

JOHN WILLIAM CORRINGTON'S JOURNALS 1980-1988

edited by
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28 August 1980

[The journals begin August 28, 1980, Corrington musing about keeping journals (his first), the pace of his life, and the recognition he is “no longer a young man—I will be 48 two months from today.”]

“[M]y life has been especially happy and fulfilled to the present time. I would like to think that I have been as good as my opportunities, though I am not without . . . questions and uncertainties as to the course my life has taken.”¹

* Professor of Law, West Virginia University. Editor, Legal Studies Forum. I wish to express my deepest appreciation to Joyce Corrington whose encouragement and help has been so generous from the first days of my interest in her husband's writing and his life.

For a selection from the journals which focus selectively on Corrington's pursuit of philosophy, see Joyce H. Corrington, “The Evolution of Bill Corrington's Metaphysics,” in William Mills (ed.), JOHN WILLIAM CORRINGTON: SOUTHERN MAN OF LETTERS 106-116 (Conway, Arkansas: UCA Press, 1994)[hereinafter *Southern Man of Letters*][26 Legal Stud. F. 659 (2002)]. For additional biographical information on Corrington, see William Parrill, “After the Confederate War: An Interview with John William Corrington,” in *id.*, at 181-201 [hereinafter, Parrill Interview] [26 Legal Stud. F. 671 (2002)]; Jean W. Ross, “CA [Contemporary Authors] Interview,” in Ann Evory & Linda Metzger (eds.), CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS 114-117 (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1983)(New Revision Series, Volume 8) [hereinafter Ross Interview][26 Legal Stud. F. 695 (2002)]. For a bibliography of John William Corrington's writings, see Joyce H. Corrington, “A Complete Bibliography of the Works of John William Corrington,” in *Southern Man of Letters, id.*, at 202-228 [partially reprinted in 26 Legal Stud. F. 899 (2002)].

Selections from Corrington's journals are indicated by quotation marks. Excluded passages within a quote are indicated by the usual ellipsis points; excluded materials are further indicated by the end of a quoted passage and the beginning of a new quoted passage within a dated journal entry.

¹ Corrington indicates “questions and uncertainties as to the course my life has taken.” Yet, in looking back over his journals, correspondence, and fiction I'm not sure what he might have had in mind by this passage. One suspects that Corrington's “questions” may have related to the fact that he spent the last decade of his life dividing his attention between writing to make a living (TV soaps and film scripts) and the writing that he believed his destiny (his fiction and philosophical writing). Corrington describes the dilemma this way:

Joyce Corrington and I have consistently been paid best for our worst work.

But I suspect that, in great measure, these questions are the effect of the age upon me. It has been called "the age of anxiety," and Faulkner noted that syndrome thirty years ago. Perhaps it is simply the oppressive weight of a history and a wisdom we have betrayed collectively that makes us question the very essence of our lives.

Spiritually, at least in terms of my consciousness of a reality unaltered by our small affairs, I am immeasurably more fortunate than most of those around me

I do not know the meaning of my life, and I am certain no one else knows more. Many will express such a knowledge, but when the question is asked, and the answer given, the result is always the same: some temporal absurdity set in the place of transcendent purpose. Henry James supposed the thing in life was to be kind. As an ultimate, then, one posits manners, the will to power or the accumulation of vast wealth Self-knowledge seems a path into an endless thicket. Ambrose Bierce defined *mind* as that which sought to know itself—with nothing but itself to use on the quest. Certainly, one knows almost instinctively that a knower must occupy at least one more dimension than that which is to be known."

31 August 1980

"The summer is almost over. Another year is moving toward its final months. Autumn always makes me think of mortality, and the span of life itself.² I was born in October almost at the birth of the most savage period in human existence.³ The age of Hitler and Churchill and

Neither of us could make a decent living writing what we want to write, writing in the great literary tradition that T.S. Eliot told us extends from the work of Homer to the present. If we are willing to write garbage and not complain, we can make thousands of dollars a week. If we insist on doing the best work we can do, we'll be lucky to make ten thousand a year.

"The Mystery of Writing," unpublished typescript, Corrington Papers, Centenary College [26 Legal Stud. F. 503 (2002)]. See also Journal entries dated November 10, 1981 and October 22, 1984 for restatements of the dilemma.

Corrington was far more explicit about the depravity of the times in which he lived (indeed, the modern era itself), than he was the "questions and uncertainties" that would arise in his own life. Bill Corrington was not, as he put it, "given to autobiographical ravings." *Id.* See also Journal entry dated September 30, 1981.

² Corrington returns to this theme in a Journal entry dated March 21, 1981, *infra*.

³ Corrington was born in Cleveland, Ohio on October 28, 1932. He would, with the unsuspecting, sometimes claim Tennessee as his birth place.

Roosevelt—and no end is in sight.”

1 September 1980

“The confusions and complexities of life in the 20th century make one’s spirit yearn to transcend it”⁴

“I have no idea how men will break the grip of ideologies—those desperate partial ideas that try to stand as if they were central to our lives.

Once the commitment to them is made, truth and honor, all the old verities, are tossed aside as irrelevant, as useless aristocratic, bourgeoisie baggage meant to hold down the working class. And yet compacts must be made between men.

Men have to be able to take each others’ word, or the possibility of social structure vanishes.

Ideology creates the very islands of human isolation which created it initially. John Donne was mistaken.⁵ Most human beings are islands nowadays, because they fear being lied to—and fear ideology as well.⁶

⁴ Corrington was no fan of the 20th century. A friend and colleague, Bill Mills, finds throughout Corrington’s work, “a critique of modernity . . . that will continue to deserve serious attention.” William Mills, “John William Corrington: Southern Man of Letters,” in *Southern Man of Letters*, 1-6, at 6 [26 Legal Stud. F. 891, 897 (2002)]. See generally Corrington’s Journal entry of September 5, 1980.

⁵ The “no man is an island” line is from John Donne (1572-1631): “No Man is an island, entire of itself, / Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; / If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, / as well as if a promontory were, / as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; / Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; / And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; / It tolls for thee.” Donne trained, as a young man, in law and was associated with both Lincoln and Thavies Inns. “That he did not neglect law entirely for poetry, we know from his own statement, and this is corroborated by the poems themselves, in which legal metaphors abound.” 4 CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE (1907-1921) <<http://www.bartleby.com//214/1102.html>>

⁶ In a paper presented in Chattanooga, Tennessee on February 4, 1984, Corrington provides a historical reading of his understanding of ideology:

The rise of ideologies from the Enlightenment egophanies of the *philosophes* through the scientism and materialism of the 19th century to the political mass-movements and therapeutics of the 20th century, including, but not limited to, National Socialism, Marxist-Leninism, secular humanism, and logical positivism has resulted in a virtual decerebration of the Humanities.

But if the only alternative to mindless conjunctions in ideological parties is the insistence on truth, where are we left? For there are surely truths that are almost impossible to bear.⁷ At least things with the appearance of truth which would, if taken as such, would make modern life as awful as the collective falsehood of the ideologies.

The anthropomorphic structure of religious myth is not false—as to the unfolding soul. But it tends to become opaque to the ongoingness of the spirit. How can one maintain the truth of the myth, and move beyond it? In this lies the end of ideology and the future hope of humanity? Part of the answer lies in our not demanding too much. I would never have thought I would echo T.S. Eliot's words, but we need someone or something to 'teach us to sit still.'⁸ The past two hundred years have become a fever rather than a progress. [We] [t]orment ourselves and one another with fantasies, with the notion that elemental control of the world and intellectual dominance of reality is a vector, a permanent and straight-line. That is not the case. Human progress is toward an eschatological moment, toward an ultimate event which is both historical and personal.

My encounter with the *eschaton* is the moment of my death; the world's moment, identical in kind, is constituted by the presumptive end of the universe by contraction into the original kernel from which the 'big bang' initiated, as the end of the planet with humanity still stranded upon it."

4 September 1980

"I only wish I had vision enough to see what this age will evolve into. Most of my visions are unpleasant ones. Each generation of lunatics seems more clearly homicidal than its predecessor."

John William Corrington, "The Recovery of the Humanities," in Reed Sanderlin & Craig Barrow (eds.), *POLITICS, SOCIETY, AND THE HUMANITIES* 113-129, at 113 (Chattanooga, Tennessee: Southern Humanities Press, 1984) [26 Legal Stud. F.781 (2002)].

⁷ It is these "truths that are almost impossible to bear" that lie at the heart of Corrington's fiction, particularly his lawyer stories.

⁸ "Ash Wednesday," in T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World 1963).

5 September 1980

[Corrington, responding to ongoing problems with the producer of the TV daytime drama, *Texas*,⁹ which he wrote with his wife, Joyce

Corrington, writes]: "I wonder frequently how I got involved in this idiocy. I suppose destiny is its own answer. For the present, this is where I am supposed to be. I hope we can get together enough money in the next year or so to gain a measure of economic freedom. . . .

I find this situation ludicrous because I don't give a damn about TV or film for that matter.¹⁰ I care about serious writing—the novel, the story,

⁹ Corrington and his wife, Joyce, along with Paul Rauch, were the creators of the television TV daytime drama, *Texas*. The Corringtons were also head writers for the series (episodes #1-147), which aired from August 4, 1980 to December 31, 1982.

¹⁰ Corrington was clearly not a fan of films which is rather ironic since he wrote numerous film scripts—*The Red Baron* (1971)(originally "Von Richthofen and Brown"); *The Omega Man* (1971); *Boxcar Bertha* (1972); *The Arena* (1973); *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* (1973); *Killer Bees* (1974). Asked in a 1985 interview if he were interested in movies when he was younger, Corrington said:

I viewed them as pure entertainment, something to have fun with, to live vicariously. I was John Wayne in *Flying Tigers*, and that kind of thing, but I never dreamed that anyone would consider them an art form, and I still find that astonishing. I have seen only one film that I would regard as art. Possibly another two, but they're dubious.

Parrill Interview, *supra* note *, at 191 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, 682 (2002)]. The "one film" Corrington referred to, he identified as *Breaker Morant*.

Corrington's interest first, foremost, and last, was literature, history, philosophy, and music. All of these interests can be traced back to his days as a student at Centenary College (and perhaps, by his biographer, to his childhood). On his love of music, he writes, in a letter to Charles Bukowski, that, "you've got to remember that I grew up with the dance-bands. The way I talk is part Southern back-woods, part Dizzy Gillespie, and part literate. I am the victim of a fragmented generation. But I am expressive." Letter to Charles Bukowski, dated August 19, 1962. Corrington Papers, Centenary College [hereinafter all letters cited are found in the Corrington Papers archived at Centenary College]. Corrington told William Parrill in a 1985 interview:

My first love and my last will always be music, and I wanted to be a professional musician. Unfortunately, I was born approximately fifteen or twenty years too late, and with a very small talent. My great ambition in life (and it still would be if there were a time machine) was to play lead trumpet in the Glenn Miller orchestra. That was the way I grew up. The pillars then were Tommy Dorsey, and Goodman, and Shaw, and Miller.

Parrill, *id.* at 182. In an earlier interview, Corrington noted: "I had planned to be a big-band trumpet player, but just about the time I graduated from college the big bands vanished." As in the Parrill interview, Corrington said, "I always loved music; it was my first love, and I expect it will be my last." Ross Interview, *supra* note * [26 Legal Stud. F. 695 (2002)]. As to his talent as a trumpet player, Corrington says:

the poem, the essay—or even this journal. It appears part of my destiny to always love the old things,¹¹ to forever be pressed into the service of the new.

I begin to wonder if a teaching job . . . might not be best for me. I'd love to return to Shreveport and teach at Centenary.¹² It's the right size, the

I was just a pretty good trumpet player. The horn got me through high school and even got me a college scholarship and a place on the Symphony. But as much as I loved music, I simply didn't have the skills, the fundamental capacities to achieve what I wanted to achieve. . . . I was two years into college before I could bring myself to admit that I was never going to be good enough to be a professional musician. It was as painful an admission as I've ever had to make.

"The Mystery of Writing," *supra* note 1 [26 Legal Stud. F. 503 (2002)].

Corrington's interests—in his reading, varied intellectual pursuits, and in his fiction—were broad and eclectic, but he never found much place in his life for movies, except, ironically, as a writer of film scripts. On Corrington's work as a screenwriter, see Frances Doel, "John William Corrington as a Screenwriter," in *Southern Man of Letters*, *supra* note 1, at 134-143.

And how does this enormously talented writer of poetry, essays, novels become involved in the writing of Hollywood films?

[I]n 1968, after I'd come back home to Louisiana after a term at the University of California, I got the strangest phone call. It was from a man named Roger Corman whom I'd never heard of, and he'd read my second novel, *The Upper Hand*. He wanted me to write a movie for him—about Manfred Baron von Richthofen, the great German air ace of World War I. I told him I didn't know how to write movies and wasn't especially interested. He said that was too bad, because he'd pay me \$10,000 for a 125 page script. Since I was making \$12,000 a year, it dawned on me suddenly that I sure as hell could learn how to write movies, and that, secretly, I'd always wanted to do just that.

Joyce Corrington and I wrote the script together. *Richthofen and Brown*, later retitled *The Red Baron*, marked the beginning of our work together as writers in film and television. After that came *The Omega Man*, *Boxcar Bertha*, *The Arena*, *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*, *Killer Bees*, and years of writing for television.

"The Mystery of Writing," *supra* [26 Legal Stud. F. 503, at 508 (2002)]. We might note that William Faulkner, another of the South's notable writers, was also a screenwriter. See Bruce F. Kawin, *FAULKNER AND FILM* (New York: F. Ungar, 1977).

¹¹ Corrington's "love of the old things" is part and parcel of his on-going critique of modern times, as is evident in his early novels, and in the sentiments and longings of the various characters found in his law-oriented fiction.

¹² Corrington's love for his alma mater, Centenary College, and for Shreveport, his home from the age of ten, are evidenced throughout his writings. While he may have sometimes fantasized a return to teaching, Corrington had spent a fair number of years as a college professor and as dean of an English department and left these positions to pursue other interests, the study and practice of law among them. Letters written during his days as a college professor indicate that he had far more interest in poetry, writing novels, and other intellectual pursuits than in his classroom teaching. While Corrington may never have expressed great fondness for classroom teaching, his preparation was

right atmosphere—and that's where my only roots are. I'd feel that my life had come full circle if I could go back there and serve the school which gave me so much. But . . . I may spend my days with the sour taste of a stranger's bread in my mouth, climbing the stairs to sleep in a strange room over soil that is not mine.¹³

But how fine to round out one's life in service to those one loves, on the ground where my father is buried.

I am not a modern man—and that may be my own personal salvation. What I love comes to me from the past, the gift of Mozart and Albinoni, Dickens and Shakespeare, Plato and the prophets, Lee¹⁴ and Jackson,¹⁵ St. Thomas and Augustine. I would like to live into the 21st century just to piss on the 20th. Filth, death and savagery—ideological madness and mass murder.

meticulous and, from all accounts, he was a gifted and charismatic teacher. Personal communication, Barbara Steinberg, a colleague and friend of Corrington's.

On Corrington's attachment to Shreveport, see entries dated September 9 & 13, 1980; December 1, 1980; November 25, 1981; December 30, 1981; April 23, 1983; and October 5, 1983, *infra*.

¹³ This idea of a man (and a lawyer), far from home, paying penitence, is the theme of a Corrington story, "The Actes and Monuments." See "The Actes and Monuments," in *THE COLLECTED STORIES OF JOHN WILLIAM CORRINGTON* 215-245 (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1990)(Joyce Corrington ed.) [26 *Legal Stud. F.* 181 (2002)].

¹⁴ Corrington here refers to General Robert E. Lee, who he once told Charles Bukowski, in a burst of enthusiasm, was "the greatest man who ever lived." Knowing Bukowski to be something of a cynic, he went on to say, "You laugh, but whenever I get faced with a decision that bears heavily on those around me, I ask, "what would Uncle Robert want me to do?" Letter to Charles Bukowski, dated September 14, 1961, LSU, Baton Rouge.

Corrington and Bukowski, both young poets, carried on a literary correspondence throughout much of the 1960s. The relationship, built around their work as poets, and struggling writers, would not survive the '60s, but there remains an extensive correspondence between the two writers. See generally Lloyd Halliburton, "Corrington, Bukowski, and the Loujon Press," in 13 (1) *Louisiana Literature* 103-109 (1996). For Corrington's critical assessment of Bukowski's poetry, see, John William Corrington, *Charles Bukowski and the Savage Surfaces*, 6 (4) *Northwest Rev.* 123 (1963); John William Corrington, "Charles Bukowski at Mid-Flight," intro. to Charles Bukowski, *IT CATCHES MY HEART IN ITS HANDS* (New Orleans: Loujon Press, 1963)(reprinted in Dorothy Nyren, *et. al.* (eds.), 4 *MODERN AMERICAN LITERATURE: A LIBRARY OF LITERARY CRITICISM* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1976)).

¹⁵ Andrew Jackson was the seventh President of the United States (1829-1837). He read law and then practiced law as a young man in his home state of Tennessee. He was, like Corrington, a man fiercely jealous of the idea of honor, and was willing to brawl and duel to preserve it. Corrington was drawn to Jackson, not only for his sense of honor and duty, but for his heroic defeat of the British at New Orleans in the War of 1812.

The future will chiefly remember this age positively for only one thing: its physics. The argonautic adventure of modern physical theory is the single thing that has happened in my life that is not a humiliation to the human spirit, and an embarrassment to human history.¹⁶ I only wish I possessed the intellectual power to begin converting the unfolding of modern physics into a new and magnificent spiritual vision. I see bits and pieces—because I have a superb second-class mind.¹⁷ But I can't see that future laid out true and full and beautiful as it should be. But the pieces of the future need to be pointed out, set in order. One honors the predecessors of Augustine, Aquinas, and Einstein, for the great work depends upon those who set out the materials, the techniques for genius to combine. Plato was a child of his pre-Socratic fathers who established the nature of the problems which required his attention.”

6 September 1980.
Westchester County

“My own prediction is that *Texas* is doomed, because we will not have the time to find our groove, the special place that our show and our characters can occupy. But that's all right. The next substantive

¹⁶ Two and a half years later, Corrington, for a presentation at the National Space Society in Houston, Texas would describe himself as follows: “I was a student of literature and philosophy, a novelist by choice, a screen and television writer by necessity, who had become entranced by the legend of modern physics, that new journey of Argonauts bent on discovering the structure of the universe.” “A Wind is Rising and the Rivers Flow,” Opening Address, 2nd Annual Space Industrialization Conference, National Space Society, Houston, Texas, March, 1983. Houston Talk, Corrington Papers, Centenary College [John William Corrington, *A Wind is Rising and the Rivers Flow*, 26 Legal Stud. F. 767 (2002)].

¹⁷ There is no small irony in the thought of John William Corrington having a “second-class mind.” Everyone who knew or encountered Bill Corrington found him intellectually engaging and to possess a first-rate mind. William Mills, who had known Corrington from the time they were college students at Centenary College, and who organized the collection of essays celebrating Corrington's work, says:

He had the quickest mind of anyone I knew at Centenary and had read more than any other student. I suspect John Willingham [another of Corrington's Centenary teachers] considers him the best mind to pass through his classroom. If he is to have a biographer, the story of his life will be very much the life of a mind, one lived among books, reading them and writing them.

William Mills, “John William Corrington: Southern Man of Letters,” in *Southern Man of Letters*, 1-6, at 1 [26 Legal Stud. F. 891 (2002)]. Corrington's self-assessment makes sense only when one considers the nature of his reading, and the esteem and honor he accorded his intellectual fore-fathers.

question to be considered is what I'll do next. I'd like to do a novel, but I'm not certain the emotional impulse is there. I've mentally put aside *The Man Who Slept with Women*¹⁸ The problem with knowledge and experience is that, sooner or later, you tend to take it serious. When you do, it begins to chip away at the mythical structure out of which you create. Maybe it was law school—though I don't believe it—that began to rupture my own hold on a mythical world¹⁹ from which I could draw the energy to write large-form fiction.²⁰ “Or most likely, it is simply a function of age—assuming one is not a permanent adolescent. Somewhere along the line what one picks up intellectually *has* to seep through and influence one's most profound emotional life. Thank God I came across the work of Eric Voegelin.²¹ It has preserved my faith and

¹⁸ Corrington would eventually return to the novel and it would be published in 1984 under the title, *Shad Sentell*. See John William Corrington, SHAD SENTELL (New York: Congdon & Weed, 1984).

¹⁹ Corrington, in talking with an interviewer about law school (which he called a “sally into the world of rationality”) contends that he has, in contrast to the kind of mind which surrounds him in law school, a “mythological mind.” Parrill Interview, *supra* note *, at 193 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, at 684 (2002)]. Corrington attended Tulane Law School from 1972 to 1975 and upon graduation took up the practice of law in a small personal injury law firm in New Orleans. He practiced law from 1975 to 1978.

²⁰ Corrington leaves little doubt but that he was after something quite serious in his fictional writing. It was a way for him to both escape and engage the “idiocy” of his own time, a way to honor those he cared and loved (living and dead), a way to live (and demonstrate) his talents, and finally, a way into a participation in the myth(s) that stand beyond everyday reality.

²¹ In a short, undated handwritten note, Corrington describes his introduction to Voegelin's work:

I arrived at LSU one year after professor Voegelin had left to return to Munich where he would found the Institute for Politics. But his presence was still pervasive there [at LSU], and soon I was reading *Israel & Revelation* and the rest of *Order & History*. That reading remains the single most important spiritual and intellectual experience of my life. Considering the usual level of philosophical and historical illiteracy which is general in our time, I was, by luck, and through the efforts of one of my college teachers, Dr. Edward Murray Clark, possessed of a decent knowledge of scripture and church history—even having read some small portion of the Fathers. Again, by accident, and because of a college friend, Jerome Hill, I had a taste for and a wafer-thin knowledge of the classics.

It is chilling to contemplate that I was one of a handful of faculty members at LSU—or elsewhere, for that matter—who was at least marginally equipped to grasp and to be awed by professor Voegelin's mind and work.

“Toward the Skandalon,” two pg. handwritten note. Corrington Papers, Centenary College. In a 1981 interview Corrington, asked about the influence of Voegelin on his work, noted that:

Professor Voegelin had taught at LSU when I was an undergraduate there, but I didn't know him. When I went to LSU as a faculty member, I was reading

my sense of a reality above and beyond the criminal idiocy of the late 20th century.²² Voegelin was the instrument by which my own vision was raised above the contemporary, above mere contingency—to the level of sensing the movement of the Holy Ghost through time and across space. I am a living part of a mystery that no mind can plumb.

manuscripts for the LSU Press. They couldn't pay you money so they gave you books. The director of the LSU Press at that time, Dick Wentworth, offered me the three volumes of *Order and History*. . . . So I went home and I read *Israel and Revelation* and thought it was the greatest book I'd read on any subject, and then read the other two and spent the rest of my time finding everything I could by Professor Voegelin. I would say his work is probably the greatest influence on my intellectual life.

Ross Interview, *supra* note *, at 115 [26 Legal Stud. F. 695, 696 (2002)]. Learning of Voegelin's death, Corrington notes that "Voegelin sent me back to the symbols and experiences from which culture—particularly political culture—arises." Joyce Corrington attributes to Voegelin, her husband's "shift from the concreteness of history to the abstraction of metaphysics. . . ." Joyce H. Corrington, "The Evolution of Bill Corrington's Metaphysics," in *Southern Man of Letters*, 106-116, at 110 [26 Legal Stud. F. 659, 663 (2002)]. Corrington himself said that after working his way through Voegelin's work, "the world looked different, less arbitrary and more intelligible." Ross Interview, 26 Legal Stud. F. at 697. For a more detailed examination of Corrington's work with Voegelin's writings, see Ellis Sandoz, "Bill Corrington's Philosophical Quest," in *Southern Man of Letters*, at 116-133.

Corrington's writings on Voegelin include: *Philosophies of History: An Interview with Eric Voegelin*, 3 (2) New Orleans Rev. 135 (1973)(interview conducted by Corrington & Peter Cangelosi); "Introduction," to *A Symposium on Eric Voegelin*, 10 (3) Denver Quart. 93 (1975)(Corrington edited the Symposium); *Order and History: Breaking the Program*, 10 (3) Denver Quart. 115 (1975); "Order and Consciousness / Consciousness and History: The New Program of Voegelin," in Stephen A. McKnight (ed.), *ERIC VOEGELIN'S SEARCH FOR ORDER IN HISTORY* 155-207 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); *A Rebirth of Philosophical Thought*, 20 Southern Rev. 738 (1984)(reviewing *The Voegelinian Revolution: A Biographical Introduction and Eric Voegelinian's Thought: A Critical Appraisal*); Robert Anthony Pascal, James Lee Babin, & John William Corrington (eds.), *THE NATURE OF THE LAW AND RELATED LEGAL WRITINGS* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991)(Vol. 27, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*).

²² Voegelin's intellectual writings helped Corrington deal with his firm conviction that he was living in a century of what he called "criminal idiocy":

We seem to have reached a point in our national development where we are prepared to do anything rather than think, anything except examine our collapsing culture and try to determine what it is telling us—anything but face the reality that we have turned away from the heights and depths of life itself and settled into a kind of spiritual and intellectual fog from which no judgments worthy of the name can issue, and into which every new insight seems to vanish without a trace.

"The Mystery of Writing," *supra* note 10 [26 Legal Stud. F. 503, 515 (2002)].

I am an integral part of the mystical body of Christ.²³ My nature as an 'individual,' as a 'personality' is real, but not significant. My significance relates to my impact upon the array of history."

²³ The references to the "Holy Ghost and "mystical body of Christ" should not be read to imply a fundamentalist religiosity. Corrington received an A in "Bible as Literature" and an F in the non-credit course, "Religious Life" (which I assume is what we once called chapel) as an undergraduate at Centenary College. College Transcript. Corrington Papers, Centenary College. The religious language Corrington uses in his journals masks rather than reveals the complex nature of his theological perspective.

Corrington, raised a Catholic, in a 1968 interview of the theologian, Thomas Altizer observed that:

Most Catholics of any subtlety have always made a distinction between the Church and the Faith, that is between the hierarchy, the bureaucracy, and the certainty of Christ's presence and God's grace. To such a Catholic most of the hierarchy's alarms and excursions, prohibitions and caveats are of no great significance. The Faith, in a word, is too important to be left to clerics.

"Thomas Altizer Talks with NOR's Editor-at-Large," 1 (1) *New Orleans Rev.* 26, 28 (1968)(Corrington served as editor-at-large for the *New Orleans Review* for its first five issues).

Joyce Corrington notes that her husband had "lost his faith" while a high school student but rediscovered it while a student at Centenary College through his interaction with Father Cornelius O'Brien, a young and intelligent Irish priest. Joyce and Bill Corrington were married in the Church, their four children were baptized, and they attended Mass fairly regularly until the 1970s. It was, Joyce Corrington says, in Bill's conversations with Owen Bradley, an attorney at the firm where he practiced law, where he realized that unlike Bradley, he attached no particular importance to individual immortality. Then, as he began to read Indian philosophy, Corrington moved away from Catholicism to a different kind of spirituality—God became the Divine. But he never lost, Joyce Corrington says, "the feeling of a close, personal connection to 'that One, sensed, not seen,' to which 'we owe our very best.'" As Corrington grew older he drew away from the forms of the Catholic "religion" in which he had been reared, but his spirituality and love of the Divine remained real to him. Joyce Corrington, personal communication to the author, February 15, 2002.

Joyce Corrington refers to a journal entry in which Bill wrote: "We have distinct personalities, but the deepest interior is likely One. It is to that One, sensed, not seen, like a shadow passing over the grass as one looks elsewhere, that we owe our very best." Journal entry dated April 23, 1983. And finally, she notes still another Journal entry that provides Bill's own summary of the matter: "Nothing lasts forever—except the love of the divine and one's dedication to that ultimate reality that can never be lost, never forgotten, and who it is death to ignore or put aside." Journal entry dated March 14, 1986.

For Joyce Corrington's brief published reflections on her husband's religious stance, see, Joyce Corrington, "The Evolution of Bill Corrington's Metaphysics," in *Southern Man of Letters*, 106-116, at 114-116 [26 *Legal Stud. F.* 659, 667-668 (2002)]. For Corrington's extended commentary on the role of Christian symbolism in our understanding of *humanitas* (and the humanities), see, "The Recovery of the Humanities," *supra* note 6.

"I think my hatred of liberalism is essentially founded in its incredibly short-term view. The measure of a society by liberal standards is the individual; I think that is no measure at all. The true measure is the ultimate contribution the society makes to the ongoingness of humanity."

"Our society has lost track of those values which transcend the single life—and thus make life itself worthwhile."

7 September 1980

"It is possible to reduce an honest and decent young man or woman to a practical [Machiavellian] with no effort at all."

8 September 1980
New Orleans

[Corrington, musing again, about the problems he and his wife were experienced with their writing for the TV series *Texas*]: "Perhaps I should have behaved myself and stayed in academia—but I don't think so.²⁴ My boredom threshold gets lower as [my] age increases."

9 September 1980
Shreveport

[On being invited to Centenary College to take part in the awarding of a distinguished professorship]: "I have always loved Shreveport and Centenary better than they loved me. Which is all right. I needed them desperately; they didn't need me—or at least had no notion that they did. Lee²⁵ and Centenary and Shreveport always sensed an alienness in me that made them uncomfortable. They are proud of what I've accomplished, love to have me visit—but I think they're not anxious that I return."

²⁴ See Journal entry of September 4, 1980, *supra*.

²⁵ Lee Morgan was a professor of English at Centenary College. Professor Morgan taught at Centenary for 43 years; he retired in May, 1997. See generally Centenary College Department of English (ed.), *RATIONALITY AND THE LIBERAL SPIRIT: A Festschrift Honoring Ira Lee Morgan* (Shreveport: Centenary, 1997).

Anyhow, Shreveport is a mythological construct of my mind.²⁶ For my own purposes, I make it warmer, more upright, more linked to the antique virtues than it ever was; wilder, more insane, more desperate at its fringes than it ever was. Everyone does one or both in relation to his past as age comes on. It is simply that the artist knows better how to do it and make it stick.”

“I’ll never understand why I feel better in this place [Shreveport], on this soil, than anywhere else.”²⁷

²⁶ Corrington was not oblivious to the importance of Shreveport in his writing and he addressed the phenomenon often. In one of his presentations at Centenary College he told the student audience:

I’ve been gone from Shreveport for almost thirty years, but, as you can see, Shreveport has never left me. It remains the subject and matrix of my work, and it always will. Not because my recollections of it are without pain, or because I lived a golden untroubled childhood here. It wasn’t that way. But the experiences I had here, the places I remember, the people I loved—and even the ones I despised—have been as useful to me, as evocative, as Paris of the 1880s and ‘90s was to Marcel Proust. Not in a direct sense, certainly. I have never written a *roman à clef* about Shreveport, using real people with fake names. Yet at the same time all my characters live here. They fitted smoothly and anonymously into the interstices of time and space in the period between 1863 and 1960.

“The Mystery of Writing,” *supra* note 1 [26 Legal Stud. F. 503, at 510 (2002)].

Reflecting on Faulkner and his relationship to Oxford, Mississippi, Corrington writes: It is clear enough . . . that the town did its part in shaping, feeding Faulkner’s talent by the simple expedient of taking him on its own terms. When he required companionship, a hunt, someone to drink with, they were there, old and trusted friends. When he was deep in that other world, that Mississippi county that occupied neither time nor space beyond the confines of his heart and mind and the pages of his books, then that was all right, too, and no one held his coolness against him when, after such a journey, he returned.

John William Corrington, *Book Review*, 19 Georgia Rev. 485, 486 (1965)(reviewing *William Faulkner of Oxford*). Corrington’s Shreveport was frequently credited for doing its part in shaping and feeding his own talent, but seems never to have become the place of solace and companionship that Corrington suggest that Faulkner found in Oxford.

²⁷ Shreveport figures prominently in Corrington’s fiction and it became for him, over the years, not only a “mythological construct” but a place he physically longed to be. And while Shreveport may have become mythic, it was no mystery to Corrington as what the place meant to him. “I know what it means to be from somewhere, to belong to a place and a people . . .” Shreveport and its people, New Orleans and Louisiana, are central to Corrington’s fiction (and to his life) “because those are the people I know in the same way I know myself.” “The Mystery of Writing,” *supra* note 1 [26 Legal Stud. F. 503, at 515, 516 (2002)]. It was this sense of a relation to a place and its people that made it possible “to shrug off the fads and the tackiness, the poor workmanship and stupidity of contemporary writing, even if, from time to time, you are forced to engaged in it.” Corrington’s devotion to and mythical reconstruction of Shreveport lie “at the very center of [his] serious writing.” *Id.* Corrington would, over the years, attempt to describe how Shreveport had

"I am a man of place; connected emotionally to Northwest Louisiana, in spirit at least. I may never come home to stay until I'm buried here, but that won't change anything. I still function best with that myth, and my interest is in functioning, not in creating documentaries to some grubby truth."

13 September 1980
[New Orleans]

"I love being back with Jo and the boys, but I wish so much that we could all be back in Shreveport—on land just out of town. If we could keep working a few years, we could go back with an independent income, work at Centenary, write, and live a full rich life as nearly removed from the 20th century as possible.

Perhaps I should set down the reasons I [despise] this age so much. I suppose I owe myself that much, lest the future see me as simply someone who was incapable of taking pleasure in this 'golden age.'

I hate this age because it is decadent, vicious, corrupt. I could have lived in the 19th century because it was barbarous, and I love guns and would have done battle with pleasure; I could have managed nicely in the 18th, because there were possibilities of civilization. But in this age, the great world of the 18th—especially in music—is over, and the barbarism of the 19th is past."

[Corrington, while in New Orleans, receives a call from an old friend in New Iberia who is putting together an oil deal which] "will put him out ahead."

become a "mythic place" in his writing, but it was, even for Corrington something of a great mystery.

Corrington moved with his family to Shreveport in 1942; he was ten years old. The family home was at 712 Unadilla Street. Corrington, in an undated note titled "Anamnesis," describes his first memory of Shreveport as follows:

Shreveport, 1942. We have just arrived in town. I think we were staying at the Caddo Hotel. It is chill, but bright and sunny. I think it must be November. My mother, father, sister and I are walking somewhere, and I see a newspaper. Toni Jo Henry has been executed for murder in Lake Charles. She was wearing black pumps. She was the first woman to be electrocuted in Louisiana. [?]

Typescript, undated. Corrington Papers, Centenary College.

"I hope it's true, because Billy²⁸ should succeed—and because I'd love to move into oil as my next business. I'm tired of writing and fooling around.²⁹ Oil would be a great *finale*—followed by a quiet life fishing³⁰ and writing"

[On Walker Percy and the President of Centenary's request that Corrington talk to Percy about giving a lecture or a commencement speech at Centenary:] "I have no idea why he's so generally admired. Maybe I should have had folks in my novels who are confused, strung out, and ready to say the rosary to solve their problems. What the hell, Walker is a decent man."³¹

²⁸ A long-time friend, Billy Daniels.

²⁹ This is one of the rare instances in which Corrington indicates he is "tired" of writing. See also Journal entry dated September 10, 1981, where Corrington questions whether he should continue writing and then in a Journal entry two days later berates himself for raising the idea. Corrington may have often exasperated at the writing he did for a living—writing soap operas—but he seems, notwithstanding this journal notation, to have never wavered in his commitment to writing serious fiction.

³⁰ Corrington, in a 1968 letter to his colleague and friend, Barbara Steinberg, wrote: "I have given myself over fully and without reservation to fishing for bass. Called green trout around here. In times of lunacy, the sane withdraw until the nuts kill off enough of each other so that during the lull, sanity can be heard again." Corrington letter to Barbara S. [Barbara Steinberg], dated November 18, 1968. Steinberg was Corrington's graduate assistant when he taught at the University of California-Berkeley in the spring, 1968. He later arranged a teaching position for her in the English Department at Loyola-New Orleans. Steinberg is now a lawyer in Chicago.

Some fifteen years later, Corrington would write: "In the swampy fingers of Bistineau or Blue Lake, on the Tchefuncta River in St. Tammany Parish, I have drifted for hours in the loving tension called bass-fishing." John William Corrington, *Are Southerners Different?* 4 (1) *Southern Partisan* 16 (1984) [26 *Legal Stud. F.* 733 (2002)].

Fishing figures prominently in many of Corrington's stories, in particular, "A Day in Thy Court." See "A Day in Thy Court," in *Collected Stories*, *supra* note 13, at 412-433 [26 *Legal Stud. F.* 335 (2002)]. For Corrington's view of "A Day in Thy Court," see his journal entry dated November 24, 1980, *infra*.

³¹ Walker Percy reputedly told Corrington he was the prototype for Lancelot Andrews Lamar, the lawyer protagonist in Percy's *Lancelot* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977). Personal communication with Professor Stephen A. McKnight, University of Florida, August 29, 2000. Joyce Corrington confirms the suspicion, but was not present for any such conversation. Corrington and Percy were at one time neighbors in Covington, Louisiana, and while they got along well enough socially, and respected each other, they had decidedly different temperaments, which resulted neither of them showing great enthusiasm for the other's work. Joyce Corrington, email message to the author, April 3, 2002.

14 September 1980

[Corrington, with a collection of stories being published by LSU Press, *The Southern Reporter* (1981), begins to think about other writing projects.] "I'm going to have to try to get down to it and do some more stories. I'm down at the end of the string now and I don't have any solidly worked-out notions."

15 November 1980

"I begin to wonder if I still have the capacity for serious work. Could I write a novel if I had the time and the solitude? What is it that I want to say? There is still the meaning of the past; perhaps also its on-going clash with the present."

23 November 1980

"I'm reading proof of *The Southern Reporter*,³² and in terms of style, I'm not happy with it. Some of it is good, but in "Nothing Succeeds," the style is quite bad, repetitive, graceless. I may call Beverly tomorrow at LSU Press³³ and find out what revisions would cost. This could be my last book for quite a while, and I'd like it to be as good as I can make it—even if that costs a little.

I'm going to set aside some time one day to revise all the stories. Not to reshape them ideationally, but to take advantage of some growth that may have taken place over the years in terms of style. I've always been a poor and lazy revisor. This is the first time it's caught up with me. I've always felt that virtually any material or point of view could produce really fine literature if the style, the writing, was of a fine enough sort.³⁴

³² John William Corrington, *THE SOUTHERN REPORTER: STORIES* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981)(a collection of stories, three of which—"Nothing Succeeds," "A Day in Thy Court," and "The Southern Reporter"—involve lawyers).

³³ Beverly Jarrett was Associate Director and Editor-in-Chief of the LSU Press; she is presently Director of the University of Missouri Press.

³⁴ Corrington did not, eventually, undertake the revision of his stories. He did, however, make the following observation about the "style" of his writing:

Well, I made one decision very early: you will never have a style. You will burnish the instrument, you will read every word of every significant writer, including translations, you will even learn a little bit of Greek to have some sense of language, and then you will serve the material with that instrument. You will bring the instrument to the material and you will determine who the narrator

Occasionally, a story will carry itself, but not often, and the kind of things I like to deal with calls for an arsenal of style, or styles.”

25 November 1980

“Beverly, as I suspected, was sweet and considerate, saying I should make such changes as to me seemed good. I’m reworking the proofs now, making dictional and factual changes. In some ways, “Nothing Succeeds” is the sloppiest story I’ve ever written. It could have been made tighter. But that was then, and this is now. Don’t go trying to revise the substance of the past. Sufficient unto the day—keep planning for the next one to be better. There’s always time for one more good one. The great enemy is that depression [and] sense of hopelessness that saps away the energy that drives the story far below the level of consciousness. One has to put that aside by virtue of one’s interior monologue, the way one speaks to God and to oneself. I have to get past *The Man Who Slept With Women*³⁵ which has been inside in inchoate form too long to toss aside.

should be and how the characters will speak and so forth to the limit of your capacity. You will not take the material, as e. e. cummings or Hemingway or even Faulkner did, and twist the material until it suits your instrument. In a sense, I think my arrogance was greater than that of a man who perfects a style. I was determined, and I hope it’s true to this day, that if you were to read four novels without an author’s name on them, you could say, those are all four terrific novels, these must be four interesting writers—that you would not identify them as the work of the same man. That is what I would hope. I don’t know if it’s true or not, but that was the hope. No novel would produce the instant recognition of, Oh, Corrington.

Parrill Interview, *supra* note *, at 184 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, at 674 (2002)].

In a letter to Charles Bukowski some years prior to this observation, Corrington had noted: “You will notice in what I write I hardly ever make the same mistake twice. I keep finding new ways to fail. For a writer, I think this is the method of success. So long as you don’t believe you have found anything, you don’t get anxious to keep what you haven’t found.” Letter to Charles Bukowski, dated December 3, 1962.

³⁵ The novel which Corrington refers to in his journals, *The Man Who Slept With Women*, was eventually published under the title *Shad Sentell*. See John William Corrington, *SHAD SENTELL* (New York: Congdon & Weed, 1984). As late as an “Advance Reading Copy,” the novel was titled, *Shad, The Man Who Slept With Women*. Congdon & Weed, Inc., Advance Reading Copy (library of the author). Corrington was clearly fond of the original title and was not pleased to have the book published using a different one: “[*The Man Who Slept With Women*] was to be the name of the novel from day one. There is no more psychologically painful thing than to have a book in your mind and to write it and to have a publisher say, no, you can’t use that title.” Parrill Interview, *supra* note *, at 198 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, at 690 (2002)]. The title change was requested, according to Joyce Corrington, because of a then popular Burt Reynolds’ movie titled, “The Man Who Loved Women” (1983)(directed by Blake Edwards).

It can be good and useful to get on to the next one . . . if I can just do it on a solid regular basis, using the story—revised—as a basis.

Shad is fully developed in my mind. Sonny is not.³⁶ I think they be Sam Lachle³⁷ and me. That would be good. I'd like to leave a memorial to Sam. He deserves it. Even at this remove, his memory is warm and special and good. His friendship was immensely important to me.”

9:45 p.m.

“Just finished proofs for *The Southern Reporter*. It's a strange book about men in desperate circumstances. The best story in terms of substance seems to me to be *A Day in Thy Court*. The juxtaposition of fishing with the suppression of remembered love works well. I remember starting out to do something like *Big Two-Hearted River*.³⁸ I think I may have done something better. More dimensions. The stuff about fishing is just as true, through I skipped all the Ian Fleming naming of things. Somehow H & H's and Rebel minnows didn't seem required.

All in all, while the book will receive no critical attention—none of my books has—it is one more piece in the pattern. Now I'm out of work done, and have to start again. The next story, if I can get a narrative line I like, is *Taking Pains*—about the old black woman at the old folks home.”³⁹

26 November 1980

“A story, more than any other form, represents the expression of a problem—not in a social sense, but in a philosophical sense. Social problems are inherently uninteresting in art. Art probes the heart, not the appetites. What must be found is the stance of the heart in every cir-

³⁶ Shad and Sonny are characters in Corrington's then novel-in-progress, *Shad Sentell*.

³⁷ Sam Lachle was a lifelong friend of Corrington's whom he knew from his youth in Shreveport. In a letter to Charles Bukowski, Corrington describes Lachle as “[m]y best old pal,” a man who “stood around 240 in his beer days, and he was bad if crossed or fucked with. But he never came on strong from size.” Letter to Charles Bukowski, dated October 2, 1962.

³⁸ See “The Two-Hearted River,” in Ernest Hemingway, *THE NICK ADAMS STORIES* (New York: Scribner, 1972). See also Kenji Nakajima, “BIG TWO-HEARTED RIVER” AS THE EXTREME OF HEMINGWAY'S NIHILISM (Tokyo: Eichosha Publishing Co., 1979).

³⁹ “Taking Pains” was eventually retitled “Asylum” and while completed, remained unpublished at the time of Corrington's death.

cumstance. Nothing else has artistic merit—hence the final tragic failure of Lawrence Ferlinghetti,⁴⁰ who gave up the ‘fantastic fooly heart’ in favor of Castro.⁴¹

“Strong as my political feelings might be,⁴² I’ve never consciously tried or wanted to convert them into stories or poems. There has to be a form of human expression which ignores the short-term passions and gets on with the real questions: the ones that have always existed, and which always will.

⁴⁰ Lawrence Ferlinghetti, a preeminent Beat poet, founded the “City Lights,” a poetry magazine, which would lend its name to Ferlinghetti’s San Francisco book store, City Lights, which he opened (with Peter D. Martin) in 1953. For those unfamiliar with Ferlinghetti’s work, *A Coney Island of the Mind* is a good place to begin. See Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *A CONEY ISLAND OF THE MIND* (New York: New Directions, 1968)(1958). In the 1960s and 1970s, Ferlinghetti’s *A Coney Island of the Mind* was reputedly one of the most popular poetry books in the U.S. It has now been translated into nine languages, and something like 1,000,000 copies of the book have been printed. Ferlinghetti, named San Francisco’s first poet laureate in 1998, is now eighty-three. He continues to operate City Lights and give poetry readings.

⁴¹ See Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *ONE THOUSAND FEARFUL WORDS FOR FIDEL CASTRO* (San Francisco: City Lights Publication, 1961). Corrington, well-versed in Ferlinghetti poetry, had early in his academic career written a scholarly essay on Ferlinghetti. See John William Corrington, “Lawrence Ferlinghetti and the Painter’s Eye,” in Donald E. Stanford (ed.), *NINE ESSAYS IN MODERN LITERATURE* 107-116 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965).

⁴² When Corrington got around to talking politics in his *Journal*, infrequent as it may have been, he always seemed to be writing under a full head of steam. Cool and methodical in his writing generally, he was far less so (as are so many of us) in his musings on politics. On political matters Corrington tended to bluster and rage, especially about “liberals” and the degradations he associated with the North and its politics. See *e.g.*, *Journal* entries dated September 6, 1980, *supra* and November 26, 1980, *infra*. Yet, Corrington did not intend for his novels and stories to serve as political tracts. He told his students in a Twentieth Century Novel course: “Let me say quickly that I do not regard the novel as a kind of social remedy, a tool in the class-struggle and so on.” “The Twentieth Century Novel,” typescript course notes, Corrington Papers, Centenary College. Corrington went on to note that while “every work of art is polemical,” art “urges a whole universe of change, not simply alterations in detail.” Corrington here implies that politics is about details rather than our larger being, our existence.

Art demands that there be proportion, depth, and meaning in life. With a work of art, social consciousness lacking a psychic center, a schema which draws all experience into itself and relates every part to every other, merely exacerbates our confusion. Unless I am mistaken, literature has some kind of resistance-element built in which rejects any complexus of facts which have no bearing on a truth. A novel based in existential circumstances has very little life-expectancy—unless the circumstance itself is fundamental enough in its ramifications to yield up multiple interpretations, manifold tissues of meaning.

Some of the titles I want to use are “The Prison Gods,”⁴³ “Virgil Kane is the Name,” “1983”—which refers to the Civil Rights Statute, 42 USC 1983—, “The Civil Code,” “All My Trials.”⁴⁴ I have a draft of “The Absolute Vices” that I have to work through. The style is good, as is the title. But it doesn’t work as it stands, making revision necessary.⁴⁵

I think we all work from a myth-structure: someplace we’ve been or someplace we’re going. My own has been thinned out through the years. The present epoch is so disgusting that it’s hard to get hold of a vision of reality worth writing about. In a sense, the myth one writes from must be total: there can be no emotional or spiritual loose ends lying about. You have to be able to give at least a provisional answer to every legitimate question from within the myth. Hardly a structure can be conceived of today which fulfills such requirements. It is not simply that the past secedes and the future is bleak; it is that the past has been largely repudiated—even by those who evoke it—and that the future shows little promise in a spiritual sense. It is dingy, a ‘threadbare millennium’ as Teilhard de Chardin said.⁴⁶

Not that it has to be that way. We should be looking forward to the stars, but the liberal—and some conservative—scum⁴⁷ is determined to keep us earthbound, solving earthly problems. There is no problem: we all die. It would be desirable if, despite this, the species moved on, determined of its destiny, and to hell with the stragglers. That is not going to

⁴³ Corrington did put “The Prison Gods” to use as the title of a novel, a draft of which he completed before his death. “The Prison Gods” manuscript. Corrington Papers, Centenary College.

⁴⁴ “All My Trials” became the title of the collection of two novellas, “Decoration Day” and “The Risi’s Wife,” published by the University of Arkansas Press in 1987. See John William Corrington, *ALL MY TRIALS* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1987). “All My Trials” was the title that Corrington himself used for “Decoration Day” until it was adopted as the book title. In a 1962 letter to Charles Bukowski he noted that: “The past is a victory. The present is a trial.” Letter dated November 26, 1962. Corrington probably adopted the title of the book from the old folk hymn “All My Trials.” The hymn has been recorded by Joan Baez, Harry Belafonte, Glenn Yarabrough, Odetta, The Kingston Trio, and Nana Mouskouri.

⁴⁵ Corrington continued to work on “The Absolute Vices” but did not publish it before his death in 1988. With the permission of Joyce Corrington, the story is now being published in the *Legal Studies Forum*. See John William Corrington, *The Absolute Vices*, 26 *Legal Stud. F.* 395 (2002).

⁴⁶ See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *THE FUTURE OF MAN* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964)(Norman Denny trans.)

⁴⁷ Corrington was passionate in his belief that liberals had lead the country astray. See *e.g.*, his commentary in his Journal entry dated December 30, 1980, *infra*.

happen. At least, not in the United States Sentimentality dominates, and the stragglers, the evolutionary culls rate.”

1 December 1980

“I find I dream and daydream a lot of going home to Shreveport.⁴⁸ Maybe that’s how dying feels; the urge to return to what we sense as the source. For better or worse, that is Shreveport. I was unhappy there a lot, and happy. But most of all, I managed to find myself a place. Centenary College was a large part of it; Otis & Sam⁴⁹ & others, too. What people need most of all is a place of their own that they can respect, and which offers some sense of stability.”

“More than anything, I want open space and open time in my life. I used to think I was an exceptionally lazy person, but then I came to realize that it wasn’t sloth—it was the need for contemplation, for dream-time. Reading,⁵⁰ creating stories in my mind, playing through them: heroic,

⁴⁸ In an essay presented at Centenary College in 1968, Corrington says:

[W]henver I come home I think of those heartbreaking yet exultant lines which conclude *Swann’s Way*: “The places that we have known belong now only to the little world of space on which we map them for our own convenience. None of them was ever more than a thin slice, held between the contiguous impressions that composed our life at that time; remembrance of a particular form is but regret for a particular moment; and houses, roads, avenues are fugitive, alas, as are the years.”

“The Academic Revolution: Work in Progress,” Corrington Papers, Centenary College. *Swann’s Way* is the first volume of Marcel Proust’s seven-part novel, *Remembrance of Things Past*, which was published in 1913.

⁴⁹ Otis Finch and Sam Lachle were friends of Corrington’s from Shreveport. On his friend Lachle, see Journal entry dated November 25, 1980, *supra*.

⁵⁰ In a letter to William Gray (a lawyer), Corrington argues that “We need poets, novelists, and critics who can read and having read write intelligently.” Letter to William Gray, Esq., dated May 16, 1964. In a presentation at Centenary College on “The Mystery of Writing,” Corrington contends that:

No writer is better than the sum of what he has read. Despite what people think, writing of the serious kind is not done in isolation—unless it is done badly. You are responsible to that long shadowy line of men and women who have gone before you, and who know that language is God’s special gift to our species, and that the world is sacred and should be realized as such by those who have the audacity to try to use it for something more than calling the dog, scolding the children, or lying about where you caught that 8-pound bass. To read is to educate yourself. Nothing that you read is ever lost or useless.

One can even profit from reading junk. After reading something by Sidney Sheldon or Tommy Thompson, you have at least seen now not to do it. Then, turning to Joseph Conrad or Henry James, you’ll have a deeper appreciation of their accomplishment—and a sense of how far you still have to go.

romantic, ending at some point of rest. The human spirit needs such time. Fishing was enough for adventure; a walk in fresh clean woods enough for realigning my senses with the reality of God's world.⁵¹ Shreveport was never all these things, but I have sculpted into it all that I would have had it be. What was and still is, is a place where people knew and acknowledged me. Even now, I expect, there are those who remember me without fondness, but they remember me . . . as I do them."

2 December 1980

"One comes to like Shad [the central character in the novel to be published under the title *Shad Sentell*] for his honesty, his animal spirits. He lives his life without props—in the sense of stage-props. Shad will do almost anything for anyone, but you must not expect anything from him. He always does what his work demands of him. He is the complete pro—and it gets him killed. But he rejects any proper social role. In those areas, he is not only not a pro—he is an inventor, an explorer. His sexuality is a personal possession. He would subscribe to Mae West's response to Cary Grant. Q. Haven't you ever found a man who could make you happy? A. Sure. Lots of 'em."⁵²

3 December 1980

"Life plays strange tricks on us all, but none so strange as on those with no sense of history."

Handwritten notes written for a presentation of "The Mystery of Writing" at Centenary College. Corrington Papers, Centenary College. Corrington attributes this idea that writers must read to his days as a college student:

In my third year of college, I learned the fundamental lesson about writing. If you want to write, read. Read everything. By the time I had graduated, I must have read two-thirds of the Modern Library, bought book-by-book on credit from J.B.'s Bookshop through the kindness of J.B. and Henry Meyer.

Id.

⁵¹ Corrington would later put this advice to an audience at Centenary College: "It is best to respect it [reality], to move with it when you can, to find ways in which you and reality can work together." "The Mystery of Writing," *supra* note 1 [26 Legal Stud. F. 503, 503 (2002)].

⁵² Cary Grant and Mae West, in *She Done Him Wrong* (Paramount, 1933)(directed by Lowell Sherman). Grant and West also appeared together in *I'm No Angel* (Paramount, 1933).

8 December 1980.

1:12 am

“Another script done. But not with much pleasure. Seems I’ve stopped enjoying it. Which has little to do with anything. That’s where the money is. I’d rather fish.”

11 December 1980

“Art Dula called tonight.⁵³ Said he’d have a job for me any time I want to start practicing law again. That’s certainly a possibility.⁵⁴ If the TV and movie writing goes sour, I’d just as soon head for Texas, and do some law. No need doing one thing forever. Anyhow, Houston would be a good town to fool around in. Nothing happens in New Orleans. At least nothing that’s very interesting to me. It has no intellectual life, very little cultural life, and no future possibilities.”

“I think I’m getting restless. Maybe bored. I’d like to go off to the country and just write, but that’s not really possible. Hence, I have to work, and I’m tired of what we’re doing. I’d almost rather teach school.

This is not a healthy attitude, and I’m going to have to change it. Life is good. It’s absurd to gripe when things are going well. One should save the complaints for hard times—and these are sure to come.”

⁵³ Arthur Dula and Corrington were first year law students together at Tulane. Dula now practices law in Houston. Corrington, in a lecture which Dula helped arrange, described his friend, Dula, as “a chemist and all-round student of the sciences” who “found himself becoming interested, if not intrigued, by history, philosophy, and literature.” In contrast, Corrington describes himself as “a student of literature and philosophy, a novelist by choice, a screen and television writer by necessity who . . . became entranced by the legend of modern physics, that new journey of scientific Argonauts bent on discovering the structure of the universe.” “Houston Talk,” undated, Corrington Papers, Centenary College (titled by Joyce Corrington, “A Wind is Rising and the Rivers Flow”). See *supra* note 16.

⁵⁴ There is little evidence that Bill Corrington took seriously the notion that he might again take up the practice of law, although he would sometimes muse about doing so. See Journal entries dated January 25, 1981 and August 20, 1981, *infra*. After he graduated from Tulane Law School in 1975, he practiced in New Orleans for three years. When he left law, he seems to have left it permanently, and without, as suggested here, any serious thought that he might again practice law.

17 December 1980

"I have always felt that whatever creativity I had was directly related to my love of and presence in the South. Surely that may be an illusion. But perhaps it isn't. Why should there not be a direct connection between what a man is, and where he is?"

29 December 1980

New Orleans

"A quite pleasant Christmas. The trip to New York was exhausting, but worthwhile.⁵⁵ At a record store, I found a recording of Mozart's *Apollo & Hyacinthus*, one of his earliest semi-operatic works.⁵⁶ We tried to get tickets to see *Amadeus*, a new play about Mozart, but they were sold out.⁵⁷

I find that Voce and other labels are putting out more and more Rossini⁵⁸ and Donizetti.⁵⁹ Phillips continues to issue new works in its Haydn cycle.⁶⁰ I have a feeling of humility when I realize that I'm hearing works that generations of opera-lovers and musicians never heard. It seems the National Endowment [for the Arts] should undertake to see that the whole of existing human culture is permanently recorded, and made available. Whether we like it or not, we have become the great repository of the Western tradition culturally as well as

⁵⁵ The Corringtons frequently traveled to New York, and to California, before permanently moving to California in 1987, because of the demands of their TV writing projects. It was a move that Corrington made with some trepidation.

⁵⁶ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Apollo et Hyacinth* was first performed at the Great Hall, Salzburg University, on May 13, 1767.

⁵⁷ Peter Shaffer, *PETER SHAFFER'S AMADEUS: A PLAY* (New York: Perennial ed., 2001) (1980).

⁵⁸ Gioacchino Antonio Rossini (1792-1868) began his operatic writing at age eighteen and began to receive commissions from Bologna, Venice and Milan.

Rossini's operas, both buffa and seria, showed his mastery of the *bel canto* (beautiful singing) school of composition. With florid lines, vocal embellishments, incredible speed and spontaneity, Rossini created some of the most unforgettable music in the operatic repertoire.

Arizona Opera, "Learn About Opera: Rossini," <http://www.azopera.com/c_bios/rossini.php3> (visited May 13, 2002).

⁵⁹ Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848), like Rossini, was born in Italy. And like Rossini, he was a master of the *bel canto* style opera. Donizetti was for some years a dominate figure in Italian opera. "Learn About Opera: Donizetti," *id.*, at <http://www.a3opera.com/c_bios/donizetta.pRp3> (visited May 13, 2002).

⁶⁰ Joseph Haydn (1732-1809).

politically and militarily. That portion of our heritage is where the secret of morale actually rests. Those who know and treasure the tradition know what it is that the struggle with Marxism is about: the capacity of the human spirit to create, and for that creation to feed the spirit of all mankind.

Here, in the dark guttering end of the year, I look over another year dedicated to making money and little else. It is depressing to always be looking forward to a time where I can study and write again, knowing that day may never come. Still, this is simply the darkness at the end of a cycle. Another is about to begin, and it seems that some things may be better. I look forward to spring & summer. Perhaps I'll find the time and the spiritual energy to start another novel."

30 December 1980

"I've done a rough outline of *The Man Who Slept With Women* [published as *Shad Sentell*].⁶¹ Looks absurd on paper as an outline. That's all right. There'll be another draft, and then the artistry will begin: to recreate Shreveport, and bring Sam Lachle back to life in a role he would have surely loved—*Don Giovanni*.⁶² Perhaps I will find in the writing some portion of what I loved back home there. How can I bring some sense of the stature of that world alive again? To me, it was like Poland today: life at the edge."

"I think we must use the spectre of crime to cleanse our judicial offices once and for all, and remove the latitude of sentencing discretion from them. Spell out the crime, and the punishment, lessen the difficulty of proving the obvious. Make insanity a virtually impossible plea to sustain,⁶³ and try all juveniles over 12 as adults for violent crimes. Return to capital punishment with a vengeance. Answer honestly the contemptible corrupts who seek to justify their own weakness and inability to analyze and act. Say that we have no interest in the deterrence effect of killing killers—except as it applies to the killer

⁶¹ John William Corrington, *SHAD SENTELL* (New York: Congdon & Weed, 1984). An "Advance Reading Copy" of the novel retains a version of Corrington's working titled: "Shad, The Man Who Slept With Women."

⁶² *Don Giovanni* is an opera by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. On Sam Lachle, see Journal entries dated November 25, 1980 and December 1, 1980, *supra*.

⁶³ Corrington returned to this theme and the insanity defense in his unpublished novella, "The Prison Gods." "The Prison Gods" manuscript. Corrington Papers, Centenary College.

himself. Answer . . . 'why do we kill people to prove that killing people is wrong.' We have no desire to prove anything. Our purpose is to kill killers. The wrongness of murder is left to others. We simply state that we will not suffer the animals to dominate this society any longer—nor will we pay for their imprisonment."⁶⁴

8 January 1981

"I have lived [amidst] a storm of insanity called the 20th century."

22 January 1981

[Upon receiving a telephone call and being told he and Joyce have been fired as writers of the TV serial *Texas*]: "This is a time to consider new directions and new projects."

"I may speak to Don Webb, President of Centenary College. If I'm going home at all before they bury me there, now is as good a time as any."

"There's the law, too. I might manage to get into a firm, but that's a grim future, isn't it?"⁶⁵

⁶⁴ The human being as "animal" and killer is considered with far more empathy than this remark might suggest in Corrington's "The Actes and Monuments," in *Collected Stories*, *supra* 13 [26 Legal Stud. F. 181 (2002)]. Of course, the question of how much empathy should be shown a human being who acts like an animal, is open to question.

⁶⁵ See Journal entries dated December 11, 1980, *supra*, and August 20, 1981, *infra*. Commenting on the news of her husband's first trial, Joyce Corrington seems to have had doubts about her husband's future as a litigation lawyer early on in his practice:

I received your letter about your jury being hung. . . . I am glad you had the experience of your first trial. First times are always awfully hard to take. That was a tough case since the liability was sort of passive rather than active. But however it went I am glad everyone thought you did well. I still don't think a constant state of combat is the best way for you to live, for the sake of your family and your writing."

Letter to John William Corrington from Joyce Corrington, dated Tuesday, May 24, 1977 (posted from England where Joyce was traveling with their daughter Shelley).

One striking feature of Corrington's personal writing in his final eight years of life (his journals were written from 1980 to 1988) is how little he had to say about the years he practiced law. With the exception of an unpublished essay occasioned by an invitation to the University of Oklahoma Law School, Corrington was content to deal with his life as a lawyer by way of his fiction rather than as part of his contemplative writing. For Corrington's Oklahoma presentation, see John William Corrington, *Logos, Lex, and Law*, 26 Legal Stud. F. 709 (2002).

25 January 1981

"I'm not interested in TV or film. Both are boring. I want to write books. I want to read. I want to spend time outdoors. I want a life, not a circus. The next few weeks may tell what direction the rest of my life will take."

8 March 1981

"In even the most apparently simple matters, there is a degree of mystery."⁶⁶

15 March 1981

[After an evening out]: "Now we are listening to Wagner. It is good listening to him, listening to the last of the truly great musicians.

I enjoy listening to Strauss, Ravel, and to others. But it is simply silly to suppose that the 20th century musicians are in any way the equivalent of those considered great in the 19th and early 20th centuries."

21 March 1981

"I have come to measure my life differently in the last few years. I use to care about what I *did* more than what I *was*, despite my mother's wise counsel otherwise.

The jolt that 40 gave me in the fall of 1972, and for three years thereafter began the change. I cannot catalogue it day by day because it did not take place episodically. That sort of thing is reserved for drama because it is artificial and must show by convention what in fact happens moment by moment.

⁶⁶ For Corrington, writing was at once simple and complex, and so a mystery within which mystery is to be explored. Corrington once noted that fiction's ultimate virtue is the "rendering of the incommunicable" and in his fiction and his philosophical writings he set about to do exactly that. See John William Corrington, *An American Dreamer*, 18 (1) Chicago Rev. 58, 66 (1965)(book review of Norman Mailer's *The American Dream*).

Certainly Voegelin's work has played a central part in all my intellectual and spiritual development.⁶⁷ Not a single idea, or even the mass of his thought, but his human dimension: how he looks at the world, and what the drama of Humanity means to him.

Strange that I owe Dick Wentworth⁶⁸ so much for having pressed *Order & History*⁶⁹ on me in the early 1960s. It was one of the epochs of my life.

Another such moment—and I am setting out here moments as exceptions which prove the rule—was during a conversation with Owen Bradley⁷⁰ when I realized that 'immortality' as a putative real experience meant nothing to me. I am not the best hypostasizer in the world, and I had never had much of a notion of 'going on forever' as I am. Rather the ultimate realizing symbol for me was being justified, having the sense of having accomplished some portion of God's will—in the words of General Lee, 'the sense of duty faithfully performed.'⁷¹ I began to

⁶⁷ Voegelin's work "pulled together all the things that interested me: theology, literary criticism, symbolic studies, even psychology—everything I knew a little bit about fed into and was made coherent by Voegelin's work." Ross Interview, *supra* note *, at 115 [26 Legal Stud. F. 695, at 697 (2002)]. See note 21, *supra*. One might note that Corrington places theology first on his list. Corrington would note elsewhere that

the world's mind is much more profoundly moved by theology than by philosophy. The doctrines of Aquinas and Calvin have done more to shape [us] than any ten philosophers or political thinkers. It is a platitude of philosophy that the givens, the essential grounds of philosophical thought all move from theological origins. If Hesiod is the first of Greek thinkers, it is in his assault against the portrayals of the gods in Homer that he begins his career. The same goes for Plato, for Socrates, and for a large bulk of the Pre-Socratics.

"William Gaddis" notes, in "The Twentieth Century Novel," typescript course notes, Corrington Papers, Centenary College.

⁶⁸ Richard Wentworth was Director of the LSU Press.

⁶⁹ Eric Voegelin, *ORDER AND HISTORY* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1987)(1956)(4 vols.)

⁷⁰ Owen Bradley was a member of the law firm that Corrington practiced with in New Orleans from 1975 to 1978.

⁷¹ General Lee's "Farewell to the Army of Northern Virginia" delivered on April 10, 1865 at Appomattox Courthouse:

After four years of arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude, the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources.

I need not tell the survivors of so many hard-fought battles who have remained steadfast to the last that I have consented to this result from no distrust of them; but feeling that valor and devotion could accomplish nothing that could compensate for the loss that would have attended the continuance of the contest, I determined to avoid the useless sacrifice of those whose past services have endeared them to their countrymen.

differentiate these symbols unconsciously and without great interest or anxiety, as if the conclusions reached had no personal importance, though obviously they did. I read a passage in an otherwise unimportant book suggesting that the lust for immortality was chiefly a desire to 'preserve our habits' into eternity. I found that to be true. And I found such an object unworthy. I also thought of the Anaximander and Heraclitus fragments concerning the *apeiron*⁷² and the ignorance we

By the terms of the agreement, officers and men can return to their homes and remain there until exchanged. You will take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed; and I earnestly pray that a merciful God will extend to you His blessing and protection.

With an unceasing admiration of your constancy and devotion to your country, and a grateful remembrance of your kind and generous consideration of myself, I bid you all an affectionate farewell.

Richard N. Current (ed.), 4 THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE CONFEDERACY 1792 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

⁷² The *apeiron* "is the *arche*" and "is as well the *teleote*, or end, toward which all that arises into existence tends toward once more." John William Corrington, "Order and Consciousness / Consciousness and History: The New Program of Voegelin," in Stephen A. McKnight (ed.), ERIC VOEGELIN'S SEARCH FOR ORDER IN HISTORY 155-207, at 172 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978). Joyce Corrington notes that

The movement of consciousness from darkness into light and its symbolization in myth and metaphysics became one of Bill's major concerns. He believed Anaximander's *apeiron* to be an early expression not only of the emergence of the *kosmos* but also of the emergence of consciousness.

Joyce H. Corrington, "The Evolution of Bill Corrington's Metaphysics," *supra* note *, at 111 [26 Legal Stud. F. 659, 663 (2002)].

Corrington placed great weight on this idea of the *apeiron* (source of all) and argued that the Anaximander's commentary on the *Apeiron* was the beginning of Western philosophy. In a Houston speech, Corrington introduced Anaximander's comment on the *apeiron* saying:

It is a matter of no small interest that there is a wide agreement on the text which is said to represent the beginnings of [W]estern philosophy, hence the beginning of [W]estern rationalism and scientific thinking. The great political thinker, Eric Voegelin, the most distinguished philosopher of the 20th century, Martin Heidegger, and the philosopher of science, Giorgio de Santillana of MIT, all agree that these words herald the beginning of the [W]estern intellectual tradition: "He said that the principal and element of existing things was the *apeiron* (the Boundless, the Infinite) . . . and the source of coming-to-be for existing things is that into which destruction, too, happens according to necessity; for, they say, penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice according to the assessment of Time.

...
 "A Wind is Rising and the Rivers Flow," *supra* note 16 [26 Legal Stud. F. 767, 768 (2002)]. Corrington's interest in the *apeiron* emerged as he rejected the illusion that "humanity [had] turned away from mythic thinking" to take up scientific thinking. While Corrington believed that the illusion that we had transcended our old mythic ways of thinking may have been of importance to science "in its early days," he argued that the "time of the illusion's usefulness has ended" and in our present "speculations into the nature of

have of what shall follow our deaths. And from these pieces, I came to realize that the experience of mortality cannot be rid of its dread, but can be contemplated until one begins to realize that, as to the passion at least, the imitation of Christ is inevitable for each and every one of us.

Stripped of its myriad of protective devices and qualifications, the Gospel says we will be one with the force which created and governs the universe, that we each become Christ in the nature of life and death—especially the latter. The experience of *thantos*, of the conclusion of the mode of mortality in existence, is to endure the sacrifice, willingly or unwillingly, of giving over our life, returning to that from which we came, the *apeirontic* mode of non-existence—in order to pay tribute to the ordinance of time for the disruption of our existence.

And perhaps it has been looking forward unconsciously to the measure of my mortality that has kept that other Heraclitus fragment in my mind: ‘the way up, and the way down are the same.’⁷³

30 March 1981

“Too bad I didn’t keep a journal back when I was writing hard. I hardly remember doing the novels.⁷⁴ It’s as if they were done by someone I used to know. We grow through ourselves, and the only self is the present self.”

3 May 1981

“I dread the re-write on this damned book [*Shad Sentell*]. It is going to be long, difficult and painful—something writing has never been for me. My innate laziness has always sent out manicured first drafts. And it may be a profound error to change that. Some people produce writing

reality,” we are “beginning to fuse the symbols once more—so as to blur the distinctions between spiritual and physical symbols, and to view the cosmos once more as a single ordered universe in which men and superhuman forces stand together in love and strife.”
Id.

⁷³ See John Burnet, *THE FRAGMENTS OF HERACLITUS, EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHY* 146-156 (London: Adam and Charles Black, 2nd ed., 1908).

⁷⁴ Corrington’s 1960s novels include: *AND WAIT FOR THE NIGHT* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1964); *THE UPPER HAND* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1967); *THE BOMBARDIER* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1970).

with great slow miserable effort. Some easily.⁷⁵ Both modes may produce rot or riches. Only the result matters.”

17 May 1981

[In reference to a conversation with his wife, Joyce, about *Shad Sentell*]:
“Comedy is not devoid of seriousness—it’s not even devoid of tragedy. It’s simply another way of looking at human experience, and placing it in a more modest perspective.”

24 May 1981

“I have come to feel that my own talents are not designed for the middle ground in which most of life is lived today. I could be a happy gardener or carpenter—or, I think, a great leader of forces to take over and reshape society mercilessly. I am restless in this middle way, but there is good work to be done. I am uncomfortable in situations when I cannot act, simply move against an enemy and put all at risk. But the middle way is not therefore evil; it is simply incommensurate with my own metabolism. It has always been, and the prime secret of my inner life has been containing the demons that say, to hell with what is expected, and with conventions. Warn those who cross you, and then blow them away. There is a restless thoughtless part of me that wishes to move in that way. But the rational faculty says no. Nothing is at last shaped by the mere instinct to motion.”

“I have as many reasons as most to be terminally worn out. But I am not. I expect to spend the rest of my life in battles of one kind or another. Why not? That is what life is about: to fight, to win, or to make your enemy suffer so much he’d just as soon you had won.⁷⁶ But never quit,

⁷⁵ Corrington must have been a member of the later category. The surviving handwritten drafts of his fictional works appear to be more in the form of dictation than a novelist struggling to get his story on paper.

⁷⁶ In a letter to Charles Bukowski written almost twenty years earlier, Corrington says:

I am not a bad guy to mess with. I can be messed with a good deal. I hate scenes and noise and jawing and all. But when I go off the edge it’s all the way off. I never fought in my life without the full and looming intent of killing my opponent. In the old days, I was too little and the fights were all quick and the flare died. Now no fights. But all stays the same either there’s no reason to fight, or there’s reason to kill. What I liked in Hem [Hemingway] was the stripping away of phoney half-ways and in-betweens and fuzzy sentiments.

Corrington letter to Charles Bukowski, dated December 6, 1961.

never slow down, never let the bastards grind you down. There will be a time to quit, a time to slow down. It's called death."

"Life itself should be, at its source, a matter for laughter. Even Tragedy should be. Only by realizing the comic nature of our lives do we establish our own best realization of the trivialities and the heft of our lives."

27 June 1981

"I found a great title last night, reading Mailer's *Existential Errands*.⁷⁷ *So Small A Carnival*. 'A quote from Nietzsche, about Mardi Gras.'⁷⁸ I want to write a detective novel.⁷⁹ About a New Orleans detective, a redneck from Shreveport, trying to solve a singularly New Orleans Catholic

⁷⁷ Norman Mailer, *EXISTENTIAL ERRANDS* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972). Corrington taught Mailer's books when he was a professor of literature, and wrote a scholarly review of Mailer's novel, *An American Dream*. See "Norman Mailer" notes, in "The Twentieth Century Novel," typescript course notes, Corrington Papers, Centenary College; John William Corrington, *An American Dreamer*, 18 (1) *Chicago Rev.* 58 (1965). Corrington goes on to say that upon publication of his Mailer article he received "a Mona Lisa-ish note from Mailer" which posed no objections to his review, saying only: "I limit myself to saying I enjoyed reading (a piece) or didn't enjoy reading it, and I obviously enjoyed reading your piece . . ." "Norman Mailer" notes, *id.*

⁷⁸ In one notable passage, the source we have yet to locate, Nietzsche says of Mardi Gras:

We need history because it is the storage closet in which the costumes are kept. We are the first era that is truly learned so far as 'costumes' are concerned—we are better prepared than any time has ever been for the Great Carnival, the most spirited Mardi-Gras laughter, the most reckless fun, for the transcendental summit of the utmost idiocy, for a truly Aristophanean mockery of the universe. We can be the parodists of world history, the Punchinellos of God! If nothing else living today has a future—perhaps it will be our laughter that has one.

⁷⁹ Corrington did not, as one might assume, write crime detective fiction for money. As Corrington put it:

Now I'd always wanted to write a mystery novel, because it's a classic American form almost as stylized as the Western. But it seemed to me it had never been used to carry much intellectual and emotional freight. The crimes all seemed pretty ordinary, the characters just a cut above cartoon figures. I thought it was possible to do better. So the first novel Jo and I collaborated on, called *So Small a Carnival*, is a detective story set in New Orleans—but the protagonist is a redneck reporter from Shreveport who can't stand the place. The crime is anything but ordinary, and the reporter from Shreveport would never have believed he'd accidentally become involved in solving one of the great and memorable crimes of the century. "The Mystery of Writing," *supra* note 10 [26 *Legal Stud. F.* 503, at 509 (2002)].

crime?⁸⁰ Nice idea. But what taboos are left? Anyhow, it's an idea, to throw in with dozens of others."

4 July 1981

[On reading a biography of Camus:] "One's admiration for Camus does not flag. He was thoughtful, decent, serious to a fault. He makes me embarrassed by some of my own opinions.⁸¹ But there was a great sadness, a great hopelessness in him. I suppose he would have called it lucidity. But that is to accept the preposition that lucidity requires a vacuum, and a non-commitment to belief. Is that so? I should consider, or perhaps I do not believe. Is faith commensurate with belief, or can there be faith without belief?"

5 July 1981

"I feel my parents in me, and it makes me comfortable."⁸²

⁸⁰ Corrington went on to write this detective novel and three additional ones, all in collaboration with his wife, Joyce. See John William Corrington & Joyce H. Corrington, *SO SMALL A CARNIVAL* (New York: Viking, 1986); *A PROJECT NAMED DESIRE* (New York: Viking, 1987); *A CIVIL DEATH* (New York: Viking, 1987); *THE WHITE ZONE* (New York: Viking, 1990)(published after Corrington's death in 1988). On the Corrington's crime fiction, see, Frank W. Shelton, "The New Orleans Crime Fiction of John W. and Joyce Corrington," in *The Southern Man of Letters*, at 156-169; J.K. Van Dover & John F. Jebb, *ISN'T JUSTICE ALWAYS UNFAIR? THE DETECTIVE IN SOUTHERN FICTION* 214-218 (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996).

⁸¹ In a letter to Charles Bukowski, with whom Corrington carried on a long correspondence, he describes Camus this way:

He was a good man, a beautiful man, and the only one of the young to measure up to the old boys. I didn't go with all his stuff, like the conclusions in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, but he was tall and honorable, kind and strong both in person and on paper. You don't ask more unless you are shopping for gods.

Letter to Charles Bukowski, dated February 17, 1963. Corrington assigned, as part of his "The Twentieth Century Novel" course, Camus's *The Stranger* (1942) and introduced his students to Camus with the following high praise: "If the 20th century has produced any saints at all, I expect that, at least in a secular sense, Albert Camus is one of them. No man who has devoted his life to writing and philosophy has, with more courage and insight and discipline outlined the human situation in his time." "Camus" notes, in "The Twentieth Century Novel," typescript course notes. Corrington Papers, Centenary College.

⁸² Corrington was named after his father, John Wesley Corrington. His mother was Viva L. Shelley. For additional references to his father and his relationship to him, see Journal entries dated December 10, 1981, July 12, 1981, and August 20, 1982, *infra*. In a letter to Charles Bukowski a week after the death of his father on August 20, 1962, Corrington says:

"[E]veryone's life is a salvage operation, isn't it?"

[On his novel, *Shad Sentell*]: "[T]he low comedy aspect of [it] got old before I was done."

"[S]urely there are serious issues played squarely against farce. That is what I wanted [with *Shad Sentell*]. I doubt it will be recognized or understood—now. But a serious novel is not *for* now. It takes its chances with the future."

12 July 1981

"It has begun to dawn on me that my work may become recognized. If it does, I would want to use it as a series of monuments to those I have loved, and who have loved me. I once said to myself, if I won the Nobel Prize, I would use my address to name the fathers and mothers, all the teachers and friends whose love had made me able. I'd use the form of the opening of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*.⁸³ Is *hubris* taking over? Not likely. I seem to be growing farther and farther from myself over the last few years. My own appetites are for music & work & books. The rest is the desire to render in some permanent form the objects of my love.

But isn't art the purest and the best when it reflects a vanished artist, and a luminous object whose sheen, the glory surrounding, is the living projection of the subject artist immolated as an ego, existing only

He was quite a guy. Born in Memphis, and one of fourteen kids. A third-grade education. The Marines in France. Then law school at night, and passing the bar. Years of working for other men until, in 1952, he went into the insurance adjusting business for himself. He was around fifty-five, Chaz. A pimple-faced boy in college and a little daughter in high school. If he missed, he knew we were all down the drain. But he didn't miss. He made 10 grand the first year, and it kept going up. My mother worked in a dry-goods store that first year to make the few bucks that would tide us over. She worked 8 hours a day. She made \$28 a week.

And when he died, he left his sweetheart with something like 70 thousand dollars and a business noted for being honest and able. He left us all with the memory of a man with guts who was also gentle and just. And there are not many like that around any more.

Corrington letter to Charles Bukowski, dated August 27, 1962.

⁸³ In a letter to Charles Bukowski, Corrington writes: "Did you (he asked sheepishly) ever read Marcus Aurelius? Picture of a man who used the space he occupied and the air he breathed as few men have. I think he might be the pattern of all men." Letter to Charles Bukowski, dated September 14, 1961, LSU, Baton Rouge.

in the patina of love which lifts the object out of nature and into that small transcendence of artistic creation?

I think I would like to write the ultimate *roman a clef* in which all of those I have cared for would be rendered part of literature for as long as Homer's people have survived. And not just those I have loved fervently like Jo and the children⁸⁴ and my mother and father. But Dr. Clark⁸⁵ and Lee Morgan,⁸⁶ John Willingham⁸⁷ & Bryant Davidson,⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Jo is Joyce Corrington, his wife. The Corringtons had four children: Shelley Elaine, John Wesley, Robert Edward Lee, and Thomas Jonathan Jackson.

⁸⁵ Edward Murray Clark was a prominent professor at Centenary College from whom Corrington took a course in the "scripture." See Ross Interview, *supra* note *, at 115 [26 Legal Stud. F. 695, 697 (2002)]. Corrington notes that: "Dr. Edward Murray Clark at Centenary College, spent hours with me, patiently debating, explaining, framing my mind as surely as Socrates created Plato's." John William Corrington, *New Orleans, Mon Bete Noir*, 26 Legal Stud. F. 519, 532 (2002). Over thirty years after those conversations with Dr. Clark, Corrington would write:

Even now, I return in memory to the dark study of Dr. Clark's house where we talked about religion and literature, about the truths of the heart and what they might mean, about what men had known and felt three thousand years ago—what they were thinking just then, in 1954.

"The Mystery of Writing," *supra* note 10 [26 Legal Stud. F. 503, at 504-505 (2002)].

⁸⁶ Morgan was one of Corrington's professors at Centenary College.

⁸⁷ John R. Willingham, before he moved to the University of Kansas (where he retired), was one of Corrington's early teachers and one he never forgot. In a presentation by Corrington on "The Recovery of the Humanities" at Kansas State in 1986, he dedicated the presentation to his old friend and teacher.

As some of you are aware, many years ago and in another country, one of the University of Kansas's most distinguished professors, Dr. John R. Willingham, was my teacher. Indeed, he was considerably more than that. He was, and is, my friend and a father of my spirit. He taught me my first class in modern poetry, and I never worked harder or with a better will—not before, not since.

Regrettably, however, in those days—we are talking now about the spring of 1955, and there are those of us still among you to whom such dates constitute rather more than distant history fit only for term papers and chuckling—my friend, my professor, had yet about him the wretched pallor and mean ways of a fresh Ph.D. As difficult as you may find it to believe, I received a B+ on my paper, and a B in the course.

Still, having brooded on this *adikia*, this injustice—nay, this *infamia*—for thirty years, I have concluded that perhaps my view of T.S. Eliot in those days left something to be desired. So I am trying again. Dr. John, this one is for you.

John William Corrington, *The Recovery of the Humanities-II*, 26 Legal Stud. F. 805 (2002)]

⁸⁸ Bryant Davidson was Corrington's philosophy professor at Centenary College. In the "Mystery of Writing," Corrington writes of Davidson:

I remember the living room of Professor Davidson's house where we met for our weekly philosophy seminar. I can even recall the ongoing debate between Professor Davidson and me—the only argument I ever won with him—regarding his practice of skipping the Middle Ages in his philosophy courses, going from Plotinus to

Donna Holloway, Doug Peterson,⁸⁹ Billy Mills,⁹⁰ Otis Finch,⁹¹ Tom Wilson⁹² and Laura Lou Coffee⁹³ & Tom Bell,⁹⁴ Peter Cangelosi,⁹⁵ David Daiches⁹⁶—& on & on. In a sense, the artist is the ultimate conservative. He cannot bear the notion that the objects of his love should ever perish, should ever go without a name. If he is honest, he sees himself as a mediocre-gifted [person] with the ability to render resplendent those things more worthy of lasting than himself. Eliot was surely right: one

Descartes as if nothing had happened in between. I didn't know much, but I was smart enough to know that you couldn't skip 1400 years and make things come out right in the history of Western philosophy. Professor Davidson finally owned up that I was likely right, but that he just had no use for the Middle Ages, and hence not the sympathy needed to teach the style of medieval thinking.

"The Mystery of Writing," *supra* note 1 [26 Legal Stud. F. 503, 505 (2002)].

⁸⁹ Peterson and Corrington were old friends from high school and college days and played in a band together. Peterson went on to become a professor of music.

⁹⁰ Corrington, in a review of William Mills' first novel, *Those Who Blink* (1986), notes that:

Billy Mills and I were classmates more than 30 years ago, and we still share the same Louisiana in our work. Perhaps the formality of a book review may be bent enough for me to say that it is an unusual and considerable pleasure to read the work of an old friend which reveals what Allen Tate called "knowledge of the heart."

John William Corrington, "Book Review," *Los Angeles Times* (The Book Review), June 22, 1986, p. 3. On the phrase attributed to Allen Tate, see "Narcissus as Narcissus," in Allen Tate, *REASON IN MADNESS: CRITICAL ESSAYS BY ALLEN TATE* 132-151 (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1941).

⁹¹ See note 49, *supra*.

⁹² Tom Wilson was a policeman in Shreveport and went on to become a lawyer.

⁹³ Corrington was romantically involved with Coffee during his days as a graduate student at Rice University and was briefly engaged to her. Joyce H. Corrington, personal interview with James R. Elkins, January, 2001.

⁹⁴ Corrington met Tom Bell when he was a graduate student at Rice and Bell was still an undergraduate. Corrington helped secure a teaching position for Bell at Loyola-New Orleans in the Journalism department and they remained lifelong friends.

⁹⁵ Cangelosi was a Professor of History at Loyola-New Orleans. He is now deceased.

⁹⁶ Daiches was Professor of English and American Studies and directed Corrington's doctoral dissertation at the University of Sussex. Corrington received his D. Phi. from Sussex in 1965. Corrington told an interviewer in 1981 that he went to the University of Sussex in England specifically to study with Daiches. He went on to say that his decision to study in England was further motivated by the fact that he was

sick and tired of the American graduate system—the endless English courses one takes that one either doesn't need or doesn't believe in and the refusal to allow one further courses in music, history, and philosophy. The farther I went in the American system, the narrower it got. I was forced to take more and more courses in areas that I had no interest in and which I could've picked up by careful reading anyhow.

Ross Interview, *supra* note *, at 114 [26 Legal Stud. F. 695, 696 (2002)].

wishes to lavish the gifts of personality on what one loves. This is not some form of selflessness; it springs from the artists own sense of an immortality of spirit (*not ego*) to which he wishes to join what has given his own life its form and its meaning.”

18 July 1981

“Sometimes I feel as if I am drifting away from life, moving slowly into a legendary and solitary plane defined by books and music, the great work of the dead.”

21 July 1981

“There is a monastic aspect to serious writing.”

23 July 1981

“[M]y ideal was always the moderation and control of Antoninus,⁹⁷ Robert E. Lee,⁹⁸ Socrates. That’s how I wanted to be, and that’s what I have always wanted my work to reflect. I’m not sorry for the polarities; creation takes place between them—where coolness and passion collide. I’m not Wolfe nor am I Faulkner.⁹⁹ For better or worse, I’m me.¹⁰⁰”

⁹⁷ Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (A.D. 121-180) was Roman Emperor, A.D. 161-180. See Marcus Aurelius, *THE COMMUNINGS WITH HIMSELF OF MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS, EMPEROR OF ROME: TOGETHER WITH HIS SPEECHES AND SAYINGS* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979)(C.R. Haines trans.)

⁹⁸ See note 14, *supra*.

⁹⁹ Corrington says of Faulkner: “If Faulkner was not the major motive force of the ‘Southern Literary Renaissance,’ he was clearly, to date, its major figure. Indeed, his achievement is so monumental that any number of critics and commentators would like to have us believe he was primarily an ‘American writer.’” John William Corrington, *Book Review*, 19 *Georgia Rev.* 485 (1965)(reviewing James W. Webb & A. Wigfall Green (eds.), *William Faulkner of Oxford* (1965)). Corrington takes something akin to pure delight in seeing again how “totally provincial, how completely Southern, Faulkner the man essentially was.” *Id.* Corrington says that Faulkner loved the South “beyond expression” and the same might be said of Corrington.

¹⁰⁰ Asked about his view of Thomas Wolfe, Corrington said:

I read Thomas Wolfe when I was seventeen, and it was an incredible experience. I read him again when I was about forty with great trepidation and found out that he stands up very well indeed—unless of course you’ve forgotten you were ever young. My wife wishes I would write more like Thomas Wolfe. I said, look, I’m not in that tradition. I’m in the Faulkner tradition.

Corrington goes on to identify Wolfe with the tradition where the author is “more or less” the protagonist. Corrington identifies with the “Shakespeare tradition” where “the artist

Approaching fifty, maybe I have reached the point of control, and the work will become richer.”

4 August 1981

“Everything I’ve written has fallen into a void. Perhaps it will emerge later, but I have no reason to suppose that this time will be any different. Why should it be? I guess I have to get ready for any of the possibilities that may arise. With God’s grace, I’ll take success or failure with the same equanimity. I mean for this to be a productive decade, and to lay down the foundations of a permanent reputation. Not for pride’s sake, though Lord knows that is in it, but because as Wolfe said, this is a man’s work, and worthy of a man’s dignity.”

15 August 1981

“I am a writer in the tradition from Hawthorne through Faulkner, dealing solely with ‘the human heart in conflict with itself.’¹⁰¹ I will never acknowledge another goal, or betray what my predecessors have accomplished. Mailer¹⁰² & Styron¹⁰³ can make all the bucks they want, I’m going to leave to my posterity the clean, unburdened fact of a man writing, seeking the truth like the pre-Socratics or the prophets did.”

20 August 1981

[Worried that he has not heard from his literary agent on the status of *Shad Sentell*]: “I may not have the time, the leisure to go on with the next book, and the one after that. I worry that I may have to practice

vanishes in his work.” Corrington says, “I’m not comfortable without a persona, but I love Wolfe very much.” Parrill Interview, *supra* note *, at 183 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, 672 (2002)].

¹⁰¹ The phrase Corrington draws on here, one that he would use frequently, is from William Faulkner’s acceptance speech for the 1949 Nobel Prize for Literature: “[T]he young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat.” “Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature: Stockholm, December 10, 1950,” in James B. Meriweather (ed.), *ESSAYS, SPEECHES & PUBLIC LETTERS BY WILLIAM FAULKNER* 119-121, at 119 (New York: Random House, 1965).

¹⁰² Norman Mailer (1923-), author and essayist.

¹⁰³ William Styron (1925-), author.

law again,¹⁰⁴ or find some crummy job to keep going. I guess I'm ashamed of this anxiety. I'll manage it. I always manage these things.

10 September 1981

[With no news on *Shad Sentell* and a deep chest cold]: “[I]t’s been a long time since I have been so depressed. It seems hopeless. What’s the good of trying to write well and honestly when only bullshit makes any impression? Publishing has always been commercial, but now it’s ideological as well. Clichés and gimmicks and left-wing causes, or forget it. I can’t write that crap. I’d fall asleep on the page. I begin to wonder if there’s any hope at all, or any reason to continue writing when it seems no one wants my work.”

12 September 1981

“The entry above is horse-shit, the result of a deep chest cold and possibly senile dementia.”

30 September 1981

“I begin to wonder if I need to come closer to my own personal life in my writing. I don’t think so, because the scale of meaning and significance has to be lowered by factors of ten if you do that sort of thing. Proust was wise and lucky, and the scale of the life he led was, after all, that of the *fin de siècle* ruling class society of Paris.¹⁰⁵ My own world is somewhat more constricted, though I prefer it that way.

No, what I need to do is to fasten on the definitive myths of the latter days of the 20th century.¹⁰⁶ But I fear I couldn’t do them. I don’t understand the character—rather, lack of it—of this age, and what I do understand is so awful, so disgusting, that depiction of it is virtually foreclosed. Sodomy, child-abuse, murder of incredible kinds and of cruelty that rivals the Nazis and the Bolsheviks.”

1 October 1981

“Today we go to Baton Rouge, novel [*Shad Sentell*] in hand. I want to give it my best pitch, and then let it go. I am getting tired of the

¹⁰⁴ See Journal entries dated January 25, 1981 and December 11, 1980, *supra*.

¹⁰⁵ See generally Ronald Hayman, *PROUST: A BIOGRAPHY* (London: Heinemann, 1990).

¹⁰⁶ “Thales told me everything is full of gods.” Corrington letter to Miller Williams, undated (ca. June or July, 1985).

thing.¹⁰⁷ I think I hate business (for myself) because it is repetitive and calls for lies and exaggerations to be told that are recognized as such by both sides and which reduce the value of relations.

"I'll be seeing Lewis Simpson¹⁰⁸ also, and see if there might be any chance for a place at LSU. I have little hope that there will be, and I'm not even sure I want to go back. But I *do* know that the *Texas* money is unlikely to hold out forever, and that an academic position is less awful than most alternatives. Of course, if the press [LSU Press] publishes the novel and it should be successful, that would be a whole other thing. I suppose I could also see what's up in the polysci department, or even in the law school. I'd enjoy teaching legal philosophy.

"I'm beginning to read Paul Valéry. The poetry is pretty awful: 'Mallarmé without the magic.'"¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ *Shad Sentell* was long in the making and difficult to revise. Corrington says: *Shad Sentell* was in my mind for ten years during which I wrote only short stories. I was having an academic battle at Loyola part of the time, I had family problems part of the time, and I went to law school part of the time, but when I finally wrote it, it took me four months. It's two and a half times longer in the original version than in the poor, butchered version that was published. The original name of the book was *The Man Who Slept With Women*. The publisher looked at the first draft and claimed I'd written too much.

Parrill Interview, *supra* note *, at 198 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, at 689-690 (2002)].

¹⁰⁸ Lewis Simpson is professor emeritus of American literature at Louisiana State University. He served for twenty-five years as editor of *The Southern Review*. Simpson's books include: *THE FABLE OF THE SOUTHERN WRITER* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994); *THE MIND AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR: A MEDIATION ON LOST CAUSE* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989); *THE BRAZEN FACE OF HISTORY: STUDIES IN THE LITERARY CONSCIOUSNESS IN AMERICA* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980); *THE DISPOSSESSED GARDEN: PASTORAL AND HISTORY IN SOUTHERN LITERATURE* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975). See also J. Gerald Kennedy and Daniel Mark Fogel (eds.), *AMERICAN LETTERS AND THE HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS: ESSAYS IN HONOR OF LEWIS P. SIMPSON* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

¹⁰⁹ Paul Valéry (1871-1945) was an influential French poet, aphorist, essayist, and critic. Interesting enough, Valéry was both disciple and friend of Mallarmé, and in the eyes of some, unlike Corrington, his work transcends that of Mallarmé. Along with Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine, Valéry is considered to be one of the most important Symbolist writers.

Valéry is reported to have said: "A poem is never finished, only abandoned." Corrington would have argued that poems are indeed finished and poetry itself must be abandoned to write the kind of fiction he wanted to write. Valéry, however, did abandon his poetry, and from 1892 until 1912, gave up poetry to attend to other intellectual pursuits. Corrington began his writing life as a poet, abandoned it, and returned to the writing of poetry only in his final years.

Valéry too was a student of law, at the University of Montpellier. He left school early,

3 October 1981

“Nothing at LSU in English, and it dawned on me when I sat with Lewis [Simpson] that I didn’t want to go back. It’s grim. It’s no place to spend your life. Better TV for a while than academia for the rest of my life. I guess I shouldn’t fret, but trust in the Lord that everything works as it should. He’s given me a year to do the novel [*Shad Sentell*], and seems about to provide another paying job. I don’t know if I can do the TV crap and still get anything serious done on DTI [*Down to Ilium*].¹¹⁰ I hope so. Otherwise, I’ll just have to do stories. But I’m kind of blank about that. I can’t seem to get hold of a real cracking idea. But I’m sure it will come. You can’t force it. You do what you can when you can, and spend the down time reading.”

11 October 1981

“A couple of ideas for stories have come up in the last few weeks: two from the paper. A man killed his wife and daughter-in-law because the women cooked pork-chops. The man had no teeth, and became wildly angry when they didn’t cook something he could eat.¹¹¹ In another, a Southern man refused to accept a medal he had earned in WW II. He said it was all bull and he didn’t want it.¹¹²

I had another idea: a retired man who carries in a worn satchel all the documents, memorabilia and assorted trivia of his life as he nears its end.

Stories grow like pearls. You have to drop into the subconscious all sorts of tiny beads; titles, characters, ideas, phrases, descriptions, lines of dialogue. I’d like to get eight or ten stories done in the next year. It

and moved to Paris to pursue life as a poet and as an intellectual.

Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) was a French poet and leader of the Symbolist movement in poetry. *See generally* Stéphane Mallarmé, COLLECTED POEMS (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)(Henry Weinfield trans.)

¹¹⁰ “Down to Ilium” was a work in progress at the time of Corrington’s death.

¹¹¹ The brutal and grotesque killing of a man’s wife and daughter by the husband’s employee over a trivial wage dispute is central to Corrington’s unpublished novella, “The Prison Gods.” “The Prison Gods” manuscript. Corrington Papers, Centenary College.

¹¹² The refusal of a Congressional Medal of Honor figures prominently in “Decoration Day.” *All My Trials, supra*, note 44, at 1-148. “Decoration Day” (1990), a Hallmark Hall of Fame film, was based on the novella.

would be good to have enough for another book of stories out in the next year or so, to keep the momentum going.”

“It’s hard to concentrate on a specific story—in fact, it’s almost impossible. The result of over-concentration is surely a reduction and a rationalization of the material, and when that happens, it’s just not worth writing. Fiction is not a statement; it’s an evocation. In my fiction, I have *never* meant what I said. Even in the work which may seem unequivocal, there was always something more than, at that time, I suppose I meant.

It has been said that I am an apologist for the South.¹¹³ The South does not, and has never, needed an apologist. Only those whose own spiritual reality has been constricted by their self-mutilation in the mode of gnostic inflation,¹¹⁴ and who have consequently lost their own sense of sin and personal evil can suppose that the South owes anyone an apologia.”¹¹⁵

¹¹³ William Parrill in his 1985 interview told Corrington, “You strike me as the most unreconstructed of all the Southern novelists I know anything about.” Corrington replied, “I consider that just about the greatest compliment anyone could give. I can think of no reason to be reconstructed. My country is the South—especially North Louisiana and East Texas. The antique values and ways of thinking are good enough for me.” Parrill Interview, *supra* note *, at 186 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, 676 (2002)]. Corrington, reviewing a book of poetry by his friend and colleague, Miller Williams, praises Williams for having that “special *cachet*” that he associates with Southern literature:

He is a Southerner, and totally conscious of the whole spectrum of ramifications implicit in so being. As a result, few things seem simple to him. He knows and can set forth with authority the fact that sacred Jesus and Stonewall Jackson, populism and prejudice, whiskey and violence whirl in dark kaleidoscopic splendor through the vitiated but still vital Southern mind. He knows what we are, and how to find the uncharted points at which our purposes and anti-purposes surface for a moment to cross and re-cross like the glistening lethal strands of a spider’s web.

John William Corrington, *Book Review*, 19 (2) *Georgia Review* 253, 255 (1965)(reviewing Miller’s first book of poetry, *A Circle of Stone* (1964)).

¹¹⁴ Corrington had a long-standing intellectual and philosophical interest in gnosticism. See generally John William Corrington, *Charles Reich and the Gnostic Vision*, 5 (1) *New Orleans Rev.* 3 (1975).

¹¹⁵ The South may not need an apologist, but it does deserve explanation. See “Introduction,” to John William Corrington & Miller Williams (eds.), *SOUTHERN WRITING IN THE SIXTIES: FICTION ix-xxiv* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966) [26 Legal Stud. F. 721 (2002)]; John William Corrington, *Are Southerners Different?* 4 (1) *Southern Partisan* 16 (1984) [26 Legal Stud. F. 733 (2002)]; John William Corrington, *A Letter From A Southerner*, 26 Legal Stud. F. 739 (2002).

“What my work really represents is the openness, the ambiguity, the vastness of the possibilities of human being in the mode of existence as it realizes itself in the South in my time.

Any work that deals with a certain place intensely is a celebration of that place. There can be a celebration of evil as well as of good, and it is in that acknowledgment of the two, the light and the dark in us all, singly and collectively, in total collision over time in that space that the intensity resides.

None of us who works out of the spirit can know what we have done. We make an approximate aim, do what we regard as our best, and the rest depends on the interplay between the symbols we create and the people encountering them in our books.

12 October 1981

“A good day. 30 pages into a new story. I think it will be called “Virgil Caine is the Name,” and it uses the idea of the old man who doesn’t want to go get his medal.¹¹⁶ With a little luck, I should be done with it in a week.”

13 October 1981

“The longer I live, the more I’m inclined to think very few ideas are crucial; the way those ideas are shaped makes the difference, and part of that is a question of presentation.”

14 October 1981

“Virgil” [“Decoration Day”] is coming along fine. About another four or five days, a little serious attention, and it’ll be done.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ This story eventually became the novella, “Decoration Day,” and was published, along with a second novella, “The Risi’s Wife,” in *All My Trials* in 1987.

¹¹⁷ Corrington described the story as being about “a Shreveport judge, whose wife dies and he retires hoping to go and read Berlioz’s memoirs and to listen to symphonic music until the Lord comes for him too. But getting out of the world is not that easy. So things begin to happen.” Parrill Interview, *supra* note *, at 197 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, 688-689 (2002)]. Corrington goes on to note his love of novella length stories (80-150 pages) and the difficulty of getting them published: “[C]ommercial publishers will print Campbell Soup can labels before they’ll publish a novella.” *Id.* at 689.

18 October 1981

"P. 87 of the new story ["Decoration Day"]. It is not well-focused in 1st draft. It will need some work. It will probably run novella length, and I'm wondering about putting it with more long ones, and having a volume of novellas. Small chance of quick journal publication, but that is becoming less important to me than book form."

18 October 1981

[On a new story which he expected to call "The Civil Code," a man has an affair with an old lover and] "finds the law is wiser than lawyers, and that one is wise to observe the family-oriented values of the civil code."

"Maybe it will be a *New Yorker* story."

20 October 1981

"Today, eight days short of my 49th birthday, Dr. Elaine Richardson of Ochsner Clinic called and said my blood tests appear to show that I have diabetes. I wonder if that information forms the vector of that death that awaits me. I have no reason to think so. My mother seems to be doing pretty well in her late seventies. I'm mainly concerned that they may try to put me on some miserable diet that makes life not worth living."

"I'd like to do a story on a nameless Southerner coming home after years in the North as a big-name editor, tail between his legs because the Yankees have used him up as their house quisling. Now home, all his liberal bullshit is gone, and he becomes a mean deceitful closet racist, capable of nasty stuff. Perhaps at the end, he gets called back North again to edit a second-rate radical journal. And he goes.

That might be a good story to fit the title *The Last Ditch*.

Now, what I have to work on is a story for *In My Youth*.¹¹⁸ I'd like to use that for the next book title, but that would require a strong story. The play idea of a middle-aged lawyer successful in New York, but spiritually empty there, and recalling his father, a rough, brawling, hard-

¹¹⁸ Corrington never made use of "In My Youth" to title a collection of stories or for a particular story.

drinking North Louisiana lawyer in some of his finest moments.¹¹⁹ I think that might be the way to go. His Jewish secretary is in love with him, seeing in him a cowboy that never was. I could use some of the many observations my father made about my worthlessness. At the end, would the secretary go back with him? . . . He could have an amusing black friend who plans to return to Mississippi, tired of the cold, tired of liberals, tired of that tight-assed politeness at parties. He has all the money he'll ever need, and he's ready to go native—eat cornbread and watermelon, neck bones and greens. No more fucking coq-au-vin and whatcha-ma-doodly fine herbs. Didn't even know he was suffering till he read an article in *Time* about blacks going home. Then he hears some bigwig in the ACLU say at a party that he'd *never* vote for a Georgian for president—that is, a white one. He's a Georgian, and, God help him, proud of it. Anyhow, he just came by to say so long. Then there should be a talk with his psychiatrist, who sees his gathering desire to go home, his recollections of his father, as pathological. How could any civilized reasonable man want to go back *there*?"

26 October 1981

"I have to get back to work on *Virgil* ["Decoration Day"]. First draft is almost done. Revision, and then a typed draft. I wish I could hurry it, and get on to the next. But I know better than that.

If we had our financial security set, this would be an interesting time. I never felt more like working. Maybe 1982—my 50th year—will be better than this one. God protect my children. The rest is secondary."

30 October 1981

"First insulin shot today, and a stint with the diabetes nurse, and dietitian. It appears the Lord has discipline in mind for me. The diet is somewhat austere, but not as bad as I expected. I'll have to give up liquor and high-sugar drinks—switch to club soda, but it will be all right.

¹¹⁹ Corrington's father was a member of the Tennessee Bar but worked as an insurance adjuster. When the family moved to Shreveport in 1942, he started his own insurance claims business. The other characterizations of the character do not fit Corrington's father. For Corrington's of his father, see his Journal entries dated July 5, 1981 (and accompanying footnote) and August 20, 1982.

I'm rethinking *Virgil* ['Decoration Day'] for a bigger figure. Got to get others with other stories involved. I don't want a cartoon, but I do want it strong. I'm not sure the Billy-Loreen story as is has much potential.¹²⁰ But I'm not setting it aside. It must be done, so I can move on. The work has to be done."

31 October 1981

"The story seems to be taking another shape as it moves toward a short novel.¹²¹ I think it needs opening, but not so as to lose the thematic shape. Maybe they have charged Gee with fooling around with the child? Loreen wants a divorce. Should the medal business be down-played? Or rather find a clear common note between the Billy situation and the Gee story. Keeping death at bay? Did Gee have a child? Is Terry his daughter, Billy's mistress? People propping each other up under the constant anxiety of death approaching faster and faster.

It should key off Gee's resentment. How does that relate to Billy and his dream of his father inviting him to death? We make these metaphors which excite and eviscerate us. Our lives use such experiences and dreams, but in fact, the hard edge of facts supports nothing that we dream. So much the worse for the facts, that is one truth of human life. Our life at the factual level is trivial, of no consequence.

We construct cultures, societies in the pattern of these super-factual visions. Motives are not factual; emotions do not drive toward the factual. Even science drives past empirical for its satisfaction.

A. S. Finch [the judge, and central character in 'Decoration Day'] knows something of this. What does he know? The solution of Gee's 30 years anguish is easy—since the wounds of the body are not what have cursed his life so much as the perception that it was an American soldier who maimed him. Here, the facts can heal the dream, repair the sentiments.

¹²⁰ In "Decoration Day" Billy and Loreen's relationship figures prominently in the story. It is Billy who first attempts to help old Gee—Gaspard Penniwell—in his efforts to refuse to accept a Medal of Honor for war heroism that the government is trying to bestow upon him. When Billy finds the problem is not going to be resolved by writing a letter on Gee's behalf, he takes the problem to his godfather, Judge Albert Sidney Finch.

¹²¹ The story, when completed, was some 145 pages long and is probably best described as a novella. See Corrington's comment on the novella form, in Journal entries dated November 4 and 7, 1981, *infra*.

Billy and Loreen's case is harder to focus on and to resolve. The loss of romantic love has precipitated Billy into re-living the dream of his father's death. He grabs for something he doesn't even want in order to feel he is still living. Loreen is past caring.

What about Terry? Why Billy? Why posit her as a doll? Why a middle-aged planter? She could have who she wanted, and we must not suppose she wants money. Someone to hold off the night. But why Billy? Does she sense he is haunted? Then what haunts her? What is it in her that demands a certain chemistry?

-When we're finished, I give her money.

-Ah. How much is it costing you?

-Five dollars.

-My God. What the hell does that mean?

-I'm not some kind of shrink. I just grow cotton and soybeans.

-Don't sell yourself short. She . . . makes you give her . . .

-That's right. That's the deal. I can tip her if it's real bad. But only if.

-I believe I really am too old, Billy.

-Well, that's not my problem and I don't know any more than you do.

-So that's love.

-I don't know. I just do it. No, it's not love. It sure as hell is something, though.¹²²

Interesting, but solves nothing. Can we probe Terry and not lose focus? Or do we just have to let that aspect go, and chalk her involvement up to love or desire? The notion of Terry as black doesn't solve much, and makes only a narrative connection with Gee. I like to avoid sensation when I can because it blurs the logos below. 'The Great Pumpkin' was an exception since the sensational elements were satirically pointing to the absence of logos on all sides.¹²³ The young animals were the logical children of the sterile Twittys. Ironically, the one false element in the story was the notion that Twitty would own a shotgun. It would have been nice if I'd written that he knew of his wife's affair, bought the gun

¹²² In all his short stories and novels, Corrington used an em dash (-) in lieu of quote marks. The dialogue, between Billy and Judge Finch, does not appear in the published version of "Decoration Day."

¹²³ "The Great Pumpkin," in *Collected Stories supra* note 13, at 434-446.

second-hand for her lover, and then put it off till it didn't matter any more.

I should do some more stories like that. Maybe a woman's lib *Medea*. I like to satirize current idiocy—which kind of insight is no more than a gift of historical knowledge. If you know enough about the past and about human nature, you can spot the aberrations easily. Doesn't take genius. Perhaps satires ease these great social transitions by illuminating the idiot-fringe of the movements that are urging transition. When the idiots win, you have the USSR. But there must be idiots, or everything freezes solid. And that is idiocy. It seems transitions are fueled by unwise and imprudent sentiments. You get few rational 'new movements' in society, and it's pretentious to suppose the great shifts are the product of thought. That's mostly rationalization.

Back to present problems. Does Loreen feel deserted like Gee? Is that the thematic cord? U.S. has betrayed Gee; Billy has betrayed Loreen? Thin. You could make it seem to live metaphorically, but it is not a substantial analogy.

Also: should A.S. Finch be more immediately and personally involved in things. Is his wife still alive?¹²⁴ Does she begin to wonder when he starts spending nights out? Does A.S. in fact take up with Terry?"

"I think, despite the difficulties of rendering a German poet in English, that Rilke may be one of the most important poets of the 20th century. Rilke has a great talent for picking the right problems and understanding those problems in serious terms. He will be valuable in a hundred years—perhaps a thousand."

[After several pages of serious commentary on Rilke, Corrington moves back to comment again on what was to become "Decoration Day."] "Is there something in the *Elegies*¹²⁵ that will work for the story? Is A.S. [Albert Sidney] retired, contemplating his own death, no longer in

¹²⁴ In "Decoration Day," the death of Judge Finch's wife has been a factor in his decision to retire from the bench. The novella begins with Albert Sidney, withdrawing from the world, learning to live with his new life in retirement but sorely missing the company of his beloved wife.

¹²⁵ Rainer Maria Rilke, *DUINO ELEGIES* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1939)(J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender trans.)

the midst of life? Does the situation between Billy and Loreen pull him back from his fishing and reading and easy life? Or is it Gee who pulls him back?"

2 November 1981

[Corrington, now well into the writing of "Decoration Day," notes that he and Joyce are being considered as writers for a TV daytime drama, "As the World Turns."] "The show is awful. The direction is so bad as to [defy] description. Jo is depressed by the odds of improving the show ratings. But it's hard to tell what will work.

When we get the projection done, there should be time to conclude the story."

3 November 1981

"Moving along on the ATWT ['As the World Turns'] story-line. It will be ready on time without much difficulty. What a drag it will be to have to rescue this turkey—if we can."

"Still structuring in my mind the re-write of *Virgil-Trials* ['Decoration Day']? Haven't had a flash yet, but I keep shifting the pieces and trying to see where new pieces are needed—if any."

4 November 1981

"It's *All My Trials*, and I probably have notes and direction to begin. It is going to be the clumsiest of lengths: not a novel, not a short story: a novella. But I have to do it as it works out. The tyranny of length and [E]ast-coast publishers . . . can't be taken into account because then nothing is possible. Things are becoming difficult enough without one's cooperating in the disarray. I have to keep working."

7 November 1981

"It seems probable that we have the ATWT ['As the World Turns'] job."

"Of course we look at it with mixed emotions. Jo sees a job and we want the money. But it means putting aside serious work on any grand scale for a time. That's unfortunate, since I never felt more like working.

AMT ['Decoration Day'] is coming along nicely. Having rid myself of assuming a short story length for it, I feel more comfortable. It is going to be whatever it turns out to be, 35 pages so far, and I would guess something like 120 or so when it's done. It's possible Lewis would want to feature it in an issue of the *Review*.¹²⁶

What I'm enjoying is that new element of the unexpected that such a massive re-write entails. Maybe I'm becoming a 20th century man in my old age. One can hope not. With a big chunk of narrative in place, the work is easy.

What I don't like is that, to save extra steps, I'm typing it as fair copy while revising. I don't like typing, and would avoid it. But it's the fastest way to do it."¹²⁷

"No less than three murderers have received stays of execution in the past week in Louisiana. The plain truth is that the courts have become the common enemies of justice and have no concern for victims at all. We live in a strange twilight of Christian thought in which only the weak and debased notions survive. I find it interesting to see a strong vibrant society held hostage by 'vertical barbarians' protected by the courts, publicized by the 'civil rights' movement, and elevated above ordinary working citizens. Sooner or later, these contradictions will create their own institutions and movements to counter the debasement."¹²⁸

8 November 1981

"A nice quiet day of pro football and reading. No work on the story yesterday—as if the threat—or promise—of the ATWT ['As the World Turns'] job was a paralyzing agent. I'll try to work tonight. The prose is flowing well, and I'm going to have to get accustomed to working on serious material while we have a TV job. I don't have time to stop each time we're working and pick up again when we're fired or not working.

¹²⁶ Lewis Simpson was editor of the *Southern Review*. See *supra* note 108.

¹²⁷ Corrington wrote his "serious" fiction in long-hand; he typed his TV and film scripts. Communication from Joyce Corrington. February 16, 2002.

¹²⁸ The concerns Corrington express here are worked into "The Prison Gods" which remained unpublished at his death.

9 November 1981

"Somewhere in here I need to write at length about the Peerless Cleaners and Brad Thweatt.¹²⁹ I don't know why I have always remembered him so kindly. Of course, the strange irony of old man Lachle¹³⁰ taking over the Peerless Cleaners and Sam working there makes the thing have a certain emotional significance. Perhaps those WW II Army insignia¹³¹ constituted a connection between the inner romance of my thoughts and a concrete world in which Faustian events were taking place. Maybe Brad, already lost in a fog of alcohol, appreciated that. Anyhow, there is a good story there. It is not a factual story. But it is true whether any of the participants meant it or not. Every character drawn from life is an idealization. Even the first person narrator. It is the writer's task to say what they meant to say, whether they meant to say it or not.

That is why literary 'style' and fashion is so hurtful.¹³² 'Realism' or 'naturalism' have no meaning except as descriptions of ways in which we can achieve our purposes. Critics are pernicious because they purport to say what *we* meant to say. But their only inventions are categories. Criticism goes for nothing in most cases. Lowes is an exception.¹³³ Perhaps Eliot, who is always trying to set us down at table with those he is fond of.¹³⁴

I received a letter from a Mr. Guttenplau of Pantheon Books praising *The Southern Reporter*. If I'm not mistaken, that's a house that's turned down *The Man Who Slept With Women* [published under the title *Shad Sentell*]. It's a nice note. Much appreciated, but I question Mr.

¹²⁹ Corrington knew Brad Thweatt from his youth. Thweatt owned the Peerless Cleaners on East Kings Highway in Shreveport, next door to the Chat Noir which would later be called The Chef, a restaurant which Corrington identifies as the best in town. See Journal entry dated October 22, 1984.

¹³⁰ On Sam Lachle, see notes 37, 49, and 62, *supra* (and accompanying text).

¹³¹ Thweatt saved insignia that became detached from military uniforms at Peerless Cleaners and gave them to Corrington.

¹³² On literary style, see note 34.

¹³³ Corrington is probably referring to John Livingston Lowes. See generally John Livingston Lowes, *ESSAYS IN APPRECIATION* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1936); *OF READING BOOKS* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929); *THE ROAD TO XANADU: A STUDY IN THE WAYS OF THE IMAGINATION* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964)(1927); *CONVENTION AND REVOLT IN POETRY* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919).

¹³⁴ See T.S. Eliot, *ESSAYS ON POETRY AND POETS* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1957).

Guttenplau's future in the business. Literacy isn't going to take him very far."

10 November 1981

"We didn't get the ATWT ['As the World Turns'] job."

"There seems to be a change of style at hand in 'All My Trials' ['Decoration Day']. Subtle, not a big thing, but a thicker, tougher, more intense way of working language, and maybe a penetration to deeper levels of thought and sentiment. Ironies and ambiguities will abound, but there is something more.

As far as the writing is concerned, I feel terrific. With a big fine novel behind me [*Shad Sentell*], and a good start on the next, it's pure pleasure to get some reading done—I'm back on Proust—and to write some shorter things that give a quick feeling of completion. I feel as if I could do a great deal of fine work in coming years—if I'm just free to do it.¹³⁵ Lord, send me a publisher and editor who are literate, and enough money to be free.

11 November 1981

"P. 82 of typescript *All My Trials* ['Decoration Day']. I feel the Gee narrative is slow, but maybe not. Best finish it and then see what we've got. I hope it works in this new version. I'll know more when I get back to the Billy-Loreen material and see how it moves. No plot problem, simply the problem of moving through the work, of making it live, making it stand.

Every new work makes me go out again. Sometimes I would as soon not make that trip. There are so many things on my mind. But the challenge is always greater than the torpor, greater than the limitations of personality. The curiosity, the drive to discover what words taken together can mean—it keeps me going out. I expect it always will."

¹³⁵ In his early years as a writer, Corrington wrote to his friend, Tom Bell: "But one day I'll pull that old Flaubert bit and give you a brief novel that is perfect from cover to cover. That will sing in chapters, in pages, in paragraphs, and even in lines. Anyhow, that's the dream." Letter to Tom Bell, dated March 1, 1962. On Bell, see note 94, *supra*.

12 November 1981

"17 pages into ms. Version of *Taking Pains*.¹³⁶ It's going well. Utterly different in style and substance from AMT ['Decoration Day'], but interesting. It seems I can do two quite different pieces simultaneously without difficulty. Why not? Every imagined world is an alternative world. One could inhabit any number of them so long as one is able to control events."

17 November 1981

"Call from Rick Ray. He spoke to Eleanor Timberman at ABC. She is still interested in talking to us about moving to the coast to write *General Hospital*. We still don't like the idea, but given the collapse of ATWT deal, it has to be considered. A one-year contract would make us a lot of money—a two year even better, whether we worked that long or not."

18 November 1981

[There are talks with various people about TV writing projects but] "Unfortunately no word from Roz [Roz Targ, his New York literary agent] on the book [*Shad Sentell*]."

25 November 1981

[After negotiation with ABC there is an offer to write for *General Hospital*.] "We get \$2000 a week for the next 10 weeks. Just to sit and watch and attend story conferences, then 13 weeks as head writers.¹³⁷ Then a contract—for at least a year.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ "Taking Pains" was the early working title for a novel later called "Asylum." Corrington completed the novel before his untimely death in 1988. He assumed the novel would be published that year; it was not and today remains unpublished.

¹³⁷ The initial offer for writing for "General Hospital" was for \$5,500; Corrington expected the final figure to be more like \$7500 a week.

¹³⁸ In a Journal entry dated December 1, 1981 Corrington notes that ABC raised its offer of weekly money by \$1500 dollars and that he and Joyce had counter-offered with a request for a longer contract.

The idea of California is mind-numbing to me.¹³⁹ I never thought to go there for more than short stays. And we wouldn't be going now if it weren't for the fact that we have no job, and the *Texas* royalties are very chancy after March."

"I have a premonition I may never get back home to Shreveport."¹⁴⁰

26 November 1981

Thanksgiving

"Reason tells me I'll have to put aside my misgiving about going to California.¹⁴¹ As Judge Finch [the protagonist in 'Decoration Day'] says, there is no bank to the river of life for us to climb up on. We have to go forward toward whatever awaits us. Thanks to God for his grace these past months."

1 December 1981

[After more negotiations with ABC on *General Hospital*, Corrington notes]: "It appears we're going to California."

[Later in the evening the "General Hospital" deal is sealed]: "We go to L.A. on Thursday for a Friday story meeting." [Corrington is interested] "to see the rest of the writing group, and see how they operate. I'm inclined to lie low for as long as possible. And also to see how the ratings progress over the next month. If they begin to slide, I think we can come in with some fast new story-lines. If not, we'd just work with what they've got."

This promises to be an exciting time. I only hope it's a pleasant time as well."

¹³⁹ See also Journal entry dated February 1, 1982, *infra*. Corrington gives literary expression to his sentiments about California in his story, "Nothing Succeeds." *Collected Stories*, *supra* note 13, at 360-411 [26 Legal Stud. F. 285 (2002)].

¹⁴⁰ Corrington would, as he feared, die on California's strange soil, a long way from his mythical Shreveport.

¹⁴¹ The Corringtons would not finally move to California until 1987.

5 December 1981
Los Angeles

[Corrington and Joyce have spent the day driving around Ojai Valley north of Los Angeles looking at houses and not finding anything especially interesting.¹⁴² In the evening they plan to attend a *General Hospital* cast party at the Bel-Air Country Club.] “I wonder if I can do serious work out here, and how long we would stay. I still have that feeling that, if I come here, I will never get home again. And I worry about the boys. Will they end up staying in California? If they did, would I want to go back? Finally, does it matter? Maybe all the old loyalties are misting away now. Not taken; simply dissolved, carried away by time and the innovations of modern life.

It is not difficult to make decisions, because if you have any brains, you know that there is no way to be certain in advance of what will happen as a result. Even the most calculated decision may carry you to disaster. There appear to be rules inherent in nature, especially in human nature, that exclude certainty in decision-making. Even a statistically-wise judgment is meaningless, because our lives are not, despite all, led statistically. We live our lives and die our deaths individually. And in about half a year or less, I'll have to decide if I want to commit to California and the kind of world it represents. We don't have to live statistically, but the statistics are there, and they are not cheering. We'll see.”

10 December 1981

“This is my father's birthday. I believe it would be his 88th. God rest his soul and may he be anxious for me to join him. He was a very good man.”

“I hope this one [the new novel he is working on] can find a publisher. If not, I'll just keep driving on. They can't stop me now. The work is in me, and it has to be done for me to complete my own destiny.”

¹⁴² The Corringtons eventually acquire a house and property on Mulholland Highway in Malibu.

19 December 1981

"I'll be getting back on *All My Trials* ['Decoration Day'] this week. It shouldn't take too long. I'm not sure I have the ending for it yet. Maybe reading through it again will give me what I need."

22 December 1981

"'Life is for living,' 'war is hell,' are obvious [solipsisms] on the order of 'business is business,' or 'art for art's sake.' The purpose of such symbols is to stall or obfuscate the debate on meanings, to blunt a criticism which is approaching too close to the mark, or to derail examination of the process in question.

The pretense is that so long as 'art' or 'business' or 'war' can be seen to be proceeding, moving on, there is no need for debate regarding the end, the *telos* of the process."

27 December 1981

"I'll be taking *Down to Ilium* [a novel in progress] to California. Also possibly *All My Trials* ['Decoration Day']. It isn't done yet. I've been lazy lately, and the holidays cut in on my time.

"I'm going to feel stripped in California without my books and music. But it will be good to break out of long-held habits, too. Chiefly, I'll miss the boys. But if it works out, I might like a place in the mountains outside L.A. So long as I don't have to mess with the Hollywood types. Ignorance gets me down quickly."

30 December 1981

Shreveport

[Making arrangements for his mother to take care of his sons while he and Joyce get the *General Hospital* writing job underway]: "I hope I can come back one day to stay."

2 January 1982

"The new year has finally arrived. Lord, let it be better than the last. Almost everyone we know has gone through some kind of anguish this past year."

"I need time. Maybe the symbol of that time is the north Louisiana winter. What might arise out of that bleakness, that long death of nature, walking on dry leaves, crackling branches, broken limbs underfoot. Last night, I was reading about Dostoevski,¹⁴³ and the interpretation suggested a single motif under all his work: How can one live in the world? Especially, how can one live a Christian life? Maybe it's time for me to center in on my question, and begin a final framing of it. Is mine simply Dostoevski's asked again, a century later, in another country, under different conditions? I should think about that. My mind seems to be become more and more organized, stripping away old appetites and dreams that either should not or will not be fulfilled. The South has surely dissolved in a larger sense,¹⁴⁴ and it is nostalgia and romanticism that keeps repeating Southern themes except in a personal way. I hold on because I *know* the region and its people, and they are my choice as art and in life. But the issues are now much larger and no longer seem to possess small-scale analogues as they once did. But when you try to extend your fiction to a very large scale, the quality fades, and you're doing either rubbish of the 'international' sort—Harold Robbins, etc, or moving toward Henry James' wonderful but denatured and dispassionate kind of thing.

I get the feeling that the novel may be moving toward the film: only epics and garbage need apply for publication. That would be unfortunate, but since present literati is essentially ideological, serious work is in for trouble. Trouble? These are troubled times, and bid fair to become more so soon. I have the sense that history is about to overtake us all, personally and collectively. The possibility of war is very real, and no one seems able to step in and say 'here, that's absurd. The Russians are all dotty and always have been, and the Americans don't really have much poise or self-assurance, and they surely haven't the guts to take

¹⁴³ Fyodor Dostoevski (1821-1881).

¹⁴⁴ Corrington told an interviewer in 1985 that:

[T]here has been an enormous erosion of the sense of the South in the last twenty years or so. I can remember when Miller Williams and I used to go around on tour delivering a lecture on the roots of southern literature when we still considered the Civil War to be alive and working. I fear that's not really true any longer. I think television has managed what Sherman's troops never could.

Parrill Interview, *supra* note *, at 185 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, 675 (2002)]. Corrington also noted in the Parrill interview that "In the 1950s and early 60s, the South still existed. As far down as my generation, there were still men and women who could tell you what Reconstruction was like. There were a very few Confederate veterans still alive." *Id.* at 184 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, at 675].

on the Soviets for a hundred-year haul, forcing socialism to demonstrate its thorough incapacity to take decent care of its people. Further, the American system doesn't recommend itself to all peoples and all circumstances. It isn't even smooth-working in American."

"The order of heaven is closed to us, and we do not know the way any longer. But human nature is constant enough so that only some of the Marxist lunatics have forgotten that there *is* a way."

16 January 1982

"I begin to find something strange in my thinking now. For the first time I begin to sense the radical, over-powering ambiguity of language, even of thought itself. An old phrase my father used to use: even a broken clock is right twice a day. Is it possible that everything expressible has a fundamental order of truth about it simply by virtue of its sayability? Are lies perfectly true statements out of context? Shift the context and the lie becomes true. A lie misstates the state of affairs. To right the situation, one can change the statement—or alter the state of affairs. This seems odd, somehow, but, motivations aside, it seems accurate."

23 January 1982

[Corrington notes they are driving out to Los Angeles to finally begin serious writing work on "General Hospital" and that he is taking along *All My Trials* ["Decoration Day"].

1 February 1982

"I don't like the pulse of this place [Los Angeles]. There seems to be no peace here. Not surprising. The freeways go all night long. It is as if there were no quiet time here, no moment to consider, no zone of silence in which one can determine what should be done next. One spends one's capital here. On the other hand, the poverty of ideas of spirit is such that a solid vision of reality, plus the wile of the Machiavellian, could carry one through a lifetime."

"If we could get a place with land and lots of trees, I think I could do serious work here. It would be interesting to find out what that work would be like.

Whatever happens, this constitutes a break in my life. Like the time in Berkeley.¹⁴⁵ It appears that California looms large in my life, through no desire or plan of mine. But then little of my exterior life has been planned. Things tend to happen. Maybe I am a Chinese legalist at heart, one who responds, but does not act.¹⁴⁶ I like that. It gives me the feeling of reacting to what the Lord presents to me. That seems to be what we should do, rather than attempting to create occasions.”

“My own nature and thinking is primal.¹⁴⁷ I am a poet, a myth-lover. I know that the Japanese *aké* means: the experience of being elevated via sensible things to the insensible, things sending me onward to no-things.

Since I am primitive,¹⁴⁸ I am comfortable with Judaic and pre-Socratic thinking.¹⁴⁹ Heidegger makes me come to think that the antique pattern of my own deepest impulses may be, if not in any sense correct, at least useful in this age. The question is, what does this age require for its own future? Is it possible that a return to the prophets and the originating philosophers is what is needed?¹⁵⁰ Lord make it so. I have, since I became old enough to think and feel seriously, suspected that I was no more than an interesting and inexplicable fossil with a certain minimal nostalgic value. I would have it otherwise. Heidegger makes me consider that my fundamental impulses are perhaps valuable; that it is possible that an age of spiritual rot and rootlessness could profit from one who is, even now, enamoured of the *apeiron*,¹⁵¹ still tranced by the *arche* from which all arises and to which all returns. Maybe the Lord’s

¹⁴⁵ Corrington spent the spring quarter (March-June) 1968 as Visiting Associate Professor teaching English literature at the University of California-Berkeley.

¹⁴⁶ While Corrington would know better than I, my reading of Chinese legalist philosophy would suggest that the philosophy would not have been all that attractive to him.

¹⁴⁷ On the primal mind, see Jamake Highwater, *THE PRIMAL MIND: VISION AND REALITY IN INDIAN AMERICA* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *THE SAVAGE MIND* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

¹⁴⁸ We know that Corrington was fond of Edward Burnett Tylor’s *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom* (London: J. Murray, 1871). He tells an interviewer he has been searching for the book for some years. Parrill Interview, *supra* note *, at 191 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, 682 (2002)].

¹⁴⁹ Corrington was an avid reader in ancient philosophy, including the pre-Socratics: Anaximander (610 B.C.-546/45 B.C.), Parmenides (515 B.C.-), and Heraclitus (540 B.C.-480 B.C.) (various dates are given for the births and deaths of these pre-Socratic philosophers).

¹⁵⁰ Corrington took up the idea of the prophets in one of his law school writings. See John William Corrington, *The Law and the Prophets*, 4 (2) *The Forum* 5 (October, 1973) (Tulane University School of Law) [26 Legal Stud. F. 705 (2002)].

¹⁵¹ See note 72, *supra*.

gift, through me, is this uncorrupted realization of the pre-metaphysic order of reality.”¹⁵²

9 March 1982

“I got a check for royalties on *The Southern Reporter*—\$500+. They’ve sold 120 copies, pretty good sales for short stories. Eases the pain a bit.”

10 March 1982

“Anyway it goes [staying on with *General Hospital* or going back to Louisiana], this will have been a very valuable period in my life. I feel at ease, despite all the pressure, because I’m quite sure God will see to it that what happens will be for the best. This is not simply a vague Protestant ‘All My Trials,’ but a strong vision. The Lord will see that I have time to do my work. I don’t know how—I don’t even know precisely what work I am to do. But I will not be denied that. I will have time, and my family will have sustenance. God will not waste me. He cannot afford to. Things need to be done, to be expressed, and there are few who can manage it. I am one of those, and the work must be done.

I think some of that work is connected with philosophy,¹⁵³ with insight into what the 20th century has insisted on overlooking.¹⁵⁴ I have to work and prepare myself. I am not an avatar, or a yogi. But I am a mind able to work the ground. John the Baptist is not a bad role to play.”

19 March 1982

“I’ve collected a splendid group of books on Indian thought, and most of the basic documents over the last several weeks. I’m learning a lot.”¹⁵⁵ I

¹⁵² Corrington addressed, in a searching, philosophical way, this “pre-metaphysic order of reality” in his philosophical essays. See e.g., John William Corrington, *The Recovery of the Humanities*, 26 Legal Stud. F. 781 (2002), *The Recovery of the Humanities-II*, 26 Legal Stud. F. 805 (2002); *A Wind Is Rising and the Rivers Flow*, 26 Legal Stud. F. 767 (2002).

¹⁵³ See generally Joyce H. Corrington, “The Evolution of Bill Corrington’s Metaphysics,” and Ellis Sandoz, “Bill Corrington’s Philosophical Quest,” in *Southern Man of Letters*, at 106-116 and 117-133.

¹⁵⁴ Given the influence of Eric Voegelin on Corrington’s thinking, we might assume that this insight draws on Voegelin’s writings on intellectual history, as well as Corrington’s own critique of the era in which he lived. See Journal entries dated September 6, 1980 and March 21, 1981, and accompanying notes.

¹⁵⁵ The result of Corrington’s immersion in Indian thought and literature can be seen in his novella, “The Risi’s Wife,” in *All My Trials*, at 149-233 [26 Legal Stud. F. 115

have a Sanscrit grammar and dictionary and mean to learn to read the language at least [in a rudimentary way], so I can go to the original text when in doubt regarding a translation.

I want to write a book like Voegelin's *Israel & Revelation*¹⁵⁶ about Indian thought as the basis for Western religious and philosophical insight. It would be a great task, but even greater pleasure. There are scores of books on Indian thought, but none like Voegelin's, which reveals the utter soul of Hebraicism."

"We've decided to go home, and hope to get other work. We don't want to live in California; we want to go back where we belong. This business eats up your life. Our lives mean more than a TV show.¹⁵⁷ We can do more than that."

(2002)]. See generally Louise Harmon, *The Canyon of Doubt: John William Corrington's The Risi's Wife*, 26 *Legal Stud. F.* 859 (2002).

¹⁵⁶ Eric Voegelin, *ISRAEL AND REVELATION* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994)(Vol. 1, *Order and History*).

¹⁵⁷ Corrington had no illusions about his work as a Hollywood TV writer, but did see in the ready money he was able to make from his Hollywood writing and the difficulties he experienced in publishing his more serious literary works a sign of the times:

My career in Hollywood has been remunerative but undistinguished. If somebody in Hollywood or in New York television calls me and says that he'll give me \$100,000 a year if I swear never again to write for film or television, I'll say, you just got yourself a deal. In fact, I can be gotten for much less than that. I never wanted to do it, I do not presently want to do it, and next year I will not want to do it. But I can make more money on one crummy piece of TV than I can on five books. I did a lecture in Shreveport last year, and I said: you must understand the spiritual confusion of a man who has seen the best work he ever did go for peanuts, and the most banal crap his mind could conceive of paid for at the rate of \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year. But maybe I'm mistaken. Eliot said that Dante after all was an indifferent critic of Dante. It seems we're talking about a non-culture called America, but perhaps I'm part of that, and it's the films and TV—not the writing—that's worthwhile.

Parrill, *supra* note *, at 192 [26 *Legal Stud. F.* 671, 682-683 (2002)]. Corrington has little to say in his journals about his film writing beyond his disregard for film as an art form. He says of his "Boxcar Bertha" film script:

When I see young men and women look at me with stars in their eyes and say, "my God, you wrote *Boxcar Bertha*, that's the art form I want to practice," I tell them, I wrote it for thirty thousand bucks, I think it's crap, and their little hearts break. If that is art, what in the name of God do you call *Tom Jones*? It's like calling Walter Lippmann a great political philosopher. What the hell do you call Plato? (Laughs.) It's like calling contemporary rock and roll great art.

Id. at 197 [26 *Legal Stud. F.* 671, 689 (2002)].

24 April 1982

[Their last night in Redono Beach, where they have been living while writing *General Hospital*, leaving the next morning for San Francisco and on to New Orleans]: "Pantheon turned the book [*Shad Sentell*] down, and we start from zero again. That is all right. When the Lord wants my work published, it will be."

5 June 1982
New Orleans

"A long time with no entry [in the journal]. I guess I've been downhearted and disgusted with the way things have been going. I had hoped the novel [*Shad Sentell*] would mark a new turning-point in my work, but that is apparently not to be. It also seems we're not likely to get another writing job soon. If *Texas* goes off the air, we'll have to get any kind of jobs we can find.¹⁵⁸ It's not I've lost faith. I guess I just feel the Lord has other things on his mind.

The reading in Indian thought is going on. But I slacked off on my Sanskrit. I've got to get back to work."

5 July 1982

"I'm beginning to move toward the Indian book. I've read dozens of commentaries and am about to go through the Vedic hymns one by one."¹⁵⁹

16 August 1982

"Since my last entry [in the journal], a great deal has happened. We've been hired by John Conboy to write *Capitol*,¹⁶⁰ have been to L.A. and back, and am back in harness. It seems this job could work. Conboy is smart and able, through like most TV producers,¹⁶¹ he has no great

¹⁵⁸ The Corringtons were receiving royalty payments for creating *Texas*.

¹⁵⁹ See VEDIC HYMNS (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891-97) (F. Max Müller trans.)(2 vols.)

¹⁶⁰ "Capitol" first aired with a prime-time special on March 26, 1982 and appeared in a regular 2:30 P.M. (E.S.T.) time-slot beginning on Monday, March 29, 1982 following "As the World Turns," another daytime TV drama for which the Corringtons had been considered as writers. See Journal entries dated November 2-10, 1981. "Capitol" was in the CBS line-up of daytime soaps for five years. The networks were airing thirteen different soap operas in 1981, "Capital" became the fourteen.

¹⁶¹ Conboy, along with Stockton Briggie, served as executive producer of "Capitol."

insight into good writing. I think he believes there is some basic difference between writing for TV and writing as literature.”

20 August 1982

“The 20th anniversary of my father’s death. I think of him often—mostly as a strangely distant, self-isolated, lonely man who smiled and back-slapped when he didn’t want to, who worked very hard and did the best he could for his family. I wonder if I seem as abstracted to my boys as he did to me. Twenty years later I miss him and wish we might have been closer. I will be 50 in October. When he was my age, he had 17 years left to live. I doubt I will live that long. To contemplate that long darkness makes me realize that 20 years is no time at all.”

6 September 1982

[In the course of reading widely and deeply in the Indian literature, and taking up still another Los Angeles writing job, Corrington notes he is “doing notes” for a story called “The Risi’s Wife.”]

“The days are full. Not with what I’d wish, but then, it’s a very fine life. No one could ask for better.”¹⁶²

26 September 1982

“A thinker’s achievement is not like that of an artist, complete and to be valued in its own uniqueness. The thinker is like the teacher—properly valued for what flows *from* his work rather than the work itself.”

28 October 1982

“I think seeing John Updike’s picture on the cover of *Time*¹⁶³ told me what fiction had come to, and it doesn’t interest me much. Fiction as an heroic exploration is gone. The middle-class has appropriated it as a kind of celebration of its own virtues and vices—both of which are

¹⁶² One observer commented: “Corrington has squeezed into one lifetime what most of us might not manage in two or three.” Louis Gallo, “Corrington: From Poetry to ‘Killer Bees,’” *The Courier* (New Orleans Journal of Leisure, Entertainment and the Arts), Nov. 25-Dec. 3, 1975.

¹⁶³ Updike appeared on the October 18, 1982 cover of *Time Magazine*, with the title, “Going Great at 50.” Updike also appeared on the cover of the April 26, 1968 issue of *Time*.

reduced to a scale so diminutive, so contemptible, that they are not even of concern to a pathologist. Flannery O'Connor would shake her head and shrug."

29 October 1982

"I had a nice birthday, and today was quiet. Tonight I'm watching *Islands in the Stream*,¹⁶⁴ and I'm beginning to realize that over the past year, I'd begun to doubt the power of words in any meaningful sense. I was simply lacking in heart. [George C.] Scott brought Hemingway back to life.¹⁶⁵ It was a good film. I doubt it made its costs. But it makes me want to try again. The last lines were 'No one thing is true. It is all true.'"

¹⁶⁴ *Islands in the Stream* (Paramount Pictures, 1977)(Franklin J. Shaffner director).

¹⁶⁵ Corrington had long been a fan of Hemingway's writing. In the 1985 interview with William Parrill he noted that in growing up it had been, Faulkner, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Wolfe who were "the four great pillars." Parrill, *supra* note *, at 182 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, 672 (2002)]. Over two decades earlier, when he was still teaching English literature, Corrington wrote Charles Bukowski:

You got to listen. I just finished reading *The Old Man and the Sea* for maybe the fifth time. It is only immortal. It is only enough to make Shakespeare cry like a baby for the flashy shame of what he did. It is only enough to make Steinbeck and Dos Passos take poison for having published their slum. It is enough to make the white-haired survivor in Oxford shiver and wonder if *The Sound and the Fury* and *Old Man* and *Light in August* are good enough, and whether he has juice enough and a straightforward enough mind to coin something now to put into the contest.

Chaz, so help me God it is one of the most perfect things I have ever read, and it is not Poppa's reputation speaking to me. If I can ever write anything like it, I will feel finished and able to bear anything because I have written something that God might sign with pride.

Corrington letter to Charles Bukowski, dated April 2, 1962, LSU, Baton Rouge. *See also* John William Corrington, *Book Review*, 2 (1) *New Orleans Rev.* 81 (1969)(reviewing *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* by Carlos Baker).

Corrington began his lecture on Hemingway to students in his literature course with the observation that:

It is never easy to speak of your own contemporaries, and impossible to evaluate the work of a man whose death moved you to tears. William Faulkner was one such; Hemingway the other. When I speak of them, I speak of my own youth and my own dreams, and in a sense, of whatever future I may have. Because the pillars of my life so far as writing is concerned, were Joyce, Thomas Wolfe, Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway.

"Ernest Hemingway" notes in "The Twentieth Century Novel," typescript course notes. Corrington Papers, Centenary College.

7 December 1982

[There is good news from Roz, his literary agent. *Shad Sentell* has finally found a publisher—Congdon & Weed—and there will be a \$7500 advance.] “This resolves months of personal misery. Now I think I can begin working again. The impulse is still there. It will take a while to get it back in gear but I have *All My Trials* [‘Decoration Day’] and *Shady Grove* [*Asylum*] to re-write. I may also have a TV documentary to do. Dick Bishirjian wants to do one based on Kirk’s *Roots of American Order*,¹⁶⁶ and wants me, Jo, and Paul¹⁶⁷ to do it. We’d go to Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, and London for a survey, then do the script.”¹⁶⁸

20 January 1983

“We got a word-processor last week and I think it may change my work habits. It really makes typing bearable.

I’m working on *All My Trials* [‘Decoration Day’] with the idea that there may be a short novel in it. I’d like to have it ready for when *Man* [*Shad Sentell*] comes out.”

“I’ll also want to put the pieces of ‘The Risi’s Wife’ on the processor. I will like it as a story idea.”

12 April 1983

“We’re done with *Capitol*, and nothing new in the offering. I’m back into *All My Trials* based on some terrific suggestions from Joyce.”

19 April 1983

“I finished *All My Trials* today in ms. About 190 pages. Short enough to suit the prevailing trend, as it were. The writing seems good to me, the intensity maintained not so much by incident as by the 1st person narration.”

¹⁶⁶ Russell Kirk, *THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN ORDER* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 3rd ed., 1991)(LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1974).

¹⁶⁷ Paul Raush, a TV producer.

¹⁶⁸ A preliminary survey trip to scout for film locations was undertaken, but *Roots of American Order* was never produced.

20 April 1983

"I'm almost done typing up AMT ['Decoration Day']. I will then go back and see to details, and get it in the mail by Friday to Roz Targ [his literary agent]. I'm hoping this one can be sold for some good money, but one allows no hopes for that. I will relax for a few days, a week or so, reading, and then go to work on *Shady Grove*. Maybe this will be my 1929. I am anxious to get on to *Down to Ilium*. That one will take a while, but could be worth the effort. In between, I want to do a couple of stories—*The Risi's Wife* for one.¹⁶⁹ It feels good to be writing full-tilt, and not doing that damned boring TV. We'll have to get another job, of course, but this is a golden time."

23 April 1983

"We sent off *All My Trials* ['Decoration Day'] yesterday. I'll be interested in Roz's response [Roz Targ, the literary agent] to it. She sent a letter saying Macmillan wants to see all my old books. I wonder if they're considering republication? That could mean a lot in terms of recognition if not money. One ends up translating into the other, of course, and it would be splendid if we could make a living on my serious work. I can't imagine that's likely, but this is such a grotesque time in American letters that perhaps a good story or two might succeed. The question would arise as to whether Jo would be restless if we weren't doing TV or film. I've tried to interest her in Indian studies, but no dice. It's a shame.

¹⁶⁹ "The Risi's Wife" became a novella and accompanied "Decoration Day" in *All My Trials*. This is the way Corrington described the story in 1985:

A good old boy from Shreveport, from Rapides Parish, actually, gets drafted, and as one of the lawyers tells the other one, by some misbegotten fate, they send him to the China-Burma-India theatre where he flew the hump. And everybody who flew the hump smoked the hemp, because when you got up in one of those damned C 47s, you are flying from Assam in Northern India across the Himalayas down into Northern China. Here's the problem: your ceiling is twenty-thousand feet and the mountains range up to twenty-nine and thirty-thousand feet. If you misread your compass and your map, you can fly down a four-hundred mile corridor into a sheer face of rock—and there's no turning back and there's no going up—you're dead. This makes for a very nervous bunch of guys. In a certain way, it was more terrifying than having to combat German fighters. The description of the Himalayas I'm very proud of, just the sheer awe of something that reduces mankind to the size of a gnat. We're going to have to go into deep space to encounter anything more humbling than that. Anyhow, he comes back and he has yoga powers he didn't even intend to get. Imagine yoga powers in Shreveport in 1947.

Parrill, *supra* note *, at 187-188 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, 678 (2002)].

I could use her sharp insight into things. It would make learning Sanskrit easier, too.”

“Soon we’ll be looking for property elsewhere. Either up near Shreveport or over in St. Tammany Parish. If we can buy a piece of land on a river or lake, I’d like to build a house and move in the fall Rob and Tom start to college.¹⁷⁰ Two more years. One more move. If I can get settled, I think the work would increase. I need to write five or six more novels in the next three years. Also some stories. I’ll be interested to see whether *The Risi’s Wife* comes to anything.

I started to keep notes here as the final stages of *All My Trials* [‘Decoration Day’] began, but it seemed fruitless. My recollection of the journal passages during the composition of *The Man Who Slept With Women* [*Shad Sentell*] is that they revealed nothing.

It appears the capacity to create is in some way sealed off from the analytical portion of the mind. . . . I used to think Plato was a harbinger of the worst kind of romantics when he claimed that the poet is ‘out of his mind’ when he creates. Now I suspect Plato’s observation was almost clinically accurate. Most have risen from personal insight. There is nothing romantic about it. The creative process simply happens, as it were, under one’s hand, and in a certain sense, the creator is as astonished at the result as is an observer.”

“If it is true that in the mode of creation the artist is, literally, ‘irresponsible,’ he must form himself as best he can in the mode of ordinary living to propose his finest, deepest and longest-lasting impulses for expression in that other way of being.

We have distinct personalities, but the deepest interior is likely One. It is to that One, sensed, not seen, like a shadow passing over the grass as one looks elsewhere, that we owe our very best.”

4 May 1983

“I spoke to Roz Targ yesterday. She had read *All My Trials* [‘Decoration Day’] and likes it very much. We will presumably meet in New York next week.”

¹⁷⁰ Rob and Tom are Corrington’s sons.

16 May 1983

[Corrington notes that Roz Targ hasn't sent "Decoration Day" to Congdon & Weed, the publisher of *Shad Sentell* because they haven't paid the second half of the advance for *Shad Sentell*.] "I want this business on the road, but the politics is difficult; we can't slough Tom [Congdon] off, and take AMT ['Decoration Day'] to another publisher, because *Man* [*Shad Sentell*] would then receive little or no care from Congdon. Still, I don't want to sit on it till *A Man* is published. It appears there is no way to get the bullshit out of the process. One comes to believe it is not hydrogen that lies at the root of all matter, but bullshit. Much is thus explained."

18 May 1983

"I spoke to Roz today, and got the name of her agent in London, Carole Blake. I'll look forward to seeing her as well as Hale in regard to *Man* and also *All My Trials*."

20 May 1983

[In thinking about an upcoming presentation at Chattanooga, Tennessee on the humanities]:¹⁷¹ "There are, legitimately, no such things as 'disciplines'; there are only problems, questions worth examination and study. A man may find his interests carrying him from law to physics to history to linguistics to Sanskrit and Greek, [and] the work of Heidegger. . . ."

12 June 1983

"The last night in the Aegean. Greece has been a wonderful experience. Athens was fun, but the islands and Ephesus and Ionia—now Turkey—have been even better. I have been in those places where Pythagoras and Heraclitus and St. Paul once stood. The water of the Aegean is royal blue—despite Homer's wine-dark sea. The white foam is beautiful against the darkness of the water. The sun is splendid and strong, but not hot by Louisiana standards, because the humidity is quite low. The houses on [Mykonos] are white against the . . . landscape, with the deep blue of the sea everywhere."

¹⁷¹ See note 6, *supra*.

7 September 1983
Los Angeles

“Congdon [Congdon & Weed, the New York publisher of Corrington’s *Shad Sentell*] has turned down *All My Trials* [‘Decoration Day’]—an act of consummate stupidity, but what can you expect from a publisher who can’t even imagine anyone writing except for money.”

“Doris Quinlan has sent *Shad* to James Garner as a possible film.¹⁷² Garner isn’t Jo’s choice or mine. We’d like Robert Preston. It would make a good film—a lot like *Smokey and the Bandit*. Maybe we’ll make megabucks and never have to come out here again.

Jack Martzell wants us to meet with ATLA [American Trial Lawyers Association] people regarding a possible show based on trial lawyers.¹⁷³ It’s not a bad idea—if there’s any market for it. I’d like to syndicate it, and make bucks that way. Maybe ATLA will come up with development.”

5 October 1983

“In a few weeks, I will be 51. Lord knows I don’t feel like it. I have good days and bad, but I don’t feel *old*. I don’t feel much older than I did at 20—except I get tired easier, and can’t handle liquor as well as I used to. Otherwise, I feel splendid.

Oh, hell, I’m tired of fighting, that’s for sure. I’d as soon spend the rest of my life thinking rather than brawling. But if it should come to a situation in which I have to spend the closing years of my life fighting stupidity and idiocy, I reckon I can manage that all right.

¹⁷² *Shad Sentell* was not made into a film. James Garner was, however, cast as Judge Albert Sidney Finch, in the Hallmark TV film, “Decoration Day” (1990). James Garner has now been cast as a Supreme Court Justice in network television’s first dramatic series to focus on the Court. The first episode of *First Monday* (CBS, 2002) was telecast on January 15, 2002.

¹⁷³ Corrington first met John (Jack) Martzell when they were in the third grade together in Shreveport. Martzell represented Tom Blouin, Corrington’s colleague at Loyola-New Orleans, in a tenure dispute with the university. Martzell, now associated with the law firm, Martzell & Bickford, still practices law in New Orleans. See “Martzell & Bickford,” <<http://www.mbfirm.com>> (visited May 14, 2002).

Or maybe I just feel that way because I'm home in Shreveport in October in 1983. That's as good a reason as any. Lord, it feels so good to be home."

23 January 1984

"Longtime between entries. No special reason. I've been working hard. Maybe that's it. We've done a soap projection for NBC, and tonight I finished a rewrite for a CBS movie of the week. I've done a paper for the Southern Humanities Conference,¹⁷⁴ and rewritten *All My Trials* ['Decoration Day'] and *Asylum*. Roz [the literary agent] has both of them now. Once more at the mercy of mental defectives who want to make a lot of money and don't give a shit for lit.

20 April 1984.
Los Angeles

"Consciousness as it occurs in individuals is a *calling*—a calling up, a calling forward, a calling back, a collecting and gathering of Being herded into the points we call beings."

24 April 1984
New York

"I've just started reading James Hillman,¹⁷⁵ whose books I finally ran down in Los Angeles at the Bodhi Tree.¹⁷⁶ He's very good indeed, and seems to represent a powerful new force that springs from Freud and Jung alike—and shares the humanistic insight of [Erich] Neumann.¹⁷⁷ I'm sure he'll be helpful in my work on Indian thinking. The book I'm reading is *Re-visioning Psychology*, and he insists on the necessity of *personification* (in the way of Thales or Empedocles, I think) and uses quotes to suggest that the issue is not personification—which is natural—but *depersonification*, the leaching away of emotional content from

¹⁷⁴ See note 6, *supra*.

¹⁷⁵ James Hillman, *REVISIONING PSYCHOLOGY* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1977) (1975).

¹⁷⁶ The Bodhi Tree Bookstore, a West Hollywood's Melrose Avenue landmark, is still in operation.

¹⁷⁷ Erich Neumann, *THE ORIGINS AND HISTORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954); *DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY AND A NEW ETHIC* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973)(1969). Corrington read Neumann's work carefully and made extensive notes on his reading of *Depth Psychology and a New Ethic*.

'things' such that we allow 'the gods' to die, the world itself to be reduced to a waste-land of valueless objects."

19 May 1984

"Before I go to New York [where Corrington and Joyce will live while working on a new TV writing project], I hope to get *The Risi's Wife*¹⁷⁸ and *Heroic Measures* done.¹⁷⁹ Neither will be a blockbuster, but they're kind of experimental, anyhow. I want to bring Asiatic reality into American fiction. But not as a novelty, as a continuing function in the widening of American consciousness—such as it is."

17 June 1984

"A writer is a mirror, and he should honor his material by introducing into as little distortion factor as possible. I have always tried to avoid making fiction which in fact constituted nothing but fictionalized essays on my own opinions and moods."

22 October 1984

New York

"The division between my working life and my real life is greater all the time. At last, it will become so vast that I cannot measure the space between. It would be wrong to resent it, because I truly believe the Lord has been kind to me and my family—but I wish my dharma had been other: that I might have done the work I love for a decent wage—instead of tons of money I can't seem to hold on to, and work I don't want to do. Which is not to say I don't like doing soaps. If dumb-asses would get off our backs and let us do what we want to do, I'd enjoy it. I want to do

¹⁷⁸ Two years before "The Risi's Wife" was published, in his interview with William Parrill, Corrington describes the novella as follows:

I recently finished a book which I think Arkansas Press is going to publish called *The Risi's Wife*. "Risi" is the Indian word for a seer with extraordinary powers from the time of Rig Veda. And the form is patterned after [Joseph] Conrad: if you know Conrad, you know this form. It's two lawyers discussing a case that one of them once had. It started as a divorce case and ended as a manifestation of Shiva, but it's done with cold, calculating determination to get the same kind of effects that Conrad was able to get out of Marlow's monologues in such words as "Heart of Darkness."

Parrill, *supra* note *, at 185 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, 675-676 (2002)].

¹⁷⁹ See "Heroic Measures / Vital Signs (1986)," in *Collected Stories*, *supra* note 13, at 489-513.

intense emotion and big stories of good and evil at the far margins—and no one will let me do it. I’m tired of fighting these bastards.”

“I’d go insane if I had not withdrawn spiritually to the study of philosophy and the fundamental thinking of the Greeks and Indians. [M]an has to have something to give him dignity, to make sense in the long arc of his life. Win or lose, I think I’ve published enough to establish myself as something more than a movie or TV writer—though I wonder if even that matters.

It matters insofar as one wants to send something onward for his children, and for those not of his blood who will come to understand how he saw the reality of his own time.”

22 October 1984
New Orleans

“Perhaps one begins to realize why Plato rejected poetry: it fails to establish reality, yet fills the place where reality might be—were it not for poetry.”¹⁸⁰

[In reference to an old friend Sam Lachle, whom Corrington memorialized in *Shad Sentell*, he observes that neither Lachle nor he were “good old boys” but were “rednecks in temperament.”¹⁸¹]

28 January 1985

“There seems to be an interesting flow of philosophical thought toward monism and toward a unification of philosophy and conduct. I’m reading

¹⁸⁰ For Plato’s commentary on poetry, see Plato, *THE REPUBLIC* (1871)(Benjamin Jowett trans.)(Francis Cornford, *THE REPUBLIC OF PLATO* sec. 595a, *et. seq.* (Oxford, 1945)). Corrington was, of course, himself a poet. His published collections of poetry include: *WHERE WE ARE* (Washington, D.C.: Charioteer Press, 1962); *THE ANATOMY OF LOVE AND OTHER POEMS* (Ft. Lauderdale: Roman Books, 1964); *MR CLEAN AND OTHER POEMS* (San Francisco: Amber House Press, 1964); *LINES TO THE SOUTH AND OTHER POEMS* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965). With his friend and colleague, Miller Williams, Corrington also produced an anthology of Southern poetry for LSU Press. See John William Corrington & Miller Williams (eds.), *SOUTHERN WRITING IN THE SIXTIES: POETRY* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967)[*The South and Its Literature*, 26 *Legal Stud. F.* 721 (2002)]. On Corrington’s poetry, see Ralph Adamo, “An Exemplary Poem: An Overview of the Poetry of John William Corrington,” in *Southern Man of Letters*, *supra* note *, at 46-58.

¹⁸¹ Some twenty years earlier, Corrington had tried to explain “rednecks” to the outside world. See John William Corrington, *From Another Country: The Southern Redneck*, 21 (3) *Today Magazine* (Chicago) 4 (December, 1965).

Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*¹⁸² and Deutsch's *Humanity and the Divine*.¹⁸³ Both argue for a monistic—or non-dual—reality. Bohm, a physicist, does a splendid job of explicating a central order of physical reality that sounds almost identical to the Vedantic Brahma.

I'll be going Wednesday to Oklahoma Law School to lecture. It will be interesting to see what sort of questions and problems arise in the discussions."¹⁸⁴

"Ellis Sandoz,¹⁸⁵ God bless him, sent a letter today to tell me of the death of Professor Voegelin. I went to face west, looking out of the back porch. I said a prayer for the peace and light of one of the great men of the 20th century. Certainly I have no expectation that I shall meet another such man face to face, or even read such work. I will never forget reading *Israel & Revelation* at LSU in the early 1960s, turning to Joyce, and saying, 'Now I know how God did it.' Professor Voegelin, rest not in peace alone, but in the light. May the Lord give to you all love and knowledge in repayment for the love you always held for him. And the light you gave to all of us. I only wish I could achieve some small part of what you did. None of us who knew you will ever forget you or your work."

10 March 1985

"I sent *The Risi's Wife* to Roz [the literary agent]. No word back. I'll be interested in seeing if she feels it has any commercial chance at all. Of course, there's considerable question whether anything I write has any commercial possibilities.

¹⁸² David Bohm, *WHOLENESS AND THE IMPLICATE ORDER* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981)(1980).

¹⁸³ Eliot Deutsch, *HUMANITY AND DIVINITY: AN ESSAY IN COMPARATIVE METAPHYSICS* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1970).

¹⁸⁴ The title of Corrington's presentation was "Logos, Lex, and Law." His invitation to the University of Oklahoma was initiated by Professor Drew L. Kershen. Telephone communication with Kershen, December 28, 2000. Corrington's presentation, along with one made by Judith Koffler on the same evening, were videotaped and are on file at the University of Oklahoma Law School library. See John William Corrington, *Logos, Lex, and Law*, 26 *Legal Stud. F.* 709 (2002).

¹⁸⁵ For Ellis Sandoz's commentary on Corrington and Voegelin, see Ellis Sandoz, "Bill Corrington's Philosophical Quest," in *Southern Man of Letters*, *supra* note *, at 117-133.

Lewis¹⁸⁶ suggested I send him a story, so he can get it in before he retires. I'm going to work on 'The Prison Gods,' hoping to make of it my own *Penal Colony*.¹⁸⁷

16 March 85

"Ten pages into 'The Prison Gods.' I'm not sure I've got a hold on it, but now seemed a good time to try. The story arose from an actual letter Owen Bradley¹⁸⁸ got from Angola,¹⁸⁹ the prisoner misspelling 'gurd.' Too good to pass up. I'm just not sure of the tone, or of the placement of the narrator. Still, one is never sure of anything, and it's important to keep going. I'm going to try to get a start on four or five stories at once, I'll see how it goes."

30 March 1985

"Judged a Tulane Moot Court today,¹⁹⁰ and saw Bill Lovett again.¹⁹¹ He taught me Negotiable Instruments years ago.¹⁹² Later, Jo and I finished replacing our back fence. The job had to be done, because it had become a sieve through rot, and puppy was getting out every day or so."

¹⁸⁶ Lewis Simpson, editor at the *Southern Review*. See note 108, *supra*.

¹⁸⁷ See Franz Kafka, *THE PENAL COLONY, STORIES AND SHORT PIECES* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976)(1948)(Willa and Edwin Muir trans.). Corrington's "The Prison Gods" was not, ultimately, published.

¹⁸⁸ Bradley was a partner with Steve Plotkin in the law firm Corrington joined after his graduation from Tulane Law School in 1975.

¹⁸⁹ Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, a former slave plantation now used as a maximum security prison for dangerous criminals.

¹⁹⁰ Corrington began Tulane Law School in 1972 and graduated in 1975.

¹⁹¹ William A. Lovett is Joseph Merrick Jones Professor of Law and Economics, and Director, International Law, Trade and Finance Program at Tulane Law School.

¹⁹² Bill Corrington kept his law school notes in 9 1/2 by 6 inch wire bound note books, the same kind he had used as a professor of modern poetry, and he continued to use the same pen and the same ink. Corrington quite literally stepped out of the classroom as a teacher of English literature into his new life as a law student. His Negotiable Instruments notes are contained in one of the wire bound note books with three plastic tab dividers. One tab is devoted to early notes for a novel that would be published under the title *Shad Sentell*. (It contains only two references to the novel: "R.E. Sentell from Birth to Old Age" and then the note, "Story: Our Day Will Come." There follows a list of classical records he intends to order. The second tab of the notebook contains 32 pages of Negotiable Instrument notes, almost three times as much as he managed for Evidence (13 pages), which he placed following the third tab. Corrington manage to take more notes for his Roman Law and Socialist Law courses than he did for Evidence. Jurisprudence resulted in 9 pages of notes. Notesbooks, Corrington Papers, Centenary College.

[Later in the day Corrington has lunch with Jack Martzell and Steve Plotkin,¹⁹³ his old law firm colleague.]

6 May 1985

"We got a call from Roz today. She's sold *So Small a Carnival* to Viking. For reasons best known to them, they want Jo's name off the book. I told Roz that was impossible. I assume Viking isn't crazy enough to turn the book down because my name doesn't appear on it alone. I'm bemused by the whole thing. I wasn't aware that my name was worth anything. Never mind. Viking is the first house it's gone to. If they refuse to publish Jo's name, I expect we can find one who will."¹⁹⁴

16 May 1985

"I'm no mystic, but as I get older, I seem to be freeing myself from some of the world's opinions and finding, through language and in language, pieces of reality that point toward a larger significance in things, a deeper mystery than human beings ever supposed before. We are not what we appear to one another. We are not even what we appear to ourselves. We have to *think*. That is a great burden, but to be and act like men asleep is somehow an awful thing. Thinking can carry us away from our own people. It can make us misanthropes, drive us mad—if in the course of thinking we seek possession of something. Thinking is not *for* anything. It is the course of Being. The non-existent objects, created, thrown off in thinking, are our tributes to Being, our humble thanks to what Is. Jo said we are each tales told about God. That's a hard phrase to follow. My thinking is a deep pleasure. All the more so since I have begun to realize that it leads nowhere and I am not obliged to produce something in order to justify it.

¹⁹³ Steven R. Plotkin headed up the New Orleans law firm where Corrington practiced law. Plotkin was elected to the Louisiana Court of Appeals in 1987. For a short bio on Plotkin, see, New Orleans Bar Association, *It's the Law*, <<http://www.neworleansbar.org/itslaw/plotkin.htm>> (visited April 9, 2002).

¹⁹⁴ Corrington goes on in this journal entry to mention a sequel to *So Small a Carnival* and suggests it might be called *A Project Named Desire*, which was indeed the eventual name of the second of four detective mystery books Corrington would co-author with his wife, Joyce.

The books have all been dedicated AMDG.¹⁹⁵ They are the Lord's pastoral, part of the *lila*, the play—more properly, the task in which we are all involved whether we would be or not. A nice 'All My Trials,' but one that bears more thinking about. The dedication always flowed from the bounty of thanks for Life and for the frame of it into which I found myself set. I feel sometimes almost overwhelmed with love for the whole order of the cosmos. If we can let purpose, *telos*, become simply one more subordinate piece of the form of our lives—rather than a driving, demanding center—we can be very happy. It is not at all that we have to give up the world in order to be content. Quite the reverse. We need to immerse ourselves in the actuality of the world rather than rest our whole life's meaning on the non-existent lunacies of fortune."

14 July 1985

"I see no way out of writing for commercial TV in the near future unless a teaching job should appear—and I'd only be interested in a limited number of locations for such a job. At least with the TV writing, we've managed to stay in Louisiana so far."¹⁹⁶

2 September 1985

"Playing catch-up, the last few weeks have been interesting. Miller Williams at Arkansas¹⁹⁷ has two good readings on *The Risi's Wife*, but feels it's too short. So I sent *All My Trials* ['Decoration Day'] and Joyce's edit for *Asylum*. With a little luck, I'll have two of them in print soon."¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Asked in a 1985 interview the meaning of AMDG found at the beginning of all his books, Corrington replied:

It's something that I was taught when I was just learning to write, taught by the Jesuits to put at the head of all my papers, and it's the only thing that I carried away that I have any use for—that and the discipline they gave me. It stands for *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*, to the greater glory of God.

Parrill Interview, *supra* note *, at 183 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, 673 (2002)].

¹⁹⁶ The Corringtons would eventually leave Louisiana—in 1987—and move to Malibu, California. Corrington was never seduced by the lure of California that enveloped so many of us. The move to California was made only to facilitate their TV writing.

¹⁹⁷ Miller Williams was the founding director and editor of the University of Arkansas Press. Corrington and Williams were old friends and collaborators from the early 1960s when they taught together at LSU.

¹⁹⁸ Upon Corrington's death in 1988, his novel, *Asylum*, remained unpublished.

Then, last Friday, we got a call—at last—from Jerry Howard at Viking. He praised *Carnival*, said he had reservations on *Project*—but wanted to publish it. So we have 2 books with Viking—thanks to Roz Targ.¹⁹⁹

Howard is also reading my short stories, and *All My Trials*. It appears he thinks I'm a 'considerable writer.' Roz likes to think reputation is 'just around the corner,' in her phrase. I wouldn't bet the house on it, but it's been a good period."

26 December 1985

"Soon we begin working on a story line for *The Ulganov Account*, our first international suspense story. I'm done with my paper for Kansas . . . and working on another paper . . . for Kansas State.²⁰⁰ Lewis Simpson of *Southern Review* took *Heroic Measures/Vital Signs* which I'd just finished.²⁰¹ Now to finish—or get a decent start on *The Prison Gods*, and complete the Judge Finch stories."

1 January 1986

"A new year. In many ways, the past year has been very successful. Two suspense novels written and sold,²⁰² another almost done.²⁰³ The novellas

¹⁹⁹ John William Corrington & Joyce H. Corrington, *SO SMALL A CARNIVAL* (New York: Viking, 1986); *A PROJECT NAMED DESIRE* (New York: Viking, 1987). Miller Williams, who would publish *All My Trials* at the University of Arkansas Press, wrote the following note about *So Small a Carnival* (apparently for use as a statement on the dust-jacket):

When I heard that the Corringtons were writing a crime novel, I knew that it would be literate, violent, political, and charred about the edges by its own energy. *So Small a Carnival* is all of this, but there is more. The Corringtons have built each of their main characters from such a dark mix of what we are that when we meet them we feel emotions not usually aroused by genre fiction. I'm not sure I would give my living room to most of the people I get to know here, but my attention is hostage to the events in their lives, I believe they are who they say they are, and they sometimes move me to pity and fear. Aside from such critical twaddle on my part, Bill and Joyce Corrington have done what they know how to do—they've told a damn good story.

Miller Williams note, single pg. typescript. Corrington Papers, Centenary College.

²⁰⁰ The address given at Kansas State University in 1986 was entitled "The Recovery of the Humanities-II," a continuation of an earlier presentation at the Southern Humanities Conference at Chattanooga, Tennessee on February 4, 1984. See John William Corrington, *The Recovery of the Humanities-II*, 26 *Legal Stud. F.* 805 (2002); *The Recovery of the Humanities* 26 *Legal Stud. F.* 781 (2002).

²⁰¹ "Heroic Measures / Vital Signs," in *Collected Stories supra* note 13 (first published in 22 (4) *Southern Rev.* 804 (1986)).

²⁰² Corrington is referring here to *So Small a Carnival* and *A Project Named Desire*.

²⁰³ *A Civil Death* would be published by Viking in 1987.

['Decoration Day' and 'The Risi's Wife'] almost placed at Arkansas—Miller called and said the press committee will meet on the 10th, but that he feels it's a formality. I hope so. The Title of 'All My Trials' has been changed to 'Decoration Day' in order to use AMT for the book. I only wish that I'd gotten *The Prison Gods* done for this book.²⁰⁴ No way. I have a parcel of notes, but no secondary idea, and a foundation for progress is not at hand yet.

Financially, the year has been a disaster. No work since last November on OLTL ['One Life To Live'] and no real prospects of anything forthcoming. I've asked one agent to try to get me script work [for TV daytime dramas]. I've had a belly full of head writing jobs. No one wants quality and it's not worth the pain and feeling of insecurity. If I can get a script or two a week, we could do quite well and still have time for other work."

13 January 1986

"[L]ast Friday Miller called. *All My Trials* will be published by Arkansas next year. It will contain 'The Risi's Wife' and AMT, retitled 'Decoration Day,' a title I'm not too fond of, but it will serve.

Irv called this afternoon and said Roger Corman has a re-write for us.²⁰⁵ That's cheering. We'd love to get reinvolved with Roger."²⁰⁶

15 January 1986

"I had a colon operation at Ochsuer's [Hospital] today. Preparing for it was loathsome, but the procedure went easily. It would appear the polyps were benign, but we'll know for sure next week when the biopsy is done."

²⁰⁴ The final version of "The Prison Gods" consisting of 150 pages in a "first typescript" version (the words "first typescript" written in hand by Corrington on the manuscript) remains unpublished. Corrington Papers, Centenary College.

²⁰⁵ Irv Schecter was the Corringtons' agent.

²⁰⁶ On Corrington's work with Roger Corman, see Frances Doel, "John William Corrington as Screenwriter," in *Southern Man of Letters*, *supra* note *, at 134-143. On Corman generally, see Roger Corman, *MAVERICK: HOW I MADE A HUNDRED MOVIES IN HOLLYWOOD AND NEVER LOST A DIME* (New York: Random House, 1989); J. Philip di Franco (gen. ed.), *THE MOVIE WORLD OF ROGER CORMAN* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1979); Ed Naha, *THE FILMS OF ROGER CORMAN: BRILLIANCE ON A BUDGET* (New York: Arco Publishers, 1982).

15 February 1986

"I'm still fretting over *The Prison Gods* which won't come into focus for me. I am lacking elements, something needs to be present that is not present, and it's holding up work."²⁰⁷

17 February 1986

"No progress on *The Prison Gods*. Patience. It's not going to be a money-maker anyhow. It always comes, sooner or later. It has never failed. There are other things to do while I wait."

14 March 1986

Los Angeles

Bel Aire Sands Motel

"Several good weeks. I forgot to take my Journal to Kansas University but then I spent all my uninvolved time reading. It was a wonderful week with John & Yvonne Willingham, and a new friend, Dick Hardin. John & Yvonne are the same people they were 30 years ago at Centenary. God love and bless them both, and make them happy. I tried to talk John into working with me on my 'recovery of the humanities' project, but didn't get much response. Not many folks seem excited by ideas nowadays.

We're in Hollywood being considered as executive producers of a spinoff of *Peoples' Court* called *Superior Court*. I'd rather drink muddy water, but we need a steady job to get ourselves fixed financially. If we get the job we'll have to come to L.A. to live again, but if the bucks are right, we'll have to do it.

Viking bought *City of the Dead*,²⁰⁸ paying \$15,000 as they did for *Project*. But given they've bought all three mysteries, we can live with the short money up front.

²⁰⁷ "The Prison Gods" was left unpublished in a "first typescript" version and in Joyce Corrington's view, the novella was never, in her husband's mind, finished. Personal communication with the author.

²⁰⁸ *City of the Dead* was published under the title *A Civil Death*.

So Jo and I have our first trilogy of novels accepted one-two-three. Not bad for a pair of Ph.D. teachers.²⁰⁹ They're good books.

Today is John's birthday.²¹⁰ He's 24, and a loveable and fine young man. I hope he knows how much I love him, and how proud of him I have always been. I guess the great price I've paid for the life Jo and I have chosen to live is to have not played the parent that every child dreams of. Yet I hope one day my children will know the value of the work I did, and realize that they were participants in it with Jo and me. I think the books will live, and one day the kids will come to understand that I was not a cold and distant father, but a man committed to writing books for *their* children, to continuing a cultural [tradition] left to me by my predecessors that cannot be allowed to fail, that must needs be passed on like a living flame even amidst the cultural darkness of our time.

At Kansas, I suddenly realized that I made a great mistake in leaving the teaching profession. Because I was an exceptional teacher. I possessed and was able to pass on a rare quality in this age: energy, involvement with ideas.²¹¹

Even a few years back, I would have laughed at someone preaching about 'the life of the mind.' . . . [T]he interplay of spirit and intellect constitutes what one's life comes to mean when his children are grown and the balance of his life lies before him, more or less to be used as he chooses.

²⁰⁹ Bill Corrington received his D.Phil. from the University of Sussex in 1965. See note 96, *supra*. Joyce Corrington received her Ph.D. in Chemistry from Tulane University in 1968. The topic of her dissertation was "Effects of Neighboring Atoms in Molecular Orbital Theory."

²¹⁰ John Wesley, one of Corrington's sons.

²¹¹ "It seems to me the ultimate gift of a teacher of literature can pass on to his students is the gift of sensibility. Having that gift a student can do anything. Without it he is crippled." Corrington letter to Walker Percy, dated March 13, 1967 (discussing arrangements for Percy's teaching a Literature tutorial at Loyola-New Orleans where Corrington was chair of the English Department).

Corrington seems to have put his mind to teaching the way he did everything else. His surviving lecture notes suggest extensive preparation and that he was in scholarly command of the writers he taught in his literature courses. But, there is also ample evidence that he was not in love with teaching, or committed to it the way he was to writing. In a letter dated August 8, 1962 to his friend Tom Bell he says, "Summer school is a drag. You might as well talk to cans of chicken-soup." In an earlier letter to Bell (undated)(probably October, 1960), Corrington says he finds LSU, where he was then teaching, "all right" but then "anyplace is all right. They leave me alone and I sure leave them alone."

My view at last is a straight forward and simple one: a man makes his best guess as to what may constitute the meaning of his life. Then he lives by that judgment as best he can. There is no certainty, no assurance that one's judgment is correct. But then there can be no such certainty. I am living in an age that seems to be repudiating Christianity which has been the soul and solace of the West for 2000 years. Nothing lasts forever—except the love of the divine and one's dedication to that ultimate reality that can never be lost, never forgotten, and who it is death to ignore or put aside.”

21 March 1986
New Orleans

“[T]he *raison* of *myth* is a function of the psyche—it is, in Cassiser's phrase how we know what we know; it is the play of our symbolic reality in extended form as the Tale. It places us—ourselves—in front of ourselves in one of our guises so that we can in imagination at least play out the Tale which resides within us.

Thomas Wolfe's repetitive writing, driven by compulsion, indicated to me that each of us bears a Tale, and the expression of it in some way is the 'meaning' of our lives. I had already told mine when I completed *And Wait for the Night*. The rest is variation, seeking more precise form. It took Hemingway till *The Old Man and the Sea* to find his form.”

31 March 1986

“A call from Ben Myson in Berkeley yesterday on the possibility of our writing the Hank Williams Jr. film 'A Country Boy Can Survive.' I hope we get the job, especially if it pays well, because I'd love for us to have it and 'Nightfall' as new features.²¹² We'd like not to have do [daytime drama] series. The money is fine, but the time and pressure considerations are very rough indeed.”

3 April 1986

“For the first time since November of 1984, we have a regular job. The 'Superior Court' deal got made yesterday, and it's a pretty good pay-out.

²¹² The Corringtons were working with Julie and Roger Corman on a script for "Nightfall," based on an Isaac Asimov science fiction story about a planet always in daylight.

We'll have to be in L.A. for at least the first part of the run of shows and for pre-production, but at least there's a pay-check every week. We'll be able to pay back part of our Keogh borrowing, and have a few dollars to carry us forward. It's a great relief.

We fly to L.A. on the 13th and start work on the 14th of this month. It appears we'll be working—and perhaps living—on Hollywood Boulevard. We'll try to make a deal with the Hollywood Roosevelt, our old stomping ground where we've stayed so often before. It'll be an easy five or six weeks. Then, if we get renewed, we'll have to find a place.

On this show, we'll be getting producer credit as well as writer credit. We'll also get 1% of the net profits on the show, and a large chunk of guaranteed rerun money as well. It's not as easy or as well-paying as an hour soap, but we're glad to have it. Now we'll make a living while we wait to see how the Viking suspense novels do.

I'm into Blumenberg's *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*.²¹³ It starts well. I hope it doesn't flounder like his *Work on Myth* did in its later sections.²¹⁴ The man is brilliant and magisterial in knowledge, and his take-off point, questioning the commonplace of modern consciousness as a 'secularization' of Christian consciousness, is worth examination."

10 April 1986

"Less than a week before we go to L.A. I don't want to go, but it's not a terrible fate. The project ['Superior Court'] is going to be very difficult, because it's essentially silly. It is always difficult to make silly things work, especially for Jo & me, because we have a tendency—especially Jo—to want things to be right, to make sense and possess some measure of integrity. 'Superior Court' doesn't offer much of a possibility for such ventures. But if we can stick with it, we'll have another year of money to live on."

"A strange thing happened Friday—one of those things I wish happened more frequently, just so that life would possess at least the appearance of a deep structure, a profound destiny, outside the purview of my imagination. Georgia Jones called from the *Los Angeles Times*. She

²¹³ Hans Blumenberg, *THE LEGITIMACY OF THE MODERN AGE* (Cambridge: MIT Press Paperback ed., 1985)(1983)(Robert M. Wallace trans.)

²¹⁴ Hans Blumenberg, *WORK ON MYTH* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985)(Robert M. Wallace trans.)

wants me to do book reviews for them. The first book I'm to review is a first novel called *Those Who Blink* by William Mills. I told her Billy and I were fraternity brothers and friends of 30 years, but that I'd like to do it—acknowledging the relationship between us. So the novel is on the way. It's being published by LSU—which turned down *Shad*—but then why not? The politics is embarrassing, but this is Louisiana, and I don't blame Billy.

I hope it's a good book. I want to praise it roundly and keep him working.²¹⁵ God knows I have few enough peers nowadays."

16 April 1986
Los Angeles

[T]o the extent that the cognitive appetite directs itself at nature, it is apprehensible not on account of the nature of its objects but rather because it prefers the inferior realm of the dependent and conditioned to the immediacy of its relation to its author.²¹⁶

"This is Tertullian's complaint against science, and it has assisted me in understanding why I feel more fully the significance of the Brahmanistic vision than the Christian. I simply cannot believe any longer in the separation of the divine and its 'creation.' To love and contemplate the reality of the natural world is to praise and love and meditate on the Lord. The universe in some sense is his flesh. The idea of creationism—as opposed to emanationism²¹⁷ or some similar metaphor seems destructive of the harmony of unity that I sense at the root of things. We are enfolded in the divine, and it in us. We and the divine cannot be shed of one another. There is no way. We are flesh and blood and soul together, and a failure of love toward the divine constitutes self-hatred—as in the line I found recently in Engels: 'All that exists deserves to perish.'²¹⁸ Certainly Engels did."

²¹⁵ See John William Corrington, "Those Who Blink" by William W. Mills, Los Angeles Times Book Review, June 22, 1986, p. 3.

²¹⁶ Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, supra note 213, at 302.

²¹⁷ Emanationism is the doctrine that holds emanation (*emanare*, "to flow from") as the mode by which all things are derived from a first reality, or principle.

²¹⁸ Frederick Engels, LUDWIG FEUERBACH AND THE END OF CLASSICAL GERMAN PHILOSOPHY 7 (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976). Engels is, in the line Corrington quotes, constructing a proposition rooted in statements he attributes to Hegel. The statement seems also to be attributed to Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*. Mephistopheles says: "I am the spirit that always denies! / And rightly: all that is deserves to perish." GOETHE'S FAUST (Part I)(New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1976)(Randall Jarrell trans.).

30 April 1986

"Another long day at the tractor factory, but tonight we received the first bound copies of *So Small a Carnival* from Gerry Howard at Viking. Fawcett came in with a \$20,000 first bid for paper rights. Roz says Gollancz is a possible publisher in England.²¹⁹ The PW [*Publisher's Week*] review was good. I hope this one goes especially well, since Jo's name is on it too."

"This place [Hollywood] is like a small town, supposing their concerns to be those of the world."

13 May 1986

"Listening to some Glenn Miller records I found at Tower Records in L.A. They're still beautiful. I was even able to find the old sides the Miller band broadcast to the German Army during the war. There are even a few tunes I'd never heard before."

20 May 1986

"Time is getting short. Soon we'll be back in Hollywood for a long time. It's a living. As soon as we settle in a house, I'll start a reading program and note-taking. Also I mean to get *Prison Gods* done. Got the British paperback of *Shad* [and] the cover is a piece of insulting stupidity.²²⁰ The English can't seem to grasp the distinction between rednecks and hillbillies. *Shad* with laced boots?

Also got the advance check on *City of the Dead*.²²¹ We'll be revising that one while we're on the coast. Lots of activity, not much money or personal pleasure. I'll try to remedy that with some good work. Maybe a few short stories."

24 May 1986

"I thought once more as I often have, that it was, in a public sense, wrong for me to quit teaching because I had the ability to make students

²¹⁹ *So Small a Carnival* would eventually be published in England by the Mysterious Press in 1989.

²²⁰ The first publication of *Shad Sentell* in England was by Macmillan in 1984. Corrington here refers to the paperback publication by Grafton Books published in 1986.

²²¹ "City of the Dead" was published under the title *A Civil Death* by Viking in 1987.

realize how important it is to live the life of the spirit, of the intellect. I'd like to be doing it now, but no one in academic circles wants me around. I present difficulties. But isn't it the task of a great teacher to present difficulties? Whitehead said, it is the business of the future to be dangerous. Dead on. And it's the business of us all to drive the past into the future so that our children will know and understand the questionable meaning of the present."

"Lord keep me going, let me get the work done."

3 June 1986

"I've loathed positivism for years, but it's essential to realize that the counter-positions of positivism do not constitute a proper expression of reality, either. I'm going to try to express the intellectual situation as clearly as I can, but with no hope that it will fairly represent the encrustation of a century of problems.

Positivism was the faddism of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. As LaMettrie's book expresses it, *Man a Machine*.²²² Historicism was one of the 19th century responses to positivism—of a piece with Romanticism—which is to say Medieval thought and feeling stripped of religion.

One is thus confronted with counter-positions which appear to co-opt all the available territory without resolving the problems which presumably occupied the territory. The analysis comes in several parts—the debate between positivism in its multiple modes and historicism. Romanticism remains at all times a kind of absurd jurisdictional struggle between varieties of Christian sectarianism. Both schools stand within the ontology and epistemology of the great overarching past, pretending—perhaps even supposing—that they represent a new view of reality when in fact they represent no more than minor varietal substructures of the old Judeo-Christian version from which they sprang. One views them with a certain degree of amusement, realizing that they reckon themselves to be expressing 'modernism' in some sense, when in fact their claims reveal nothing more than the collective modern ignorance of ideas. One is driven to wonder if Whitehead was precisely correct when he said all philosophy was nothing but footnotes to Plato.

²²² Julien Offray La Mettrie, *MAN A MACHINE* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Co., 1961).

Yet things are more complex: positivism is, after all, a minor scientific product of classical physics. It arose as a kind of joyous result of the awesome victory achieved by Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton at the observational level, and Bacon and Descartes at the theoretical level.

Such victories produce their own kinds of confusion, and seem to draw second-rate minds into methodological judgments that would not be made in less exceptional times. It is an easy matter to jump a head of substantial realizations and pretend that the most extreme speculations in some sense constitutes knowledge. All of us have been suffering under precisely such a situation for the better part of two centuries. So much for the groundless pretensions of positivism—the silly notion that mathematical physics constitutes a general method or logical rationale for all knowledge, including the human.”

13 June 1986
LAX 7:01 am

“In the 1980s, no one really pays any attention to positivism. One only sets out its positions as historical fumbings which we have grown beyond. And that is good.

But not good enough. The Romantic counter-thrust of historicism with its radical subjectivism and its rejection of natural science is not worth comment. Not because Dilthey, Collingwood and others are valueless, but because, even as they were writing, something incredibly more dramatic took place.

The old positivist schools were destroyed not by historicism, the higher criticism, and all the various humanistic responses to 19th century natural science, but by the new wave of science itself. If we laugh at scientism today, and see it as nothing more than a contemptible faddism of its time, that is because its arrogant posturings were shattered by the New Physics of the 20th century.²²³ The ‘exact sciences’ of the 19th century have become the ‘statistical sciences’ of the 20th.”

²²³ See generally John William Corrington, *The New Physics vs. The Old Gnosis*, 4 (2) New Orleans Rev. 99 (1974).

6 June 1986

“But there remains nonetheless a number of serious questions left untouched—or at least unresolved by the epigonic debates of the followers of Hegel and Hume (*cf.* Blanshard’s equation of central logical positivistic positions with the thought of David Hume).²²⁴ Never mind the founding epistemological questions which have haunted [us] since Descartes without any resolution: there are other questions which may perhaps be answered—for example, the profound question of uniformity between ‘natural’ and ‘human’ reality is one.

I find that, on principle, I believe that there is and must be some clear degree of uniformity between fundamental laws of nature and whatever laws [govern] ‘humanity.’ Not in a simple-minded way, but profoundly, deeply.”

13 June 1986
LAX 7:01 am

“On my way to Shreveport for the Writer’s Conference I promised to speak at month’s ago.²²⁵ We’re in our new place out Benedict Canyon, and it’s an incredible contrast with L.A.—even cold at night, green, beautiful. Hard to imagine Hollywood Boulevard 20 minutes away.

I’ve begun to see a pattern behind the foundational meaning of ‘Reason.’ Friedländer’s *Plato*,²²⁶ added to the book *Archaic Logic*,²²⁷ pointed the way: Reason is ‘the third god,’ the daemon which links the discovered dispositions in a suddenly post-mythic dualistic world. Reason did not destroy myth. It was the inner binding force of mythos, unconscious salvaged from *skopsis* for the use of consciousness.”

²²⁴ See generally Paul Arthur Schilpp (ed.), *THE PHILOSOPHY OF BRAND BLANSHARD* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1980).

²²⁵ Corrington presented an address entitled “The Mystery of Writing” at the Northwest Louisiana Writer’s Conference, Shreveport, Louisiana, June, 1985. See “The Mystery of Writing,” *supra* note 1.

²²⁶ Paul Friedländer, *PLATO* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2nd ed., 1973 (1969)(1958)(Hans Meyerhoff trans.)

²²⁷ Raymond Adolph Prier, *ARCHAIC LOGIC: SYMBOL AND STRUCTURE IN HERACLITUS, PARMENIDES AND EMPEDOCLES* (The Hague: Moulton, 1976).

18 June 1986

“Benny Goodman is dead. Conrad did a cartoon for him in the *LA Times* today—the first cartoon of his I haven’t found contemptible.²²⁸ It showed Benny among the stars like a constellation—‘And the Angels Swing.’

Benny Goodman was my introduction to music. ‘Sometimes I’m Happy’ and ‘Stompin at the Savoy’ are two of my earliest musical memories—along with Tommy Dorsey’s ‘Getting Sentimental’ and Glenn Miller’s ‘Sunrise Serenade.’ I like Artie Shaw’s clarinet more than Goodman’s, but that was because I was always more of a musical romantic. I appreciated Goodman’s constant unrelenting musical taste and intelligence. His records seem to me to represent a large part of the high water-mark of American popular culture. Like Benny, it seems to me most contemporary pop culture is for retardates. Nobody could say that about the Goodman bands, and the multitudinous orchestras influenced by them.”

22 June 1986

“I’m beginning to see the motive underlying positivist and analytical philosophy, and it comes as no surprise, and yet bemuses me. Why would a generation of apparently sober men dedicate themselves to a war against transcendence and metaphysics? Seems, very strange. A battle against organized religion seems a simple-minded enough way to pass time, but to fight against aspects of human consciousness and the unconscious seems absurd on its face.”

25 June 1986

“Im done with my two scripts for the week and can spend tomorrow on *Nightfall* [a new film script for Roger Corman], I’ll be done with it by 10 July when it’s due, but I wish it had more fizz, more movement. Maybe it will before it goes to production.

We went to the Fuller Theological Seminary bookshop in Pasadena last Saturday.²²⁹ It’s quite good, with lots of Jewish stuff—and the complete

²²⁸ Paul Conrad was a cartoonist at the *Denver Post* for 14 years, and received his first Pulitzer Prize in 1964. He then joined the *Los Angeles Times* where he was chief editorial cartoonist until 1993.

²²⁹ The Fuller Theological Seminary Bookshop is located at 84 N. Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, California.

edition of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* for \$375.²³⁰ I'm going to buy it if we have the money—simply because I want to fully understand the incredible spiritual and intellectual gymnastics by which a man of Barth's obvious status reached his conclusions vis-a-vis Scripture and the knowledge of God.

I cannot imagine a faith which does not take into account every scintilla of knowledge and insight regarding every aspect of life that a man knows about, has seen, smelled, imagined, speculated on. With all our experiences, our ground for approaching the divine is poor and sorry enough. I would not dare approach that majesty with nothing more than a base and faltering knowledge of the Scriptures, claiming that thereby I had done any whole duty to know him, to love him, and serve him. I say this for myself—not those blessed Jews and Buddhists who lose themselves in rapture through the power of a single revelation. Maybe my way is easier than theirs—or perhaps harder. In any case, I didn't choose it. It came upon me like a destiny when Dick Wentworth gave me Voegelin at LSU so long ago.²³¹

Strange how my destiny has been wound in with Voegelin's. Now I feel as if I were his son, destined to fulfill myself in consideration of what the father achieved. I have no hope of adding anything to his work, but I wistfully wish I could. I can imagine nothing of more worth than to write a book or two that would stand in some relation to his.

²³⁰ Karl Barth, *CHURCH DOGMATICS* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1936-1963)(G.T. Thompson trans.)(4 vols.)

²³¹ Richard Wentworth was director of the LSU Press. He later became director and editor-in-chief at the University of Illinois Press. Wentworth retired from the University of Illinois Press in 1999. When Wentworth retired, Miller Williams, who had been with Corrington and Wentworth at LSU, wrote of Wentworth:

We've come together here to mark the end
Of the luminous, long career of a good friend.
As one of the fortunate who, since books began,
Were privileged to be published by this man,
There's much that I want to say, but I'd be remiss
If I left unsaid one thing to say about him—
There's not greener laurel to lay on a leader than this,
That he did it right so we could do it without him.

Presstime: The Newsletter of the University of Illinois Press, No. 6, April 1999 <<http://www.press.uillinois.edu/presstime/6.html>> (visited April 21, 2002)(used here with the permission of Miller Williams).

I would not dare quarrel with the life the Lord has given me, but I could wish I were more intelligent and less literary. The truth of it is that I am reduced to the permanent status of an entertainer in this society, and I am not especially anxious to entertain. I would rather put forth ideas that the future might take hold of and move forward. I guess I wish I had been Voegelin—or Bohr or Schrödinger—someone whose work is in some sense a mirror of the ground.”

18 July 1986

“Yesterday I got the Ms. *For All My Trials* back from Arkansas. It’ll fill up the weekend, but it’s worth the time. I still feel its one of the best things I’ve done.

The work goes on. . . . We’re going into full-scale production [on ‘Superior Court’] next week—week after week of 5 shows per week.

The weather here is strange. We sleep under a blanket almost every night. Many mornings are clouded over and downright chilly. By mid-day, it’s usually burned-off and warm. By six in the evening, the chill is back.

But one day merges into another, only the script names being different, that’s what we get paid for. In the evenings I read as much as I can, but generally I fall asleep after a few pages. Still, I’m learning. For me, the growth of mind doesn’t arise from concepts, but from a deeper experience than conceptual. What I read may appear in a piece of fiction, a script, conversation—or go underground for quite a while.

The Prison Gods is still germinating. I wish to hell it would flower or let me be done with it.”

22 July 1986

“I sent off the Ms. *Of All My Trials* back to Arkansas. Jim Twiggs is a hard-driving editor. He did a good job and forced me to a hard look at the book. I can’t do better without a massive rewrite, but Jim made me realize I’m no master yet. Still, if one can get past the impacted prose, those are two good stories.

Also called *The Southern Review* about proofs for 'Heroic Measures Vital Signs.'²³² Said they'd send them out here to me. It'll be in the fall issue. It's an interesting story. I call it my 'Buddhist story.'

Work is going along well. One could wish for better cases [for 'Superior Court'], but what we've got we can live with. We have to be renewed for the final 20 weeks in another couple of weeks or so. Then we'll be here till February finishing the final 20 weeks of the first season of the show. Should it do well in the ratings, we may get a shot at a second season. I have to say that I'll be amazed if the show is successful. I can't imagine watching it. But then I'd as soon drink bat-blood as watch any daytime TV. Night-time [TV] is generally bad enough."

9 August 1986

"We had to work late yesterday to stay even, but that was all right. We went by the studio and things seemed to be going well. It was the first time that five shows were shot in a single day."

23 August 1986

"We sold the paperback rights to *Carnival* and *Desire* last Wednesday for \$33,000—of which we'll get half. It's disappointing, but then I've gotten to the point of expecting to be disappointed in what my books bring in. Still, I suspect *Carnival* will turn out to be a genuine classic. And, after all, we'll have made about \$45,000 off the three mystery novels—perhaps more, since the TV and film rights to *Project* and all but hardback rights to *City* [*A Civil Death*] remain to be sold."

30 August 1986

"It looks like we'll be picked up for the last 20 weeks of 'Superior Court.' The show goes on the air 15 September, and I hope it takes off.²³³ It would be nice to have a sure supply of money for another year. At the same time, we'd have to decide about what to do with our house in New Orleans. I don't want to move out here. I'd rather get a place in

²³² John William Corrington, *Heroic Measures / Vital Signs*, 22 (4) *Southern Review* 804 (1986)(in *Collected Stories*, *supra* note 13, at 480-513).

²³³ The Corringtons' were headwriters and producers of episodes #1001-1170, 2001-2170, 3001-3170 of "Superior Court" (Stu Billett Productions). The episodes aired from 1986 to 1989.

Shreveport, so I could go home when this California stuff is done. I find California very attractive in weather and country, but depressing in people. I don't want to live out my life in a swamp of decadence, druggies and defectives."

7 September 1986

"I finished the proofs for 'Heroic Measures / Vital Signs.' It's a good story, not much like anything I've done before. Also got a note from Bev at LSU Press²³⁴ saying they'd gotten a terrible reading on *Asylum*. Hope they save such reader's reports. They might be amusing one day."

8 September 1986

"We've got 20 weeks to go—longer than we've already done. It seems interminable, but necessary."

21 September 1986

"Billy²³⁵ and Beverly²³⁶ are supposed to come down from San Francisco today. Bev is visiting Mrs. Voegelin about the planned LSU complete edition. Bev asked if I'd want to be involved in the edition. Of course I would.²³⁷ Any contribution I could make would be small repayment for what Professor Voegelin did for me. He was surely the greatest intellectual influence in my life."

²³⁴ Beverly Jarrett was associate director of the LSU Press. In 1989 Jarrett became Director and Editor-in-Chief of the University of Missouri Press, a position she currently holds.

²³⁵ William Mills was a friend of Corrington's from their days at Centenary College. Mills, after Corrington's death, edited a collection of essays and commentary on Corrington's work. See Mills, *supra* note *.

²³⁶ Beverly Jarrett is married to William Mills. Jarrett, in her position at the University of Missouri Press, was instrumental in publishing *The Collected Stories of John William Corrington*.

²³⁷ Corrington, with Robert Anthony Pascal and James Lee Babin, edited *The Nature of the Law and Related Legal Writings*, Volume 27 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, published by the University of Missouri Press in 1991.

2 October 1986

"Billy's book, *Bears & Men*, is a good one.²³⁸ I wish I could have reviewed it rather than the novel. It has a distanced serene tone without being cold or sentimental. He shows a deep respect for our pastness in Being, and sees into the tragedy of the core of life: that living things live by the consumption of living things, that vegetarian nonsense simply begs the question of life going on by consuming life. We've shared a lot of the same feelings and ideas about things, and both been guilty of not understanding guilt because we are not men of a soteriological age—never were. We understand *harmartia*, missing the mark, and we are eminently capable of feeling shame—which is what you feel when you miss the mark.

I wish I could write and tell Willie that our own private goat-song consists in coming very late to the realization that the gods articulate time and eternity through us, and that good and evil count much less than the thrust of living in response to the divine tug that draws us on. We have to be content with our portion (*moira*) and desire only the *areté* of having found the mark and plunged into it with love and trust—not faith, trust. I have no knowledge of the substance of things hoped for,²³⁹ and I hope to hope for nothing. I trust, and the gods hear, and the cosmos and its divine foundation will draw me back as a lover enfolds the beloved."

3 October 1986

"Another week finished. We're looking forward to Thanksgiving, since we've been here since May. If the weather's good, we'll go fishing, but just being back where we belong will be a great relief."

²³⁸ William Mills, *BEARS AND MEN: A GATHERING* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1986).

²³⁹ "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. / For by it the elders obtained a good report. / Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Book of Hebrews 11:1-3, BIBLE (King James Version).

The Revised Standard Version translation reads: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. / For by it the men of old received divine approval. / By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear." Hebrews 11:1-3, BIBLE (Revised Standard Version).

10 October 1986

"One surely understands the temptation and profound desire to stand apart from the incredible chaos of the world at large. America had that thought, and many surely still hold it. But the 20th century, its wars, technological advances, and flow of population, has ended the notion of closed societies as successful ventures anywhere in the world. We may bang into one another in utter cultural ignorance, but we will be involved with the world—all of us. There is no alternative. Somehow we *all* chose it—without even realizing we were choosing.

This is an incredibly messy time in which to live—a confusing act in the drama of humanity—and I have not yet found what it is I'm supposed to do or say, but it's not a boring age (at least in terms of action; intellectually, it's a drag)."

16 October 1986

"I have no hope or interest in doing anything of value in film or TV. I never had any interest in either to begin with, and if I had supposed anything would come of them, *Texas* taught me better.²⁴⁰ Hollywood feeds us. That's as much as we expect, and its enough. I just wish I could work from home."

28 November 1986

"This is our last night at home. We fly back to California tomorrow. I wish we could stay home, but things don't work that way—at least not now. Perhaps we can work out something for next year."

1 February 1987

"If we can get a really good deal [for continued work on 'Superior Court'], we'll buy a place here, presuming to work here for at least the next few years.

A possibility has opened up at LSU Law School. I have no idea how serious the thing may be. John Baker and Tim Martin (who knows my

²⁴⁰ The Corringtons created the TV daytime serial *Texas* and were head writers of episodes 1-147. The series aired on NBC and was produced by Proctor and Gamble Productions. The Corrington episodes aired in 1980 and 1981.

work) seem to support me. Jack [Martzell] and Steve [Plotkin] would do whatever they can. I'd like to go back to Baton Rouge and end my academic career where it began. . . . Steve Plotkin is trying to get something going at Tulane. I'd settle for that, though I'd prefer LSU."

2 March 1987

"We've renewed at 10 thousand a week for another year [to continue 'Superior Court'], and the ratings rose to 5.5 for last week. We've gotten good reviews on *Project* so far, and we're trying to buy a house. This is the first time in a long time that I feel my life isn't under my control."

12 March 1987

"We've placed an [offer] on a house and 26 acres near Malibu If the deal goes through, it seems likely our destiny, at least for awhile, possibly for the rest of my life, will be worked out here in California. It's not a thing I chose, but the work is here, the money is here, and the place is really beautiful. We'll begin moving things out slowly, and transfer the bulk of our equity from the New Orleans house to this one. The house is large, airy, a really pleasant place open to the outside."

"If I had any way to make a decent living in Louisiana, we would not be leaving. But we have made no part of our living there since 1978. It will be interesting to see if such a move has serious impact on my work. Certainly I will not shed any tears for New Orleans, but it leaves a great emptiness in me to think of severing all ties with my own state.

But it seems life must have it's sea-changes. The South has faded since I was a boy, and my work has taken on an elegiac tone. Maybe it will find new ways to move in this new environment. The land is such that it seems likely we could sell it at a profit if we should decide the experiment isn't for us.

We'll be going home to New Orleans in a few weeks to talk about this with the boys."

2 April 1987

"We're marking time waiting for the load [of furniture from New Orleans]. I'll be relieved when we get into the house and settled. I think the physical beauty of the Santa Monica mountains will open up new

feelings for me and my work. Twilight here is lovely; the land seems oblivious to us—which is fine with me. I can think of no reason why the land should notice my passing. In fact, Jo and I have talked, and we want to make the land richer, more beautiful in its own terms. We mean to plant trees, shrubs, flowering plants native to the place . . . plants that require either no artificial care or very little.

I finished revision of *Asylum* yesterday. It was printed today, and I'll send it to Bev tomorrow. It's a strange novel—utterly unlike anything I've done before—expect possibly *The Disintegrator*.²⁴¹ If I hadn't written it, I don't know if I'd ever like it. It's cold and intellectual beyond the narration of *The Upper Hand*²⁴² and *Shad*.²⁴³ Now I'm free to work unfettered on *The Prison Gods* till I get it right.

I've been thinking of *Virgil Kane is the Name* since I read some articles sent by Lewis Simpson,²⁴⁴ including one on Allen Tate, and one on the *Inman Diaries*—17 million words by an obsessive Southerner who lived out his life—till suicide—in Boston.²⁴⁵ Masochism? But I'm still looking for that proper story and character to clarify the last anguish of the South as a separate place, and a distinct people.

I guess what I'm feeling just now is that I'm not leaving the South; it left me after the years Miller and I spent together at LSU.²⁴⁶ I can't say just what happened: television, obnoxious federal intervention—or just that no passion spawned in the world will last forever—most especially in America where brain-damage in the form of necessary loss is an assumed circumstance.

²⁴¹ See "The Disintegrator, A Novel," typescript (135 pgs.). Corrington Papers, Centenary College. See also John William Corrington, *A Chapter from the Disintegrator*, 2 (3) *New Orleans Rev.* 247 (1970); *From the Disintegrator*, 1 (1) *Barataria Review* 48 (1975).

²⁴² *The Upper Hand*, published in 1967, was Corrington's second novel.

²⁴³ *Shad Sentell*, Corrington's last published novel, appeared in 1984.

²⁴⁴ See note 109, *supra*.

²⁴⁵ Arthur Crew Inman, *THE INMAN DIARY: A PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CONFESSION* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985)(Daniel Aaron ed.)(2 vols.)

²⁴⁶ Miller Williams and Corrington first met in September, 1962, when Williams joined the LSU English faculty and was assigned to share an office with Bill Corrington. Personal communication from Miller Williams to James R. Elkins, April 7, 2002. Williams is now University Professor of English and Foreign Languages at the University of Arkansas. He is the author, co-author, or translator of thirty books, including twelve poetry collections. Williams is the founding director of the University of Arkansas Press and was responsible for the Press's publication of Corrington's *All My Trials* in 1987.

It's time now for me to step to the edge of my particular history to follow Voegelin's path—to stay open to transcendence, to be patient and to listen and watch without involvement or desire.

It's dawned on me that there is no hurry for me to write philosophical work. If I have something to say, it will get said—in that form. I'll just go on reading and working till critical mass is reached—or not.

Just finished a fine book, *Freud's Odyssey* by Stan Draenos.²⁴⁷ It makes clear that Freud's work begins with a passion for 'philosophy' (whatever Freud might have understood by that) and ends with a return to myth—which he despised in his faddish positivism.”

3 April 1987

“*Asylum* went to LSU and Bev Jarrett today. I guess it'll be several months before we hear anything more about it, which is okay. I have other work to do, and would like to get rid of things when I'm done with them. I get the feeling that perhaps the years ahead may be most productive. I don't know why, but the energy needed for creation seems to be growing rather than lessening. The problem now is ideas . . . it's much harder to find an image or a story or an idea that seems really worth the time and effort for writing.”

8 March 1987

“We're still fooling with *The White Zone*. It'll shape up soon, though, and we'll get it done quickly and start planning another: perhaps the *Ulyanov Account*, which I'd enjoy, and which our present situation with the Russians would make interesting.”

“If I can get settled out here, and make some bucks, I've got a lot of stuff to do. I want to do *Cosmos & Consciousness* very much, but I can't just dash it off. I need time and solitude. We're fixing to have the solitude. We have to buy the time. Elsewhere, I've made notes of my theory of sacrifice as a recognition of the exchanges of the life cycle: one eats food, dies, and becomes food. Sacrifice is the conscious symbol of this unconscious realization that we are *essentially* process, not entity, the process

²⁴⁷ Stan Draenos, *FREUD'S ODYSSEY: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE END OF METAPHYSICS* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

of life moving through momentary bits called human beings, animals, etc. But even more: the exchange of matter and energy, this movement from Big Bang toward some *telos* that is end and goal, eschological whether we wish it or not. I need to work on the details and the language but the idea is solid and can be documented from Greek & Indian thought at least—probably from any mythological order. Isn't Anaximander's 'paying penalty for our injustice' a statement of sacrifice? In Hebrew, there is *Halla't sin*—in Greek *hamartia*—paying penalty once again."

17 April 1987

"Our last afternoon at 9836 Wanda Park Drive. We've been transferring stuff out to Mulholland Drive on the assumption our loan will close, and we'll be moving in as soon as we come back. These loan people are cretins—but then people whose principle concern is money usually are.

We broke off dealing with Roger & Julie [Corman] on *Nightfall*. Nothing but bad to say about the script—which was not good, but better than most of what he shoots. They wanted a 'polish' that wasn't in the contract—no more money. We've done enough on a crap project.²⁴⁸ There's got to be more stuff to do."

"We've gotten a good start on next year's 'Superior Court'—lots of scripts ahead. Stu²⁴⁹ is determined to change the judge, but his options so far don't offer him any great alternatives. He's still considering Judge Mildred Lilley, an appellate court judge who is tough and ferocious. I like her okay; I have no idea what the audience would think. She ain't apple pie—she ain't even Mom.

²⁴⁸ "Nightfall" was eventually produced by Roger Corman with a screenplay by Paul Mayersberg. It appeared in 1988. Joyce Corrington notes that it was Julie Corman, Roger Corman's wife, who was pushing "Nightfall" which was based on an extremely short Isaac Asimov story. The story was "not really material suitable for adaption to the screen, so you had to just take the concept and try to do something with it. Bill had agreed to do it for \$5,000 at a time when we were out of work (just before getting 'Superior Court'). We did something like the fifth script for Julie Corman and she chose not to use it." Corman's film company resurrected the Corrington "Nightfall" script, reworked the screenplay, and produced a new version of the film in 2000. Joyce Corrington, personal communication, April 20, 2002.

²⁴⁹ Stu Billett headed the production company which produced "Superior Court."

I finally got around to Rohde's *Psyche*.²⁵⁰ A hundred years old, and it's still intelligent, penetrating, and a great teaching tool. I'd be proud to have written such a fine book.

I don't want to talk much about the house until we have it. I've already planned the bookcases and all manner of things that need doing. I just don't want to jump the gun on the thing. It may still be that something will happen to call me home to Louisiana before I make this great change.

I got a note from Beverly saying she'd received the new draft of *Asylum*. Now I reckon we'll move on—at least I hope so. That book—on the heels of *All My Trials*—would bemuse reviewers. Then, after *The Prison Gods* is done, the California work—whatever it may be—will begin. Of course it will not be a great change, but it will be interesting to see. I hope I can do more of the kind of 'Heroic Measures'²⁵¹ and 'The Risi's Wife.'²⁵²

27 April 1987
New Orleans

"The fishing has been wretched. We went out Saturday and Sunday. Two small catfish. Still, the marshes are lovely in the spring, and a cool breeze blew over us both days. We're leaving the boat down at Shell Beach while we're in town. It's possible we won't ever fish the marshes again after this trip."

"We're planning work on the new house, and some of the modifications will be interesting and attractive. We expect this to be our permanent base, and mean to make it just what we want."

7 May 1987

"We got word this morning that the California loan was approved. I assume we'll get a letter in the next few days. It appears that we are to go west. May the Lord bless us in these foreign parts and make our lives and products rich and useful.

²⁵⁰ Erwin Rohde, *PSYCHE: THE CULT OF SOULS AND BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY AMONG THE GREEKS* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1950)(1925).

²⁵¹ "Heroic Measures / Vital Signs," *supra* note 201.

²⁵² "The Risi's Wife," in *All My Trials*, *supra* note 44.

Had lunch with Martie.²⁵³ We talked about old times and new times, and kind of renewed our friendship on a personal—rather than a familial or professional—basis. Martie Broussard is a fine person and I'm proud that we're friends."

"[S]tarting to pack the books. That means we're *really* moving."

"Lord, what a change. I will be changed, changed utterly in all the possible ways that change can take place. I ask the Lord to assist me in my work, and to make all that I do in this new world, pure service to his play within reality.

I've been feeling depression over the last 6 or 8 months—as if life itself could accomplish nothing. But that's absurd, and a clear weakness of character. Cicero lived in an age worse than mine; so did Plato. Mozart lived and died at the edge of a civilizational collapse. As I told Martie [Broussard] this afternoon, we must do our duty at all costs, and the hell with the rest of it. It's not my problem who doesn't work toward maintaining civilization order; it is *my* problem if *I* do not do my best to maintain it.

I must gain and hold serenity, and try not to be anguished by the slaughter and vicious injustice around me. I cannot be responsible where I have no authority. I can only speak for justice and order, and stand ready to serve both when such a chance avails itself.

10 May 1987
Houston

"[We've] been nominated for an Emmy for our writing on 'Superior Court.' I'm amazed. It would be nice to get for future jobs and to indicate the degree of success we've had doing S.C. our way.

Weather here is as bad as New Orleans and the fishing is bad all over. . . . I'm almost ready for the California climate again. Only that dryness

²⁵³ Martin Broussard and Corrington both joined the New Orleans law firm, Plotkin & Bradley, in 1975.

bothers me—but I'll assume Heraclitus was right about dry souls being best.²⁵⁴

Still reading Rohde's *Psyche*²⁵⁵ and an essay by von Franz on Descartes. Still making notes on the 'divine space' idea. It should be doable in rough draft when we get the library unloaded in California—which will be at least August, I expect."

14 May 1987

"Things are proceeding toward the closing for next week in California, and here we're pulling down what we spent 15 years putting together. My office is almost empty—all books and records packed—desks, tables in the truck (the truck is like 24 feet, and holds an astonishing amount). I've found stuff I didn't even know I had—the copy-edited *Southern Reporter* ms.—which LSU had said was lost when I asked. It seems I'd gotten it without recollecting I had. Also a holograph of *Asylum*—still called *Taking Pains*.

Yesterday I got an advance paperback copy of *All My Trials*—right in the middle of packing. It's a good-looking book, and I'll be interested in seeing the reviews. I expect them to be absurd—the illiterate are now in total control of book pages all over the country."

22 May 1987

"Beverly & Billy called from Baton Rouge. She got a favorable report, and *Asylum* is now officially set for publication at LSU Press. That, following fast on the arrival of advance copies of *All My Trials*, certainly makes me feel good. As soon as I can finish the essential work around her. I'll get back to *The Prison Gods*. It's not right yet. The part I've done doesn't please me. I'm not sure the Judge's pov [point-of-view] is what it should be. But he has to be hard . . . or there would be no recognition. I see the Judge as preternaturally intelligent, but willful—always wishing to clarify, purify, 'thorough.' He holds antique virtue at the center of his interior life, but is forced always to come to terms with a messy, importunate reality that often mocks his intentions.

²⁵⁴ "The dry soul is wisest and best." A fragment attributed to Heraclitus. See John Burnet, *EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHY* 146-156 (London: Adam and Charles Black, 2nd ed., 1908).

²⁵⁵ See note 250, *supra*.

I'll be going over *Asylum* once more with Beverly. I think it needs some careful editing. Maybe even a bit of re-write here and there. Still, I'm proud of it as a book I almost threw off amid other things. I've learned somehow to write under adverse conditions—when I'm unable to concentrate exclusively on the work at hand as I'd wish. That's no virtue; I had no choice."

7 June 1987

"Quite a weekend. Friday night, there was a dramatic thunderstorm, the lights went out, and lightning hit at the edge of the property line, setting fire to the grass, leaves, and underbrush. Jo and I got it under control till the firemen came and put it out. Saturday night, a rat in the upstairs bathroom. I killed it with a shovel after much maneuvering and running about. Shelley [Bill's daughter] swears she'd already mortally wounded it by accidentally stepping on it trying to get out of its way. The two dogs were useless.

I just started a small short story idea called 'The Jew Who Knew Too Much.' It may come to nothing, but it might be pretty good in a small way. I have another idea called 'The Church is Not your Friend.' Both are really short ideas dealing almost solely with character and incident. We'll see how they come along."

22 June 1987

"I finally got a copy of Jaspers' *Origins and Meaning of History*, \$45 from Michael Thompson.²⁵⁶ It's a fine book, much more penetrating than most of his work, and an obvious influence on Voegelin. I can't imagine why it ever went out of print."

23 June 1987

"I remember when we were talking about moving out here and Jo said, 'is Malibu any farther from Shreveport than New Orleans is?'²⁵⁷ I can answer that better now: it seems closer. The mornings are calm and quiet, a kind of hush prevails."

²⁵⁶ Corrington was undoubtedly referring to Karl Jaspers, *THE ORIGIN AND GOAL OF HISTORY* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953)(Michael Bullock trans.)

²⁵⁷ See generally John William Corrington, *New Orleans, Mon Bete Noir*, 26 Legal Stud. F. 519 (2002).

1 September 1987

“LSU Press thought better of publishing *Asylum*.²⁵⁸ I understand their fears, but they might have made their decision earlier. No matter. I’m 136 pages into *The Prison Gods*, and will submit it to them. Hardly a naughty word or horrid concept in it.”

“We’re making headway on *The White Zone*, and it should be worked out and ready to write in the next few weeks. They always go fast once we get the story set up.”

10 September 1987

“Things have a way of turning around. Last Friday, [we learned] the deal . . . on *Project* was off. Then Sunday night, I had a heart attack. I’m in St. Joseph Medical Center in Burbank, a nice hospital, in the ccu [cardiac care unit].

We haven’t told mother or the boys. No use in them being disturbed if I come through it alright. We’ll have to tell Stu, since I’ll be home for a month recuperating. But I’ll be able to write scrips and breakdowns from home. Dr. Feinfield seems to feel surgery might be called for later. Not if I can figure a way to avoid it.

I swear it seems as if all this is punishment for coming to California. I should have stayed home where I belong. But then, where would I have got a job? How make a living?

One hopes for tranquility as old age comes on. Jo and I haven’t gotten much of that so far. Maybe in the future somewhere, sometime.

At least I’ll be able to use my recuperative time to write *The Prison Gods*, and hopefully *The White Zone* as well. When all that’s behind me, I think I’d better write *Under the Double Eagle*.²⁵⁹ You start having

²⁵⁸ “Asylum” was never published.

²⁵⁹ Corrington’s first novel, *And Wait for the Night* (1964) was an ambitious novel about the Civil War, but was not, according to Corrington an “historical” novel in any sense except in Faulkner’s sense that the past isn’t dead, it isn’t even past. In the 1950s and early 60s, the South still existed. As far down as my generation, there were still men and women who could tell you what Reconstruction was like. There were a very few Confederate veterans still alive. I think the last one, Walter

heart attacks and you never know when one's got you. I would like to conclude the Sentell trilogy."

14 September 1987

"I'm feeling pretty good. It seems the fever may have cracked, and with luck I'll be home sometime tomorrow.

I've had considerable time to contemplate mortality and for the most part, I haven't. This has not been a great learning experience—just an interruption in my life that might have turned into a period. I haven't felt that I wished I had done otherwise in my life. I would do pretty much what I've done—better, I hope.

There are deep regrets. I wish I had been more talented, harder working, more insightful—and perhaps more compassionate, though I wonder if that's such a remarkable trait when I see its misuse by 'activists.' Most of all, I wish I had been the kind of person who had more to give his children. They have all had my love, but my capacity to shift and change in response to them has not been notable. But then, even as I write that, I wonder if this illness has affected my brain. Don't we all need loving resistance more than mere acquiescence?"

Williams, died in Houston when I was in Rice University. I did not intend the book to be "history," nor did I believe it to be a piece of embalmed imagination. Parrill Interview, *supra* note *, at 184 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, 674 (2002)]. Corrington always assumed there would be another "large book" to follow *And Wait for the Night* and he always referred to it as *Under the Double Eagle*.

[I]t's the story of E.M. Sentell, the second, the son of Major Sentell, the grandfather of Shad, in the 1880s and nineties, as a member of the Brotherhood of the Workers of the World. What he does with his associates from all over the world is to go around and kill plant owners and strike-breakers, and police and railroad detectives. It's the K Squad of Brotherhood of Workers of the World—the kind of thing which did go on at Cripple Creek and the Westead Mill and places like that. They call it labor violence, but that's not being very sophisticated because it amounts to incredible acts of terrorism by the owners against the workers and the workers against the owners. A kind of slow-motion civil war, if you will, after the Confederate War. It figures that the son of a Confederate soldier might find a new focus for his anger.

Parrill Interview, *id.* at 186 [26 Legal Stud. F. 671, 676 (2002)]. Corrington had used the Sentells in his 1984 novel, *Shad Sentell* and with *Under the Double Eagle* he planned to complete the trilogy.

“Maybe I’ll have a little while longer to watch them [my children], but I think I feel myself slipping a little from my attachments—not as an act of will, but as . . . a form of growth?”

“I’ve always suspected the spiritual and willful gymnastics of the medieval European and the classical Hindu periods were bullshit, and somebody had missed the point. If you have in mind the love of the divine, you will move toward it as toward a distant music you scarcely hear, or a perfume that eddies in a room and vanishes. You are, after all, moving toward that closest to you—yourself—and that farthest from you—yourself. This must not be misunderstood as self-absorption in an egoistic sense; that view makes use of a mistaken paradigm of metaphysical reality. It assumes a creational origin for the cosmos. An emanational one rids us of a number of problems by transforming them into other units of meaning than they appear to be in the creational paradigm. Ego becomes only an eccentricity of the Divine in some of its forms, as it plays in tension with itself—the fall of the divine behind the play-mask of virtue and that of evil, too.

In *this* paradigm, we *all* must grow, because one sector of the divine is essentially identical with another. How much contrast, diversity, tension, can the divine contain? Enough, I expect, to provide us with a cosmos or two.”

14 September 1987

12:30 am

“I finish this damned volume [of the journal] into which I have put so little of value now, and I leave this hospital for a new life. May the next volume be full of insight and richer than the ones before.”

?? October 1987²⁶⁰

“Back on Mulholland Highway, and in reasonably good circumstances, all things considered. Got home to find the contract for *The White Zone* in the mail—\$25,000 advance, and a \$34.00 check on royalties for *So Small a Carnival*.”

²⁶⁰ Corrington dated this entry September 14, 1987, but in his next journal entry on October 12th noted the mistaken date: “I think the date is wrong, but what the hell?”

12 October 1987

"I'm into chapter three of *The White Zone*. I've written better, I've written worse. But it'll pick up as I go along. What counts is that Rat [the police detective protagonist] is in good voice.

I'm going in to work today. The fog is thick and it rained last night, so I couldn't get much done here.

They say 'Superior Court' is doing well in the ratings, but I never really trust that kind of talk. You're always doing okay till you're cancelled. Hard analysis isn't anybody's forte out here, and syndication is tough anyhow.

The papers for the Voegelin conference are not good. I'm disappointed in the rambling uncertain quality, and fear that if they can't do better, Voegelin's work may die with him."

25 October 1987

"Flying back from New Orleans after the Voegelin Conference, and a little while with the kids and mother. I like less and less this division in the family and wish I could bring us together. But it seems hard to figure how to do that now."

30 December 1987

New Orleans

"The movers are clearing out 1724 Valence Street, our home for almost fifteen years. By tonight, the place will be an enormous hollow shell with only the boys' rooms still in place. It's not a house I'll miss. All I ever liked was the pool. But a lot of good work was done here: almost everything since *The Bombardier*.²⁶¹ Now Jo and I are fully committed to a new and I reckon final phase in our lives in California.

There's no safety or security in it, but the work is there, and perhaps a good break that will allow us to pay off the new house and give us some money in the bank.

²⁶¹ John William Corrington, *THE BOMBARDIER* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970).

I'll have some hard-driving weeks getting things arranged, then back to complete *The Prison Gods*."

"I'd like to hope we get renewed on 'Superior Court' and the show goes into profits so we can put something aside and I can get into another burst of writing. *Under the Double Eagle* is long overdue. Then I'd like to think through *Down to Ilium*. That book always was intended to blend Louisiana and California anyhow, and might be interesting to do.

Jo has made excellent suggestions for revising the opening chapters of *The White Zone*, and that will be first priority back in California."

19 January 1988

"Beverly and Billy came to New Orleans yesterday. We had lunch at Manale.²⁶² Bev says to go forward on the collected works edition of Professor Voegelin's *The Nature of the Law*.²⁶³ I'll start gathering materials as soon as I get back to California. Paul Caringella will likely know what, if any, original materials are available. The introduction will call for some re-reading of Aristotle and also some reading of [Hans] Kelsen and Gustav Rödenbruck, the pure law theorists with whom Voegelin began his study.

Of course I'm not the best choice for the work. It's quite possible others could do better—but then that's always true. Still, I have a background in civilian law as Voegelin did; I know Voegelin's work thoroughly, and I know the essay and its underlying dialectic very well. It will be a pleasure to work through Voegelin's text and try to clarify his brilliant insights."

29 February 1988

"Rain for two days now. One little waterfall outside is flowing strong. Work has started on Jo's study and the bathroom. In a month or so, the house will be done. Meanwhile we've planted five magnolias and a lot of

²⁶² Pascale's Manale, a family-run, Italian-Creole restaurant, founded in 1913, located in uptown New Orleans, is famous for its barbecued shrimp.

²⁶³ See Robert Anthony Pascal, James Lee Babin and John William Corrington (eds.), *THE NATURE OF LAW AND RELATED WRITINGS* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991) (Vol. 27, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*).

gazanias and ice-plants on the hill behind the house.”

“Into chapter seven of *The White Zone*. So far, I’m not impressed. It’s Rat, but he’s not quite as straight on in L.A. Maybe it’ll develop. I want it finished by mid-April when, I assume, we’ll be back on ‘Superior Court.’”

“Lots of reading, and some time working on the Voegelin intro. I’ve got a rough draft preface written. But no word . . . in regard to earlier drafts or notes on ‘The Nature of the Law.’ I can’t believe there’s no earlier version, holograph, or notes, but I can’t hang around forever waiting for someone to cough something up.”

1 March 1988

“Reading Zubiri *On Essence*,²⁶⁴ and trying to work through technical aspects of philosophy, keeping Gödel in mind. I want to get a strong enough hold on Hegel to compare his dialectic with Gödel’s meta-language, and see if there’s reason to suppose the issue of dialectic/metalanguage constitutes an infinite regress or progress of structures in reality.”

2 March 1988

“We met with Ann & Bob Shanks tonight about doing the mystery novels for film or TV. Nice bright folks . . . I hope we can make a deal. We might need a job soon. One never knows in this business.”

“I’m still working on *okeanos*, still looking for foundations of thought. So far, I seem to have the following points or vectors of thinking that shapes the West:

- 1) The cosmos is created; it is other than, separate from, the divine ground.
- 2) The divine is good.
- 3) The divine is unchanging.

The creational choice of Western thought . . . establishes a permanent and unbridgeable separation between created and creator. This becomes expressed as a ‘natural’-‘supernatural’ division. This fundamental

²⁶⁴ Xavier Zubiri, *ON ESSENCE* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1980)(A. Robert Caponigri trans.)

bifurcation becomes the paradigm for body-soul, mind-matter divisions, and even shows up in the essential structure of Western logic as excluded middle and the principle of contradiction.

Nietzsche smelled a rat in Western thought—especially logic—but was constitutionally unable to stick with the problem until he restated it effectively. What Megill sees as his ‘aestheticism’ is Nietzsche’s admission of defeat, in that he found it necessary to step out of the ‘universe of discouse’ in which logic reigned in order to express his intuitions.²⁶⁵ The ‘realm’ of art served, for, as Philip Sidney noted . . . ‘poetry cannot lie, for it affirmeth nothing.’²⁶⁶ A pregnant phrase when stripped from its context. Poetry’s (art’s) power resides in its indifference to logical discursive discourse. It cannot contradict for it does not affirm—that is, it is non-propositional. Moreover, art does not assume creation. Plato denies the ‘creativity’ of the poet; he is ‘outside himself,’ and merely responds to a *daemon*, a *telos*: he ‘discovers’ his poem, work of art. That he discovers it in himself, and finds it not as a proposition for debate or an affirmation that invites denial, but as a ‘revelation’ obviates a duty to logic. He affirms only the ‘nothing’ from which his insight arises. (Cf. Eckhart, Heidegger, *Vedanta*.)”

“Christianity wishes to break us loose from our immemorial habits and propensities, and then offers us sinlessness and omnipotence as hallmarks of the divine. But to what god shall we offer oblation when successful adultery or sharp practices is our determined course? Are we to deposit our pornographic and brutal and mindless tendencies elsewhere? Then what are we? And what are we to make of a divine which has no hand in vengence and black heartedness, forgery, rape and the stuffing of ballot-boxes?—to say nothing of malice and envy and damnable, hard-hearted pride? The refusal to postulate a divine that in some as yet unfortunate way presides over infanticide as well as over childbirth, who protects the fornicator as well as the honest householder, the counterfeiter as surely as the director of printing and engraving, leaves a larger (if not the larger) part of reality to the providential care of . . . who? what?

²⁶⁵ Allan Megill, *PROPHETS OF EXTREMITY: NIETZSCHE, HEIDEGGER, FOUCAULT, DERRIDA* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

²⁶⁶ “Now for the Poet, he nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth. . . .” Phillip Sidney, *THE DEFENSE OF POESIE* (1595)(transcription by Richard Bear, University of Oregon) <<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/defence.html>> (visited April 22, 2002).

Israel was wise in the manner of those who, at least on ceremonial occasions, look at human experience, see it clearly and see it whole. Theodicy was resolved for a moment at least when the Lord spoke to the Adversary in the overture to *Job*, and got drawn into a noxious wager which no decent god would have touched with a barge-pole. Nonetheless, there he is, betting away Job's substance and happiness, evil to the gills and caring not a whit, caught up in rivalry with Lucifer, his brother, son, self, playing at conclusions just as if the divine could *be* a player.

Of course. Because the divine *is* a player. And the played-upon. And the play. We lie and shame ourselves when our theology exhorts the fowl and denies the feathers. Whatever is, is the substance of the divine, good or ill, ugly or beautiful, splendid or a goddamned mess. Those who know this are permitted to choose the piece they will play in the next round—or, if they are lily-livered and do not savor the game, they may be released and return to existence no more. Good riddance. Do they suppose there'll be no more cakes & ale?"

4 March 1988

"A lot of new interest in the mystery novels: Lorimar is looking at them, and Jerry Rafshoon wants *Project* for Lou Gossett—who, of course, is the image we had in mind for Rat Trapp. Ann & Bob Shanks are interested in all three books.

I'm into chapter 8 of *The White Zone*. It's not catching fire for me yet, but this is the hardest and most complex of the mysteries. I'll be glad to be done with it and use it as a kind of precis both for *Under the Double Eagle* and *The Ulyanov Account*.

No word on the renewal of 'Superior Court'." I reckon we'll hear in the next week or so. Of course, for the long term, we're hoping for the books to be bought and made into films.

Reading Hacking on probability, and finding once more that Leibniz is at the center of modern thought.²⁶⁷ I've got to re-read Dewey on

²⁶⁷ Ian Hacking, *THE EMERGENCE OF PROBABILITY: A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY OF EARLY IDEAS ABOUT PROBABILITY, INDUCTION AND STATISTICAL INFERENCE* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

Leibniz,²⁶⁸ and begin a serious and careful reading of the texts themselves.”

12 March 1988

“I’m on chapter 9 of *The White Zone*. It’s going okay, but not to my satisfaction. It still seems thin. But it has good elements and, given revision, could be a good book.”

“I made a minor breakthrough on *The Prison Gods*. Judge Finch has a dream in which he sees all those he has loved over 40 or 50 years and comes to understand that death is not a punishment—it is a proper destiny—it is where all of us must necessarily end. ‘All that exists deserves to perish,’ Engels says, and is too stupid to realize that his statement has resonance far beyond any sort of materialism.²⁶⁹ We deserve to perish because perishing is necessary, and a proper reward for our long anguish in existence.”

16 March 1999

“Reading *Prophets of Extremity* by Megill.²⁷⁰ An excellent book. The section on Heidegger probes his nostalgia and aestheticism, and helps me to grasp why I am drawn to H’s work. The desire to return home is fundamental with me. It seems H. finds it fundamental to humanity.”

20 March 1988

“The Megill book is quite good. I find a certain simplification of ideas one finds in H[eidegger] and N[ietzsche]. My own failure to write anything in philosophy so far has a lot to do with the fact that I find it hard to believe the words of the philosophers taken at face value. Take for example the ‘transcendent ego’ of Husserl. Is it a variation of the

²⁶⁸ John Dewey, *LEIBNIZ’S NEW ESSAYS CONCERNING THE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING: A CRITICAL EXPOSITION* (New York: Hilary House, 1961)(1888).

²⁶⁹ See note 218, *supra*.

²⁷⁰ Megill, *supra* note 264.

Platonic forms? Where is this ego located? What does it mean or refer to?"

21 March 1988

"Started a new book, *Critique of Heaven*.²⁷¹ It proposes Marx as a theologian. This has pragmatic meaning on two levels: first, any thinker whose work refers seriously to the Divine has as much claim to the term 'theologian' as has any churchman. Second, Marxism surely has established itself as a 'political religion' if such term has analytical significance."

10 April 1988

"I've planted a lot of gazanias on the slope along the road on the right side of our house, and have a lot yet to plant. It's hard, slow work but a pleasure. Every moment I spend out there evokes memories of my father. It's strange how the genes make their demands."

1 May 1988

"I'm to Chapter 13 of *The White Zone*. It's finally beginning to take off, but it's going to take a lot of work to make anything of it. Strange: it's a fine plot, but somehow Rat [the police detective protagonist] never takes off, and the other characters are hardly present. I don't know exactly what's wrong yet, but it's gotta get fixed."

26 July 1988

"Got Voegelin's *Political Religions* yesterday, and am almost done with it.²⁷² It's a good book and trenchant as all his work is. Also Barry

²⁷¹ Arend Theodoor van Leeuwen, *CRITIQUE OF HEAVEN: THE FIRST SERIES OF THE GIFFORD LECTURES ENTITLED "CRITIQUE OF HEAVEN AND EARTH"* (New York: Scribner, 1972).

²⁷² Eric Voegelin, *POLITICAL RELIGIONS* (Lewiston, New York: E. Mellen Press, 1986)(T.J. DiNapoli & E.S. Easterly III, trans.)(republished in *Modernity Without Restraint*, Vol. 5, in *THE COLLECTED WORKS OF ERIC VOEGELIN* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000)(Manfred Henningsen ed.)).

Cooper's study.²⁷³ The intro suggests that several of V[oegelin]'s early works spell out the relation with Kelsen in more detail. I'll have to see them before I can do my intro for "The Nature of the Law." There are still puzzling points that require clarification.

I've also found out that there are a number of sections of V[oegelin]'s early German books dealing with the law. I'll try to get those materials from Bev—who says she has the early stuff being translated. I think I have to account for everything V's had to say about law in print if my introduction is to have serious weight."

30 July 1988

"Got a bundle of new books from Scholar's Bookshelf. My philosophy library has become very good indeed. Most books I run across in footnotes I now have—at least primary sources and major studies.

One of the new books is Samuel Alexander's *Space, Time & Diety*. . . ."

11 August 1988

"I'm back from surgery at Cedars-Sinai and have no energy at all. I feel no pain from the operation, but I tend to sleep a lot, and do little work."

"I'm done reading OoH:V [Eric Voegelin's *Order and History*, Volume 5] for the third time. It's still dense and hard to penetrate, but I'm getting there. The law thing is on hold till I can get copies of V[oegelin]'s German work on law from Bev. I don't know that that stuff is essential but Professor Voegelin deserves my best and most thoughtful work.

What I'd like to do with the intro is suggest how V. might have treated law later in his career. TNOL [*The Nature of Law*] is not as deep as the subject deserves. One suspects V's accord with pure [legal] theory arises in part from the fact that it is a harmless positivistic isolation of law from the substance of larger political reality—in order to be able to deal

²⁷³ Barry Cooper, *THE POLITICAL THEORY OF ERIC VOEGELIN* (Lewiston, New York: E. Mellen Press, 1986). After Corrington's death, Cooper published still another study on Voegelin. See Barry Cooper, *ERIC VOEGELIN AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN POLITICAL SCIENCE* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999).

with 'jurisprudence' without the *aporias* arising from an examination of that substance.

But where does law fit? Is there an answer in O&H:I [*Order and History: Volume 1*]? I have to reread it on Jewish law. The intersection of revelation, Torah prophecy, and Halakah may give a clue."

19 September 1988

"I'm close to the end of Hammond's *History of Greece*.²⁷⁴ I guess I'd forgotten what a slaughter-bench (to use Hegel's term)²⁷⁵ Greek history was. One yearns for the moment when Phillip becomes 'Hegemon' of a collection of brilliant mercurial city-states which had reduced themselves to murder machines. It becomes difficult to understand how Athens had time to establish its estimable culture amidst its endless and almost uncanny involvement in violence, rapine, and cruelty."

11 November 1988

"Days run into weeks, into months, and I forget to note what's happening here. I'm reading Harris's *Hegel's Development*,²⁷⁶ and gardening as much as I can. It's cooler now, but the weeds prosper and must be cleared out. Like house-keeping, it's an endless job.

We're nearing the end of our third year writing on 'Superior Court.' At the moment it appears that the show may well be renewed for another year. While we want to remain . . . there is a treadmill quality to this work: it's difficult to put my mind to serious things while we're doing S.C.—and yet *not* doing it would be financial disaster."

²⁷⁴ N.G.L. Hammond, *A HISTORY OF GREECE TO 322 B.C.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 3rd ed., 1986).

²⁷⁵ "But even regarding History as the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of States, and the virtue of individuals have been victimized—the question involuntarily arises—to what principle, to what final aim these enormous sacrifices have been offered." G. W. F. Hegel, *INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY: WITH SELECTIONS FROM THE PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1988)(Leo Rauch trans.)

²⁷⁶ H.S. Harris, *HEGEL'S DEVELOPMENT: TOWARD THE SUNLIGHT, 1770-1801* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); *HEGEL'S DEVELOPMENT: NIGHT THOUGHTS (JENA 1801-1806)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

"It appears that Jerry Rafshoon is going to buy *Project* for a film. We're anxious to do it. We'd make a good piece of money and return to the theatrical film market. And if *Project* did well, *Carnival* and *Civil Death* would come to life as film possibilities. We'll finish *The White Zone* as soon as we're done with the season [of writing for 'Superior Court']. It needs serious re-writing or more precisely re-thinking in order to give the book its own character and the kind of movement characteristic of the earlier books.

Then there's *The Prison Gods*. I'm well into it, and I know the ending but I can't get a handle on the trial aspect of the story. . . . I can't seem to find a way to manage this 'in-between' section—but I will, because it's a good piece of work, and it's time I got something else out. When it's done, I'll have to decide what to do next on a large scale. I expect I should go on at long last and do *Under the Double Eagle*—and finish the Sentell trilogy as well as the Judge Finch trilogy. It's just that the book seems somehow predictable, and I can't think of a way to make it *more* than predictable. But that's my problem, not a problem inherent in the material. Maybe the solution is 2 novels: *Under the Double Eagle* and *Rebuild the Sky*—with the two intersecting somehow."

14 November 1988

"A chill bright morning, and we're in the last few weeks of this year's work on 'Superior Court.' The numbers are looking all right on a comparative basis (ratings are lower generally) and it seems likely we'll be renewed for next year, but of course the tension won't ease until we know for sure.

I'm reading . . . [Karl] Barth . . . and I still find it almost impossible to believe or to take serious [his] postulates. . . . They are irrational to an extraordinary degree. One's tension toward the divine must arise from experiences of spiritual order, not from strange theological propositions regarding God revealing himself as Lord. Barth and Tertullian seem to be what one might call 'shock' theologians: they toss out propositions and dare you to dispute them. Marxism is more seriously intellectual.

There is, in the religious domain, a profound distrust—perhaps even loathing—for thinking. And yet a spiritual experience which does not evoke mediatation, contemplation, would scarcely be worth having. I

think spiritual truth and its transmission—if such is possible—must move at the level of images, and be *served* by propositions.”

■ ■ ■

The November 14, 1988 journal entry was the last. Joyce Corrington says: On the evening of November 24, 1988, after enjoying a Thanksgiving dinner with his family, Bill collapsed from a sudden heart attack. His last words, uttered in the car as he was being rushed to the nearest hospital were, “It’s all right.”

Epilogue: Bill Corrington on Mortality & Life

"I think that, growing up in Shreveport with some very tough folks, I always had a sense that every day might be my last—and that any day is a good day to die."

"To be a Southerner attuned to the old days is to grasp simultaneously the tragedy and the absurdity of life. After all, tragedy is a goat-song—it arises from the fundamental vision of recognizing that life is never complete, never well-ordered, frequently grotesque, never consistent—that it begins when you don't understand what's happening and ends before you can figure it out."²⁷⁷

□ □ □

"The only man who really dreads dying is the poor bastard who has never lived. By all measures, I have lived well. What I could do, I have pretty much done."

"So much is luck. So much is the grace of God. But the part that shows and can be seen belongs to us, and neither Lady Luck nor God Almighty is stingy enough to steal the by-line."²⁷⁸

□ □ □

"It is a lucky man who gets the bricks made and the wall started before the reaper comes. . . ."²⁷⁹

□ □ □

"You [Charles Bukowski] figure we've got our hands full being human (which is true), but I think it is more to be human for a time, and then to find, if you can, a way to dive out of humanity and leave a vapor-trail for tomorrow to whistle at."²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Corrington letter to Barbara Steinberg, dated November 10, 1988.

²⁷⁸ Corrington letter to Charles Bukowski dated May 10, 1962.

²⁷⁹ Corrington letter to Charles Bukowski, dated January 30, 1962.

²⁸⁰ Corrington letter to Charles Bukowski, dated April 24, 1962.

