

## TALKING WITH REBECCA AND CLARA

James R. Elkins

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Two men are riding a commuter train. One is, as the expression goes, fat, dumb, and happy. Though he lives the most meaningless sort of life, a trivial routine of meals, work, gossip, television, and sleep, he nevertheless feels quite content with himself and is at home in the world. The other commuter, who lives the same kind of life, feels quite lost to himself. He knows that something is dreadfully wrong. More than that, he is in anxiety; he suffers acutely, yet he does not know why. What is wrong? . . . .

If now a stranger approaches the first commuter, takes him aside, and says to him earnestly, “My friend, I know your predicament; come with me; I have news of the utmost importance for you”—then the commuter will reject the communication out of hand. For he is in no predicament, or if he is, he does not know it, and so the communication strikes him as nonsense.

The second commuter might very well heed the stranger’s “Come!” At least he will take it seriously. Indeed it may well be that he has been waiting all his life to hear this Come!

—Walker Percy, *The Message in the Bottle*<sup>1</sup>

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[“The Man on the Train,” which appeared in *Partisan Review*] was recommended to a few of us stray souls . . . by Paul Tillich [who] offered surcease, to use a somewhat out-of-fashion word *he* occasionally used—a relief from dogmatic, presumptuous, and all too self-confident psychiatric generalizations. . . . Tillich was . . . full of passion and ready to insist upon the mystery of things, the strange and fateful “moments,” he often called them, that make such a difference in our lives. The reading of “The Man on the Train” turned out to be such a moment in my life. The article was intended to bring readers up short, to prompt in them a thought or two about why they we doing what, day in and day out. . . . It was a little harder, after reading the essay . . . and hearing Paul Tillich talk about it, to be quite so . . . sure of oneself . . . .

—Robert Coles, *Walker Percy: An American Search*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “The Message in the Bottle,” in Walker Percy, *THE MESSAGE IN THE BOTTLE: HOW QUEER MAN IS, HOW QUEER LANGUAGE IS, AND WHAT ONE HAS TO DO WITH THE OTHER* 119-149, at 134 (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Coles, *WALKER PERCY: AN AMERICAN SEARCH* ix-x (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978).

## *Rebecca*

Rebecca has survived law school's notorious first year. Now a student in my Lawyers and Literature seminar, she has ventured beyond the narrow confines of law school's traditional curriculum and finds herself in trouble. She has scheduled an appointment to talk with me about her writing for the course, a paper in which she tries to talk about what she's learned from the stories we've been reading. In anticipation of our meeting, she stops by the office to give me a copy of her paper. When she leaves, I begin to read the paper and experience the uneasiness that slams at a teacher in the discovery that a student who has come so far can produce such dismal work.

I don't look forward to meeting with Rebecca. Anything resembling honesty about the quality of her writing is ill-advised. It's hard to know what might keep us on the right path. Rebecca rarely speaks in class and I have no sense about what kind of student she is or imagines herself to be. I have no idea what kind of road she's traveled to write so poorly and with so little imagination.

I reread Rebecca's paper before she arrives, and I'm faced with the obvious first questions: Does she really mean for *this* essay she has written to constitute her work for the course? How can a young woman in professional school present a shallow, poorly conceived, seven-page paper and assume it will pass muster in a course with *literature* in its title? Whatever Rebecca's hopes and fears, her successes and failures as a student may be, she is unlikely to want to give a full accounting of them in our conversation. Rebecca will, undoubtedly, want to know what has gone wrong with her paper and how to fix it, or what has gone wrong in her life as a student. I expect a student who writes this badly to be anxious about her grades for the course, and that this anxiety may obscure her thinking about broader problems as a student. I'm stuck, really, with two basic questions: How did she end up writing a paper that shows so little promise? How can we talk about such a failed effort? These questions remind me of James Boyd White's observation that "[s]ometimes one's language

seems a perfect vehicle for speech and action; it can be used almost automatically to say or do what one wishes. But at other times a speaker may find that he no longer has a language adequate to his needs and purposes, to his sense of himself and his world; his words lose their meaning.”<sup>3</sup>

The Lawyers and Literature course attracts some good readers, students eager to read and think about something other than judicial opinions. Inevitably, the course attracts a few students looking for something soft; they’ve had enough law and are looking to “chill out.” Some hope to find in Lawyers and Literature the law school equivalent of spring break at Cancun. An occasional student—I don’t know whether Rebecca is one of them—will say something like, “I mean, really, how can anyone evaluate what I write when I’m writing about *stories* and about *my* reading of them? Reading cases and writing legal papers I half-way know what I’m doing, but writing about stories, I feel I’m in la-la land. Who wouldn’t?”

With my meeting with Rebecca imminent, I mull over some things I might say to Rebecca to get us started: Reading, if it counts for anything, must be an act of engagement: appreciation, puzzlement, critical evaluation, amplification. You must find a way to describe this engagement.<sup>4</sup> You must find a way in your writing to reflect your encounter with the stories by writing that has the capacity to engage a curious reader. What I want to convey to Rebecca is that the kind of writing she must undertake cannot be just a survey of her opinions about the stories. And it’s not the kind of

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<sup>3</sup> James Boyd White, *WHEN WORDS LOSE THEIR MEANING: CONSTITUTIONS AND RECONSTITUTIONS OF LANGUAGE, CHARACTER, AND COMMUNITY* 7 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> I make clear to students in Lawyers and Literature that the course reflects one teacher’s reading and experience: the course bears my imprint. “Authors of course materials . . . package their biases in subtle but effective ways, through their selection, organization, and emphasis of materials.” Thomas E. Baker & James E. Viator, *Not Another Constitutional Law Course: A Proposal to Teach a Course on the Constitution*, 76 Iowa L. Rev. 739 (1991). Students must put their own imprint on the course as they read to find the subject of the course that they will spell out in their writing. The student is asked, in essence, to write the course.

writing that can be produced to fit a teacher's descriptive summary of a writing to mimic. In this sense, the writing is like a poem; it's written to be read, written in a way that resist prior summarization.

In her writing, occasioned by the lawyer stories she has been asked to read, I ask Rebecca to find a way to put her own mind to work on the stories she reads, and to use her writing to show her engagement with the stories. To do this, she will need, in some way, to:

- focus on the possibilities and difficulties she faces in reading the stories;
- explore the interconnecting themes and motifs found in the stories she reads;
- identify the fundamental tensions she finds in the stories (and, if she can find a way to do it, relate the tensions to her own life);<sup>5</sup>
- recognize how, in literature and in life, it is possible to move from the ordinary to the wondrous, the strange, and the mysterious;
- show, in some way, that she has become a curious, critical reader of the stories;
- present, as a record of her engagement with the stories, a writing that offers an alternative to what she might most want to say of it: “I have been forced to write this paper, don't know what to say, have waited until the last possible moment to begin the paper, and can only hope that I survive the experience.”

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My discussion with Rebecca begins well enough. She knows the paper is dismal. What she doesn't know is what to do with the mess she has created; she is stuck.

I ask Rebecca, Did you have difficulty writing the paper? She indicates that she did and tries

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<sup>5</sup> “We cannot exist outside an interplay of tensions. Even those who live passively cannot escape some measure of tensions. Frequently, there is an ongoing denial of tensions, but these tensions should be understood. I believe, in fact, that one task of radical pedagogy is to clarify the nature of tensions and how best to cope with them.” Paulo Freire & Donald Macedo, *LITERACY: READING THE WORD & THE WORLD* 49 (South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey, 1987)(statement by Paulo Freire).

to explain. “I don’t see myself as a deep person. Sometimes in class, I feel that the discussion is too philosophical. There’s a lot of posturing going on.” I ask Rebecca if she thinks her paper reflects something of her frustrations with the course. (Students can often diagnose their writing problems by talking about the way they write and how they view what they are asked to write.) I’m curious if Rebecca can see her ambivalence about the course in her writing, an ambivalence that has her left her largely ignoring the stories and novels she’s been asked to read: Tolstoy’s “The Death of Ivan Ilych,” Melville’s “Bartleby the Scrivener,” Camus’s *The Fall*, Walker Percy’s *The Second Coming*, stories in which we find lawyers struggling to understand how their lives work and how they have fallen into disarray. Rebecca may not be willing to do what Ivan Ilych, Jean-Baptiste Clamence, and Will Barrett do in the way of reflection, but she’s going to need to do some digging in the stories, and maybe even in her own life, if she is to get any heft into her writing.

The stories we read are troubling, and few students find it possible to wrestle with the full complexity of the psychological excavations undertaken by Tolstoy, Melville, Camus, and Percy. Rebecca needs to know that I respect the student who recognizes her limits, who walks with care along the shoreline of her own experience and knowledge. I also want Rebecca to know that there are times when a student must venture forth and take some measured risks. In Rebecca’s case, the decision to play it safe has reduced her writing to pablum.

Rebecca doesn’t think she has anything to say about these stories, and thus, she puts as little as possible of herself into the writing. Jeffrey Wilhelm describes readers who do not bring their “life to literature” and that they do not know how to take “a literary experience back” to their lives. They seem, on first appearance, to have no experience of literature because they conceive of reading as the “decoding of words.” Jeffrey Wilhelm says of one reader, Marvin, that he “did not expect reading to be meaningful, and if he had a goal it was to identify individual words successfully. . . .” Of

another student, Kevin, he says, “if meaning existed it was ‘in there,’ inside the text waiting to be discovered. Successful reading was being able to answer factual questions about text to the teacher’s satisfaction.”<sup>6</sup> Rebecca, like the readers described by Wilhelm, is a passive reader, a reader who wants to expose herself to a story “like a photographic plate . . . hoping to receive a clear and accurate impression automatically.”<sup>7</sup>

As we talk about the problem, Rebecca tells me she has never been asked by a teacher to write in a reflective way about anything. We’re left, now, with an inexorable question: Where do we go from here?

I want Rebecca to know that there are ways to write about the stories she reads without anything close to autobiographical confession. As I try to explain this, Rebecca seems distracted. Then, she shrugs and tries to bring our conversation around to her most pressing concern: How can I, she wants to know, get started? Where do I begin? “I don’t think,” she says, “I know how to do it.” She reminds me again, “I’ve never liked deep stuff.” Then she says something that startles me, “I’m quite willing to admit I’m a superficial person.” I find this rather remarkable candid statement refreshing. *Is it, I wonder, Rebecca’s invitation to take a risk?* I tell Rebecca, in a somewhat jovial fashion, “Maybe you should write *The Autobiography of a Superficial Law Student*.” I’m joking—or maybe I’m not—and we both laugh. I detect a liveliness in Rebecca’s face when she laughs that relieves the blandness that so often settles around her and finds its way into the sound of her voice and has managed to seep into her writing. We laugh, I think, because we both know she is not nearly so superficial as she fears. I’m willing to bet that if she can entertain the frightening notion of what

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<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey D. Wilhelm, “YOU GOTTA BE THE BOOK: TEACHING ENGAGED AND REFLECTIVE READING WITH ADOLESCENTS 4 (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Robert W. Frank, Jr. & Harrison T. Meserole (eds.), *THE CRITICAL QUESTION: AN APPROACH TO THE PROBLEMS OF CRITICAL READING AND CRITICAL WRITING 1* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1964).

she fears about herself, she'll see herself (and the stories and novels we are reading) in a way that calls this confessed superficiality into question. If Rebecca can do a parody of the superficial law student, if she can entertain and map out what she sees as the pretensions of her superficiality, it's hard to imagine that her writing would be any worse than it is now.

Rebecca seems, to my surprise, intrigued by the possibility of actually writing about her superficiality. She asks, "Would anyone actually be interested in reading that kind of thing?" I confess I would. She smiles again and listens intently as I speculate how her writing might look dramatically different if she could deal in some way with this suspicion that she is superficial. Would it be possible, I ask Rebecca, to write a law student's guide to superficial reading? Maybe an exposé of the ways that law students try to convince teachers that they are more sophisticated readers than they actually are? Is it possible, I again ask Rebecca, that law school has become a safe haven for superficial students, pseudo-intellectuals, and other such creatures? She laughs again, and tells me, "I don't think this is what you had in mind for us to be writing about in *Lawyers and Literature*."

As Rebecca gathers her thoughts about this new approach to her writing, she lays out her concerns and with a serious, pensive expression, says, "It isn't easy to be superficial." She falters a bit as she admits, "I'm not all that excited about being superficial. I feel, in thinking I'm superficial, just as badly as I do about this paper I've written." I wonder whether our conversation does not have Rebecca thinking something like this: *Do I really want anyone, particularly, one of my teachers, to know just how hard it is to carry around this fear that I have about myself?* I tell Rebecca, "Go where you want to go with your writing, see where all this thinking about superficiality might take you." I remind Rebecca to keep in mind that the stories we've been reading are themselves an antidote to the superficial and provide clues for her writing. I reiterate that the purpose of reflective writing is not the revelation of personal secrets; the idea is not to create a pretense of being philosophical when

you are not at all philosophical. But Rebecca must also know that everyone has a philosophy of some kind or other. To abhor philosophical pretense is itself a philosophical stance.

There is a danger in the kind of reflective writing I have proposed for Rebecca, and I have no desire to hide that danger from her. She may set out to write in this new way only to learn that she is more nearly the person she fears than she wants to believe. I cannot guarantee Rebecca that in trying to get more life into her writing she will not face still more anxiety and fear. What I hope is that Rebecca will find in her writing a better understanding of her old assumptions about herself, and that she can use the lawyer stories she's reading to address these old fears she has about herself. The bet we make in reflective writing is that it's better to know the reality of who we are than to live with old debilitating scripts, illusory shadows, and nameless fears. The danger is that we let our fears, imagined and real, shut us off from parts of the self that can enliven our reading, our writing, and our lives.

Rebecca says, giving way now to resignation, "I guess I don't know what you really want in this paper at all." She may be trying to say, if I read her comment right, "If I get into trouble, it's your fault as much as mine. You didn't tell me, at the start, exactly what you wanted us write about and I'm still not clear where all this is going." Rebecca finally admits that she is fearful she will not get a decent grade in the course. Looking down at her hands in her lap, she says she's worried what her father will say when he sees her semester grades. "My parents," Rebecca tells me, in a statement that at first seems unrelated to our discussion, "are tolerant, but they are strict." Without prompting, she goes on to say, "I feel uncomfortable when anyone makes demands on me and I can't figure out how they are going to judge me. I don't like being judged. Maybe that has something to do with my parents." Her spirits seem to lift a bit, and there's a slight smile, when she adds, "I guess I've come to the wrong place if I wanted to avoid being judged." I ask Rebecca what she means about law

school not being a good place to avoid judgment. “Well,” she says, “there’s a bunch of Little Hitlers running around here.” We both laugh again—a silent conspiracy—in finding humor in Rebecca’s outrageous observation.

Hearing Rebecca laugh—she is now so much more alive than when she first appeared in my office—I point out, on impulse, “Rebecca, you do seem to have a sense of humor.” What I tell Rebecca, candidly, is that, “I find your sense of humor a surprise, given the way you write, and the way you sometimes talk, there is this other part of you that you don’t readily display to others.” “Yeah, you’re right,” she says, “and this sometimes gets me into trouble.” A quizzical look on my part, and she continues, “Maybe I should I have written about things that can get me into trouble. But if I do that, I’ll feel worse than I already do.” She laughs again. In this, and everything we talk about, we circle around her dreary writing. I glance at my watch and realize we’ve been talking for well over an hour. Rebecca shifts uneasily in her chair and I sense we have both come around to that time to park this conversation in hiatus status.<sup>8</sup>

Rebecca says, preparing to leave, “Well, I guess I need to think about what I’m going to write about.” I tell Rebecca, “Of course, you must think about what you are going to do, but keep in mind that you cannot expect to think your way into doing a fabulous paper.” She smiles again, and admits

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<sup>8</sup> There are a good many ways to think about what Rebecca and I are doing. As for what I was doing, or trying to do, we might call it “the art of critique.” See Richard K. Neumann, Jr., *A Preliminary Inquiry into the Art of Critique*, 40 *Hastings L. J.* 725 (1989). Critique is a “latent form of art,” Neumann observes, “resembling a cadenza or a raga in its union of defined compositional principles with improvisation. Its status as an art is certified by its capacity to awaken and transform its participants and, where there is one, its audience.” *Id.* at 727. Neumann relates the art of critique to Socratic dialogue. “In the *elenchus*, the teacher’s questions guide the student to an understanding of the nature and extent of his or her ignorance. The *elenchus* ends when the student reaches *aporia*, a state of new found perplexity. In the *psychagogia* (literally, the leading of a soul), the questions help the student construct the knowledge that the *elenchus* showed was lacking.” *Id.* at 730. Neumann goes on to present a brief instructive list of underlying reasons that might result in a student’s resistance to a Socratic-based critique. See *id.* at 738-739, 753-762.

it would be a relief to write without the constant dread that always hovers over her.

What Rebecca may have learned from our discussion, I will not know until I see what she has managed to write about her reading and herself. (It's possible that even then I will have no clear idea what she has learned from our conversation or from the course.) It's one of those days when I feel I've done something worthwhile, a day when I've learned as much as I've managed to teach.

### *Clara*

Clara stands outside the room where law firms interview the prospective crop of new lawyers. I stop to say hello. She jokes about her interview outfit; her daughter told her before she left to go to school that in her fancy outfit she looked like an airline stewardess. I sense she's uncomfortable in her suit and perhaps with the conversations that take place in the law school's little claustrophobic interview room.<sup>9</sup> When the interviewer steps out of the interview room to tell her he is running twenty minutes behind schedule, I invite Clara to my office.

She apologizes for missing the class when we discussed Walker Percy's *The Second Coming*,<sup>10</sup> one of the novels we read in the Lawyers and Literature course and that she is trying to write about. She hated to miss the class, she said, but her son had a soccer match and his ride to the match didn't show up, and she didn't want him to miss his game. She asks how the class went; I tell her how we struggled with Percy's story of lawyer Will Barrett. In the novel, we find Barrett at mid-life, having returned to the Carolinas after the death of his wife, after living and practicing law in

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<sup>9</sup> For vivid accounts of women's encounters with perspective employers, see Brenda Waugh, *A Theory of Employment Discrimination*, 40 J. Legal Educ. 113 (1990), and, "The Interview," in Lowell B. Komie, *THE LEGAL FICTION OF LOWELL B. KOMIE* 1-11 (Chicago: Swordfish/Chicago, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Walker Percy, *THE SECOND COMING* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980).

New York City. A good many students find Will Barrett's malaise and philosophical musings more than they want to puzzle through. Students often find the novel dour, notwithstanding Will Barrett's crackling philosophical ruminations, new found love life, and his resolution to resume his professional life as a small town lawyer.

Clara, in her stewardess disguise, is not surprised at her fellow students' response to Will Barrett. She too, she says, found the novel difficult. "How so?" I inquire. "It was just too much," she says, "too much to be inside Will Barrett's head, as he struggles with the meaning of life. We don't do much getting inside our heads as law students. We either don't know how or don't believe we should try. This isn't the kind of thing we do in law school. Maybe we don't know how to do it. But then, I'm just telling you what you must already know." Yes, I tell her, what she's telling me is one reason we're reading *The Second Coming*.

Clara wants me to know that, notwithstanding what she has just said, she doesn't think law students are any more impaired in their psychological sensitivities than anyone else. "Basically," she said, "we just don't have time to do the kind of reflection that Walker Percy has Will Barrett doing in *The Second Coming*. I know I need to be more reflective, but at times I found myself skimming the book, knowing I should be digging deeper instead of simply trying to finish the novel."

"The problem with Will Barrett's story," Clara tells me, "is that you don't get any relief. His problems land on you in the first chapter and there's not much let up. It's hard to admit that Will Barrett's problems might be related to my own problems. As a law student, I know I'm vulnerable to depression. But what am I supposed to do? No one wants to talk about this kind of thing. And you think anyone knows how to talk about this in class! What do I know about depression except that everyone in law school is depressed! What depresses us, the effect that law school has on us, we

don't want to talk about it. Everywhere you turn in Percy's *The Second Coming*, the characters are going down into themselves. We're too busy, too fearful, in law school, to do that. Law students think—well, actually, we know—we don't have to be reflective to get through law school. And, in all honesty, we have so many other things to do, so much else to do that we don't pay much attention to how bad we feel. We can't afford to. We really don't have much time to think about ourselves in law school."

I don't see law students being all that fearful, I tell Clara. "Most of you seem so boisterously confident." "Yes," she adds, "of course, that's what we want everyone to believe; actually all our talk we do is just a way to cover-up our fear. Our fear is that we'll not end up so happy, and we get to contemplate that unhappiness in full bloom when we do the kind of soul-searching that Walker Percy prescribes. Confident we may appear to be, but it's mostly a defense of what we hide."

Listening to Clara, I'm all the more convinced of the need to study the personal and psychological dimensions of a life in law along with the regime of law school training. The stories I ask students to read in *Lawyers and Literature* are cautionary tales; they remind us that the practice of law implicates one's soul.<sup>11</sup> It's an implication that some students try, in every way possible, to avoid if they can.

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Robert Coles describes Walker Percy as a writer who "intend[s] to bring readers up short, to

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<sup>11</sup> Three powerful cautionary tales of the success-in-law/failure-in-life genre, are "The Death of Ivan Ilych," in *THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYCH AND OTHER STORIES* 95-156 (New York: New American Library, 1960); Albert Camus, *THE FALL* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956); Charles Reich, *THE SORCERER OF BOLINAS REEF* (New York: Random House, 1976).

prompt in them a thought or two about why they were doing what, day in and day out.”<sup>12</sup> It’s hard to talk about Walker Percy’s portrayal of Will Barrett without, as Coles puts it, being brought up short. Students resist, and there’s no great mystery in that resistance. Rebecca, for example, resists, and even a student as introspective as Clara realizes that the resistance is a built-in part of legal education. Many students don’t think much about the legal mind-set they are developing. They want to be a lawyer, do what lawyers do, earn a lawyer’s salary, live a lawyer’s life. They assume that this life and the practices that go along with it—what they learn, what they do, with what they learn to make a living—doesn’t affect their mind. They are, like the commuter in Walker Percy’s commuters-on-the-train vignette, “quite content” with themselves and their place in the world.

Student resistance to introspection becomes all the more obvious, even painful, when they read stories that offer a perspective on the future they rush to embrace. Law students, as Clara observed, may think as deeply about their lives as anyone else, and the more they think, the more they expose various forms of school-related neurosis; nothing makes it easy or painless to talk about the “dark side” of legal education. This is the way Robert Coles describes our efforts to resist introspection: “[W]e try to protect ourselves, keep secure our ‘adjustments,’ our various accommodations, if not outright surrenders. We resist knowledge of boredom, loneliness, despair—do so artfully, insistently, and, for the most part, successfully enough.”<sup>13</sup>

To deal with Will Barrett’s story, students argue something like this: “No, Will Barrett’s story isn’t really relevant. If you take Walker Percy too seriously, it would threaten your ability to be a

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<sup>12</sup> Coles, *supra* note 2, at x. Coles observes that we turn to novels to embrace the writer’s “struggle to obtain brief moments of partial liberation for their characters, and by extension, for those . . . readers who for a while, anyway, are brought up short, jolted, made to think about themselves and their lives. . . .” *Id.* at 93.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.* at 3-4.

successful lawyer.” The student wants to be a lawyer, and in pursuit of that goal leaves unacknowledged the psychological and moral undertow of the legal mind-set and legal persona.

Some students recognize the cost of legal thinking, find it corrosive, and try to find a way to become lawyers that avoids its worst side-effects. Rather than join the maddening rush to acquire a Legal Mind, some students proceed with deliberate caution.

By bringing those who are oblivious to how law might shape their lives into conversation with those who have gotten a glimpse of law’s power to capture and deform the mind, we have the makings of a conversation worth having. It’s a conversation between Percy’s two commuters: the student who wants to think carefully and seriously about how her life in the law might unfold and the student who finds reflection a waste of time. My part in this conversation is to keep the conversation going and keep it from getting derailed.

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Robert Coles, during his psychiatric training, found Walker Percy through Paul Tillich. I found Walker Percy by way of Robert Coles. I turned to Walker Percy for the same reason that Coles did, because Percy “took up, yet again, the old Socratic question of ‘life’s meaning,’ but did so in a lively, humorous way—offering psychological and sociological observations almost casually, as if they were important, yes, but had to be taken with a few grains of salt.”<sup>14</sup>

There is, in this chain of readers—Tillich to Coles, Coles to Percy, and Percy to me, and from me to my students—a strand of thinking with important philosophical and psychological implications: Stories that prompt reflection and introspection can be put to use in thinking about our

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<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at x.

professional lives.<sup>15</sup> Like Coles, I'm intrigued by a novelist like Percy who Coles describes as a philosopher, a man of "special understanding and humor, a person who helps the reader think altogether differently about life . . . ."<sup>16</sup> Coles, in his infectious appreciation of Percy's academic writing and his novels, led me to Percy's *The Second Coming* with the idea that it might be a novel that awakens a student's story sensibilities, a novel of particular value to students who cannot imagine that they have embarked on a life in which there is any great need for serious novels or a philosophical novelist.

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Coles is not only a child psychiatrist, biographer, and essayist, he's a teacher of stories at the Harvard Business School and Harvard Law School. For Cole's reflections on teaching stories, see Robert Coles, *THE CALL OF STORIES: TEACHING AND THE MORAL IMAGINATION* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989) where he celebrates the power of stories that shape and mold our lives.

<sup>16</sup> Coles, *supra* note 2, at ix.