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## Thomas L. Tryon: An American Author

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Michael T. Duni, Ph.D.

## Acknowledgments

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c  
2016

## Table of Contents

Introduction	7
1 <i>The Other</i>	14
2 <i>Harvest Home</i>	38
3 <i>Lady</i>	56
4 <i>Crowned Heads</i>	87
Conclusion	127
Bibliography	134

## Photographs

## Dedication

To all those who must tell and hide at the same time.

## Introduction

Thomas Tryon's nephew, Ty Tryon, the last male in the Tryon family, sits at a table in a local coffee shop. In front of him appear many newspaper clippings, black and white photographs, numerous pencil sketches, and even an unpublished manuscript written and illustrated by his uncle. It is titled "Forever Amber." Ty Tryon wears the watch given to him by the late Hollywood actor, while he enjoyably reminisces about his Uncle Tom.

Ty remembers that Thomas had sent his nephews and nieces cowboy hats from his television appearances in "The Virginian" and "The Big Valley." He proudly possesses the Winchester 94 Centennial 30/30 that is gold-plated with the actor's name engraved on it. The rifle commemorates Tryon's starring role in the television movie, "Winchester 73." Though Ty admits he has not read all of his uncle's novels, he clearly knows them by their titles and their popularity. He also recounts his uncle's memorial service in Los Angeles, California, by describing the many-colored balloons that the mourners held and then let go into the air on the beach that day in the autumn of 1991. Family members had flown from Connecticut while Actor Roddy McDowall, along with other fellow actors and actresses, was present.

The history of the Tryon family in the United States may be traced back to the 1600s. But Ty carefully explains that, more recently, Thomas Tryon, born on January 14, 1926, was the son of Arthur and Elizabeth Tryon who had three other children besides Tom. The first, a daughter, died young while Lane and Bill were Tom's surviving siblings. Bill had no children. Lane had four, and Ty is one of those four. Arthur, Tom's father, of the well-known clothing store of Stackpole, Moore and Tryon in Hartford, Connecticut, was the son of the store's founder Thomas Seymour Tryon. And the father of Thomas Seymour Tryon, Watson Tryon, was a



master builder of many Hartford sites including several at Trinity College, the capitol building of Hartford, and the Hartford Times Building, now known as the Hartford campus of the University of Connecticut. Nearby sits the Wadsworth Atheneum wherein the art work of Thomas Tryon's great, great uncle Dwight Tryon, an Impressionist, appears.<sup>1</sup> While these figures certainly prove contributors to society, Thomas Tryon, the actor and writer of the twentieth century, may be said to have also contributed to Connecticut and beyond, especially through his fiction.

I wanted to write about the works of Thomas Tryon for years. After college graduation, I picked up his new novel, *Lady*. I needed desperately to take a break from the classics and escape into a contemporary novel. *Lady's* clear prose, suspenseful story line, and somber subjects conveyed worthwhile themes and evoked incredible nostalgia in me. After many rereadings, the work still saddens and encourages me to appreciate life because it presents an accurate portrayal of human behavior and offers an understanding of the human condition. Today, some forty years later, Tryon proves insightful as to the possibilities in improving this condition, as I have also discovered in reading his other works.

Tryon was a writer of popular fiction during the 1970s and 1980s, but one can examine his works in a scholarly fashion and see that each merits praise. Tryon, a graduate of Yale University, gives us narratives wherein his literary sensibility is displayed by his ability to write a complicated plot with plausible characters in a meaningful setting that develop themes to which we can all relate. According to Laurence Perrine, literature can be entertaining or interpretive or both.<sup>2</sup> Tryon's work is both. That little has been said about his work or his talent as a writer is disturbing. His writings beg for attention. For this reason, I have spent several years reading and rereading his stories to write this book about a Connecticut writer who has seriously contributed to American letters.

In recent years gay literature has enjoyed much attention. In fact, certain pieces of literature written and intended to speak about homosexuality and the gay lifestyle have been acknowledged and analyzed. In *The Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature*, edited by Byrne R. S. Fone, it is written that homoeroticism and the figure of the homosexual in ancient and in historically closer texts have now been embraced in the literary canon. Consequently, countless literary articles that concern same sex attraction have since clarified these dramas, poems, and narratives.<sup>3</sup>

Though written decades earlier, the renowned gay novel by E. M. Forster, *Maurice*, was presented in 1971. Michael Bronski in *Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sensibility* summarizes the theme as follows:

The poetry of Walt Whitman, the political philosophy of Edward Carpenter, and the historical and scientific writings of Symonds and Ellis all set the stage for the blossoming of gay sensibility. All four of these men were products of a progressive movement in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a movement that was to endorse a notion of a private self as distinct from the wider social world. Whitman's break with accepted conventions of verse, Carpenter's move to the country to make a living growing vegetables and selling hand-made sandals, and Symonds' and Ellis' expanding ideas of sexuality are all examples of a new sense of selfhood.<sup>4</sup>

However, this movement crawled during the first half of the twentieth century.

According to Philip Gambone in his text *Something Inside: Conversations with Gay Fiction Writers*, 1978 proved "the annus mirabilis" of modern gay writing. Prior to this, however, "Whether because of shame, fear, apathy, or lack of encouragement—all manifestations of internal and external homophobia—gay writers shied away from 'material that

really mattered,' or developed what David Bergman, in his essay "The Gay American Novel," has called 'the E. M. Forster syndrome: queer writers' block.'" Gambone also refers to Michael Denny's essay "Further Down the Road" which recalls "in the mid-to-late seventies, the first years that Christopher Street was in operation, the editors 'were surprised that so few new stories ever reached their desks.'"<sup>5</sup> Denny states "It turned out that there wasn't all this unpublished material lying around; there was all this *unwritten* material lying around. . . ." (Gambone, 11). However, between 1971 and 1976, a popular American author, Thomas Tryon, wrote and published several works that became best-sellers. These works, not considered gay fiction then, were written and published before 1978. Lying around then and examined now, Tryon's work may be considered, to a certain degree, gay in content and in message.

These works, products of the then pop culture, were deemed some of the best examples of the American Gothic literature which had its beginning in Europe, especially with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. In this narrative and in others that followed, magic, mystery, and horror became the feelings that were the effects of the secret passageways, trap doors, and spooky stairways that were the staple devices of this literature. With Charles Brockton Brown's writings came the American Gothic that continued the atmosphere of terror and the unexpected.<sup>6</sup>

In his excellent text entitled *Redefining the American Gothic from Wieland to Day of the Dead*, Louis S. Gross comments that the Gothic is written primarily by women, gays, and colonials. In other words, these narratives are created by marginal figures about marginal others.<sup>7</sup> Gross asserts "From its inception, gay writers have found the Gothic a congenial home" (Gross, 58). He continues "The homosexual presence in Gothic narrative is especially significant because of the genre's cultural associations with 'decadence,' an aesthetic stance that often reveals the construction of heterosexist ideology [as contrasted with difference]. The

Gothic's ambiguous fascination with transgressive sexuality merges with the voice of the sexual Other in narratives of homosexual desire . . . to construct an imagined demonic world that the dominant culture accepts as the 'real' homosexual world, an assumption with obviously dangerous political consequences" (Gross, 91). Not only does Tryon take his place among writers of the Gothic, but he is also one who concerns his personal self with this homosexual presence.

By examining several literary works of Thomas Tryon, one realizes that this New England-born Hollywood actor turned writer not only proves a descendant of the American Gothic tradition, but he also proves a slighted, undervalued, and nearly lost author of the twentieth century. Tryon offers serious messages about the human condition and strongly suggests his own personal story—a story more profound than his devoted reading audience was aware of from his fiction during his popularity of the 1970s. This examination concerns Tryon's first four novels written during the 1970s. Six additional novels were written in the 1980s and 1990s, but these first novels are decidedly indicative of his focus, his talent, and his character.

In his writing that describes life in either New England or in Hollywood, Thomas Tryon creates narratives that emphasize disguises, masks, and duplicity, which if decoded, reveal his own secretive life story. Indeed, Tryon's supposedly mere popular fiction serves as a vehicle that discloses his own tale of a figure from the small New England town of Wethersfield, Connecticut, who becomes first a Hollywood movie star and then a successful, popular writer yet with his true self still primarily hidden. Again, Gross comments that in the Gothic "there is 'the hidden self' and, therefore, 'an incomplete knowledge of selfhood'" (Gross, 70). Tryon's characters wrestle with their selfhoods as their creator does with his. Within the pages of his novels and stories about Connecticut and Los Angeles, Tryon reveals his secretive self as a gay

man. His authorship eventually assists him in coming to terms with his self. Through this confessional fiction Tryon shares intriguing mysteries along the Connecticut River, psychological horror stories in Connecticut Yankee communities, and heavy-hearted plots involving veteran movie stars in glamorous Hollywood. Between the covers of his fiction, Tryon craftily shares the true account of his under the covers own complicated and conflicted gay self. His writing could be classified as confessional because Tryon proves to be an author who, because he was troubled by his gayness and uneasiness with having others know about it, pens narratives that strongly suggest and disclose that aspect of him that seemed blameworthy and dangerous, given his time. While Tryon offers much as an author in the school of the American Gothic, he outs himself in his fiction as well.

## Notes

### Introduction

<sup>1</sup>Ty Tryon, interview by author, Fall 2017; hereafter cited in the text as Ty Tryon.

<sup>2</sup>Laurence Perrine, *Story and Structure* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc.), 4.

<sup>3</sup>Byrne R. S. Fone, *The Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press).

<sup>4</sup>Michael Bronski, *Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sensibility* (Boston: South End Press), 39; hereafter cited in the text as Bronski.

<sup>5</sup>Philip Gambone, *Something Inside: Conversations with Gay Fiction Writers* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin), 3; hereafter cited in the text as Gambone.

<sup>6</sup>Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman, *A Handbook to Literature* (New York: The Odyssey Press), 215-216.

<sup>7</sup>Louis S. Gross, *Redefining the American Gothic From Wieland to Day of the Dead* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press), 2; hereafter cited in the text as Gross.

## Chapter One

### *The Other*

In the early works of Thomas Tryon, he firmly establishes himself in the Gothic tradition. Landscape initially proves Tryon's most noticeable Gothic device. Tryon uses the secretive, oppressive enclosure to enhance this Gothic milieu in *The Other*. Consequently, some characters in the novel, as well as in other narratives by Tryon, long to escape from oppressiveness. This escape may call for disappearance, disguise, or confession wherein the self of the character is finally actualized. Most important, sexuality becomes a part of the self's actualization with the protagonist in *The Other*. Within the Gothic, Gross warns "the fear of transgressing boundaries of sexuality" appears.<sup>1</sup> If, in any way, actualization is hindered, as in the case of the protagonist, a conflicted self results in a disordered mind that becomes destructive. Gross comments, "If there is one central area of fear the Gothic novel exploits it is the fear of losing one's sense of self as a human being in relation to the family, the state, and God" (Gross, 8). We see this frightening issue illustrated during the pages of *The Other*.

*The Other* begins with the troubled forty-eight-year old Niles locked in a mental institution. The asylum is the narrator's first enclosure where he has lain on his bed for years looking at a ceiling water stain that he imagines as "a face . . . And there's the mouth, there—see how it curls slightly at the corners? Rather benign, it seems to me. I am reminded of—never mind; you *will* think I'm crazy."<sup>2</sup> Reminiscent of the criminal's words from Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "The Tell-Tale Heart," Niles's words work as flashback wherein he tells the story of his childhood as the twin of Holland in the Perry household. This description by Niles of a face throughout the novel serves as a metaphor not for fear of losing his sense of self but rather for his

need to be another self, a different self. And, it is this quest for another self that becomes the suspense of the novel. In fact, at the novel's end we learn that Niles sees himself as that other self in the resurrected Holland only to admit to himself and to the reader that he is different and indeed the Other who he has wished to be for so long.

An eerie landscape pervades the pages of *The Other*. An old house, a recluse, an “air of magic,” madness in the family, and several murders define the novel as Gothic. “[T]he Perry house” “stalwart, large, rambling” (*TO*, 8) is “an ancient house, two hundred years or more old” (*TO*, 16) that rests in Pequot Landing. Here, fictionalizing Wethersfield, Connecticut, Tryon places his narrative in an old Connecticut River town. Here, as in other works by Tryon, a house nearly becomes a character as if “itself were breathing, exerting some effort of its own, struggling to maintain a curious lifelike equilibrium” (*TO*, 244). This implied wish for balance is as much a wish for/of the house as it is for the protagonist, Niles. “Usually the house was fairly crackling under the plaster, the walls, floorboards, ceiling stirring as though the place were about to collapse” (*TO*, 278). As with the house, the threat of collapse concerning Niles exists also. And at the novel's end, when tragedy has reached its peak, the protagonist admits that he “was not sorry to leave the house on Valley Hill Road [as he] found it, after a while, too large, too noiseless, too—dead. It seemed to be growing, enlarging and expanding, the whole house, and I felt its emptiness oppressive, as though conspiring against me” (*TO*, 287). By means of personification, Tryon creates a home that serves as the novel's major landscape for intrigue, disaster, and instability. Similar to the house in Henry James's short story, “The Jolly Corner,” the Perry house is “rambled patchwork-like in its haphazard additions: dark passages, unexpected turnings, oddly located stairways, and eccentric, surprising spaces” (*TO*, 77). These ramblings and twists of the house underscore the mystery behind the narrative. A maze much



like Niles's mind, his house seems like a living thing itself. A place of misfortune, the Perry house is thought by neighbors to be haunted (*TO*, 248) and "awash with spirits" (*TO*, 249).

Though the narrator is referring to libations with this comment, one may read the Perry house as haunted with ghostly spirits as well. It appears possessed as does Niles with Holland's spirit during the narrative. That the Perry house contains a grandfather clock that goes "tock-tick" instead of tick tock emphasizes its unconventional atmosphere, its eccentric occupants, and Niles's imbalance, too (*TO*, 278).

The Gothic setting underscores the odd characters and their circumstance. For example, the narrator's mother, Alexandra, because of her grief over the death of her son—Niles's twin brother, Holland—remains a mentally insecure recluse in the Perry residence. She has turned to drink. Likened to an apparition at times, Alexandra as well as her mother, Ada, Nile Perry's Russian grandmother, gives the Gothic novel a sense of spirituality as they are both described as angelic and winged. Furthermore, Ada has taught the young Niles a secret game of mystic "transference" (*TO*, 65) where he can recreate, conjure, and become another. Niles even becomes at times his dead twin, Holland. Niles, as Holland resurrected by means of this transference game, murders his baby niece, Eugenia, as he has earlier murdered his cousin, Russell Perry, and his neighbor, Mrs. Rowe. Niles, as Holland, also attempts to kill his own mother whose husband was murdered years ago by Holland himself.

Insanity runs in the Perry family. As the Perry house appears oddly configured, so too the family has eccentricity and surprise in it. According to Gross, "The theme of the family unbalanced through death or improper object choice is found in every Gothic tale" (Gross, 5). Years ago "mad as a hatter, Old Aunt Hattie" stayed in the "invalid room" (*TO*, 77) rather than [be] entrust[ed] to an institution (*TO*, 77). Some years later Grandmother Isabel Perry, "given to

Queen Maryish toques and carr[ying] a walking stick,” (*TO*, 103) is placed in an asylum. And now Alexandra, because of her violent behavior, along with her son, Niles, follows in their ancestors’ deranged footsteps. In fact, structurally it should be noted that each of the novel’s three parts begins with a prefatory piece by Niles who narrates this tale from inside a mental asylum where he has lived for many years after the narrative has ended. However, the reader knows that he is Niles who believes that he is Holland. To add to the confusion of identity, or rather to Niles’s instability, the narrator speaks at times in the third person about both himself and Holland.

Niles seems initially beneficent. He is born “[T]wenty minutes later, when midnight had come and gone” (*TO*, 66). Niles, having an easier birth, then arrives on the next day, under a different zodiac sign, and with a different temperament. He is “born with a caul” (*TO*, 258). It is said that one who is born with a caul, a veil over one’s face, is sensitive, insightful, lonely, misunderstood, and different. These traits all fit the character of Niles. Though both share similarities, Niles is “a child of the air, a joyous spirit, well disposed, warm, affectionate, his nature in his face; tender, merry, loving” (*TO*, 65-66). According to Ada from whom we discover the most about her grandson, Niles is also “Generous to a fault” (*TO*, 66). Niles’s insight was “both innate and suitable. Ah, but he was quick! Looking and looking and looking. Then *feeling*. Then *knowing*. And the knowing came as though a light had quite suddenly come on” (*TO*, 126). As with those born with a caul, Niles “is uncanny sometimes, the predictions he comes out with” (*TO*, 135). Ada affectionately refers to her Niles as “her *podsolnechnik*, her sunflower now; gone were all the sunflowers of Russia, but in their place grew this one, this prize flower of her heart” (*TO*, 57). A positive image, the sunflower suggests the loyalty, peacefulness, and supposed happiness associated with Niles. As Niles appears to be the novel’s

light figure, it is Holland who is dark and thus most attractive and intriguing as the Gothic genre demands.

Though the twin brothers share similarly shaped eyebrows, it is Holland, the towheaded twin who dies early in the novel, who initially proves the dark figure in this tale. The word, initially, is used because Holland is resurrected by Niles through this game of mental transference taught to him by Ada. Holland's dark figure contrasts with Niles's more favorable character that eventually becomes embodied by Niles. Holland's physical appearance and personality become manifested in Niles throughout. Though most of the remarks are about Niles as Holland, it is Holland, the outcast and sullen one, who is at first the sinister figure in the narrative. Holland precedes Niles, as his "body struggling, rending the womb, emerging dead" (*TO*, 66), is strangely "Slapped into angry life" (*TO*, 66). As a child "of a *dark* nature" (*TO*, 23), he is different and rebellious. In school Holland's teacher had described him as "a disturbing influence" (*TO*, 67) while later a psychologist had explained that he was a "High-spirited boy. Boisterous, but with no defects, unless an excess of spirits. Not unnatural in young boys. Keep him busy. Lots of exercise" (*TO*, 67). His "gable shaped eyebrows" further underscore this unusualness that likens him to other dark romantic figures in Gothic literature. Ada, his grandmother, further explains that "there was more to it: stormy, fretful, surrendering himself to blind rages, torn by tantrums, this was Holland. Rash, sulky, proud by turns" (*TO*, 67). Like Bronte's Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, he is set apart from the rest of the family. Like Milton's Lucifer in *Paradise Lost*, he is considered arrogant and beyond mere mischief. At one point Holland through Niles looks "saturnine, satanic almost" (*TO*, 184). Though a troublemaker and much like the Gothic Byronic hero, his transgressions are attractive. And it is Holland's difference that draws not only the attention of the reader, but also the attention of Niles, who,

especially after Holland's accidental death falling in the family well, cannot be without Holland. In fact, "[w]ithout Holland, he felt some unidentifiable part of him had been lost" (*TO*, 103). Holland, "the underdog" (*TO*, 98) whose "discriminate and sensitive nature . . . detest[s] the ugly and the grotesque" (*TO*, 99) and who loves the macabre somehow attracts his living twin. The infatuated Niles reasons that "twins are supposed to be together" (*TO*, 185) and always forgives his brother his transgressions. It indeed appears that Niles is "in thrall to a cadaver" (*TO*, 209). Consequently, the reader, in turn, becomes further enthralled with Tryon's villain and narrative.

Holland's difference rests in both his physical appearance and in his character. His gray eyes though inherited from the Perrys, are "remote and glassy" and "oddly tilted" (*TO*, 24) so much so that he casts an Asiatic look. His expression, unlike others, is always "stark, flat, implacable" (*TO*, 30). And his mouth appears as a "mocking smile" (*TO*, 83), and one with a certain "grin" about it (*TO*, 48). As the tale continues, it is Niles as Holland who is similarly described, for example, with a "throaty timber [with a] slightly mocking tone" accompanied by "a prissy face" (*TO*, 80). Set apart from his family, Holland, as resurrected through Niles, casts more than a dark shadow over this well-respected New England family.

In the tradition of nineteenth century fiction, Holland's physicality indicates his character. Though he might have "sun whitened hair," (*TO*, 24) Holland typifies the villainous rogue with his sinister appearance and his "strange, unpliant, [and] distant" (*TO*, 23) demeanor. Holland has a "voice . . . of ridicule" (*TO*, 20) and is "always sniggering," (*TO*, 23) and "secretive, and brooding" (*TO*, 23). Decisive and "poetic" (*TO*, 13), he is "his own person [but] a loner" (*TO*, 23). "Sly" and "crafty" (*TO*, 29), Holland is bad, both as himself and as his twin Niles through the game of transference. As Holland, he catches Niles in the throat with a precisely thrown arrow. As Holland, he hangs Pilakea, Ada's pet cat. And, as resurrected

through Niles, Holland/Niles commits deeds that are both mischievous and criminal. Scribbling graffiti on Mrs. Jewett's wall, stealing Mr. Pretty's lantern, throwing a rock through a window at the train depot, and urinating on a grave are some of the pranks Niles as Holland commits. But the pushing of his own mother down a flight of stairs, the murders of his cousin Russell, the neighbor Mrs. Rowe, and the baby Eugenia make Holland enclosed in Niles the villain of Tryon's novel.

The enclosure is the major device used by Tryon throughout *The Other*. Enclosures abound in the novel. And they abound with purpose. Donald Ringe states in *American Gothic: Imagination and Reason in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, "settings not only provide an appropriate atmosphere but sometimes suggest as well the physical and mental condition of the characters who move through them."<sup>3</sup> He points out that Charles Brockden Brown employed "the Gothic mode as a vehicle for psychological themes, [and he relates] the mental states of his characters to the objects of external reality" (Ringe, 57). Such enclosed places with secrets and locations of misdeeds achieve suspense and serve as alcoves of crime and eventual apertures of confession, as they do in Tryon's other novels. Some, like the storeroom and Mr. Perry's compartments, stress the bond between the twins and the clandestine atmosphere of the New England family. Many, such as the apple cellar, the well, Russell's casket, and Mrs. Rowe's parlor, connect with horrific crimes committed by Holland, or Niles as Holland. And, especially one other—the mental institution—magnifies the imbalanced behavior that pervades the Perry household. These places not only help enhance the novel's horrific events, but also represent the secretive, troubled, criminal, isolated, and entrapped mind of Niles who, as he narrates the story of the Perrys of Pequot's Landing, "[has like Poe's characters before him] lost . . . hold on reason" too (Ringe, 137). Moreover, Niles's need to be Holland's self—the rebel, the different, the Other—

after Holland dies at the beginning of the novel, insinuates that if no sort of escape from confinement is realized, the continued oppression of the protagonist, Niles, continues. Held in suspense, the reader then asks what this need must entail.

An enclosure surrounds and is something that confines. It further suggests something that may be hidden, imprisoned, or something from which one eventually may need to escape to be free. Enclosures abound in the novel, and they abound with purpose. The asylum, the apple cellar, the well, the toolshed, the storeroom, the wagon room, the barn, the granary, the pigeon loft, cousin Russell's coffin, the maze, the arbor, the ice house, Mrs. Rowe's parlor, the secret compartments made years ago by Mr. Perry, the Prince Albert Tobacco tin, and finally the wine keg harboring Eugenia's dead infant, emphasize secretiveness, confinement, imminent disaster, and, therefore, possibly a need for release. These enclosures create an ambiguity as they hold secrets, threaten suffocation or destruction, and suspensefully suggest that something needs to be known.

For example, the well, another "dark and secret place" (*TO*, 14) looks "like an ancient tomb" (*TO*, 39) and, the place of Holland's death, seems to become the birthplace of Niles's traumatic experience. Though Niles witnesses the death and some readers may argue that Niles has caused it, Niles refuses to believe that Holland accidentally died in this family's dried up well while hanging his grandmother's cat. According to S. T. Joshi in his article, "Thomas Tryon: Rural Horror," "the incident [becomes] the most deeply repressed event in Niles's psyche."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the well as landscape serves as a symbol. Niles becomes forever entrapped by losing his twin. Later confronted with Holland's grave, an enclosure at its very best, Niles still refuses to acknowledge the premature demise of his twin. Both Holland and Niles become caught, confined, and identified by this enclosed experience and either die or suffer mental

instability. With the well and its effect on both young men, a sense of confinement and subsequent need to escape is emphasized. So, too, the twin's mother, grieving Holland's death, "slip[s] over the lawn, her lavender wrapper shimmering across the dark grass, like a beautiful specter, crossing the gravel and into the fir trees" (*TO*, 137). Tryon continues, "she reach[es] the well, where she [stands] for a long time . . . . And as she look[s] down at the heavy seal over the well mouth, it seem[s] to Niles that it [is] as though she [is] waiting for it to speak" (*TO*, 137). Alexandra consequently becomes imprisoned by this enclosure as well. Certainly, the need to escape from oppressiveness pervades the novel.

The apple cellar, too, so "cool and dark and silent" (*TO*, 18) serves as an underground enclosure that not only augments the "spooky" (*TO*, 18) mood of the story, but also emphasizes the hidden psychological recesses of the main character. In childhood Niles and Holland reenact stories of murder. Here, in this "marvelously clandestine place" (*TO*, 18), the twin's father has been killed before the novel begins not by Holland resurrected by Niles, but by Holland himself.

Here, the apple cellar served for other, more devious, employment. Shut away from the light, free from intrusion, you felt it was such a place as could be peopled by a boy's imagination with all the creatures of his fancy, with kings, courtiers, and criminals—whatever; state, temple, prison, down there seeds were sown, to grow magically overnight, like mushrooms. A place whose walls could be made to recede into airy spaciousness, the ceiling and floor into a limitless void, wood and stone and mortar dissolved at will (*TO*, 18).

Certainly, Niles's (as Holland's) secretive, imaginative, and criminal nature becomes symbolized by this subterranean recess. And it is in this apple cellar later where Ada attempts to kill—to burn with gasoline—Niles, hoping both to terminate her grandson's ability to imagine,

to conjure, and to resurrect his twin Holland, and to end any further criminal acts in the Perry family. Historically, those born with cauls were often burned to death. The underground room happens to have a slave door, also connecting with the idea of freedom, that is used ultimately so that Niles as Holland may escape.

It contains objects connected to the dark crimes of the novel including “the ring, the finger, the glasses which had belonged to Russell, a ribbon from the baby’s dress, the *evidence*, in short” (*TO*, 286) of the terror caused by Holland, Niles, and Niles as the resurrected Holland. And these dark crimes, though hidden, gradually become revealed.

At the same time that oppressive secrets and escapes exist in the narrative and beg to be understood, the desire to disappear from this world also exists. Niles wants to reenact the disappearing game of Chan Yu, the Disappearing Marvel. “Niles [begins] mentally examining the nest of boxes. . . . What is the mystery of it, the truth? The magician seems to be in the cabinet . . . that’s the reality. Boxes; shiny, smooth, lacquered surfaces, brass-banded, escutcheoned . . . A box within a box within a box. Another and another . . . A nest. A riddle. A trap?” (*TO*, 106). These nests of boxes may represent the isolated, hidden, and captured mind of Niles wishing to both adopt and to escape *into* a darker self and eventually to disappear both from mental torment and the world of Pequot Landing altogether. Along with this urge is the figure of the magician in the novel. A magician is a conjurer or a trickster of illusion—again illustrating Tryon’s preoccupation with disguise. Assuming the role of a magician himself, Niles, along with his brother, attempts to reenact the disappearing game of Chan Yu. Why does Niles wish to disappear? He may want to disappear because he is unhappy, especially without Holland or that other self, which, in his mind, would make himself complete. Held in suspense the reader asks what is it about Holland that would make Niles’s self complete?



In a photograph published by *Hartford Courant* on July 3, 1938, is a young Tryon with neighborhood peers from Wethersfield, Connecticut, as they put on a fair for the benefit of Camp Courant and Times Farm in the Griswold Barn at 371 Wolcott Hill Road. Surrounded by seven youngsters, including his own younger brother, Bill Tryon, Tommy Tryon stands taller than the rest, especially as he dons a magician's top hat. That Tryon might have liked magic and certainly fills his writing with magic from time to time may be significant. It is while wearing a magician's hat that the youngster Niles as Holland causes Mrs. Rowe to have a heart attack and to die. Magic has to do with distraction. And though attracting his reading audience with memorable characters and chilling horror, he may have wanted to distract his audience from something about himself that he nonetheless wants to reveal between the lines of his prose.

Another enclosure that stresses the motif of suffocation concerns the corpse of an infant. Near the end of *The Other* Niles as Holland murders his sister's baby. He stuffs it not in a bottle this time as he has seen at the fair, but in a wine vat. "[The] little face . . . floated in the dark red wine, so like the baby in the bottle, hair waving, the eyes staring up at the ceiling, the mouth parted in a silent scream" (*TO*, 277). Billy Talcott also experiences a suffocation by drowning "under the ice" (*TO*, 131) earlier on in the novel, indirectly caused by either Niles or Holland. Both of these events pivot upon enclosures and suffocation that Niles himself psychologically endures throughout the novel. Because Ada feels the need to put an end to her evil grandson, she attempts to kill him in a conflagration that instead kills her. Instead of witnessing "the Angel of the Brighter Day" (*TO*, 284) as he has hoped, Niles is nearly smothered by "the Angel of Death" (*TO*, 284). Niles has needed to be other than himself and has needed to be Holland—the rebellious, the different, and the other self that was Holland, his darker twin. Niles suffocates. At

the end of the novel, Niles's Uncle George discovers that his nephew has committed these many crimes and commits him to the asylum.

Niles, at the end of this psychological horror novel, remains locked up in the insane asylum still convinced that he is Holland and that Niles has gone away never to be conjured up again as Holland. According to Ringe, Poe understood "reason's enemy [as] death" (Ringe, 142). Indeed, Niles's reason has not been maintained. Traumatized by Holland's death years earlier, Niles, by means of a supernatural game of transference, loses his reason, enacts dark deeds, seeks to be different, and experiences a metaphoric death. One unnamed critic, according to Jocelyn McClurg in "A Life in Two Acts" from the "Hartford Courant" in 1992, sees Niles as "a deranged and demonic schizophrenic."<sup>5</sup> This reading is possible, yet other interpretations are probable.

One must read Tryon subtextually to understand the condition and the escape that Niles endures and achieves. His secret is revealed by the novel's end. *The Other* is a story thematically about a self that needs actualization; in fact, it longs to be another self. In this case, it is Niles's self who needs to be Holland's self in order to achieve freedom. Granted, Niles institutionalized has not achieved an escape. His freedom is not a physical escape as much as it proves an escape to truth through narration. Tryon, like authors before and after him, pays tribute then to the power of the word.

Tryon, like Melville and Whitman before him, was an egalitarian. Though believers "in human equality, especially with respect to social, political, and economic rights and privileges"<sup>6</sup> each faced a similar problem. Homosexuality was a crime in their day. Michael Bronski in *Culture Clash* explains, "Although the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a great deal of homosexual

writing, much of it was heavily coded or produced in such a way as to limit readership.”<sup>7</sup> He elaborates,

Although he would later use the word ‘adhesiveness’ to describe ‘love for comrades,’ Whitman was at a disadvantage in speaking of his sexual nature. To declare it openly, rather than indicate it, would have opened him to charges of both sin and crime. Going further than anyone else had, Whitman took the precaution of choosing a word—adhesiveness—that might carry more meanings than the strictly sexual. Pioneer though he was, Whitman was unable to make the leap from a consciously identified to a ‘named’ sexuality. At the end of “Song of Myself,” he wrote: There is that in me . . . I do not know what it is . . . but I know it is in me. Wrenched and sweaty . . . calm and cool then my body becomes, I sleep . . . I sleep long. I do not know it . . . it is without a name . . . it is a word unsaid. It is not in any dictionary or utterance or symbol (Bronski, 21).

The word was homosexuality.

The Gothic tradition will remain with Tryon for several forthcoming works allowing him to reveal truths about the condition of human nature, including his own situation. If Niles is read as Tryon and *The Other* more autobiographically, why does Tryon wish to be different or to disappear? Might Tryon be suggesting between the lines of this Gothic tale something of his own hidden, vulnerable self who needed to be a different self? In this narrative Tryon suggests his unhappiness and consequently his desire to disappear or to adopt another self as well. It is his self that Tryon wishes to share in his prose. *The Other* begins Tryon’s attempt at not only revealing the complexity of the selves of his fictional characters, but also disclosing more about his very own nature. Tryon succeeds in initially liberating his true self in the pages of his first novel. In it Tryon paradoxically entraps in print that which needs to escape and to be revealed

about his self. As Niles confesses so too does his creator. Intriguingly, this first work is dedicated to his mother and father. Whether Tryon was out to his parents is not known, but perhaps in this first novel Tryon attempts to hint about this aspect of his self to them.

A situation in *The Other* that may be seen as autobiographical is Nile's refusal to attend summer camp. Ada, who suggests it, hears Niles say emphatically no while he says to himself, "no, Holland didn't want to go, didn't like the games, the groups, didn't care much for playmates" (*TO*, 52). This instance mirrors the words of George Tudan, a fellow Boy Scout with the younger Tryon, who tells of the time when Tommy attended Camp Pioneer in New Hartford, Connecticut. Tudan explains that Tom as "a youthful, tall, handsome Boy Scout with a shock of black, well-groomed hair . . . was friendly, but did not join in the evening activities with the other scouts. By the second week, the young campers were grouching about Tom's attitude."<sup>8</sup> Both Tryon and his fictional protagonist share a likeness.

In the genre of confession writing, an author tends to admit or to hint of "intimate and possibly guilty matters . . . to serve some didactic purpose."<sup>9</sup> Tryon mildly gives hints of his own sexual nature in *The Other*. Although this novel, unlike *Harvest Home* and *Lady*, is not blatant with sexuality, subtle suggestions are evident and sexuality could be the primary and personal issue he wishes to write about. Gross asserts "The Gothic examines the limitations of the "traditional sexual relations and the transforming qualities of alternative sexuality" (Gross, 3).

That the twins carry around with them a Prince Albert tin proves one suggestion as the term Prince Albert has often been associated with the penis, in the past as well as more recently regarding body piercing. These young boys, and especially Niles, consider the Prince Albert tin along with its evidence of crimes, as highly important in their secretive world. These thirteen-year-olds frequent the apple cellar where their "seeds were sown, to grow magically overnight,

like mushrooms” (*TO*, 18). Certainly, adolescent boys with penises sprouting like mushrooms ready to masturbate is imagined. Not only has the subject of masturbation connected with the topic of insanity throughout history, it also eventually links itself to the protagonist who is insane by the novel’s end. Also, the activity between boys seems, though natural, yet again a possible hint on homosexuality that exists in *The Other*. That the tin contains the finger that once wore the Perry ring, which Niles cut off of Holland’s corpse, can be considered sexual, too. Like the term Prince Albert, it more than implies a phallic connection. For in fact the finger resembles a phallus. Tryon’s preoccupation with this priapic imagery begs attention. It is his magic act for old Mrs. Rowe that causes her heart failure. Perhaps Niles does pull out from under his cape a rat but it is implied he shows her his penis. Furthermore, the carnival that both Niles and Holland attend presents a show that contains a hermaphrodite. As Torrie and Ryder engage in sexual intercourse they are described as a hermaphrodite. This half- male and half-female figure further connects the subject of sexuality and gender to the young boys. And this further brings up the issue of Thomas Tryon and his concern and attempt at a secretive life as a homosexual.

Niles wanting to be Holland, his desire to be other than he is, and his subsequent torment in remaining in the closet could be an issue of gender. It is not a coincidence that the twins’ father and mother are seen in a photograph, each dressed as the opposite gender. It is not a coincidence that, at the end of the novel, Niles is found and dragged from a closet. Hiding in a closet from the family after Torrie’s baby is found floating “in the dark red wine,” (*TO*, 277) Niles admits that it is Holland who “must be . . . crazy” (*TO*, 278). He further worries, “How long was [I] going to have to stay here in the closet? [I] hated the dark so” (*TO*, 278). Ada finds him in the closet and brings him out of it only to die herself soon afterwards. Sent to an asylum, Niles, confined and still thinking that he is Holland, shares this dark narrative. Niles has not

improved upon his self and certainly has not gained any liberties by the novel's end. However, both Niles and Tryon find liberation through the confessional pages of the narrative.

*The Other* needs to be read subtextually. Certain objects must be decoded. Holland wears a bright pink shirt. As Niles performs his magic trick, he wears this shirt. According to Winnie, the maid, Niles "can't wear another shirt 'ceptin that old rag of Holland's" (*TO*, 232). Even at the end of his story Niles in the asylum thinks he is Holland and imagines that he sees himself as "a fleeting glimpse only, a flash, just for a brief moment, standing there, there in the darkened corner of a closet, or there, winding the grandfather's clock as he used to, or there, in the storeroom, wearing the pink shirt and playing the old Victrola" (*TO*, 287). Having lost his mind, by confusing himself with his twin brother, Niles, as he admits, has reached "the end of the line," which will become another significant element as to Tryon's subtextual intent.

In an earlier passage Tryon writes that the twins have fused into one. It is as almost they were "one being housed in two forms" (*TO*, 66).

*At the pump:* Holland and Niles, naked, in the pool under the spout. The pool filled, their broken images doubled in the water, duplicated precisely as jacks on a playing card. In one moment of sheer delight, bursting with unreserved joy, their arms reach out to each other, hands clasp in a mirthful flash. Their connection seems not only physical, but spiritual as well. Each smiling, each expressing a deeper delight in his human reflection, there is evidence of a profound sort of union. (*TO*, 71-72)

Not only does the fusion help Niles achieve his goal of becoming the other, but it also invites speculation as to Niles's attraction to his twin. The pink shirt helps resolve the mystery. During the time of this novel and perhaps even during the time Tryon was composing it, the white shirt was predominately that vestment worn by most men. However, the pink shirt had and

still has connotations of a difference, of the other. Pink was understood as is the color violet, as a sign of possible homosexuality. This issue along with others strongly suggests Niles's need to be that other self—that twin Holland. Rather than the best little boy that Niles is, Niles needs to be that rebellious, that different, that other temperament which was embodied in his brother Holland. The pink shirt is yet another timely object that has autobiographical implications.

In *The Other*, as well as throughout *Harvest Home*, the figure of the scarecrow appears. In fact, according to his nephew Ty Tryon of Bloomfield, Connecticut, Tryon sketched many scarecrows and gave these sketches to various members of the Tryon family (Ty Tryon). Several of Tryon's scarecrow drawings along with other papers remain in the Gotlieb Archives at Boston University.<sup>10</sup> In an article on her website titled "'The Great Scarecrow In Days Long Ago': Gothic Myths and Family Festivals," Juliette Wood says "Many scarecrow stories have been illustrated, but depictions of scarecrows in art, prior to the modern explosion of interest in the figure, are surprisingly difficult to find."<sup>11</sup> Tryon has contributed to this explosion in both narrative and art.

As Ada attempts to make Niles understand that his twin brother has died by taking the boy to the cemetery, a scarecrow's face from an adjoining field looks down upon the couple. As the scarecrow's "brittle, ragged form stir[s] in the lifting wind," Niles sees "bit by bit, the face change, [and] become another face. A face he would not recognize. Could, but would not. A face no longer straw and string but lichen-spotted, decayed, the flesh shriveled, eyeless sockets, lips stretched away from withered gums pulled back from bare teeth, forever grinning in an ivoryed skull" (*TO*, 261-262). The scarecrow "limp and tattered on a pole, straw stuffed, straw faced" (*TO*, 258) now becomes more than an imitation of a man—rather more a dissimulation of a man—but becomes Holland, the more substantial and true self, who Niles wishes to become.

Tryon focuses on the scarecrow figure in both his fiction and his art as an image that is merely the semblance of a man and is not truly a man. A scarecrow, simply made of straw, is a forgery—a trickery—a substitute for a man. This further underscores for Tryon the falseness that Niles seems to carry with him while wanting to be other than who he is. It also emphasizes Tryon's own falseness as a gay man having to present himself as a straight man. Perhaps early in his life, Tryon felt his homosexuality made him less substantial than the straight man that others assumed he was. A look at the time during which Thomas Tryon lived also augments this perception. Given the historical time of the novel and of its author, the oppression and possible danger suffered by the gay man is not only fact, but also cause for subsequent disguise.

Both Tryon and his fictional creation, Niles, have the need to deceive, to disguise, and to be secretive in order to deal with loneliness and to acquire a self that is to be other than their own. It remains that Niles and Tryon want a different self than what they possessed and presented to the world either in the world of the novel or in Wethersfield, Connecticut. During the early twentieth century homosexuality was considered distasteful, immoral, and criminal. It was grounds for ostracism, imprisonment, and institutionalization. Given the continued negative attitude towards homosexuality in 1971, one might understand the reason(s) behind making this desired self dark, sinister, ambiguous, and self-abnegating. Neil Miller in *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869-to the Present* clearly records many instances of homosexuals placed in mental asylums as happens to Tryon's Niles.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps this is the justification of Tryon's reference to Babylon throughout *The Other*. According to Niles, Holland continually recites the lines from a Mother Goose rhyme. Holland says, and Niles as Holland will say, "*How many miles to Babylon? Threescore miles and ten. Can I get there by candlelight? Yes, and back again*" (*TO*, 21). These lines imply that where Holland and then Niles wish to go has the



characteristics of the ancient city of Babylon. It, unlike Assyria, was known for its paganism, intolerance, and wicked ruler Nebuchadnezzar. More so, Babylon, a foreign home for the Jews who never assimilated to its culture, has been likened to Sodom where homosexuality proved pervasive. Both Holland and then Niles become homesick for the Shadow Hills of Babylon. Niles eventually when institutionalized refers to his end place as Babylon. Ambiguity rests here with what Tryon is saying. On one hand, Tryon by choosing Babylon—a place of immorality and sin—may be suggesting a conflict regarding his sexual orientation. On the other hand, this place that Niles refers to as “the end of the line” (*TO*, 288) though very well dark and sinful to some, proves alluring and vital to the experience for self-actualization—an actualization that Tryon strongly insinuates about himself through his art. Yet, it could also be simply and starkly the mental institution.

Elizabeth MacAndrew in her text *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction* identifies the figure of the double as a device in Gothic literature. This device has developed over the years from one that focused upon the hero and the villain as separate entities. However, as the genre became more interested in the psychology of man, the double became one entity. MacAndrew writes:

Since the reader was to sympathize with the tormented man who replaced the villain and who was a victim of his own evil, the device was formed of projecting the evil in him out onto a separate character. The figure of the double was thus born from the split and warring factions of the personality of the Gothic villain. The double figure showed that it was the nature of every man that the good in him must struggle in unending battle against the distortions of evil.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, Holland and Niles can be seen in this way. However, Tryon’s use of this device becomes complicated as the seemingly evil nature of Holland could be acceptable and not

repulsive, especially to Niles who longs to have Holland's characteristics. Again, the reader becomes compassionate with the suffering Niles who is tormented and is enticed by a self that he wants. Again, Tryon's ambiguous perspective towards homosexuality and that which is expected of him by society appears here. MacAndrew sees that in later Gothic works a mixture of compassion and horror for the tormented character, who often reaches madness, occurs because of this doubleness. The reader is left then understanding that there is an unclearness as to what is good and what is evil. Often an individual is seen as "degenerating into madness under social pressures" (MacAndrew, 100). "The madman, however withdrawn or hallucinated or violent, is felt to be in the grip of something that is not his true self" (MacAndrew, 147). Tryon illustrates these Gothic issues in *The Other*. Perhaps the little boy from the bucolic, aristocratic, traditional town of Wethersfield, Connecticut, desired to be in a more liberal, untraditional, unconventional setting like Babylon instead. Niles as Holland favorably mentions the trolleys that travel to Babylon. Interestingly, Tryon would "from the time he was old enough" take a trolley from Wethersfield "and head for the picture show in Hartford in the '30s" (McClurg, 10). Both figures needed to get away.

Several other remarks and allusions are cleverly used by Tryon that may have homosexual relevance. At one point Niles and his grandmother listen to the composer Tchaikovsky, who was gay. At another point in the novel Holland is likened to Achilles who was Patroclus's lover. Mr. La Fever, from a circus freak show, has three legs. And Niles is called a "pretty boy" (*TO*, 108) by a carny as he attempts to enter an adult sideshow at the carnival. Inclusions such as these strongly imply Tryon's focus regarding sexual orientation.

This desire to be other than what appears eventually overwhelms both the family and the traditions of Pequot Landing. By the conclusion of *The Other* the Perry family has lost its place

in society and is ruined, as Gross claimed as a fearful happening in the Gothic. The prestige of the Tryon family of Wethersfield was, Tom Tryon felt, threatened by his true nature, especially as his figure became more and more public. Gross remarks “the Gothic quest ends in the shattering of the protagonist’s image of his/her social/sexual roles and a legacy of, at best, numbing unease or, at worst, emotional paralysis and death” (Gross, 1-2). This frightened Tryon. Niles’ ending illustrates this observation. In *The Other* the main character remains isolated, outcast, and still masked at the novel’s conclusion. Through its pages however, Tryon begins to reveal that which needs to be undisguised and unquieted regarding his own life. Tryon is best associated with Constantine Cavafy, a Greek homosexual poet of the twentieth century, in yet another tradition. According to Demetres Papanikolaou in his essay titled “Words that tell and hide: Revisiting C. P. Cavafy’s Closets,” Cavafy both hides and tells a truth at the same time.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, W.H. Auden finds that Cavafy offers “the speech of self-disclosure” in his erotic poetry that “bears witness to the truth.”<sup>15</sup> As a lover of men, E. M. Forster further describes Cavafy in his *Pharos and Pharillon* as one who “stood at a slight angle to the universe.”<sup>16</sup> One could offer similar expressions about Tryon.

Again, it is understandable that this first work, ultimately of self disclosure and truth, is dedicated to his mother and father.

Photo: Conduct Fair For Camp Courant' Benefit July 3, 1938 Courtesy of Hartford Courant

## Notes

### Chapter One

<sup>1</sup>Louis S. Gross, *Redefining the American Gothic from Wieland to Day of the Dead*, 9 (see Introduction, n. 7).

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Tryon, *The Other* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Crest Publications, Inc.), 12; hereafter cited in the text as *TO*.

<sup>3</sup>Donald Ringe, *American Gothic: Imagination and Reason in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky), 55; hereafter cited in the text as Ringe.

<sup>4</sup>S.T. Joshi, “Thomas Tryon: Rural Horror” *Studies in Weird Fiction* (Necronomicon Press, 1991).

<sup>5</sup>Jocelyn McClurg, “A Life in Two Acts: Of Tom and Thomas Tryon” *Northeast Magazine, Hartford Courant*, April 26, 1992, 12; hereafter cited in the text as McClurg.

<sup>6</sup>*Webster’s Ninth New College Dictionary*, s.v. “egalitarian”; hereafter cited as Webster’s Ninth.

<sup>7</sup>Michael Bronski, *Culture Clash*, 53 (see Introduction, n. 4).

<sup>8</sup>George Tudan, letter to the editor, *Northeast Magazine, Hartford Courant*, June 14, 1991.

<sup>9</sup>William Rose Benet, *The Reader’s Encyclopedia*, Second Edition (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, Publishers), 218; hereafter cited in the text as Benet.

<sup>10</sup>The Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center of Boston University holds most of Tryon’s extant papers and sketches.

<sup>11</sup>Juliette Wood, “‘The Great Scarecrows in Days Long Ago’: Gothic Myths and Family Festivals,” accessed February 1, 2018. [www.julietwood.com](http://www.julietwood.com).

<sup>12</sup>Neil Miller, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present*

(London: Vintage of Random House); hereafter cited in the text as Miller. Michael Bronski's text *A Queer History of the United States* is an excellent source as well.

<sup>13</sup>Elizabeth MacAndrew, *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press), 50-51; hereafter cited in the text as MacAndrew.

<sup>14</sup>Dimitris Papanikolaou, "Words That Tell and Hide: Revisiting C. P. Cavafy's Closets," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, October 23, 2005, 236; hereafter cited in the text as Papanikolaou.

<sup>15</sup>W.H. Auden, introduction to *The Complete Poems of Cavafy*, trans. Rae Dalven (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), viii-xi.

<sup>16</sup>Gore Vidal, foreword to *Before Time Could Change Them: The Complete Poems of Constantine P. Cavafy*, trans. Theoharis C. Theoharis (New York: Harcourt, Inc.), xvii.

## Chapter Two

### *Harvest Home*

In 1973 Thomas Tryon wrote his second novel, *Harvest Home*. Again, in the genre of gothic mystery, the novel met with acclaim and success. Set in the Connecticut countryside, his novel not only offers an intriguing story but also further information about its creator.

She is the mother.

I stared at the mounded mass in my palm.

“Lay seed in her, she will bear. She will nourish and sustain and in the sustaining will give forth and provide. And that seed you give her will make another seed, and that another, and another, again and again—forever the Eternal Return.” Slowly her arms rose and straightened, her fists opened, spread broad, an impressive gesture of benevolence, a priestess acknowledging the deity. “Let us pay her tribute. Let us pray that she may bring forth her strong plants, her rich food, her very life. How selfish we are. We give her but a seed, a kernel, a dead thing. Yet see what she returns to us. Such bounty, such riches, such life! What mortal is there who cannot help but wonder at her, love her, fear her?”

The Bible says Eve was born of Adam’s rib, but he was born of the earth, so there was woman before there ever was man. She is not merely a mate, a life’s companion, a helpmeet; she is the moving force, the power. And while Adam was abroad in the forest, she was in the fields planting and tilling. What man but a fool will reject the counsels of his spouse, who will give life to his sons? What man will spurn her, not venerate her, she who shares his bed and board, who tends his fire and his cookpot? The Lord preserve the

women. The Lord preserve the fruitful Mother. And she will give, and give, and give, till there is no more to be given.”<sup>1</sup>

Here in the middle of Tryon’s *Harvest Home*, the Widow Fortune explains to Ned, the narrator of the novel, the belief system of Cornwall Combe, a small New England town. It is here where Mother Earth and women control the world, which leads to the destruction of men.

*Harvest Home* is cyclical; its structure pivots upon the seasons. Divided into five parts, the novel tells the story of a twentieth century agrarian community in Connecticut. Far from modern, however, the people of Cornwall Coombe subscribe to a way of life that is unconventional. Their way can best be understood by the celebrations or rituals they practice, which serve as structural devices for the novel. Each part is titled after an important ritual in the narrative that culminates with the highest celebration, Harvest Home.

“Agnes Fair,” part one, begins with the Constantine family moving into Cornwall Coombe. Originally from New York City, Ned, Beth, and Kate, their daughter, now live in a 300-year-old house and spend their time meeting some of the locals from this quaint Connecticut town. In flashback, Ned describes his family’s initial encounter with community figures including Mrs. Dodd, Jack Stump, Tamar Penrose, and the Widow Fortune. Mr. Demming tells Beth, “The social unit here is not the family, it’s the community. And the community is founded on corn. As the corn flourishes, so does the village” (*HH*, 115). Agnes Fair, named after an earlier resident, occurs on “the last Saturday in August” as “an annual tradition” (*HH*, 6). But this event, as all else, will eventually prove more than it seems and become part of a greater mystery involving Cornwall Coombe. Agnes Fair, though it offers wrestling contests, quilting circles, and horse pulls, is not just an ordinary New England fair. More important, it is a celebration at which time the Harvest Lord is chosen for the next seven years. It had been



“Justin Hooke at Agnes Fair seven years before. He had been crowned at Spring Festival, and it was this traditional role he would continue to assume through the weeks of harvest; a pageant was to be held in the Grange hall some weeks hence—the Corn Play, as it was called—where his queen would be crowned. She was called the Corn Maiden, and Sophie Hooke had been chosen for this part” (*HH*, 66). Most significant, “It was the Corn Maiden who, mated to the Harvest Lord, caused the corn to grow” (*HH*, 119).

The novel begins with Justin and Sophie as Harvest Lord and Lady soon to celebrate this year’s Harvest Home. But, it is time now for the new Harvest Lord to be selected for the next seven years, stressing again that the world of the book is cyclical.

Gothic elements abound in “The Days of Seasoning,” the novel’s second part. A supposed suicide of a young girl, the apparition of the Ghost of Soakes’s Lonesome, a journey that leads to a skeleton in a haunted wood, the mysterious presence of a voodoo-like corn doll, and a modern-day witch who concocts a hallucinogenic or sexual liquor all justify Tryon as a twentieth century Gothic writer.

The landscape, as in *The Other*, proves the most Gothic of elements as especially witnessed during “The Days of Seasoning.” As in “Agnes Fair,” the setting emphasizes the significance of the seasons, the earth’s furrowed land, and the countryside of Cornwall Coombe. Cornfields envelop houses whose inhabitants literally listen to the corn grow. But this landscape involves more than corn. Soakes’s Lonesome, the Lost Whistle Bridge, a rainbow, the moonlight, a reoccurring yellow bird in a locust tree, and gravesites all contribute to the mysterious landscape. Tryon describes the world of *Harvest Home* as mostly out-of-doors where Earth becomes a major character, and the community’s “faith [is] based on the moon, the stars, and the tides” (*HH*, 174). Soakes’s Lonesome is the place where mean-spirited and reclusive

men live apart from others as outcasts. They wage hostility against their neighbors of Cornwall Coombe. Inhabitants of a wood where trespassers are not welcome, they have a hidden still on their property and a rumored ghost. Later both Ned and the reader discover that the ghost is really the sound from the skeleton of the murdered Gracie Everdeen, who had disrupted the cult of women and their plans for an earlier, healthy corn harvest. When Jack Stump learns the true identity of the skeleton his tongue is cut out, his mouth is sewn tight, and his body is dashed with ashes. Although the Soakes's hate snoops such as Jack Stump, we later discover that the women of Cornwall Coombe were the murderers as well as Jack Stump's assailants.

Along with these old houses, ghosts, and moonlight visions, Gothic characters reside in Cornwall Coombe. A remote hollow isolated from the world, it has "grisly woodland apparitions," (*HH*, 149) but no medical doctor or school. Yet the Connecticut village does have a matriarchal figure, the Widow Fortune, who tends her honeybees and mysteriously dons a pair of shears as part of her daily dress. She has a Druid-like connection with Mother Earth. The Widow Mary Fortune "a sort of midwife, homeopath, and veterinarian combined" (*HH*, 18) leads the coven of witches. Described as "a witch" (*HH*, 37) the Widow Fortune cures the ill, respects the cows, and instructs her followers that "God is fine but it's Old Mother Earth that's the friend to man" (*HH*, 50) and that to "Love the earth and it must love you back" (*HH*, 50). With her house excessively surrounded by corn, she who talks to the corn and hears it grow appears "a priestess acknowledging the deity" (*HH*, 312). This priestess reveres her and expects the community to revere "the fertile soil" (*HH*, 50) and the ancient fertility rites in order that a "bountiful" harvest (*HH*, 51) is assured. Mary Fortune is the villain of this Gothic narrative.

The reference to Earth Mother and the witches prove part of the Gothic tradition. "Back in the old days there was a cult of women who worshiped a goddess called Demeter. She was

the earth goddess” (*HH*, 363). And this Mother Earth has her women disciples of Cornwall Coombe. Elizabeth MacAndrew in *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction* asserts, “The double aspect of the female side of human nature in the Gothic novels [portrays] the woman as gentle inspiration or as seductress . . . [who] tempts, seduces, lures men to inevitable destruction.”<sup>2</sup> And the female portrayed as both destructive witch and attractive seducer in Cornwall Coombe proves to be best illustrated by certain women, especially the Widow Fortune and Tamar Penrose.

Amid all this Gothicism appears an animosity between women and men of Cornwall Coombe. These outcasts— though most essential to make the corn grow—illustrate Tryon’s theme that the power of women in connection with Mother Earth ultimately leads to the domination and the destruction of the male sex. Tryon consequently creates a novel wherein women not only control men but also oppress and eventually destroy them. They are used, emasculated, made speechless, and blind. Men in *Harvest Home* have become underpowered and impotent, including Ned the protagonist and artist figure of the novel.

The domination and destruction of men is best witnessed in “Tithing Day”, the third part of *Harvest Home*, which advances the plot of the mystery but also affords the reader his or her share of violence, blood, and sexuality. In it we encounter knives and hatchets. Blood results from a chicken prepared for dinner, and Ned’s asthmatic daughter’s throat is cut to save her life. Here we become privy to the Gracie Everdeen story. We also learn of Tamar Penrose’s sensual, seductive side forced upon Ned and other men in the community.

Tamar Penrose admits to Ned that years earlier she had murdered Gracie Everdeen who had wanted Roger Penrose. Tamar had desired Roger herself so that at *Harvest Home* they could “make—the —corn” (*HH*, 336). Tamar further confesses that “Roger and I, we made the corn

together” (HH, 336). Seduced by Tamar himself Ned says “she was of the earth. She was earth itself, the Mother goddess, and even as my semen flowed I could feel my eyes sting as the tears came; the man unmanned, defeated by the woman” (HH, 339). Ned adds, “When my breath was spent, I limply pushed myself to the surface. I slicked my hair from my eyes and looked at the bank. She was not there, but imprinted in the wet clay was the hollow of her form, and it seemed as if she had entered there, the goddess returned to earth” (HH, 339). Man is indeed subject to woman as “the castrator” (HH, 242) and her earth.

Missy Penrose at the end of Agnes Fair divines a new Harvest Lord for the next seven years in the reluctant Worthy Pettinger. “[The land] cooled slightly, the shadows began to lengthen as the sun dropped, and the Common settled into somnolence. The air was still and heavy and smelled faintly sour, the odor of weeds or grass cuttings. The pennants hung limp and tired on the booths. No traffic passed, no voices called, no dogs barked. All was silence” (HH, 86). Coming upon Missy and other members of the community Ned notices a dead sheep. “Dripping red, the glossy tubular glands and bulgy membranes slid about and slowly slipped through her splayed fingers and fell back into the parted red cavity beneath them. Never removing her eyes from her hands, she raised them palms upward before her, toward the sky, their redness trembling against the blue” (HH, 87). Soon she, as young oracle, “reach[es] out her hands and lay[s] their redness against the cheeks of Worthy Pettinger” (HH, 88). In a landscape that holds the sacrifice and divination of ancient pagan ritual, one more powerful female, another devotee of the fertility rite, destroys yet another man seven years into the future.

However, this year’s Corn Play must be held. Part Four of *Harvest Home* entitled “The Corn Play” not only contains the play itself, but also other significant events of the novel’s gruesome plot. Ned suspects that Gracie Everdeen had not committed suicide so he questions

the Widow Fortune about “the figure in the corn field” (*HH*, 268), to the widow’s dislike. Ned also admits to Beth that Worthy, despite Worthy’s election as a future Harvest Lord, has departed the village but only after he has damned the corn, to the dismay and anger of the community. Mystery might pervade Cornwall Coombe, but it is anticipation of this pagan celebration that overwhelms the participants, the spectators, and the reading audience of the Corn Play itself.

Ned explains, “The play was the duplication of the natural process, a pantomiming of life itself, and it seemed to me that at heart these people were primitives, a clan of ancient lineage, plain and clear in their wants and needs” (*HH*, 287). The play is made up of several phases or ceremonies including “Planting Day,” the “Moon of Good Gathering,” and the “Moon of No Repentance” all leading up to the “Eternal Return” where the pantomime assures the community that the ritual enacted by the Harvest Lord and Corn Maiden will guarantee that the crops will grow. Through the sexual act, or at least the foreshadowing of it, the community illustrates its belief that female Mother Earth reigns superior, though she requires man and his seed at times.

After this play Ned learns even more about the mysterious ways of his new hometown. Justin explains to him the enactment of fertility rites and the reasons for their continuance. He asserts, “We fear only one thing, that something should interfere or change the cycle . . . Of life. Of living things, of the seasons. Of the natural order of things. The Eternal Return” (*HH*, 299). Ned also now knows that the Widow Fortune and her disciples have cut Jack Stump’s tongue out because of his discovery of these women’s murderous ways, including the murder of the previously supposed suicide, Gracie Everdeen. At this point, Ned is seduced by the aggressive temptress and rapist Tamar Penrose, which in the end underscores the woman’s power over the

man. Beth becomes one of the women of Cornwall Coombe while Worthy, costumed as a scarecrow, has been found murdered, because of his disloyalty to the community, in a cornfield.

It is during Harvest Home, the final part of the novel, where Tryon achieves striking suspense and the novel reaches its climax. It is expected by the community that the Harvest Lord Justin and the Corn Maiden Sophie will have sexual intercourse as the play has foreshadowed. But Sophie Hooke proves a poor disciple of Mother Earth as a seducer and destroyer. Just prior to the making of the corn and Harvest Home, Sophie hangs herself because she realizes her husband, Justin, this year's Harvest Lord, will be killed as part of the celebration. And indeed in a landscape of a "grove, in this temple of the Mother Earth, the Harvest Lord was to be offered in ritual sacrifice. Here, in the moonlight, with the dancing and singing women, Justin Hooke was being drugged, was then to be murdered, murdered for the corn" (*HH*, 386-87). These devotees to Mother Earth eventually slit Justin's throat.

Others, like Gracie Everdeen, who have not devoted themselves to these beliefs, or those like Jack Stump, who happen upon the dark and murderous secret deeds of the coven, are discovered undoubtedly to have been punished. The reader assumes that the shears of the Widow Fortune have cut out Jack's tongue, his lips sewn tight in order that he will not reveal what he has witnessed. Besides untongued, Ned will be blinded soon, as Robert Dodd has been blinded by the agricultural ladies in the name of Mother Earth. At the end of the novel, Beth is the one who makes the corn with Justin Hooke and becomes pregnant with his baby. Seduced by one of these women—these women with whom his own Beth has now joined—Ned learns of their cyclical, sexual, and murderous ways, and pays the ultimate price.

MacAndrew asserts, "The power of the female earth to envelope [sic] men and make them part of itself corresponds to the strength of the virtuous women and the witches who draw

their power from the earth, in contrast to the male scientists who try to wrest her secrets from her” (MacAndrew, 183). So too does Gross see this “Dark Woman with her transforming power as the ultimate sign of her demonic nature” as the witch in American Gothic literature.<sup>3</sup> The Widow Fortune illustrates it best. While referring to authors including Radcliffe, Hoffman, and Hawthorne, MacAndrew suggests that these women “exercise a good-evil power that symbolizes man’s need to reconcile his idealism with his attachment to the earth” (MacAndrew, 182). The same theory applies to the artist. MacAndrew continues that a “Gothic device brings out the paradoxical conflict between art and life, between man’s soaring spirit and his connection with the earth” (MacAndrew, 218). Ned is the artistic male figure in *Harvest Home* who is at once deceptively embraced by the women, but also ultimately destroyed by them. Similarly, Gross feels that “the ultimate act of the demonic woman is the destruction of patriarchal order” (Gross, 51).

Thomas Tryon then writes a narrative that underscores woman’s dominance over man. In it the women of Cornwall Coombe literally have the last say and ultimate control over the male sex. Each man—each major male character—Jack Stump, Worthy Pettiger, Robert Dodd, and Ned Constantine—succumb to the oppressive and wicked woman. In fact, even before the narrative begins, it is implied that the Widow Fortune’s own husband has died at the hands of the womenfolk years before in Cornwall Coombe. The women were connected to the earth more than to the spirit and to the arts. That Tryon writes a novel where the men are weak or weakened and the women are strong or controlling makes the reader wonder about Tryon’s personal motives in writing this Gothic story. Might Tryon be implying his own submission or destruction at the hands of women in his own life? What had been his relationship with his

mother, his sister, and his wife of only three years? As a homosexual, Tryon's interest in women whose powerful role it is to destroy men after emasculating them begs for conjecture.

*Harvest Home* is a carnal novel. The topic of sexuality is evident. The village centers on the fertility rite known as Harvest Home, and the town is unique because of it. The love and passion between Ned and his wife prove quotidian and thin compared to the rest of the carnality in the story. For instance, sexual banter occurs among the men and women. The women, despite their seemingly calm country ways, find enjoyment gossiping about "Justin's rooster" (*HH*, 56) and seem to know that "Justin Hooke's got the biggest rooster in town" (*HH*, 55). So too, the women "squeal" (*HH*, 56) with laughter as Jack Stump tells them the off-colored joke about "the fellow with twelve inches but he don't use it as a rule" (*HH*, 56). And the girls at the Agnes Fair approach and flirt with Justin asking him who his Corn Maiden will eventually be. The novel is structured and moves to an orgasmic end with Justin Hooke and Beth as his Queen making the corn at Harvest Home at the novel's conclusion.

Much more than sexuality is implied by Tryon by means of his concentration on a village, its cult that centers on a fertility rite, and the making of the corn by a man and woman at the end of the agricultural year. The men prove to be mere sexual tools later to be discarded. But, they are so carefully described erotically—certainly more than any female character—that one should take notice. Creating a wide divide between women and men, might the novelist be attempting not only to describe his relationship with women, but also be trying to explain his perspective towards the male sex and, possibly, his own sexual orientation?

Homosexual means having an attraction towards someone of the same sex as oneself. Homoeroticism is different in that something through a work of art, whether it is a painting or a piece of literature, is received in such a way that the image or the writing provokes a feeling that



suggests this attraction. The content, the focus, and the description accomplished in the image or the writing achieves the feeling that, whether one is straight or gay, affects the seer or writer emotionally. Such subject matter, emphasis, and delineations appear throughout Tryon's works.

Tryon is preoccupied with virility in *Harvest Home*. In fact, maleness seems more accentuated than does femaleness, surprisingly and ironically in a novel about Mother Earth, fertility, and powerful women. His reliance on the scarecrow, again, is noticeable. Juliette Wood focuses upon the scarecrow and its changing significance. She finds, "They are no longer just a pragmatic agricultural device, they have been absorbed into the symbolism of gothic and horror literature, and more recently have become symbols of our changing attitudes to Nature."<sup>4</sup> She continues, "the idea that these figures are survivals of ancient pre-Christian fertility customs remains a popular explanation of their origins" (Wood, 3). Her theory further clarifies that "the scarecrow [survives from] an ancient sacrificial ritual [and] underpins" the plot of Tryon's *Harvest Home* (Wood, 7). Though she states that "[it] has become a standard assumption of romantic folklore that such figures are substitutes for ancient human sacrifices, . . . there is no solid evidence for this" (Wood, 2). Tryon does meld the presence of scarecrows and the human sacrifice that takes place every seven years at Cornwall Coombe. According to some, the number seven "indicates the senses of a change after an accomplished cycle and of a positive renewal."<sup>5</sup> Sacrifices as these are done in order for the vegetation cycle to continue in Cornwall Coombe.

That homosexuality is connected with the Gothic is not uncommon, according to Louis S. Gross (Gross, 53). One example occurs at the beginning of *Harvest Home*. The scarecrows are "Not the ordinary, garden-variety of scarecrow, these were fanciful fellows, decked out in extravagant bits of motley costuming and rags. There was one in particular, the head and body

stuffed with straw and cornhusks, a battered hat tilted rakishly over one button eye, a long feather stuck in the band like a cavalier's plume" (*HH*, 56-57). The description of this particular scarecrow hints strangely at a gay demeanor. And, as in *The Other*, might the scarecrow as an insubstantial man hint at Tryon's ambiguous attitude towards homosexuality?

Soon after this scarecrow's description the Widow Fortune asks Jack Stump to sell her some old clothes in order to dress her scarecrows for the Spring Festival. She soon tells Ned about Jack that "His heart's in the right place, but his tongue's an affliction" (*HH*, 57). While this comment may have to do with Jack's proclivity to talk, it also continues the priapic preoccupation in the novel. The tongue is an important phallic symbol. The tongue as phallus the women destroy. Certainly, the cock becomes a major presence in *Harvest Home* as written by a closeted man.

And this preoccupation, while not slighting the creative text, may ultimately confess Tryon's sexual orientation as expressed through fiction. Gross instructs, "The abuse of the body in Gothic narrative is pervasive and shocking" (Gross, 60). Jack Stump suffers emasculation at the shears of the Widow Fortune and her coven. We shall see this "pain and mutilation" (Gross, 60) again in *Crowned Heads*. Not only is the tongue suggestive of the penis, but also the mushroom and the ear of corn are described and implied to be phallic-like. Accompanying the Widow Fortune on her mushroom gathering expedition, Ned "had never seen the old woman so excited; her face was flushed from her exertions as she demolished the ring [of rooms] little by little" (*HH*, 163). Tryon continues, "though it was handsome, it certainly looked like the most poisonous thing nature could provide. The cap was about four inches across, a brilliant red, with small warty bumps on it. The surface felt sticky, and bits of pine needles had adhered. The stem was white and pulpy-feeling, and the gills on the underside were a delicate formation of pale

white” (*HH*, 163). Paradoxically this penis-like mushroom is detailed as both poisonous and intriguing at the same time. Tryon becomes ambiguous not only about the penis but also about his own sexual orientation. Similarly, the ear of corn, shaped as a phallus, often appears during the novel and further suggests the male member.

Most noticeably are Tryon’s descriptions of the phallus as he focuses upon the Harvest Lord Justin Hooke. During the Corn Play the men more than the women seem to enjoy the dramatization of the making of the corn. The men speak more in this scene than the women, and the men enjoy Justin as the Harvest Lord. Especially their interest in Justin’s penis must be noted. Tryon narrates, “Then Fred Minerva pranced about in his corn tatters and, as Harvest Fool, flipped up the skirt of Justin’s tunic, making asides to the audience: ‘Hey, girls, now there’s a plow to make the corn with! You’ll be harrowed for sure.’ Nobody seemed to mind the ribald talk, everyone laughing good-naturedly; one man crowed to Justin, ‘Hey, old cock-a-doodle-doo!’ and another cupped his hands and shouted, ‘There’s a cock’ll do!’” (*HH*, 286).

Not only does it become apparent that the men of Cornwall Coombe enjoy sex, but also that Tryon does. He takes special care during his narrative descriptions to accentuate the male sex in his fictional world. In “The Corn Play,” as Ned is seduced by Tamar who has just informed him that she had killed Gracie Everdeen, Tryon physically describes Ned along with Tamar. Despite Ned’s disgust for Tamar, and his wish to kill her for her crime, he loses to her sexual advances and she, unlike him, gains control of his body. They wrestle. Tryon describes Ned’s “buttock muscles [as they] knot as [he] arch[es his] back and [drives himself] into her” (*HH*, 338) over and over again. Later, at the rite of Harvest Home, it is Justin’s cock that becomes adored by the coven which, led by the Widow Fortune, chants and praises him for his soon to be coupling with the Corn Maiden. In a frenzy these women

Swooped upon [Justin] and brought him from where he stood beside the Corn Maiden to a spot near the center of the clearing where the earth had been hoed, and from my hiding place I could see the blank glitter of his eyes, the half-lidded look of pleasure as they strewed themselves about his feet, rubbing their cheeks along his legs, upward to his thighs, their eager hands reaching under his tunic to fondle and caress him. His head dropped back and a deep-throated moan of pleasure issued from his mouth as he became aroused, and through the parted strips of corn leaves appeared the living male-hood of the Harvest Lord.

ya—Idhu! they screamed, rushing to touch it, feel the erect object of their adoration, the great rooster that had occasioned the ribald comments at their kitchen doors. Ya—Idhu! Ahm-lot! AHM—lot! Cries of torment, their frenzy now insupportable. The sight and touch of the Priapean object induced a wild pantomime of devotion, an obscene reverence to the maleness of the Harvest Lord. (*HH*, 392-93)

The homoerotic writing cannot be overlooked and serves as a confession to Tryon's attractiveness to the male form and to his own sexual orientation.

The image of the closet has been iconic to the gay world for a long time. Papanikolaou reminds us that even Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the Closet* asserts "the closet is the defining structure of gay oppression in [the twentieth] century."<sup>6</sup> It proves intriguing that in Tryon's fiction the closet's appearance is both pronounced and significant. It is in *The Other* that Niles is dragged out of a closet by Ada. It is in *Harvest Home* that Ned, taken into custody after discovering some of the sinister happenings in Cornwall Coombe, plans an escape from his place of incarceration by means of a closet that opens to a tunnel that leads to another closet in the nearby church. Climbing the steeple, Ned begins to see the fertility rite during Harvest

Home. Under the Moon of No Repentance Justin will make the corn with Tamar Penrose in order for the corn to grow. Later, hiding behind trees and shrubbery, Ned learns that “Here, in the grove, in this temple of the Mother Earth, the Harvest Lord was to be offered in ritual sacrifice. Here, in the moonlight, with the dancing and singing women, Justin Hooke was being drugged, was then to be murdered, murdered for the corn (*HH*, 386-387). In *The Other*, the closet’s purpose is to hide Niles. In *Harvest Home* the closet is used to free Ned to discover and tell about the Eleusinian Mysteries of Cornwall Coombe. These mysteries in ancient Greece “celebrated the revival of corn in the springtime.”<sup>7</sup> Tryon in both these novels connects his protagonist to the closet. This image suggests the iconic closeted man that could autobiographically connect to Tryon himself.

Papanikolaous argues Cavafy’s work both hides and tells his homosexuality from his community in Alexandria. Papanikolaous writes, “As a particular discursive strategy for disqualifying male love . . . the closet goes hand in hand with the identification (and subsequent repression) of the homosexual as a particular kind of person, a distinct and retainable human type, an identity, a biography” (Papanikolaous, 238). He continues “But, even though originally a site of oppression, the closet has recently started to be thought of as also a positive space in which to forge queer identities. It becomes not only a hiding place, but also a place from which to utter identity” (Papanikolaous, 238-239). Tryon uses the same strategy.

At the beginning of *Harvest Home*, Ned tells us that his family and he had come to Cornwall Coombe initially so that he could become “a serious artist” (*HH*, 4). He gave up an executive position in a New York firm to pursue this career as artist, but it was not to be. Caught up in this murderous, pagan drama, Ned, at the novel’s conclusion, fails at painting and has become blind and speechless because of the village’s coven. The villainous Widow Fortune has

conquered yet another man and anticipates Jimmy Minerva and Kate Constantine as a future Lord and Maiden of the Corn. Now indebted to his caring wife, Beth, Ned merely sits and listens, as the similar victim Professor Dodd does, to a “talking book machine” (*HH*, 401) of passages from Dickens. Despite Gross’s observation that “the disintegration of hope . . . is the Gothic quester’s epiphany” (Gross, 62) Tryon has Ned, the maimed artist, script the narrative nonetheless. Despite everything, the written word stays powerful. The novel is written in the first person emphasizing that Ned remains a purposeful storyteller while Tryon places himself, as he does in *The Other*, with the Gothic and confession traditions.

Photo to Come

## Notes

### Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Tryon, *Harvest Home* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 312-313; hereafter cited in the text as *HH*.

<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth MacAndrew, *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*, 179 (see chap. 1, n. 13).

<sup>3</sup> Louis S. Gross, *Redefining the American Gothic From Wieland to Day of the Dead*, 53 (see Introduction, n. 7).

<sup>4</sup> Juliette Wood, "The Great Scarecrows in Days Long Ago." 1 (see chap. 1, n. 9).

<sup>5</sup><http://www.RidingtheBeast.com>

<sup>6</sup> Demetres Papanikkolaou, "Words That Tell and Hide: Revisiting C. P. Cavafy's Closets." (see chap. 1, n. 12).

<sup>7</sup> William Rose Benet, *The Reader's Encyclopedia*, 306 (see chap. 1, n.7).



## Chapter Three

### *Lady*

More than for his works of historical romance that appear later, Tryon is best remembered for *The Other* and *Harvest Home*. His third work, *Lady*, is a novel of mystery and nostalgia. A young man, Frederick Woodhouse, known as Woody, tells the story about his life in a small Connecticut town that involves a neighbor named Lady Harleigh. She, as well as the mystery that surrounds her, leads Woody to encounter life's lessons concerning truth, dissimulation, tolerance, and forgiveness. At the beginning, Woody admits, "It is not easy to learn much about love, but one thing I discovered, that Lady Harleigh taught me: it is not whom we love that is important, but only that we love."<sup>1</sup> And, as Woody cleverly remarks at one point, "all of this became disclosed to me by gradual degrees" (*L*, 22). *Lady* proves to be not only a quasi-Gothic novel of suspense, but also a bildungsroman.

Major features of Lady Harleigh's life include her "house on the Green" (*L*, 3) its garden's gazing globe, the chifferobe in her bedroom, the brick walkway with its birdbath, and the shrine of photographs of her deceased cruel husband, Edward. These details help identify Tryon's work as a part of the Gothic tradition. Other elements, especially a graveyard, secrets, rumors of ghosts, two murders, and a mysterious disease, effectively distinguish Tryon's novel as a twentieth century quasi-Gothic tale. That Tryon favors the Gothic narrative is significant and indicative of his own character because horror has often aligned itself with the outcast and his or her sense of alienation. Tryon and his characters share in this sense, as exemplified with Niles in *The Other* and with the men in *Harvest Home*.

The first section of *Lady* titled “Old Songs” clearly defines the Gothic narrative. It is a dark mystery, which by its inherent nature, offers situations that beg for clarification. Adelaide Harleigh lives “in the handsomest house on the Green,” (*L*, 3) which looms far atop the small Connecticut town. On the house itself rests a plaque identifying it as “the ‘Josiah Webster House, Built 1702’” (*L*, 3). Lady apparently resides in her house with her two servants, Jessie and Elthea, originally from Barbados. After Edward’s murder, she becomes a recluse while Woody, the narrator of the novel, considers the house the town’s castle. Here, at least to Adelaide, the ghost of Edward occasionally appears. As in *The Other*, Tryon uses the enclosure to achieve suspense and to anticipate further revelations of secrets. For example, early on Woody describes the carriage house as an enclosure with “heavy doors” (*L*, 4) that contains Lady’s automobile, a Minerva. This residence as well as an expansive Green, a “locally renowned plot of New England earth that in colonial times had been the village common” (*L*, 4), enhances the setting and, in turn, gives the novel a sense of a dark past, a puzzling present, and a suspenseful adventure.

Woody describes the house as:

A large brick house, with gleaming white-painted trim and rows of sunny windows between long shutters, the squares of glass twinkling in the light. Two splendid elms canopied the broad front lawn, and a flagstoned paving led from the street to its friendly sagging doorway where the stoop was laid charmingly askew, with two small panes of bull’s eye glass set in over the lintel. The slates angled steeply from the roofline, where graceful wrought-iron rods served to ward off bolts of lightning that threatened the slender chimneys rising like sentinels over the gabled dormers. (*L*, 10)

The house's brick construction suggests a Yankee sturdiness that will eventually parallel the tough character of Lady Harleigh. Its gleaming whiteness implies the innocence and uprightness that a New England family supposedly possesses in a small town as in this Connecticut town called Pequot's Landing. Windows with "long shutters" (L, 10) and glass "squares" (L, 10) imply the angularity and rigidness that identifies its occupants or the standard-bearers of society as in control and perhaps foreshadow the control that society may have upon others later. The expansiveness of its "broad front lawn" (L, 10) also speaks to the Harleigh's aristocratic position in the community. Yet, the homely state of this abode is also addressed by Tryon with its nonchalant pathway to the door that itself is "friendly" (L, 10) and "sagging" (L, 10). It appears that this household may be vulnerable as it is on guard and protected from that which threatens its existence, especially by its chimneys likened to "sentinels" (L,10). Metaphorically, the sentinels stand ready for the lightning or the threat of blackmail that will arrive later at Lady Harleigh's doorstep.

Woody continues, "Inside [are] generous furnishings, including a Sheraton dining table and eight chairs—one with arms, where Edward always sat when they entertained—to say nothing of Lady's expensive dressing table, and the walnut chifforobe with numerous drawers in which Edward kept his personal belongings" (L, 10). Grand, elegant, and aristocratic, the setting of Lady Harleigh and her narrative includes a house equivalent to Hepzibah's in Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* or to any castle imagined by a Gothic master. Tryon envisions and describes an impregnable stronghold that shields its inhabitants from a possible invasion. In the words of Colonel Blatchley, it "is one of the most historical houses in our town" (L, 53). Colonel Blatchley is referred to as a courtier and the mysterious Mr. Ott with "his bright glistening eyes, his tight, mean mouth, his snowed covered red hair" (L, 35) is likened to a

menacing dragon. These add to the story's Gothicism. Earlier, this house had been a prison for Lady held captive by Edward. Lady Harleigh, royal figure as suggested, becomes for a time a damsel in distress and at the mercy of the dragon, Mr. Ott.

As everyone awaits the fate of the sick servant, Jessie, "it [too] was as if the house were holding its breath, waiting" (*L*, 185). Throughout the novel the reader senses Lady's house, or castle, as personified. As in Gothic narratives, the house becomes a character, sometimes an imprisonment, always a mystery, and at one point a heroic accomplishment by the hero of the story, Woody. In "Old Songs," after Lady Harleigh invites Woody for "a little supper of veal cutlets" (*L*, 27), the young narrator—the hero of this coming of age story—first realizes that "[he] had stormed the castle at last" (*L*, 27). Woody attains admittance to a foreign territory in his hometown of Pequot's Landing. Ultimately the narrator loses his innocent perspective on the world but gains the traits of compassion and forgiveness because of his friendship with Lady Harleigh. Tryon refers to Andersen's *The Snow Queen* to press upon the reader Woody's infatuation with Lady, his own Snow Queen, and his gradual understanding of life while in her company.<sup>2</sup> In this way, *Lady* is not only a Gothic narrative, but also a bildungsroman about the adolescent boy, Woody. These elements propel the story's mysterious plot, reveal the natures of various characters, and insure Tryon's achievement of meaningful Gothic adventure. And with this edifice, a home that welcomed George Washington just prior to the Battle of Yorktown, will come further intrigue about Lady and subtextually about Tryon himself.

Tryon's narrative centers upon the fictional town of Pequot's Landing at the beginning of the twentieth century. He masks Wethersfield, Connecticut, as Pequot's Landing. Through details authentic to the times, Tryon achieves verisimilitude in his fiction. The setting in the early 1930s and 1940s includes: an ice box soon to become the Frigidaire, magazines including the

“Women’s Home Companion” and “Photoplay,” the Bushnell Memorial theater in nearby Hartford, Smith’s Dairy of the Connecticut River Valley, and Lady Harleigh’s Belgian car, her Minerva. And, in the background but not far away from this New England setting, World War I and World War II occur. Though this narrative involves imagined characters and story line, Tryon authenticates his work by relating to the actual town of Wethersfield, Connecticut, in the early 1900s. Gross points out that, unlike the Gothic work in Europe that focused “its vision outward to another people and another age,” the American Gothic turned its gaze “inward to illuminate its own people and their age.”<sup>3</sup>

Pequot’s Landing is an agricultural community “guilt ridden and fearful of impropriety” (L, 91). This white, Anglo-Saxon community frowns upon Jews, suspects Catholics, and casually refers to Lady’s servant Jessie as “nigger” (L, 99) and “coon” (L, 200). Gross asserts

The genre of the Gothic is marked by the unique contributions of certain marginalized social groups whose very existence focuses the specific social tensions regarding sex, race, and class which underlie Western bourgeois literature. The Gothic, with its horrified fascination for the points of transition between daily life and its nightmarish reflection, permits the writer and the reader to stare intensely at those things hidden by more mainstream, therefore more critically respected, modes of writing. (Gross, 91)

Tryon’s foci on the thematic topics of hypocrisy, intolerance, and bigotry become issues in his Gothic tale of early New England where conventional propriety is valued more than understanding and compassion. Intolerance may be defined as a lack of understanding, compassion, and acceptance towards the difference of another. Bigotry may be defined as an even harsher attitude that involves a prejudice against another’s belief. Indeed, difference has appeared in *The Other*, *Harvest Home*, and now in *Lady*. Tryon’s works contain illustrations of

intolerance that festers into bigotry. And it is this early twentieth century intolerance and bigotry that he cautions his readers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries to avoid, especially and ultimately regarding alternative beliefs, race, and surprisingly—and subtextually—his own lifestyle and sexual orientation. During the 30s and 40s, miscegenation laws existed. These laws preventing inter-racial marriage lasted until 1967 when the United States Supreme Court ruled them as unconstitutional. Until this time, as with same-sex behavior, which was not legally tolerated until 2003, such behavior was punishable by imprisonment. This cautionary agenda lies within the lines of *Lady* and Tryon's other works.

For example, Porter Sprague strongly manifests intolerance and bigotry in *Lady*. His intolerance is shown towards his dog whose bothersome bark ceases “because Mr. Sprague had surgically severed its vocal cords” (*L*, 81). Again, Sprague proves the exemplary bigot when he tells his barber that Lady Harleigh is “too familiar with her inferiors,” (*L*, 57) referring to Jessie and Elthea, her servants. The narrator suggests that Miss Berry and her partner, Gert Flagler, are lesbians. Sprague accuses Miss Berry of being a “Dame morphodite!” (*L*, 79) after she douses him with water because of his mistreatment of his barking dog. Woody takes candy from Elthea at one time and Sprague warns the young boy that, if he continues this friendliness, “Folks’ll be calling you a nigger lover if you don’t watch it” (*L*, 9).

Certainly, Porter Sprague is not Pequot Landing's sole bigot. More illustrations of man's unacceptance and hostility towards others exist. “Mr. Pellegrino at the barbershop would never cut a black person's hair” (*L*, 74). Even Woody—before his understanding of tolerance, compassion, and forgiveness in his coming-of-age narrative —speaks for the white folks of Pequot's Landing as he asserts at one point “as we knew, it was the whites who'd inherit the earth” (*L*, 75). Tryon makes certain that the world of Pequot's Landing has a plausible share of

unfriendly, unaccepting, and downright hostile inhabitants. Nancy, a worker in Woody's home, refers to Poles as "Polacks" (*L*, 157). The train engineer, referring to Jessie's corpse says, "someone get this coon's car off my tracks . . . I got a late train here" (*L*, 200). And, near the end of the novel, Lady explains to Woody the mystery involving her life, including the figure of Eotis Thorne's hatred not only of herself, but also towards his own black people who had rejected him because of his white blood. Hostility and prejudice are directed even towards one's own in this story. Gross correctly includes "the person of color" (Gross, 91) in his list of those marginalized figures at risk in a prejudiced world. Tryon enlarges the canvas and underscores the pervasiveness of intolerant behavior. He, through Woody's words, says about Jessie "that not only did he view our New England extremes of temperature with dissatisfaction, but viewed with equal dissatisfaction our small-town puritan ethics and folkways, as if our often narrow viewpoints were distasteful to him" (*L*, 90). The need for tolerance in the world becomes a major message for Tryon. Woody has much to learn.

That Pequot's Landing is a cozy New England town with a soda fountain, a village green, and an apparently close community does not, by the attitudes and behaviors of some of its members, make it Edenic. At Pequot's Landing difference is not accepted. The town has one Jewish family and "like Catholics they were somehow 'different'" (*L*, 91). Even the Marianis, whose daughter will become Woody's wife at the novel's conclusion, "enterprising as they were, good upstanding people, still . . . were only farmers, and Italians, and Catholics—[and] they wouldn't go far in Pequot's Landing" (*L*, 92). Lady offers several remarks about the narrowness of her community members and the fact that Italians, Catholics, and Jews are slighted as different. But, she hopes that "One day it may change" (*L*, 91). There, in Pequot's Landing, the other is ostracized.

It is obvious Tryon's story exemplifies that difference is unacceptable. The reader encounters bigotry on a small yet strong scale in a novel that includes a world of communist threats, Hitler's extremism, and world war, all caused by man's intolerance of another man's difference. Aware of this, Lady Harleigh tells Woody "From Abraham to Selectmen Standish, we are all guilt ridden and fearful of impropriety. Narrow lives make for narrow minds" (*L*, 91). By impropriety Lady means that the community of Pequot's Landing now fears nonconformity, unconventionality, and difference from the set standards of the day. She knows that this way of thinking is "part of the New England ethic which, even after centuries, still hangs on" (*L*, 91). Tryon understands and illustrates that this mindset continues in his day.

The intolerant world of Tryon's time is also addressed subtextually. This needs to be known in order to understand Tryon's reticence about his sexual preference and his subtextual messaging of this. In his outstanding summative text Miller recounts the time Tryon lived and encountered society's reaction to homosexuality. A homosexual, especially during the first half of the twentieth century, was regarded as an outlaw, a pervert, and a deviate. Because homosexuality was linked with Communism, antigay hysteria pervaded America. In "the late 1940s the U. S. military was discharging homosexuals at the rate of about 1,000 a year."<sup>4</sup> Tryon served in the United States Navy from 1943-46. Raids on gay bars and investigations into the personal lives of everyone occurred during that time. Mental hospitals began to fill up with "moral offenders" (Miller, 272). Here, one should recall Niles from *The Other*. Miller continues, "Little distinction [was made] between 'criminal sexual psychopaths' and homosexuals" (Miller, 272). This type of sexual behavior was a criminal offense in many countries. It remained so until the late 1960s and early 1970s, and even until now.



During the times of homosexual harassment around the world, Lord Arran of Great Britain, advocating for the Wolfenden recommendations to the Parliament, said (italics are author's):

*Homosexuals must continue to remember that while there may be nothing bad in being a homosexual, there is certainly nothing good. . . let me remind them that no amount of legislation will prevent homosexuals from being the subject of dislike and derision or at best of pity. We shall always, I fear, resent the odd man out. That is their burden for all time, and they must shoulder it like men—for men they are.* (Miller, 287)

The attitude Arran describes towards homosexuals is what Tryon, along with thousands of others, faced and, as will be discussed later, was the attitude of the viewing public both on television and in the movies on whom Tryon depended as his fans. It caused Tryon great fear and kept him in the closet.

This kind of thinking by an oppressive majority will provoke duplicity or masking. Dissimulation is a common practice at Pequot's Landing. Deceit, though commonly thought incorrect, in every way and to every imaginable degree appears in Tryon's *Lady*, as it does in both *The Other* and in *Harvest Home*. Tryon does not suggest that secretiveness is correct behavior, but that it is, at times, necessary and justifiable. Part of Woody's bildungsroman involves his loss of innocence, mainly in terms of finding out about the dissimulation in his hometown. Woody's discovery of either excusable or ill meaning falseness and his subsequent loss of a naïve and judgmental perspective helps the young man mature. In other words, for Woody, appearance eventually is not reality and, because people are intolerant and cruel towards difference, secrets or masks on occasion may be necessary for people to survive. The reader accompanies Woody on this journey.

As Lady and Woody discuss his affection towards the Big Little Books, Woody discusses one of his favorites, *Tarzan*, who “was currently disguised in a crocodile skin battling an Egyptian pharaoh” (*L*, 32). This disguise proves minor contrasted with the other deceptions that pervade Tryon’s novel. Yet, it still emphasizes disguise. Lady Harleigh’s father-in-law swindles half the town in stock maneuvers “before the Panic of 1907” and thus first exemplifies a serious falsehood in the novel (*L*, 11). Elthea lies to Woody when she says that she has been married to Jessie a long, “long time,” (*L*, 59). In fact, Elthea and Jessie are siblings while Jessie is Lady’s lover. At Halloween an assortment of “marvelous disguise[s]” (*L*, 112) trick or treat the Harleigh mansion and provoke Adelaide to say to Woody, “extraordinary what a mask may do for one” (*L*, 112). Many illustrations of deceit imply its necessity in order for one to live a life of truth and happiness within oneself. And various examples of deceit underscore the importance of honesty in Lady as well.

Characters, including Mr. Harleigh, don masks to do ill. But many wear masks to remain concealed, fearful of disapproval and ostracism. Dissimulation, then, does not occur only as morally incorrect. Deceit can also be a justifiable falsehood. For example, Woody prides himself for protecting Blue Ferguson, his childhood hero, from shame as he secretly destroys the Pilgrim Market basket, which would have declared to the community Blue’s clandestine sexual escapades with the married Lilah Pierson. With this deceit Woody learns about Blue’s flaws and also about Blue’s commonness where he is “no different [than] ... anyone else” (*L*, 138). Accepting this, Woody chops the basket up for kindling and “watch[es] Blue Ferguson’s shame go up the flue in smoke and ashes. It made a cheerful light” (*L*, 137). Near the end of the novel upon Lady’s death, Woody again deceives Mr. Foley by simply agreeing that Lady had “had a

nice life” (*L*, 261). By this time Woody is fully aware of Lady Harleigh’s hidden life that was actually difficult and painful.

The entire mystery of Lady Harleigh pivots this hidden, disguised life for both the reader and for Woody who must figure it out during the course of events that will enable Woody to complete his bildungsroman. The deception involves Adelaide’s love affair with her supposed servant, Jessie. Elthea, Jessie’s sister, has come with him from Barbados to don the mask of spouse years earlier in order for Lady and Jessie to be lovers. All three characters live double lives.

Tryon blends fairy tale and symbol to disclose Lady’s mystery. Infatuated by his neighbor, the youngster Woody listens to Lady read Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Snow Queen*. In the narrative, this “demon-mirror” (*L*, 48) of the goblin turns everything ugly. “The mirror was so evil that in the face of heaven it shattered, and the fragments flew about, some people even getting them into their hearts, which turned them to ice” (*L*, 48). Several mirrors become a preoccupation with Lady as they not only reflect reality, but also emphasize the self. Woody remembers her staring into a mirror the night Mr. Ott, the blackmailer, visited. She shudders. To Lady the mirror emphasizes the ugliness of people and of life, which destroys happiness. Further along in the tale, the Snow Queen captures Kay but promises him his freedom if he spells the word eternity from the shattered pieces of ice of another mirror, a frozen lake, known as “the Mirror of Reason” (*L*, 48). Kay is unable to do this until Gerda rescues him. Though this fairy tale ends happily ever after it ironically provokes Lady to sadly conclude, “And anyway. . . who could spell ‘Eternity’ out of the broken pieces of a mirror?” (*L*, 48)

Because of Edward’s and Ott’s deaths as well as her affair with Jessie, Lady is guilt-ridden and understands reality—a shattered mirror—as anything but beautiful, harmonious, and

happy. She is plagued by remorse and guilt because of her deeds and secrets. To spite Jesse after an argument, Lady impulsively cuts her hair that he loves. Angry with her actions, she shatters a mirror saying, “Well. That’s that. Goblin—goblin—Ugly people doing ugly things” (*L*, 142). Tryon makes Lady’s sense of reality and her perception of herself distorted and unhappy by means of the shattered mirror.

But soon Lady obtains a gazing globe for her garden. “Lady’s immense fondness for the globe was manifested by the extended periods she would spend looking at its curved reflection” (*L*, 152). That she feels her life is broken counters the symbolization of the outdoor ornament. A shattered mirror might represent a distorted existence, but the gazing globe suggests the opposite in its calming continuity. Later, speaking to Woody while they both inspect the globe, Lady explains,

You see how things look whole? Not only your little piece, or someone else’s little piece, but all the pieces, all unbroken, all flowing together. It seems to me that when I look in there I can really see what God meant the world to be like. The earth is round, and so is this globe. All is visible, you can see everything in its place, and each thing is in relation to each other thing. Everything is in balance with everything else. That’s the way the world should be. (*L*, 175)

Understanding her, Woody thinks “Everything seemed to proceed in one unbroken line; everything continued, in time, in space, in existence, all held in that silver globe, and reflected by it” (*L*, 175). Unlike the goblin mirror and the mirrors in Lady’s home, the gazing globe symbolizes symmetry, peace, concord, and truth.

While the globe survives the hurricane that occurs in “Sad Songs” Part Three, it does not in Part Four titled “Last Songs.” Time passes and Woody ages. Woody, home from the Navy,

visits Lady and notices that the gazing globe has been left out in the cold. Bringing it in to her provokes a conversation that contrasts the goblin mirror with the globe. Lady still believes that mirrors reflect the ugliness of man and his world while the globe represents the continuity and harmony which the world should imitate. Thinking of her past deeds, she exclaims, “I have done terrible things in my life—dreadful things” (*L*, 44). Woody acknowledges Lady’s guilt but refuses to believe that she has committed “dreadful things” (*L*, 244). Later, Woody learns from Miss Berry that Lady, feigning to make love, intentionally infected Edward with the influenza that consequently killed him.

Twenty months later, Woody visits Lady again and he listens as she tells that Jesse had purchased the gazing globe soon after an argument regarding her somewhat feigned devotion to Edward, even during their own present love affair. During this conversation and while holding the globe, Lady reveals that Mr. Ott’s murdered corpse lies under the globe’s pedestal in the garden. Tormented by guilt because of her dreadful deeds, Lady drops the gazing globe, which smashes to pieces. She merely utters, “Make ‘Eternity’ from those if you will” (*L*, 259). She allows the shattered pieces of glass, either from the mirrors in her story or now from her beloved gazing globe to validate her broken life. As Woody explains, the world seemed over for Lady where “the past, the present, and the future [have] exploded” (*L*, 259) and have vanished. Woody has long perceived Lady as his own Snow Queen, though she is not “cold as ice, but warm and comforting” (*L*, 48). He eventually learns that the globe becomes a token that does not suggest the sordid and incongruous but promises balance, form, and truth. That Tryon has a gazing globe remain at the novel’s end attests to his message that despite a narrative about a world that is sad, intolerant, and duplicitous, a world can be imagined where tolerance, love, and forgiveness exist.

At one point Lady tells Woody, “We all wear other faces, it’s true” (*L*, 173) and that “people are seldom really who they appear to be” (*L*, 173). She continues, “It’s not easy to pretend . . . For a lifetime. It is a wearisome burden, pretending. Playing a game, acting a part—for others, not yourself. To make it easier for them, not you. It was all a masquerade” (*L*, 231). So, Lady’s life, painful for her to endure and known only to Woody and then to the reader, passes as unknown. That Woody and readers see her life as a charade does not cheapen her life but brings attention to the reasons for it having had to be the grandest duplicity of the novel. Because of Lady’s burdensome, hidden life, truths are revealed and certain behaviors are encouraged by her creator. Lady Harleigh and Tryon, both in their separate stories, must eventually tell the truth.

What then are the truths that all this dark duplicity encourages? Besides a mystery, Tryon’s work affords insights as to the conduct of life that seem to be best heard in the words of Lady Harleigh. Adelaide’s values of understanding, compassion, nonjudgment, tolerance, kindness, self-affirmation, and, to a degree, forgiveness become the lessons that Woody eventually realizes and adopts. Tryon hopes his narrative encourages these values. Yet, all the ability to gain them depends on one’s admittance to truth. The reader has seen these values and attributes ignored and neglected by several characters in the novel. These truths that have been illustrated throughout the novel make Woody and the reader acknowledge what should be the correct behavior of man towards others.

In order to reach truth, especially about the self, one must acknowledge the self and, if necessary, confess, which would include an acknowledgment about the self of the confessor. This is the case for Lady Harleigh to Woody, her pal, and to the priest at her deathbed at the end of the narrative. Gross correctly comments that “the weight of the past is an oppressive force in

the Gothic narrative” (Gross, 29). Lady Harleigh subtextually is Thomas Tryon confessing to his reading audience. It is not that homosexuality is wrong. Tryon wishes for us to know that he, because of the time, had to remain silent about his self and had to exercise dissimulation. As to his life and the world in *Lady*, Tryon emphasizes that the times were wrong in its intolerance towards difference and that the individual himself, difficult as it may have been, must be truthful to his or her self. Only in this fashion is self-actualization possible.

Tryon had been paranoid for most of his later years about his sexual orientation, especially his dalliance with porn superstar Casey Donovan.<sup>5</sup> During their few years together Tryon tried desperately to hide the friendship even when Donovan and he were publicly noticed. Before their relationship Tryon had married and had divorced a few years later. That his homosexuality gradually revealed itself to him and that his eventual acknowledgement of it lead to deception is highly probable. His falseness by living a double life becomes his confession, especially between the lines of *Lady*, and in his other writings. To some his stories were and can be simply read as Gothic mysteries and adventure narratives. Yet, that Tryon deals with the other, the different, the outcast, the homoerotic, and the confessor leads one to believe that besides sharing an entertaining story, Tryon outs himself in his fiction.

Reading *Lady* between the lines allows the reader to catch a further glimpse of Tryon, the man, first as a boy from Wethersfield, Connecticut, then as the renowned Hollywood star in the film “The Cardinal,” and finally as the undervalued writer of many books at the end of the twentieth century. As that boy living in rural Connecticut, he can be assumed to be like any other product of the time. As that innocent lad dressed in a top hat who pretends to be a magician, Tryon, the writer years later, has, as all magicians do, tricks up his sleeve and deceptions eventually to confess. Despite his early innocence and adherence to convention,

Tryon offers in *Lady*, as he does in *The Other* and *Harvest Home*, a personal narrative relevant to himself.

According to Brian Mustanski, Ph.D. in an article titled “Why Do Young Gay Men Try to Be the Best,”

the best little boy in the world aptly describes so many young gay and bisexual men. The phrase derives from the eponymous novel published in 1973 by Andrew Tobias, a classic coming out narrative, in which the author recounts his efforts to overcompensate for and evade detection of his nascent sexual orientation by excelling at seemingly everything. Since the publication of Tobias' memoir, numerous gay authors, therapists, and public figures have harnessed the best little boy in the world theme to describe their own formative experiences of presenting an infallible facade to guard the personal secret of their sexual orientation.<sup>6</sup>

Although Tryon has Woody describe his younger, spoiled brother Kerney with this expression, it nevertheless is noteworthy to observe that the phrase is used by Tryon in *Lady*.

An unconventional sexual relationship, though not rare, is a strong hint in the novel that effectively underscores and counters the intolerance of Pequot's Landing. Tryon introduces two women who are implied to be lovers. Gert Flagher and Miss Berry are partners or “lady companions” (*L*, 23) in a Boston marriage sense. While Miss Berry dons “voluminous skirts whose hemlines far exceeded the dictates of either modesty or fashion” (*L*, 23) Gertrude Flagher “favored tailor suits of seat-sprung tweed. She chopped her salt-and-pepper hair off at the ears and squeaked around in heavy brogans” (*L*, 23). These women represent lesbianism in Pequot Landing not only in appearance, but also through actions. Gert strongly stands up for Lady Harleigh and proves to be as unconservative as possible. As others of the community want Lady



to drop out of the Pilgrim Club of Pequot Landing because of her shameful ways, “Oddly, it was Gert Flagher who led the ‘for’, stating in her loudest tones that what people chose to do was their own damn business and she wished other people would mind theirs” (*L*, 194). It appears odd to the narrator that Gert would want Lady out of this prestigious group of women, but the implication is that Gert thinks Lady far better than the intolerant, hypocritical, elitist group. Later, Miss Berry listens alongside Woody to valid reasons voiced by Woody’s sister, Ag, that he should be more tolerant of Lady Harleigh himself as he wrestles with his discovery of her dissimulation all these years. Miss Berry silently agrees. Gert and Miss Berry, potential outcasts of Pequot’s Landing, have much in common with how Jessie, Lady Harleigh, and Woody find themselves in the novel. Outspoken, courageous, and unconventional, these lesbians are counter to their community but represent values and principles that Tryon holds dear.

Another reference Tryon makes to homosexuality is Woody’s infatuation with Blue Ferguson. If a homosexual feeling does not exist from Woody towards Blue, Tryon creates a homoerotic one between them. The eroticism first appears in Woody’s perception towards Blue as an older boy with whom he becomes undeniably infatuated. Though Woody becomes increasingly spellbound by Lady, Woody may have gender issues as well. Infatuated with Adelaide Harleigh, Woody sees Blue Ferguson speed “by in the Pilgrim Market truck” (*L*, 26-27), and it is implied that Woody’s attention immediately turns to Blue and “the spell was broken” (*L*, 27). Early in the narrative, Woody makes certain that he takes a photograph at the pageant of “Blue Ferguson in his feathers and war paint” (*L*, 67). Later, Woody compares Blue and Jesse as his heroes even “if for different reasons” (*L*, 75). He never clarifies his reasoning. He continues, “I have said that Blue Ferguson was our hero, but I think he was more than that, a kind of demi-deity” (*L*, 85). One night at an outing on Hermitage Island after the fire dwindles,

Woody while falling asleep under the stars reflects on Blue, his demigod, and his future and possible departure from the “one horsepowered town” of Pequot Landing being the “hundred-horsepowered boy” (*L*, 94) that Blue is. A preoccupation with a male figure by a younger male is not unusual. Nevertheless, the preoccupation intensifies later when Woody spots Blue naked, as he escapes from his sexual partner in Mrs. Pierson’s burning house. Tryon includes this fascination, this idolatry, this homoeroticism between Woody and Blue because it is part of a youngster’s growth and an implication that Woody—representing Tryon himself in part—may very well have had, despite his marriage later to Teresa Marini, homosexual leanings. Bronski explains “the literary tradition depicting male friendship was so strong, gay writers had no trouble using the genre to mask their real concerns.”<sup>7</sup> Such writing displays “the desire for and inclination towards the beautiful, the idealization of male friendship, and the transcendence of personal feelings and experiences over social expectations” (Bronski, 33).

The homosexual is paradoxically attracted to beautiful and emotional women, especially of aristocratic and movie star status (Bronski, 95). Woody dresses in women’s clothes, specifically Adelaide Harleigh’s, twice. First, Lady lends Woody “half her coat to wrap in” (*L*, 27) one day as they come in from the cold. A bit later Lady rescues Woody after he has fallen through the ice while skating. Lady “pull[s] off [his] soaking windbreaker, substituted her fur jacket, [and] wrapped [his] head in her scarf” (*L*, 41). In these situations, where he dons women’s apparel, Woody is described as happy and “in Heaven” (*L*, 27). Certainly, the issue of gender and one’s sexual preference, given the time, along with other differences, including blackness and Catholicism, becomes prominent here and counter the mainstream, which are not tolerated in the world of this novel.

Other elements in the novel that may be seen as hints on the issue of homosexuality include Lady's gift to Woody of A. E. Housman's best-known work *A Shropshire Lad*, is a collection of poems homoerotic in flavor. Housman, a nineteenth century English poet and Latin scholar, proves a meaningful choice for Tryon. The work contains "sixty-three short lyrics, celebrating youth, loss, and early death."<sup>8</sup> This relates, of course, to Woody's friendship with Blue. According to Charles McGrath in his review of Peter Parker's book *Housman Country: Into the Heart of England*, "More than half of 'A Shropshire Lad' was written during a charged five-month period in 1895, when Housman seems to have been missing Moses Jackson acutely" (McGrath, 65). He had been Housman's roommate at Oxford where the poet "had become emotionally undone over an unrequited yearning for . . . the athletic and good-looking" fellow (McGrath, 65). Both Oscar Wilde and E. M. Forster "detected a note of suppressed homosexual desire" (McGrath, 65) in *A Shropshire Lad*, as one does in Tryon's treatment between Blue and Woody. Moreover, Housman's understanding of poetry "was 'to transfuse emotion—not to transmit thought'; it was to make your throat clench and your hair stand on end" (McGrath, 66). This may not be exactly the same effect of Tryon's words, but Woody's infatuation, subsequent loss, and the achievement of nostalgia are similar.

Housman's poems are given to Woody on the day that Blue returns home from war in a coffin. Lady takes it upon herself to mark a particular poem that Woody is to recognize and then decides to read it to him.

Into my heart an air that kills  
From yon far country blows;  
What are those blue remembered hills,  
What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,  
I see it shining plain,  
The happy highways where I went  
And cannot come again.

(A.E. Houseman "Into My Heart an Air that Kills")

Lady Harleigh reads "the perfect poem for the perfect time" (*L*, 219). It eulogizes Blue thus emphasizing Woody's love for the dead soldier. It distinguishes between discontent, which Woody as a youth thinks his landscape is, rather than the land of lost content that he loses with the loss of Blue Ferguson. And might this land of lost content be the idyllic male bond Tryon longed for regarding another male. Such a bond though is sadly lost and only realized and saved on the pages of Tryon's fiction.

*Lady* takes place at a time when a paucity of sexual discussions and sexual information exists. In the 1930s and throughout the 1950s, conversations and helpful advice towards sexual matters, especially any that might have dealt with life choices including the gay lifestyle, were nonexistent. Take, for example, Lady Harleigh's own experience of pregnancy. Not only does the experience stress the patriarchy of the times and the ruthlessness of the Harleighs themselves, but it also implies Lady's ignorance of feminine matters. Miss Berry reminisces to Woody near the end of the novel,

They got married in a hurry. Went to Mexico on their honeymoon. When they got there, Edward informs Lady that she's pregnant. *Edward*, mind you. She'd been examined by that terrible Dr. Forbes, he was the Harleighs' doctor, and he didn't bother to inform Lady, or even her mother, but told Mr. Harleigh instead. Now, there's a nice, small-town

girl who doesn't know a lot about these matters, her mother's never told her about much, and here she is on her honeymoon, and she's already going to have a baby. (*L*, 270)

Sexuality then is by no means a topic of discussion but rather an element of reality conveniently ignored to the disadvantage of people like Lady and, possibly, Woody. Given the age during which Tryon lived, his probable lack of knowledge in this area was understandable and also disadvantageous. Little was discussed or shared about sexuality. Remember that both instances of Woody's disillusionment regarding duplicitous acts that lead to his realizations and maturation are about sex. First, Blue proves no saintlier than others as he hopped in bed with a married woman. This sexual transgression, especially in light of Woody's subconscious homoerotic feelings about Blue, taints the young boy's regard for his hero. And the fact that Lady Harleigh, his second infatuation, lives in considered sin with a black lover tarnishes Woody's idealistic conception of the world around him. As the gazing globe shatters, so too does Woody's perception of a seemingly whole, harmonious world. Initially believing that both these individuals are above wrong, Woody's values are questioned. Then he resorts to some behaviors and mindsets of others around him. He frowns on Blue and totally abhors his Snow Queen for a time, until he learns forgiveness.

George Eliot astutely claimed that our purpose here on earth is simply to be kind to one another. No other objective overshadows this one. Earlier Lady tells Woody, "What is more wise than to be kind? And what is more kind than to understand?" (*L*, 148). Kindness is achieved through tolerance which *Lady* most assuredly asserts. Tolerance occurs especially when one becomes humbled and when, as Lady comments, "We learn not through happiness but through suffering" (*L*, 275). Both Lady and Woody witness adversity. These lessons lead to the most difficult of lessons, forgiveness. In *Lady* all of this happens to both Lady Harleigh and

Woody. Lady needs forgiveness from her parish priest for the murder of both her cruel husband and Otis Ott. A strict Catholic, Lady is guilt-ridden because of her sinfulness. Given her circumstance, she also needs to forgive herself for these acts as well as the dissimulation she exercised in order to live a somewhat meaningful and loving life. Woody realizes that Blue's shenanigans with the married housewife prove less grave than Woody had previously thought. He learns to forgive Lady Harleigh for shattering his ideal of her, as he does Blue. Both Lady and Woody learn to forgive and to accept life's unavoidable ambiguities.

If Woody represents Tryon himself, then Woody's involvement with sexuality should be seen in part as Tryon's involvement with sexuality also. Tryon, first getting married but then soon divorcing, perhaps did not know much about life's possibilities. A product of the middle of the twentieth century, he suffered because of history's hand in making some life choices unavailable to him. Or at least, such choices needed a disguise to be actualized. Hence, Tryon's emphases on kindness, tolerance, and forgiveness.

Tryon is a mixture of both Woody and Lady. With the young boy becoming a man and noticing the grayness of life, Woody is Tryon. With Lady Harleigh living a double life and having to confess so much of her deceptions at its end is Tryon revealing certain features of his self. Lines from the poem "An Epitaph" by Walter de la Mare appear at the very beginning of *Lady*. "Here lies a most beautiful Lady, / Light of step and heart was she" (*L*, frontispiece). Not only can these lines be associated with Lady Harleigh but also may further connect with Woody. Childhood pervades de la Mare's writing. So too does it appear in *The Other* and *Lady*. Each part or section of *Lady* is entitled either "Old Songs," "New Songs," "Sad Songs," "Last Songs," or "Recollected Songs." They furnish structure in the portrayal of Woody while he journeys towards truth. Both de la Mare and Tryon see the phases of life, especially those of children, as

songs. Woody has been a child for most of the novel. It has been said that de la Mare described “childhood as a time of intuition, deep emotion, and closeness to spiritual truth.”<sup>9</sup> Woody’s bildungsroman requires for him to become aware of certain truths in life in order to achieve maturity. He is a protagonist who has been intuitive, emotional, observant, and increasingly aware of truths of both the soul and the heart. Singled out in the novel, Woody learns to value himself as well as those who may be different and outside the social construct of Pequot’s Landing. *Songs of Childhood* was de la Mare’s first published work. And he has been acknowledged as an imaginative writer who deals with supernaturalism and “the social and spiritual outsider” (Poetry Foundation, 2017). Tryon concludes *Lady* with his main character filled with wisdom gathered during childhood through his encounter with Lady Harleigh, Jesse, and others. Furthermore, nostalgia is best achieved by means of song. And Woody as narrator—much like the child speakers in de la Mare’s writings—ultimately sings his own song in *Lady*. Tryon favors de la Mare in the opening of his novel because of this similarity.

Tryon, like Woody, joins the Navy from 1943 until 1946 and becomes connected to the Great Lakes Naval Base. Tryon has his ashes scattered at sea.<sup>10</sup> Woody, the mature narrator, will make a similar request. However, it is interesting that Woody nostalgically also wishes to rest in the cemetery at Pequot’s Landing to be near Lady. Here then is the pull, of Woody’s as well as of Tryon’s loyalty, to their beloved background despite their need to be their own persons. In Tryon’s case, he was a person not really accepted by either the times during which he lived or even perhaps by those around him. Yet his love for his hometown of Wethersfield, as evidenced in his fiction, is never in doubt.

The pull that has both Woody and Tryon in its grasp effectively achieves the element of nostalgia that is so overpowering in the novel. Webster defines nostalgia as “the state of being

homesick” and “a wistful or excessively sentimental sometimes abnormal yearning for return to or of some past period or irrevocable condition” (*Webster’s Ninth*). Adding to Webster’s understanding is that nostalgia provokes sincere tears over something regretfully lost yet of something else happily gained. Tryon’s ability to achieve nostalgia is most apparent in the last two sections of *Lady* entitled “Last Songs” and “Recollected Songs.”

For example, upon Woody’s return to Pequot’s Landing as a young man, he sits in the kitchen and thinks

It was pleasant having a quiet moment, and it seemed to me, as we sat in the pool of light spreading over the old table, that the shadowy forms of Jesse and Elthea Griffin hovered somewhere around the edges, she coming from the pantry with a loaf of fresh-baked bread, he from the cellar in his slippers. It spoke to me of the years that had gone, and I thought I could sit there forever, content never to leave that friendly old room. (*L*, 244-245)

Then, as WWII ends and the community celebrates the Japanese surrender, Woody says, “I wished Lew could have been there to see it. And Blue Ferguson” (*L*, 254). The longing for the past, the narrative’s past with which the reader too has become so familiar, escapes the accusation of sentimentality and provokes heartfelt emotion. Later, as Woody lets Lady Harleigh sleep during his visit, he says

While she dozed, I wandered to the back window and looked out on the flowering garden, and thought of other times. I felt a bitter sorrow then, as ghosts from the past nudged me. I seemed to see myself on the carriage-house roof, with Lew below, watching as I flew into the cucumber frame. I saw Lady seated on the terrace wall while the boat parade went by. I saw us digging out the septic tank. Saw Dora spying from the



loft window; saw myself in the wind, rescuing the gazing-globe. Saw Blue Ferguson's market truck parked at Mrs. Pierson's kitchen door. Saw Lady and Jesse making their spring garden. I thought with amusement how they had fooled us all, she playing the Merry Widow while they lived up here as man and wife. Absently, I ran the tips of my fingers along my chin: I needed a shave. How was that possible? I was still a boy, wasn't I? I hadn't been away, had I? Lew was still alive. Blue was driving for the Pilgrim Market, Jesse and Elthea were downstairs. . . . I raised my glass to absent friends. (*L*, 255-256)

The mature Woody recollects, appreciates, and yearns to return to the irrecoverable past. At the very end of his story he remembers that Miss Berry had correctly told him, "It's good when one feels the affections of the past. They are among the lasting things—they will never leave us" (*L*, 278). Earlier Lady tells Woody "Be glad you can suffer, be glad you can feel. It's not such a bad thing, do you think, to be made to feel?" (*L*, 111). Woody asserts, "The years seemed to gather me up and draw me backward" (*L*, 267). Part of his maturation is his understanding that such a journey is of the mind and temporary. In "Recollected Songs" Woody looks around and senses "the cunning hand of Time at work. It was changed, all changed" (*L*, 266). Now in Pequot's Landing life there is "Strange, all strange" and "Different, all different" (*L*, 266). Even the Great Elm has vanished. But the gazing-globe has been replaced and new trees replace the old. And it is this replacement that allows for continuity— "perhaps 'even 'Eternity'" (*L*, 276) best symbolized by the new gazing-globe. So, after this story of hominess, intolerance, murder, dissimulation, and friendship, a hopeful attempt at envisioning life as a unified sphere continues.

Both *The Other* and *Harvest Home* have connections with the fictional Pequot Landing. McClurg points out that the narrator in *The Other* says, “Pequot Landing—I’m sure you know what that’s like, a typical Connecticut river town, small, unpretentious, elderly. Splendid elms forming shady aisles over the streets—before the Dutch Blight, this was—spacious, well-kept lawns, promising in June, scorched by September, house of wood or brick or stucco, sometimes all three” (*TO*, 16). So too, Cornwall Coombe is a similar bucolic town in Connecticut. Nonetheless, according to McClurg, it was still “New England [that] provided the chills in *Harvest Home*.”<sup>11</sup>

McClurg continues that the “Tryons had been among the town’s first settlers in the early 17th century. Wethersfield coursed irrevocably through his veins” (McClurg, 3). Yet, to some, Tryon was close to his hometown of Wethersfield. According to others, however, he purposefully distanced himself from it as he aged. McClurg asserts, “As a writer, Thomas Tryon shared Thomas Wolfe’s elegiac ambivalent bond with his hometown, leaving—only to return, obsessively, in his imagination” (McClurg, 10). And Tryon returns novel and novel again to Wethersfield, Connecticut. The village green and Great Elm of *Lady* surely mirror Wethersfield. Both landmarks become prominent in Tryon’s *Lady* and give witness to Tryon’s attraction to his hometown.

However, according to Doug Alves, a former director of the Wethersfield Historical Society, Tryon “felt unappreciated in Wethersfield” (McClurg, 17). Alves comments that Tryon “told me Wethersfield was a hick town. He couldn’t wait to get out” (McClurg, 12). At the time of Tryon’s death, Christopher White from *Wethersfield Post* records Alves as reflecting “It’s a shame he wasn’t appreciated more by the town. I think he deserved a lot more praise in town than he got. I think he kind of felt that he was not that appreciated.”<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, according to

White, Tryon came to speak to one of Emojean Weaver's English classes at Wethersfield High School in the early eighties and donated copies of *The Other*. Weaver found Tryon "very serious about his writing." Though taught in many schools around the nation, *The Other* was not in the Wethersfield curriculum. Tryon explained to Weaver his hesitancy about returning to his hometown. He explained that he didn't want to face the change that had taken place in his hometown (White, 3). Perhaps that he thought his self and his lifestyle did not align with his hometown was a more accurate reason. Several of his later novels also focus on Pequot's Landing. McClurg correctly surmises "Maybe he couldn't go home again, but home became his literary legacy" (McClurg, 16).

*Lady* can be considered as a bildungsroman. Certainly, Woody encounters conflict yet matures and becomes the hero of his own story, much like David Copperfield. From an innocence of youth to a painful disillusionment about his fellowmen, Woody matures nevertheless into a caring, appreciative, understanding young man. Tryon clearly steers away from the most Gothic feature of having "the education of a young man," as Gross puts it, lead a protagonist to an "education into despair" (Gross, 63). Rather, Woody, as *Lady* has recommended many times, realizes and accepts difference and otherness. He does this more easily with Blue Ferguson than with Lady. Yet, that he eventually sees and tolerates others' ways besides his own is Tryon asserting the need for his readers to do the same; for his contemporaries to do similarly. In *Lady* Tryon strongly encourages man to tolerate the other and difference. At the very end of the novel Woody says, "No one cares much now who are lovers, if they are black and white, mismatched by color, sex, age, or whatever one may miss by" (*L*, 268). The question remains whether Tryon believes this to be the case, as Woody may state in his fictional story? Tryon, Woody's creator, still observes an inequality, especially between a man and another man,

which forces him to continue to address the issue in his writings. In all three of the novels so far examined, Tryon quietly but confidently attempts to persuade man to accept another's difference in sexual orientation.

By stressing falsehood in his novels, Tryon does not favor deception and indeed does not condone self-delusion. Perhaps in Lady's case, although she may live a life with Jesse, her falsity was the sole alternative. But, truth about the self is of paramount importance to Tryon, even if it comes with the price of having to confess such masquerades. Tryon, as both Lady Harleigh and as Woody, ends with speaking the truth about Lady in that she has been false and that Woody has matured in his ways of thinking, respectively. Tryon then encourages self-actualization, which of course, Lady has been unable to do publicly, and Woody continues to do during his life. For Tom Tryon his wish to self-actualize seems to come more in the form of fiction than it did in his public life. When stressing the joyfulness of children, Lady instructs Woody "To watch them grow, and become, to find the person they really are, that's a wonderful thing" (*L*, 113). One cannot help but recall an earlier talk between these two when Lady, after inquiring about his brothers, asks Woody to speak about himself. He replies, "I had never given thought to what sort of person I was" (*L*, 31). Though Woody does marry Teresa and lives a heterosexual life at the novel's end, cannot one imagine this comment voiced by Tryon himself that strongly implies his repressed feelings, his desire to love, and his need to self-actualize? In fact, Jocelyn McClurg recalls Tryon writing in the 1984 book by Dennis Wholey, *The Courage to Change: Personal Conversations About Alcoholism with Dennis Wholey*, "I just couldn't seem to catch on to who I was" (McClurg, 14). That he lived a discreet, often unhappy life as a gay man, is more than plausible.

Tryon's homosexuality is not news. He has died, his books are difficult to locate, and he has been forgotten by many. That he wrote his work so well as not only to tell a story but also to reveal his authentic self proves him a commendable craftsman. Noticeable characteristics of Tryon's craftsmanship include his ability to achieve suspense, effective detail and description, the employment of literary allusions, plausible dialogue, and a sincere nostalgic voice. These features have been exemplified herein. That his work offers a meaningful message cannot be disproven.

Ultimately Tryon not only follows the Gothic tradition, but he also may be understood again as yet another confessional writer in a long list of earlier Americans. Similar to those writers who must have lived in sixteenth century Wethersfield, Tryon, though in the twentieth century, confesses his life through his writing. To confess primarily means to acknowledge one's fault or sin. Tryon cannot be said to do this in fact. This was not Tryon's intent. Confess can also mean to make known or to admit to something. Tryon can be said to do this. In his work thus far, namely *The Other*, *Harvest Home*, and *Lady*, he subtextually discloses, declares, and owns a self and a life that needed acknowledgement and actualization, if not publicly, then through his fiction.

We next move from the rural landscapes of the past three novels to the environs of Hollywood, California, where Tryon, though in more contemporary times, continues to deal with inevitable dissimulation and his continued anxious need for self- actualization.

Photo to Come

## Notes

### Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Tryon, *Lady* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 3; hereafter cited in the text as *L*.

<sup>2</sup>Hans Christian Andersen, *The Snow Queen* (New York: Purple Bear Books, 2006).

<sup>3</sup>Louis S. Gross, *Redefining the American Gothic from Wieland to Day of the Dead*, 24 (see Introduction, n. 7).

<sup>4</sup>Neil Miller, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present*, 262 (see chap.1, n.10).

<sup>5</sup>Roger Edmonson, *Boy in the Sand Casey Donovan All-American Sex Star* (New York: Alyson Books), 132-153; hereafter cited in the text as Edmonson.

<sup>6</sup>Brian Mustanski, Ph.D., “Why Do Young Gay Men Try To Be the Best?” *Psychology Today*, April 17, 2013, <http://www.psychologytoday.com>

<sup>7</sup>Michael Bronski, *Culture Clash*, 53 (see chap. 1, n.6).

<sup>8</sup>Charles McGrath, “The Land of Lost Content,” *The New Yorker*, June 26, 2017, 63-66; hereafter cited in the text as McGrath.

<sup>9</sup>Walter de la Mare, *Poetry Foundation*, <http://poetryfoundation.org>; hereafter cited in the text as *Poetry Foundation*.

<sup>10</sup>Ty Tryon, Interview (see Introduction, n.1).

<sup>11</sup>Jocelyn McClurg, “A Life in Two Acts: Of Tom and Thomas Tryon,” 11 (see chap. 1, n. 4).

<sup>12</sup>Christopher White, “Native Author, Actor Thomas Tryon Dies,” *Wethersfield Post*, September 13, 1991; hereafter cited in the text as White.

## Chapter Four

### *Crowned Heads*

#### “Fedora”

At the beginning of *Crowned Heads* Tryon cites Shakespeare’s words spoken by Henry IV, “Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.”<sup>1</sup> Tryon not only alludes to the tribulations of the English monarch, but he also foreshadows the woes of each of the main characters in the four novellas that comprise *Crowned Heads*. Whether about Fedora, Lorna, Bobbitt, or Willie, this volume of fiction, possibly spiced with autobiographical implications, turns from the Gothic of *The Other* and *Harvest Home*, along with the quasi Gothic of *Lady*, to a more contemporary and glittering time in Hollywood, California. Yet this work, like those before it, remains centered on issues previously addressed: disguise, imprisonment, escape, and the self. It may be concluded also that in all of his first four works, Tryon strongly asserts that one’s self needs to be actualized rather than hampered or life becomes an inevitable dissimulation—a dissimulation that proves destructive. Such falsehood seems pervasive and is caused by forces inside and outside the selves of his characters and, also implied through subtexts, of himself.

“Kirkus Review” summarizes *Crowned Heads* as

the distinctive anthropology of Hollywood—the Hollywood which actor Tryon knew as well as anybody before it became extinct . . . . There’s a gratifying intimacy with great names dropped with such ease, and there’s sure to be less gratifying speculation as to whether any of the four characters here are vaguely related to anybody that was somebody when . . . . Fedora who lasted from the silent through decades of talkies, her whole life a mask as unlined as her incomparable face . . . Lorna Doone, who just went



on crumbling through the years, looking for one man after another behind sunglasses, poor Bobbitt once known as Robin Ransome and now thinking of himself as Mr. Thingamabob, the child star who went on to make up selves and roles for the Peter Pan . . . inside him . . . [and finally] Willie . . . [who] created . . . a monstrous masterpiece of human fraud and veneration and desecration. . . . Judged for what [the novel] is dust to dust, stardust to stardust, *Crowned Heads* is sovereign entertainment.”<sup>2</sup>

These works contain examinations and illustrations by Tryon on the important self. As with the previous novels, Tryon does more than tell a good story. In each of his narratives he also comments about human behavior, the human condition, and the significance of the self.

Fedora is an elderly stateswoman of Hollywood who, after she dies, begs understanding by the media. A mysterious figure “Fedora was queen,” “crowned from the court of Hollywood,” and “had outshone all and outlived most” (*CH*, 3). But, as characters would have it—especially movie stars—their selves given to the public were different from the selves held in private. Through a conversation between the newspaperman, Barry Detweiller, and a television producer, Marion Walker, the story of the silent movie star turned recluse comprises “Fedora.”

At the beginning of Barry’s story about Fedora, he recounts to Marion that Fedora had quoted to him from Colette, “Nothing provides as much assurance as a mask” (*CH*, 9). Fedora then, like so many of Tryon’s characters prior to *Crowned Heads*, represents another figure whose self is hidden. Barry gradually reveals the mystery of a self behind the mask, the one that is not in the public eye or on celluloid.

According to Barry, Fedora was “fiction from start to finish” (*CH*, 13). She was, like the Mona Lisa, “A perfect work of art” (*CH*, 23) though no one ever really knew her. Barry continues, “It took years to create the public figure, the mythical image—the legend. The ‘salad

dressing.’ She allowed it; that was probably her mistake. She was only the counterpart, the shadow. And it was the shadow that fled the press, fled people, fled the world” (*CH*, 25). Preoccupied with her looks, Fedora wanted this to be the only self to which the public was privy. Thus, “she spent her life sneaking in and out” (*CH*, 27). For a time she became a recluse, and everyone wondered if she was finished with filmmaking. Then again, she appeared and disappeared making her audience crave her while also curious about her private matters. She took up residence with an old friend, the Countess Sobryanski in Greece.

Barry Detweiller makes it his business to find out about Fedora’s secluded life behind the walls of the Countess’s villa. And it becomes the unraveling of Fedora’s story as actress turned recluse where Tryon not only makes assertions on each of the topics previously mentioned, but also further emphasizes his own self.

The silent screen actress struggles between her public and her private life. Hailed as the star of stars, Fedora initially enjoys the popularity but soon tires of the notoriety. Thus, she seeks privacy. This urge leads her to escape the public’s eye and consequently makes her deceive her fans. She strives and succeeds, for a time, to mask her identity. She leaves the glamour of Hollywood and abandons the world of stardom. This escape becomes “Fedora’s . . . great disappearing act of the century” (*CH*, 27). Rumors about her whereabouts including her possible entrance into the religious life swarm all the while she leaves and then returns to make occasional movies. Finally she leaves America, never to return.

With the need to escape comes disguise. Barry’s narrative continues to explain that Fedora masks herself as the Countess Sobryanski, who has died, and dupes both Barry and others for a long time. Furthermore, Barry is dumbfounded when Fedora eventually explains to him that she has not only disguised herself as the Countess but also years earlier, by means of her

daughter Ophelie, allowed this daughter to play her roles in films. Fedora explains, “Ophelie-Fedora was my mask; she’s kept me hidden. I did well to stay that way. I have looked older and uglier longer than I ever looked young and beautiful” (*CH*, 73). Through deception Fedora captures youth and privacy.

Consequently, the narrative involves a character who enacts a double dissimulation. First, she poses as her friend, the Countess Sobryanki, and then her illegitimate daughter (by the Count) pretends to be her. Perhaps even a third disguise can be acknowledged if one considers that Fedora, years before, has undergone a medical procedure that impeded her aging. The great Hollywood star, Fedora, deceives others. Tryon writes a narrative where the feeling of imprisonment and need for escape, along with inevitable deception, predominates the human condition. “Fedora,” the novella, is a narration about the individual “playing the part of someone playing a part” (*CH*, 77). Fedora, similar to Lady Harleigh, “conspired in a stupendous masquerade” (*CH*, 78).

Tryon writes of the need to escape and to disappear through disguise—all contributing to a portrayal that underscores a definite lack of self-actualization. This lack is best understood by Fedora’s words at the end of her story. She confesses to Barry that she, as well as her daughter, Ophelie, failed to live the true self. Fedora asserts, “It is foolish to try to be something one is not; one must always be oneself in all things” (*CH*, 78). Because of this dissimulation on both Fedora’s part as well as her daughter’s, ill effects are enumerated and emphasized at the story’s end. Fedora becomes jealous of her daughter’s fame. “And then Ophelie herself [becomes] miserable. She discover[s] that she resent[s] forever playing the part of someone playing a part” (*CH*, 77). In the words of Barry, Ophelie wanted “to be herself, to be known as herself; she was neither Ophelie nor Fedora; she became no one” (*CH*, 77). Consequently, Ophelie begins to

drink, do drugs, and leads a difficult life because of the deception caused by her mother. Near the end Fedora admits that Ophelie's "existence had been such a disastrous replica of her own" (*CH*, 79). To Fedora, this masquerade was precipitated by her vanity that led her and her daughter to disaster. To mistake one's true self for what makeup, plastic surgery, or deception can do ultimately proves a dangerous falsehood that over time must be confessed. *A Virginia Quarterly Review* contributor contends [*Crowned Heads*] "may be the best 'Hollywood novel' you will find" and that "Tryon convincingly depicts what becoming a film star can do to a person."<sup>3</sup> It is this story of ill effects that Fedora asks her long-time fan Barry to narrate.

An actor in Hollywood caught up in the glitz of stardom much like the fictional Fedora, Tryon, himself, tires of the scene. He leaves Hollywood prematurely for the writer's desk. He now regards himself more as a writer. Webster Schott comments that Tryon in *Crowned Heads* "watches manners, introduces details, covers settings with a Peeping Tom passion. His stories ripple with plots and subplots."<sup>4</sup>

For example, notice Tryon's skills of observation and description in describing Hollywood's discovery of Fedora at the beginning of her story. His "name was Moe Roseman. When he met Fedora he was a two-bit shill in front of a burlesque theater in downtown Los Angeles. Sam Ueberroth, who later became Samuel L. Ueberroth, producer, was his sidekick, and with straw hats and snappy bow ties they hawked the charms of hula-skirted lovelies to be discovered inside. Moe was at that time seeing a good deal of Sam's sister, Viola" (*CH*, 13). Soon Sam and Viola encounter Maria Fedorovnya on the beach and hear her story. "She traveled third class on the Kronprinzessin Carolina, was terribly seasick, and arrived sans fur coat and sans roses, to be taken in tow by a member of AyanBee Pictures' office staff . . . She spoke hardly any English and the city terrified her" (*CH*, 14). Meeting a driver "in a second-

hand roadster” (*CH*, 14) who takes her to her hotel, she notices his “gray felt hat with a natty silk band, the brim turned rakishly up on one side and down on the other” (*CH*, 14). Finding out that it is called a fedora, she replies, “I like it” (*CH*, 14).

Tryon continues,

Enter Moe Roseman and Viola. His American tongue fumbled over the Russian syllables of her last name and he said, half kidding, that she ought to get another one. “I have,” she said. “What?” he asked. “Fedora,” she said. “Fedora’s a hat,” he said. “I know,” she said. “I want to be a high hat.”

So she had the name before she had anything else, except the face. Later, the “high hat” remark was misinterpreted as meaning that she wanted to be snooty, but at the time she meant only that she wanted to be important, famous. It did not take long, and both Moe Roseman and Viola Ueberroth were pivotally involved. (*CH*, 15)

Tryon shows his powers of observing both the behavior of a beginning starlet and that of the talent scout. His details of Fedora’s lonely journey to Los Angeles as well as the acquisition of her name are entertaining and plausible. And Tryon’s intertwining of Sam and Viola Ueberroth with the later stories of Bobbitt, Bea, and William Marsh will affirm Schott’s criticism regarding the plurality of plots.

Unlike Fedora, Tryon seems to have discovered in time that “one could not have art and heart together” (*CH*, 80) and thus opts to become a step closer to his real self by listening to his heart and abandoning the screen. As in the three novels that precede *Crowned Heads*, Tryon’s message is simply to be one’s self. This cry to discover and to actualize the self as Niles, Ned, and Lady Harleigh do in *The Other*, *Harvest Home*, and *Lady* respectively becomes once more reiterated in “Fedora.”

Paul Gray, a *Times* correspondent, comments “weaving fiction around such a monstrously self-mythologizing place as Hollywood is like gilding a plastic lily, . . . [but *Crowned Heads* proves] a loving reconstruction of a fading era.”<sup>5</sup> Hollywood is a place of make believe. Actors and actresses play selves other than their own. Barry’s favorite movie is *The Player Queen*, wherein Fedora plays “a woman playing a man playing a woman” (*CH*, 18). Tryon weakens as a man in the closet. Notice, like Ophelie, he plays “the part of someone playing a part” (*CH*, 77). This becomes tiring. Tryon for a long time plays the part of a heterosexual man playing the part of a cowboy, a military man, or a priest in Hollywood.

Tryon’s filmography is extensive. In 1956 he played in *The Scarlet Hour*, *Screaming Eagles*, and *Three Violent People*. He starred in *The Unholy Wife* in 1957 and *I Married a Monster From Outer Space* and Disney’s *Texas John Slaughter* in 1958. He played Mahlon in *The Story of Ruth* in 1960 and a year later landed a role in *Marines Let’s Go!* Nineteen sixty-two found him in *Moon Pilot*, *The Longest Day*, and the unfinished *Something’s Got To Give* with Marilyn Monroe. A starring role in Otto Preminger’s *The Cardinal* (1963) made Tryon’s name prominent in Hollywood. In 1965 he starred in *In Harm’s Way* and *The Glory Guys* while also in the 1960s he appeared in television shows including *The Virginian*, *The Big Valley*, and *Men in Shiloh*. In 1971 Tryon acted in the movie *The Narco Men*. However, it was Tryon’s involvement with *The Cardinal*, more specifically his entanglement with Otto Preminger, that pushed him into psychotherapy because of the pressure from Preminger along with his internal conflict regarding his private affairs and public image.<sup>6</sup>

Chapter Seven of Roger Edmonson’s *Boy in the Sand* comments extensively on Thomas Tryon and his affair with Cal. Tryon’s boyfriend at the time was Clive Clerk, an actor. Their relationship was put on hold in order that Tryon could pursue his new interest, Cal Culver. Clive

and Tryon, Edmonson assumes, had what is commonly known as an open relationship.<sup>7</sup> Clive later took the name of Clive Wilson, dedicated himself to art, and eventually became the literary executor of Tryon's work. He died in 2005. Supposedly, Wilson's sister is presently the literary executor of Tryon's work.<sup>8</sup>

Tryon and Cal began to become close during 1973 and became closer for several years. Their personalities and physical needs seemed to dovetail into a relationship that changed from a purely physical, financial agreement with Tom paying Cal, to a comfortable companionship. Tom seemed to like the sexual benefits of the relationship while Cal benefited from Tom's connections in the movie industry. Where the relationship became dark was when Tom, "a raging alcoholic" (Edmonson, 143) and possible drug user according to Ted Wilkins, did not match Cal's occasional glass of wine and no drugs standard. To many Tryon seemed to be conflicted not only in behavior but also in temperament, especially as the "extremely closeted" fellow he was. Edmonson writes, "As his career began to revive under the guise of best-selling author, he couldn't afford exposure" (Edmonson, 143). He continues, "Tryon, although still enamored, wasn't too happy with Cal's notoriety himself. He saw himself as a quiet, dignified man with a huge reputation to worry about—a reputation that in the '70s could have been irreparably damaged by public exposure of his sexual preferences" (Edmonson, 146). "Tryon was a willing participant in any exotic bedroom frolic Cal cared to devise. It was only in the much more public world beyond the bedroom door that [Tryon] began to feel increasingly uncomfortable" (Edmonson, 148). The author, and some of his fictional characters wrestle with the public versus private dilemma.

Tryon's discomfort led him to become increasingly paranoid and abusive to his newest partner, Cal. Rob Richards offers, "All the paranoia caused by living in the closet made the

drinking worse, and the drinking triggered the violence. Tom beat Cal. There would be horrible fights, and Cal would come to my place, all bruised and distraught” (Edmonson, 143). Though this was not a constant between the two lovers, it happened more than it probably should have. Yet, each needing the other for one reason or another, allowed this abusive relationship to continue for a solid five-year run as did Tryon’s desperate attempt to remain silent about his true, authentic self.

This necessary silence pertaining to sexual orientation was largely caused by the repressive 1940s and 1950s. The word, gay, was practically unused. Any talk of homosexuality was whispered. Indeed, Tryon was correct in remaining worried that such news about himself would do irreparable harm to his career, both as a movie star and as an author in the 1970s. “Friends and associates in the entertainment industry knew all about his preferences—his extensive reading public did not. They knew him as a military veteran and a divorced man—he was a two-year survivor of one of those ‘Hollywood marriages’ arranged by the studios to protect their gay leading men” (Edmonson, 150). He was married to Ann Noyes from 1956 to 1958. Yet, according to Edmonson, it was, in fact, Hollywood homophobia that caused the final breakup of Tryon’s and Cal’s relationship. “It was the Hollywood press corps that blew their friendship apart. Gays repress other gays in Hollywood. They are terrified that the trail will lead back to them, and they can’t allow that” (Edmonson, 152). Hinted at in Rona Barrett’s gossip column of the *Hollywood Reporter*, Tryon could not risk becoming associated with Cal. He flew back to New York as though his affair with Culver had never occurred (Edmonson, 152). Like Fedora, Lorna, Bobbitt, and Willie of *Crowned Heads*, which Cal helped Tom get to the press on time, the authentic self is betrayed and the truth suffers. Eventual truth telling is the solution that



Tryon proposes to ease this pain for his characters, especially for Fedora, Bobbitt, and Willie. By telling the truth or discovering it, these characters achieve solace at the end of their stories. Tryon finds solace in his writing, not by acting, but by writing, a way to actualize his true self as a homosexual man. Like Cavafy before him, he intentionally tells as much as he intentionally hides. This is nowhere more apparent than in his next story entitled "Lorna."

## “Lorna”

Tryon excels at creating strong, memorable women characters including Ada in *The Other*, Beth in *Harvest Home*, Lady Harleigh in *Lady*, and Fedora in *Crowned Heads*. That each woman proves an intriguing and controlling figure who deals with unhappiness, dissimulation, and eventual loss of her actual self is not coincidental from an author who himself experienced the same. Each woman connects to Tryon in various ways as does Lorna Doone in the next story of *Crowned Heads*.

Lorna is introduced as an actress of B movies, a shoplifter who is forced out of town, a hard drinker who accompanies this habit with sexual gusto, a mother, and a loner with suicidal tendencies. Certainly a reckless woman, Lorna proves to be attractive in her fraudulent way. Fraudulent, as are so many of Tryon’s characters, she connects with deceit in several instances. First, she registers at the hotel in Boca de Ora as Ms. Norah Dunne “though this was not her true identity” (*CH*, 88). Second, she conducts her life at the beach as a secret. Eventually she loses this incognito when she is recognized by tourists as the movie star she is. She, thinking especially of her past sexual escapades and the appearance she has feigned, admits to herself that she has been a fraud. Barry asserts at one point that indeed Lorna had “invented herself” (*CH*, 94).

Again, like so many of Tryon’s characters, Lorna’s deceit may stem from her need to escape, an urge that appears at different times. She gets married for the first time to escape her mother. She then escapes to Boca to avoid legalities after shoplifting and setting her home on fire. Once at Boca, she spends her time hidden away from others or fleeing from herself and her questionable behaviors. Near the end of her narrative she, before her death, is seen escaping from her rapists.

Lorna, too, is more than an iconic actress and a unique individual. She has had deep-seated problems from the onset of her story. Besides the initial shoplifting and fire earlier in the story, Lorna continues to steal, to spend money she does not have, to drink excessively, to be whorish, to set another fire, to be violent, to threaten suicide, and to be depressed when love eludes her.

Lorna's recklessness is best seen when, angered by Emiliano's inattention to her as opposed to his attention to his girlfriend Rosalia, she takes his spear gun and has "The shining steel spear hit him through the back of the thigh, exactly where she had aimed" (*CH*, 144). Falsely claiming that it was an accident she then hears that Emiliano "would never be able to dance again, would probably spend his life on crutches" (*CH*, 144). Escaping to a church after this act, Lorna sits "filing her nails with one of the emery boards and trie[s] to pray" (*CH*, 145). Soon, after committing this atrocity, she sets the church on fire and escapes on horseback once more to the jungle.

Although Tryon was not reckless, vindictive, or criminal like Lorna, according to reports Tryon did share some of this whimsy by drinking and becoming violent at times. "Wilkins put it quite bluntly. 'Cal didn't approve of either [excessive drinking or drugs], which was to his credit. He hated it when Tom drank. He didn't even want to be around him. Cal would occasionally drink a glass of wine, but he always claimed that even such a minor indulgence made him sick. I suspect it was the thought of what it did to Tom that made him sick'" (Edmonson, 142-3).

What is most interesting in "Lorna" is Tryon's preoccupation with the male figure despite his focus upon the female protagonist. Reminiscent of his descriptions of Ned in *Harvest Home* and Blue Ferguson in *Lady*, Tryon spends much time and energy capturing the physical beauty of

Emiliano in “Lorna.” This description can be seen as erotic. Tryon keenly describes the male form as he does with Ned and Blue. The narrator, presumably Barry, recounts

She saw Emiliano coming out of the water, brownly glistening, in his white trunks. She went onto the beach then, and sat under her umbrella. When he went by with his spear gun she said she’d never seen one, could she have a look? While he obliged her, pointing out and explaining its various mechanisms, she kept noticing little details about him, that his fingernails were trimmed and polished and that his hands were like a sculptor’s, or a pianist’s. She had friends who talked at lunch about checking a man’s thumbs as a clue to the size of more intimate parts, but she’d never believed it. She particularly liked his feet. She thought it remarkable how the foot was overlooked as a beautiful part of a man’s anatomy. (*CH*, 110)

The physical description centers upon parts of a man’s anatomy, namely manicured fingernails and penis that not everyone would focus upon. Yes, a woman could think of these parts but that Tryon concentrates on them is not only a correct, artistic awareness of what a female character might think or what a male narrator, Barry, might express. It contributes to the argument that Tryon is a male writer much intrigued by males. For example, Lorna, as a peeping Tom, snoops on Emiliano at one point and

by turning the wastebasket upside down she found she could stand on it and look in [to his cubicle]. What she saw was what she had wanted to see for a long time. The window looked onto a small ell of the room, across which was the bathroom; the door was open, and in the metal stall Emiliano was showering. Surely Lorna Doone could not be doing what she was doing, standing on the turned-over wastebasket and watching, but she was; she could not be experiencing the rush of emotions she felt, but she was; she could not be

thinking the things she thought, but she was. Somehow all of it was happening—not to her, of course, but watching, she thought of how she would describe the scene to Nan, who would certainly get a kick out of it, soapsuds and that brown flesh, the most sensual thing imaginable, that blue-black hair flat and straight over his eyes, water running from it in a sheet, down his body, and she thought you could really tell a lot about a person's type from the way they bathed, it was such a personal thing and the way he touched himself, so intimate . . . . (CH, 132-33)

Not only does Lorna enjoy Emiliano's body, but she also appears as a guiltless voyeur of what she says is a personal act. This is another example of effective writing by Tryon about woman's perspective about a man. In the next moment after the aforementioned passage, Tryon continues with the subject matter that is highly homoerotic. Lorna thinks to herself

Again she told herself she had no business doing what she was doing, but she could not help herself. She watched as he soaped himself, and his head came back, a smile playing on his lips, his eyes closed in the water, as he performed an act which caused her knees to go weak, and when he was done he opened his eyes and saw her watching. He did not try to hide himself, but stood looking up at her, his smile slowly fading, the water gurgling down the drain, and she thought she read an invitation in his look. She moved to get down, her head struck the window, the stick fell out, the frame dropped. She tumbled backward from the basket, barely managing to keep from falling. (CH, 133)

Though these are Lorna's thoughts spoken to herself, the reader realizes that it is Barry who is recounting this story of Emiliano to Marion, which has been written by Tryon. Certainly, this scene that describes a man masturbating is highly erotic. Masturbation has always been

strongly connected to the gay figure and same-sex homoeroticism. That it is also a topic in *The Other* regarding the male twins shows Tryon's homosexual interests in these passages.

Other males appear in the story, namely the four young studs who are tennis players who attract Lorna's attention. "They were all very good looking, with healthy, lean bodies and exuberant spirits" (*CH*, 111). But that Tryon spends time on Emiliano's masturbatory scene causes one to wonder about and to continue reading the author in more homoerotic terms. It seems that Tryon is not only having fun in creating the wayward character of Lorna, but he is also intentionally focusing on the physical and sexual nature of Emiliano as he has done with Niles, Holland, Ned, and Blue Ferguson. These characters may not be homosexuals (perhaps Holland is, and Niles wishes to be so) but that Tryon treats them stylistically the way he does adds a gay sensibility to his writing. Jordan Alexander Stein in his article "The Blithedale Romance's Queer Style," asserts "style is most often a calculated response that requires conscious knowledge to perform two gestures simultaneously: style both suggests without revealing and observes without concealing."<sup>9</sup> Here again, Tryon in the tradition of Cavafy hides but reveals at the same time.

Lorna's erratic behavior worsens as the narrative continues. Besides stealing articles from her proprietors, howling naked in the out of doors, having suicidal thoughts, and presumably setting her cabana on fire, her flight from her creditors eventually leads her to the jungle. Before she enters the deepest part of it, however, she is followed by a man named Avila from town and does not resist being raped by him. Her confused actions have her say, "She had lived through worse things, she told herself afterwards" (*CH*, 150) and "She blessed her hysterectomy and the doctor who had done it" (*CH*, 150). Her behavior and reaction in this scene is surprisingly

passive yet later followed by screams. Lorna notices twice that Avila exposes himself to her, which seems to become a somewhat enjoyable preoccupation with her.

Accompanying this preoccupation is the continued use of the priapic image. Priapus “in Greek mythology, was the ithyphallic god of reproductive power and fertility . . . and protector of shepherds, fishermen, and farmers. In later times he was regarded as the chief deity of lasciviousness and obscenity.”<sup>10</sup> *The Gay Karma Sutra* asserts “Throughout history the penis has been revered as an organ of great beauty and power. In the ancient world there were many stone phalluses which were objects of worship. There were many rituals in ancient religions in which men venerated the phallus and made love to each other, or virgin youths were deflowered, or male priests fellated the King.”<sup>11</sup>

Certain objects become phallic for Tryon in *The Other* and in *Harvest Home*, as does Emiliano’s spear gun. Obviously, emphasis has been placed upon the phallus with the spear gun’s long pointed and intriguing nature. Lorna’s interest in the phallus is without doubt as the final pages of this narrative give witness. The iconic priapic image of the snake also appears throughout the story, but it is in the final scenes when Lorna ventures into the jungle where the serpent becomes a major element that further emphasizes the sexuality of the narrative.

Once in the jungle Lorna understands that it is the holy place of the ancient Aztec god, Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent. He was revered as the patron saint of priests, the inventor of the calendar, and the god of writing and books. He was the protector of goldsmiths and other craftsmen. Identified with Venus he was also the symbol of death and resurrection.<sup>12</sup> This holy place is where Lorna ends. It is described much like Eden. According to Steven Moore in *The Novel: An Alternative History 1600-1800*, the Gothic may include lush descriptions of nature that

prove “psychic landscapes” as they do in the Gothic writer Radcliffe.<sup>13</sup> Here, Lorna’s obsessive behavior becomes acute.

It was like a garden, for all through the green were bright flowers and above them flew a little bird, bright with colors. It hung in the air with the green behind it, the way a hummingbird hangs, supporting itself by nearly invisible wings. There was a cluster of insects and the bird darted among them, pecking, picking, snatching. She laughed, holding out the bottle to it; the bird paid no attention. She drank again, and felt the liquor flowing through her, the sharp pain slowly ebbing to dullness, and she was overcome with lassitude, and it seemed that in this green and gold and flowered garden nothing mattered that she could think of. While she drank she undid her halter, and when she could get to her feet she took off the rest of her clothes. Why, she did not know, but she felt she wanted to be naked, and she put down the bottle and uncapped the suntan oil and began dribbling it along her arms and thighs and massaging it in. Her skin was a deep, golden brown, almost like a Mexican’s. She let the oil run sensuously over her shoulders and down her spine, and put her head back and let the oil drop there, rubbing it in on her forehead and cheeks. She ran the oil between her thighs, sliding her hand between them, trying to comfort the soreness. (CH, 154-155)

Here, Lorna witnesses the serpent becoming the deity, the Plumed Serpent of historical fame.

The movement caused the snake first to stir, then to slide back across the platform until it was under the bird. It waited there, coiled, its brilliance suddenly muted, brown like the stones it lay on, higher and higher, the little bird swooping brightly over its head, like a bright-colored crown of feathers, and then with sudden knowledge she realized who the snake was, Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent, and this was his temple, with the golden



step that led to nowhere. Divine snake, divine crown, snake and bird together, symbolizing that ancient deity, whose ruined house this was. (*CH*. 156)

The narrator continues “The god Quetzalcoatl lived in the green, where he hid in the shadows, and came forth to behold the sun, and the bird came to make his feathered crown, and through some mysterious accident of fate it had been allowed to her to discover the place and to witness this rarest of happenings” (*CH*, 156).

All this occurs while Lorna drinks ricea and anxiously gets naked to encounter the snake. Unafraid of it, Lorna invites the serpent to strike her—to kill her—perhaps to allow her the final escape in a long history of escapes. Consequently, the actress succumbs, is discovered, and has her remains flown back to Los Angeles at the narrative’s end.

Lorna’s fascination with the four-foot snake and Tryon’s description of Lorna’s encounter with it is a highly charged sexual passage. Lorna is not merely attacked by the serpent but also seems to be so overpowered by the reptile that it reads as a willing consummation between the woman and the snake.

The snake struck. It drew deep into its coil, the triangular head sharply angled, the neck engorged, the body thickened like a flexed muscle, then it erected itself with sudden swiftness and struck, sinking its curved fangs into the soft flesh of her forearm. *Eat*, she said, *eat me*. . . . He struck at her cheek, kissing her, once, twice, and she returned the embrace, kiss for kiss, her lips pressing against the warm, scaled flesh, crooning and sighing, not feeling the pain at all as she thrust its rigid form down, down to her abdomen and along her thighs, and at last to the place where she wanted him most. There she felt his kiss again, and she was crying with joy: she had captured the god, in her hands, with

her flesh, and with a wave of intolerable ecstasy she sensed that her female body was dominating that powerful thing, that thing she had worshiped all her life.” (*CH*, 157)

This event reads like an orgasm. “She lay back against the steps, relaxed, exhausted, feeling release and an incredible rush of warmth, smelling the heavy scent of flowers and the dimly remembered aroma of suntan oil, and her eyelids drooped languidly . . .” (*CH*, 158).

Found dead two days later, “she was not a pretty sight. Her flesh was mottled dark red and green, the colors of sinister jewels, with double holes everywhere. They had never heard of a *culebra de cascabel* [rattlesnake] striking so many times, an orgy of bites, her face, breasts, thighs, even the more intimate place.” (*CH*, 158)

Tryon speaks of his self through Niles and Ned, but also through his female characters. He reveals his self by means of Lady Harleigh and Fedora. Through these strong female characters, Tryon discloses that the authenticity of the self involves tribulations, dissimulation, tolerance, and resiliency. With Lorna, Tryon speaks pointedly of his sexuality—of his homosexuality—as he describes Lorna’s dealings with the Snake—the phallus—at the end of the narrative.

Barry describes the snake with phrases rendering it as “a scaled lance” (*CH*, 156), that it “became stick straight” (*CH*, 156), “it erected itself” (*CH*, 157), it has “that hard taut body” (*CH*, 157), it has “godly juices” (*CH*, 157), it has a “rigid form” (*CH*, 157), and “it [grew] weak and soft again” (*CH*, 158). That the reptile can be seen as a phallus makes the encounter between itself and the woman erotic. Remembering that Tryon could be identifying with his female character, the aforementioned scene becomes homoerotic and intimately autobiographical.

Lorna’s “willing encounter” may suggest Tryon’s proclivity. Lorna admits, “She had worshipped it all her life” (*CH*, 157). Might Tryon by means of Lorna be admitting to his

preoccupation with the phallus, this willing encounter with the phallus-like serpent, perhaps a wishful union between “the god and the mortal” (*CH*, 157) and perhaps the man and the man? Tryon consequently, like his character Lorna, understands this “engagement” (*CH*, 157) as a mastering of both himself and the god together—perhaps, in fact, the dominance of all men ultimately. Mary Poovey in Stein’s article claims style “represents ideology as it has been internalized and articulated by an individual” (Stein, 218). Tryon, who hides though reveals his homosexuality textually, has both internalized and articulated an ideology. The reader, as Lorna eyes Emiliano in his shower, reads Tryon’s prose “knowing at last what lay under [the] fabric” (*CH*, 133) of his fiction.

## “Bobbitt”

It is within the narrative of “Bobbitt”—the third selection of the four in *Crowned Heads*—where Tryon continues the thematic topic of disguise as he has done with the other aforementioned and entwined works. In this story the reader is introduced to Bobby Ransome, the childhood actor, who has been connected with familiar celebrities from *Crowned Heads* including William Marsh, “the once great Fedora,” Sam Ueberroth, and Lorna Doone. “Bobbitt” takes place in New York City. At one point in the narrative, Bobbitt asks his friend Nelly, “Who am I really?” This question becomes the underlying mystery about Bobbitt for himself and the reader.

At the beginning of the story the main character is called Mr. Thingamabob. He is a street entertainer who tells tales to children. Mr. Thingamabob, while sharing a story, meets Nelly in a park. Nelly and this childhood actor had starred together in the 1950s. In her early seventies, Nelly agrees to call him Robin. Because child actors mature, their stardom ends. This has happened to Bobbitt, now Robin. Supposedly Robin has a son named Bobbitt and a wife named Kitty who remain at Castle Baughelamm in Ireland. Robin admits to Nelly that he never wanted to grow up, and he soon enjoys the company of both Nelly and her lady friends known as The Belles. One evening they watch *The Player Queen* starring Fedora. Soon they all hear of Willie Marsh’s murder. He becomes the subject of the fourth narrative in *Crowned Heads*. Robin is then said to run off to Ireland but soon returns inviting everyone to attend The Galway Ball. But first, his son is expected to visit from the old country. Suddenly the son dies because of a car bomb and all of Robin’s invitations and plans are cancelled. Only through Madame Potekka, an acquaintance of Robin’s and then of Nelly’s, does Nelly discover that the event has been fabricated by Robin. Madame Potekka assures Nelly, “the child [of Robin] is a

fancy—never existed” and “That is what happened to him [Robin] out there, in Hollywood” (*CH*, 199). In his head and in his heart, he has remained a child. Everything that he has shared with Nelly and the others has been a lie. His immediate family, his acquaintances in Europe, the history of his parents, and a soon-to-be made movie entitled “Sweepstakes” have all been a dissimulation. Nelly, angered, learns that nothing was “really, truly true” (*CH*, 117) and that Robin should pay for his lies. Nelly throws him out and feels she was a fool for being duped. Yet, she soon realizes that she misses her friend Bobbitt, and she also becomes deceptive towards her friends. Nelly goes along with Bobbitt’s falsehoods. In the meantime, she attempts to locate him, especially through skywriting. Because of this notoriety Bobbitt becomes famous once again as do his old movies. She finally finds him living under the alias of Mr. Harboomsteen where, near poverty, he asks her, “Who am I, Nelly?” (*CH*, 219). Admitting that his life has been built upon lies, Robin further says that he “needed to know what was really truly true” (*CH*, 224). Nelly informs him of his newfound popularity, and he agrees to return to the stage. However, at the time of the performance he does not appear as Bobbitt, but rather as Mr. Thingamabob. He has, with pluck, left Bobbitt, his childhood role, behind and at last grown up. At the narrative’s end, Robin wins the admiration of his audience.

“Bobbitt” contains evidence of dissimulation as a characteristic of the individual and its result in unhappiness. With Bobbitt we have a character who goes by fake names. Being Bobbitt and moving away from this persona is difficult for Bobby Ransome. When Nelly first encounters Mr. Thingamabob, her former friend Bobbitt “removed his turban, then the nose, glasses, mustaches, and eyebrows, all of which came off in one piece, and stood before her with his real face.” He asks her, “Don’t you recognize me?” (*CH*, 163). Bobbitt continues in disguise for a better part of adulthood. It is Miss Potekka who says to Nelly, “He was a very big

somebody, then one day he was a nobody again. That is the way it happens out there” (*CH*, 199). She continues, ““They tried to keep him a child, so he has stayed a child, here’—touching her head again—‘and here’”—touching her breast.” ““Sometimes that is not such a bad thing, but in Bobby’s case I am not so sure. He lived in a make-believe world for so long, and he has clung to that make-believe. He will not give it up. For everybody he was Bobbitt, then for nobody was he Bobbitt any longer. . .” (*CH*, 199-200). So Mr. Thingamabob, Bobby Ransome, Bobbitt, Robin tells those falsehoods about his wife, his son, his soon to be movie in order to further dissimulate. At one point he tells Nelly’s granddaughter that a Bobbitt is “a make believe fellow and a very silly one at that” (*CH*, 187). And still later, after he has duped Nelly with all his fabrications, Nelly sadly thinks that “Robin was a sham, a fake, a hoaxer. Nothing was ‘really truly true’” (*CH*, 203). And later, when Nelly must confess to her friends that she had deceived them by keeping up Robin’s lies, she is told by them that “Everybody pretended something, sometime. Nobody was ever really what he seemed” (*CH*, 211). His identity fluctuates for most of the narrative and underscores his confusion and unhappiness.

That Tryon deals with masks, disguises, and dissimulation is by now apparent after having inspected *The Other*, *Harvest Home*, and *Lady*. These same instances occur in “Fedora” and “Lorna.” It is intentional that Robin reveals to Nelly near the end of the narrative that his family had been “very poor” and that his “dad was a hatter, nothing more; he brushed felt in a hat factory in Galway” (*CH*, 221). Tryon’s father was a men’s clothier. This connection concerning men’s apparel is another autobiographical connection between Bobbitt and himself. While Tryon’s father was not happy “with Tom’s chosen profession,” life for Tryon in Hollywood was less happy than expected.<sup>14</sup> At one point Tryon shares in “The Courage to Change: Personal Conversations About Alcoholism with Dennis Wholey,” “If anyone ever picked the wrong

profession, I did when I became an actor” (McClurg, 12). Like Bobbitt, Tryon must have felt “All that Hollywood royalty all over the place and me being taken about to meet everybody famous. I was supposed to be one of them. But I was just scared” (*CH*, 222). Clive Wilson told McClurg, “I think that Tom was a more private person than it takes to be an actor” (McClurg, 12). McClurg continues to say that Tryon’s life had a split personality: actor-writer, Tom Tryon—Thomas Tryon. When he gave up acting, he said soon after switching careers and monikers, “I just hate talking about Tom Tryon . . . He’s dead. He’s part of my memory bank, that’s all. The stuff he did in Hollywood was basically crappy” (McClurg, 12).

Bobby Ransome was more scared than happy in Hollywood. He would remember wishing not to grow up, not to become a man but instead “to be a little boy and have fun” (*CH*, 221). Fond of the story of Peter Pan, Bobbitt reads to Nelly at one point, “Peter: I ran away the day I was born . . . because I heard father and mother talking of what I was to be when I became a man. I want always to be a little boy and have fun; so I ran away to Kensington Gardens and lived a long time among the fairies” (*CH*, 221). Bobbitt continues to read, “Peter: Would you send me to school? Mrs. Darling: Yes. Peter: And then to an office? Mrs. Darling: I suppose so. Peter: Soon I should be a man? Mrs. Darling: Very soon. Peter: I don’t want to go to school and learn solemn things. No one’s going to catch me, lady, and make me a man. I want always to be a little boy and have fun.” Immediately after his reading, Bobbitt says to Nelly, “Any ninny can tell that that’s *Peter Pan*. It’s also Master Bobby Ransome.” (*CH*, 221). This dialogue underscores more hints by Tryon that another of his characters, Bobbitt, can be associated as a gay figure. Holly Blackford in her article titled “Childhood and Greek Love: Dorian Gray and Peter Pan” reiterates Michael Bronski’s assertion that Peter Pan illustrates “the gay sensibility.”<sup>15</sup> Bronski argues in *Culture Class: The Making of Gay Sensibility*, “*Peter Pan*

taps into the queer fantasy of escaping the confines of homophobic, reproductive-obsessed culture.”<sup>16</sup> Blackford adds, “It is hardly a historical coincidence that this fantasy of escape is synonymous with the fantasy of prolonging childhood or the undesirability of growing up” (Blackford, 177). Pan, Bobbitt, and Tryon relate to the world of fairies and art. As Peter played his pipes so too Bobbitt performs. Tryon acted, wrote, and, painted. Tryon graduated from Yale University in 1949 with a B.A. in Fine Arts. Bobbitt recalls that his life as a childhood actor was “a fairy-tale world out there” and “he was the fairy-tale prince” (*CH*, 223). Could Tryon have been “a fairy-tale prince” (*CH*, 223) for a time as well?

Although Bobbitt acknowledges himself as having lived among fairies, he counters it by saying, “I didn’t believe in fairies, I believed in goblins” (*CH*, 223). It may be inferred Tryon also had difficulty with this gay sensibility, where his self was in turmoil and jeopardized by the situations he experienced. For Bobbitt and Tryon, Hollywood proves “a fairy tale world” (*CH*, 223). To Bobbitt it “was all make believe, and life isn’t that . . . there’s not much storybook in real life” (*CH*, 223). Threatened by change, which is iconically Gothic according to Gross, Bobbitt overcomes it however and matures. He continues to seek what’s “really truly true.” (*CH*, 172).

It is in *The Other* where Tryon uses the face as metaphor to stress the importance of the self and the protagonist’s concern with and aspirations for a complete and genuine self. In “Bobbitt” Tryon returns to this metaphor at the end of the narrative to emphasize the main character’s quest for a sincere self:

He had picked up Nellie’s balloon, and sat staring at his own childish image on the front of the inflated rubber. The face looked so ridiculous. His face, but not his at all. Someone else’s. A long-ago face. A someone-who-used-to-be face. A yesterday face.



He undid the string and let the balloon go and it zoomed around the room, deflating, zipping in crazy circles from corner to corner, growing smaller and smaller, until it fell beside his chair. He reached and picked it up, stretched the rubber out on his knee. He couldn't make anything of the shrunken face; it was hardly even there. Then he began blowing the balloon up. He blew and blew and it got bigger and bigger, bigger than it had been before. Every now and again he would stop blowing and hold it out, watching the face grow larger, the Bobbitt smile stretching bigger and bigger. He blew some more, looked again. *Bobbitt's smile is a yard wide.* He stretched his own lips in a parody of the smile, then blew some more. And blew. And blew. Larger and larger the balloon got, and wider the smile. Until there was a loud pop and he held only the exploded pieces of rubber, then they slipped from his fingers to the floor. (CH, 226)

At this time Nelly asks Robin to return to the stage where he will once again be a famous star. Initially doubtful, after this aforementioned incident involving the face on the balloon, Robin agrees to attempt a second chance at stardom. But, like the child's face on the balloon that explodes, Robin realizes and accepts that childhood is over and to be a little boy and have fun should end. Consequently, he accepts a new self and returns to the stage but not as Bobbitt. Rather he rebounds as Mr. Thingamabob, who is a new, older, and genuine self. And, with his evolution, his audience, so used to Bobbitt, also seems to mature and accept him for who he now is.

In this story, Thomas Tryon lives through his character, Bobbitt. Both address themselves in several ways as stars partaking in dissimulation suffering from latent maturity. Moreover, these stories in *Crowned Heads* contain several references to the gay world. For example, the word "gay" is noticeably excessive in "Bobbitt" while in "Lorna" the protagonist

wants to write her autobiography and selects a “violet colored pen” (*CH*, 130) to do so. Violet has always been the color connected with gayness as it is in Willa Cather’s “Paul’s Case” and Melville’s “Billy Budd.” Furthermore, a drawing by Cadmus, known for his focus on the male form and recognized as “the dean of American homoerotic artists,” appears in “Willie,” the last narrative of *Crowned Heads*.<sup>17</sup> That “Willie” is “based on the murder of former gay silent screen star Roman Novarro” as well as the “quasi-Oedipal relationship between Clifton Webb and his mother” has been conjectured.<sup>18</sup> Tryon, while enduring a closeted existence, suffered from a not “really truly true” self, as do many of his fictional characters.

## “Willie”

“Willie” involves three burglars who torture and murder a man to obtain a valuable mirror, made by Cellini and once the property of Catherine de’ Medici. At the story’s beginning, Willie shows these unsuspected culprits the room that acts as a museum for the art collection that Bee and he shared. In this room “Mirrors were everywhere—on the walls, on hinged screens behind the two carved religious figures flanking the fireplace, on the column facings which supported the rafters—all cleverly arranged” (*CH*, 246). Tryon refers to the image of the mirror to stress that this object reflects and most usually is used to see the self. One remembers the significance of the mirror in *Lady*. And, as in the rest of Tryon’s canon, the authentic self, though at first hidden, becomes the main argument of this author’s work.

Ironically, however, the mirror also connects to another major literary thematic topic: appearance versus reality. What often appears is not true and that which is reflected may well be a trick, unreal, and false. And the story of Willie is filled with disguise, dissimulation, and fraudulence. It is Tryon’s task amidst all this falsity to lead the reader to the truth, especially regarding the self of his characters as well as of his own self.

That Arco, Bill Bowie, and Judie Lutz trick Willie into allowing them to enter his Hollywood home, only later to rob and kill him, is the most obvious dissimulation in the last of the four narratives of *Crowned Heads*. The subtlest of Tryon’s tricks in this story is that the reader is duped to believe that Willie and Bea Marsh are a married couple when, in fact, forty pages into the story, the reader discovers that they are son and mother. As in most of Tryon’s works, dissimulation and disguise at the cost of truth and genuineness pervades his work. As in *The Other*, *Harvest Home*, *Lady*, and the three prior stories in *Crowned Heads*, the quest for the authentic self despite falsehoods and incompleteness is the apparent objective for Tryon’s

protagonists and himself. Bill says to Willie, “no one ever gets to see the real” Willie Marsh (*CH*, 260). Again, the question of a disguised or inauthentic self coming to terms with itself and others by the story’s end is Tryon’s concern.

In this story Tryon again begins with aspects of a Gothic landscape. It is in a mansion, as it is in “Fedora,” and set in the hills of glamorous Hollywood. As the story progresses, its hideous turn of events and gruesome violence reach a crescendo that darkens the story and underscores Tryon’s own possible darker self.

The final thirty pages of the story contain several horrid aspects that prove to be Gothic. Even prior to these pages verbal abuse appears in the story as Arco repeatedly calls his accomplice, Judee, a wimp. Arco then insists on cutting Billy’s hair that results in a hack job for no other reason than to bully him. Arco at one point forces Judee to eat a live fish from the aquarium, again displaying his need to control and be malicious. During the night of murder and robbery, drinking and smoking cannabis occur. These sinister ways are Gothic because they side with the darker side of man’s behavior. In addition, the sexual behavior implied by Tryon and enacted by these characters evolves from the Gothic tradition that considered sexuality, especially unconventional sexuality, perverse. Consequently, the three-way sexual act suggested by Arco and the implied homosexual acts between Arco and Billy fit the Gothic genre. Later, Willie’s own implied sexual orientation fits the tale also. As the story continues, its arch villain and lunatic, Arco, becomes more and more malicious, even demonic. And, it is this satanic behavior that effectively causes Willie’s slow expiation or death. Again, Gross enlightens us by finding, “The abuse of the body in Gothic narrative is pervasive and shocking. The body is cut, whipped, beaten, burned, trampled upon, stabbed, hanged—a litany of pain and mutilation

unmatched in more respectable genres. The Gothic is concerned with human experience at the brink, and the body in pain is a body heightened in perception, both mortal and physical.<sup>19</sup>

Willie's resistance towards the robbers incites Arco to become rough with the Hollywood actor during which, abused and in a semiconscious state, Willie begins to think about his self in a confessional manner. He thinks, "Everything as it had come about seemed to him oddly fitting. Strange, but where he was was where he had wanted to be. He had imagined himself here, had wondered what it might be like, what feelings he would experience, what thoughts and emotions. Now he was here, in pain, but with it a suffusing tranquility" (*CH*, 311). Willie implies that he almost deserves this treatment.

Arco, before destroying Willie's autobiography titled *Salad Days* in a fire, has the others help him string Willie up on a wooden cross that overlooks the Marsh's private chapel in their mansion. "Uncomprehendingly, Willie looked first at his right hand, then at his left, bound to the wooden crosspiece with black tape. Wound about his middle, crisscrossed over his chest, securing his torso to the upright column was some sort of plastic lamp cord. His knees were bent, his ankles also taped. Below his feet was the altar with its embroidered cloth" (*CH*, 311).

Frustrated by Willie's uncooperativeness in handing over the jeweled mirror, Arco with "a clownish leer" yells, "It's Gethsemane time, gang" (*CH*, 311). Tryon's contemporary, Hollywood tale could not become more Gothic as the murder of Willie proves horrific and a dark parody of Christ's crucifixion. What happens next in the parody proves beyond gruesome. Willie is stripped of his clothing. Arco takes it upon himself to nail Willie to the cross so that the murder is an authentic crucifixion.

Throughout his story and especially towards the end, Willie's comments about himself not only clarify and counter what has appeared to be, but also have defined him as other than the roles he has played on the screen and in his life at Hollywood.

Earlier, Willie's feelings towards his mother, Bee, are expressed to Judee. He recalls that Bee "never lef me for an instant—not one. On the road, she traveled with me. Took a suite, she had the next room" (*CH*, 299). In fact, as the narrative progresses the abnormal relationship between her and her son becomes important as Willie refers to it as a marriage. This odd reference not only augments the reader's earlier confusion about the relationship between these two characters, but also offers undertones of what some might connect with homosexual boys becoming oddly connected with overbearing and suffocating mothers. Willie becomes progressively insightful about his true self at his crucifixion. Now, he thinks, "in all his life he had never risked anything, chanced anything, dared anything. Bee had made the decisions, forced the hands, seen to the arrangements, ruled the roost. He had been a kind of wind-up doll with a little steel key in his back: bow, move, twirl, sing, dance, amuse. Hardly a life; hardly a man" (*CH*, 314).

It becomes more and more apparent that Willie is gay which he all but directly admits in what he dubs "a secret" (*CH*, 299). Willie explains that Bee was unable to let her son have a life of his own and thus, somehow, involved him with a fantasy mate—Willie in drag—named Laguna Lil. Willie also has admitted that he has worn his mother's clothes. Willie confides to Judee,

I once had a passion. Not a perfectly grand passion . . . nor necessarily normal one . . . but for someone who hadn't had any passion at all it was enough. Sweet are the uses of perversity, as they say." He hiccupped. "But Bee—buzz buzz buzz—could not approve.

Wouldn't have it. I had to lie, cheat, make up things. But a ride on the Grand Canal by moonlight . . . gondola . . . what's blacker than a Venetian gondola? I sneaked around in gondolas, she pretended not to know. But she did. Said it would kill her. I gave up the passion, of course. Had to, for her. But. Here's the secret. She did it to make sure that for the rest of her life—and after—now—that wherever I might love, whomever, I would feel guilty.” (*CH*, 299-300)

Willie describes Bee “like a fireman, extinguishing every threatening flame” (*CH*, 300). “Though she wore no apron she had kept him on tightly tied strings” (*CH*, 300). He stresses that “when Bee was at the door, love flew out the window. Why should a person feel guilty about love?” (*CH*, 300). In this heartfelt scene Willie implies what was considered to be then his abnormal passion—his homosexuality. Consequently, Willie, near his end, illustrates what Arco calls Bee's “son's naughty drag” (*CH*, 312).

At the end of the story, as the murderers play a game of darts with Willie as their target, the child actor of the 1930s, now an old, beleaguered man stuck with barbs in his flesh, becomes likened to St. Sebastian. The reference to Saint Sebastian is most effective and telling of Tryon's intentions. Sebastian was a soldier in the Roman army around 288 A, D. He hid his devotion to Christianity as he would have been imprisoned. Eventually his faith was discovered and he was to be shot to death with arrows. This attempt proved unsuccessful, and Sebastian kept protecting his fellow Christians. Finally, Emperor Diocletian ordered Sebastian clubbed to death.<sup>20</sup>

Not only does the image of St. Sebastian, naked and stuck with arrows, align itself with Tryon's description of Willie but also associates Willie with, what has become recently acceptable, Sebastian as the “patron saint of gay men” (Glenn, 1). Because of Saint Sebastian's martyrdom and the many portraits of his often homoerotic images, he has since been called upon

by many to intercede on behalf of AIDS victims during the last thirty years (Glenn, 1). Tryon's description of Willie connects with Sebastian on several levels and strongly implies the gay undercurrent of the story.

Willie is totally involved with disguise, fakery, and dissimulation. For a time early in his career he masquerades as the fictional Ashton Marshmaine. He played many roles, especially the role of Alfie in the Bobbitt pictures. Other falsities appear during his life. Again, it is Billy who says to Willie, "That's the trouble with bein' a star, Willie. Nobody that goes to your pictures ever gets to see the real you, because you're always playin' a part" (*CH*, 260). "His bronze star [is] permanently fixed into the glittery pavement of Hollywood Boulevard (in front of the entrance to a trick-and-joke shop)" (*CH*, 237). Always playing someone else, his self has been sacrificed from an early age into maturity.

Willie accuses himself at one point of making things up. He recounts that he was mistaken for a real priest. It is discovered that everything in the chapel including the mirror is fake. Even the acid with which Arco threatens to harm Willie turns out to be merely pickle juice!

With such emphasis on falsity, once again Tryon toys with the major trope of appearance versus reality. Many people and objects are not real but examples of dissimulation. Tryon effectively attempts to promote truth, especially as far as one's selfhood is concerned. One cannot even trust mirrors for they too may be false. Willie's self has certainly not been sincere or his own for most of his life. And it is questionable as to whether the criminals, Arco and Billy, have been as well. Or have they, too, been victims of sexual repression? A puzzling relationship exists between Arco and Billy. In fact, Arco becomes jealous and angry when Willie, after autographing a photo for the young thief, addresses him as "dear."



“Don’t call him dear,” Arco’s words came out in a tightly controlled threat.

Willie shrugged. “Jus’ ‘n expression, that’s all. Doesn’t mean anything.”

“Fuck it doesn’t.” Arco’s voice had gone suddenly ugly. (CH, 292)

Arco attended seminary but hasn’t a kind word towards Catholicism or the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, during his night at the Hollywood mansion, Arco, faking himself as a priest, mocks not only the rituals of the church, but also the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Tryon associates Arco and his behavior with Catholicism throughout the narrative. This presence of Catholicism, as Gross explains, has always been, among other elements, connected to the Gothic (Gross, 58).

Arco, the older ringleader of the threesome, becomes more obstreperous and malicious during the story. By the story’s end, he has become not only the narrative’s villain, but also the devil incarnate as is illustrated during Willie’s crucifixion scene. Arco appears “as a priest, wearing the purple cassock, the lace surplice, the stole, the square purple biretta” (CH, 326). Disguised as a man of the cloth, he mocks the rites of the Church.

Arco’s face grew red; he raised his pointed finger to the ceiling and brought it downward. “On your knees!” he roared wrathfully. “Pray for the poor old bastard! Pray, you fuckers, pray, pray!” He danced around, holding up the hem of his cassock, then moving between the other two, shoving their heads down, slamming the palms of his hands onto their backs. “Pray! Pray, you fuckers. Pray like you never prayed before!”

“Our Father who art in Heaven,” Bill began. He got as far as “forgive us our” but couldn’t remember if it should go “debts” or “trespasses.” Judee looked up past her shoulder at Arco,

“Pray!”

“Now I lay me down to sleep,” she piped in her thin voice. “With a bag of peanuts at my feet!” She collapsed on the carpet, laughing.

Willie watched Arco go, hiking the purple cassock up about his shins, bobbing and weaving, the biretta rakishly canted, the skirts swirling, swooping, a stoned goblin priest waltzing in dreamlike circles into darkness, into nothingness, and then all there was was the disembodied laugh. (*CH*, 327)

As Arco nails Willie to the cross, the star’s “cries grew more feeble, [and] became moans [that] ended” (*CH*, 332). In torment, Willie displays an ambiguity where he first imagines, “He would go to his reward, he would sit on the right hand of God, he would see the pearly gates, angels with halos, gold harps, white feathered wings, he would be possessed of the peace that surpasseth all, of life everlasting, the promise of Christ, the Resurrection and the Light” (*CH*, 333). Yet, these images immediately dissolve, and he is left in darkness. After this Willie says to Judee, “Forget . . . the Math [Mass]” (*CH*, 333). He tells Judee he no longer believes.

Is this change in attitude towards the Church and the self-disparagement the result of Willie having confessed his authentic self during this horrid night’s adventure? Or is it a result of Willie having encountered this Misfit so reminiscent of Flannery O’Connor’s infamous killer who goes from robber to “crazed carpenter” (*CH*, 332) to homicidal maniac to the devil incarnate? It is both.

After Willie expresses his lack of faith, Arco says,

“See . . . I knew it.” With a wild rush he kicked open the gate, and, the purple cassock sweeping around his legs, he sprang onto the bench, reaching on tiptoe to clutch the naked, quivering shoulders in a fearful grasp, and planting his lips on the old man’s. The

two mouths remained pressed together, then Arco pulled away and released him, “Ciao, caro,” he said, and stepped down, panting.

“You kissed him!” the girl exclaimed, with a little shudder.

“Shut up, Wimp,” he told her angrily. Then, more mildly, “It was the kiss not of passion but of peace.” (*CH*, 333)

Earlier Arco tells Willie, “Your God is a fraud” (*CH*, 323). This and the aforementioned scene recalls the scene in Hawthorne’s Gothic story, “Young Goodman Brown,” wherein the Devil invites the protagonist into the Communion of his Race. Attesting to the opposite of what he earlier believed, Willie appears to have given his allegiance to the dark side in his final hours of life. Yet Willie in this awful moment has revealed his authentic self despite the consequences. Arco earlier says that he had come this evening in order “to save [Willie] from himself (*CH*, 292). Ironically, Arco has saved Willie from a self that was not at all authentic but rather has in print revealed a self that is true and not one of disguise and falsehood.

The ambiguity present in “Willie” exists towards both sexual orientation and the Catholic Church. Elizabeth MacAndrew considers the use of religion in the Gothic as perhaps insinuating that it is a force of society that sees “an awakening sexuality as evil.”<sup>20</sup> Might Tryon be showing what he perceives as his darker self in the characters of this narrative and also his unclear stance towards both homosexuality and the Church that perhaps troubled him in life? That he was a homosexual and that he himself was connected to the Church through his role in “The Cardinal” (1963) may have caused him further angst. McClurg explains the tension between the volatile Otto Preminger, the director, and Tryon, who was the lead. “Preminger would scream at the nervous Tryon, zoom in on his shaking hands, fire him one minute and rehire him the next. [Tryon] ended up in the hospital with a body rash and skin peeling due to nerves” (McClurg, 13).

Tryon was discontent and unhappy in the movie industry. But, it is not clear as to the degree Tryon considered homosexuality and the Church, each so counter to the other, difficult issues with which to wrestle. Certainly, such wrestling is present in “Willie.”

An earlier passage cited regarding Willie’s belief that he deserves to be crucified implies not only that he lacks self-esteem, but also that his perspective and behavior are blameworthy. To Willie, and perhaps to Tryon, this end is fitting and justifiable for a life that has been false and unconventional.

Tryon focuses upon the outcast and underscores difference in all his works. Holland is different, Cornwall Coombe proves certainly unique, and Lady Harleigh’s story evinces an unconventional lifestyle. All three main characters in the first three stories in *Crowned Heads* prove uncommon and end up alone, isolated, and in need of understanding. So too, in “Willie” does Tryon offer a story wherein Willie, through no fault of his own, begs understanding because of his circumstances and, especially, of his overall self. Tryon makes a point of creating characters in *Crowned Heads* whose selves—not initially genuine—need to be “really truly true.” However, ironic as it proves, Arco has assisted Willie’s authentic self to be voiced and actualized. At the end Willie “divest[s] himself of himself” (*CH*, 318). He has abandoned his inauthentic self and has attested to his true self. Again, Tryon saves both his character’s self and his own true self through fiction. Perhaps this is the reason, according to McClurg, that Tryon, in “a mediocre movie career . . . gratefully abandoned [it] for the more hospitable embrace of the best-seller list” (McClurg, 10).

“Willie” is one more work by Tryon that not only places him with other Gothic writers, but it is also in the tradition of the confession narrative.

Photo to Come

## Notes

### Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Tryon, *Crowned Heads* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), frontispiece; hereafter cited in the text as *CH*.

<sup>2</sup>*Crowned Heads*, Review of *Crowned Heads* by Thomas Tryon. *Kirkus Review*.

<sup>3</sup>*Crowned Heads*, Review of *Crowned Heads* by Thomas Tryon. *A Virginia Quarterly Review*.

<sup>4</sup>Webster Schott, Review of *Crowned Heads* by Thomas Tryon. July 11, 1976. *The New York Times Book Review*.

<sup>5</sup>Paul Gray, Review of *Crowned Heads* by Thomas Tryon. "Time."

<sup>6</sup>*TV Guide.com*

<sup>7</sup>Roger Edmonson, *Boy in the Sand Casey Donovan All-American Sex Star*, 146 (see chap. 3. n. 5).

<sup>8</sup>Ty Tryon, Interview (See Introduction. n. 1).

<sup>9</sup>Alexander Jordan Stein, "The Blithedale Romance's Queer Style," *Journal of the American Renaissance*. 55, no. 3 (2000), 218; hereafter cited in the text as Stein.

<sup>10</sup>William Rose Benet, *The Reader's Encyclopedia*, 814 (See chap. 1. N. 7).

<sup>11</sup>Colin Spencer, *The Gay Karma Sutra* (New York: St. Martin's Press), 21.

<sup>12</sup>*Britannica Online Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Quetzalcoatl."

<sup>13</sup>Steve Moore, *The Novel: An Alternative History 1600-1800* (New York: Bloomsbury), 873.

<sup>14</sup>Jocelyn McClurg, "A Life in Two Acts: Of Tom and Thomas Tryon," 14 (see chap. 1. n. 4).

<sup>15</sup>Holly Blackford, "Childhood and Greek Love: Dorian Gray and Peter Pan," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 177, no. 2 (Summer 2013), 177; hereafter cited in the text as Blackford.

<sup>16</sup>Michael Bronski, *Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sensibility* 55 (see Introduction. n. 4).

<sup>17</sup>Tomas Waugh and Willie Walker, *Lust Unearthed: Vintage Gay Graphics from the DuBek Collection* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press 2004), 228.

<sup>18</sup>[gayinfluence.blogspot.com/2011/07/thomastryon.html](http://gayinfluence.blogspot.com/2011/07/thomastryon.html)

<sup>19</sup>Louis S. Gross, *Redefining the American Gothic From Wieland to Day of the Dead*, 60 (see chap. 1, n. 7).

<sup>20</sup>Clinton Glenn, "The Queering of Saint Sebastian: Renaissance Iconography and the Homoerotic Body," *Concordia Undergraduate Journal of Art History*, CUJAH (<http://cujah.org>); hereafter cited in the text as Glenn.

<sup>21</sup>Elizabeth MacAndrew, *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*, 230 (see chap. 1. n. 11).

## Conclusion

*Crowned Heads* ends in a flashback entitled “Salad Days.” This part involves three of the four stories of the novel. In it, Barry, the newspaper man, attends a party in honor of Bobbitt hosted by Bee and Willie Marsh. Fedora, as an old woman, is also present. Except for Lorna, the major characters of *Crowned Heads* are at this party taking place in 1957. The gathering, according to Barry, occurs near the demise of the movie industry that is making way for television. In fact, Fedora is no longer recognized by most, and her star on Hollywood Boulevard is ignored. To Willie, Fedora is forgotten, and it is “Signs of the times.”<sup>1</sup> The flourishing days of these movie giants is over. But Bee, who still feels “once a star, always a star” (*CH*, 138) disagrees with Barry and her son. Willie recounts another story to Barry where both he and Fedora are totally mistaken for movie stars other than themselves. Bee’s feeling then is both correct and incorrect. A star might always be a star, but a true self may be sadly unrecognizable. Besides the idea that younger days and time passes, “Salad Days” reminds the reader that Fedora, Bobbitt, and Willie have sacrificed their selves for other pursuits. It underscores the dominant theme that has been illustrated in each story of *Crowned Heads*, namely that the self cannot actualize if intentionally masked and that in the end there should be “no need of disguise” (*CH*, 337).

By subtextually reading the works by Thomas Tryon we allow ourselves to not only go beyond the intriguing narratives and their vividly drawn characters, but we also witness a writer who had a hidden agenda that reveals both his angst and his gradual awareness and tolerance—perhaps not so much for himself as for others—of a different manner of life than the one most acceptable in his time. We witness portrayals of difference in both *The Other* and *Harvest Home* that are destroyed by madness or by an intolerant majority. The dangerous and sad duplicity of



the self and the self's need to become actualized remains the focus with Tryon in *Lady*. *Crowned Heads* illustrates the hidden selves of glamorous Hollywood. Gross points out, "The actual shape of terror will vary from author to author but the common threat seems to be the singularity and monstrosity of the Other: what the dominant culture cannot incorporate within itself, it must project outward onto this hated/desired figure. Gothic literature is obsessively concerned with searching for and confronting the Other."<sup>2</sup> For Tryon this Other is less monstrous than imagined, but still often hidden.

Thomas Tryon sincerely and with largess contributes to the Gothic tradition. He also advances the tradition of the confession narrative by his characters admitting to their true selves. Moreover, Tryon confesses his own deeply conflicted and sincere self through his fiction. This best little boy from Wethersfield, Connecticut, encountered the silent stings of history's intolerance and the fear of intolerance along with it. It needs acknowledgment and acceptance not only from the dominant culture, but also from the Other's self as well. Tryon writes to face it.

Often, a writer's characters and that which they experience and endure describe the societies and the times from which they come. It is true in Tryon. The 1930s through the 1970s and beyond were difficult, intolerant years for a gay man. American society was not at all understanding of otherness and difference, especially towards sexual orientation. In 1948 the Mattachine Society, a homosexual organization, was established by Harry Hay. "Hay chose this name for his new society because he saw the homosexuals of the 1950s as a 'masked people, unknown and anonymous, who might become engaged in morale building and helping ourselves and others.'"<sup>3</sup> Not only did the times cause intense, internal pain to homosexuals, but they also destroyed aspirations and dreams because the selves of these men and women had to be hidden and, most times, unrealized. Gross observes, "When a black, gay, or female writer inscribes

experience within the Gothic mode, a powerful statement is made regarding the differences between what is terror for the dominant culture (vampires, werewolves, ghosts) and what is even more terrifying for the minority (police brutality, drug addiction, destruction of the family, grinding poverty” (Gross, 92).

In Thomas Tryon’s case, the conflict caused by his society was intense, nearly suffocating and damaging to his person and his career. The Gothic gives us an alternative history of the American experience (Gross, 3). And, with the Gothic, American history can be seen “as a long nightmare” (Gross, 36) for some. Despite this circumstance, Tryon hiding and revealing his self by means of his fiction, survives by means of the printed word. Gross argues:

While gay artists and readers have found in the Gothic a mirror for the sense of mystery and loss forced on them by society, that same society has accepted the dark vision as justification for a political agenda. In this way gay writers and readers have been imprisoned in the Gothic world they helped create. While alternate, “abnormal” sexuality such as incest or homoeroticism gives the genre a shorthand for demonic transformation, it cannot affirm anything; it can, however, illuminate a history of sexual oppression and terror. That is in the real world. (Gross, 63)

However, Tryon accomplishes more than this. He affirms the powerful role that writing may exercise. That the written word proves a self-edifying, survival device accompanies other philosophies that Tryon asserts in his popular stories. In *The Other* he asserts that one longs for and can do almost anything to achieve the actualization of the self—and fail. In *Harvest Home* he underscores the struggle one may have countering a majority and lose the self in the process. While in *Lady*, positing the philosophies that touch upon nostalgia and acceptance, Tryon emphasizes the paradoxical presence of deception yet the need or truth to eventually appear. In

his four stories in *Crowned Heads*, Tryon clearly believes that the mask hiding the true self should be taken off. Gross comments:

European Gothic literature has often been dismissed as escapist romantic nonsense, but the Gothic in America, however nonsensical, has never been purely escapist. It has always engaged itself in the national predilection for self-reflection, but from its own position as the voice of the marginals: women, gays, people of color, Americans. It has reminded the general public of their existence in a literary culture that often denies them their voices. It has kept alive the flame of that lamp which shines into the dark corners where so much of our lives are lived. In a country where history includes great accomplishment and brutal repression it has remained interested primarily in the later. This is as it should be; mainstream literature is celebratory enough to take care that the good is enshrined, while the Gothic's reminder that evil is just as real and as lasting is its simple, terrible legacy. (Gross, 92)

However, amidst his use of the Gothic and in the tradition of the confessional story, Tryon contributes even more positively than Gross imagines to the American literary canon. The tolerance of the different, the importance and need for the actualization of the self, and the value of homosexuality should be realized. Elizabeth MacAndrew asserts that not only do twentieth century authors use Gothic devices to “turn our eyes inward in the continued exploration of the self” and uses them to address the issue of sexual orientation.<sup>4</sup> In this way, Tryon goes beyond the documentation of repression. As Gambone astutely says, “In giving serious artistic attention to the full range of his experience, the gay writer (for that matter, any writer) does more than simply identify the raw material for his work. He gives witness to that

experience, disclosing the value of events, desires, and emotions that might hitherto have been dismissed, ignored, or forgotten.”<sup>5</sup> The word “hidden” must be added to this list.

Tryon was forced to hide his homosexuality, but this drawback allowed him to write prose housing within it a voice which, when detected, enriches his work. James Baldwin’s idea that “an oblique confession is always a plea” (Miller, 314) makes us feel that Tryon’s narratives ultimately constitute a plea to be understood and accepted both by others and himself. Whether hidden or finally discovered, writing, as Scot Heim points out in *Something Inside*, allows one to exorcise or to confront demons (Gambone, 12). Focusing upon something of himself and of the life that he felt could not be acknowledged entirely, Tryon addresses both the straight and the gay sensibilities in his popular novels of the 1970s and fuses these two separate groups into one readership. Though most of his characters fail at actualizing their selves, Tryon encourages his readers, as he attempts to do for himself, that an alternative exists or should exist so that a self can be, in Bobbitt’s words “really truly true” (*CH*, 224). Tryon is encouraging about this self, especially the possible freedom and eventual joy that the genuine, actualized gay self, could experience.

More issues and many more questions can be asked and perhaps answered about Thomas Tryon. For example, what other autobiographical material appears in Tryon’s works besides the fact that Russell from *The Other* was Tom’s cousin and that the twins were, according to the author’s brother, Bill Tryon, Tom and his brother Lane (McClurg, 14)? Tryon wrote the screen adaption for the movie “The Other,” and the furnishings of the Perry household resemble exactly the furnishings of Tryon’s parents’ home in Wethersfield, Connecticut. In fact, their own grandfather’s clock was part of the movie set.<sup>6</sup> While strolling the Wethersfield Green one wonders which house provoked Tom’s rendition of Lady’s manse? *Lady* is dedicated to an

unknown Harry. And who might Arthur and Edward be to whom *Crowned Heads* is dedicated? *Harvest Home* is dedicated to a contemporary of Tryon's Allen Leffingwell Vincent, an actor and author, who helped write *The Face Behind the Mask*.<sup>7</sup> Not only is there immeasurable enjoyment offered by reading and rereading Tryon's works, but it also contains material for further research.

Six more works have been written by Tryon. He took a ten-year break between *Crowned Heads* and *All that Glitters*. After this hiatus, he wrote books including *The Night of the Moonbow* and *The Adventures of Opal and Cupid*, both focusing on children. Then, he began a sequence of novels titled *Kingdom Come*. The first is titled *The Wings of the Morning* and the second is *In the Fire of Spring*. Both historical novels take place in Pequot's Landing. A later novel for this sequence was not completed, because Tryon died in 1991. *Night Magic* was published posthumously as was *In the Fire of Spring* in 1995. Many questions may be asked about this neglected American author. What thematic threads of his first four works appear in these later works? To what extent do his thematic interests shift? In what ways does each later work illustrate and develop his craft? Does Tryon continue his discipleship with the Gothic and confessional traditions? Can the rest of his canon be read subtextually so that the agenda promoting the true self, especially the gay self, may be discerned? Does an inexplicable spirit occasionally visit 298 Wolcott Hill Road as rumored and might it be Thomas Tryon?<sup>8</sup> These issues and queries should be examined and possibly answered by continuing to read Thomas Tryon.

## Notes

### Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Tryon, *Crowned Heads*, 338 (See Chap. 4. N.1).

<sup>2</sup> Louis S. Gross, *Redefining the American Gothic From Wieland to Day of the Dead*, 90 (Ssee Introduction, N. 7.).

<sup>3</sup> Neil Miller, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present*, 334 (See chap. 1. n. 10).

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth MacAndrew, *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*, 248, 246 (see chap. 1, n. 11).

<sup>5</sup> Philip Gambone, *Something Inside: Conversations with Gay Fiction Writers*, 10 (see Introduction, n. 5).

<sup>6</sup> Ty Tryon, Interview (See Introduction, n. 1).

<sup>7</sup> [www.IMDb.com](http://www.IMDb.com)

<sup>8</sup> I have visited 298 Wolcott Hill Road several times, presently owned by the Rob Walsh Family. The stories about Thomas Tryon that they've heard and shared with me as well as their permission to take photographs of Tryon's art work, namely those pink elephants, have only been surpassed by their graciousness.

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