Grady tracing

"Real horse, real rider, real land and sky and yet a dream withal."

John Grady Cole, full-blown horseman at sixteen, sets out, not on an adventure, but in search of a life actively denied him upon the death of his grandfather. John Grady's story has as background the disappearance of the American Frontier and as its foreground John Grady's endeavor to live the life of that frontier, the life of a skilled horseman with the horse he loves—together "the shadow of a single being."
The story we are privy to begins with a dinner with Perez, for half a century, nurtured the Cole family, including John Grady. Thresholds crossed in suffering and disappointment, against the visual imagery of violence in a minor key, the accidents poignant and servicing. John Grady's story is the coming-of-age preliminary to a twentieth-century quest, not told but understood, "pass[ing] and pal[ing] into a darkening land, the world to come."

McCarty's characters come into focus for his readers in the interplay of talking and doing; little is offered by way of expository description. We are there as we learn who John Grady is, who Rawlins is, who Blevins says he is. The minor characters, John Grady's father and Dueña Alfonsa, for example, tell us something of their own stories—or have their stories told (his mother and Alejandra)—in John Grady's presence, as if the narrator has shirked the responsibility. What we know is known in the cumulative immediacy of the moments that comprise John Grady's leaving the ranch that his mother will not allow him to manage through to his return to the ranch, only to witness the funeral of Abuela, the woman who, for half a century, had nurtured the Cole family, including John Grady. Thresholds and acts of violence, experienced and remembered, are the journey's mileposts. The continuum is the interplay of the characters at the center of which is John Grady's romanticism.

Fences, highways, rivers, and gates abound—at times serving as thresholds with which to be reckoned; however, no epiphanies temper the journey. These many crossings (thresholds) are counterbalanced with "stoppings"—many of which occur at tables: breakfast with his father, chess with Alfonsa, advice from Perez, dinner with Alejandra—at which a decision is made by or for John Grady, and a turn is made. Blood is omnipresent, if even as memory. John Grady's is a rite of passage across a landscape not quite as violent as the topography traversed by "the kid" in McCarthy's Blood Meridian, but violent nevertheless.

The young romantic John Grady Cole seeks an ideal, one that for a qualified moment seems attainable: "Real horse, real rider, real land and sky and yet a dream withal," he, enthralled, muses upon encountering Alejandra on the black Arabian. It is not his virtue that is tested but his resolve; no matter the distraction—Alejandra’s seductive beauty, Blevins's fatal obstinacy, the prison's ubiquitous violence—John Grady is bent on living the mythic life of horse and rider.
Molière's *Tartuffe, or The Imposter [The Hypocrite]*

"Our secret will be safe with us alone, / And there's no evil if the thing's not known."

Molière's comedy *Tartuffe, or The Imposter* indulges our prurient interests in deception, hypocrisy, and gullibility, ultimately—and thankfully—offering in their place tested loyalty and unflappable reason. Because familial duty interposes, reconciliation is not hard fought; however, it does come—in the form of *rex ex machina*, which is the saving grace regarding an elemental contentious criticism of the play. Were the play a direct attack on religious hypocrisy alone (a charge levied at Molière during the play's several-year development) and the effect of Tartuffe's deception complete, the play would not be a comedy, especially in the mode of *commedia dell'arte*. We do not actually encounter the impostor until the third act, our attention and readiness to judge being directed at the gullible Orgon and his mother, but not in that order. There is a crescendo, an acclimatizing of sorts in anticipation of meeting the controlling master of deception who is posing as a religious ascetic. *Tartuffe* juxtaposes the "narrow bounds of moderation" against both Orgon's irrationality and the religious fervor that puts his family at risk—his son's inheritance, his wife's virtue, his daughter's, let's just say, happiness, and *Tartuffe*'s willful, practiced deception and the feigned religiosity upon which that deception depends.

As in any work destined for the boards, *Tartuffe* relies on the hyperbolic: the characters, including the servant Dorine, are recognizable types, and the play's moral concerns are evident in their exchanges, especially in their proclamations. The play's central types, against the background of the recently ended, but not forgotten, deeply political Wars of Religion (1562-1629), were (and still are) the objects of derision. The moral is, while colored by the expectations of loyalty (marital fidelity, duty to the king), the same moral offered in the story of Icarus and his failure to avoid excess; indeed, Cleante's rejoinder to Orgon's excess in having discovered that he has been duped, suffices: "[L]earn what virtue means/ And, carefully avoiding each extreme, / [. . .], / Err on the side of trusting more, not less." The social landscape is familiar: at stake is reputation; the political landscape is familiar: at play are loyalties; the ethical landscape perhaps not as familiar: central to morality is enlightened reason.

**Robert Browning: selected poetry**

"For, what with my whole world-wide wandering, / What with my search drawn out thro' years . . . ."

The importance of Browning's contribution to the dramatic monologue as a poetic form finds universal recognition; however, it is not this form, this, perhaps genre, alone upon which Browning's genius as a poet rests. Daniel Karlin, who has edited the collection serving as authority for this year's competition, argues that it is *desire* that "is the keynote of Browning's poetry, its ruling spirit [. . .]." Both the often dispassionate personae of the dramatic monologues and the impassioned speakers of his lyric poetry reveal, in Elizabeth Barrett's words, Robert Browning's "great range."

The dramatic monologue is characterized by a dramatic situation into which the reader is invited, even if momentarily; a silent internal auditor(s); implied action; and the persona's unwitting self-revelatory disclosure, one that often shocks, one that peoples a psychological landscape from which we are happy to escape, leaving, in Browning's expert use of the form, the persona in his cell, madhouse or monastic.

The interplay of characters as psychological partners in the revealing of desire—impassioned or curiously psychotic—characterizes our selection of Browning's poetry. Browning's interest in the workings of the mind reflect the nineteenth century's embryonic awareness of what will become the major focus of the likes of William James and Sigmund Freud. His is a modern treatment of human psychology in a nineteenth-century poetic mode, much of which he helped shape.