

TRACE

LIVING LITERATURE

Views, Verdicts, Fictions, Facts
EXTRA Displays of NEW ART

68

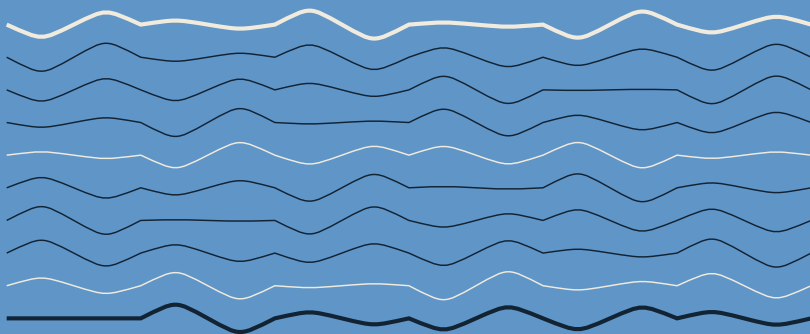
ISSUE

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TRACE

No. 68

Living Literature

Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

Mid- 1968

Edited by JAMES BOYER MAY

A CLEAN READING EDITION

Advertisements, subscription promotions, the front cover and blank leaves have been omitted, as has the running trade directory ("The Chronicle"), which runs in two instalments here; a note in its place records what they held. Four sections of graphic work — the Shustak photographs, the Keyser and Ristau drawings, Ray Barrio's cartoons and the Eggleston inks — are named where they stand, since a text edition cannot carry them. The poetry, fiction, essays, correspondence and reviews of the issue are given in full, in the order in which they are printed.

Where a poet uses the space of the page — indented lines, hanging steps, gaps within a line — that spacing is treated as part of the poem and kept as closely as a proportional typeface allows. Square brackets enclose conjectural readings where the scan is faded. Original spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing and verse lineation are kept.

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PHOTOGRAPHY/POETRY

Simon Perchik & Larence Shustak

ISSUE PP. 173-192 · SCAN PP. 9-28

PHOTOGRAPHY/POETRY is a collaboration: eleven photographs by Larence Shustak set against eight poems by Simon Perchik, one to a page, turn and turn about. The poems are given here in full and in their order; the photographs cannot be carried by a text edition and are absent, so what follows is half of a work rather than a sequence of poems. One of the photographs carries lettering the reading could recover — a sign reading LOUIE THE RAI DO — which places it beside the poem about Louie driving his death away. — ED.

YOUR AROMAS HAVE A WEAVE, AN ARCH

:your shadows mounted, oil of myrrh
supports my aim, lifts me home as Elder. I
am expected, you
a board
a branch designed like a bird, a wing
click-click
explodes
a storm of sap and acid, fixed
:an intersection ! Mister,
are you going to aim forever?
letting our horses gnaw
curving the rift
where shade was soft
below the line between blunt planes
the lamination of collisions, knots
our galaxy flattened into plys.
I am a board
am flaw, am interval, abrupt
study your sour wood, you

:the Spring mud
torn! click-cli WATCH! one full second
are you going to give each minute
the right size
enough arch to cross the foyers
break
these sidewalks
crack
the layers laced above.

All trees lean left :four nuts and bolts secure the grass
but turns begin by leaning :first an edge for pivot, last :the
twist is simply a lack of speed.

Who leaned on LOUIE THE RAT? For 10 points off the top
nuts and bolts will brace the rock the rock grows fat, THE
RAT racing for an edge, some leverage!

He never makes the turn. The 90 pulls him back :each
night LOUIE drives his death away :by day
parks the car a hard 15 from the scene.

He doesn't see his arms or legs :the moon
thunder ! sound
blackens his tongue.

He cannot talk
or see himself
or wait.

"Where! Where!" is him.

He sifts
for bones :sound
becomes a heap, a field of linkage
blocks and wheel :his lips
can't move. He
doesn't see his hands
but sees where they have been.

THESE DAYS NOTHING WILL COME TO GRIPS

:its fragments
fixed :the hours
pyramids :all reflections
immobile
though the swan almost escaped :its legs
are those of a man, caught, the right foot
lags
half bird, half man :the suicide, no
nothing will come to grips. Two sails balance,
heat the steep rims :the air
coagulates to flight.
I try to fly, try to read how the sky
is pointed at its ridge
and veering on the fold, hills
can turn
or cross
or overlap
comfort !
or why a swan, or lake, or window
tore itself in bits, ripped and shattered
then asleep :the sun
won't move. The scattered chips
are waiting a return
a formal click
to bring each hand to join.

HALF-BARNACLE, HALF-MAN

a distorted shell encrusted
to the side of a colossal ark
abandoned
the freakish crinkle on my palms
still holding on for passage, still fastened
to the bottomed plank
the rock, the wave, you!
They wanted pairs.
But we, Where did you go? we now
can wade back shore together.

EVERY JUNK YARD HAS ONE LEAF: ONE TIRE AND A COUCH. DO I STILL HAVE A SISTER?

His car rotting, the leaf, junk shaded like cotton.
How far?
The tire worn bald.
The bed empty.
What is it he wants?

Each couch begins with the numeral F ends :the room
cleared for company coming ends where he's taking my
sister.

SQUATTING IN FRONT MY FUNERAL STONE

a tradesman's stool
:he sweats a groove of letters from the end
:his alphabet begins with P :he
never comes to A
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
slamming hammers
deep in the hide of milleniums
forging from dust
a dead man's heart :into my block
my breath
clanking and moaning

ripping his swollen knuckles and knees
9 8 7 6 5 – 4 3 2 1 0
looping hammers highest in the numeral
he's pleased with my funeral stone, tunes,
looks into the polished glaze, sees
a lumberjack sit
sees him rise to clasp his stool
as if there were some leaves to fall :they
begin flying birds
hack and burn, whip and cut
keep cutting out cities, throughways
planes, "The alphabet's alive!" they laugh
erasing my name.

THE WALLS ARE PERFECT HEARTS

The walls are perfect hearts :polished woods
refrigerate the floor :young flowers,
Has Spring again been sacrificed?
How silly Christ, at such a time,
should clothe His balls :modesty
and hearts
pouring in! high walls
wide doors, wood waxed
and hangings, I
want clay, want death
but I need windows too, need stars
need sleep and laughing aloud. I
want to eat my landsmen raw.

TOWARDS PRINT (FOR WHO[M] MAY BE CONCERNED)

by the Editor

BACK WHEN TRACE WAS UNNAMED and nonexistent, its ‘embryo,’ Towards Print, this editor’s regular feature in Matrix in 1950 and 1951, was intended to aid new writers to find markets as well as to provide information for librarians and teachers. More so than today, there was a dividing line between ‘old-line’ literary magazines (chiefly those sponsored by schools) and independent littles. Virtually nowhere, except in the latter, could unknowns find print unless they adopted somewhat commercial patterns or imitated prominent writers in accepted modes. At that time, largely because of this, what was to become an ever-augmenting increase in numbers of little mags began. Already, there were more than in any earlier period, with the maximum activity in the U.S. A key paragraph of a Towards Print (Matrix No. 32) nevertheless points to a predominance of conservatism:

Current literary magazines, especially those in some degree under the aegis of a school, betray a tendency to give more weight to technical finesse than to individuality of the sort to be expected from the advance guard. This may save them from printing an occasional callow mistake, but prevents printing much neoteric work . . .

However, I was in no sense ‘campaigning,’ nor did I dream of founding Trace. This came about accidentally. I was simply serving a view expressed in my brief comments on periodicals.

The first ‘tracings,’ the small magazine listings appended to Towards Print, though not comprehensive, were geographically unlimited. I had established contacts with

editors and writers in several countries, and it was comparatively easy to expand the listings into the international directories.

Initially, the main purpose was to provide a forum for information and discussion among little-mag people everywhere—to acquaint them with one another. Then, almost at once, it was seen that this ‘bridge,’ as some called Trace, enabled writers to find outlets in magazines far from their own national boundaries. The littles grew increasingly internationalized; writers from different lands, reading one another, were mutually influenced insofar as they were using English, the idioms of which varied from Canada to Australia, from South Africa to Scotland. Soon, too, there were many translations which otherwise never would have occurred.

Naturally, from the start, Trace appealed to teachers of liberal bent; and teachers still constitute the biggest portion of individual subscribers. The standard quarterlies, much more than now, were devoted to writers already in the texts; and Trace supplied a guide to those who had not yet built reputations.

The story of the birth of Trace can be stated in a few sentences. I had cooperated with Whipple McClay in obtaining data for Galley, a bibliographical project in this field. He died in March, 1952, rendering continuation improbable. (As it turned out, Galley did reappear in 1953 . . . then expired — but I had no advance knowledge of this.) My No. 1 came to being in June of that year in response to many letters. For, Matrix — which had endured since 1938 — also was terminating. Editors Joseph Moray and S. E. Mackey had been unsuccessful in a search for some college or other institution to take over their project. My correspondents proposed that Towards Print be combined with a more adequate running survey similar to that maintained by Galley, with other contents limited to brief articles and

letters.

I wrote to John Sankey, whose Villiers Publications had been founded in 1951. He had been editing *The Window*, one of the best British littles. He offered British printing at cost of labor and materials; and this is how it came about that *Trace* is published in London under Villiers sponsorship. I assumed responsibility for the financing of American circulation (now, about ninety per cent of the total).

Trace was fortunate in gaining press notices. That summer, a couple of paragraphs by David Dempsey, in the In and Out of Books feature of *The New York Times Book Review*, brought 187 queries, accompanied by 347 dimes (the mag sold for 20c); and nearly a hundred joined Matrix supporters as subscribers. A few hundred other subscriptions were garnered by the end of the year. No. 1 sold out in weeks. There had been 300 copies produced on first estimates. The one typographical error corrected, an additional 300 were pressrun; and all of these also were sold.

Even with this propitious beginning, losses were sustained, as *Trace* grew in size (No. 1 had just sixteen pages, and it now averages about 200). This growth always has preceded and never has kept proportionate pace with the increasing subscribership, which has been very gradual. Net increase has been held to small figures by losses each year of approximately one-third of the roll (nonrenewing subscribers). Pressruns have not been long enough to reduce per-copy cost sufficiently below the price obtained. It took eight years to approach a circulation of 2,000; and this has turned out to be an average maximum.

The magazine would have broken even much of the time, however, had contributors not been paid. The deficit figures have just about matched the amounts paid them (losses presently are nearing \$3,000. a year). But I've insisted that authors be paid as a matter of principle and to safeguard their rights without their having to apply individually for

copyrights. And I think, too, that a higher calibre of material has been obtained.

Concerning contributors — from anywhere and, from early in the history, about everywhere — it should be noted that they came to Trace. Mss. almost never have been solicited. The onrush (not ‘unrush,’ for we give fast reports) has been read to the best of our abilities without regard to the authors’ reputations or lack of reputations. Submissions from ‘name’ writers frequently have been rejected because they broke no new ground or because they were found inferior as measured against their authors’ best. No editorially preconceived ideas relating to comparative values of differing writing theories have been applied, and no ‘school’ has been favored. I have tried to select on a basis of what I considered the degree to which writers accomplished what they were undertaking, in their own fashions.

Informed by Trace, scores of people have been led to found magazines. That they otherwise would not have considered this is attested by the letters we received. And scores of others, already determined to launch ventures (including small presses), have written for advice.

I don’t maintain that this proliferation has been an unmixed good; yet, conceding that numerous publications have been of dubious worth, the opportunities afforded thousands who otherwise could not have found print, have — in the over-all picture — influenced significant developments. The ‘stream’ has been broadened and enlivened; not a few magazines have proven important in their own right. Critics who downgrade the little-mag movement cite mags which have merely been media to feed vanities of their editors, those with eccentric or limited aims or devoted to cliques, those innocuously endeavoring to revive old traditions, and those in offensively bad taste. Such critics fail to see that the good outweighs the bad, that even cursory examination of the experiences of the writers forming today’s quality

vanguard verifies that little mags have been essential to an upsurge of creativity.

Evidence that unknown writers of probable significance have become known writers is part of the Trace story. In 1961, Associate Gil Orlovitz suggested that we not only talk about new literature but publish examples of it. The Creative Window section was inaugurated; and now, over half the content consists of poetry, fiction, literary experimentation of all types, plus graphic art. In these eight years, more new writers have been introduced than by any other magazine. And a few older writers of rather fading reputation have been aided. These had, for one reason or another (reasons having little to do with their works), fallen into disfavor, appearing scarcely anywhere until revived by print here. Related to this, has been a policy of publishing articles, when available, about writers of the past who, I felt, deserved more attention than they were receiving. Preference has been given those whose influences were contemporary.

One way in which Trace has been different from nearly all other mags of its kind has been in its use of reviews and/or mentions of some books published by their authors, including some from 'vanity' presses. This has not been to encourage people to pay for their own books (a most unsatisfactory nonsolution), and emphatically not to give comfort to unethical publishers, but because such books occasionally do have merit and the writers deserve recognition. I don't feel that talent should be penalized; and history reveals that many eminent authors have had to finance their early offerings. (It is this fact, by the way, which provides the potent lure to self-publication—the aspirants giving no thought to the added fact that only one in tens of thousands 'makes' it in this way.)

The Trace editorial line mainly has been fixed by the editor—for most of the years, solely by him. For about three years, there was an editorial board. If any one member was

overwhelmingly impressed by a manuscript, it was accepted even though all the others did not much approve. The idea was to avoid falling into the pattern which results from majority rule: a leveling down to a common denominator, with nothing really inferior winning print, but nothing outstandingly offbeat winning it either. However, Trace began to lose direction, becoming more eclectic than eclectic. I again reserved all final decisions to myself.

Just the same, there has been no arbitrary one-man rule. Hundreds of subscribers have influenced me, as well as the many people who have come to my aid at various periods. Besides those on the current staff, the following have been associated with Trace: Marvin Bell, Mary Carol Bird, Guy Daniels, Robin Johnson, Lawrence P. Spingarn, Wai-lim Yip, and Curtis Zahn.

During 1960 and 1961, the directories were divorced from Trace. A separate project, The International Guide, was independently financed under direction of Miss Bird. I was merely an advisor, though I continued to maintain my own card files on the magazines, etc. With collapse of the Guide, a complete directory again was carried in Trace (No. 47). During those two years, The Chronicle had been limited to little-press books and pamphlets. Since the No. 47, each year's directories have been indexed so that the four (or three, now) comprised a workable inclusive reference for everything noted in the twelve months. These have been complete only so far as new or changing projects were concerned (together with a hundred or so of the more active 'regulars').

I hope that a federal grant may be obtained to enable me to make an entire new survey in 1969, with questionnaires going to all of the nearly 2,000 editors and publishers in the file. But, due to the uncertainty of further appropriations, this appears unlikely. Should any foundation, school, or private individual be interested in furthering this work, I

would welcome assistance. Valuable though this survey would be, the experience record of the Guide (which was much more widely advertised and promoted than Trace ever has been) has proven that there are not enough buyers to make it pay for itself. There also has been and continues to be the problem of obtaining the cooperation of the diverse independent-minded people in this field (a contributing cause of that effort's failure); and Trace has been in existence long enough that it has gained the confidence even of those who are ideologically perhaps at odds with its editor. The problem of non-cooperation appears to be hampering the new Dust project, which I would like to see succeed and to which I have lent such support as I could. I believe that a comprehensive survey under Trace aegis would supply the broad foundation needed for the future of such an exclusively-bibliographical coverage such as that of Dust; and Trace, the magazine, would then continue with The Creative Window and relevant communications and articles.

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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

A grand country for hermits, this.
Some nautical anchorite
Might put his hook down here
Among the sere bushes
And bare rock faces
Without the slightest risk
(although so near the sea)
That his oar be mistaken
For a winnowing fan.

Robert Reilly

EDWARD ALBEE . . . AND THE FEAR OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

Abigail Ann Hamblen

KNOWING FROM OUR ACQUAINTANCE with Albee's work that he is not a frivolous writer, we assume that the title, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, is not simply an exercise in banality. Yet at first the significance is elusive. The play certainly seems to have nothing to do with the well-known English writer, whose well-bred erudition and exquisite style could have no relevance to the hoarse outcries of drunken husbands and wives. And yet, as we shall see, the themes of the essential loneliness and suffering of individuals and of the pain of heightened perceptiveness, themes which lie at the core of Virginia Woolf's work, are vividly dramatized here.

The first Broadway performance, in 1962, left an impact on the American consciousness that proved to be enduring. The play was strangely, horrifyingly free in its use of the less-polite expletives. It was pitiless in its exposé of naked hatred, lust, and debauchery. It was, in a word, shocking to a degree seldom known to case-hardened theatregoers. Only the critics had kind words for it.

Then came the intriguing movie version starring those durable symbols of sex and delight, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. The audience saw both of these idols made hideous with ugly dialogue and uglier stage business. Even *The Saturday Evening Post* published an article describing in vivid terms the filming, which took place on the Smith College campus in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Not since the Salem witchcraft trials has the New England air been rent with words of such unabashed venom. (The difference lies in the fact that the Salem hysteria was a local group phenomenon, an actual happening. Albee's play, a

work of art, is personal and individual—and universal.)

It is, of course, a very profound play, for those who can forget the indignant clamor of the moralists, who condemn the staging of intoxication and sexual desire, the prevalence of four-letter words and blasphemy. The play is so profound because it unearths the depths of four lives, revealing the misery at the core of each. In three increasingly emotional acts, George and Martha, Nick and Honey are shown with their defenses down and pitilessly dissected.

Through all the ugliness runs the rollicking verse of ‘Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf,’ an obvious takeoff from Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf, the gay song which accompanied the Walt Disney production of the Thirties. The tipsy Martha hails this as exquisitely witty; she thinks it’s a scream. Furious because her husband fails to think so, she shouts: ‘What’s the matter . . . didn’t you think that was funny? Hunh? [Defiantly] I thought it was a scream . . . a real scream. You didn’t like it, hunh?’

No, George does not like it. And as the play progresses, neither do we.

When, after scenes of hideous (and not always subtle) cruelty, George deliberately destroys his and Martha’s imaginary son, Martha collapses. This ‘son’ has been the only bond between them, the only constant in a marriage marred by frustration, ruined hopes, jarring discord. Nothing is left.

As she sits in a heap on the floor, George begins to sing the verse to her, softly:

Who’s afraid of Virginia Woolf,

Virginia Woolf,

Virginia Woolf,

and she says: ‘I . . . am . . . George.’

George: Who’s afraid of Virginia Woolf . . .

Martha: I . . . am . . . George . . . I am . . .

(GEORGE NODS, SLOWLY)

(THE CURTAIN FALLS)

Why, at the end, does Martha, worn out with liquor and sex and hopelessness, whimper that she's 'afraid of Virginia Woolf'? What possible connection could the subtle British writer have with the ruined life of an unsuccessful professor's alcoholic wife? Or, with the others: the cool calculating Nick, bound to rise, relentlessly on the make, and his almost imbecilic little wife?

We might glance at Virginia Woolf's life. Born January 25, 1882, the second daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen, a well-known biographer and critic, Virginia married Leonard Woolf in 1912. Already a reviewer and critic, she became a novelist with *THE VOYAGE OUT*, published in 1915. Book after book followed — novels, short stories, essays, biographies. In all, she produced twenty-three books, five of which were published posthumously. For, in 1941, afflicted with mental illness, she drowned herself. Her husband, with whom she had, in 1917, established the Hogarth Press, compiled and edited mss. of fugitive articles and stories, so that some of her finest writings came to light after her death.

This sketchy outline is enough to indicate a life very different from Martha's. Virginia Woolf had been industrious, distinguished, successful, happily married, though she had not known unalloyed serenity, subject as she was to recurrent brief bouts with mental illness. Even though she had done away with herself in the end, she had lived fully and richly.

Realizing all this, we move on to the teasing question: Why is Mrs. Woolf to be 'feared?' Obviously it is not she, the writer, of whom Martha is afraid. The facts of her life did not cause Albee to publicize her name in his title. Then — what?

The 'fear' may be interpreted in two ways. First, it may be seen as a fear of Virginia Woolf's philosophy of life, or of life as she saw and interpreted it. Her 'philosophy' or 'world view' may be found stated in many different ways in some of her

better-known works.

One does not have to read all of her fiction to perceive that she emphasized, over and over, the essential loneliness of each individual. In novel after novel, short story after short story, she takes us inside the very personalities of her characters to let us look out from their eyes at a world with which they can never really communicate.

In *THE VOYAGE OUT*, she observes: 'To feel anything strongly was to create an abyss between oneself and others who feel strongly perhaps but differently.' And in *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE*, she speaks of 'that loneliness which was for both of them the truth about things.' Septimus Warren Smith's young wife (in *MRS. DALLOWAY*) muses that 'to love makes one solitary . . .', while Terence (*THE VOYAGE OUT*), sitting by Rachel's bed as she dies, knows that now, in death, he and she are achieving the unity they had so urgently desired, and failed to attain, in life. Clarissa Dalloway (*MRS. DALLOWAY*) has 'a perpetual sense . . . of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day.'

This statement leads naturally to another facet of Virginia Woolf's philosophy: the inherent suffering in life. In *THE VOYAGE OUT*, Rachel lies dying, and Terence, who loves her, muses:

He had never realized before that underneath every action, underneath the life of every day, pain lies, quiescent, but ready to devour; he seemed to be able to see suffering, as if it were a fire curling up over the edges of all actions, eating away the lives of men and women. He thought for the first time with understanding of life and the hardness of life: the struggle of life and the hardness of life. Now he knew for himself that life is hard and full of suffering.

The whole novel, with its travellers and storms and love affairs, seems to point up the essential meaninglessness of human existence. (Why should one couple's dream of

happiness be broken by death, the other's carried on to consummation?) Mrs. Ramsey, in *To the Lighthouse*, ponders: With her mind she had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice, but suffering, death, the poor. There was no treachery too base for the world to commit; she knew that. No happiness lasted; she knew that.

And poor Septimus Warren Smith (Mrs. Dalloway), steadily going mad, sees hidden ideas in Shakespeare: a loathing of humanity, a 'message hidden in the beauty of the words.' For Septimus, 'the secret signal which one generation passes, under disguises, to the next is loathing, hatred, despair.'

Even so slight a short story as *The New Dress* shows the hidden incommunicable pain of life. Here, a woman attends a fashionable party wearing a new gown for the first time. She had considered it very smart, had loved the design, had looked forward to wearing it. But, arrived at the party, she is suddenly conscious that it is all wrong. She spends a tortured evening, sure that every look cast her way is amused and contemptuous, every slight remark a veiled reproach or even an insult. The reader writhes with her in her intense — and foolish — suffering.

Life offers much to be endured, this author seems to say, over and over again. And suppose one does not have the ability to face it bravely? Clarissa Dalloway occasionally feels 'the terror; the overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands, this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenely; there was in the depths of her heart an awful fear.' Fear of suffering — fear, really, of life's essence as Virginia Woolf sees it — may be the significance of Albee's title.

Another interpretation of this 'fear' is perhaps akin to this: fear of perceiving too much, of feeling too intensely. If one's perceptions and feelings are heightened, one develops a terrible vulnerability to life. Beauty and ugliness, pain and

joy, are too strong; they simply cannot be endured.

That Virginia Woolf possessed a heightened perceptiveness is apparent in everything she wrote. All sensual things in the world about her have depth and meaning for her beyond what they have for the ordinary person. Clarissa Dalloway in the flower shop takes in everything before her:

... how fresh like frilled linen clean from a laundry laid
in wicker
trays the roses looked; and dark and prim the red
carnations, holding
their heads up; and all the sweet peas spreading in
their bowls, tinged
violet, snow white, pale — as if it were the evening and
girls in mus-
lin frocks came out to pick sweet peas and roses after
the superb
summer's day, with its almost blue-black sky, its
delphiniums, its
carnations, its arum lilies, was over ...

Not only colors and shapes, but sounds have dimension:

The sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour struck out between them with extraordinary vigour, as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumb-bells this way and that.

The talk at a party seems, to an irritated guest, 'like a frantic skeleton dance music set to something very real, and full of suffering.' (THE MAN WHO LOVED HIS KIND)

As for feeling, Virginia Woolf speaks in her own person when she describes Coleridge's capacity:

In proportion as he became incapable of action, he became capable of feeling . . . his vast expanse of being was a passive target for innumerable arrows, all of them sharp, many of them poisoned.

And so Mr. Albee shows us four people who 'fear' what Virginia Woolf has articulated. None of them can bear the suffering lying at the core of life; the brutal realization of man's perfidy and self-seeking and appalling weakness is enough to render them all desperate seekers after oblivion. The agony of ruined dreams and disillusioned hopes is destroying them all. George and Martha are farther along in both despair and degradation than Nick and Honey, but only because they are older by some twenty-odd years. Yet each of the four is afraid of suffering. Pretty frail little Honey epitomizes their plight; she lives in terror of becoming pregnant. Hers is a specific concrete fear of life.

Having an inborn terror of suffering, these characters of course have a fear of feeling too much. Having once loved, Martha now hates; and she knows that the intensity of her passion will, in the end, be her ruin. She tells the wondering Nick that George is the only man who has ever made her happy:

George who is good to me, and whom I revile; who understands me, and whom I push off; who can make me laugh, and I choke it back in my throat; who can hold me, at night, so that it's warm, and whom I will bite so there's blood; who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy and yes I do wish to be happy. George and Martha; sad, sad, sad.

George, having hoped and desired, sees himself doomed, the ashes of a man consumed by his own ardor. Honey, desolate in a loveless marriage, whimpers because she cannot be numb and finds peace in alcohol. For the healthy Nick, cynically planning his career, the evening has been a revelation and has opened vistas of horror from which he recoils. His destruction, presumably, will come later.

They have much to fear, these weaklings, frightened of suffering, shrinking from feeling. Death is the least part of

their doom, for even death lurks beyond their grasp.

But perhaps we are being too harsh with them. Virginia Woolf herself seems to reprove us:

But, unfortunately, though one may make bodies and institutions look absurd, it is extremely difficult to make private men and women look anything so simple. Human relationships are too complex; human nature is too subtle. (NOT ONE OF US—a review)

This statement has been illustrated by countless writers. But we can thank Mr. Albee for making it live again: we may compliment him on the strength of his presentation, which is almost too painful to bear, certainly too agonizing to serve as entertainment. For, no more than George and Martha, do we enjoy facing the truth in ourselves.

IN THE SPIRIT OF THINGS She is leaving. The old witch is leaving, and no one gathers in that dark field to see her off. She goes alone, the knowledge of her witchery intact. The sky forms clouds from her prosaic stare, but the rain holds back. It doesn't rain. And no one gathers in that dark field to see her off.

Ann Menebroker

EDITORS (AND OTHERS) WRITE

THE SAME COWBOY RIDES AGAIN

Victor Contoski

Dear Editors:

Knute Skinner's 'rebuttal' of my article, *The Same Cowboy*, (Trace No. 62/3) calls it 'the silliest contribution to date to the tiresome tirades against poets of the academy.' He is entitled, of course, to his opinion, but his piece contained several questionable statements.

Skinner says, for instance, that I really object to traditional form. Nonsense. There is no such statement in the article; I have absolutely nothing against traditional form. In fact, I have published several poems in traditional forms, myself, and I also have translated Polish sonnets into English, maintaining the sonnet form. (For instance, my translation of Grochowiak's *Bronze Sonnet #1*, in the same Trace 62/3.)

Skinner says, too, that I say the surest sign of mediocrity is a poem on poetry. I say nothing of the sort. I say that certain academic poets turn to poetry when they are really hard up for a subject. Donald Justice's *Night Light* abounds in examples of this type of limitation. Justice has technique to burn, but unfortunately he doesn't have much to say.

Skinner's examples of poets writing on poetry certainly are not comparable to the stanzas I quote on art. His all deal with the same subject, to be sure, but they exhibit a wide variety of treatments. Certainly it is not hard to distinguish a stanza on art by Allen Ginsberg from one on the same subject by Jerome Rothenberg, or one by Denise Levertov from one by Louis Zukofsky. The point of my article, however, is that the stanza from X. J. Kennedy could easily

be mistaken for a stanza from any number of academic poets, by any intelligent reader of modern poetry.

Finally, judging from Skinner's misguided inaccurate and somewhat-hysterical 'rebuttal,' I think perhaps it might be a good idea for some poet-teachers to stop instructing their students to draw the same old cowboy and teach them to read.

FROM DARKER KALAMAZOO

Victor Contoski

Dear Editors: Here I am in between Ping-pong games at Kalamazoo, Africa; thought you would love to hear about the games going on at the Oasis. . . . We drink lots of lotus water . . . eat oats of broken wafers . . . serve the cause, life . . . eat again the meat of living, drinking the sweat trickling down our eyes, around our noses, over our lips . . . You can tell I like to keep in touch, so serve me your reasons as the multitudes of other editors have done . . . with my life,
Badger Stone

Postscript: Peace is happiness . . .

(Editor's note: A covering note, with mss. — the latter rejected. Mr.

Stone 'says' it better far herein.)

Probably No Good for the Mag?

Dear Editors: Congratulations to Mr. Abbe (I wonder if he's an English Abbe, To rhyme with Nab or Grab or Crab, Of if he is a French Abbé To rhyme with Monsieur George Lemay — I'm not the least au fait) And should go Down, Down Down To Posterity As a masturbassic Modern Classic.

But anyway His Day of Rest Is of the Best And should go down (Just how far down Or Down and Up or Up the Down Heav'n only knows) But his rude prose Is nearer poetry Than anything recently seen by me

A. E. Perks

Nota bene: This is probably no good for the mag, but . . .
— A.E.P.

‘A Call for Poets to Stop Apologizing for Being Poets’

Dear Editors: For the past year, I’ve been debating with those who see poetry merely as an instrument for prescribed political virtue: the poet-asmegaphone bit. What I’ve discovered is a growing attempt to pressure poets into set political molds. This is true of many literary mags (though not all, thank God). I thought you might be interested in the attached letter I received from El Corno Emplumado — or, rather, from its editor, Margaret Randall, who now evidently considers literature as some sort of luxury we can no longer afford. The situation: she accepted, two years ago, a group of four poems. And today I received this letter explaining that the poems were returned because of ‘our Revolution,’ etc. It seems to me that this asinine subordination of literature to pseudo-revolution is something for all of us to worry about. So, I would like to ask that you consider using the exchange of letters. [Since Trace does not have permission to print Margaret Randall’s to Mr. Cooperman and his to her does fairly state the issue, we must print only the one letter.]

‘Dear Miss Randall:

Today I received back a group of poems which you had accepted for publication . .

‘Since that time, I have credited El Corno Emplumado in a collection of my work just published, and a second volume already set in proof.

That you, “at this time” — or any other time — can violate your own commitment, has nothing to do with “revolution.” It merely indicates your personal dishonesty as an editor.

If indeed you reflect the “true face” of any revolution, the revolution itself must be in bloody awful shape. I would no more “link arms” with you, in whatever intellectual sewer you now inhabit, than I would link arms with a diseased sausage.

‘By all means, Miss Randall, stick to your meat-grinder. .

Your “Dear friend,”

Stanley Cooperman

A Relevant Rebuttal from Venezuela

Dear Editors:

The other day I received this letter from Juan Liscano, the editor of Zona Franca, perhaps the most important magazine (and editor) in all of Latin America. He requested that I translate it for you and send it on.

[Mr. Fox’s translation ensues. It is addressed to Trace.]

... I read a letter of Margaret Randall’s (in Trace No. 66) which attempted to rectify and refute various ideas of Hugh Fox, someone well-versed in Latin American literature. This letter was related to an article published in Trace concerning Latin American literary questions and publications. It gave special importance to the praise my magazine had received from Hugh Fox and tried to smear in any way possible not only the value of Zona Franca, but also my own individual worth, merely because I don’t agree with her political ideas.

I think it indispensable to inform you of the following, so that you and your readers will be better able to judge the biased opinions of Mrs. Randall: 1. The group, El Techo de la Ballena, praised by her as one of the most lively manifestations of the artistic scene in Venezuela has not been functioning for the last two years; 2. The publication, En Letra Roja, which she refers to as a continuation of this group, also stopped appearing two years ago, more or less; 3. Her affirmation that the worthwhile articles that appear in Zona Franca are generally ‘pilfered from other publications’ is just as false as her other allegation that no writer who respects Latin America will contribute to my magazine, characterizing it as ‘Liscano’s attempt at a display of the O.A.S. in letters.’

(We only publish articles that are contracted and paid for or accepted from free-lance sources with the condition that they give exclusive rights to Zona Franca. If we ever reproduce any text, it is with the permission of the author. Zona Franca is appreciated by large numbers of young Latin Americans; and this is rather obvious from the tone of our third anniversary issue which is dedicated exclusively to young Latin American literature and entirely drawn from collaborations sent freely from various Latin American countries. A good example of the way we are appreciated by way-out and nonconformist groups is the manner in which we have continued on good terms with the Columbian nadaistas, a group also mentioned by Mrs. Randall. We have printed and explored their texts in Zona Franca from the beginning.)

If Margaret Randall herself wasn't mixed up in the magazine game, as she is (being co-editor of *El Corno Emplumado*, which — to judge from the issues I've seen, is a very high quality magazine), one might think that her statements were the product of some kind of fanatical political mind, which we are pretty much accustomed to in the transition epoch in which we live — the kind of mind that gets trapped in fanaticism and sectarian politics and thinks in terms of concentration camps, repressions, and brain-washing instead of liberty and justice. . . . Seeing that she does co-edit a more or less rival magazine, one wonders about the validity, clarity, and honesty of her statements.

I think it is only just to give me equal space in *Trace* for Zona Franca.

(signed by Juan Liscano)

My translation is far from perfect, but it gives the gist of Liscano's ideas. Hugh Fox

Who Created 'Tunnel of Pulse?'

Dear Readers:

A poetry ms., late scheduled for Trace, carries no author's name: Tunnel of Pulse. Whether he (or she) subscribes to Trace, we do not know. We hope that the author sees this and responds at once. . . . Not a few of our contributors have sinned by such omission; and we sometimes forget to jot names on these deficient mss. Every page of every ms. should carry full name and address of author. The Editors

24 HOURS IN CHAPEL (HILL): SOME NOTES ON THE SOUTHEASTERN LITTLE MAGAZINE CONFERENCE

William F. Claire

Thursday, April 11, 1968 . . . 10 P.M.

My first realization that I am out of Washington, D.C. and back into America is on the drive from Raleigh-Durham Airport to Chapel Hill, N.C. in pitch darkness along back roads reminiscent of those just south of Seoul, Korea. The only immediate evidence of life is the country and western music coming from the airport limousine radio. I am at once struck by the disadvantages of having been born in the North and not knowing the differences. I mean to ask the driver (who has a red neck), but he doesn't seem to be the talking type. Besides, he seems wrapped up in the music. I say nothing. There is no one else in the limousine.

My reverie comes to an abrupt halt at the Holiday Inn, adjacent to the Eastgate Shopping Center. I tip the driver with a Kennedy half-dollar. He gives me a very strange look and then takes a closer look at the coin. Assuring himself that it is real, he mumbles a thank you, sir. I am always suspicious of older people who sir me.

The welcoming sign at Holiday Inn has two welcomes: the first is to welcome MR. WILLIAM LARKIN. How is it, I wonder, that they could have misspelled my name so grossly? On the other side, the South side: Welcome — SOUTHEASTERN LITTLE

MAGAZINES CONFERENCE.

Holiday Inn signs are like pinball machines exploding in your ears before coffee on hangover morning, and there is nothing you can do about it. Chances are there will be more of them — and what can you do? Nothing more perhaps than to tap someone on the shoulder (as Sam Levenson has suggested) and say: ‘Excuse me, is this ringing in my ears bothering you?’

I am apparently the last person to check in at the Inn for the conference, which began over twenty-four hours ago. I have missed several items on the agenda. Anxious to find out what I have missed, I go back to the main lobby of the Inn in search of action. There is no one around. Apparently all have left for a party after an address by Carolyn Kizer; but no one at the Inn seems to know for sure.

My only desire is to get a drink. It is becoming late, and tomorrow is Good Friday. I have enough residual New England Irish-Catholic-French superstition mixed with a Jansenist Puritanism to make tomorrow the one day of the year when I will steadfastly (in order to gain indulgences I’ve forgotten since boyhood?) refuse to drink.

There is no barroom in the Inn, so I head outside.

...

No sidewalks. Just highways. I think of Randall Jarrell, and how easy it must have been for him, in the purely mechanical sense, to throw himself in front of a car. What a dreadful place to die. No drama here whatsoever. Many people commit suicide in dramatic places ... where there is some precedent, the Golden Gate, for example. Why did Jarrell do it here? It certainly was not the place for the most curiously romantic poet of our time to die. I remember seeing him from time to time in Washington ... no one ever seemed more in love with life.

I prowls about looking for a cafe until I suddenly realize that, besides its being late at night, my being late for the

conference (and athirst), North Carolina is a dry state. ... I do not know any of the principals in the three professions here who keep the area dry—bootleggers, preachers, or politicians. ... I retrace my steps, get out of the way of a high-flying obviously souped-up white Chevy with a black stripe, think some more about Jarrell, and withdraw for the night into the bosom of Mother Holiday.

Friday, April 12 . . . 8 A.M.

...

The spectacle of literary people ordering grits strikes me as strange, but I am quite willing to believe I am the unusual one—and order scrambled eggs ... without bacon. While the ecumenical movement swept aside most vestiges popularly identified with being Catholic, Ash Wednesday or Good Friday basting rules were not changed.

I think a moment about God and any possible relevance He might have to bacon, and then I thank Him subconsciously when the waitress does not bring grits automatically. I remember my mortification and outrage on a first visit to the South a few years ago when grits were gratuitously served in an Atlanta restaurant.

8.30 A.M.

...

I meet my first three little-magazine people at the registration desk, although I have yet to register. They could not be nicer and make me feel at home immediately. They are Guy Owen of Southern Poetry Review, H. E. Francis of Poem, a new magazine out of Huntsville, Alabama, and Al Reid, who is about to start (1969) the South Carolina Review. I show off Vol. I, No. 1 of Voyages; and they are—as they should be—instantaneously impressed. When I decided to launch the first literary magazine in the history of Washington, D.C., at least the first with national pretensions, one thing I promised myself was that it would look better than most literary magazines. I long had been

appalled at how little care is given to design and layout in most littles; and one or two visits to the Eighth Street Bookshop in Manhattan convinced me not to add to the growing number of magazines hastily thrown together. Even I was delightfully surprised when Voyages came out looking as good as it does, thanks in large measure to Eliot Porter, who let us use one of his splendid photographers for our first cover.

... I make some effort to register, but I am told it is not necessary at the moment, since we will all be getting into a bus to go somewhere. Everything seems well organized ... I haven't been told to get into a bus since my army days.

... The bus reminds me of the bus in Night of the Iguana, and the most striking person on it looks like Richard Burton, although more rugged, and gentle at the same time. He sits by himself and looks vaguely out of place, as though wondering what he is doing in Chapel Hill. I wonder with him.

The weather is glorious by the time we arrive at the campus of the University of North Carolina, with everywhere the signs of spring. Everything is blooming, particularly the wisteria, which I first take for French lilacs. (The good weather thrusts me momentarily back into my youth and the memory of an ancient aunt who told me that all Good Fridays were bound to be days of wild storm, wind and rain. I had remembered that on this day every year since, and was poignantly aware that the weather every Good Friday had been somehow magnificent. But I had kept the Faith.)

... When the magazine editors had gathered around a table and I proudly had placed three copies of Voyages on it, Richard Burton noticed. He very quietly introduced himself as George Hitchcock of Kayak. Of course there was no one I wanted to meet more than he, and there was no one in the little-magazine world I respected more. Two or three years earlier, he had taken the time to write and explain various

problems about little-magazine publishing in America. I had subsequently been the beneficiary of certain lists kindly supplied me by John Ridland of The Little Square Review. These, I found, in turn, had first been turned over to him by George Hitchcock. Ridland had been so grateful for Hitchcock's help that he could do no less than pass them on ... to still another stranger starting anew.

... I am finally registered by Caroline Herron, who I understand works part time for the Partisan Review and also for the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines,* one of the sponsors of the conference. Caroline is very chi-chi, and wears (Italianate) glasses and other new things not commonly seen in Washington. She is very soft and pleasant, slightly hoarse (from directing editors about? — or last night's party that I missed?) and not at all a person you mind being registered by.

** Miss Herron, who then was actually the managing editor of Partisan Review, has succeeded David Bourns as Director of the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines.*

...

Guy Owen, calling himself a 'snuff-dipper' from way back, gives a perfectly splendid talk on the 'strategy' of little magazines. Memorable lines fly off his tongue the way good characters jump off a page. He talks of the ancient disease of *vers libre*, from which he claims to have recovered. He notes that, historically, Professors of English have been the most antagonistic to little-magazine development, and that they are the 'same now as then.' At one time, he had something to do with *Lyric*, the oldest poetry magazine in Virginia. It specialized in 'cookbook' poetry . . . everything coming out of the mold in the same way. Now associated with the *Southern Poetry Review*, he notes that this magazine originally was called *Impetus*, but that the play on words was too much. He ends with a magnificent exhortation on the need for little-magazine editors occasionally to be 'con

men.’ He develops a ‘concept of shame’ theory to embarrass people into supporting littles, but also notes that it is often best in the long run to pay as you go (yourself). His knowledge of con men is listened to with great pleasure. In addition to many other works, he is the author of that novel-become-George Scott-movie, *The Flim-Flam Man*.

...

The presence of George Hitchcock at the conference can be likened to what must have been the presence of Joe DiMaggio during spring training with the Oakland Athletics. He is there, simply, quietly — and saying things in a manner which suggests he is a pro. Not ‘professional’ (that is something else), but a pro — like Joe DiMaggio. He tells me, early in the day, that I will not learn anything: the only value will be new friendships.

...

After Owen’s talk, the substantive part of the program is supposed to begin with a workshop of ‘Little Magazine Distribution and Economics,’ with a panel consisting of William Matthews of *Lillabulero*, Jim Boatright of *Shenandoah*, Geoff Hewitt of *Kumquat*, and someone else.

I listen closely for a long time; the only conclusion I reach is that both matters are serious problems.

The whole thing becomes increasingly pointless as the discussion is opened to the floor. Several major speeches are made, all heavily laden with autobiography. Concerning distribution, opinion ranges from that of *Kumquat*, which gives copies away free, to that of *Red Clay Reader*, which Editor Charlene Whisnant says is in the waiting rooms of every self-respecting pediatrician in the South. As the morning wears on, the discussion revolves around such crucial matters as how to tell writers what poor spellers they are . . . to more autobiography. Most of the people seem terribly clever. Everyone keeps repeating his or her name and the name of their magazine. The session is being

recorded.

. . . I have lunch with Eliot Wigginton of Foxfire, published in Rabun Gap, Georgia and Alan Austin of Motive, which hardly can be characterized as a 'little,' but which has consistently published some of the better young writers, including my West Coast Editor, Jim Den Boer of Santa Barbara, before he won the International Poetry Forum Award.

. . . No one mentions the very recent murder of Dr. King or that a good portion of the country is in flames. But you can feel it everywhere. Earlier, I had read a moving article in the local Duke University paper about a spontaneous protest demonstration on the campus — a historic first for this notorious bastion of conservatism. When the students knocked at the President's door with their grievances, he became ill and had to be rushed to the hospital.

. . . By midafternoon the transportation problem is somewhat improved, and a small group leaves in a small classy bus for a demonstration of the offset process at the quaint headquarters of Lillabulero. But first, I find myself in a radio control room in a round-table discussion of the process itself. Before we are going to see it, we must talk about it. I have the feeling, throughout, that some people regard the process of printing far more important than the contents of a magazine.

But then, as I watch the group go through their production motions, I am impressed with their dedication. They are like proud parents.

. . . The Lillabulero crowd is breaking up, with the three editors going in different directions. Too bad; for it has seemed an exciting venture in the best little-magazine tradition with, I am afraid, a little overemphasis on using works of the editors. I have a long discussion with Merrill Leffler of Dryad on the wisdom of editors publishing their own writings in their own magazines. I am against it; and he

is not sure. (Editor's note: However, Lillabulero is continuing; see Directory in this Trace.)

. . . Two old pros at the conference are Baxter Hathaway of Epoch and William Davidson of Georgia Review. Carolyn Kizer and Davidson apparently had strong disagreements at some function last night, but Davidson keeps smiling throughout the day. Indeed, the more people seem to disagree with him and his traditional views, the more he smiles. At least six different people mention to me that he is the brother of the better-known Donald Davidson (who died not long after the conference), and it is plain to see that the Fugitives are held in reverence here.

...

Hitchcock, acting much the enfant terrible, really doesn't say anything shocking during his evening address, but does make several good points: that many little magazines lack

- a) an imaginative element
- b) a magical element
- c) a surrealistic element.

He says more poems should have a relevance to American life. He attacks provincialism on several fronts, but doesn't say anything about provincialism in San Francisco.

The party, after the Hitchcock talk, is given by the University of North Carolina Press, which actually publishes poets and, to its everlasting credit, is scheduled to bring out a volume of Jonathan Williams' poetry. This will be his first book by a 'respectable' publisher, though he himself has been a truly important publisher of books in America.

...

Visions of the Black Mountain group and his Jargon books do not prepare one for a meeting with Jonathan Williams. No one could possibly be more dapper than this tall cigar-chain-smoker who exudes an understated and justified self-confidence. He is wearing a wild striped shirt with a gold tie, but somehow doesn't come across in an

obtrusive way. No one could look more dapper, except possibly Reynolds Price, who is also here. A teacher at nearby Duke, Price is the author of such splendid novels as *A Long and Happy Life* and *Generous Man*. He is a Southern writer in the best sense, a writer in the best sense, and one of the best in the country.

A large Negro comes up to Price and says: 'You look beautiful, baby.' He is one of the two Negroes at the party, and is accompanying a lovely young lady who looks like a gypsy — the way every young woman should look. She is Daphne Page, editor of *Ex Umbra*. Throughout the conference and here at the party, she is treated less self-consciously than I have seen any Negro treated in over twelve years in the Capital. Having never attended a party in Washington without at least one (never more than three) light-skinned Harvard Negro a-go-go types, I am impressed by the casual way in which she is regarded as part of the group.

At dinner, Miss Page sits next to Charlene Whisnant of *Red Clay Reader*. The latter's white dress strikingly sets off her beautiful red hair. As a young child, I slept through the boring sections of *Gone with the Wind*; but here I am, sitting near Scarlett O'Hara. The person to my right (whom I had not met and who was not part of the conference) engages Daphne Page in a lengthy conversation about the new 'troubles' in America. His point throughout is his own tolerance; and she nods, and nods . . . 11 P.M.

The party grinds into the night. I am tired of drinking ginger ale. I am tired of North Carolina, and I am tired of myself. I have completed my first twenty-four hours here. There is nothing left to do, and I retreat. . . .

STRAWBERRY

Fall rests in the heart of a strawberry, Dormant and ripe, eager to reject the mouth that bites into it

The taste is of the first frost on an October morning, taste
bitter as fall is; and sweet as the dying leaves

J. J. Adamson

MY SUCCESSFUL NOVEL: TWO SIDES (OF THE STORY)

Guy Owen

RECENTLY I RECEIVED A LETTER from one of my former creative writing students, congratulating me on the ‘fame and fortune’ that had come to me with the publication of my second novel, *The Ballad of the Flim-Flam Man*. The assumption was that I had written a runaway best-seller and was wallowing in riches. (A few dishonest movie ads did state that the film was based on a best-selling novel.) I smiled somewhat bitterly and started to write him a letter setting forth the facts about both sides of my success. But I didn’t.

Now, I have some second thoughts and I would like to set them down here as honestly and simply as I can—even at the risk of seeming petty or ungrateful. Is it possible for a writer to be honest about his book? Let me try: the results should be instructive and illuminating for the beginner, or even for the pro who has not yet sold a novel to Hollywood—or, as some of my colleagues like to put it, sold out to Hollywood.

Let me bypass the quality of my novel, since I don’t wish to puff my own work here. Second novels are supposed to be dreadful; mine is not that, though it is certainly not an American classic, nor am I a neglected genius stewing in his gall. *The Flim-Flam Man* is, I think, a competent comic novel in the picaresque tradition, with an unusual share of joy and zaniness. I have more faith in it now, since I’ve revised and cut it for a paperback edition (I asked the publishers to let me do this), having profited from reviews that pointed out a number of flaws. Still, *The Flim-Flam Man* is not so accomplished and substantial as my first novel, which took me five years to write and which has earned less than \$4,000 in three editions.

First, to detail the signs of success which misled my student, or perhaps I should say had presented him with only the rosy side of the story. The Ballad of the Flim-Flam Man was published by Macmillan in 1965, five years after I had started it. Within two weeks it had been sold (for a comparatively small sum) to Twentieth Century-Fox, an option for a Broadway musical had been turned down, and an option for a TV series had been signed. Almost immediately, a chapter was picked up for an anthology, and Pocket Books bought the rights for \$4,000., with 300,000 copies scheduled to tie in with the movie. But, remember that half of this \$4,000. went to Macmillan. (Compare this figure to the \$200,000. paid for Christine Jorgenson's autobiography, or the half million for almost any confessional book by a Hollywood tramp.)

Yet, more important to me as a writer, the reviews were good. (I'll qualify this in a moment.) I do not subscribe to a clipping service, but I saw over fifty notices, some quite brief. (I depend on my friends to bring me the bad ones.) Over ninety per cent were favorable: Orville Prescott wrote a rave review and the Book-of-the-Month Club News recommended it. This was better than I had expected, or than I had a right to expect, perhaps.

Eventually the movie was released and was an almost unqualified success, winning praise from Life, Variety, Newsweek, etc. The film was even good enough to be soundly panned by Time. It did well at the Berlin Film Festival and even won three prizes at one of the numerous Italian film festivals. My home town had a Guy Owen Day, and I was recognized by proclamation in both houses of the State Legislature, and the Secretary of the State of North Carolina introduced me at the Southern Premiere of the film in Raleigh. All of this is very flattering, but it eats up time better spent on the next novel.

Thus far, the story of my novel seems bright enough, and it looks as though *The Ballad of the Flim-Flam Man* will be singing a merry tune on the cash registers, and publishers will be clamoring for my next opus.

But that is only the public side of the success story. Let me set down briefly the other side, the one that is seldom written about.

I pass quickly over the sweat and agony involved in writing the book. I quit a good job to have a year off to get the novel done, and my family of four survived on an income of less than \$3,000., though we had a rent-free house. I wrote and rewrote my book in a 'studio' that was really an abandoned fourth-class post office heated only by a wood stove, during a winter of ten snows. When I wasn't writing, I was milking a cow, hoeing my garden, or feeding two pigs, to keep the wolf from our door.

I mention in passing that, although Random House had an option on the book and my editor there nourished high hopes for it, they quickly rejected the finished ms. Moreover, it was then turned down by six or eight other publishers (I simply lost count).

However, I'm not the least bit bitter about those rejections, though I was not happy about them at the time, with my debts mounting. Now, five years later, I know that the rejections were 'right' for the future health of the novel. For, during all this period — over a year after the 'final' draft was rejected — I kept on polishing and rewriting, inventing new scenes and alternate chapters. Before the book was accepted, I had written three separate endings (William Rose came up with a fourth for the film!). All of this involved untold hours of grinding labor; but I don't regret it, for my novel was steadily getting better and I was learning more about my craft.

(I have come to believe that the ability and willingness to revise a manuscript are the chief qualities separating the

professional writer from the amateur. The old cliché seems true: there are no writers, only re-writers.)

Now for the debit side: at the end of two years, *The Ballad of the Flim-Flam Man* had sold less than 3,000 copies in hard cover. It had earned its \$1,500 advance, but only with the help of the advance from Pocket Books. (I hasten to add that I bought a hundred copies, myself, in a rather futile attempt to pick up a few extra reviews.) These figures, of course, represent nothing less than unmitigated failure for a novel.

How to account for this? Why did it fail to get more attention than my first novel? Let me offer a few random ideas, sketching them briefly. They may shed some light on current literary fashions and the publishing scene.

First, I do not belong to *Esquire's* hot center; I'm not even on the fringe of it. I've never attended a book party in New York or met any of the critics (reviewers) who belong to the Establishment — nor have I been on Jack Paar's show or Johnny Carson's show. I am simply a teacher who also writes books.

In addition, I feel that the South is out of the mainstream of American letters — though this has been less so since the Twenties — with the obvious exception of three or four coteries centered around a few universities or such literary figures as the late Randall Jarrell. I don't mean to belittle their talents; but, because of important contacts, it is relatively easy for such a group of Southern writers to get published and reviewed (they review one another, of course!). It's almost as if they were on the New York scene itself. Yet, for the typical unknown Dixie writer, it is much harder to get print: he simply has to be more outstanding in some way than the writers who are where the action is.

Of course, there is always an assured welcome for the Southern novelist who writes homosexual prose, or whose characters give the impression that our region is populated

only by quaint folk or violent and demented grotesques.

Another point: my book is a comic novel in the rather old-fashioned tradition of Mark Twain. It bucks the current fashion of nihilistic humor; hence, the reviewers in New York might not know what to make of it. (I am ashamed to admit that I even wrote a few postcards to reviewers to call attention to the novel. Granville Hicks was the only critic who had the courtesy to reply. Never again.)

But let me go one step further: I feel that it is difficult for a comic novel to get serious attention today—though God knows there is plenty to laugh at in our society. Most editors readily admit that laughter is needed, yet they seem reluctant to buy comic material. Maybe this distrust of the light and amusing is a part of our Puritan heritage that dies hard. In any case, Mark Twain never gets his due when compared to Hawthorne or James in American letters—not that I would compare myself with either of these masters.

In any case, as I've already hinted, my novel did not pick up a single review in any of the important magazines—and newspaper reviews don't sell books. As a consequence, it got almost no advertising; two ads were all I ever saw. That same year, how many dreary novels were widely reviewed that dealt with such 'in' themes as homosexuality, drug addiction, racial injustice, etc.?

The current trend, in truth, is to turn the novel over to the minority groups. The Fifties was the decade of the Jews, and the Sixties is becoming the decade of the Negroes and the Hippies. There will be, I predict, a niagara of autobiographical novels written by half-literate Negroes—many of them ex-thieves, ex-drug addicts, or ex-homosexuals—recounting how their heroes triumphed above the squalor of their environment. (I make this statement without apology, for I have participated in street demonstrations with Negroes, have written on racial injustice, and helped in a small way to desegregate my home

town. I simply cite the 'Negro novel' as an example.)

This question arises: who speaks for the common man today, for the average man who has no drug problem, no deviate sex drives, not even a drinking problem? Not that my second novel speaks for the common man; it doesn't. But my next one will; it will even stress affirmative values at a time when negation and cynicism are 'in' and the antihero and antinovel are too much with us.

What about the movie and its effect: The film was a good one—even better than my novel—and I say this with no sense of false modesty. And I am grateful that the picture remained true to the spirit of my book, making use of long stretches of my dialogue—though of course modified. (Betty Smith quipped that she was flattered to recognize two lines of her dialogue in the film version of *Joy in the Morning*.) Furthermore, not a single character was added in the scenario. But Hollywood is too self-centered to devote itself to promoting a book by an unknown writer. Or perhaps it's simply that matters are too frantic and chaotic out there. News releases from Hollywood referred to me as a South Carolina school teacher. (I am a Professor of English, with a Ph.D. in Renaissance Literature, at North Carolina State University.) When Sue Lyon, who had a starring role in the movie, was asked on a national TV show who wrote the novel on which the film was based, she hadn't the faintest idea. It wasn't surprising, then, when a full-page ad came out in the *New York Times* to note that the screenplay was by William Rose, with no indication whatever that the movie was based on a novel. Finally, in spite of three days I had spent working on the first draft of the script—for free—I was not even invited to the premiere! (To be fair, I later received letters of apology from both the producer and the director.)

Moreover, to what I had expected, the movie did not help the sale of the hardcover edition. When I saw the glowing reviews of the film in the *New York Post*, the *Daily News*, and

Variety, I was delighted. I was really elated when I read the rave notices in *Life*, *New Yorker*, *Playboy*, *Newsweek*, and half a dozen other magazines which had completely ignored my novel. I thought: this is it, a chance to revive the trade edition. But once again I was disappointed. After writing a letter to my editor asking her to alert the sales department concerning the movie's release, I received this reply from her: 'Our sales people tell me that though the movie has appeared, it wouldn't be possible to increase hardcover sales. It's infuriating.'

If you look at *Book Review Digest* for 1965, you will find no mention of my novel. Nor will you find it listed as one of the memorable books, in *McGill's Annual of 100 Best Books*. As far as these reference works are concerned, my novel does not even exist, though there are now over 300,000 copies in print and though the characters I created will reach (Irvin Kershner, director of the film, assures me) over fifty million people all over the world.

But I'm not quitting; nor am I even discouraged. More than ever before, American letters needs writers who will buck the fashions, especially the trend to write over and over again the thinly-disguised autobiographies of sensitive souls in search of identities, and the best-sellers that turn the readers' minds to clogged-up cesspools. In fact, I've just completed a lighthearted comic novel in the Twain tradition. It's called *The Resurrection of the Flim-Flam Man*.

A VIEW:

L. W. Michaelson on Anti-war Poetry

A fairly recent, and apparently a fairly futile demonstration called 'Poets Against War,' took place in Philadelphia some two years ago. The gathering was attended by live poets, reading their efforts aloud, and by dead poets having their antiwar sentiments read for them. The protest, aimed specifically at the Viet Nam conflict, culminated in the publication of a small chapbook, *Poets Against War*, put out by the Sixties Press (1966 — N.Y.).

Of course our contemporary poets are too sophisticated to express such thoughts as: 'The pen is mightier than the sword,' etc. Very likely, many of the live ones left the Philadelphia meeting feeling just a bit like Herman Melville upon his completion of *Moby Dick*: 'I have written a wicked book and feel spotless as a lamb.'

True enough, the chapbook contains many devastating poems against the warlike spirit of mankind, and doubtless the poets felt some sort of emotional therapy accomplished thereby. But Melville's lamb connotation is unfortunate: lambs are led to slaughter after all. In fact, this whole business of lining up batteries of adjectives against war tempts one to paraphrase A. E. Housman's famous lines:

True, true, the old soldier he is dead;
It sleeps well, the helmeted head,
But Terrence, this is stupid stuff,
And suffer little children still, I fear
For bombs of words fall on indifferent ear.

If this paraphrase is not enough to highlight the basic ineffectiveness of poetry, one can drag in Oswald Spengler, the philosopher-historian who, although discredited by most modern historians, is not quite discredited by current

newspaper headlines. One of Spengler's favorite comments was that if history was any basis on which to anticipate coming events, 'bigger and better' peace conferences meant only that 'bigger and better' world wars were to follow. Much the same thing might be said about antiwar poetry and literature: the more heart-rending or terrifying the poem, play, or novel, the more disastrous seem the wars that follow in their wake.

Plato, in his Republic, was concerned that the comments of a Homer or a Hesiod on the horrors of battle might make the warriorguardians of his ideal state weak, and therefore poets should be censored or directed to confine their talents to the writing of stirring songs on the order of La Marseillaise.

Apparently, the poets of Plato's time were much more skillful and effective than they are today, or possibly the audience for poetry and drama was less jaded and more attentive. Since Plato's time, poetry in general has had its ups and downs, attacked by Gosson, defended by Sidney, and on and on; but it was left to Shelley to put the form in an uncomfortable political framework. Since Shelley's rather absurd and pompous (in the light of subsequent events) restatement of Dr. Johnson's dictum that poets shall become the legislators, both poetry and poets have slipped to a popular status far below the TV entertainer and the sports hero. Indeed, if some of our prominent film stars or football pros were to say openly that they deplored war, one can speculate that the effect might be electrifying.

Shakespeare, although he suspected his verse would outlast marble monuments, had few delusions of its power to sway governments. In Julius Caesar, Brutus, commenting on poets, says: 'What should wars do with these jiggling fools!' And Brutus might as well have added politics, government, or a half-dozen other activities. But in any event, Plato's concern about poetic influence seems today so

much wasted effort on his part.

Antiwar poetry has been with us almost as long as mankind has had wars; and, as the poetry has become more frightened and whimpering, our wars have become more bloody and bestial. The unquestioned heyday of the antiwar poets came with World War I and the dramatic disillusionment of such soldier-poets as Owen, Sassoon, Seeger, Kilmer, and others. Never have so few spoken for so many potential soldiers to be; but, contrastingly, never have so many future soldiers completely ignored our few poets.

We get the picture instantly in, say—for example—Wilfred Owen's poem on a gas attack, how wars put Hell to shame, *Dulce et Decorum Est*:

DULCE ET DECORUM EST

Gas! Gas! Quick boys!

...

And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime . .

Dim, through the misty panes and thick
green light,

As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

However, since World War I, very likely if all the antiwar poems were placed end to end, they would reach around the world at least once; their sheer bulk would, it would seem, be enough to encourage our new recruits to burn their draft cards instantly. But such is not

the case. Even if we were to add our antiwar movies and plays to this dramatic encirclement of the earth, it seems that the end effect would be zero.

What then can one say? Antiwar novels and plays make entertaining motion pictures. That is all one can say. Antiwar poems? Well, apparently they make us all yawn. Poets and their graphic detailed descriptions of war certainly have not made us less warlike. Plato's concern was totally unfounded,

and Shelley's words upon the important future of poets have proven so much hot air. President Kennedy did have our major poet, Robert Frost, read a few lines at his inauguration, but this seems as close as poets have come to high political circles in years.

There might be an ironic relationship between poetry and politics in the case of Wallace Stevens. One can speculate that Stevens, as an executive of a large insurance company, might possibly have exerted some minor influence on New England state legislatures — however, it must be emphasized that if Stevens did in some degree influence the body politic, this would have been with relation to insurance rates or like matters in his capacity as an insurance man, not as a poet.

Perhaps there is a parallel between poems against war and gory photos and graphic journalistic accounts of automobile accidents. And Sudden Death, by J. C. Furnas, was one of the most terrifying and blood-chilling accounts of the immediate aftermath of a highway crash. It should have, for all time, discouraged wild reckless motorists. But again, there seems to be some inverse ratio, or some strange Parkinson law in operation: the more and the bloodier are the newspaper accounts of highway accidents, the more and the bloodier smashups to follow.

Thomas Hornsby Ferril, Colorado's poet laureate, remarked on this years ago in his column written for the Rocky Mountain Herald. Ferril felt that the stark photos of a terrible accident had an effect the reverse of that intended, that such pictures aroused some morbid curiosity, made some latent death wish flourish rather than fade. William James, in his essay, *The Moral Equivalent of War*, says much the same thing:

Modern war is so expensive that we feel trade to be a better avenue to plunder; but modern man inherits all the innate pugnacity and all the love of glory of his ancestors. Showing war's irrationality and horror is of no effect upon

him. The horrors make the fascination.

Ferril, the poet, and James, the psychologist, are apparently intuitively and psychologically correct. Sadly then, the unexpected by-product of antiwar poetry has been to make us strong in the wrong direction.

WILLIAM DORESKEI

THAT TIME OF DAY

The last sun sparks blood
on tidedampened sand.
We are as mute as the eye
that bleeds into the clouds,
coloring them warsweated gauze
stripped across their sky.
My love speaks with the minutes
of an ancient carbon tongue
that ticks off the words
of a druid at stone's song.
I speak too, but not to her
nor to the sand or water
but to the plow of ice
that has tripped the bones of earth
lying like milk
in a dead mother's dream.

WILLIAM DORESKEI

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

I devised a whip to shape
fear into drinkers and bums.
Old kegs rot in the dumps
I searched for several weeks,
collecting bongos, taps,
toboggans, and sandals.
All these things
were burned publicly.

Smoke plasticized to mold
the handle of my whip.
A devil forked a tail
to fasten on the butt.
Now watch out, land
of beer! Drunkards beware!
You won't pee on my porch
nor tap on my windows any more!
Fences of sod will cake
around the flowers of my sobriety!
Insects of dust will dry
to powder roses! A sponge
of silk will jello
over all the land of Drink
and all wine will sour
with the death of thirst.

WILLIAM DORESKE

MY NEIGHBOR THE WORLD

Next door a dog barks
at the end of the world.
A rat drags a bone
from a slimy ditch.
Chalk burns with a smell
of sweat. Bone meets bone
meets steelpounding pistons.
Noise hovers like a cloud.
Children tallow into the streets
in fleshwet floods.
Red birds screech in birches.
A tire squeals.
High school lovers make it
behind the firehouse.
A lawn mower discovers
the flavor of clover.
Leaves smoke out of trees,
skittish as quails.
The dog barks forever.
Noise hovers like a cloud.

WILLIAM DORESKEI

AFTER THE ROSE, THE SAND

After the rose, the sand
and the creeping jackals.
After the wheel, the void
and laughing in the streets.
After the word, the worm
and the ripping of the womb.
There will be flies, blood
matted like wool, stink,
pus in the gutter: it doesn't matter
that it will happen here
under artificial light,
a blaze of bladed tint.

Someone speaks there, out
where the night lies thick,
like a dog's bed of pain.
That voice must have been bitten
by the lover's flea to sing
of pearled stone and marble glaze.
Then the oak, the felling
of rotted timber.
Then a lattice of thorns
raising yellow blisters.
Then the leather cord
cutting that insistent voice.

GIL ORLOVITZ

NUMBERS: 69

Jimmyblue we heard the last of you,
the wildcatter of dreams, the selectorectifier
of carnality in the low seas, the carbon abacus
of the first woman shaking off the sunlight into
evergreens.

Sunday in the clown
he advances through obituaries with weddings
and crack nudist colonies griefstricken to their black
rectal straps.

The tears
were long since salted away under volcano level,
and the tumblers of combined solutions
into the photoelectric lock
where only paid-up shadows passing hold the leak.
The salmon leaping to high mass impair
the swordfuzz light around the angling man
his heart labors at the hook pulling at the backward
gazes of all men
into the flooded depths they sprang from,
and he must return to his children empty-manned
even as he displays his hand fingerless
from the sawtoothed tiger of the foam
he plunged his clenched rage in,
now the percolation of pearl.

GIL ORLOVITZ

NUMBERS: 103

The god-crackled wimple
engages the caesarian of no salt
where the desert burns Christ's old walking shoes.
The toes cripple the washing machine.
The Archimedes of no distortion displaces
the Atlas mind. The winged
architecture is a pale adumbration of the rejection
of man. We have seen the sea votary
of the tidal waves of earth: I have broken my lips
trying to hold back the loam frothing at
the still plait of bats.
The mares curse the scarecrows saddling
them with bikinis. I wander
among the pear-dungs prescribed
by gonadotropic pharmacists.
The skimming passes over the Second
Coming — the Elder Christs among the Egyptians
are killed off first: Moses hath
a revengeful God. Cain kills Abel
at a political rally.

GIL ORLOVITZ

NUMBERS: 104

the dazzling underwear
of the undertakers midwife
is the giant slalom
for the herdsman's curd —
how rally is the headsmans
toothsleigh down the birth
of greyhounds circling the leaning
tower of tiger in emblazoned gravity
against the sharkgenes cuisine —
in the sunstriped bee the honeyed hurricane
the hangman relishing his fellatio
while I address all fathers alkaloids —
death on high promotes the underlip
sullen as a submarine
sipping the drudges of algae —
give me war to the yeast of mint
slanging on the clutch of increment —

PETER WILD

PELAR DE PAVA

if frogs had wings
we would fly
over the stone housetops
carrying pianos,
trumpets in our pockets.
if frogs had wings
we would sit in the swamps
by candlelight
secretly filling envelopes
with gunpowder,
gather bouquets of rapiers
and dash them down
on their mothers' slate roofs
we would announce it
blaring in the streets,

marching with trousers open,
surprise them with roses
of flyspecks and mice
devour their fans, guitars
and their laces,
pluck their follicles
and wear it for whiskers
as we flew off over the moon. . . .

PETER WILD

NIGHT RAIN

I can hear the rain.
it drums the gravelled roof,
thin as my skull.
a flight of boney horses
sails over the house tops,
amethyst tongues in their heads,
toward the flooding swamps
we, dry in this box,
not hearing it,
the book, the lamp
and unposted letters,
cinnamon burnt beneath our nails. . .
a snowy sow
floats by our second-story window
and rubs her snout against the twisted panes
below us the dug-up skeletons
of babies rejoice in the shiny garden.

PETER WILD

KISSING YOU GOOD-BYE IN THE SANTA ANA BUS DEPOT

Kissing you good-bye in the Santa Ana bus depot
the dingy angels, hooked to the rafters
look down and smile

the ticket agent, gouty, member of the Masons,
thumbs his green book;
married for one year,
our minds banked with snow and jewels,
laboring here, beyond pretense,
shuttered in coffins of
brown roses,
but hopeful,
clinging within ourselves. . .
across the street the Hotel Prado
crumbling
advertises for servicemen
a home away from home
and free doughnuts. . .
I kiss you again.
a lizard from the snooker table watches.
our love twinborn.
you smile and go.
I carry you with me
newly married.

PETER WILD

LIZ

In March Liz
had her baby.
it was the 31st of March
the wild wheat
clustered with smut
tossed ragged
in the wind from
a brown dry sun
all day
we had been out flying kites,
sweaty and burnt,
and covered with nettles,
and lying in bed,

in that hot scratchy darkness
our legs hummed
that woman
unsteady,
and overripe
as a rusted peach
about to split;
and that hard pit
insoluble
moved,
a small tongue
edged with flame
cut round and round
in her golden head
lying in bed
straining
deep from the steady blackness
of the flammable stairway
we heard a chirp,
and deeper than that
her groan

YIP WAI-LIM

WHITE DEATH

Uproar, ceramics,
Tier upon tier,
Tremble at the eyebrows.
Gold-foils glimmer, burning,
The cream-colored castle.
Birdless, the sky blazes.
Immaculate hands
Thrust forth
From attenuated breath,
Like beaten flax
Against the brimming dawn.
Creaking of spindles,
Silent closing of doors
Are now childhood
Shut in brain's lobes.

YIP WAI-LIM

TURBULENT ROCKS

From star-white curtains
Attend the last wash
Of the nervous system.
In the wind, perhaps,
One can desire
To become wordless scenery,
Or green tiles
Relieved of flames.
Perhaps, waiting itself
Is a jade tree,
The primeval cold
Clotted in your eyes.
Winter refuses luxuriance.
Grottos define themselves
By being solid.
Mountains are made
To flow seaward.

No river can
Avoid lowlands.
No lake
Can unlift itself.
All cries,
Having left the lips,
Burst into flowers,
Dripping
The white wounds of the sun.
Among sky-trailing frost-branches
Horses are running.
Beyond the clouds,
blue, upon blue.

D. P. THOMAS

THE BAIT-SELLER ON THE FISHING PIER

I.
He pitched the major leagues
and had been praised.
The piles lean
sand-sucked
and the big man's hands are limed
along the joints
trembling
with the change.
The bass are out, he says
they stay
beyond the Sound
roaring
in the morning and the night
stadium-wide.
Hands and eyes
brown
with the stain of years,
his tongue
licking

the salt of pride,
feet
petrifying slow.
Being is to become basalt,
black rock on weedy piles
where the sea finds fault along
veins,
the grains of wood,
gnawing

D. P. THOMAS

THE ROT FROM ANCIENT LOGS AND COMIC FEET
SLAP PLANKS LIKE SLATES, LUDICROUS ROCK IN
SLOW ACCESSION TO THE FLESH. THE BAIT IN
CARDBOARD BOXES FROZEN AGAINST THE SICK
CHANGE OF DEATH AND THE SWEET SEA-SMELL.
II. NO IMAGE BUT A WIND FROM THE WATERS
FREEZING HIM TO ROCK, A MOMENT OF CHILL
ARDOUR, HAPPENING AFTER EXCITEMENT SEEMED
SO GONE, SO FAR FROM THE FLOOD, SO MUCH
THE DEVASTATION OF THE EARLY MUD. THE
MINNOWS ON THE HOOK WASH FREE OF ICE, THE
VILE SQUID YIELDS BEFORE THE WATER'S THRUST
SOFT UNDER AS WHITE PORK, PURPLE, THE SKIN
RECEIVES THE HOOK WITH SENILE JOY, DROOLS
THE STALE UNFROZEN SEA-JUICE THROUGH THE
WOUND.

D. P. THOMAS

Incessantly the breakers break
and parodies
enact themselves,
repeat the wreck of ventures
to the West.
Odyssey repeated now

upon the shores
upon the beach,
to sail, to sail
is only to catch the wind
which scabs.
Below, the sand has caught the pile
then slips,
weed clings, sand blows
before the wind below the waves
and never
holds its place.
And Dynamite
is on the Mound.
His force expressed,
he'll pause
and wipe his hands
(they yearn, they yearn!)
taking his time before
the implement,
a leather-covered sphere,
is breathing normally again
before he gives.
His mode bewilders meaning
and change
matters
more than definition.

D. P. THOMAS

III.

The black man in the shed
a new original
contracted
to the limits of the sea.
Vox populi, the violent arm, that shout
sousing memory
like a wave,

a change so permanent and new
so innocent of form;
no fade
and the rock is nimble bone
stiffening when done.
The bait-seller on the fishing pier
mutating
in the fresh fantasy
of salt blown in
from the bass-deep Sound,
a source
but never fixed,
shifting
like shoals across
the last destructions
and the man's
last mode.

FRED LEVINSON

**GOOD WOOD BURNS WELL AND IS NONE THE LESS
CONSUMED**

The man who has saved himself
from indolence and discovers
a latitude for his measure
and stores reserve, tenderness,
well-born judgement and chooses
the dexter corner of any contest
and acquits the race with cautious
analysis far from blood and feels
no metaphysic in a radio's frozen
goodnight; is never faced with
impossible crimes nor frightened
by blue atavisms waiting for
evolution's sure spiral cannot
know good wood burns well yet
is none the less consumed.

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FRED LEVINSON

3:30 IN THE LIFE OF AN INTELLIGENT MAN

Young girls on the way home from school
awash with hesitant music and strung
under a sebaceous noon,
they walk
among pepper trees and
wild lupin
a few casually backward, moving simply
and well, held to the ground
by fright and
cool winds that intimate
a superior distant
burgundy dark fiber unstrung
through the constant
deep blush anodyne of youth
I wish to cheat time
and I wish them I am held
forever in their grammars
their innocence of dimension

FRED LEVINSON

MY WIFE WAS LIKE THE DUST OF GREAT CITIES

My wife was like the dust of great cities
like nine troys
like twelve pities
shouting up from the last
and I nameless through history
formed in our words and things
and she went back falling
into the open mouths of time
she is gone but I have written her
down recordable like an accident:
Her aspatial confederate
She fouled her lines
in hopes: they knocked her out of the hair
of her limits and she died for me O
she died for me
I am still stained with the
exigesis of her humors
it is love through attrition

ELIZABETH GOURLAY

AGAINST THE DARK

it was not
the incest
Oedipus
but the other sin
unforgivable
you flourishing
while the plague
bit deeper
in the City's wilting stalk,
you
in profusion of
power, health
certain that you could
search out

the sick, the guilty one,
forgetting
each man carries in himself
the maggot of his death
dark nature holds her mirror up
the tree must shed its leaves
before the sap can run
I knock
I knock on wood

RONALD SILLIMAN

WHEN HONESTY IS POLICY

I can't stand the heat of
your words, the way
they force us all
to shed our
clothes.
Our trees are
choked with
sand, for
the sea has
turned to steam.
I don't like
it; you
come to us
and turn
the other way.

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PHILIP HAMMIAL

POETASTING

'I have just killed my mother.'

— Charles Whitman

In midnight fields
hungry dogs, afraid of me,
hang knotted tails. Are you
afraid of me? They wear
masks I have worn asleep. Are
my poems ever like those notes
that madmen leave? Here,
beneath the gallows of a play-
ground swing, a forlorn moon
sways silver-pale. Who
has hung it there? I? No, never I. I
have never sung a poem mad enough
to murder moons. I,
like nameless other poets who
instinctively or by training
relate death to dark and life to sun,
only walk at night to know
what masks I wear asleep.

JOEL WEISHAUS

I AM AWOKEN TO A NIGHT AS WALKING

with the staggering sunlight
the way becomes darker
rib by rib
mountains lose their tall collars,
adornning themselves in winter's cold moon.
i am awoken to a night
as walking out a high window:
down i drop

free
yet slave to the spot
waiting to receive
this bag of bones
just as the snow receives my booted feet.
shallow light splashes against a huddle
of sequestered tents,
black trees,
tracks leading thru frozen gullies
over soft bellies of fresh snow
past nests of sleeping bramble
my legs spell out a slow
monotonous circle.

.....

snow crunches into my ears,
whispers sliding down their gelid tunnels:
'What?
'I think i saw something.
'Where?
'Up there!
i look up
& it's the Universe
looking down.

JOEL WEISHAUS

FOREVER ANGEL SHE WILL DIE

she is all the times
who whispers love
while dying,
she's dying,
because dying,
the wind will halt
in her hair one day
a noose will find her neck
at home, or pills, or knife,
or a woman will usher her thru
one more night
she knows
that's why she knows
Forever Angel
she will die
she will
she will
she will

HILDA AARONS

THE END OF CONFUSION

confusion has an open end
where i stick out
together with a torrent
of lovely idle hands
billions in certificates
cannonades of napalm
that prattle into
children and etceteras
hosts of tea towels used
for ignominious parties
and a streaming confetti
of anguish . . .

DOROTHY DALTON

THIS WOOING OF STRANGERS

This wooing of strangers
is a swimming
in a spill of love,
the wooer
capped in bright identity —
a floating in dream waters
touching hands and mouths
with strangers,
 in sudden love,
with secrets
inching toward beaches
like golden fish
waiting to be caught
and shared.

TRACY THOMPSON

FLOWER OF AN AGE

we are masters now,
masters of conversation:
this fine art, the highest
seated in our spiritual
sidewalk cafés
we have perfected
that highest of all the arts
painting-replacing
music-displacing
poetry-relieving
of its craftsmanship:
conversation.
O flower of an age
with its brains in its mouth.

TRACY THOMPSON

THE DAILY ROUND

O glassy-eyed
after those useless evenings
and those worse nights,
and now the wordless mornings
before the silent noon
and the speechless afternoon;
then the useless evenings
again,
and the worse nights to bless
before the wordless mornings,
the silent noons,
the speechless afternoons.
But now, O glassy-eyed,
it's only morning, wordless.

JAMES HEARST

THE STRONGEST MAGIC

Anger pens me in a sty,
shapes me bestial with snout
and tail, bathes me in filth
when I wallow in stale pride,
flies torment me, dungsmell
fills my nose, I sleep in sour
straw, eat from a trough, squeal
when the prod strikes. Light
glazes my red eyes, a cold wind
brings me bad dreams, I grunt
hairy thoughts crazed by blood
surges, until you laugh the beast
into its shadow when your kiss
turns me to a man again.

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MAREK SKWARNICKI

THE ROAD TO EDEN

On the cold heaven marks of beasts
who took that road to water
the deer herd traversing the sky
with hooves cloven in stars
as no one knows the whereabouts
of their bones nor by what lake
or river the archeologist of night
shall find their great horns
fixed in the world

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LESSON

Europe, as you remember from mythology, was named for the king of Sidon's daughter, the most beautiful girl in the world. Zeus in the form of a bull carried her off. They lived in Crete in a maple grove. Their grandson, sprung from Minos, was the Minotaur, ruling in terror from the confusing labyrinth, which not even he could solve.

Translated from the Polish by Victor Contoski.

LENNART BRUCE

THE COMMISSION

The question is crucial,
12 times 12 months in the year
twelve by twelve by infinity,
all religions are right
and all priests wrong,
I rise in my own scaffolding
I love my tent, my sky
with transparent walls
every drop is a world,
my biggest deal
ever, nothing
compared to it
in size it's
between continents
and between them the sea.
My commission,
and this is a condition,
I'll collect
in rivers.

LENNART BRUCE

My Business

I open the door
and the wind
sways the chandelier
its prisms roll colors
across the floor and the ceiling
around the walls
my business is dealing
in nothing
it's clear
I build around
the strongest
I wrap
around nothing
paper papers
I'm neither asleep
nor awake
I'm sorting
my papers
my problems
one
by one
I'm open

JOHN TAYLOR

Confusion

The cries of the birds like wires
Stretched across clouds
Bleached by the white disk of the sun
Extend their skin
Until experience rustles like a drum.
The meniscus of a glass of wine
Swallows the shudder of the birds
And breaks the white ring of the sun,
Within the halo of the wine
On which the sun is rolling like a drum.

JOHN TAYLOR

GOING TO SLEEP

I am playing the end of the world
In the middle of night as I sink
Into the tufts of the counterpane
That ravel like cloud,
I am playing the end of the world
And I sink into the cloud of the bed,
Into the sky of the dark.
Taken too soon from his mother,
I remember our kitten would suck
On a tuft for a nipple
And notice nothing except
Marmoreal blue of the spread,
Claws moving into the dream
Of peace in the blue of the bed.

PAUL LAVIGUEUR

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

Each day, my love,
I row a little boat
From that far island
Out to meet you.
I have no sail
To palm the wind;
Oars for arms,
Boards for skin.
The sea is sometimes rough
In its turning,
Often the wind screams
Like the brakes of the sea:
If I am late crossing
Wait for me.

GREG KUZMA

TAKING THE STONES

Even the mind
Must pick stones.
I put one
In my bathing trunks
For luck.
We wade out
Until we are over
Our heads.
The lake wells
In me,
Coloring dark green.
Later, still swimming,
We find the stones
Tucked in our hands.

STEVE BEHRENDT

Cracked moonbeams
lying around
in
cor
ners,
trampled down flat all over the floorboards
where they get stepped on,
b l o w n thin by
the b r e e z e ,
or
just
lying
somewhere
drying out
dew-soaked
nightclothes,
wither in the early sunlight
and run away,
leaving the

c
o
r
ners
e m p t y ,
the floorboards dusty.
Wait.

GRACE BUTCHER

SOME SORT OF DEATH

The heron
steps
slowly
along the edge
of a certain dream
shattering two skies.
Dark soft weeds
move with the water
dark with slime
my hair still growing
. . . even now.

The heron
walks
across my eyes
His strange feet
change my face
easily
I need no form.
This lake is enough.
I have two skies
although they break
and break
where herons walk.

CHRISTOPHER SCHREIBER

‘IN THE RAIN’

In the rain
the naked hulk of Us
envisioned through the transpicuous madness
of the dismal:
I saw prophetic clowns howling
monkey gummed, inside — outside
laughing with surprising accuracy
Amid the confusion
of the blast — of the loosening
I fingered beautiful coffin lid etchings
of Myshkin’s dreams —
what a shame I was blind
When the nova finally came
rotten sunlight
covered a dead planet
and yellowed the smouldering scribbled walls
of the sunflower temple.

BOBBI SHERMAN

LEGACY

What landscape can I show you,
What terrain involve you in,
Through what weather shall we go ?
Everywhere is unfamiliar, granite, large, grotesque.
Rock croppings stumble giants and I take the long way
round.
The wind is a kind of dragons breath
Furring the twilight gloom.
Grim with my own chaotic whim
I walk in the light of a quarter moon.
Odd animals burrow underground for all their season
out of sight.
Eventually there is no end to inherited night
As there is no end to sorrow.
Though in an agony of tenderness
I touch your tightly curled hair
I have no hemisphere to show you but the one
Slowly going under drifted snow.

IIKENDALE NIGHT

STOP AND REST

stop and rest
by small stream
after long hike
up narrow Big Sur canyon
and watch water strider
fight small current
to stay in lightly flowing pond
for ten minutes
and then watch sow bug
archaic creature looking strange
in afternoon shade,
crawl over rock
until out of sight.
i don't see water strider now-

gone somewhere
hiding
lost downstream.
i write on smooth stick
for another traveller,
if ever, here stopping:
' two of us have rested here '
and walk on

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GEORGE DILLON SLATER

THE RAPE OF THE SPIDER OF VERA CRUZ

La Aranja de Vera Cruz was American
as a spider
nibbling on Ouspensky at noon
preying at night until the heat
got her walking on the pier
where fishermen eight pescadores
flung her hard to the wood
knelt to prey the youngest fourteen
the sagest forty-seven each
getting a leg in the tides
quiet moons light.
Vera Cruz was too hot
for any clothes
and fancy pretenses I don't like
the heat she said
just the people that do.

LYN LIFSHIN

RICH DARK

No slivering streetlight
through heavy curtains,
but the feel of your thigh
smooth through the sheet.
In the light your hair's hot amber
but now wild seaweed,
silky smelling, like lemons
and the pillow smells of your
skin. Only willow sounds
on the screen till
suddenly you move away,
stumbling to where the
light goes on and the
rich dark stops.

THAT FEBRUARY

Snow on your hair,
the room so warm and
everything melting,
there were thoughts of
starting but it was all
over, that's the way it
had to stay. Dust
in our throats, the same
dried flowers on the wall
and we leaving, half relieved,
clutching iced branches,
glad for the cold.

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TO GIVE THE LIE

Being a Short Fiction, Narrated by Mr. Cain Rory Binzwanger to Sir Christopher Sackville Spens-Northrop, while the Former Was a Guest at the Spens-Northrop Summer Estate at Breeme; and Faithfully Transcribed Herein by Russell Banks, Secretary and Traveling Companion to Mr. Binzwanger.

Very well . . . as you wish. Let us begin it at the beginning, then:

A ten-year-old boy — maybe eleven, maybe nine, but no older and certainly no younger — kills his buddy, one Alfred Coburn, while the two are enemy espionage agents engaged in a Life-or-Death struggle in the middle of the wide, perfectly flat, tarred roof of an American hotel in Hong Kong. (That is, the hotel is American owned; people of all nationalities are welcome to avail themselves of its many and varied services.)

This young killer, whose name, let us say, is Nicholas Lebrun, stabs his good buddy in the chest just below the left nipple, with the blade thence slicing deftly between two ribs, through the taut pericardium, to plunge unimpeded into the left ventricle — stabs his young friend with an inexpensive penknife manufactured and distributed by the Barlow Cutlery Corp., of Springfield, Massachusetts. This knife has a plastic simulated-wood grip and a 2½” steel blade. Also, a 1½” smaller, narrower blade, which can be used most effectively in scraping grime from under chewed-down fingernails, peeling the plastic insulation from two-strand electric appliance wire, and violently, chaotically, scoring a vest-high scissure along the wall-to-wall length of blond, Scandinavian-birch paneled lobbies of medical clinics, new high schools, model homes, and certain other public buildings.

I mention these possibly-irrelevant details now for a number of defensible reasons: tone, ironic counterpoint, physical immediacy, &c. Mainly though, I mention them because they might take on a meaningful, as opposed to a dramatic, significance. In other words, I regard them as possibly relevant, rather than irrelevant, details. For, I am not, after all, a trivial man, nor am I a French novelist.

Alfred — O poor wide-eyed Alfred — squeaks in surprise and falls; Nicholas understands what has happened and runs all the way home.

There is a distance of approxi-

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mately one city block separating the Transilex parking lot, which has been serving as the roof of an American (owned) hotel in Hong Kong, and the asbestos-shingled, wood-framed, mid-Victorian house, which has been serving as the Lebrun hearth and home for over forty years now — ever since Nicholas' paternal grandfather was a young, newly wedded, still childless man.

Nicholas' grandfather was named Ernest, but because of the color of his thick short-cropped hair and moustache, he was called Red. A clockmaker, and a good one, too, Ernest learned his trade (he would have said 'craft') in his home town of Hartford, Connecticut; and then, emigrating to Waltham, Massachusetts, when the time industry shifted to that city shortly before the outbreak of World War One, he went to work for the Waltham Watch Company. A French Protestant, Ernest Lebrun: yes, thrifty, yes, prudent, and implacably stable, high-minded and effortlessly honorable, uncorruptible, intelligent, organized, good-humored. All resulting in his becoming universally well-liked and financially secure long before he was forty years old. He died in his dreamless sleep shortly after World War Two had finally ground to a bewildered halt and some time during that eventful year commencing with Nicholas' birth and

winking out with the child's first birthday, which fact surely was of considerable moment for Ernest (Red): hanging onto shreds of life until after the birth of his first male grandchild, the son of an only son, assured finally, and only at the very end, of the continuation of the name, &c.

Anyhow, it is because of the distance between the Transilex parking lot and home, and because he ran all the way home, that Nicholas is out of breath, panting and red-faced when he turns into the scrubby yard and thus arrives safely at what appears to be, and what later turns out to be, heaven.

Hell is another place, and much, much later, gentlemen. I'm sure, and so may you be.

Robert Lebrun, the boy's middle-ageing, auburn-haired father, a paid-in-full member of the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters (AFL-CIO) Local #143, is comfortably swinging on the porch glider, smoking his after-supper cigar in the gloaming summer-evening light, and from time to time reading a shrill item from the tabloid newspaper spread across his lap.

Abruptly, Nicholas parks himself next to his father, upsetting with his momentum the glider's gentle vacillation; and the father

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asks his son, his only child, heir to his ancient name and lands, Why is he running? The lad tells his father why he is running. Not, of course, without considerable encouragement from the father — whose cigar goes slowly out during the telling.

I might have forgotten — but young Nicholas does not forget — to mention the fact that just as he steps off the flat square expanse of tar which has been serving as the Transilex parking lot — now almost innocent of parked automobiles — and onto Brown Street's narrow sidewalk, he happens to glance back at the friend's fallen body. That

small heap of summer clothing and inert flesh, already used up and thrown out, dropped in the middle of the great black square. A little crumpled pile of stuff lying next to the right front tire of a bottle-green British Ford sedan. And in that fraction of a second, Nicholas realizes that the owner of the bottle-green sedan — a man who lives in the neighborhood and who, unfortunately, is notoriously effeminate, a practicing pederast in fact, mocked and hated to his face by all the neighborhood kids and behind his soft back by all the parents — is strolling blithely across the lot, is approaching his little car from the side opposite Nicholas and the car's right front tire.

Now, it is possible that the fairy, whose name, by the way, is Toni Scott, does catch a glimpse of Nicholas in flight; but that possibility shall have to remain forever equivocal and unrealized. I shall demonstrate why this is so:

Toni, who works as a waiter in an attractively decorated Boston cocktail lounge of a socially ambiguous, though not inconsiderable, fame, for several years, has been saving at least five dollars a month by parking his car (illegally) in the Transilex parking lot, always taking care to remove his car well before the nine P.M. departure of the Transilex Cafeteria's second shift and — because of his nighttime working hours — usually managing to slip the innocuous little sedan back into the lot some time between the four A.M. unlocking and the five A.M. arrival of the cafeteria's first shift. This particular summer evening's ritual removal of his car from its stolen space definitely, even though only partially and from afar, is observed over Nicholas Lebrun's fleeing shoulder (Fateful, damning backward glance!) just before the rigorously bathed, meticulously groomed, idly smiling Toni Scott, filled to his eyes with sweet memories and still-sweeter anticipations, discovers Alfred Coburn's hard sun-haired body by accidentally smashing its rib cage, sternum, and spine with the right front tire of his

bottle-green car.

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He cuts the wheel hard to the left, revs up the tiny four-cylinder motor, and he spins the car backwards, swinging the front of the car around in an arc to the right — so that he can make his exit from the lot by the very gate Nicholas has used just seconds earlier. (He may well have seen Nicholas fleeing before him, but this really is inconsequential here.)

At this point in the narrative, Robert Lebrun interrupts his son and compels him to insist that no one, absolutely no one, saw him stab his playmate. He makes the boy reassure him that he (Nicholas) did not extract the penknife from Alfred's chest. (Toni's right front tire has already torn the knife from its nest of flesh, bone, and blood — has ground it against pavement, paint, white pebbles in the tar, has smashed the plastic simulated-wood grip, and has removed all fingerprints.) Then Lebrun makes Nicholas repeat several times the part of his narrative that has to do with Toni Scott's arrival on the scene; and finally, after telling his son in clear, exact, and step-by-step terms just what he intends to do, Lebrun stomps into the house and, yelling EMERGENCY, POLICE! to the telephone operator, he calls the cops. In a stage whisper and speaking rapidly, he says that he is Robert Lebrun of number forty-eight Brown Street and that his son and another neighborhood kid have just been sexually molested by the neighborhood fag and that his son broke away from the guy — but the other kid is still with the sonofabitch in his car which is parked in the Transilex parking lot, the one which used to be the old Waltham Watch Factory lot, and he (Lebrun) is leaving right now to kill that filthy sonofabitch with his bare hands. So, if they want Toni Scott alive, they have about three minutes to get to him. He makes one other call: to Alfred Coburn, senior, over on Ash Street, some three blocks farther from the parking lot than

the Lebrun house. Using that same rapid whispery voice, he tells Alfred Coburn, senior, what he has just related to the cops.

Then, under a full head of steam, Lebrun lunges for the parking lot and Toni Scott, who, while dialing the police department from the public phone booth which stands luminous in a dark corner of the lot, hears through the glass walls the rising shrieks of approaching sirens.

In this story, everyone who lies and knows that he lies, does so effectively. That is, he is believed.

Everyone who lies and yet knows not that he lies — meaning, for example,

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Evelyn Lebrun (Nicholas' adoring mother) and poor Alfred Coburn, senior, and the two or three neighborhood ladies who claim they saw Toni Scott talking to the boys from inside his little green foreign car, heard the bastard calling the tykes from their play, saw him smilingly offer them candy if they would get into his car — these also manage to lie effectively: they are believed by the arresting officers, the rest of the neighborhood, the newspapers, Time, Life, the district attorney, the psychiatrists testifying for the prosecution, the psychologists testifying for the defense, the defense attorney himself (although he pretends not to believe), the judge, the jury, and the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Everyone who tells the truth — meaning Toni Scott, the thirty-eight-year-old fatting balding homosexual — tells the truth stupidly, inconsistently, alternately forgetting and remembering critical details, lying about other and unrelated matters — and so on into his long night. Toni Scott is not believed, although now and then he is pitied.

Thus, the compassionately prompt arrival of the police at the scene of Alfred Coburn's beastly murder — savagely slain twice by a scorned and thereby-enraged deviate — plucks Toni Scott from the huge pipefitter's hands thrust at him by

Robert Lebrun, only to set him down again one year later in Charleston Prison (life plus ninety-nine years).

But I see now, or at least I begin to suspect, that I have been drawn into attending too much to the sorry plight of Toni Scott. Consequently, and without intending it, I have ignored several aspects of the story which, if elaborated upon, might convey the desired point(s)* somewhat more effectively than has been possible so far in this fiction.

To continue, then: It may have been noticed — indeed, it should have been picked up by even the most inattentive of my listeners — that the original lie (the Original Sin, one might say, if one were fond of such analogies, although I must confess that I rarely find them particularly enlightening, dramatic, or even amusing) originated with Nicholas' dad. However, I either forgot, or simply did not bother to mention, that once the lie has been designed and manufactured according to specifications, once it has been energized, activated, and released to the interested public, Robert Lebrun begins to have certain secret mis-

** Mr. Binzwanger speaks on occasion with a noticeable lisp, and thus it was not clear at this point whether 'point,' 'points,' or both was to be understood. R.B.*

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givings about the way the lie is being used. The cause of these shadowy misgivings is not, as one might suppose, the absurd fate of Toni Scott. Rather, it is the consummate skill, the unquestioning grace of movement from blatant truth to absolute falsehood which consistently, unhesitatingly, and under the most trying of circumstances is demonstrated by Robert Lebrun's only begotten son, the young Nicholas Lebrun. It is almost as if, for Master Nicholas, there is no difference between what actually happened and what was said to have happened.

What happened, Nick? his father asks. Why the hell you running in this heat? You never run like that when you're

called. Only when you're being chased.

Nobody's chasing me, the kid answers, but something really awful happened.

What?

I don't know, actually. Me and Al was just playing around, see, and he got cut with a knife, only I didn't mean it, Pa. It was an accident. You gotta believe me, Pa.

(The boy uses the same name for his father that Robert Lebrun was taught to use for his. It might be helpful if one remembered this disclosure.)

I would guess that this probably is the point at which Lebrun begins to shuffle fearfully through his memories and imagination for an alibi. The fear of retribution he now believes to be dominating his son's entire consciousness — even to the boy's physical perceptions of the scaly white glider, the splintery porch floor catching against the corrugated rubber bottoms of his U.S. Keds, the cooling air laden with the smell of freshly cut, still-bleeding grass, the cold zinc-smell of his father's dead cigar, the sounds of his own sexless voice and the sex-rich sounds of his mother's sleek hands washing dishes in warm soapy water — this fear is in reality the father's very own.

Or, I should say, the father attributes to his son the overwhelming quantity of fear that he knows would have been his, were he ten or nine or eleven years old and faced with 'something really awful,' 'an accident,' a wounding that occurs without warning, absolute. And in its own terms, too. Right in the middle of a game, too.

Then, having attributed such terror to the boy's consciousness of the world, Lebrun — although no more a poet than the rest of us — unintentionally and perhaps without even being aware of it, identifies himself with his son's self; and in that way, the fear he has attributed to

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the boy becomes his own.

To be specific: his now, the force behind the knife as it buries its 2½” steel blade in the playmate’s boney chest; then comes the realization that the boy is dead, absolutely and forever, no joke, no pretense, no foolish vain imitation of the absence of existence; his now, the flight from the body’s silent accusation, away from this gusty hotel rooftop, so deserted and stark in the midst of ragged teeming Oriental architecture; and his, the image that is the figure of Toni Scott, seen through tinted wrap-around glass as he swishes his lightheaded way across the parking lot.

And thus, he lies not to save his son from merciless vengeful gods, but rather to save himself. His own father, Ernest (Red) Lebrun, would have found the dynamic reversed from the beginning to the end; and no doubt Robert was aware of this at some point along the progression, knew that his own father, were he placed in a similar circumstance, would not have been able to credit his son with possessing an overpowering fear of retribution — and therefore the child’s experience would have remained intact, still his very own, unmolested by the rush of a father’s consciousness of himself. And no doubt this awareness of how Ernest Lebrun would have responded to a similar set of circumstances, circumstances in which he, Robert Lebrun, would have been the lonely unmolested son, was a critical factor in making it impossible, even now, for Robert to become anything other than that lonely unmolested son.

But, not so for Master Nicholas:

The redheaded Ernest gave to his young son an absolute truth and an absolute falsity; and for that reason Robert was forever a child. Robert, to his son, gave relative truth and relative falsity; and for that reason Nicholas was never a child.

The question of responsibility, then, seems not to have been raised in at least three generations. Understandably, one might say, with such mediocre human beings. But still .

. . well. No matter.

Perhaps I should admit that I have wilfully neglected to mention many of the less-significant characters, circumstances, and actions present in this story, hoping that my failure to mention them will permit them to exist just as they are — which is to say, as insignificant — gaining thus for my little fiction a certain verisimilitude and a roundness seldom found in fiction, even in the most self-consciously ‘realistic’ fiction. Or, as the poet Verlaine has

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quite appropriately written: ‘Ce qui m’intéressé n’est pas toujours ce qui m’importe.’ It must be true, after all is said and done, that it is more important to be interesting than it is interesting to be important. Well.

So there you have it, my friends.

(Here, Mr. Binzwanger, with a twinkle in his eye, got down on his knees and prayed fervently to Heaven for the souls of the slain Alfred Coburn, Mr. Toni Scott, and the three Lebruns. Not unexpectedly, this greatly amused the entire company. R.B.)

a Hart 66

ONE OF THE INTIMATE MEMOIRS

OF ALVIN EDWARD COOPER

When you go to the park to pick up girls, sometimes you do and sometimes you don't, and sometimes you meet people you don't try to. Like Old Trott, who I don't think I was ever even introduced to. But he usually was always in the park when I went there, so we just got to talking. The reason Old Trott was in the park so much was because he was a printer and he used the park as an office.

One day Old Trott asked me: 'Alvin, you're a good boy with a head on your shoulders; how would you like to come work for me?'

I felt like saying that I was twenty-two and too old to be a good boy, but I didn't want to be rude so I just asked what I would have to do.

'You won't have to kill yourself. A couple of nights a week you'll help me print, and if there's an errand to do during the day you can do it . . . and I'll pay you according to what you do. None of this salary business — that's for the capitalistic exploiters of the working class.'

It sounded easy, so I said okay. The first job he gave me was to deliver some pamphlets to the Sexual Liberation League at their sit-in on the steps of City Hall, and on the way back to try and collect a \$13.27 bill from the Citizens' Committee for Better Housing. When I got to City Hall, the police had begun carting away members of the Sexual Liberation League.

Luckily, they hadn't carted away the leader yet, so I was able to deliver the pamphlets okay. Then I went to the Citizens' Committee for Better Housing. They said they were too weak to pay any bills because they were on a twenty-four

hour fast. I went back to the park and told that to Old Trott. He told me to go again and ask them if maybe they weren't too weak to pay half the bill. They said they were too weak to pay that much and gave me five dollars on account.

When I got back to the park, Old Trott was talking to a lady about her grandson's wedding invitations.

'Fifteen dollars—that's highway robbery. When my Ronald got married, you only charged me ten dollars—and there were more people invited.'

'Mrs. Ginsberg, that was twenty-five years ago.'

'It was twenty-three years ago. Shows how little you know.'

'Well, things cost more today than they did then.'

'The city is raising the rent on your park bench?'

'Mrs. Ginsberg, I don't want to get aggravated — if you don't like my

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prices, go to Al Bainya.'

(Al Bainya was a guy who had a big printing plant on Suffolk Street that did mostly big jobs for advertising agencies. Most of the old timers in the East Village didn't like him because he lived on Park Avenue, never gave any money to charity, and would only come to the East Village to take his wife shopping.)

Mrs. Ginsberg said she'd pay twelve dollars. Old Trott said fourteen, not a penny less.

Mrs. Ginsberg said thirteen, not a penny more.

'Mrs. Ginsberg, I don't want to get aggravated. I'll do it for thirteen-fifty if you don't say another word.'

'Thirteen-fifty is all right if you just let me say one thing.'

'All right, say one thing.'

'I . . . I don't know what to say.'

After she left, Old Trott said to me: 'That woman will bring back the depression, singlehanded.'

'She sure sounded stingy.'

'Well, at least what she says she'll pay, she'll pay. Did those phonies from the Housing Committee give you any money?'

'Five dollars on account.'

'I hope they didn't strain their fur coats taking the money out. A bunch of phoney liberals. They're as bad as the capitalists.'

A guy in green corduroy pants came over and said he was from The Committee to Abolish Income Taxes. He asked how much it would cost for two thousand leaflets. Old Trott told him thirty-eight dollars.

'That's more than we can afford to spend. I guess we'll just have to run them off on our mimeograph machine.'

Trott got aggravated. 'Mimeograph. Mimeograph! Mimeograph is for anarchists! If you have a good cause, you should have good printing.'

The guy said he'd think it over, but I could tell he wouldn't.

Old Trott asked me if I could help him do some printing that evening. I couldn't, because it was the night I worked at Garcia's Superette. He asked me what time I got through.

'A little after midnight.'

'I don't start till one o'clock anyways. Meet me at twelve-thirty at Roosevelt's Bar-B-Q.'

I didn't feel like working after working, but somehow I didn't say no.

About a quarter past twelve I got to Roosevelt's Bar-B-Q and sat in a booth to wait for Old Trott. When he came in, he and Roosevelt gave each other big hello's.

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'How's the printing business?'

'Could be worse. . . . How's the restaurant business?'

'Things are slow. . . . I could use some more circulars, but business is so bad I can't afford them. . . . Maybe I can have my kid make some up on a mimeograph machine.'

'Mimeograph. Mimeograph! Mimeograph is for hash houses!! You have a good restaurant, you should have good printing. Your credit is good with me. How many leaflets do you need?'

'How much are you going to charge me?'

'Fifteen dollars a thousand.'

'I'll take thirty-two hundred. Make it an even forty-five dollars.'

They agreed on thirty-five hundred at fifty dollars; then Old Trott came over to the booth where I was sitting.

'You hungry, Alvin?'

'A little bit.'

‘Order some coffee and a roll,’ he leaned over and whispered: ‘Don’t eat any of the food here — everything’s greasy.’

The waitress came over and Old Trott ordered tea in a glass with lemon, saying: ‘Give my friend here anything he wants.’

I ordered coffee and a roll.

After we finished eating, Trott led the way down East Third to Clinton Street. I was curious to know where we were going because no one knew where Old Trott did his printing. One rumor was that he did it in the Daily Forward Building by getting the night watchman drunk.

When we got to Rivington Street, Old Trott said: ‘The whole world doesn’t have to know where I do my printing. You have to promise not to tell anybody.’

‘I promise.’

We walked down Rivington till we got to the Mother Kimmelblat’s Wine Company. Old Trott turned on a flashlight. We walked down an alley, through a double-locked door, down a flight of stairs, through a cellar, up another flight of stairs, through a room filled with tombstones without names on them, through another alley, and then through a green and rusty metal door. Old Trott turned his flashlight off and flicked on a light switch.

We were in a room filled with about twenty printing presses. He took a piece of paper from his briefcase and said: ‘This is a list of the paper we’ll need. Come help me carry it.’

We went into a storeroom that was filled with more paper than I’d ever seen. There was a pile of stationery there that told me where we were!

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We were in Al Bainya’s printing plant! I was so amazed I almost tripped over a dolly. Old Trott said to me: ‘Don’t look so much, and look where you’re going.’ He pointed out what paper he needed, and I loaded it on the dolly.

I wheeled the paper over to a printing press that Old Trott was putting ink on. He told me we were going to do a thousand booklets for the Hispano Hibernian Society, who were wonderful people because they paid in advance. He showed me where to pile the paper and went over to a fat little machine in the corner to make the plates. It was exciting to think that we'd be turning a pile of blank paper into a booklet.

Old Trott came back with the first plate, put it on the press and made some adjustments which used up about ten pieces of paper. Then he told me to keep an eye on the press as it purred, hissed, jingled and whirled, printing on each piece of paper, then piling them up neatly. When it finished with all the paper I'd put in it, I shut the switch and went over to tell Old Trott that the press was ready for the next batch.

He wasn't at the plate-making machine where I figured he'd be, so I looked around for him. He wasn't in the room with the presses or the storeroom, so I figured he must be in the washroom. I lit a cigaret and waited for him to come out. After a while I had to use the bathroom, myself, so I went in. Old Trott was lying on the floor. His face was pained and he was breathing hard short breaths.

'What's wrong, Trott?'

'It's nothing. I'm having an attack.' He was the color of the tombstones without names on them.

'Should I call a doctor?'

'It's nothing, it's happened before . . . I'll rest. I'll be all right.' He tried to sit up, but couldn't.

'Maybe I better call a doctor, Trott, you don't look too good.'

'You can't. I made up with Al Bainya that no one should know I'm here. That's the agreement.'

I knew I had to do something. 'Let me call Al Bainya and tell him.'

‘So tell him.’

I got the number from information and dialed it. The voice of a woman with an English accent answered.

‘May I talk to Mr. Bainya? It’s an emergency.’

She called him to the phone and I told him what was happening. He said that he was playing gin rummy with a doctor and they’d be right down. In about half an hour I heard a key in the door. Two men came in, One had a black bag, so I knew he must be the doctor, and the other had

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to be Al Bainya. We went into the washroom. Old Trott was lying still, staring at the ceiling. Bainya asked him how he was feeling.

‘How should I feel? I’m having a heart attack.’

The doctor examined him, gave him an injection and some oxygen. Trott looked a little better and sat up. ‘Do you have any health insurance?’ the doctor asked.

‘What insurance? You just stay healthy and you don’t need insurance.’

The doctor called Al Bainya aside. ‘He’ll have to go to the hospital for a few weeks.’

‘Will he be all right?’

‘He’s a sixty-year-old man having his third heart attack; only God knows... At best, he’ll need three weeks in the hospital and a month of complete rest.’

‘Take him to Mt. Sinai and send the bill to me.’

‘It’ll cost you a small fortune, Al. Better let me call a city hospital.’

‘Take him to Mt. Sinai, and keep the bill as low as possible. You get enough money from me, playing gin.’

The doctor called for the ambulance, then went in and gave Old Trott some medicine. ‘This will make you sleep, and when you wake up you’ll feel better.’

‘What’s going to be, doctor?’

‘You’ll have to rest up for a while in the hospital.’

‘If it has to be, it has to be.’ He reached into his pocket. ‘Alvin, here’s the money I owe you.’

‘Pay me another time, Trott. It’s okay.’

He pulled out a dirty brown wallet and struggled with a safety pin that was holding it together.

Al Bainya said: ‘Don’t worry about it, Trott. Just relax.’

Old Trott glared. His eyes were two fires. “They should say that Trottmans don’t pay his bills?”

The doctor whispered to me: ‘Take it.’ Trott took out a dollar bill from the zippered section and a five-dollar bill from the secret compartment. I made sure to put it into my left back pocket, because that was the one without a hole in it.

While we were waiting for the ambulance, Al Bainya and the doctor were talking. ‘This will cost you a small fortune, Al. Is he a distant relative?’ Bainya said: ‘No, but he’s the man who taught me the printing business. If not for him, I’d have been a fighter until my brains were knocked out.’ The doctor chuckled. ‘You were the worst middleweight on the lower East Side.’... ‘The worst Jewish middleweight, maybe,

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but not the worst.' They talked about things till the ambulance came; then the doctor took Old Trott to the hospital, Al Bainya went home in his chauffeur-driven limousine, and I went to Mike's Pub for a beer. The next day, I went up to the hospital to visit Old Trott. He looked very pale and, except when he talked, his face was expressionless. I meant it to be a social visit, but he treated it as if I were coming to work. He gave me a list of people who owed him money and a list of people to give refunds to. All in all, the money owed him was sixty-seven dollars and the refunds were fifty-five dollars. He also told me to bring him a pastrami sandwich from Katz's Delicatessen when I came back. Most of the people who owed him money paid up when they heard he was sick in the hospital. A few people who were entitled to refunds said to keep the money as an advance on future jobs, even though I told them Old Trott was pretty sick and might not be able to do any more printing. It took me two days to contact everyone on the lists. I kept a record, and when I figured it out it came to eighteen dollars left, thirteen of which was for advances on future printing. I brought the money to Old Trott, along with a pastrami sandwich and a jar of chicken soup from Mrs. Ginsberg. He paid me twelve dollars for my work and a dollar extra, 'not a bonus, a profit-sharing.' He was looking worse. His face was a pale grey and his movements were very slow. He asked how he could get in touch with me when he got out of the hospital. I told him c/o Garcia's Superette. He said he'd let me know when he was ready to print again and that I was 'a good boy' and still had a job with him. I meant to visit Old Trott again, but somehow I never got around to it. He kind of drifted from my mind until a month later, when I got a letter from him: Dear Alvin, How are you? I'm feeling better. As you can see from my address, I'm in the convalescent home recuperating. I need you to do me a favor, if you would

be so kind. Come see me this afternoon before four o'clock, four-thirty the latest. Yours truly, Trotman I wasn't a thousand per cent anxious to go because there was a concert in the park that afternoon, which meant a lot of girls would be there. But I knew my conscience would jingle if I didn't go, so I went to Katz's and got a pastrami sandwich to take to him — also, a bagle and cottage cheese

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I figured he might like. At first, I almost didn't recognize him. He was skinny as his bones, and his hair was greyer and thinner. He talked very slowly. 'Alvin, I'm glad you're here . . . Take a look at this.' He handed me a booklet. 'I'm not only a printer now, I'm a publisher.' There was a little gleam in his eye as I looked at the booklet. The booklet seemed to gleam, too; it was on glossy paper, printed in three colors: THE HOME FOR AGED AND INFIRMED HEBREWS DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST GAZETTE GRAPE PICKERS STOMPED ON BY BOSSES Boycott Being Organized As I started to read it, he said: 'We're organizing a boycott of the Mother Kimmelblat Wine Company . . . Do you know how much they pay their grape pickers?' 'How much?' 'If you read the papers, you'd know.' He handed me a pile of gazettes and said: 'The best place to distribute them is on the corner of Sixth Avenue and Eighth Street. If you hurry, you'll be in time to catch the crowd coming home from work.' I took the gazettes. I didn't feel like distributing them; I felt funny doing it; but I did it.

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If only I could feel again, truly feel a distinct emotion. It is all an emptiness within, a wind howling over a barren snow, full of rage and fury but without meaning or direction. Only the mordant physical sensations move me now: hunger and thirst, evacuation of my bowels. I cannot feel happiness or sadness or guilt or sorrow except as a cursed reflex of my brain. And I am dead inside.

Yet, my mind sees, touches many states of feeling; it reasons, weighs, balances, judges, tells me how to react. It brings forth the appropriate response, a conditioned response, to confrontations of reality. I am insane, quite mad, but I see myself as I am. This puzzles me, for I had always believed that I was not growing sick so long as I was able to observe things as they happened to me.

I am quite aware of my situation at the moment. I am in Ward 6, the violent ward, because I wished to be here. I had heard about Ward 6, with its padded cells and the bars on the windows, and I'd felt that I should be there. I had assumed that I would see violent deranged madmen wandering about some huge arenalike room, hear cries of patients resounding in agony. But Ward 6 was not like that.

I find it to my liking. I have a private cell. No one disturbs me. I do not have to perform any of the useless amenities of society. I may eat and sleep when I like. At times, I may sit for hours or stand until my legs are numb, without moving or thinking, perhaps staring at a crack in the ceiling until it becomes no longer a crack but something beautiful and satisfying, almost meaningful and important.

Damned be the days when I thought, for that was when I began to die, to disintegrate by degrees. To think is to doubt, to exaggerate, to realize that nothing is knowable, to discover

the intangibility of things, to erode the soul and eventually eradicate it completely.

I must tell you what I am. I must play the game fairly or you will say that I have deceived you. I am number 6-17-59781. The number itself tells something about me. The 6 is, of course, the number of the ward I am in. The 17 is the room or cell I occupy. I was admitted in 1959 as patient number 781. You see, I have been here a long time.

What is wrong with me? I believe the hospital records will have recorded it as catatonic schizophrenia. Of course, I have never achieved the more advanced state of complete withdrawal so I must be force fed and led about like a mindless child. But I do reach periods of shutting out the world about me almost completely for several hours at a time. This is

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not healthy, yet it pleases me to do so. The doctor informs me that I do so when problems I do not wish to face rise in my mind. This seems too simple an explanation. My condition interests me immensely. I know what is happening. I am as detached an observer as anyone else. I too can stand apart from myself and study myself. Even as I am lost in a dream of cloudlike stillness, I see and hear without reacting. But I do not react because I do not choose to react. But I can react if I wish to. That is how I came to Ward 6. I was standing in my room, motionless and still. I am not certain if I am thinking when I am in these trances. Ideas in some form do collide in the back of my mind, but I am not thinking with words. And, as I was standing, I heard two passing interns stop to look at me. 'Look,' said one of them with delight. 'Here's a catatonic. Let's take a look at him.' 'But, Jerry,' said the other — I remember that name — 'do you think we should? We're not supposed to . . . ' 'Don't worry about it,' said Jerry. He approached me boldly but, I sensed, hesitantly with that inner fear of the insane which characterizes all normal persons, and which they cannot hide. He was a short stout man of perhaps twenty-five, with heavy horn-rimmed glasses and thick black hair. His companion stood in the doorway a distance behind him. 'What's your name?' he asked. He waited, I said nothing. 'This here's a real live one.' He laughed. 'Jerry,' whispered his friend. 'Take it easy. Nothing to be afraid of. Catatonic. They don't respond to anything. You can stick a pin into them and they don't feel it.' This mistaken notion, based upon something he must have read in a magazine, suddenly pleased him. From his pocket, he took a large safety pin and pressed it open with his thumb. He stood next to me and pressed the point into my arm, not slowly as though testing for a response, but hurriedly, almost savagely. Instantly, I was upon him. With one hand, I held fast to his hair and

with the clenched fist of the other smashed his glasses against his eyes, first one eye and then the other. I hammered my fist into his face, closing my eyes so that I would not have to look at it. I meant to blind him. I felt the glass cutting my knuckles and heard him screaming. I swung again at the dangling man and broke his nose before the other intern seized me. I became calm again at once and sat down and looked at the young man on his knees crying with his hands over his face, and I felt that it

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would be very good to be able to cry. They gave me a sedative and I fell asleep.

This event earned me admittance to Ward 6. I had wanted to do something which would put me there. I realized that I had waited to react, had played the game my way until the last moment, I had been aware of what was happening. I had heard the words; but I do not know if I could have answered him.

I discussed this with the doctor the next day. He asked me why I wanted to hurt the young intern. He knew what had happened, but he wanted to know why I had not simply spoken and stopped it. The reasons that came to me were that I saw myself as the embodiment of all misery and pain and suffering and the intern as all unfeeling oneness, and that I wanted to see Ward 6.

We discussed this at great length. At times I am very rational, I knew the real reason I had done it was to be sent to Ward 6. He asked me why. I told him what I had told him for several weeks: my theory that all insanity is actually cured in the snake-pit, not by the medieval system of fear and its modern equivalent in electric-shock treatments, but by the simple process of . . . How can I explain it? I envied the man with new shoes until I saw a man without legs. When one visits a hospital, he is suddenly glad he has only minor ailments. Being among really-crazed madmen I

thought would make me feel much better.

This is why I had to go to Ward 6. It was my only chance to be cured. This seems to the doctor to be characteristic of me. I always propose my own treatment, enjoy myself analyzing him, trying to break down his science into simple terms. I know he resents this. The psychiatrist always dislikes the patient who speaks of his condition in the same terms he uses.

Do you see? This mass of flesh I am, this complex of being, is a toy. I enjoy playing with it as much as the doctor does. I, too, am interested in its various actions.

I have been in Ward 6 about six months now. Have I improved? I truly cannot be certain. I have refused to leave my room at times. My spells do not seem to have lessened in intensity. Perhaps they are even worse. I am not sure.

You cannot know how obsessed I am with my illness. It gives me immense pleasure.

I had a visitor today, a beautiful woman with dark eyes and a face that whispered to me.

As always, I walked across the green and white tile squares in the visitors' room and extended my hand to her. 'Hello, my name is Cor-

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poral.' I really shouldn't say things like that. It only makes them think I am completely insane.

She asked me if I knew her. I said I didn't, and she began to cry. It seemed to me that I had seen her before, but I couldn't be certain. My memory is not good.

When she told me she was my wife I wanted to tell her she was lying. I had never been married. But then, of course, I am the one who is insane; and perhaps she is my wife. I tried to comfort her and told her not to cry. It disturbed me greatly.

I know she is my wife. She committed me after I tried to kill her. They only want me to admit to it and the other thing.

They want to trick me into talking about the little girl.

I see her lying on the grass with her eyes staring at me, her neck broken. I think of the time when, as a small boy, I killed a bird, first wounding it with an air rifle, then stepping on it to crush the life from its suffering body. The trace of blood that trickled from its beak as my foot broke the wispy bones of its frame, trickles along the brow of my mind. The girl screamed. I could not help myself. I meant no harm.

They want me to talk about that. How can I? I don't understand it.

There is nothing that I need from anyone. It is enough to be left alone, to stand in my room and listen to the wind in the trees outside my window, to try to understand what I am expected to do to be allowed to live my life. I do not wish to think about my past, but to begin again in a new world, my world, where the ordered relation of things corresponds to a pattern, my pattern.

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CLARENCE MAJOR

EXCERPTS FROM A NOVEL IN PROGRESS

There was no food and no money, and tomorrow the rent would have to be paid. There had once been a time not very long ago when Thyssen kept plenty of tasty foods and even excessive quantities of liquors, though she herself didn't drink much of it — and extra money. In fact, two or three hundred dollars were usually in the locked handbag under the bed. But now Ray was, as she put it, showing his ass. And the boys were doing without . . .

It was true that Ray was laid off his four-dollar-an-hour factory job. This was summer time, as they say, and the living was supposed to be easy. But, shit, thought Thyssen, I just don't feel right without some money!

The only person she knew she felt easy enough about borrowing money from was Stella, her neighbor; and it was obvious that the good-natured Stella was, herself, broke.

Anyway, she and Ray had usually had enough to make it on, whether or not he was working. With extras, too. But the hangup was — she immediately guessed was — that she could not stand him sexually any more. It made her feel grimy and dirty. She knew that her attitude in this matter was destroying her economic security; but there was nothing she felt she could do to make herself even pretend to him that she enjoyed him. She had almost no control left, and her personal fear and hatred of him came out almost every waking moment they were together. But, usually he wasn't around.

Ray had gone to 47th Street and applied for Unemployment Compensation. He'd stood in the long slow-moving lines for hours. His self-esteem, low as it was to start with, was even lower. Every year when the automobile

factory laid off, this feeling crowded his life; but this time, now that he was with Thyssen (whom he admired and loved — and hated himself for), it was worse. He wasn't really married to her, and he could leave any time he wished; but he didn't wish to do so. He knew from experience that life could be much more miserable alone. There was nothing quite so horrible as being alone and sad.

One day he had come home from one of those long rambling drives through the city, wasting gas, and had gone straight to the dresser drawer and taken out his good wrist watch. Thyssen had asked: 'Where you going?' He'd answered: 'To the pawnshop.' And that had been the beginning of more feelings of self-pity.

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But it was obvious to him that Thyssen had no sympathy for how he felt, what he suffered. So, lately he kept his mouth shut, and got drunk.

But Thyssen really knew that things were getting down to the nitty-gritty as far as Ray was concerned: for instance, she knew she would have to get some money some kind of way to pay the rent. She couldn't sit back and wait for him to pay it. She knew one way she could get some quick money, but she didn't want to do it that way. And jobs made her sick, because white people were too difficult for her to get along with. . . . Every time she went over in her mind the possibilities of escaping her economic plight, she ended right back where she had started.

Late that night, Thyssen came in from the streets feeling very tired. She had left the kids alone upstairs, asleep. The numbness in her bones was a reality. And she knocked softly at the office door on the first floor. There was no answer.

Well, tomorrow she'd pay the rent. She climbed the stairs. With one finger, she fingered the wet roll of paper money in her purse. The bills were damp with human sweat.

And, just as she knew, when she opened the door of her apartment, Ray wasn't there.

The days dripped by; some summer rain came, and a little sun. Fall was near, but the heat was still intense at midday. Stella hadn't gotten a job; but she was so busy enjoying herself, running from pleasant places like Lake Meadows Restaurant & Lounge to The Baby Grand Lounge & Ballroom to the new Strand Show Lounge to Robin's Nest to The Fabulous Two Restaurant & Lounge, etc. She was a beautiful young woman living a modestly-plush life, an exotic black woman escorted often by a very Aryan-type white man.

One night, not long after they had started really going out a lot together, Stella and Hussey sat in his car, parked before the building in which they lived. He and she both were a little high, and he had the radio going.

'Why so quiet?' he asked.

She smiled, without answering.

'Did you enjoy yourself tonight?'

'I had a nice time.'

'I want to kiss you, Stella.'

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She didn't answer — but smiled.

He pulled her into his arms and kissed her fully in the mouth, and she didn't resist.

For some reason, she suddenly saw in her mind's eye the face of Old Man Albert Irwin. The old man was kissing her. And she felt no repulsion. The young man, here and now, was lost somewhere on the back side of her mind.

And why had Albert Irwin, the withdrawn old man, come to the forefront?

Hussey said: 'I suppose — Oh, well, forget it.'

Quickly, she looked at him. 'What? What is it?'

'Nothing at all.' He seemed very irritated.

'What's bothering you, Hussey Glauber?'

'You.'

'What about me?'

'Your coldness toward me.'

'My coldness toward you!'

'You don't answer me half the time!'

'What'd you mean, answer you.' She could tell he was angry, and it didn't please her at all. His anger was irritating to her.

'Like when I ask you a question or something.'

'I answer what I can. Some things can't be answered, Hussey.'

Greatly and physically upset, he turned fully to her and took her shoulders into his hands and shook her.

For a moment she saw it not as the itch of a man, but as the fury of white supremacy. And it almost turned her stomach. A wall flew up between them. That is to say, another wall flew up.

'Can't you come out of your shell?' he demanded. 'Can't I reach you? I've taken you out almost every night this week,

and yet I feel that we don't really talk to each other! We don't really get any affection across! I kissed you a moment ago and your lips were cold!

She repeated: 'Your lips were cold.'

'Mine?'

'No. I was repeating you. My lips were cold.' Then she laughed suddenly, strangely. 'Maybe it's not a good thing,' she said.

'Us?'

'Yes,' she answered.

'We can be, if you'd let us!'

She was smiling mysteriously.

He spoke. 'What is it, anyway? Is it that I'm white?'

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'No, it's not that —'

'Stella,' he cried softly, 'it is something. Something is standing between us. I feel it. I could reach out to you, touch you, be with you, love you, but —'

'Don't talk any more, Hussey.'

'See? Don't talk any more. See?'

'Well, we're not getting anywhere.'

'What argument do you want to advance right now?' he asked. 'Do you want to tell me that the state of the world is such and such? I mean — you know — that things are so racially terrible that it's impossible for us to even say hello in the morning or hold hands or kiss or marry each other?'

'I'm awfully sorry, Hussey,' she said, 'but I don't follow you.'

'You don't, huh?'

He took out his cigarettes and lit one with the car lighter.

'Tell me about your work,' she said.

'How come?'

'I want to know.'

'What do you want to know?'

'What did you do today?'

'I told a Negro woman with ten children how she could go about getting free dental care for her children.'

This statement brought back upon Stella all the sad poverty of her childhood with her mother in the Projects. She was almost on the edge of tears, but she controlled herself. A white boy such as Hussey wouldn't, she reasoned, understand such tears.

'And you're paid to tell Negro women such things?'

'No, I'm not paid.'

'No, you're not paid. You do it out of the goodness of your heart, because you love humanity?'

'Oh, Stella! Oh, Stella! I don't know you, do I?'

Suddenly, without answering, she got out of the car and went up the steps.

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Faintly, in the distance — probably from the building across the alley — Stella could hear the voice of a great Negro singer sounding on record:

He hauls my ashes
He strokes my fiddle
Threads my needle

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Creams my wheat
Lawl, he's a damn good man to have around . . .

and she lay abed, sweetly naked, stroking her soft warm flesh, much in the way a small child does, unconsciously. In many ways, Stella was still a child — always would be a child.

And yet ,she was strangely wise, deeply informed by nature on natural processes. For instance, she understood the song she heard sung by the female blues woman.

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Stella was dreaming again. She was a little girl sitting on the side of a bed somewhere in a dark room and listening carefully for sounds from outside the room. She knew she had to be quiet or face danger.

I'm not the princess but the ugly half-sister!

She felt that she must be crazy. For a moment, she knew she was grown, seeing herself through grown eyes. Then, really she had no idea why she had gotten up or why she felt scared. Of Sadie? Of the dark? Accidentally, she felt the wet spot. Instantly it became clear: she had wet the bed with warm youthful liquid. But now there was no mistake about it: Sadie was groaning and moaning. At first, it seemed the sounds might be from pain; but after a few of the sounds became truly meaningful, Stella knew that they were sounds created by the female during sexual possession. And who was the man? Not her father? And she cried, half awakened, grown again, knowing the child's pain.

Once in sound sleep again, she plunged right into the depths of a dream of a delightful, though strange, luncheon . . . The weird brothers were gathered around her as though she might be the substance for consumption. She sat at their low Chinese table with the six of them.

(Did they really possess one? If not, where did it come from to be in the dream; and, incidentally, now she knew she was dreaming while she dreamed of the adventure with the playful fat brothers.)

She could see herself dressed in her finest pink and white outfit, and she knew she smelled and looked as fresh as an African flower . . .

They all were trying to talk at the same time — so excited and thrilled to have her!

'What makes your lips so pretty?' asked one.

It was the first time she had giggled like a school girl since high school. Then she filled her mouth with a plump fried shrimp dipped in cheese sauce.

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... Mr. John Raley was up early as usual on Sunday morning, getting ready for church.

Little Stella lay awake with those large dark eyes upon him. She lay quietly by her young mother, Sadie.

The man looked lovingly down at his four-year-old daughter. God bless her, he thought. Yes, the Lord had sent the young Sadie to him, and the Lord had blessed them with a girl child . .

But Sadie wanted to go to dances, to be among young ones her own age. He told himself, I understand that . . . I'm old enough to be her grandfather . .

Stella, the child, watched the tall powerful-looking man as he dressed himself in a dark suit. . . . He frightened her sometimes, but she knew he was kind. She loved him. . . . But Sadie's hands fed her. Milk came from Sadie. And punishment came from Sadie. . . . The big man was father, was good; but soon he became only a vague memory — then, forgotten . .

Morning; and he felt much worse than he had felt in a very long time. Tired. Tired. The swelling in his joints, the pain. He felt very weak, very tired.

He lay in bed, not sleeping, he had had a hard night.

The sun came in this morning thinly as always, but it was not good; it did not warm him. Perhaps it would never warm him again.

There was the long tiredness of existence, and the welcome whisper of something called the end. The world he was leaving behind really shouldn't matter, and yet he had made arrangements through his lawyer for things to be done after he was gone. He remembered his conversation by phone, a few minutes ago, with the lawyer, Roger H. Kirk . .

‘... What’s the trouble, Al?’ Kirk asked.

‘No trouble, old man. Just listen. Take this down: I, Albert Irwin, hereby leave all my worldly possessions, that is, money, stocks, bonds, shares, etc., to Miss Stella Raley of 5900 Stoney Island, 2nd floor.’

‘Uh — let me see now. I take it that this is a change of your will?’

‘That’s correct.’

‘Of course, Al, Elsie may try to charge that you were out of your mind when this change was made, and —’

‘Listen, I don’t give a damn what she tries to do — you fix it so she can’t meddle in my affairs!’

CLARENCE MAJOR

‘Al, she has been nice to you.’

‘Okay — sure, she’s been nice to me, and I’ve been nice to her. I’ve paid her for everything she’s done for me. I don’t feel that I owe her a damn thing!’

‘May I ask who — uh — is Miss Raley?’

‘No, you may not! As soon as you can get the new will over here, Roger, and —’ He suddenly couldn’t catch his breath. He hung on for a few seconds without a voice. ‘And . . . uh, I’ll sign it.’

It was almost laughable, he thought, leaving everything he possessed to a stranger, a beautiful black girl. But what could be sweeter, what could be more in correlation with his reluctant suspicion that the Third World would be a reality, and that perhaps some of those black, brown, and yellow people of the future would think a little less hard of the deeds of the white man, when they were on top. Despite the latent logic, it was laughable. But, so was everything!

Thyssen knew she had screwed up as far as getting help from Ray again. Half the time he didn’t come around, and it was to be expected. How could she have acted otherwise? She couldn’t stand an unclean drunken man fumbling with her body. It was simply one of the things she could not tolerate. So she’d have to dig up some bread somewhere, somehow. When she picked out a trick, he was always somebody who looked clean, who in some way appealed to her sensibilities. Otherwise, no deal. So, in this sense, she was not a professional prostitute.

On the other hand, a little hustling, and even a little boosting, were — she considered — only fair for a woman in her position.

This night, however, Ray returned. With a strange smile, he sat down on the dark couch not far from her. Thyssen

was watching a dumb TV show; and the boys were sitting too close to the screen, really digging the slap-dash action. In a lone chair, Stella sat, legs crossed, watching, also.

Ray whispered to her: 'How you doing?'

'What?'

'How you doing?'

'I'm doing all right. What's it to you, nigger?'

'Now, see — why you got to call me all kinds of names? I just asked you how you was doing.'

'And I just told you.'

'Yeah — but them names.'

CLARENCE MAJOR

'Well, shit — you is a nigger.'

'Are,' he said. 'I can't talk to you, can't even get started.'

'Then, why you come here?'

'To see how you was doing. To see the boys.'

'You ain't even said hello to them.'

The boys had heard what was said, despite sounds from the TV. They turned. 'Hi, Ray,' they said, together.

'How you all doing?'

They both said: 'All right.'

'Them is my boys.'

'Yeah,' said Thyssen, still focussed on the screen.

He turned back to his ex-mistress. 'Well, how you been making out?'

She could smell the rank odor of whiskey on his breath. She hesitated, then answered: 'Didn't I just tell you?'

He gave a sigh of disgust. 'You all got food?'

'Don't worry about it,' Thyssen said.

There was a long silence, in which he focussed on the television's screen with the rest. Then, in a quiet, almost quizzical voice, he asked Stella: 'How you been doing . . . Miss Raley?'

He had never before addressed her as 'Miss Raley,' and Stella was somewhat curious; but, as a service to her friend,

Thyssen, she didn't answer.

33

He knew it was dangerous for him to be seen anywhere on the streets during daylight hours, and almost as risky for him to travel anywhere by night. The cops were looking for him, and Jomo was, also.

Yeah, he had told the Feds where the guns and ammunition were, and he had told them Jomo's real name — which was George Luke Williams. But the heat already knew Jomo's real name and only wanted to get their singing bird, Ron, securely in their righthand pocket.

He knew they had him. He was 'out' only because he had made a deal with them; and, from experience, he knew he wouldn't be out long. The police couldn't be trusted to keep their word. They fucked you every time. They made a stool-pigeon out of you, then busted you anyway.

But he had been so desperate for his freedom at the time they had him that night in the squad car. They found three caps of horse in his pocket and said they'd let him keep it if he would talk. He knew they had enough on him to send him away. They found the gun later that same night in his Projects apartments. (His wife had moved out with the children and was

CLARENCE MAJOR

now living with her mother.) They had him where they wanted him. And Jomo and his followers were really out to get him, and Ron knew the police would do nothing to protect him. His life wasn't really worth a penny; and that was why he hid all these days, until now, at his sister's shabby basement apartment on State Street. On this Wednesday night, he ventured out though — tired of being in the stuffy apartment. He would be careful. He had his sister's gun. He knew that, if the cops saw him, if the ones who knew him saw him, he would be picked up and arrested, even if he were clean. He had had this information from his mother, by phone, a few days earlier. So, he not only had the heat to avoid, but Jomo, bad luck, heaven and hell. He carried the .32 pushed down into his belt at the center of his back.

.la kaŋlo.

THE ARTIST & HIS WORLD . . .

1 — His Uncle: 'That's a pretty good pin-up, my boy. Why not paint her the way she is?'

2 — His nephew: 'How come you don't go to work like my dad?'

3 — A client: 'Yes, well, ah, something a little more chic.'

4 — The neighbor: 'Got a beer-can opener, bud?'

5 — You don't see — you feel!

6 — Yeh. Not bad. Not bad.

7 — This one eludes me completely.

8 — You mean to say you actually sold this?

9 — I don't get it. I mean, why paint an egg when there are so many beautiful things in the world?

10 — Yeh, but will the public stand for it?

11 — That little bit of red just matching your sofa, how WONderful!

2 — His landlady: 'What are you DONG to that nice girl?'

13 — I don't — I'm not with it.

A LIVELY MUSEUM OF YOUTH AND DESIRE

(EXCERPTS FROM BOOK III)

One time when I was fourteen, I woke up and listened. I do not know what I listened for. I do not know why I listened. Our house was near the river and the field, and those things I listened for are gone. I have forgotten. In my childhood, there were white horses and damp sweet-smelling dung. From my childhood, there are the grapevine hands, the streams running nowhere out of nowhere, and the knowledge simple as a song that, if it does not run, it does not run. If it does not run, it does not run. If you do not go, you do not go. It is all lost. The rabbits in the field near our house, farlost things in my forgetfulness. The lost things of my youth. The night and all the rivers rushing down.

One night when I was little, I woke up in bed alone. Everything was quiet but the crickets in the bush. Then I knew that if you do not go, you do not go. Then I got out of bed and looked out of the window. If you do not go, you do not go.

It was very late and I knew that in the fields lived all the wild things. In the trees — that all the wild things slept. And nothing happened and I knew everything. And what I remembered most in my childhood is that if you do not go, you do not go. And it was always very late.

And then I went to bed and slept, because it was always very late. And in your dreams, you always find the redhead moon and Mrs. Sparrowbutt and the chinkchank of little girls in skates and the grass good beneath your feet and the owls and bats of darkness alive in the night rushing down outside. If, I thought, you never go, you never go . . . and you

are sleeping in your childhood, very big with knowledge.

The dream that is in people's faces on a train, the brightness of traveling will come into a small town at night, bringing with it a brightness, a newness that comes from travel: a spirit, a warmth that is in people who move a great deal, who come and go suddenly . . . the dream that is in people's faces on a train comes into the town, then goes away, leaving something there to the people in a town because it comes and goes so suddenly.

At the crossing, people waiting and the train going by, slowing up for a signal at the crossing, the small children watching the faces of travelers

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in the train, some waving, but receiving little answer from the travelers, nevertheless waving and feeling somehow good about the whole thing, these smalltown people waiting at a blocked crossing at eight at night for the train to go by and on: feeling the goodness of travel, the brightness coming into their lives: and here they are, going somewhere (really nowhere in particular except across the tracks to home or friend, but going somewhere, and having this little going made rather swell by the bigger going the train always brings) . . .

The dining car, if it is open, will be the main feature on the twelve-act performance of the fast twelve-car train.

The thing is that people are eating and living on that train when it is moving. That is what is hard for them to understand: this life, this fact of living and moving.

And the train begins to leave.

There is a watchfulness and a kind of little gladness in the faces of the thirteen people waiting for ten minutes at the crossing. Some of the more daring of the children have walked down the tracks and around the back end, watching carefully all the time the travelers on the train . . . especially, in the dining car . . .

It rolls easily (shug . . . shug . . . shug . . .), leaving. Everyone on it leaving. The people by the windows were mildly irritated at stopping here before, wanting very much to get on with the journey; but now, on leaving, on rolling out of the town forever, never to see these thirteen people exactly the same way again, nor to see them at all, separately or together . . . moving away, the train rolling, the people standing still, yet passing by into the darkness: now, on leaving, a kindness comes over everyone . . . everyone feels lonely.

The people crossing behind the train, the train gaining speed . . . a little automobile crossing and going on down the street . . . the people going across slowly.

The train that came into the town at night going away and leaving them. . . .

. . . From the purple forest thicket, the children coming. . . He did not let go the little hand in his.

Over the green hill climbing together . . . the girl child was always laughing . . . chattering of everything all the while she was laughing (saying about a cloud in the pale sky or a bird they heard singing from some dark secret place). She swung his arm and looked for a moment into

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his face, then out over the lonely meadows below them or back toward

the forest or up into the transparent sky where a crow was soaring high.

Her tongue was never still.

Though the boy was always serious (because he had great work to do, that was why), he could not help smiling at the things she kept saying, and at how she never stopped.

... They went there where the little yellow house sat, where they lived ... hand-in-hand, and he did not let her go: he listened to everything she said, though even he could make nothing of most of the things she rambled on about ...

about that bird there sailing or a cake she was going to bake and what kind of icing she would use and about a dog, some dog which did tricks, though he could not make out where this dog was, although he even asked her.

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here a long time —

and he saw the concern in the young woman's white oval face under her round red hat. and he wanted to run someplace and find the street for them.

I have lived around here a long time, the little guy said into the woman's concerned face. but I have never heard of such a street. thank you so much, the woman said softly.

I have lived here a long time, the little guy said.

and they were walking up the street away. the little guy was standing there among all the buildings. he felt that it would begin to snow early this year. late in october. he felt the snow already in the air.

he watched them until they walked under a streetlight together and turned the corner and were gone forever. he looked up at the sky and down on the ground again, trying to find the name of a street somewhere so that he could run after them and tell them where it was they were going.

and that was in september and now it is december. and he is still standing there trying to find out where they are all going. the woman has become more lovely, the man more romantic. and they are still asking him, what is the way to mulberry street. and he is trying to find within himself the way to all the streets.

and remembers, standing there, the look of concern on the woman's face. he would like to tell her and show her the warm room where she would go and laugh easily with friends, and light her tailormade cigarette for her, on mulberry street somewhere.

it is true that it has begun to fall in big flakes around him, and he is so little and dumb and alone and standing in

the middle of the street giving directions to all ways around him, to everybody, not knowing where.

His heart went out to her as if he were fastened to her with a long red strand of bloodvessels.

When they were together in the park or in the picture-show, they would sit so close together he'd almost choke to death from her nearness.

And when they walked along the street like one person, sometimes he would grow so desperate he'd squeeze her hand until she cried out; and then they would both start running desperately along the street, crying into the air like two wild lost things. Sometimes they would hunt each other in the hills and valleys of the park; and they found each other

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always with a great savage joy, and they would take hands and jump around chanting: London Bridge is Falling Down, Falling Down, Falling Down . . .

But there was something in her that was aloof and savage, and even through their delirium of play on swings in parks, and running through the wood, and through the dark street at night — even when they lay on their backs in the grass and looked at the stars dancing and squeezed each other's hands until they hurt — there was something in her that was savage and hard and alone. And when he wanted to make love to her, she pounded him back desperately with her little white fists until his chest was sore and he was coughing and gasping. And they would go on with this life of theirs, squeezing each other's hands until they cried aloud with joy, chasing each other through the forest and the hills until they slumped down breathless, hurting each other with a pitiless and insane hurt that was so full of joy.

When he was older he found that you remember such a love like a long steel splinter that has slipped itself into your soul, and all the bloodvessels that bound you to her are cut

and dried, and the dead ends frayed.

Then later, she told him that she was a dreamer, that in fact all of it was only a dream of theirs, or rather of hers — this whole affair of hers. She told him that it would be better if they just gave it all up now and quit once and for all, for good, because she knew she didn't really care about him. It was all a dream — do you see? Sitting by him, not close in spirit or in any way at all except physically, she told him that it was all a silly dream, that was all.

Oh, he said.

You thought it was something different, I know; and I guess it's my fault for letting you think that. I'm sorry if it's my fault.

He shook his head, hardly knowing why.

But don't ask me anymore to go through that with you, she said. I can't anymore. . . . It was a kind of experiment for both of us, wasn't it? So don't ask me anymore.

To go through that, he said, looking at her very intently. I like the way you put it.

I'm sorry if I hurt you, I don't intend to hurt you or anybody. I'm really sorry if I hurt you. But after all —

There is something beautiful and poignant in what you're saying —

Don't be silly now. I'm serious. Try to be serious, yourself, for a

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change. But we're grown up — you look grown up, anyhow! and I like to think that I am. It was only a trial, wasn't it? It was a trial for both of us! You used to call it that, yourself, all the time, didn't you? When you were so urgent at first! (she smiled) You've got to experiment or how are you ever going to know whom you love. Wasn't that the way you said it?

For a moment she was silent and in herself refound for a moment a shame she had lost. She was young in face and limbs and years, but, in experience, old. In her face was this

death of something that might have been.

I came upon her by chance where she stood tied, munching grass at the side of the road, and saw in her face how it was with her.

She was so gentle of expression, so kind and in her way understanding, that I was touched profoundly and stopped and looked at her. She looked at me.

I saw how it was with the cow. I saw in her the old loneliness: the loneliness that needs no words, no intelligence, that is seen in a thing definite and created, alone on the earth. This feeling of apartness, this seeking to the ends of the earth for the home, the beginning voice, the good things of a life, is in all live creatures; and I could see it in the cow, a loneliness.

And I was like that, too, walking up the road. So I stopped by the cow and looked at her; and she looked at me.

She was so beautiful, with such large sad beautiful eyes: a tan and brown cow, not very large, with soft hide. Her head was very remarkable and wonderful: the lines of it were positively classic. From her large protruding eyes down to the sudden evolution of the velvet nostrils, large and breathing, to the chewing mouth, with its slight horizontal crunching motion, her head was an edifying thing to see. Her chin was very nice, too. It was a slight bump with hairs growing on it, and it moved around as she chewed.

I knew her instantly, and she recognized me.

She began moving over toward where I stood by the side of the country road with my grips, waiting for a ride. She was timidly friendly, because she had been alone so long, munching grass, having no one who understood her come near.

But just then a car came by and stopped and I jumped in and the car moved away, leaving my friend behind, alone.

ROBERT LOWRY

If someone would come to you when you were ten years old and say: Look, here is your life—you would laugh at them and not be able to believe them. If they would show you on a moving-picture screen the women you would love, the days you would go through, the roads you would walk along, the things you would want, the great deeds you would try to do, you would think it so screamingly goofy and ridiculous, you would take two quick trips around the block on your scooter, then sit under the apple tree in the back yard and weep. But when you are all alone with your life in one little room in the big city you feel all around you, and when your future is in jeopardy and your past nothing at all to speak of, you get so full of sadness and loneliness. He lay stretched out on the bed, very hot in that room, his hands back of his head. It was hot. In the rooms underneath him, people moved. He heard a baby crying. What sort of place was this? Places aren't different. You can be in one little room, living in it, the days of your life.

MAUDE RUBIN

APO ETSP ROGRE ESS

**(SATIRE ON AMERICAN ENGLISH VERSE, CIRCA
2066 A.D.)**

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MAUDE RUBIN

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FREDERICK CANDELARIA

A FABLE FOR RAT PSYCHOLOGISTS, ADMINISTRATORS, & MANIPULATORS

I've lived in this brown frame house far longer than its owlish owners, their pink kids, and black cat, but the usurpers won't answer my wires (warning of termites or begging food) that I telegraph inside their ears as I scratch night letters on the woodwork of their rhythmic bedroom.

Instead, between sleeps, these dreamers, though refusing to acknowledge my existence, have mobilized to murder me: there are poisons, traps, and the cat.

The cat is made of black fur, green eyes, white claws & teeth, hate, and waiting.

All I can do is scratch like mad my messages on the wall
by the bed when they're loving sleep, dreams, or their
contracting-expanding bodies: the faster they twitch, the
louder I scratch, and keep them from making it — ever.

Perhaps I'm the only mouse forever become nightmare —
until they send the yellow wire to my grey kin: 'House cat
kills mouse.'

HANS JUERGENSEN

TO W. K. (1919-1945)

I had never dreamt of him before.
Strange enough, he being the earliest
Friend from there.
But last night I met him in Spain
During an undeclared war between
Unidentified nations in an
Indistinct year.
It ran like a film clip,
Some Guernica of the mind.
Blond as ever, he spurted toward me
With the remembered grin.
Recognition felt warm, though our uniforms
Appeared to clash. But both of us
Were fleeing truth.
Gasping words in boyhood German,
We hurried through a shelled town,
Protecting each other
With thirty-year-old phrases —
Entering the square, on market day,
We idled among booths,
All the while smiling out
Our reunion . . .
Until
I stepped out of the illusion
With glad eyes.
Awake now, I strike at memory.

My friend, I learned years ago,
Had died before a wall
in 1945.

TOM GALT

TIME CAUGHT US BY THE FORELOCK

Who hurled us astronauts
in our computer Argo
competent to all continents?
I did not ask — did you? —
to fly time's coop.
Definitely I remember
several my stiff daisies
three four nine
coated with coal dust
cited seated set
and my companion wanted ashcans
painted a new color.
So why had we to fly?
Decades that we never dreamed
heaped up, sped toward us.
Wildly we cried
to the wee world
of fenced-space nations!
Too late; time will not wait.
And we shall orbit all the rolling globe
leaving behind
ashcans and daisies
in the deserted mind.

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BROWN MILLER

LETTER TO A SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN FROM HIS SON

Dear father why
did I stare at their wrinkled wild
black glinting knuckles, knees,
necks? Why did I assume
they found white skins and fine straight hair
repulsive? Why did I wonder
(when I was a school boy's ghost)
if they ever got hard-ons
from watching blonde wiggings,
and if a black tit was like a white tit?
But more important father
is why do I now breathe all over
the mere words nigger tail
or the simple sound of a dark voice
laughing like freed satanic grace?
Jesus father! what did you breed
out of those kind days
that soft-heartedly cared for them like pets?
Yes our part of the south
was good to them, turned each
to a doll of affection.
Is it cruelty I want to shove
into her giantly jerking end?
Is her leather skirt
strapped forever to my open chest?
And where can I dance to death
if shattering doves of brown lips
don't come
to save me?

ALBERT SCOFIELD KNORR

HOW NOW NEXT TIME?

If so imperative it is
(By standards of a group of folks)
That I reincarnation grasp —
I'll watch for Browning in egg yolks.
Perhaps the bacon on that plate
Is William Shakespeare in disguise;
A Spanish omelette then might yield
Some verse, as in the pan it lies.
The deerhead, gracing western wall
Above the fireplace, has a glow
About its eyes. Were lines just penned?
Could he have possibly been Poe?
Instead of squashing flies and bugs
In summer, I should cultivate
All these as friends — to help me write
Some poems that would really rate.

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CAROL HOLE

DROSOPHILA MELANOGASTER: THE FRUIT FLY

Drosophila Melanogaster
has moved the march of science faster
because his chromosomes comprise
eight handy subjects, large in size,
for research done at small expense,
whereby the progress is immense
and all geneticists rejoice
and hail him with a single voice.
But I confess the reason why
I chiefly like this tiny fly
is this: his weighty designation,
as ominous as incantation,
heavy as thundering percussion
or philosophical discussion,
and sonorous upon the ear
as stern processions drawing near
with purple portents of disaster:
Drosophila Melanogaster.

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CONFESSIONS

Theodore Kitaif

Characters: A Young Man

A Young Woman

A YOUNG MAN AND A YOUNG WOMAN ARE SITTING SIDE BY
SIDE

She: I've been unfaithful.

He: I don't want to hear about it.

She: I want to tell you. I must.

He: I do not wish to hear about it.

She: I must, I say!

He: I don't wish to hear it.

She: I knew you wouldn't.

He: I —

She: I suppose you think I feel this urgent need to tell you
about my infidelity in order to pacify my unendurable guilt?

He: I think exactly that, in part.

She: I can say in all honesty that I feel no guilt whatever.

He: I say: good! — in that case your sole aim must be to
amuse or enlighten me, but I require neither.

She: I've never known so cold a man.

He: I —

She: I suppose you feel that you know me inside and out,
and can learn nothing new?

He: I've learned too much already, and yes, I do know you
inside and out, I know you too well — that's the trouble.

She: I —

He: I wish to heaven or wherever one wishes I didn't know
so much, didn't know you so well.

She: I take it you're bored with me.

He: I wouldn't say that.

She: I must tell you about it.

He: I — about what?

She: I must tell you about it — IT.

He: I suppose, oh well, you must — as you put it — in order to punish me. Correct?

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THEODORE KITAIF

Theodore Kitaif

She: I never thought of that.

He: I don't believe you. I would wager you thought of nothing else.

She: I would take the wager except it would be impossible — knowing

you as I do — to decide who won.

He: I'm willing to let it go at that.

She: I'm not.

He: I'm —

She: I'm going to tell you.

He: I'm not going to listen.

She: I know you will because with all your knowing everything, you

don't know how to close your ears.

He: I said listen. I'll hear it, that's true, but I won't listen.

She: I'm about to begin from the beginning.

He: I'm about to cease listening.

She: I didn't love him . . . I just, well, felt like — . . . I knew that

wasn't reason enough to be unfaithful, so I thought up a reason:

I would be unfaithful because you wouldn't want to hear about it

afterward. . . . I went with him to his apartment and all the

while I kept thinking about how you wouldn't want to hear about

it. . . . I even thought at the time I was thinking this that what

I'm thinking is right out of a textbook! — a textbook you've read

six or eight times — a textbook whose top and bottom and side

margins and title pages and end papers are positively crawling

with your comments and notes and interpretations so that every

time you picked up the book and flipped the pages you'd be

reminded how much more than the author you know. . . . I didn't

stay the night with him in his apartment. I wanted to but I —

He: I'm glad!

She: I was afraid of that. I'll tell you the truth about my infidelity. I

was unfaithful — to myself.

He: I don't understand.

She: I'm glad!

He: I — well, . . . I said I wouldn't listen but I did, didn't I? I

suppose that bodes well.

She: I suppose.

He: I — isn't life great!

She: I suppose.

He: I think I might be ready to listen now.

She: I think I might not feel like telling it.

CURTAIN

YOUTH IS POWER ONE

Frederick Castle

A TYPOGRAPH ON MISTER KOCH

I didn't really want that kind of power Is that so? they laughed behind their backs. Oh I don't know but you do you know well I suppose so I no you do you know Well what of it may I ask. as rain as left as Andy as hell as I am as I was and as I would be. they still thought that they were younger than (certain details as had been mentioned when they did be so as to drop the game favorably resulted) The score was kept.

Footnotes into the bargain but he would not be part of a serious conversation and what's more he knew what that might be certain kind of gay threat I guess a ready smile, sort of, the day after the party I read the newspaper and in it they quoted one of those poems that is no long that is no longer read again but read about it wasn't very long indeed I used to write for by of with them but I gave it up a slightly longe a slightly longer line with rules to break the words at just one point if necessary and it do not bother with the character of the conversat of the conversation well perhaps so but why do

YOUTH IS POWER TWO

Frederick Castle

To Kenneth Koch.

I got a great kick out of meeting you last night. I even went so far as to write about it, sort of. I don't write poems like that myself. I write like footnote. Actually this is still part of the poem but this time it is in the form of a letter, not a footnote or a poem that I call a typograph to indicate that nobody would ever want to read it aloud, of course not. All of a sudden I made up this whole new type of modern poem, a typograph, which however some people call Axis Poetry. Then I went home. How nice it seems to be always right. But before that I fell and broke my hip, stopped stepping on it. Lookit, useless, hopeless, stop smiling once in a while now. See what I mean? Everything is always very cleverly described. It can be faked too of course it is not too orderly it is just like everything you like like I say it is. Fooling around isn't poetry. For some reason writers never live too well unless they are the exception to the reason that I don't know. Most of it just happens to them. People always do the same thing to young people that was done to them at that age. We are just trying to be different. It isn't very difficult. I often give the impression that I know much more than I do. You may have no idea how easy it is to do so, I can do it in my sleep. I really must have been drunk; when I woke up I was still drunk but I could type again which before I hadn't been able to do and all that my friend could do was sleep it off above the radio. For breakfast we had six long poems and a fake play that was supposed to be very funny but before that I invented this new type of poem, a typograph, which was supposed to be very funny but after all it wasn't very funny was it. This jargon keeps on coming out. I have to resist

some temptations which I do by sleeping it off below the
that's right. It just goes on and ultimately straightens.
Cheers.

Frederick Castle

December 21, 1967.

ON FILM ACTING

Felix Singer

THERE ARE MOMENTS . .

SOME TIME AGO I HAD THE STRANGE experience of watching myself on the motion picture screen, reading a personal essay. It had been years since I'd looked at that essay, and reading it aloud before the camera I felt again some of the emotion that had gone into the writing. The photographer needed some retakes, for technical reasons; the second time, I read dispassionately. On the screen, much of the first take looks phony. Much of the second seems full of deep feeling.

An old story: Point a camera at people in emotional crises, and ninety percent of them turn artificial. Keep the camera hidden, and ninety percent will seem artificial on the screen. Which is why the cinema vérité style comes out less convincing, often, than the standard rehearsed performance. The artist does have to learn again and again that the path to the illusion of reality runs through mazes of contrivance.

Yes . . . well . . . But. In a couple of scenes in TOUCH OF EVIL, Orson Welles manages a remarkable mixture of vérité and conventional acting. All necessary script points get made in proper sequence; yet the actors, most of them veterans, fumble around, bump into each other, become entangled in patterns of awkward verisimilitude that you just know could not have been rehearsed. Directors like Godard, like Cassavetes in SHADOWS, seem to be groping for this mixture Welles tossed off quite casually. Has he done it again — reached out far ahead of his time and anticipated future style?

A photo in a cinematography journal: Frederic March on the job. Alone, he sits in a chair. Behind him and on either side, clutters of cinematics — lights, reflectors, filters,

whatnot. Above him, the mike boom. Facing him, the big black camera. Thus hemmed in, he is to convey in closeup, Willy Loman's agony: 'A man is not a piece of fruit —'

A man's a piece of film, so many frames per minute, framed, lighted, cut just so, with soundtrack on the side.

Millions of words have been written about film acting. Has anyone ever said anything much about exactly how the thing is done? It may not be sayable . . .

The camera is always the interpreter. All the subtle gradations in human relations can be derived from what the camera sees, for how long, under which lights, whither and how fast it moves. This miraculous visual (and also auditory) manipulation of impressions, only a few decades old, has long ago become so commonplace that we demand it even in the poorest films. What director-photographer-editor have done has penetrated our visual lobes, so that for many of us some living moments don't look-feel real because we wouldn't believe them on the screen.

The director is today more and more often in complete creative control, even in the U.S., and this is necessary. But the film actor remains, and remains crucially important; and one of these days, mark my words, the film actors will rebel to remind directors of that fact. (Directors are depriving actors of applause, even of top billing — and that's the last straw!)

Virtually all dramatic film performers can be fitted into one of three categories: the Movie Models, the Personality Projectors, the actors.

The M.M.'s photograph superbly, we like to look at them. That's all. In order to survive in films, they must become P.P.'s.

The P.P. (for convenience let's say he, though it's as often a she) projects an abstraction of (some facet of) his own personality. Whether it fits the role or not. This of course is where fame, big money, the long career have always been: all

the legendary superstars have been P.P.'s.

Newsreel some years ago of a big celebration: Here's a preoccupied middle-aged man, looks a little familiar. Then somebody evidently said: 'Hey, they're taking newsreels' — and the man raises his head, thrusts out the chin, smiles quite naturally at us, that glint in the eyes: CARY GRANT.

In each role the P.P. acts out stylized marginally differentiated versions of his own dreamlifeself. And, of course, of ours. Which is why we need P.P.'s, as prefilm generations needed gods, saints, kings. But nowadays the P.P. must not take himself too seriously. Oh, he must still play Himself consistently, but in this age of satire we demand of him an occasional off-screen hint that, after all, it is a put-on. (In *BEAT THE DEVIL*, Bogart effectively destroyed his long-established P.P. Image: no wonder the public hated it.)

The difference between M.M.'s and P.P.'s is unmistakable: the Models do nothing but pose. The M.M., Marilyn Monroe, was a Model who became a skilled P.P. and was on her way to becoming an actress (e.g., the scene on the courthouse steps in *THE MISFITS*). But watch M.M. Brigitte Bardot in *TWO WEEKS IN SEPTEMBER*. She's playing a fashion model and the poses she strikes in front of the fashion cameras are much the same as those in her real-reel life. She survives by pulling her pants down, with style, and it is a lovely little derriere; but after all these years she still can't quite go P.P.

But the contrasts-relations-transitions between P.P.'s and actors: there lies far more ambiguous territory. Some widely acclaimed actors are, in my opinion, nothing but glorified P.P.'s (Katherine Hepburn, for instance, who has been quoted as saying something pretty close to: There are no actors, only P.P.'s). Traditionally, the P.P.'s are expected to become—or are ballyhooed to have become—actors. Some bring it off, most don't. Some try acting once or twice and give it up. Good actors may deteriorate into P.P.'s because

they are typed, because they can't help repeating the same mannerisms . . . or because the scripts bore them or because they're too lazy or greedy. Performers may slide from one category to another, and back again, depending on scripts and directors . . . all sorts of possibilities . .

European esthetes rave about the talents of American P.P.'s. Why? Because they don't dig the sound. You can easily read all sorts of things into Gary Cooper's great stone face—if you can't hear that diction, tone, voice rhythms never change, be he architect or Nineteenth Century marshall, tycoon or cowhand, brigadier general or Quaker farmer. And it works vice versa across the language barrier. How many American critics praising foreign film actors have any idea about what Neapolitan peasants, French cops, Japanese bureaucrats really sound like? And would our ears know it if (traumatic thought!) Ingmar Bergman's actors sounded as if they were reciting the Stockholm phone book?

Although the actor carries ever so much heavier prestige than the P.P. (along with a lighter wallet, usually), some films are better cast with a P.P. From past exposure we remember so much about the P.P., we can accept him as a recognizable character from the start. This makes it easier for him to sustain something like a believable performance.

To sustain: there's the crux. I'd sit still while the photographer switched film magazines and try to hold onto the voice level of the sentence just read. How would you like to embrace her in a sudden tumultuous upsurge outside the native hut in Java, drag her into the hut and recommence ardor on a Hollywood soundstage three weeks later?

To hold a mood, or the sub-particle of a mood, to project it less by what you do than by what you don't quite do—to an audience of machinery and technicians—pretending you're oblivious of the Great Glass Eye on which all depends—to recapture that sub-particle again and again, in segments minutes or seconds long, over a period of days or weeks . . .

balancing a Ping-pong ball on your nose while climbing Mt. McKinley barefoot on tiptoes sounds easier.

Films penetrate our consciousness (and the areas beneath) more directly, more deeply than any other medium — but so fleetingly. So fast. On, off. Hard as we in the audience may strain to hold on, to keep believing, the truly sustained ninety-minute performance is rare.

Films give us instants. Moments. Moments when it's real up there on the screen, more real than real, when it's overwhelming.

Below (alphabetically), a mini-gallery of Moments I've retained from three decades of films.

John Barrymore 'in love for the first time'

He was the archetype, perhaps, of the actor turned P.P. — but with a viciously masochistic self-caricature as overlay. In *GRAND HOTEL* (1937) he could still act.

GRAND HOTEL is full of heavydish histrionics (Wallace Beery, Garbo, Jean Hersholt, Lionel Barrymore before he became a P.P.). John B. and Garbo do one of those all-buttons-stay-buttoned nocturnal scenes that passed for romantic passion in Hollywood's 1930s, a quicksketch pantomime by a couple of artists who are saying to their publics: you all know how well we do this sort of thing, here we need only suggest . . . But afterwards!

Afterwards, Barrymore confides to Joan Crawford: 'Something . . . very strange . . . happened to me last night. For the first time in my life I fell in love.' So preposterous, coming from this particular character (the intended effect) and from this particular actor (the P.P. effect re-enforces). But look: the face goes helpless, the eyes blink, glaze. For this one instant you believe somebody is for real in that fascinating butcher shop museum of 1930's screen ham.

Brando bangs the geisha

His last decade comprises a series of frenzied thrashings to escape P.P.-hood. When he spoke 'Friends, Romans,

Countrymen' trippingly in JULIUS CAESAR, everybody was so surprised; and they promptly forgot all about it, preferring the Sweatshirt Mumbles Image. From the actor who had played Marchbanks to Cornell's Candida. An actor who works from the inside out.

Your Texas sheriff is wearing evening clothes on a rare occasion. Has to stop down at the office and unlock his desk drawer. He'll grope for the key — right? Because it's not in its usual pocket. You'd say any competent actor would think that one through. Brando did, in THE CHASE. Nine out of ten screen actors would not have.

But this moment is from SAYONARA. Nothing much as a film. But there's this one shot. He meets this geisha. Slides the door shut, leans against it, looks at her, smiles. A little something in the eyes. Cut.

And you know he's going to take her. Now. Fast. With few if any preliminaries. No words said. Just a facial expression as stark as an erection. An obscene shot, really; but it serves as a pinch of seasoning to flavor later scenes in which he will moon over that woman Romeo-style.

THE TWO VIRTUOSI — TOGETHER (?)

Chaplin is all Moments; continuity, he has seldom achieved. Most of his famous bits have been rhapsodized a hundred times. Let's take the occasion when this solo performer shared the camera with another great soloist, Buster Keaton.

One day in Hollywood (so the story goes), Chaplin ran into Keaton and said something like: 'Well, hello! haven't seen you in ages. Are you working now?' And Keaton said: 'Ah, well —' 'Tell you what,' Chaplin said, 'I'm making this film now, maybe I can work you in.'

Thus, in LIMELIGHT, the character Chaplin plays encounters that exquisitely atrocious puss and says: 'Well, haven't seen you in ages . . .' Same exchange, and he ends up offering him a part in a variety routine.

And so here they are: Keaton unrecognizably disguised as der Herr Professor Doktor von Moosick at the piano, Chaplin as the hyper-temperamental violinist. Two bewildered virtuosi trying to coordinate preposterously variant tempi and styles — which is exactly how it must have been in front of the cameras on the set. And there and then, as on the screen doing routine, they had only vague ideas as to what they wanted to do — and they end up doing next to nothing except fumble with scores and instruments and miss each others cues as they try to get going together. It lasts a couple of minutes (it's cinema history, their one and only duet) and for some mysterious reason it's hilarious.

LEE J. COBB SAYS IT RIGHT

'You come from Greenpernt, go back to Greenpernt, you don't work here no more.'

The crooked union boss in *ON THE WATERFRONT*, dismissing an errant stooge. This one line, in perfect New Yorkerese — rhythm, cadence, inflection, and all — it's a sound I heard daily back in the 1950s while working near the New York waterfront. This one sound almost makes the whole film the semi-documentary it pretends to be. And it justifies the invention of the soundtrack: I'm sure Cobb couldn't have hit that note that precisely eight-ten times a week on the stage. 'You come from Greenpernt—:' Six, seven years since I last saw the film, I can still hear that.

James Dean and that movie star

He died young, before he could be forced into the P.P. mold. This fellow thought and felt before and while he said lines: that, only that, and how rare that is on film. In *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*, there's this crazy splitscreen effect you feel so often when an actor shares a scene with a P.P. Here's Natalie Wood, complete with puffed-up bra and flawless coiffure, projecting her Goldenhearted High School Siren. And you might even accept her, if there wasn't in the same

frame, this kid leaning against the car and ever so casually proposing to the radiator: 'Ah—you wouldn't—ah—wanta go some place—uh—well, I thought—.' Every awkward adolescent who ever lived. And this particular one, now. How, you wonder, did Miss Whozit the Movie Star ever get into his life?

But this is Juárez

Over and over, years apart, I've seen the film and heard this inner voice protesting: 'No, this isn't Paul Muni!' Out of a few skimpy scenes he draws a personage of massive silent power.

The film named JUAREZ is in fact full of the Emperor Maximilian and his bettedavis-type wife, and it is these Caucasians we can't help identifying with. They've registered for quite some time before we even see Juárez. And that first glimpse of him is a glimpse of an inexplicable piece of screen acting.

Mexican generals and politicians arguing about tactics. In their midst, silent, motionless, sits Juárez. Camera and lighting help him very little to do what somehow (how? I keep asking myself, how?) Juárez does: dominate the group. The brown small hands lie folded. The dark eyes see-hear all: we feel through these eyes the dignity, the majesty, the Lincolnesque mystery of this man. After everyone has had his say, Juárez speaks quietly. The matter is decided.

In a handful of scattered scenes, thinly written (and Muni's writers had to fight Bette Davis' writers to work those in), Juárez lives: the Indian, the scholar, the leader, the visionary. Beginning in that first short conference scene as the eyes listen, ponder, decide.

Maria Schell : an impossibly complex pantomime

Here's an acting problem, class. In THE LAST BRIDGE, you're playing a woman doctor captured by enemy partisans. A physician, remember. In the front lines, in wartime. You're in something like a thin slip, in daylight, allowed to wash up

in a stream, guarded by a (somewhat sympathetic) partisan who watches-doesn't watch. The film's ending represents you as the symbol of eternal feminine compassion; and such is the conditioned reflex of most Western men that they could not accept in such a symbolic role a woman without some physical modesty.

Given these factors—Oh, wait, I forgot: you're also very tired, see, and you have cause to fear that some of the other partisans may come to molest you, and you're plotting escape every minute and this is a relatively unguarded minute—a chance?

Now: how do you register all this, wordlessly, in longshots? How hard do you try to conceal your body? How do you make the guard stop watching you?

It lasts maybe a minute, involves a few glances, turnings, arm and shoulder movements. It's exactly right. Pure body-acting technique.

THE UNIVERSAL SEX-PIG

LOLITA was a silly nothing, but Peter Sellers has this one close-up . . .

He's talking to James Mason. Something insinuating about this young gal with this middle-aged man, Mason, at the hotel. The words are nothing. The voice, eyes, face twitchings are those of every sick-sick sexopath in every men's room. The slimy innuendo, the unspeak-ability oozing out of a few ambiguous sentences. And the man's inner terror. Stanley Kubrick gives Sellers big fat closeups for this. The scene doesn't require them. I'm sure this is merely the director's way of shouting to the world: 'Watch this! This is fleshcreepingly real!' And, yes, it is.

EVERETT SLOANE'S MR. BERNSTEIN REMEMBERS ONE OF HIS MOMENTS

Old Mr. Bernstein, in *CITIZEN KANE*, rambles irrelevantly to a stranger about this lovely girl in a white dress he had glimpsed for an instant so many years ago . . . so many years ago, on a ferry it was, . . . funny, ain't it, young fellow, how you'll remember a thing like that over all those years . . . strange, I can close my eyes now and see the sunlight in her hair. . . . Like that.

It's almost the only moment of warm feeling in that sharply sardonic sketch. One round smooth gleaming pebble amidst ragged cutting stones. Sloane just talks it in Bernstein's old cracked Bronx voice.

It has nothing to do with the film, really. Or—wait (I suddenly think, five years since last seeing the picture): Kane, if so attracted, would have had to own, exploit, exhibit that girl. This little man is content to cherish a tiny memory . . . and his old age is so different from Kane's . . .

DEADLIER THAN THE PLOT!

A. Fredric Franklyn

DEADLIER THAN THE MALE IS AN appropriate title for this Universal Pictures tale of the lethal antics of two of the lushest killer-sadists in contemporary melodrama, Irma Eckman (Elke Sommer) and her assistant, Penelope (Sylva Koscina). Director Ralph Thomas mixes them into a fairly smooth blend of the merely improbable and the sheer spoof.

Obstructed as little by clothing or inhibitions as they are troubled by morals or manners, this pair of idealized sexual fantasies bounces along through the film committing some of the most sadistic (and Freudian) murders to be seen in the current spate of international super-spy and detective thrillers. So alienating are the fatal whimsies of Irma and Penelope, in fact, that — all the dynamic physical attractions of the girls notwithstanding — even the most prurient members of the male audience want them to get it (and not sexually) by the time the film concludes.

For openers, the first bit of mayhem is managed through an oral device. Irma (Elke) is apparently a stewardess on a private plane of a multi-millionaire oil executive. She is making him comfortable in his cabin. This includes supplying him (from high up under her skirts) with a loaded cigar. The pseudo-stewardess makes her exit as her victim is lighting up. Trapping everybody aboard the plane by ‘dogging’ the main hatch, she quickly undresses, carefully sets a time bomb and places it where it will effect the most damage, slips into the harness of a parachute, and takes French leave.

In his cabin, the oil magnate contentedly draws the first few puffs on his after-lunch stogie. When the lighted end reaches the powder in the front portion, it explodes, sending

a bullet through his mouth and taking off most of the back of his head. The crew hears the shot and its members discover they are trapped. Moments later, as Irma floats gracefully (and leggily) to earth, the plane explodes, finishing off those the Havana phallus didn't get.

In an equally Freudian sequel immediately after the first murder, the victim is nailed in the stomach with a harpoon from the kind of gun which scuba divers use under water. This time, both girls undertake the killing. An agent, who later proves to have had some connection with Hugh Drummond (Richard Johnson), and who has acquired crucial information concerning Eastern oil operations, is taping a report on the beach in front of his Mediterranean villa. Like a couple of delectable Aphrodites in their bikinis, Irma and Penelope emerge from the sea and mince up to him.

He's trapped; and the girls get his tape anyway, so his murder is as wanton as it is unnecessary. Plainly, the girls enjoy their vocation.

Shortly after this, Irma appears at a meeting of oil barons. She claims an enormous sum of money for a principal whom she represents. This is the fee these men promised in the event her principal could eliminate the obstructions which her initial victim had placed in the way of an important merger they were planning.

Now, her motive becomes clear to the audience. But, under the impression that her first victim, their competitor, had died in an accident, the board refuses to vote her principal the promised sum of money. One member in particular is opposed to paying Irma. In fact, the negative vote succeeds by a margin of only one.

That evening, while he is preparing to go out, this negative-voting executive receives a visit from Irma in his apartment. He of course is at once suspicious of the motive behind her visit. All the same, he succumbs to her tease and,

a moment later, he is paralyzed by a drug she's used on him while they were necking.

Penelope appears. Irma explains that their victim is wide awake and perfectly able to hear everything they are saying and to understand what is happening to him. The drug is effective for but a short time and will wear off in a few moments, leaving no trace for an autopsy.

The audience is at liberty to imagine the man's horror, as the two lovelies carry him outside to the terrace of his apartment and hoist him to the railing. Sadistically, they permit him to lie there for a moment, gazing helplessly down the many stories to the street far below, seeing death now a few seconds away. The girls time it perfectly: Just before the drug loses its grip and he is freed from this paralysis, they lever him gently over the balcony into space, and he plunges to the sidewalk.

By this time, Drummond (Johnson) has been informed of the death of his friend and associate, and has been asked to investigate. He is present the next day when Irma arrives to discuss business again with the remaining members of the board. He partially witnesses this interview from an office adjoining the board room. This time the group quickly votes to pay the sum owed Irma's principal!

Drummond is attacked in a garage basement by thugs who have been paid to kill him. The film's best-choreographed fight sequence takes place — until one of the killers swings a length of pipe at Drummond, who ducks. The pipe connects with one of the other attackers, removing a part of his nose and breaking most of the small bones in its vicinity. Another attacker runs away. After that, our hero definitely has the situation in control.

Drummond has a nephew, Robert (Steve Carlson), who shares his apartment from time to time when he's in London. Robert gets involved initially when his girl friend, whom he has up to the apartment in Drummond's conspiratorial

absence, almost becomes his uncle's proxy victim. An entire box of the lethal cigars are sent to Drummond and delivered while Robert and his girl friend are affectionately wrestling.

The girl insists she wants to smoke one of the stogies, chiefly as a ploy to stall Robert's bed enthusiasm. Fortunately, the old Freudian stick isn't in her mouth when it goes off!

The girls learn about Robert; and Penelope takes him on. She picks him up, lures him to her place, drugs him and, when he recovers, she has him nicely tied down to a table and stripped to the waist. She proceeds to misuse him, putting out her cigaret a few times on his manly chest, and so on. This activity is presumably a method for soliciting information from the young man; but his torturer makes no effort to disguise the evident enjoyment her sadism is affording her.

Irma returns, and they decide to terminate the impromptu inquisition. Penelope has to get dressed so they can leave. We learn at this point (and later the plot is reinforced) that Penelope has a habit of borrowing things which don't belong to her. The girls have a family quarrel over a baby doll which Penelope is using, but which belongs to Irma. The latter reproaches her: 'I've told you before, I don't like you wearing my things.'

Drummond apparently is hot on the scent, so the girls check out fast, leaving Robert tied up and the customary time-bomb clicking away portentously. Uncle Drummond arrives; but he first begins untying Robert instead of removing his gag. Robert is having a snit, trying to signify with his choking sounds that he has something to say. The bomb's clock is within a second or two of zero-instant when Uncle D. finally discovers and stops it.

After their narrow squeak, the boys set off for Italy to get a look at the scene of the agent's death. Drummond thinks he may be able to turn up something there. Additionally, a

friend of Robert's, King Fedra (Zia Mohyeddin), who also is a key figure in the proposed merger negotiations between these Eastern oil interests and the Western cartel, is taking his yacht on a Mediterranean cruise and will be in the area.

At this point, the plot line gets down to hard-core melodrama. The identity of Irma's anonymous 'principal' is revealed: He is Carl Petersen (Nigel Green), one of the board executives of the group seeking the merger of oil interests.

Petersen has a magnificent castle where his sexy entourage of deadlier-than-the-male assassins (which includes lovelies of every nationality, along with an overweight karate bodyguard) make their vacation headquarters. When Drummond finally gets himself trapped in this palatial overoccupied white elephant, he begins by provoking the karate expert into a best-two-falls-out-of-three . . . which, of course, he wins. But he loses his next engagement, in one of the bedrooms, with Irma. He gets a draw however with another of this script's warm mamas, Grace (Suzanna Leigh), who, it develops, is only nominally a member of the organization.

But Petersen and his favorites, Irma and Penelope, view it all over a closed television circuit and determine to use Grace to get King Fedra — as well as her traitorous self — out of the way. They reveal that they are onto Grace and offer her an apparent chance to redeem her defection. Actually, they are deliberately going to permit her to 'escape' by seeking sanctuary on the king's yacht. Without her knowledge, Grace will be the carrier of a brand new kind of plastic time bomb. (It's difficult to say whether time has too much or too little value in this technicolor intrigue-epic!)

Meanwhile, Irma and Penelope are at odds again. The girls have quarreled over a mutual interest in Drummond. Also, Penelope's habit of highhandedly borrowing and using other people's belongings has again annoyed Irma. This time it's a cigarette lighter she has taken from her.

Petersen has the villain's predictable cinematic compulsion to inflate his ego by trying to impress the hero. And, wouldn't you know it? — wouldn't you just know it? — the weakness leads to his downfall! He is showing Drummond a life-sized chess set, with huge metal pieces on a room-sized board, with trap doors for each individual piece and hand-operated remote controls. They begin a game while Irma and Penelope take Grace down to the pier, where their seeming carelessness permits her the opportunity to escape.

Drummond, whose nephew also is with the king on his yacht, is presently told of the whole plan by the boastful Petersen. Having learned this, it becomes his turn, naturally, to escape. In a duel among the moving chess pieces, he kills the poor third-rate karate bodyguard; and then he electrocutes Petersen.

Free, Drummond knows that Grace, who already is aboard the yacht, has a bomb concealed in something she is wearing; but he does not know which article of clothing contains it. He captures Irma and Penelope and forces them to accompany him out to the boat. Aboard, he frantically begins stripping Grace and throwing her clothing overboard.

Momentarily unobserved, the gold-dust twins escape in a convenient ship-to-shore motorboat. This gruesome pair of sex-pots are laughing their heads off.

When Drummond has stripped Grace almost down to nakedness, still failing to locate the plastic bomb, he apologizes for the necessity and throws her overboard. Still, no explosion . . .

In the escaping motorboat, Penelope asks Irma where the bomb actually had been hidden on Grace. Irma laughingly tells her it's concealed in Grace's wig. An expression of paralyzing horror comes over Penelope's face. Irma screams: 'You didn't!' . . . 'But her wig was so much nicer than mine,' Penelope barely has time to explain.

The explosion, an instant later, scatters the little pieces of their fleeing craft all over the water.

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THE CHRONICLE

The Chronicle — the running trade directory of little magazines and presses that TRACE carried in every issue — runs in two instalments here, two pages at the front and ten more at the back. It is omitted, with its capsule notices: it is a working address list rather than reading matter. What follows is a note of what these instalments record.

CITY LIGHTS has the fullest entry: Carl Solomon's MORE MISHAPS, René Daumal's MOUNT ANALOGUE in its first American edition translated and introduced by Roger Shattuck, and Janine Pommy-Vega's POEMS TO FERNANDO in the Pocket Poets series. MISCELLANEOUS MAN is entered from North Fairfax Avenue — it was by then published by the LOS ANGELES FREE PRESS, and this issue carries its advertisement for a Golem number guest-edited by Jack Hirschman. THE OUTSIDER announces that it is going into book format with a double number 4-5.

One entry is of local interest fifty years on: BEYOND BAROQUE, Box 675, Venice — George Drury Smith's magazine in its first years, listed here among the Ohio quarterlies and the Argentine reviews. CORNISH CAMBRIDGE PUBLICATIONS is entered care of Sam Cornish. KAYAK BOOKS has a selected Yvan Goll. From Allahabad, DAMN YOU and EZRA & FAKIR move address together — 'query Arvind Mehrota', the same Arvind Krishna Mehrotra whose prose stands in No. 67. And CUADERNOS UNIVERSITARIOS of León, Nicaragua devotes 250 pages of a new series to post-Dariana Nicaraguan poetry.

The full list of names is in Trace_68_1968_chronicle_names.txt beside the transcript. — ED.

ISSUE PP. 265-272 · SCAN PP. 101-108

DRAWINGS

Eight pages of drawings stand here and carry no text. The magazine's contents page names them as ink drawings by GUSTAVE KEYSER (pp. 265-268) and brush drawings by HARLAND RISTAU — BROKEN NOCTURNE, THE UNCHARTED, STUDY FOR MASS & MOTION and FRAGMENTS FOR AN UNCHARTED LANDSCAPE (p. 269). They are noted here rather than passed over. — ED.

ISSUE PP. 305-312 · SCAN PP. 141-148

What follows is the caption text of THE ARTIST & HIS WORLD, a sequence of ten cartoons by RAY BARRIO — the Raymond Barrio who the following year published THE PLUM PLUM PICKERS. The drawings are absent; the captions are his and are given in full, numbered as in the magazine. Three further pages of ink drawings by GIN EGGLESTON follow the sequence and carry no text at all. — ED.