



GRAAT On-Line issue #7 January 2010

**From *Walk Me to the Distance to Wounded*,  
or the undesirable appropriation of frontier justice**

Claude Julien

Université François-Rabelais, Tours

In his foreword to *Making Callaloo, Twenty Five Years of Black Literature*, Percival Everett points out that up to the 1970s black authors stood at the mercy of the publishing industry looking for “the next, blacker work...” that did not “upset the way America wants to see black people and itself.” (xvi) Stories of the black experience, of inferiority or oppression, of wrongs redressed by due process or white change of heart used to be the favored stuff of black fiction. Everett’s novels and short stories have consistently neglected that protest novel tradition by portraying characters, black or white, who are part of a society that fails to live up to decent standards of tolerance, justice and understanding.

Comparing two novels by the same author that were published twenty years apart, both set in rural Wyoming and touching on the theme of “frontier justice” will serve here to illustrate a consistent discourse and, in spite of their vastly dissimilar fictional situations, their cutting for themselves paths far removed from the publishing industry’s stereotypes of black people.

In *Walk Me to the Distance* (1985), David, a black man, allows himself to be sucked into the execution by the citizenry of a mentally retarded young white man. In *Wounded* (2005), an old black man dying from cancer and a Native American execute three redneck racist and homophobic murderers on reservation land.<sup>1</sup> A sense of shared guilt is at work in *Walk Me to the Distance*. *Wounded*’s narrator, John, also disapproves of murder, but his account of the events does not blame the

avengers. Social and literary considerations will intertwine here. Both David and John are hurt, wounded. David needs a place he can call home and tries to melt into the group. While John knows he will always remain a stranger among white Westerners, the novel articulates a plea for mutual understanding and respect through an insistent metaphor on training animals.

*Walk Me to the Distance* is a virtually raceless novel. Only David's birth place, Savannah, GA., coupled with his sister's having married a lawyer who claims he was the eighth member of the Chicago Seven do place him among black people. David's blackness is functional, though, because it illustrates the paradox of a pitiless society that feels pitted against outsiders, but is ready to literally adopt a black man and a Vietnamese girl, and executes an idiot without a future in their midst. On the contrary, *Wounded* looks at American society from a racial perspective. Its strong suit is that it meets the challenge posed by the introduction of racially motivated retaliation into a fiction that succeeds in upsetting the way Americans like to think of themselves with respect to minority people.

One of the characteristics of *Walk Me to the Distance* is the omnipresence of violence under many forms, but never racially motivated. Violence oozes out from many a page, to begin with David's shooting jackrabbits as he drives on—which strands him in Slut's Hole when he shoots a hole into his car radiator. That mishap brings him luck because he finds a place and people to live with; but there is a dark side to it: a lack of respect for life, wanton killing or wounding. Equally violent, though clad in a rancher's pragmatic mercy killing, is Sixbury's shooting a ram because its old age and heavy horns prevent it from being any good—"He can't even mount an ewe.... I'm doing the pathetic creature a favor" (p. 13), she says before firing her shotgun. Generally speaking, David can be a ball of anger ready to explode at the slightest provocation—as a prostitute informer claims her money back, or as a candy machine fails to work and the attendant will not refund his money. He is sometimes shown under another light, though, for instance in a bar where a brawl bursts out: a gun flashes out. David and Howard are horrified compassionate witnesses who rush to help the victim and prevent further disaster as the gun man, a

jilted husband, is being mercilessly kicked on the floor. But, mostly, David shares the violence around him. The ram's execution is proleptic. It announces Sixbury's worries about her son's life when she dies. No one takes the murder of Patrick lightly, least of all his mother, but she thanks David in a passage where emotion is beyond words. To her, Patrick's death was as necessary as her own, soon to be self-inflicted.

While David is seeking acceptance and finds a home in Slut's Hole, John sees himself as a refugee from modern society. Highland, though tiny, has grown too large for him. He shirks the Wal Mart and McDonald with the same loathing he does the church; but he is no loner in so far as he needs companionship on his own terms. He has no illusions about human behavior, man to man and man to animal. Unlike David, John detests guns. To him, the land itself is harsh enough to animals. He is sickened to see a coyote lair has been torched on BLM land where ranchers have no sheep to protect, and there is no question he must rescue the puppies. He sees himself as a victim, is conscious there are moments when it is best for him to put on his "best cowboy voice" (p. 32). As he tells Gus on driving back up the mountain, he feels he cannot walk like a full person, that he is "like that three-legged coyote" (p. 185). If only through Gus's prison sentence, he knows the law meets retribution out to people according to their colors. Most of the violence in *Wounded* is racial. It can be physical when non-violent John punches one of the obnoxious rednecks in the nose, "a coil that had been tightening for years." (p. 102) It can be a sign of contempt when Indians ("red niggers" [p. 111]) are being shot at, or their cattle killed. But there is also homophobic non-racial violence when the three rednecks murder Wallace's companion or beat David Thayer mercilessly. A more subtle form of discriminatory violence, one that readers are left on their own to sense, is perhaps the lawmen's lack of zeal when the victim is gay.

Gus becomes a victim for the second time when killing, certainly a spontaneous act the first time, now imposes itself to him as a way to settle an account before cancer takes him away. Both John and David are also casualties of the world around them. *Walk Me to the Distance* reads like an indictment of frontier society's home-made justice, in which the victimizer is, in turn, the victim. David is a good man

captured by local mores, “corralled” (p. 175) is the image actually used in another context. Violence, perhaps Vietnam-bred, perhaps acquired from early life, is in him as he drives to Slut’s Hole, but he is clearly corrupted by the dominant harshness. His early impulse to protect Patrick from the bullies who molest him at the livestock auction, his compassion<sup>2</sup> when he oversees him relieving his sexual needs with a ewe soon fade away. He hardens until he becomes Sixbury’s arm. He has heard her voice her concern for her son’s future after she passes away. Her repeated statements<sup>3</sup> that Patrick is a burden she wishes had not been brought into the world have seeped into his mind and supersede compassion when he shoots at Patrick’s fleeing figure, and linger on later when he fails to support Howard’s plea for mercy. The condemnation of the frontier lynch law is unrelenting. The girl’s trauma, visible on her martyred body, is no excuse for the men’s callous determination. It is Quinn, the deputy sheriff (not on duty as such) who, so to speak, authorizes the lynching by saying he “[hasn’t] seen Patrick” (p. 126) as he rides away to take Butch home. The executioners are two respectable, religious family men who simply tell Howard to ride home with Quinn and excuse David from the lynching itself by asking him to stomp the fire dead in the cabin. Patrick is hanged with his broken arm handcuffed to his opposite ankle. David notices the still bleeding wound he has inflicted and Patrick’s “stupid face” (p. 127) as he pulls the blanket Lowe has provided him from under his saddle tighter around himself. The “strong-smelling wool” (p. 127) symbolically wraps him in cowboy culture. David does not quite share the group’s brazen feelings, but he later tips into evil when he tells Howard his reasons for not going to the police, his concern for the family men involved. His excuse is weak, but, remarkably, one which Howard supports by hinting at the rampant ruthlessness at the end of a dialogue mixing responsibility with an irrelevant question about Howard’s girlfriend:

“What is it, Howard? Do you think we should tell the sheriff?”  
Howard put his beer down. “Hell, I don’t know.” He paused.  
“Maybe.”  
“It’s over.”  
“Just like that?”  
If it was just me or just me and you, I might agree with you. But it’s not just you and me. These men have families. Hell, we may have done the right thing.”

Howard said nothing.

"It felt right."

Howard picked up his beer again.

"How's May doing?" asked David.

"She's all right."

"Are you going to be able to keep this to yourself?"

"You don't think I'd tell anyone."

"I don't know."

"Who would it matter to anyway?" Howard asked. (p. 133-134)

Perhaps the most severe denunciation of this frontier justice is that David's attitude is inspired by Sixbury's own acceptance of her son's death. On coming home, David lies to her. She has asked no question, but David tells her there was no sign of anyone around where Butch was found, and their disconnected conversation laden with unspoken thoughts ends as he walks by her to go to bed:

He went to step past her, but she reached up and took his wrist.

"David."

"Ma'am?"

"Thank you."

He put his hand on her shoulder. "Yes, Ma'am." (p. 129)

There follows a community-wide conspiracy to cover up the events. People talk around the manslaughter. Even the pastor, who extols solidarity in his sermon and reassures the faithful that in a land as harsh as theirs a bad action is not necessarily evil. The doctor who attends to Butch's wounds and bruises keeps silent. To cap it all, the state police that Howard has later informed appear less than eager to press charges. Quinn is not fired but simply demoted to working behind a desk, and the investigation promptly ends with Sixbury's brazen lie that she has just seen Patrick stealing food from the pantry. Joshua Lowe, the deeply religious man whom David admires so much, explains their abruptly closing the case by suggesting they perhaps only wanted a reason.

David is the only black man in Slut's Hole, where white people like to think of themselves as Indians pitted against the outside world. On the contrary, *Wounded* offers a more racially diverse cast of characters. In this seemingly peaceful place, all minority people share a consciousness of an on-going wrong. There is Gus, of course, who was given an unfairly long prison sentence because the man he killed to succor

his wife was white. There are the Indians who distrust the sheriff and come to John for help because no one will listen to them. Although he has been a long-time resident and is well accepted by the local citizenry, John knows he is an outsider and there forms a spontaneous non-white network around him. A lucid man, he feels privileged compared to the Indians who “get treated like shit” (p. 51). However, he is fully aware the tolerance he enjoys is only skin-deep, that he remains a black man in a white man’s country. Never one to accept intolerance, he strongly reacts to Duncan’s homophobic joshing in the diner by telling him he might come up with a “nigger joke” (p. 88) next—only to regret his words the moment he sees Duncan’s aggrieved expression. But he never regrets his punching one of the rednecks.

John bears no hatred toward whites. There are people he relates to easily: Myra who runs the feed store, Duncan and his daughter, the young waitress in the diner, Hollis the librarian and his wife, Hanks the deputy sheriff, even Bucky the sheriff—even though he resents his not doing his best to investigate David’s disappearance, and suspects he is not quite color blind. He decides to locate the rednecks’ hideout after the police have given up their search, but, although he takes his rifle along and mulls over calling the police, he is not ready to take the law into his hands. Gus will do that, disregarding his instructions. John’s twice repeated utterance after Gus blows the red-headed thug’s brains out, “You killed him” (p. 202), carries surprise and reprobation.

Discourse is consistent from one novel to the other. Gus has, like David in the earlier book, become a victim to society’s disrespect for life. The men he kills are guilty, as was his wife’s rapist, but killing dehumanizes, especially premeditated manslaughter. John’s respect for life does not allow him to picture Gus, a longtime friend, in such a role, but the reader is made to guess<sup>4</sup> Gus and Elvis planned a revenge. The killing of the other two thugs takes place off stage. Gus’s and Elvis’s minds and actions remain closed books. Elvis bore a grudge against the thugs, but whether he killed any of them or merely helped Gus hide the evidence is unknown. Elvis is the one to mention frontier justice as he drives the old man back to the ranch, telling John to “take care of [his] uncle” (p. 207), in other words to mind his own business. In effect, without seeking any excuse, Elvis states they have opted for

“frontier justice”, the white man’s way to do things. However, analyzing the two novels together projects them beyond race to denounce a national culture of violence. For one, *Walk Me to the Distance* has Zacks, a religious-minded crack head, admire the greatness of the landscape but bemoan “a disease that has run wild” (p. 88), a fever that must be sweated out. For the other, *Wounded* has Gus blame the country in more direct terms: “There’s plenty of hate for everybody. Rally around the flag” (p. 67). Are contextual influences at play, Vietnam in one case, racial and sexual bigotry<sup>5</sup> plus Middle-East policies in the other? Probably so. David gets the impression shooting hares from the wheel was “a common activity” (p. 10), which Howard Dale the veterinarian disagrees with. *Wounded* takes place as the Clinton-Lewinsky trysts were the talk of the country, a case of insistent investigation which possibly sheds an ironical light on the slack police investigation in the novel. That the characters’ ages, mindsets and needs inform the plot lines is more arguable. David seeks a home and makes allowances for local mores. Frontier justice is detestable, but compromise is in order if he is to stay. In a way, the novel molds itself on his intention. Patrick’s lynching occurs about half way through, enough space left for the hideous action to be counterbalanced by Slut’s Hole’s better side, the neighborliness extended to the ailing Sixbury. Characters have a life beyond the last page. Here readers projecting themselves into David’s future are likely to see him become a steadfast family man: Katy, the nice young girl from near Casper is part of that picture. The plot line of *Wounded* doesn’t allow for any such alleviation or future perspective because the book ends as the elimination of the three white thugs is confirmed to the reader. The last two executions perpetrated by Gus and, possibly, Elvis Monday have taken place off stage. John is not directly accountable, but the reader’s projection into his future is firmly guided by the intimate knowledge of the wounds that have driven him up the mountain, his “chosen isolation” (34), of the memories that will gnaw at his conscience, of his craving for a genuine companionship. His blunt frankness to Morgan about Gus’s deeds speaks on his tormented conscience, his need to share the burden on his shoulders. This is not to say that *Wounded* probes deeper into human consciousness than the earlier novel. What *Wounded* suggests after John’s brief homosexual contact in the cave where he first had sex with Morgan is that his

chances to participate in a mutually rewarding life are slim beyond appearances. The only hope that is allowed to filter comes from Morgan's sincere attraction and genuine considerateness.

Pessimism is a consistent trait of the two novels. No character in *Wounded* is naïve, or young enough, to ask for the kind of help Butch asks Sixbury, to walk her to the distance. John's ultimate refuge in *Wounded* is a cave near the desert. Suzy, his dead wife, was scared to go in, but John and Morgan have sex there for the first time, and it is also the place where he takes David to revive him from the cold. Mysterious others—smokers—have been in the cave, but John likes it there because the dark allows him to withdraw from the world. Comparing *Wounded* to the earlier *Walk Me to the Distance* makes me argue that the author has built his artistic independence by freeing himself from the black writer's dilemma mentioned at the beginning of my essay. There is a path from one book to the next. David, a college dropout who plans to go back to school, wears none of the badges of blackness the publishing industry expects stamped on black characters. John is a more accomplished counter stereotype. Sophisticated, a graduate of Phillips Exeter and Berkeley where he majored in art history, scarred by life, he has no illusions but is ready to give anyone the benefit of the doubt in this society where, as Duncan Camp says, "Wolves are nothing compared to a sick person" (p. 14).

Animals fill a pervasive metaphorical role in *Wounded*. John's behavior toward the horses he trains or the coyote puppy he rescues can be apprehended as a global blueprint for improved relationships between men. Animal instincts must be redirected, animal fears must be overcome. Neither the coyote puppy nor Duncan's huge palomino is "supposed to make decisions" (p. 19). The trainer's responsibility is to achieve a well-ordered harmony without being domineering. The coyote puppy will be taught not to bite, even playfully, by turning her on her back and stroking her belly until she desists, he advises Gus. More to the point because riding calls for mutual reliance, riders need to show understanding to build a horse's confidence, must keep alert in order not to communicate their own feelings and fears to their mounts. Understanding does not preclude hierarchy. Hierarchy does not entail



dominion. John's philosophy is that even an antsy mule trying to wriggle its way out under the bottom rail of the pen can be trusted to behave while keeping its self-respect if treated right:

I rode up slowly and looked down at him. Only his head and neck were out, but they were well out. The mule opened his right eye wide and looked up at me, but, in that mule way, he didn't panic. He just let his head slap into the dust and lay there.

"So, what now?" I asked in a calm voice.

The mule didn't move.

I dismounted and dropped to my knee in front of the animal's nose. This was potential disaster. If the mule got excited and tried to get up, he could be in real trouble. I couldn't push him back because he might go nuts. I decided to back off and let the mule figure it out for himself. (p. 42-43)

Composure and respect are attitudes many a human in the novel lacks, especially those who are, or think they are, in a position of authority: Bucky, the sheriff, who disregards John's suggestions; Wallace's brother who is certain he has found God's true way; David Thayer's father who tramples his son's feelings; Robert who makes a show of his being gay. Self-assertion is not John's way. An arresting image tells us that when he marvels at the hesitation, "that gap, that space, that break" (p. 185) printed in the three-legged coyote's tracks in the snow.

David is pursued, if only briefly, by the shadow of guilt in *Walk Me to the Distance*. No such feeling is expressed in *Wounded*, but any reader's projection into the future of the characters invites it—shared between John and Morgan out of their loyalty to Gus's vengeful murders. John is seen at the beginning shoeing a horse with his "heeler", a quiet horse used to inspire another with proper behavior, standing close by. Once again, the animal world reads as a metaphor extending to humans. There is only one step to take, one letter to change from "heeler" to "healer". *Wounded* suggests healing is a long way off, if only because David Thayer has instilled doubt in John's mind concerning his sexual preference. One more wound, possibly tied to Suzy's death when she attempted to prove herself by riding a still restive horse.

There remains a huge leap to take, one I was bold enough to suggest in my essay's title: minority appropriation of frontier justice seen from the perspective of the writer's oeuvre. This leap calls for a detour through "The Appropriation of

Cultures”, a short story that was collected in *damedifido* in 1998. This ironic fantasy is set in South Carolina where a wealthy and cultured a-typical black man purchases an old pickup truck from a hillbilly. The truck sports a decal of the Confederate flag on its rear window and Daniel convinces people, including a group of black militants, that this emblem belongs to him as much as the Black Panther Party’s raised fist. The fashion he sets in town voids the flag of its symbolic value and the state of South Carolina ultimately decide not to fly it any more on its Capitol.<sup>6</sup>

*Wounded* is far removed from the ebullient irony at work in Daniel’s trickster act but the story’s contents had become part of the writer’s repertoire,<sup>7</sup> which allows the reader to graft one fictional situation onto another to produce a different effect. There is no timeless fictional inspiration. Creation flows from an author’s momentary perception of the world and characters, too, rise from specific—if shadowy—contexts. David does not appropriate frontier justice in *Walk Me to the Distance*. He only participates in it—at the cost of shouldering a detestable usage—out of his need to belong after the trauma of the Vietnam War. John has no similar need. He has a home or, rather, makes do on the fringes of a world that tolerates him. He is not satisfied and craves for a true relationship like the one he achieves with animals. While he harbored no inclination to redress wrongs outside the law, he owns to himself the frightening thought that he did place himself in a situation where he could have become a murderer. On the contrary, real anger simmers in Gus and Elvis whom society has left by the side of the road. Gus’s race consciousness surfaces everyday when he calls John his “nephew”. Outsiders, even well-meaning ones, refer to the old man as John’s “uncle”, and even Elvis uses this racist slur from the past. Frontier justice is anathema to John, but Gus and Elvis do appropriate it. How or why this fictional phantasm arose is not for a reader to say. Was it triggered by the news men were declared missing on reservation land? Was it the fruit of disgruntled imagination? *Wounded*’s difference with *Walk Me to the Distance* is nourished by the fact the later novel plants its plot in a soil where racism, homophobia and fundamentalism<sup>8</sup> walk hand in hand—disliked but tolerated by a sheriff who had rather have the neo Nazis move away from town on their own rather than check on them. Is police inaction reason enough for wronged citizens to take justice in their

own hands? As always in Everett, John and David are Nietzschean characters haunted by the potential for evil in themselves, but aiming for good to rule their lives.

We have been reading two thematically consistent but fictionally distant novels. Their parentage is visible in their appraisal of the U.S. as the land of violence. Their plots only share the location and the long shadow of "frontier justice".

It is not unlikely the course of *Walk Me to the Distance* is influenced by David's need to be accepted because the story closes on the possibility a better future may develop for him. On the contrary, *Wounded* imparts a more pessimistic vision of the future perhaps due to John's mindset, his feeling out of place in the town down the mountain, his being haunted by his possible responsibility in his wife's accidental death, and, more recently, by Gus's taking the law into his hands. Is this difference merely due to the characters or to the author's greater disillusionment with his country two decades later? What belongs to whom, and who molds what? A reader can only guess when deprived of inside information on composition processes and moods. No book is free from contemporary social fall out, so let us risk an interpretation. By the mid-1980s, the evils of the Vietnam War were beginning to recede from national consciousness, the country was more appeased. Brutal fundamentalism was only smoldering and the benefits of affirmative action were not yet significantly chipped by the 1978 Bakke decision. On the contrary, the early 21<sup>st</sup> century was shaken by a disputed presidential election decided by a reputedly politically independent Supreme Court. Conventional wisdom and White House speeches fractured the country into defeated "blue" and triumphant "red" states, and, mostly, war was spreading its wings again with an unprecedented disrespect for the laws of the land. Are those some of the ingredients that give *Wounded* its tone and savor? One notes the later book has a harsher environment for a background. Nature is as beautiful as in *Walk Me to the Distance*, but winter blizzards are more of a danger in *Wounded*. It is not altogether unlikely, therefore, that a more mature writer could denounce lesser evils like the ascendancy of commerce, distance himself from his earlier character's youthful need and see a cause for vicarious vengeance against brutal, mindless bigotry. However, when first hand information is inaccessible, it

may be wiser not to venture beyond a description. Readerly speculation can only go so far.

### WORKS CITED

Everett, Percival. *Walk Me to the Distance*. New York, NY: Ticknor and Fields, 1985.

---. (Foreword to) *Making Callaloo. 25 Years of Black Literature*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2002.

---. *Wounded*. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 2005.

Julien, Claude & Tissut, Anne-Laure. *Reading Percival Everett: European Perspectives*. CRAFT series n°4. Tours: PUFR, 2007.

---

<sup>1</sup> Should the need arise, there follow two outlines concentrating on the theme of justice. *Walk Me to the Distance* is set in the early seventies. The main character is David Larson who listened to official propaganda and dropped out of college when he was in his junior year to join the army. He finds himself unwelcome on returning home from three years in Vietnam. His parents have died in an accident and his now married sister who is involved in the anti-war movement rejects him.

He drives west to Nebraska in the disappointed hope to be reunited with a fellow veteran. He continues into Wyoming where he finds himself stranded in a place (improbably) called Slut's Hole. He boards at the Sixbury sheep ranch. Ms. Sixbury is a widow with a prosthetic leg and afflicted with a mentally retarded son who cannot speak, Patrick.

David immediately takes to the breathtaking landscape and the hospitable people. He is offered work as a rest area attendant and becomes a surrogate father when a group of Vietnamese refugees abandon a seven-year-old girl whom he calls Butch. No welfare official cares to take her in, but the neighbors do and flock to see the girl and bring food and Sixbury urges David to keep her.

When Patrick abducts Butch, a posse immediately assemble and ride out in a blizzard. They rescue the raped girl and hang Patrick whom David has shot in the arm as he was fleeing. David's guilty feeling makes him return to Georgia where his sister now thinks he can help her group of anti-war activists. His stay is curtailed because Savannah feels like a trap to him.

He returns to Slut's Hole where a state police investigation of Patrick's disappearance is now on. The officers do not push matters, however. The case is closed when Sixbury tells the investigators she saw her son stealing from the pantry the night before.

The novel ends as Sixbury wills her property to David after suffering a stroke, on condition that he raise Butch. She cannot accept life as an invalid and is about to commit suicide. David sees the gun in her bedside table drawer but says nothing.

*Wounded* is set during the Clinton/Lewinski affair. John Hunt is a former cattle rancher who now specializes in training horses. A black man, he lives with an older black

man, Gus, who has spent eleven years in jail for killing a white man whom he surprised raping his wife. John is a widower. Morgan, a neighbor down the road, is attracted to him, and Gus approves of her.

Their lives are disrupted when a homosexual is found murdered. The police arrest Wallace, John's handy man—the murdered man's companion—who hangs himself in jail. These deaths provoke a gay pride rally that brings David Thayer and his companion, Robert, to town, where they become the targets of homophobic thugs driving an old rusted BMW.

David Thayer, who is the son of one of John's friends from college days, returns to the ranch after breaking up with Robert. He later disappears as he is driving to town for Gus's medicine. The police search is ineffectual because no attention is paid to John's hints about the men in the BMW. John finds the men's hideout with the help of an Indian. He goes to the cabin with Gus who disregards his instructions to wait and then alert the police if needed, and shoots one of the men dead. One of the abductors confesses and John finds David unconscious in a dug out. Gus stays behind as he takes the young man to hospital, with instructions to mislead the sheriff as to where David was found. The novel ends as Elvis Monday, the Indian who helped locate the men drives Gus back to the ranch. "This is the frontier, cowboy," he tells John. "Every place is the frontier. Take care of your uncle." (207)

<sup>2</sup> This gives rise to a grotesque episode when David and Sixbury, both as drunk as can be, drive to town to recruit a prostitute so that Patrick, who does not take advantage of the opportunity, learns sex from a woman. David later falls in love with Olivia who has no interest whatsoever in him, and he tries, a foolish do-gooder, to steer her away from her trade.

<sup>3</sup> Sixbury worries about Patrick's life when she dies and denies the existence of a bond between them: "I'm his mother, but he ain't a part of me.... I have no children." (12). "Sometimes I hate him. Sometimes, I have no children." (70) After Patrick has fled from the ranch, carrying Sixbury's prosthetic leg away, she toasts his departure during a Bourbon dinner on the front steps with David: "To my son... May he know enough to die well." (83).

<sup>4</sup> As we rolled away I looked over at Gus. 'What was that all about?'

'What was what all about?'

'What were you two talking over?'

'Just talking.' (192)

<sup>5</sup> One may remember the movie "Brokeback Mountain" was released slightly after *Wounded* was published, which suggests homophobia *vs* tolerance was part of the doxa.

<sup>6</sup> The author addressed the question of the Confederate flag during a conference at Caen university in 2005 when he spoke about his invitation to speak before the South Carolina legislature: "I stepped to the lectern and said that I was here to speak to them on art, but that art and politics are inextricably bound together and that that flag, a symbol of exclusion, was unacceptable. And I left. Having said that, I now believe that flag ought to be there, ought to be flown atop the State Capitol, ought to be in that chamber for the reason it tells you what the United States really is.... I have been in many places in the country, I sometimes tell myself they ought to keep a Confederate flag in hotel rooms, just as a reminder." (Julien, Tissut, 230).

Jacque Berben has studied "The Appropriation of Cultures" in an article titled "'Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke' ... ou l'art de retourner les stéréotypes" soon to appear in a *LISA* issue (Rennes University) edited by Eliane El Maleh.

<sup>7</sup> I am assuming that the writing of *Wounded* is posterior to that of the short story. Whatever that be, the author points out in a private email dated Sep. 4, 2007, that his works make up an evolving whole: "I do feel that all of these works are one and that they are continually addressing the same cycle of themes."

---

<sup>8</sup> One of the neo-Nazis invokes God in the hour of his need: “Jesus, man, don’t shoot me,” (203) he blurts out before revealing the place where David Thayer’s bruised body lies. Is the name of Jesus mere lingo God stuff, or belief?

© 2010 Claude Julien & GRAAT