

division much more frankly than do his rationalizings as we paraphrase those works. His heroic plays and his odes are pure Baroque — though in the odes he willfully goes his Pindaric way. On the other hand, his prose is the first modern prose; even while he argues for Baroque ornamentation in the drama — the encrustation of rhyme, as we read in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* — he writes in the middle style of which he is the first

master. Finally, his political and religious poems exhibit in purpose, ideas, and technique Dryden's ambivalence, never fully resolved, except on a religious and hence other-worldly plane, an ambivalence that he confesses as an old man at the end of his life in his last poem, *The Secular Masque*:

'T is well an old age is out,  
And time to begin a new.

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### *Theseus Grown Old*

The ground is no longer firm under his  
feet,  
while the village encompasses him like a  
city;  
neighbors' houses shimmer and vanish,  
mirages only.  
Slowly he makes his way in the afternoon  
downtown to the newsstand (but nothing  
happens now)  
and the post office (but no one writes  
letters any more).  
Strangers live on the street beside him,  
and children, enemies, jeer at him;  
boys were different in his day,  
playing hare-and-hounds over the  
mountains,  
(he calls to them now)  
slashing Mrs. Grimby's clothesline on  
Hallowe'en,  
throwing old shoes at weddings . . .  
Where is his young wife? The girl with  
long blond hair  
passes by, unseeing, crosses under a  
traffic light, hurries on.  
Is it she?  
O what town is this, what country?  
Footsteps pound close behind him, and  
Something whispers,  
*Why, this is the Labyrinth.*

MARY ELIZABETH OSBORN

# The Bear Paw

MARION MONTGOMERY

DOCK'S GNARLED FEET PADDED softly as he walked down the sandy path toward the cowshed and pigpen. Last night's rain had left the sand a swirl of dark purple sparkling with silica, and here and there a silver fleck of isinglass caught the fresh sun just breaking through the dripping pines. The saw grass curved with the weight of the drops of water strung along the blade. Everywhere he heard the soft sound of dripping water. The palmetto's black spear tips, green fronds and white clustered flower tops were as new as resurrection since the rain had pounded the dust off.

He passed around the cowshed to the pigpen and stopped dead. The pine slabs on the swamp side were ripped away. His shoat, next winter's meat, was gone. The hound dog Billy lay dead against the side of the pen, a great clot of blood around his head. The dead dog, the ripped slabs, the pattern of tracks around the pen and shed left no doubt as to the caller. The bear had come again. Dock's grey eyes narrowed to pick out its path of retreat. He stood for a moment staring into the swamp clenching and unclenching his fists. Sam Willoughby or no Sam Willoughby, he would have to go after the bear. He turned and walked deliberately back up the path toward the cool house set on stilts in a hummock of

live oaks, remembering last week's meeting with Willoughby.

It was Saturday, and he had driven the wagon into the little settlement, taking Ruth to buy the spool of blue thread and shirt buttons and a new pair of overalls and to talk. As soon as they walked into the cool darkness of Grady's Store, the main building in the cluster of five or six, Grady called him over to the counter where he was cutting a head of cheese.

"Sam Willoughby been looking for you," said Grady. "Said tell you he'd be here most of the morning if you come. Don't know where he is, but he was here three, four minutes ago."

Ruth began matching thread with the scrap of cloth she had brought, and Dock went back to join the four men he had spoken to in front of the store. Sam wasn't one of them. He looked up and down the street. Then he sat down on the edge of the board porch, picked up a stick off the ground and began whittling.

Three of the men were listening intently to the fourth, and one of them explained. "Old Brown done got one of Jim's shoats," he said.

Dock nodded and listened to the account Jim gave of the bear's raid. When Jim finished, Dock asked a couple of questions, and again fixed his attention on his whittling.

He heard Sam walk up onto the porch.