

but I wondered if she would go the way of Gypsy. But, knowing that she had been wrong, she never disobeyed again. She may, even, in some collie-way, knowing she had grieved me, have repented.

The point of these little stories is animal morality, taught by a master and quite unknown to animals in the wild. Man was taught right and wrong by God — and man, like these dogs and horses, often defied the teaching, and still does. But man takes amoral beasts out of the wild to be his companions and helpers in hunting and herding, and gives them laws and morality — and, in my belief, personality and souls. Although I'm not able to attempt a theology of beasts, it may be that I can suggest some pointers. We individually are gods to our animals; and, like Taffy and Gypsy, Flurry and Nelly, the beasts with masters struggle with the moral codes we have taught them. If we with our dominion over other created life were not ourselves fallen, there might be many more beasts saved through us. If we, some of us, are to be saved through God Incarnate in our Saviour Jesus, so, I believe, some beasts, not amoral but good, *choosing* good as we have taught them, will individually be redeemed and saved. If so, we are to them what Jesus Christ is to us: their saviours.

## FROM "FEELINGS" TO OBJECTIVE TRUTH

Kimberley Manning

### My Road from Gender Feminism to Catholicism

Consider the following scenario: There was a time in human history when all was well. People lived in harmony with the planet, all resources were shared equally, and there was no violence. This was the great time of matriarchal cultures

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An awesome responsibility.

When Flurry gave up her blithe spirit in death — and went eagerly, I hope, to join her mistress, who had died, I wrote a poem about her that implies much that I, her master, have been saying. And I shall end with that.

#### DEAD COLLIE

I'll not catch such a flurry of living and grace.

To chase down the wind is sheer folly:  
Just say that my life has a void lifeless place  
For a little dead collie.

Still I muse on your goodness — so glad to be good —  
Free courtesy ruled your brief living.  
Never thinking you could disobey if you would,  
And purely forgiving.

A whistle from me and you whirled from your play,  
Up ears and eager paws drumming,  
Your duty and wishes all one in the gay  
Swift rush of your coming.

Even now a clear whistle might reach and surpass  
All limits and bring back the rushing  
Of printless gay paws running over the grass,  
And the silky head brushing.

when women held the positions of power in their societies and wielded that power with wisdom.

Then it all came to a halt when men rose up and began to use force, rooted in misogyny, to bring women under their control. This was not some series of isolated uprisings, but a systematic reversal of world power and a subjugation of women which has left my gender devastated. Rape was the first method used to subdue women, followed by the development of the institution of marriage; however, as time went on, more sophisticated mechanisms were employed to rob

women of their power, both earthly and spiritual.

The coup de grâce in this destruction of matriarchal utopia was the development of Christianity. This patriarchal system, purposely dominated by men, would seek to destroy the last vestiges of the great goddess-centered religions by establishing the complete authority of males over females through its use of supposed sacred writings (the Bible) and masculine symbolism to describe God. The great peace-loving goddess religions were no match for the brute force of a male dominated Christendom and so were decimated. The greatest blow was the Inquisition, in which millions of pagan women, many high priestesses, were burned at the stake, as the Catholic Church made its massive attempt finally to eradicate female power. Then came the witch hunts in the New World, while today such constructs as gender roles continue the assaults against feminine energy on the planet.

Revisionist history at its finest? To be sure. However, much to my embarrassment, I must confess that not so long ago I subscribed to this gender feminist nonsense. Don't get me wrong, I wasn't raised with such notions. To my parents' credit, I was brought up in a strong Christian home. Baptized in a Methodist church, I was raised in a warm and loving Episcopal home in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania — the heart of Amish country. The Christian values of love thy neighbor, personal morality, and strong faith were modeled constantly at home and reinforced by Anabaptist fundamentalists who set a very conservative tone for the community. Most significantly, I was raised with the old-fashioned idea that there is objective truth — that while there may be some gray areas in life, there is such a thing as definitive right and wrong.

I embraced these values, knowing that somehow they were connected to the God in whom we believed, though I was unclear as to how that was so. Consequently, while seeds of truth were planted, they had not taken root, and by the time I left for college, I was very vulnerable to drifting away from Christianity.

As is not uncommon for young adults, I began to consider other options when I failed to see meaning in the religion of my youth. Gender feminism would eventually become that other option, but my "conversion" was a slow and insidious process. I use the word "conversion" purposely, because I later came to see that gender feminism is a pseudo-religion in which all of the archetypal symbols are there in a twisted man-

ner. "Womyn" is deified, empowerment is the mantra, unborn children are the blood sacrifices in the ritual of abortion, and men are the scapegoats for our sins.

My first brush with radical feminism was a brief discussion with the Lutheran minister at my college over the issue of inclusive language in the Bible. At the time, it struck me as absurd that the reference to God as "our Father" in any way undermined my value as a woman. That was when my head was still screwed on straight and I was majoring in science. Two years into my degree, I switched majors and began to study social work. My heavy interest in the subjective philosophies of pantheism and my decision to do a volunteer internship at a domestic violence shelter had potent consequences. I began to hear a lot of talk about "woman's experience," how it is the ultimate source of truth. It began to seem like an all-out attack on women was taking place in society, in the form of domestic abuse (not such an absurd conclusion if the only new women you meet for 10 months are battered ones). I began to read a lot about misogyny, considered by many feminists to be a deep psychological predisposition in all men.

By the time I graduated, I was still brave enough to get married, despite my growing awareness that marriage was a legal maneuver orchestrated by men to gain control of women, both economically and physically. With a growing concern for my oppressed sisters everywhere, I took a paying job as a domestic violence counselor in a shelter.

In my personal life, I continued to explore pantheism, branching out into the New Age movement. I became fascinated with all things subjective. Psychology and spirituality were my passions and the left-brained world of critical thinking was now diagnosed as anal-retentive. I became convinced of such nebulous notions as there is no evil (or good/evil/God are all the same), pain is an illusion, God is really a woman, if you don't get it right in this life you can always come back and try again, truth is whatever we make it for we are all creating our own realities, and all views and choices are of equal value. My highest virtue became tolerance, and I felt guilty if I in any way judged another's actions.

These ideas dovetailed quite nicely with my experience at work. The staff members at the shelter were all women. We saw ourselves as a feminist organization in which all of the women were co-equals. On numerous occasions I found this "no one's in

charge" approach unbearable. Sometimes we would sit around for days in staff meetings trying to make a decision about a particular case. Those days seemed interminable, but it was all done in the name of fairness, for there should be no leaders, no hierarchy of authority — those were male constructs. So everyone would have her say as discussion and negotiation would go on and on. The name of the game was consensus, but when consensus could not be reached, our director would make the final decision. This always struck me as contrary to our philosophy, but in the end everyone seemed willing to overlook the inconsistency out of sheer fatigue.

Ours was a safe environment in which the lesbian women could feel safe to "come out." The banter of male-bashing was an endless stream of jokes and occasional outbursts of raging hatred. A woman's "right to choose" was the pivotal issue around which women's freedom revolved and which had to be protected at all costs. We even had copies of videos giving instruction in "menstrual extraction" (do-it-yourself abortion) in case men ever took away our "right" to control our own bodies. Makeup was frowned upon and dieting was seen as a total surrender to the male-dominated culture in which women are merely objects for men's pleasure.

Sexual abuse in America was rampant, I was told. The estimates were said to be as high as 70 percent of all girls. Some feminists I read even asserted that all acts of sex between a man and a woman are, by definition, rape. And the statistics for domestic violence were astounding; we often quoted that half of all married women were being savagely beaten every year! Eating disorders (which we believed were caused by the male desire to keep women helpless little waifs) were killing our daughters, and all over the world the organized patriarchal religions were keeping women oppressed with such tactics as genital mutilation, whipping, stoning, death sentences, forced marriages, forbidding birth control and access to abortions, and refusal to accept same-sex marriages.

It all seemed so unjust, so horrible: The evidence mounted in my mind: Men were simply evil, and governments and organized religion — specifically Christianity in America — were their weapons. And then one day it happened. I had my "click" experience. I later read that *Ms.* magazine had coined this phrase to describe the exact moment of coming into full consciousness of one's oppression. I was sitting across

from a co-worker in the shelter one evening and, like a light going on, it suddenly hit me that the cultural reality of my childhood did not exist. I realized in my moment of "enlightenment" that all men were perpetrators and all women were victims. "Where have I been all these years?" I asked my friend. "I feel like I've been living under a rock and for the first time now I can see clearly. There's a world of male oppression against women out there and we've got to fight back." My friend smiled warmly and said, "Now you're getting it. I had the same experience. Now you see the truth."

From that moment on, for the next four years, I essentially abandoned the notion of objective truth and embraced the world view that all things are relative and truth is determined by the individual. This was a wholly right-brained approach to life in which one's personal experience and feelings at any given moment determine reality. Left-brained thinking patterns, such as critical analysis and skepticism, were deemed too rigid, too limiting, too male. I felt freed by the artistic approach to life where everything is an open possibility. What 23-year-old wouldn't love a doctrine of *carte blanche*? Luckily, though, the traditional, objective values of my upbringing still resonated with me and so my "experience" led me to continue to make prudent decisions in my own life.

Meanwhile, in the name of tolerance, I found myself supporting or at least not speaking out about all manner of poor decisions that friends, co-workers, and clients were making in their own lives. They did not have the luxury of a sound foundation in Christian ethics that I had grown up with, and consequently their lives were disasters. I was too much of a coward to judge anyone else's actions, but I reaped the benefits of having been reared in a world view that correctly set high standards for me. Consequently, I went along subscribing to this nonsensical system without getting myself into any real trouble.

During that time, I led my life with the comfort that I had found the "truth" — that it was whatever I willed it to be and was determined only by my own personal experience. But two situations came up that caused such a disruption in my feminist outlook that, looking back, I realize they were the start of my debriefing process out of radical feminism.

The first was when I discovered that a seriously flawed methodology was being used to gather data on the number of women that the shelter system had to turn away each year. I saw that the numbers were

being artificially inflated by a defective statistical method, and then those numbers were being presented to the public as the basis for more funding. I told people about this, but no one seemed concerned. "I was told that the huge numbers we were getting statistically coincided with our "sense" of the number of battered women out there who were not able to get help, so therefore the numbers were valid. I was also told that statistics were basically meaningless anyway since mathematics is just another male construct used to oppress "woman's reality." This was too much for someone who had majored in science for two years. Personal determination of lifestyle and world view I was willing to go along with, but such a cavalier attitude toward numbers and data was intolerable. When I began to see the outer reaches of subjective truth, I pulled back to regroup.

The second situation occurred shortly after this discovery. It involved what I like to call my "anti-click experience," which would begin my return to the world of objective truth (though complete deprogramming would take years). One day it suddenly dawned on me that if I were to base my truth solely on my own personal experience, then I could not subscribe to the gender feminist model. After all, my experience of my father, brother, and husband was that men were wonderfully kind and had the utmost respect for women. It was statistically impossible that I alone would have found the only three decent men in the entire world. So with that, gender feminism became a self-refuting proposition for me and began to crumble before my eyes. That one such basic argument in logic could devastate my entire philosophy was quite an embarrassing blow — one I would suffer again when I returned to, and attempted to defend, Protestantism.

Over the next few years, I had two daughters. On the occasion of my older child's third birthday, I realized that I had no real dominant philosophy, much less religion, in which to bring up my children. I had originally planned to raise my girls with a knowledge of all the great religions and let them carve out some meaning to life on their own, but, as the parent of two toddlers, I was becoming acutely aware that children need structure and standards. Another young mother and I had begun writing a political and social editorial column in the *Arizona Republic* in which we often lamented the effects on our society of the "whatever-works-for-you" mentality. I had returned to the belief

that there is an objective truth out there somewhere and I felt I owed it to my children to find it. I had looked into and dismissed Native American religions, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Shamanism, even pseudo-Christian philosophies such as the popular *Course in Miracles*. The only obvious arena left was Christianity, but I was still inclined to think that while Jesus had obviously been a fine prophet, men had distorted his ideas and then used the institution of the Church and the image of a male god to alienate women from an experience of the divine. Then one day my Catholic friend and co-writer, Leila Miller, mentioned to me that the Catholic Church held the Virgin Mary in great esteem — she was and is the Mother of God, worthy of veneration. (I had never heard of devotion to Mary in my Episcopal church. In fact, aside from Christmas-time references to the Virgin Birth, she was not mentioned.) This realization of woman's exalted status in Christianity severed the last thread which connected me to the feminist rendition of "herstory." I was finally willing to take another look at the religion of my childhood.

In January 1995, I made a public statement to a group of friends that it was my sincere prayer that Jesus would reveal Himself to me. I had never really understood this whole story of God made man, crucifixion, resurrection, and salvation. If Jesus is the real source of Truth, I wanted Him to prove it. What followed was a rapid fire conversion over the ensuing four months. The support for my conversion was a Bible church that I chose solely on the basis that I could walk to it on the days I would not have a car. The first sermon I heard there was excellent. Not only did the pastor clearly instruct that the Bible is actually relevant to my life today (something I had always doubted), but he also argued that Christianity is not some nebulous religion of blind faith. He spoke of Christianity as the source of objective truth, grounded in a real act that had occurred in a specific moment in human history. I was intrigued and, over the following four months, I never missed a service. I joined a Bible study group focusing on the New Testament and, after opening my heart to Christ, I had a classic moment of conversion: By His amazing grace, God gave me the gift of faith and I became a believing Christian.

Since I had such a "moment," I figured I was a born-again Christian and it made sense that I should become a member of the Bible church. Since this would mean renouncing my membership in the

Episcopal Church, I decided that I should take the Bible church's doctrine class to understand fully what I was joining. This, along with a fair amount of reading on the side, left me enamored with the ideas of the Reformation. *Sola scriptura*, the idea that the Bible is the only source of authority for a Christian, and *sola fide*, Luther's idea that we are saved by our faith alone, became my pillars of the truth. Looking back, I realize that those doctrines were no more than an impossible "synthesis" of subjective and objective truth: The objective truth is in the Bible, but I, like Luther, still had the option of personally interpreting that truth. But at the time, I was sold on these newfound gems and ready to join the nondenominational world of the Bible church.

In the meantime, Leila saw how much fun I was having at the Bible church and considered leaving Catholicism. Her mother very wisely advised her to know what she was leaving before she left the Catholic Church and subsequently gave her a copy of Karl Keating's *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*. This prompted what can only be described as a marathon replay of the Reformation. For months Leila and I debated the meanings of justification, salvation, sacrifice, transubstantiation, consubstantiation, and the Marian doctrines (just to name a few). Two of our phone conversations actually lasted seven hours each, and eventually the debate came down to one issue: authority. We discovered that the core decision for a Christian is whether or not one submits to the authority of the Catholic Church (which claims to operate under the guidance of the Holy Spirit) and thus accepts the Church's understanding of the Bible and her pronouncements on faith and morals. If one rejects the Church's authority, then one subscribes to the doctrine of *sola scriptura* and is left to find, through a personal interpretation of the Bible, the Truth that was promised by Christ. The latter seemed the proper democratic (and more comfortable) approach to me and, imbued with an underlying subconscious prejudice against Catholicism and influenced by heretical Protestant biblical interpretations, I stuck to this position with a vengeance.

And then in one last act toward an informed decision, I read a book called *Surprised by Truth*, edited by Patrick Madrid. In three nights, the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, and much besides, came crumbling down around me. I came to realize that if the Bible, as I held, was the sole source of truth for me as a Christian,

then it would have to state as much. But I discovered that, in fact, the Bible never makes such a claim — in fact, the opposite is true. Just as in feminism, I found myself smack dab up against a self-refuting philosophy. I had been duped again, and this time I was devastated. My newfound joy in Christianity evaporated, my spirit fell, and I was left in darkness. I could hardly sleep for nights as I wrestled with the terrible possibility that there was no Truth to be found. Certainly the Catholic Church could not be the true Christianity — those people worship Mary, pray to idols, believe in salvation by works, engage in some sort of cannibalism at their Mass, and use guilt and threats of excommunication to coerce their members into serving the Church hierarchy.

Then I remembered an Anglican priest I had met while I had been a speaker at a prolife conference (I had left the "prochoice" camp when I left feminism). He was from a schismatic group of Episcopalians. In a panic, I met with him to find out just exactly where Episcopalians and/or Anglicans stand on the issues of *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*. By that time, I had been reading Keating's *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* myself (along with some embarrassingly weak Protestant apologetics). In subsequent meetings with this priest I sought an official Anglican/Episcopal response to the Roman Catholic positions on such critical points of doctrine as the Petrine succession, the Immaculate Conception, and Papal infallibility. I thought for sure that he would present grand apologetic arguments in response to these questions. Instead, I came away from these talks recognizing what I now know to be a nearly universal ignorance of the Roman Catholic doctrine. A prime example of this was the priest's comment that the doctrine of infallibility gave a pope carte blanche to invent any doctrine the Church wanted to make up. "They are at risk of becoming like Mormons with that kind of doctrine," he said. Luckily, I understood by that time that infallibility is actually a highly limiting doctrine that preserves and protects the deposit of faith. It was clear to me that after 20 centuries of existence, the Catholic Church had not turned into some bizarre form of Mormonism but had, instead, preserved the living Faith instituted by our Lord and handed on by His Apostles. I chuckled to myself as I considered that Mormonism was historically a result of Protestantism!

Meanwhile, at home, my husband kept asking me when I was going to admit to myself that my

thinking was Catholic. Yet I still just couldn't imagine converting to the Church. So, in a series of last-ditch efforts, I went to four Episcopal priests in an attempt to find anyone who could talk me out of becoming Roman Catholic. After all, the Episcopal Church is said to be the *via media* — the middle ground — between Catholicism and Protestantism. I had earlier dismissed the Episcopal Church, primarily because of its weak position on abortion, but now I was desperate. I was hoping the Episcopalians would be able to teach me how to stay out of the Catholic Church without being a heretic. After engaging in many hours of discussion with these fine men, I was left stunned at the similarities between the Episcopal Church and gender feminism.

I found a serious breakdown in moral teaching reminiscent of the "tolerance" model of feminist ideology in which no one or thing should be judged lest someone be made to feel uncomfortable. One priest, who claimed to be prolife, told me he believed in a woman's right to an abortion and that he would not discourage a parishioner from having an abortion if she thought it was the best option for her! Another priest responded to the Catholic stance on artificial birth control by saying, "You simply can't run a church like that today." And I discovered that ordination of noncelibate homosexual priests was a quiet but regular practice in the Episcopal Church.

I also saw that old, familiar subjective truth model raising its ugly head again. It was explained to me, by the dean of an Episcopal seminary, that the Episcopal Church is not a "confessional" church in which one is required to concur with any particular interpretation of doctrine. An Episcopalian, he said, cannot ignore the articles of faith (found in the Book of Common Prayer) or the creeds, but at the same time he need only profess them with regard to how he personally interprets them. Shocked, I remember clarifying, "Do you mean that one man in the pews can profess belief in a literal resurrection, and the man next to him can profess a metaphorical resurrection, and they're both right in the eyes of the Episcopal Church?" The answer was a definite "Yes." I was told numerous times that Episcopalians believe that "everyone is right, both Protestants and Catholics." But I had already learned that it is only in the world of subjective truth that two opposing doctrines can both be right. Subjectivism is simply antithetical to the objective Truth of Christ.

Another priest, a former assistant to the Archbishop of Canterbury, encouraged me to join the "Roman mission" if that was where I felt most comfortable. Making decisions based on feelings and personal experience was another tenet of feminism that I had rejected as contrary to an objective Truth.

And I learned that Episcopalian rejection of the papacy is not based on any solid historical, scriptural, or theological reason. It is simply a refusal to submit to Church authority, just as it was for its founder, King Henry VIII. This disdain for binding authority is classic gender feminism, where the "patriarchal model of hierarchy" is seen as an abusive male construct.

The Episcopal Church I found is not the same creedal church my father grew up in — the one that taught me to seek objective truth. Moreover, it is schism from the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, therefore schism from the assured guidance of the Holy Spirit, that creates creedal chaos and has led Anglicanism into heresy. One Episcopal priest put it beautifully, "The Catholics are specific [about doctrine] while we Episcopalians think of ourselves as tolerant." Exactly! The magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church is the unchanging and knowable Truth rooted in a 2,000-year history. That Truth is incompat-

## LETTERS

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ible with "tolerance" of heretical philosophies.

Everything I had rejected and escaped in gender feminism had surrounded me once again in Protestantism: personal interpretation, subjective reality based on emotion, moral relativism, and rejection of legitimate authority. I had not come all this way back to Christianity only once again to subscribe to the right-brain, subjective, emotional, and morally ungrounded philosophies that I had rejected in feminism.

It was finally over — I realized that I could not remain outside of the Catholic Church.

Since my decision to be reconciled with the Catholic Church, I have been thoroughly analyzed by bewildered friends and family. I have been accused of becoming a Catholic because my friend is Catholic, because I like liturgical services, because I am committing some long overdue rebellion, or because I have a psychological wound from my past that has me on a neurotic search for an authority figure. But I became a Catholic this past Easter Vigil because I sought objective Truth, a Truth that leaves both feminism and Protestantism in the dust. Jesus said He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, so I took Him up on it. Much to my surprise, and now inestimable joy, I found His promised Truth, His objective, unchanging, divinely protected Truth, in His Holy Catholic Church. I thank God I'm home. ■

## HARVARD DIARY

By ROBERT COLES

### Invisible Man

For many years I have taught, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* to college students, and each time I discuss the book I find myself yet again the grateful reader who is both entertained and instructed. The novel was published in 1952, when I was just starting medical school and had little time for reading on the side. I did have a few minutes, now and then, to converse with my parents, both avid fans of fiction, and I well remember Mom recommending the

Ellison novel to me in the course of a hurried phone conversation. I promptly put her suggestion out of mind, however. I had long biological lists to memorize, if I was to be a physician, and my interest in such study could never be taken for granted, to say the least — so I had to give what time I had to those textbooks, given my low level of "efficiency," a matter of boredom doing its undermining work. My mother kept trying though — her apparently casual asides and suggestions a legendary part of our family's life: We knew how reluctant she was to abandon an idea in which she believed. But as her son I had learned my own, responsive stubbornness, and the long and short of it was that I turned a deaf ear to her prodding with respect to *Invisible Man* — until one day it arrived in the mail, with a long letter from my mother, which offered apologies for what got called "an intrusion," but submitted, as well, a passionate plea for what she kept calling "a close look at our country." That phrase was all Mom — a modest, unpretentious way of saying more than is at first apparent. This was, after all, a novel whose title told of invisibility, hence the blindness of others — and there she was, using a visual image in her appropriately casual advocacy.

I read the novel during the summer of 1953 — an occasional stolen hour while rotating through a clerkship in pediatrics, which even then I knew would be my chosen branch of medicine. I carried the book with me, actually, in my black doctor's bag, full of those instruments which not only help a medical student examine patients but are a badge of honor: Here I am, headed *there!* One day, as I was examining a 10-year-old boy who had cystic fibrosis, and therefore poor prospects for an extended survival, I found myself emptying my bag, in search of my stethoscope, which had become entangled with other diagnostic devices in a limited space. As I did so, I pulled out the novel, and the boy wanted to know what it was. A story, I told him. About what? Borrowing from my mother: about America, a look at it. Oh — is the guy a shadow? I draw a blank — puzzle at the reference, take it literally, say no, a real man, even if a lot of people don't consider him so and ignore him. I don't want to go any further though — I have work to do, and I'm already behind schedule. But the boy won't let up — he tells me about his dad's favorite boyhood radio program, "The Shadow." I smile. I tell the lad that I also used

to listen to that program. For a second or two I'm forgetting about the novel, remembering "Lamont Cranston, man-about-town" and his girlfriend, "the lovely Margo Lane," and remembering, as well, the creaky, creepy voice of "the Shadow," and the mystery of it all: Cranston become invisible, and, in that form, morally knowing, and, yes, invincible — he could spot the crooks, take them by complete surprise, undo them.

After a minute or two of talk about "the Shadow" I have forgotten about Ellison's novel, and I presume the boy has too. I prepare to listen to his lungs, but he wants to use them in further conversation: *Well*, is the "invisible man" in that book someone who "catches the bad guys"? Condescension drops upon my thoughts — I smile in order to mask my impatience. I am convinced that there is no way I can explain this novel to this lad, so it's best to move on, proceed with a necessary evaluation of his medical condition. But I can tell that the boy wants his question answered, and so I nod — signal the novel as yet another radio crime story that has a happy ending. The boy thankfully loses interest in further questions of any kind — the silence of a sick child, worried about his fate, descends on him, on both of us actually. *Invisible Man* moves far from my consciousness as I go about my work.

Later, in the evening, I have some spare time, and I go back to the novel. For some reason, as I turn the pages, that young patient of mine keeps coming to mind. I can hear him asking about the outcome; I can hear him wondering whether the Invisible Man, like the shadowy figure of the radio program, "catches the bad guys." I am still the patronizing older person, all too ready to dismiss that line of inquiry — yet, it won't let go of me. Finally I stop and think; I take the boy's question seriously — and realize that Ellison's anonymous protagonist does indeed "catch" those many "bad guys" who populate the novel — he sees *through* them, catches sight of them, is a witness to their phony, pretentious, greedy, manipulative, mean-spirited ways, even as they pay him no heed, are blind to his presence, his humanity, his right to be taken into consideration, given notice. Who are "they"? Without favor, Ellison dares show us warts and worse among the rich and poor, the powerful and weak, and, yes, black people as well as white people — his is a vision of things that is by no means shaped by the confines of race.

His is a moral vision — hence the appropriateness, I begin to realize, of my patient's question. His is the outsider's peculiarly privileged vision — as in Dostoevsky's "Underground Man": The world passes him by, but he keeps his eyes open, keeps observing how people behave, what they do to one another, and the result is the narrator's progressive enlightenment, in the tradition of, say, Dickens or George Eliot or Hardy, his melancholy awareness of how things work, of how people get on with one another.

By the time I finished the novel, I had connected it unforgettably to that youngster I had come to know in the hospital, who in his own way was trying to sort things out, distinguish between the good and the bad, the heroic and the malevolent. The novel, after all, is one of innocence gradually lost — every child's daily experience. Ellison has a youth at a school in the rural South go North, and as he moves across the American land, he meets people high and low, begins to understand what he (and many others) have to keep constantly in mind — the consuming egoism of so many, a nervous smugness that deprives them of their humanity, hence their inhumane behavior, demonstrated in ways large and small.

Even as that boy, with his heart-of-the-matter question, made me squirm, retreat into a medical egoism, Ellison's college youth hasn't quite learned to go long with all the lies and pretenses, the fakery called normality to which he is exposed, and so we readers are made to squirm, to laugh nervously, and, maybe, to recall our own time of relative naiveté, even sincerity, when the world seemed trustworthy, reliable, decent. Soon enough, the fall — our growing realization of what is out there, meaning what is inside the minds and hearts of so many, a darkness that has nothing at all to do with the skin's pigment, that belies all appearances, that can take utter hold of us, and, in Ellison's imagery, blind us, so we see no one, really, but ourselves, and, ironically, become thoroughly blind to ourselves as well (because we don't recognize, really, what has happened to us).

Not that such a growing moral awareness on the part of a humble hero makes for a finger-pointing stiff narrative, or precludes irony, ambiguity, and humor. *Invisible Man* is not, ultimately, a novel about race (only), and it certainly does not give us a black-and-white view of human affairs. The novel's