

TRACE

LIVING LITERATURE

**YEAR'S MAGS; New Chronicle
Satires, Photo-Art, Poetry**

69

ISSUE

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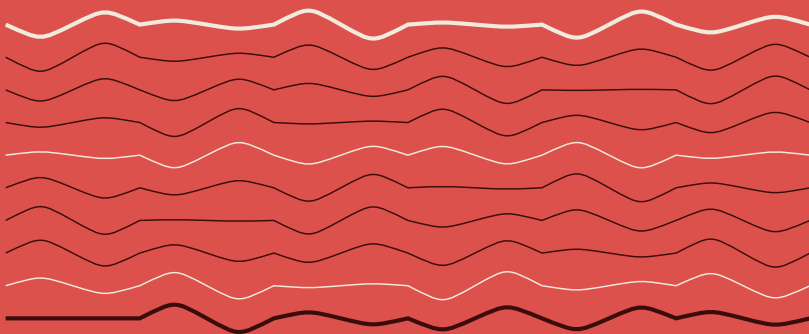
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TRACE

No. 69

Living Literature

Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

1968

Edited by JAMES BOYER MAY

A CLEAN READING EDITION

Advertisements, subscription promotions, the front cover and blank leaves have been omitted, as have the running trade directory ("The Chronicle"), which runs in two instalments here, and the 1968-69 address list that indexes three years of it; notes in their place record what they held. The year's own index of contents is kept. Four sections of photographs and drawings are named where they stand. 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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THE EXISTENTIALIST ORDEAL OF MICHAEL FRAENKEL—II

by Will Slotnikoff

WHO IS MICHAEL FRAENKEL? When did he live? And why is he worth discussing in 1968? The answer to the first question is best put in the form of a brief biographic note. Michael Fraenkel was an American writer, a former bookdealer, who was born in 1896, of Russian parents. In the early Thirties he met Henry Miller in Paris. He owned the house, 18 Villa Seurat, where Miller stayed briefly as a guest in Fraenkel's apartment and later — from September, 1934 until May, 1939 — as a tenant. Having made a modest fortune in the book trade and on the stock market, Fraenkel established the Carrefour imprint, which used the facilities of the St. Catherine Press in Bruges, Belgium to publish books of his friends as well as his own: *WERTHER'S YOUNGER BROTHER*, 1931 —400 copies; *DEATH IN A ROOM*, poems written between 1927 and 1930, 1936 —200 copies; *BASTARD DEATH*, with an introduction by Henry Miller, 1936 —400 copies. In November, 1935 he embarked on a lengthy correspondence with Miller under the title of *HAMLET*. This correspondence continued for three years, while Fraenkel traveled in Europe and North America, and was eventually published in two volumes under the Carrefour imprint, in Puerto Rico and Mexico, where he took up residence in 1940. Excerpts from his Mexican journal (1940-44) were published by Oscar Baradinsky of the Alicat Book Shop in Yonkers, N.Y. under the title, *LAND OF THE QUETZAL*, 1946. Fraenkel wrote a long essay on *The Genesis of the Tropic of Cancer*; and when the first French edition of *TROPIC OF CANCER* (Paris, Denoël, 1946) came under attack by French authorities, he wrote *Défense du Tropic* (Paris, Variété, 1947). Miller's essay on Fraenkel was published in *We Moderns*, 1940; and in June, 1948 the French magazine *Arts et Lettres* published a *Lettre d'Henry Miller et Réponse de Michael Fraenkel*.¹ Michael Fraenkel has given us his own impressions of the decade 1930-1940, during which the books named above were written and

published. For younger readers this decade is ancient history, as all the events outlined happened before they were born, events to which they may have heard their seniors allude, but which to them must remain remote and unreal as does even Lindbergh's pioneer flight across the Atlantic. Nevertheless this historic setting is a necessary preliminary to the examination (or reexamination) of Fraenkel's writings.

¹ See *Some Brief Biographical Notes*, compiled by Gunther Stuhlmann, who edited and wrote an introduction to HENRY MILLER LETTERS TO ANAIS NIN (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1965).

Briefly paraphrased from the opening pages of *The Genesis of the Tropic of Cancer*, this is roughly what the period looked like: In England, the pound was falling, and a prominent British statesman (Lord Ellsworth) was calling on London to carry on as if uncertainty were the rule, the norm that was to be periodically expected but not to be alarmed about.

In Spain, Alfonso XIII had abdicated and the Spanish Republic founded, later to be destroyed by Hitler and Mussolini while the western democracies looked on pretty much passively on the assumption that neutrality was the most expedient role on their parts.

In China, flood and famine raged over the valleys of the Yangtze, as it had hundreds of times before; but thunder from Tokyo rumbled in Manchukuo, and Chapei 'tossed fitfully in a nightmare of terror and rape, while the League of Nations regaled itself with the latest statistics on the dope traffic.'

Herbert Hoover had just declared a moratorium on Germany's debts to the Allies, the pocket battleship *Deutschland* was launched, and Hitler and his Storm Troopers were starting their march through the streets of German cities with their evil demonic slogans that were later to culminate in a war that cost more than fifteen million

lives. The Burning of the Books by these new Yahoos was soon to follow.

In America, it was the day after the Great Stock Market Crash and the October suicides, and the eve of the Bank Holidays.

In Russia, a million Kulaks, in the Ukraine alone, paid with their lives in a genocidal attempt on the part of Stalin to exterminate opposition to the collectivization of agriculture. Hunger and famine were rife in the Soviet countryside and in its urban centers.

In Italy, Mussolini was bragging that the trains were arriving on time.

And in France, under President Paul Doumer (assassinated in 1932), there was economic paralysis and mental despair.

The little world the statesmen and politicians had held together with spit and baling wire and hollow words at Versailles was coming apart at the seams. Uncertainty, confusion, fear were pervasive in the Western World. And, adds Fraenkel, in a significant phrase: 'There was everywhere uncertainty, confusion, fear — and utter incomprehension.'

The uncertainty, the apprehension grew and deepened and spread like a cancer. 'It reached out everywhere, left nothing untouched. It was like a mist, a fog, a condition of the weather; the air was thick with it. It fell, a stain or a rust, a gentle dew from heaven, and settled over people's lives and homes, over their thoughts and feelings, words and acts, over everything they touched or handled.'

Towards the close of this account comes the typical Fraenkelian touch:

And always there was the same incomprehension. . . . This was just another economic crisis we were going through. It would pass — in time. They did not know what was behind these crises, what lay behind this stain and rust,

the putrefaction that lay behind them and found its way to the surface again and again, like the putrefaction of a silent, secret wound. They did not know that this rust was the same rust that lay on the surface in 1914, and before that, and before that. A rust lay on the surface for many years now, many generations, a rust that no blood from the living or the dead could wipe or wash away, as they secretly and naively thought and feared and wished. They did not know that this rust was only the merest visible sign of a rust, a malaise below, in the silent depths of their being. A rust of the soul, a blight of the spirit, a death, a spiritual devastation within, of the mind and heart and soul, which no blood of the living or dead could wash away, so long as the death underneath remained. . . .

It was against this historical background, as here seen through the eyes of Michael Fraenkel, that WERTHER'S YOUNGER BROTHER, DEATH IN A ROOM, and BASTARD DEATH were published — in slim little volumes in limited editions.

There is nothing more dreadful to an author than neglect, Dr. Johnson wrote. In comparison with this, reproach, hatred, and opposition are names of happiness. And, with the exception of a few of the most perceptive literati, neglect is what these books suffered — almost total neglect.

Yet the exceptions are quite noteworthy, and a few of them worth recalling. Aldous Huxley, for one, wrote of BASTARD DEATH as a very remarkable book: 'The business of death in life is a very important one. The death of deaths consists of being a member of a patternless urban civilization and just submitting to the processes of patternless living.' Havelock Ellis was another; having read BASTARD DEATH, he wrote the author from London: 'I admire your skill in the use of words. Wherever I alight I tend to linger rather than to be carried on.'

To Gerald Sykes, writing in *The Nation*, WERTHER'S YOUNGER BROTHER, Fraenkel's first book, is the work of a

‘tidy, dexterous stylist . . . shows understanding, as though by some age-old influence, of the inner meaning of things. . . . If only because it deals so expertly, so traditionally with the inner life, it may be considered something of a novelty in American literature. . . . It is not, by the way, an introspective novel of the old-fashioned voluminous kind, but a dainty piece of classicism. If it had been written in France it might have had a vogue.’

And in a Swedish review in a Stockholm literary periodical, *Bonniers Litterära Magazin* (Jan., 1940), Artur Lundkvist informed his readers that Michael Fraenkel is an American, but has preferred to spend a great part of his life in China and Europe . . . that he is a thinker and philosopher, an aphorist, essayist, and poet, inclined to give his speculations a poetic and symbolic form. ‘Fraenkel lays it down as an axiom that we are at the end of an historical epoch, so that the only question of importance is how to shake off the deadly grip of the past and gain a foothold in the future. Everything he writes is highly provocative, deepened by a thoroughly original personality, written with amazing clarity, and bound together by a sense of unity truly remarkable in the face of the manifold and complex trends that go to form the whole pattern.’

And in Shanghai, in February, 1941, writing in *T’ien Hsia Monthly*, Brian Corbett offered his opinion that Fraenkel may be considered as the philosophical spokesman for that group of writers including Lawrence Durrell, ‘whose prose poem, *THE BLACK BOOK*, was recently reviewed . . .’. He states that Fraenkel writes from an American point of view, but that his argument does not depend upon the details of current history in either America or Europe. Referring to *DEATH IS NOT ENOUGH*, he concludes that this ‘book should appear when Europe is embarking upon a war of which the best that can be said is that it can bring no new disillusion, yet for him the scales were weighted long ago.’

And Henry Miller in Paris summed up the effect of BASTARD DEATH on his mind: 'The modernity of Hamlet is made manifest in this book which has proved so baffling to the serious critics. The author is lucidly mad because he is aware to an hallucinating degree of the problems which beset us. He offers no solutions except — "to live out the disease." It is scarcely to be wondered at, then, that he is despised and misunderstood. He is of the same company as Plotinus, Blake, Rimbaud, Nietzsche. He prefers to be misunderstood rather than to compromise.'

And not the least remarkable and memorable, a most profound and discerning conspectus of the basic outlines of this Hamlet theme, propounded in the work of Fraenkel, by the author who suggested that I write this little study, Walter Lowenfels, who may by this time even have forgotten he wrote it. It was published in *This Quarter* (Dec., 1931), a periodical of which Edward Titus, assisted by Samuel Putnam, was editor and publisher.

A poetry crisis comes when the old words are dead. And the old words die because the old emotions are dead. Language needs a vital emotional background in order to be alive. Emotions have to do with bodily reactions, and it happens that you cannot be physical unless you are spiritual and vice versa; at least, not in poems. We go dead inside; therefore our words go dead. If one goes dead inside there is no background for emotions, either outside or inside. Everything vanishes. The old poems and the old words had a mythical background of nature and belief to draw on. The beliefs have dried up and the old nature has gone. That means that there is nothing really green for the poet about green. The tree loses color. Everything and everyone dries up in a world of talk. We still have trees but they have become electronic, like Sir Arthur Eddington's tables . . . The poetry crisis is the empty world. The empty world is the empty word. And the empty word is the empty heart. There is

activity rather than vitality.

. . . That is why originality in the sense of uniqueness is a danger. The original poet is the one who continues dying where the last man left off. He tries to continue the tradition. Unless he does, someone else is likely to have done so, and gone ahead and left him permanently behind, dead instead of dying. . . .

Having written two earlier articles on the existentialist nightmare of Michael Fraenkel — An Open Letter to Henry Miller and Michael Fraenkel on the Hamlet Theme, in my first book, *THE FIRST TIME I LIVE* (Manchester Lane Eds., Washington, 1966), and the one in Trace No. 65 — no useful purpose would be served by again going over the ground they covered. The reason for the present addendum may be gathered from a letter recently received from Walter Lowenfels who, in collaboration with Howard McCord, has completed a book to be called *THE LIFE OF MICHAEL FRAENKEL'S DEATH*. His letter reads, in part:

You talk about how much Fraenkel means to you and you write an *Initiation into the Mind and Art of Henry James*. You quote Fraenkel's dying words to you 'tell my story' and you tell *The World Elsewhere* of Anais Nin. 'By 1984' (you say) 'his body of thought will have found the large scale audience he unsuccessfully tried to create in his lifetime.' I presume that by that time you hope to be successfully dead and not involved in the work you say meant so much to you. I herewith offer you an opportunity to get published an essay in which you tell the reader the outline of Fraenkel's work, his thought, and why you think his stature as a writer, poet, and thinker grows.

Aside from the tone of righteous indignation in this letter, which struck me as more amusing than annoying, it constituted a challenge and an offer no beginning writer

would find easy to resist. Before having read the Trace article which attempts to do, in part, the very job he challenges me to undertake, Lowenfels has called for a re-examination of the work of the arcane writer who died eleven years ago, so as to highlight its contemporary relevance 'to young people who have never heard of Fraenkel.'

The truth of the matter is that, uninfluential as my writing has been to date — apart from Mrs. Daphne Fraenkel, who is turning heaven and earth in London to keep alive and enlarge the reading audience for the work Fraenkel spent half his life doing, and the forthcoming study by Lowenfels and McCord — I am the only American who has done anything at all to revive the interest of readers in a small but most significant body of work, the basic doctrines of which the eleven years since his death have not only confirmed but have proven invaluable source material for similar later diagnoses of what Senator Fulbright described as a 'sick society not a great one.'

Yet, on second thought, what Lowenfels would like to see done is almost impossible to do. It would require the combined talents of a Will Durant, a James Michener, and a Karl Jaspers to give a popular transcription of Fraenkel's thought, his central ideas — the dialectics of death, as it came to be known — in a form that would make it comprehensible and meaningful and relevant to the campus generation of today. And even if I had the talent for such a simplified exposition, it would require several years of intensive research and study.

Since an article such as this must necessarily be limited to some particular aspect of an author's work and thought, the bit of Fraenkeliana I have selected for my contribution toward a revival of interest in the art and mind of Fraenkel — to attract new younger minds — is *THE DAY FACE AND THE NIGHT FACE*, a limited edition of 1,000 copies published by Irving Stettner, New York, in 1947.

The motto on the flyleaf reads in part:

A new life begins where all life begins — as far from the fatal edge as possible. I would like to think that there are already men among us, right in our midst, who have the seed of the new life within them.

My contribution could be titled *Narcolepsy Genus Americanus*. It will take the form of an open letter to the Michael Fraenkel still vitally alive in my memory:

I don't quite remember. Perhaps you are reading aloud to me. Perhaps I am reading aloud to you. In any case, it is your *THE DAY FACE AND THE NIGHT FACE* we are reading. The passage in which you are speaking about America. As I remember, you are saying that you love America as you love her. The deep and strange life that goes on there, 'under the surface, a strange, deeply throbbing life under the surface, a confusion compounded of many things strong, vital, elemental, which I sometimes think — who knows? — may yet some day give a meaning, a promise which it does not have today.' And then you stop and you turn to me — you may remember — and you give me a look as if to say you and I of course know better. You look at me as if to say this sort of thing is to be taken with a considerable grain of salt. Your look inserts, as it were, the inverted commas that your text has omitted.

A few days later I am reading this passage with Mary Whitcomb, editor of a music magazine, a *New Englander*, rather conformist and conservative in her literary tastes — the one I told you about, a neighbor of mine with whom from time to time I carry on literary discussions. And she is commenting that this man certainly knows how to write. She likes your phrase, 'that cold, hard will of yours which lays out under the skin a dead pattern of line and angle, a geometry of matter-of-fact.' For self-evident reasons, perhaps. The rest of your work that I show her, the last section of your Lawrence essay, for example, that I sat down

and typed out for you the day we left Woodstock for New York together, makes her a little fearful, I think. Because, the next day when I talk to her again I feel that she is instinctively recoiling from the theme of you and your work. Not so much because she senses in you the prophet of despair, but because if she let herself she might read you with her pineal eye, the Eye of Osiris — with her deepest self — and necessarily begin to question the whole flimsy superstructure of her day reality, what you so admirably call the conscious face of herself, the conscious face of America, which is indispensable to her life-illusion.

She can only live, as I see it — and I feel it is typical of the American outlook — she can only live in the daydream. The pseudo-surrealist fantasia of the American day-consciousness. Moral illusionism! Unreality! The American who, as you are well aware, has not yet been born; who is still squirming around like a sackful of snakes in the desiccated walls of the womb. The American who has never lost contact with inner reality because he has never had any inner reality. Only the confused and anxious dungeon of his narcissistic nightmare. His womb! A prenatal existence. The primordial chaos is his reality. That is the meaning to me of his day face. A sort of schizophrenia in reverse. The split has not taken place because there has never been wholeness of self, body.

As you are so well aware, there are the two deaths. Cessation of life, decease; and absence of life, lifelessness. And the no-man's-land in between. Narcolepsy! That creeping paralysis at the heart of the world today that even the anatomists of the mind are beginning to perceive without being able to diagnose.

So that the American Death, as I see it, is more like a stillbirth; America has failed to create herself a usable body. The spoiled fruit is Mary—who does not dare look you straight in the third eye because she dare not face herself.

Mary, then, America, is in constant process of performing a Caesarian on herself, but the malignant tissue grows faster than she can cut it away. Her hand being directed not by the will of the Highest but by the laws of an impotent jackanapes wearing a sterilized mask and rubber gloves. Science! The New Technology! The dead idealist working away on a live corpse. The operation is always a success. But the foetus is always torn from the womb unborn; a dissonant coda to a sonata that never gets written.

'It accounts for the fragmentary, chaotic, explosive and unguided character of all her work.' For the rounded work of art, as you know, is always a complete projection of an inner urgency. It bespeaks catharsis and discipline. And for catharsis you need the higher hygiene, the late dialectics, the dialectics of death of which you are one of the supreme exponents in our time.

It is some such truth I understand you are trying to express when you say: 'For today I only feel and sense the confusion, these odds and ends of ourselves, these scraps of loves, hates, passions, desires, hopes, buried away, stuffed under the ribs of skyscrapers, between the stones, in the mortar and concrete.' A world of dead debris of which not the least dead is the man with the iridium heart and aluminum ball-bearing joints standing impotent over the live corpse of himself, with a gold-plated pneumatic drill in his hands.

I shall attempt, then, to state the proposition about America that it seems to me you have omitted, as one will do in life, leaving the middle premise dangling in the air as it were and then—one shrugs one's shoulders like the Frenchman or puts another kettle of tea water on the fire like the Russian. In the meantime the thought never recurs to be completed nor even, perhaps, to receive its first clear statement. I have nothing agin', mind you. If a man likes, he need never complete anything as man. Perhaps in a sense he will then be almost completely alive—but only, be it

remembered, as the child is alive—to the interests suggested by objects directly under his nose, and by those objects alone. He will then have achieved the perfect ‘momentaneity’ that D. H. Lawrence repeatedly mentions because it constitutes so important an element in his desire for the wholeness of being that is felt most richly by those who live entirely in the present, the ‘now.’ Incidentally, there is implied here, a distinction — a necessary one to my way of thinking — between life and art, the misunderstanding of which, I believe, caused Lawrence Durrell to affirm not long ago that in our time it is inevitable and necessary for the writer to make absolute integration between his life and his art. To make the further statement: Henry Miller has realized himself as a man better than did Shakespeare. The distinction, as you undoubtedly gather, is that in the work of art life is completed just as in the artist, the man is completed. There is fulfillment for man and the world in the measure that matter finds its true form. In the work of art, matter finds its latent soul and man his essential self.

Now, am I to take it that what you mean to say is that America is finished? That she has failed herself? Failed to serve the needs of a creative man? Or is that putting it too mildly from your standpoint? You are convinced, for example, that a book like your *DEATH IS NOT ENOUGH* will not get a hearing in America.

But let us for the moment assume everything. Let us assume the worst is true that you or anyone can possibly say or mean about America. Does it not, then, remain true that the American Death represents the acutest stage of the decay of modern Europe? That the American Death is the general European decline in its most advanced phase? And if that is true, if in America the tragedy of a European world in febrile quest after a new inner reality reaches its worst crisis, the very interesting question suggests itself that your Gallic shrug of the shoulders may have overlooked an important

possibility: that the new life — whatever it is going to be like — may likewise have its beginnings in America? Haven't you declared somewhere, with such circumspectness, with your usual understatement: 'I sometimes think — who knows? — [America] may yet some day give a meaning, a promise which it does not have today?'

What meaning and what promise? That is the all-important question. Just what is it you have in mind here? That is what we want to know. For, if we are to trust your own favorite maxim that 'the worse things are the better they are,' today (which you have developed in your papers on Active Negation) — and I believe it is fundamental to your point of view — then if the European tragedy has reached its finale in the American impasse, the American Death, is not American man by the same token closest to that state of intolerable torment which must precede a new beginning?

And this question, my dear Fraenkel, this question that I raise seems to me to lead directly to the statement of a still profounder aspect. You have pointed out repeatedly — and I agree it is a primary consideration — that 'nothing can be done today, no new step taken before death is faced and accepted.' In that case, the question takes on a new form: assuming that the European malady comes to its final flowering in America, is there the necessary awareness that death has taken place? Has the Western Death been sufficiently faced and accepted in America? I am inclined to agree with you here. In that respect, America is in an even more unhappy plight than that represented by the work and example of D. H. Lawrence — concerning whom you have correctly pointed out, I think, that at the very least he completed half the circle. More deeply and more passionately than any of his contemporaries, he was aware of the death. Deeply, courageously aware that man as body, man as end-in-himself, living creative man had died. And that therein lies the great significance of his work to our time. But

to return to America. While I am on Lawrence, let me remind you of another remarkable passage about America which occurs in *Studies in Classic American Literature*. Attributing the condition to the unappeased ghosts of the murdered Indians, he writes that the white American, WASP, is characterized by the 'great American grouch, the Orestes-like frenzy of restlessness in the Yankee soul, the inner malaise which amounts almost to madness, sometimes!' 2 And again: 'The American has got to destroy the whole corpus of the white psyche, the white consciousness. And he's got to do it secretly.' Like a modern-dress Hamlet masquerading in the bedsheet of the KKK, he is driven by his lack of spiritual reality in the dead of night, and traveling in packs. The Caesarian operation again — en masse — it being clear that the specific American configuration is not that of being born again from death into life — alive! — so that there may be something to die and be born again. The world has not yet been entered. Subhuman chaos! I am here taking the view that the unborn cannot be killed — cannot die and cannot be aware of death or, *pari passu*, born again. So that, to understand more clearly the disintegration of man and society which reaches its frenzied climax in the American Death, it seems to me necessary to glance at the decline of Western culture in general, which Nietzsche prophesies so eloquently and of which he knew himself so to be a superlative example. How fearlessly he faces

2 Cf. in this connection the recent declaration by Susan Sontag, reported in *Partisan Review*: 'The white race is the cancer of human history; it is the white race and it alone — its ideologies and inventions — which eradicated autonomous civilizations wherever it spreads, which has upset the ecological balance of the planet, which now threatens the very existence of life itself.' (Quoted by Benjamin deMott in his review of *DEATH KIT*, *New York Times Book Review*, Aug. 27, 1967.) and accepts the *mal de siècle*!

What supreme inexorable awareness of the death!

Nietzsche speaks repeatedly of the life that is rooted in the tireless awareness of death. 'I love those who do not know how to live except in perishing,' he exclaims in his dithyrambic prose, 'for they are those going beyond.' One is reminded of Lao Tse's 'He who dies but perishes not enjoys true longevity.' And in passage after exalted passage, he anticipates the final dwindling of man. 'Tell me, my brethren, if the goal be lacking to humanity, is not humanity itself lacking?'

And even more explicitly in another significant passage: 'Since Copernicus,' he writes, 'man seems to have fallen on to a steep plane—he rolls faster and faster away from the center—whither? into nothingness, into the thrilling sensation of his own nothingness.'

In our time it seems to me particularly fruitful to counterpose to the American Death, the American conception of man as anonymous unit in a scientifically-closed systematic universe—an ID number in an IBM computer—a portrayal such as Nietzsche's of a creative man who is equally capable of the highest discipline and the most corporeal gayety. And he is, above all, beyond good and evil. Man, self-created, a cosmos-unto-himself! Man, in short, as god!

And to understand this conception of man still more thoroughly, it is necessary, I think, to cast a brief backward glance at its sources in Hellenistic humanism revealed in a saying such as Protagoras' Man is the measure of all things—Man not only the measure of all things but the measure of the gods themselves. So profoundly is this conception rooted in the Hellenic mode of life that it is impossible to say, for example in studying the sublime dimensions of Greek architecture, whether the Greeks humanized the gods or elevated to godlike proportions the figure of man. In any case, so universal is the beauty of the

human figure embodied in the work, say, of Phidias or Praxiteles that Western civilization has never ceased to judge beauty according to the ideal realized by the Greeks in the Fourth Century B.C.

And according to Nietzsche's body of thought, man-as-god is to grow again out of the barren soil of the mass-mediocrity of our time, the whole compost of universal anomie—social organization, to him, of course, being not an end-in-itself but a means to the attainment of creative man. And the process of creative dynamism that is to produce him is, he insists, necessarily antibiological, inasmuch as Nature seems to favor the survival of man-as-ant.

The larger meaning of an age of chaos, violence, disorder, disintegration, he sees as breeding-ground of man's latent greatness. For, out of the breakdown of the Western World he prophesies the quiet birth of new individuals, new heroes who will bear in themselves the seeds

*of a new vital mythology to replace the one in
process of decay. The creative individual of today
is to him the forerunner of a new society. 'Ye
lonely ones of today, ye who stand apart,' are his
magnificent chiliastic words, 'Ye shall one day be
a people; from you who have chosen yourselves, a
chosen people shall arise; and from it the
superman!'*

TOWARDS PRINT

(WORDS: IN OUR TIME, & . . . 300 YEARS AGO)

by The Editor

IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, as in the sixth decade of the Twentieth, there was agitation over ‘abuses’ of language. James Hay Beattie’s *DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD* bore on this theme. In fictitious conversations between Addison and Johnson and between Swift and ‘Mercury,’ language is shown to have been in a state of accelerated change. Many of the things said about the changes sound contemporary, and many of the innovations have parallels in the new writings of the past twenty years.

Beattie has Swift saying that he wishes ‘to hear more particulars of the degeneracy of the English tongue.’ Mercury responds in an ironic satirical vein that ‘to make English of the newest and best patterns,’ his first rule is ‘. . . avoid short words as much as possible, however significant and well-sounding,’ and ‘. . . to raise admiration of your learning, use . . . longer words derived from the Greek, Latin, or French.’ He further remarks: ‘. . . language is not now thought the worse for being ambiguous. . . .’ On the other hand, he subsequently says: ‘. . . it is also thought genteel sometimes to shorten ordinary expressions,’ citing as examples ‘reform’ for ‘reformation’ and ‘in future’ instead of ‘for the future.’ Tongue-in-cheek, he advises the affectation of ‘uncommon terminations as much as possible’ (referring to Greek forms — which are commonly adopted in today’s new words).

In the Addison-Johnson conversation, the former, as would be expected, charges the latter with too elaborate and labored a style. Johnson retorts he has observed in

Addison's writings 'a colloquial imbecility.' Whereupon, the argument moves to the ever-to-be-debated matter of intelligibility: whether sound (or cadence) should take precedence over sense. Swift and Mercury also introduce the never-to-be-settled question involving inconsistent figures of speech within an otherwise-unified literary creation.

There were many popular innovations at that time. It's interesting to find that not a few of these phrases are still in everyday use, and that Beattie puts into the mouth of Mercury a declaration that they are 'not merely ambiguous, but unintelligible: . . . scouted the idea, netted a cool thousand . . . made up his mind.' And there's much ado over the 'new' word 'pugilist' usurping the place of 'boxer,' as a fancy liberty (putting a Greek ending on a Latin word). Finally — of 'capturing': 'About twenty years ago, when this word was imported, I heard a surly English ghost remark, that, since his countrymen had learned to talk of "capturing" ships, they seemed to have lost the art of taking them . . . !'

Defending language of 'venerable magnitude . . . elegance and dignity,' Johnson is made to assert that vulgar and cant words 'in general are short.' I wonder what he would have thought of some of those same old four-letter words now enlivening the most respectable journals?

But, today, more than before, the outstanding question rises from failure of some critics to distinguish between animated originality and disjointed confusing syntax, their failure to perceive the distinction between writings of stimulating textual interest and jottings of disorganized thoughts in distracting procession (which in some instances are not even true recordings of real processions, but deliberated illogical sequences for distraction's sake). In general, unusual placements of words and their uses with unusual shades of suggestion fall into two altogether disparate categories: that of possible enrichment of communication, and that of valueless (maybe harmful)

misuse either from carelessness or from inane wish to puzzle or startle readers.

The basic determining touchstone should form from regard for maintaining and improving communication. Beattie makes Addison affirm that ‘speech was intended to convey the sentiments of men from one to another.’ Inseparable from this is the consideration of a writer’s purpose in endeavouring to convey either sentiments or facts. The purpose (if he does have one, other than to fling down phrases) will largely decide his choices of words and his manner of setting them down (style). This is because his conscious or unconscious aim will be to select and arrange words and sentences to give the sharpest focus to what he is saying (theme).

There’s actually little point — nor little to be clarified — in arguments over the comparative merits of long and short words, common and uncommon phrases, old words and new or freshly-coined ones. United though men are by languages in common, each individual’s vocabulary varies somewhat from that of others; and this variance naturally grows with the practice of the writing craft. There are many degrees of selfconsciousness concerning this. But it is vital to learn to hear oneself, to develop the manner of expression which is uniquely one’s own.

It’s questionable that any author ever has been without some thought of future readers. Maybe he fancies that he writes solely to please himself. But that’s inescapably future-tense (too); everyone changes day-to-day. Consider the chagrin—and this has been experienced millions of times—of picking up what one has set down perhaps a short year or so earlier, to miss the effect one vaguely recalls had been intended (maybe to miss the very meaning!). In this connection—there being as many resemblances as dissimilarities amongst a population—if an author does succeed in producing what continues to please him, he is

bound to please at least others whose tastes are like his own.

After reading these dialogues by the precocious younger Beattie, the notion occurred that his 'debates' really were internal, that he wrote to help himself discover how he should proceed in his own practice. He evidently did feel, in accord with his ghost of Addison, that much of Dr. Johnson's writing was pompous and pretentious; however, though young (he scarcely survived to manhood), he too was a scholar and had, among other exercises, translated numerous English poems into Latin (a 'thing' in that century). And his style betrays not a little Johnsonian influence. Nearly all his work to then had been imitative: poetry in the manner of Thomas Gray and several others he admired. Furthermore, in such pieces, the mixed figurative language backhandedly criticised in the *DIALOGUES* is much in evidence. A self-discipline?

Beattie has Johnson close with a speech of quite naive 'repentance'—maybe to be interpreted as his own highflown youthful resolve: 'If I had my style to form anew, I should perhaps make it, in a greater degree, elegant without constraint, dignified without ambitious ornament, strong without rigidity, and harmonious without elaboration.'

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ESCAPE

*I am aware of being in a beautiful prison,
from which I can only escape by writing.*

— Anaïs Nin

the poet's song the dancer's leap
unhinges the door leaves behind
in the mind's frame the body's bag of bones
and wings free the heart

Martin Steingesser

EDITORS (AND OTHERS) WRITE

WE ARE THEY (ISN'T IT WONDERFUL?)

Dear Editors:

... College kids are subjected to no philosophy that offers them any hope, and no poetry that offers them any reality but nadismo, nada, and neo-nada. This is the poet's fault; although it sometimes appears that some poets are carrying so much more of their share ... in an attempt to prove what I've shouted now for a year or so: Too many Christ figures, not enough Christianity!

This is where both the new left and the old right seem to find their rallying points as more and more of society gets up against the walls, pages, periods, paper, wood pulp and fine linen fibers. As the pictures in the magazines sneer more and more, the smiles become false faces of ennui and fear, the stillborn resignation of the old already in the faces of the young. All this — thank God — is mere illusion, too; but the media and the light shows and all the other psychedelic paraphernalia of phantasmagora have created a black magickal apocalypse of chrome, plastic, and merely scintillating light. Creature-Man is running amok.

Henry Miller may be proved right, and Man may have to abandon the machine ... finally seeing that he will never master it. It is really in a sense an alchemical problem; and just as the alchemists had to give up their absurd quests ... and become philosophers, the scientists of this time ... may have to do the same thing, along with those of us who have already moved in this direction ...

It is up to the poet to change that look of 'world show me you're worth living for' on the face of the young to a smile in the plexus.

... Not very much longer can we follow the withdrawal traditions of the past; because they only lead to further catatonia, paranoia, chaos, psychosis, and suicide. ... Certainly, poetry can follow no political lines. That will never be a valid position for either poet or poem. But the poet who turtlelike pulls his head into his shell and does not deal with the cataclysmic chaos will not much longer be relevant to much of anything.

Our failure has not been in poetry, because surely we have not been at a loss for words. It has been in being afraid to communicate. ... The fear of communication keeps all (not only poets) from it; and without communication, there is no real poetry. This is what is wrong with the poetry of the past and the poetry that appears to be of the present, but which is just phantasy built on the sand castles of the past. Poetry is not the abstract word game that the concretists, for instance, would like it to be; nor is it the domain of the castrati choirboys of the various grove-shrouded academies. Not just because Doug Blazek, Bukowski, Steve Richmond, Harold Norse, Tom McNamara, Yevtoshenko, and Marianne Moore say so. Not just because this letter is an ultimatum to stop the perpetuation of a puritanical mindlessness — not to you, but to everybody. I'm not going to try to tell you that this is important just because it involves everybody's real sanity and wellbeing . . . their life, their hope, their possibilities for joy — just because it is.

There is no joy in America. It is not America's fault, certainly not the fault of the American high-school kids who dig the current teacher's strikes as some of the teachers do, as I do; because they weren't getting anything inside those prison walls but the warden-minds of constipation.

It is fashionable to denounce the writing you don't like, these days, as masturbation. But doesn't that just go to show the frustration of critics — because there is no valid criticism of poetry that is not a better poem; and we are far

from where we should be in poetry when the poet does not realize that the poem is a prayer to share and that it can be and in fact must be sexual . . . I'm not saying . . . let me be quick to point out, that it should be 'pornographic' or an 'obscenity;' because that is frequently, although not necessarily always, a forced or sophisticated thing, too . . . Grove Press is guilty of cynically exploiting that aspect . . .

Let us know that our poetry must be bread and sticks and various frangopanis and eggs and soot and the rich loams of the earth, the wet humus and the wondrous aroma of the hairs as they swirl in the adagios, the andantes of the symphonies of Life — but that, too, we must have room and make room for the machinegunbulletstaccato of the rockn'rollin' chaotochromismic aspects; or, like it or not, we must admit that we fail as poets to truly reflect our time. Never before has the poet's vocation been so important, so demanding. Never before has the poet had such demands put upon his art. Never before has there been such an opportunity for heroic poetry or whatever it is that makes poetry 'great.' The poets of the past dreamed of an apocalypse like this . . .

Tom McNamara

REGARDING ACANEMIA, STREET-ITIS, CCLM & OTHER JABBERWOCKY

Dear Editors:

You know, it's oddly amusing that Joyce thought Lawrence obscene and that Lawrence thought the same of Joyce . . . that Miller thought Hemingway so much shit, and Sandburg thought Miller something insane. And all this on the basis of each's respective, yet individual, description of life. It's amazing. And I understand the only exception is Gore Vidal and Norman Mailer. They are very good but aesthetically opposed friends. Vidal disapproves of so much sex in Mailer, and Mailer can't understand why there isn't any to be found in Vidal. Honestly, I think it all goes back to Lawrence again; to a Lawrence truth he did not know well enough to practice in his human relations. He wrote simply in a letter: 'Trust the tale, not the man.' Hemingway said it, too. In effect, it was simply that one should leave one's morals and ethics outside the bedroom, as otherwise it was inordinately too crowded for serious concentration. I think this good advice for academy artists, street artists, CCLM, & anybody & everything else. Seamus Finn

TO EDIT — OR NOT TO EDIT

Dear Editors: I have lately been exercised by thought of the extraordinary modern difficulty of writing English — under which head must be subsumed Anglo- and American-. Whilst I am more likely to have it in for editors for — editing the more serious sort of writing, this time I have it in for publishers for failing to edit the less serious sort. Many writers whose primary purpose is to distract, who do so compulsively well, and are a gargantuan asset to their publishers, acquire a grasp of three ever-swelling languages,

and yet remain in need of elementary correction. I think publishers owe it to them, as well as to English, to provide this service.

Elizabeth Louch

VIENNA 1967

Though my
roots are
cut off
here, they
hurt like
an old
scar when
it rains.

Felix Pollak

THE POET AS TRANSLATOR

*For most translations one would merely say, take
it away and start again.
— Ezra Pound*

by Gene Fowler

THIS IS PERHAPS MORE A NOTE than an article, but a necessary note. Right now there is a stampede among poets to be translators. This is in part because contemporary poets think Pound made his reputation this way and that having done translations from a number of languages is a sign of erudition that is attractive in a poet.

Another reason for this exaggerated enthusiasm is that our current poets are at a loss as to what to write. Translation is a way to get a poem without having to go into yourself for it. Or it appears, to them, to be.

Still another reason is that many of these poets are becoming at least dimly aware that they are all alike. One or another may then see a glimmer of uniqueness in being the channel through which a unique and strong poet comes into the language. (The uterine theory of poetry.)

Unfortunately, after all these factors have jolted the poet into becoming a translator, nothing happens. The translations prove no better than original poems by the translator. They are ignored. He decides that he alone has the genius to appreciate the great imported poet.

The truth of the matter, of course, is that a poet cannot, as a poet, translate a better poet than himself. Assuming he is aware, as a reader, of what is in the original — he simply cannot match it.

Baudelaire improved Poe. He did not set out to improve Poe: he simply couldn't help doing so. He was a better poet.

By the same principle, our contemporary poet-translators destroy most of what they bring into English. They do not, as Pound does, use the opportunity to introduce new possibilities into English.

Interestingly enough, most of them do not even approach the job as poets. They are called poets on the jackets, enjoy reputations as such; but when they set out to translate, they immediately become neophyte scholars, looking for the message, the paraphrase.

I do not want to single out a particular man whose life and habits I haven't investigated. But I do want to take as an illustration the poem I was reading when this article occurred to me.

I was reading the New Directions book of selected Lorca. The poem at which I finally exploded was the next to last section of *Poema de la Saeta*.

The translator was W. S. Merwin, and I admit readily that this may be his weakest translation. The remarks above are not directed at him particularly.

Here are both poems: Lorca's very lovely *saeta*, *Balcon*, and Merwin's version in English, *Balcony*.

BALCON

La Lola
canta saetas.
Los Toreritos
la Rodean,
y el barberillo
desde su puerta,
sigue los ritmos
con la cabeza.
Entre la albahaca
y la hierbabuena,
la Lola canta
saetas.
La Lola aquella,
que se miraba
tanto en la alberca.

BALCONY

Lola
sings saetas.
The little bullfighters
circle around her
and the little barber,
from his doorway,
follows the rhythms
with his head.
Between the sweet basil
and the mint,
Lola sings
saetas.
That same Lola
who looked so long
at herself in the pool.

The first thing we feel about the poem in English is that it isn't very good. We might blame this on Lorca. Almost any

reader without Spanish would do just that. I say almost because I do not have Spanish.

But I am a poet, so I looked at the original, saw different balances and weights than in the translated poem. I looked up the pronunciations of the language — and got to where I could sense if not utter the sound patterning. And, when I knew a word had to carry more weight than the translation would indicate, I'd ask my wife, who has some Spanish, if this word did not indeed have a second meaning or carry a sound pun.

Consider the opening. Note the mass and dignity, the almost duende dancing of the first two lines: 'La Lola / cante saetas.' Then, the insipid translation, the empty statement of 'Lola / sings saetas.'

The rest of the poem shows similar witherings in the translation.

Before going into any detailed explanation of why I felt moved to see what was possible, let me give my version in its entirety. (And acknowledge the help of Hilary Fowler, my wife and a poet.)

BALCONY

La Lola
chants saetas.
Among the sweet-basil
and the mint-leaves,

LA LOLA CHANTS SAETAS.

La Lola alone,
who watched herself
so long in the pool.

Merwin was obviously jotting down what the poem said. But he failed to see that how it was said mattered. The poem itself might be the saeta she did. Our word sings covers too

much ground and usually means something altogether too relaxed and easy. I did not simply go back to the original for my opening lines, but took, as well, the closest availability in English.

I wasn't first interested in the fact that *sigue* might be signals as easily as follows, but was appalled that the two-beat 'con la cabeza' had been given as the one-beat 'with his head.'

I can't even prove that line weight and phonemes at the break result in the Spanish line being two-beat and Merwin's one-beat. But I can hear.

I used mint-leaves to recapture the structural similarity in the two names of herbs — and, to get the balance and sound in those lines, I went from between to among.

The word *aquella* is much like our antique *yon*. That same is just too flat for this Canto. My choice is adequate, I think.

All this, then, to bring us to the conclusion that a poet must translate poems: and he must remember that he is a poet, not fall into the scholar's role. He must bring across the rhythmic and sound integrities as well as the sense, as part of the sense. All translations fail at some point. But our current translators accept failure too soon, before they start. So they do not try very much.

After having done what is possible to bring the original over into the language, the poet may breathe a sigh, mark the job as done for now — and let his frustrations go into playing.

REVELRY

Miss Tassles
belts saetas.
Small bull marketers
circle her,
the little broker,
from his table,
signals the rhythms
on with his head.

Among the cigar smokes and the booze breaths, Miss Tassles belts saetas. That same Miss Tassles who watched herself so long in Tiffany's window.

APOSTLE OF LIFE: ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN

Abigail Ann Hamblen

ANY MAN SO INTENSELY, SO EXUBERANTLY in love with life as Robert P. Tristram Coffin is bound to be controversial. One cannot proclaim an almost naive satisfaction in all the circumstances of one's existence, as he did, and not evoke the dry scorn — or even the contempt — of those whose pleasures are less full-bodied. The intellectual, the man of reason, may feel a distaste for what might seem an adult's playing of children's games. And Coffin had, all his life, many of the attributes of a growing boy — a certain jauntiness of mien, a certain artless way of telling the world that his home was the best, as well as his people and his concepts of beauty. He also had (in a thoroughly good-natured form) the young boy's tendency to defy the grown-up world. Whether or not these characteristics are attractive depends, of course, on the beholder. Tastes differ.

Coffin's poetry is brilliant with images; it glows with keen appreciation of animals and people and woods and sea (Maine animals, people, woods, and the sea off the coast of Maine). Like his prose, it is enlivened with an eager restless vitality, a vitality that almost cries out, pleading with the reader: Believe in me! I am Tristram Coffin. I am alive and I shall live forever as do the stars and love and faith . . .

Poets, he said, 'cannot be jaded or tired men. Of all alive they must be the most intent on living.'¹ He lives up to his word.

A new book (A BREATH OF MAINE, by Raymond Charles Swain — \$5.95 — Branden Press) gives a colorful portrait of Coffin, lovingly executed and painstakingly detailed. But the portrait is utterly uncritical. The reader learns that Swain, as

a young aspiring author, early came to Coffin's notice, that Coffin was unfailingly kind and helpful to him. Coffin's friendships and relationships with his students were never anything but warm and considerate. He would spend long hours analyzing and evaluating the work of a friend or student. He was generous with praise, lavish with encouragement, and always sincere in criticising their writings, pro or con.

No wonder, then, that Swain never sees or admits to any flaws in his master. His book is not so much a biography and critical study as it is a tribute, an act, almost, of worship. Swain evidently gained much from his friendship with Coffin, from the richness of Coffin's *joie de vivre*. Perhaps he considers it poor taste or even a sign of ingratitude to grant that any of his idol's opinions or attitudes might be questioned. And yet, anyone reading Coffin finds questions bristling like Maine firs from every page.

¹ NEW POETRY OF NEW ENGLAND — *The Johns Hopkins Press*, 1938, p. 108.

We began by saying that nobody so ebulliently enthusiastic about life, so candid about his views, could escape being controversial. For, precisely because he did love life as he did, he was passionately prejudiced and held intensely pronounced opinions, especially on matters pertaining to writing and poetry.

What are we to think, for instance, when we read his appraisal of Longfellow as quoted by Swain:

We know that Longfellow's poetry will still be around, long after what the Romanticists of the Twentieth Century have written has passed into oblivion.

Some of the reasons Coffin advances for this statement seem strange, almost ludicrous:

No one can say about a Maine poet what is being said about Longfellow and have people believe it to be true. People are just not fooled that easily. (Both quotations from p. 180)

The fact that the city of Portland has erected a statue of Longfellow scarcely seems proof of the latter's poetic genius, though Coffin cites this. Maine Yankees may be thrifty, he says — no one can dispute that — but the fact that they would spend money for a statue hardly makes the subject of the statue a great poet.

Of Joseph C. Lincoln, he says: 'He probably stands equal with Mark Twain as an American humorist;' of Edwin Arlington Robinson, 'If he had remained in Maine with its lovely purity, Robinson would have been a greater man even than history will have proved him to be.' (Pp. 177-78) Joseph C. Lincoln is all very well, of course, but one hardly can put him beside Mark Twain! As for Robinson, anyone can perceive the dangers in saying what he — or any artist — would have been . . . if . . .

Concerning those he called the 'modernists,' Coffin was merciless:

They have sick, distorted, diseased minds, and are gifted only in inexact anagrams of poetry. This sort of thing — God help us! — is all the rage now in college classes. Let such poets as Spencer, Andrews, Fearing, Potchner, and the rest such as e e cummings, have the stage and the limelight now. They are weaving a rope which will some day, and soon, I hope, hang their fool necks! The members of the Establishment are doing nothing with their propaganda but downgrading the high art of poetry. (p. 88) Even the mildest sort of reader feels himself flexing his muscles. Here is something to dispute! No one should get away with such a sweeping generalization, such a determinedly narrow outlook! But Swain is passive, though he does quote a biting comment by e e cummings to the effect that Coffin's work will not last, together with an angry statement from William Carlos Williams calling Coffin a 'rhymester' like Edgar Guest.

Definitely of the 'sermons in stones' school, Coffin combined a lavish earthiness with a genuine mysticism. This

mysticism could lead to rather beautiful figures: You know a maple tree in your pasture very well, and one morning you go out and find no tree there, but a magnificent flame where it was, and you do not go near it any more. You stand off from it, as Moses did from the burning bush.² One can accept that description; it is the stuff, surely, of poetry.

But mysticism can work overtime:

And I have seen that same holiness of light in the eyes of moths, the earthy small angels of the night, drinking in my lamp's flame and staring at me and worshipping that light I had made for them as well as myself. (p. 155)

This is not the only time Coffin skirts sentimentality.

Charming as his style is — in both verse and prose — we occasionally find its lushness somewhat disturbing. Life may indeed be good at times; none of us, probably, is so jaded or so cynical as not to concede that radiant moments and seasons of real beauty are possible. But Coffin's insistence on the pervasive glory of earthly existence, the never-ceasing dramatic wonder of the universe, at times has an effect like that from a man caught in a thunderstorm explaining the beauties of lightning to a drenched and miserable companion.

Coffin's poetry is almost uniformly smooth. He never tries for the startling effects, the brutal imagery, the jagged rhymes that have so often made for a fresh awareness of the whole art of poetry. His lines flow easily; they are frequently of a velvety texture, both delightful and soothing. His craftsmanship is superb.

In fact, it is almost too good. We are haunted by a feeling that here and there he comes close to doggerel. One feels ungracious to cavil at near-perfection in any art; however, poetry (as any art) simply is not quite so neat and easy as Coffin makes it at times, though not by any means at all times. Reaching back for an extreme example, Alexander Pope's couplets are smooth, yet they do not give the impression of vapid facility.

Still, what really melodic poetry Coffin at his best did produce!

²THE SUBSTANCE THAT IS POETRY — *The Macmillan Co.*, 1942, p. 165.

And what breath-catching lines. A poem describing a pheasant which has been shot, ends:

Gentleness relaxed his head

He lay in jewelled feathers, dead.

Or a boy's first plowing:

When I turned at last and saw
My furrows running true,
My head was higher by a hand,
So fast my thigh bones grew.

He produced an amazing amount of poetry as good as these lines, and better. And he had the satisfaction of seeing his work frequently applauded. Honors came: the Lit.D., from both Bowdoin and the University of Maine; Phi Beta Kappa Poet at Harvard; membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters; the Pulitzer Prize (1936) . . . and more. At one time he was Fulbright Professor at the University of Athens.

With all this, plus a quite genuine scholarship, he proclaimed his devotion to the common ordinary life: he made a point of not owning a tuxedo; he could indulge occasionally in rather shocking grammatical lapses in conversation, such as, 'They won't hurt you none.' (We have mentioned his small-boy defiance of the adult world.) May we not be forgiven a teasing suspicion that there was a trace of the poseur in him? For, a man simply does not force his highly colored peculiarities on his fellow men unless he (consciously or unconsciously) wants to jerk their attention awake. And Coffin's mind had a certain gnomishness which would never let him rest — nor give rest to those about him!

One regrets that *A BREATH OF MAINE* is, as we said at the start, almost monotonously adulatory. And certain minor flaws are irritating. Swain, for instance, rather petulantly charges 'prestige publishers' with 'materialism' because he was not allowed to quote Coffin, Frost, and Robinson without paying what he felt were high-prohibitive sums of money. Occasionally his style is rather stilted; and such expressions as 'he stated,' 'seemingly,' and such an unapproved form as 'alright' jar on the reader.

A major flaw is the absence of adequate comment upon Coffin's fine prose works, which are passed over with the briefest of remarks. Any student of the poet will miss a discussion of the novels, which are lyric and arresting and really show more of Coffin, the man, than his poetry. The essays and lectures, too, are revealing, and they make delightful reading; but Swain is not much interested in them, though he does reprint the fine Commencement address Coffin gave at the

University of Maine, in 1937, as well as the lecture on Edna St. Vincent Millay. (In fairness, it must be added that he was prevented by copyright laws from including a lecture on Frost and one on Robinson.)

Still, the student of American letters will read *A BREATH OF MAINE* with considerable profit. For, it tells us much about Coffin; and it is rich in anecdotes about writers Coffin knew as friends—writers such as Edna St. Vincent Millay, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, and many others less well-known. We learn a great deal about Maine, also, and its influences upon him.

Swain writes with love, as we said, and with admiration. And perhaps the very absence of objectivity gives us a clue as to the strength of Coffin's bright and overwhelming personality. One certainly is persuaded to believe that here lived a remarkable man whose better works cannot be ignored.

VILLAGE ON THE SEASHORE

i have a bow with one arrow to string.
The tiger is larger than God —
for all men know the tiger
lives. And where.
i will meet him in the plain.
At noon.
My arrow will shatter
with the snap of heated glass.
So it was told
at my birth.

John Hideyo Hamamura

JAMES HINER

THE MISSILE (MISSAL) IS THE MESSAGE:

AN INTERVIEW

*with Master S. O’Loone (author of Subject is Contént, The
Rutabaga Revolution, et cetera . . .)*

Int.: Master O’Loone, which of your many books, would you say,

is the best one for the uninitiated to start with?

MSO.: Yes, well, of course all of you are uninitiated. Every one you

see looks back and therefore you don’t know the books I’m

working on. Incidentally, they’ve been translated into twenty-

two languages.

Int.: The books you’re working on?

MSO.: Well, now, those are predecktion. That’s a pun. Predict, or

‘say-before,’ and pre- or before-deck. A place to stand on that isn’t there yet, you see. Nearly everyone looks backward

and hence postdicts. People stand on the back of chariots,

looking at the dust churning behind them.

Int.: Yes.

MSO.: But of course there are no chariots! So people have no deck

to stand on. The deck is always gone, so no postdictions are

ever possible. The new dict devours the old deck.

Int.: Am I correct in saying . . .

MSO.: Pre-saying.

Int.: Pre-saying, yes. That this is what makes the 'súbject content?'

MSO.: Everyone is simply terrified of the pre. I do nothing but pre.

I don't have any deck to stand on. No point-of-view. I am continually pre-standing. A pun, you see: prest-anding, or in

other words fast-adding. Fast (prest-, presto) and-ing (add,

and). Joyce did, or dictated, this all the time.

Int.: Or, as you have written elsewhere, 'The Add-Age is the

Adage?'

MSO.: And notice that the d of add disappears in the adage!

Int.: The old subject disappears in the new content.

MSO.: The subject is the content. That's . . .

Int.: Excuse me, but actually wasn't that book translated into

twenty languages?

MSO.: Twenty-two. Now that's what makes the subject content.

People can't understand this. They want to see themselves as subjects. Assertion of the old I. But that's a post, a past; but the last post is past. You simply can't have the old I, it's gone. Not subject, but subject; subject to the new content, which is therefore content.

Int.: I wonder, Master O'Loone, if we couldn't bring this down, or forward, however you like . . .

MSO.: Pre it, in other words?

Int.: Yes. With something concrete. Perhaps a concrete illustration?

MSO.: Certainly, take simply anything. Take, for example, electronic music; there aren't any words left there, you see. No word-stand on the subject. And the subject doesn't take a word-stand, or post-diction. That is all swallowed up in the content.

Int.: Along with the music, the tone-deck, would you say?

MSO.: Yes. The Missile is the Message. The pre-content, pulsing, missile-like beat is content; it's destroyed the old subject. Joyce with his missals contented like this all the time. All the new media gives you is pre-diction. No re-, or read-diction any more. Look at speed reading. Reading is gone. Scarcely anyone speaks. Speech will be gone next.

Int.: By the year 2000, would you . . .

MSO.: Sooner. By 1996. The old speech processes are far too slow for the miss-ill age. Too slow, too certain, trying to stand on platforms — decks, you see — and shout purposes and goals.

Int.: But when you speak to peple — people, excuse me — like this, don't you find it terrifies them? Don't they want to know what they're going to do in place, or instead, of speak?

MSO.: They're going to gesture. Not instead, by the way, but instant-add. What pulses, like the missile. Of course they're terrified. They want to post-dict, watching the dust swirl behind the chariot. Naturally, everyone's terrified of pre-ing. They want to keep post-ing, I-ing. They want to over-stand rather than under-stand. They can't understand that in the Add-Age there is no time to be anywhere. The Add-Age is too fast for the old Age, which becomes the adage of the New Age. Take war. The Hundred Years War was a reading war, fought at a reading pace, the Revolutionary War was a speech war — speech, in fact, just barely able to keep up with it; but by the time we get to the War of 1812, we have a pre war: the decisive battle of that war was fought after the war ended. Speech simply could not keep up.

Int.: Well, what will the next war be like, can you say?

MSO.: There won't be any next war. There was just barely a War of 1812. So long as people, subjects, kept talking about it, they talked about what had already ended, been post-ed. In other words, they post-dicted.

Int.: But wouldn't you say . . .

MSO.: The Missile is the Message. It's much too swift for communication to be possible. Russia doesn't understand this. China doesn't understand this. The pre is present before the past. The future, in other words, is present in the Add-Age, and thus war is before any possible communication regarding the war is possible. The missile is the message. This terrifies people. They get the missile before they get the message. Man doesn't want to face the future; this terrifies him. And when man is terrified, he naturally reacts with violence.

Int.: Then there will be violence?

MSO.: But not war. War is obsolete, part of the old Predatore-Election-predilection, that is, or predecktion. Future wars will occur before they start. Hence there simply will not be any language in which they can happen. There's no message but the missile and the missile is the message.

Int.: What do you think will happen to schools and colleges, Master O'Loone?

MSO.: They will disappear. They are all subject to the new content. When Sputnik went up, the old subjects went down — become content to content the pre-dict environment of Sputnik. Schools and colleges, the old subject simply became object in that instant.

Int.: Am I not correct, Master O'Loone, that you have in the past had a considerable investment of time in schools and colleges?

MSO.: You might also say they had a considerable investment in me. Of course I have sympathy for that investment. I don't say I like the pre; that really has nothing to do with it. I simply pre-dict whatever is there, there to see.

Schools and colleges want to deck themselves, want to stand, want to re-joist, as it were. My position is, on the other hand, to re-joyce. It's not a matter of choice, but joyce. There's simply no old joist for the schools to stand on.

Int.: What will be done with schools and colleges, then?

MSO.: They'll be taken apart, simply taken apart, joist-by-joist, and put in some tribal museum of the Adage. This isn't a question of point-of-view, I simply pre. I have no point-of-view. The ordinary man is terrified to pre, and when he gets terrified he gets violent.

Int.: Have you experienced some of this violence, yourself?

MSO.: People are constantly attacking me — what I say, that is. They start violently after my Adage instead of pre-ing at the add-Age. They did the same with Joyce. They always have, I suppose. I made a remarkable discovery the other day, for example. On the Mazda-Echts, or Mazdecks. Now, these pre-Edisonians had electric lights. But they had no books, nothing to read. Then, why did they have electric lights? No one has ever been able to say. Everyone, you see, reads backwards. Scholars, anthropologists — anthroapologists! — all of them post-ing, and no one has ever been able to say why the Maz-decks had electric lights but no books to read.

Int.: And . . .

MSO.: I solved it just the other day. Simply by pre-ing, not looking at the adages behind the medium, but the Add-Age before. The electric lights were for their Read Gods, or: Reed Gods. Reading reeds. And when they descended they were to have lights to read by.

Int.: And no member of the Mazdecks ever used them?

MSO.: There were simply millions of miles of these electric circuits with lights and they had no other use than to be there for the Read Gods who were expected to descend in some distant pre, or future. Absolutely no other use was ever made of them.

Int.: Then that means, doesn't it, that there have been other Ages, that one at least, that got the Adage?

MSO.: No mistake about it. There have been Ages that have known how to read the missal. Even a few rare individuals. Joyce, for instance, and . . .

Int.: Master O'Loone, I'm afraid that we've run out of time. Like the adage. Thank you for being with us . . .

MSO.: Ahead of you! . . .

Int.: Yes, this afternoon. You have been listening to Master S. O'Loone, author of *Subject is Contént*, *The Mechanical Ride*, and other books. This is V.O.A. Radio, Washingdeck.

His feet
(like his children)
were good to mine
liked mine
and mine liked his
(in the early mornings
I remember)

Elizabeth Snowdon

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IN MEMORY OF CHRISTOPHER PERRET

BIRD MOTHER

Out
over the chimney-pots
out over the cobbled tops
of the twilight rooms
to the suckling lunar night
she flies
my bird
Bird Mother
feathering mother of the glowing worm
and winking grouse
out over the restless gorse and thirsting
frond-fell fields
Bird Mother of sable down and kitten teat
tumbling the west-wind pap
cool to the fathering whisper of sea
down to the seaweed dawn
of the spermy whale and shadowed coral
O Bird Mother rippling, lifting the waking
wail
Out over the quaking a childbirth cry
Bird Mother we love you
our sun has risen
die.

Young Perret, who died December 6, 1965, was published in TRACE both before and after his death. A Memorial Volume was published by POESIE VIVANTE (Switzerland) in late 1966. His writings — especially his poetry — had appeared in leading magazines both in Europe and the U.S.A.

IRVING BENIG

FOR RAMON

i will say it: there is nothing
but the thing, even if the thing
is only a bronze shadow heaped
on a high horizon, heaped
like a mountain or a mushroom
you heard her humming like a girl
beyond the sea's sound of itself,
beyond the dark loomings
and the tragic flow of brown water,
beyond the colored voice
that makes the sea
a tomb, like an anvil makes iron
a sword, pressed by the artificer
like the repeated plungings
of an oracle into dead mire
you, with trembling ears, heard
her hum like a regular bird,
and you turned to us, saying
there was more than that,
celestial, like a spinning orb

IRVING BENIG

spinning music in the clouds
that rises like a jubilant corpse
refusing to be still, refusing
to inherit the earth and eat
the tender dust, becoming silence
again. How you can turn a phrase
to me and make me take it
lying down, asphyxiated by the sea,
how you can say it, afraid
of the sky, is beyond me like her voice
cannot be beyond the sea itself.
The sea is the only voice

and make it vanish with red heat
and you kill sound with red heat
like water kills fire
in a simple gesture of compliance.
Speak, ramon, speak,
and if you glance around
toward the neon city, with blue eyes,
and see the glassy lights
which burn without fire, speak
what is in your heart
and what quickens you with fear.
Ramon, ramon, do you see
how the lights blaze in the sea
and how the white moon drops
like the dead shadow of a bird, falling
down with no grace, with no glide,
like a dull lump in a dead throat
trumpeting the decline of the sea?

IRVING BENIG

UN POÈME C'EST BIEN PEU DE CHOSE

(raymond queneau)

(
by the way,
are you ready to melt?
i mean are you ready
to meet your maker?
the warden of the great perhaps
because if you are
it's a simple matter, yes
sir, like nothing at all
all you have to do
is stay where you are
and act alive
)

IRVING BENIG

AUTOPOEM

when i was 14 and horny
i dreamed of a black woman
who approached me half nude
her full breasts faced me
with faces of their own
and i took them into me
i was of my time
and knew what i can never
know now, even faintly
when i was 15 and dulled
i held my father's moist hand
waiting for the ambulance
when he heard it in a wish
the doctor was a man to him
but to me he was a woman
who, out of my dream, washed
me and let me kiss
her breasts because i was young

MICHAEL FRANKS

POEM FOR MY WIFE

Have you forgotten, flesh,
That uterine song?
Or, panther-limbed in her darkness,
How she stung?
Woman lying lovely as a fish,
The night long.
There will be time to know
The animals killed by flowers.
And have you not trembled at how
The nightingale sang into rust?
But you and I, my sparrow,
Are not usual lovers.

Winter we sat inside
And quarreled or kissed to keep warm.
I burned the Works of Pope
When the wood in the wood-box ran out.
After which, evaluating the harm,
You sipped your brandy and said:
He was a hunchback anyway.
O the boredom we undid
In the nude reading Yevtushenko!
May we never outlive our lust,
Or the shape of our arms touching, loveliness.
Always inside you to hear
Mountains flutter like wings.
In the nights of every season
Lie close, my throbbing bird.
Lie close, lie close!

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MICHAEL FRANKS

TRAGEDY IN RAGTIME FOR FIVE INSTRUMENTS

Overture In Bruges they have a mechanical ragtime band; It
plays when you put a coin in it. Five tin musicians keep no
time with their feet; Their rag is not passionate.

How elegantly sad they make the music!

Expressionless, they play their same song over.

What is the tragic rapture they suggest

In ragtime to killer or lover?

I. It's hard to be drunk in Dover On a bilious
Whit-Monday, Though the gulls tremble like kites, over The
quay, And the herring-men blaspheme: Christjesus has
killed the crabs.

In the Albatross I got sick On pickled hardboiled eggs
That bobbed in an oestrous jar, And walked unquestionably
home To a dormitory room, Tired of singing and darts. We do
what we've always done.

Canterbury twenty kilometres. Shall I stumble there like a
pilgrim? It's lovely to be lost, And the ticket-man insists
(Unaware of his metaphor) the Trains do not run on
Pentecost.

MICHAEL FRANKS

II.

Oranges and ale at noon,
Over the easy fence
For the roadside shade,
Is a narrow meal for one.
Shall I sing to the sheep?
And, after braising a rump,
Lie down fat in the dandelions;
Recline my satiate gut in the grass

And laugh like Whitman.
 On the ferry from Oostende
 I spoke to a prostitute.
 And when she later complained
 A sailor had stolen her bag
 The man at the railings said:
 'Oh Oh Oh
 The queen has lost her portmanteau!
 Oranges and ale
 On the road in-between.
 And the blackbirds want something;
 Collapsed from the sky's miracle,
 Pitching their difficult circus,
 Perform for an ort.
 Odd, how you get to places.

III.

Strode through the fieldflowers
 Where no one else was.
 You cannot pretend to be summer
 Very long though.

MICHAEL FRANKS

**MET ME AN OLD HAGBITCHWOMAN, LYING
 ASTRADDLE WITH HER EMPHASIS, WITH THE
 WORD HISTORY TATOOED AMIDSHIPS. WHO
 THOUGHT IF SHE STREW LILIES AT HER
 WHOREBREASTS AND BRUSHED THE BATS FROM
 HER EYES I WOULD THINK HER APHRODITE.
 WOODED MY TIRELESS CYCLOPS TO FALL THROUGH
 THE CENTURIES OF HER CONSUMPTIVE ZERO.**

IV. But there was another weather, In a time before the
 time we woke Each day with ravens At the bedposts. You
 said: carry me seaward. And I did.

We did not account for the usury of idylls. And it did not
matter That high christ and the hawk Had long ago scribed
their arc Into our foreheads. Time would curve a sanctum in
his ways.

In those days We saw Rodin's in Paris And knew we had
posed for them.

V. Despair is nothing new, A fifth act with flourishes. The
rape is all in dumb-show, And God is the Wizard of Oz.

MICHAEL FRANKS

ROETHKE

Theodore, elephant-jesus of the Small,
Is it true you are drowned
Swimming in Puget Sound?
Did the waters make you final?
The stones and I miss you,
The moss and the tendrils.
But I am no Milton, Ted,
And you no Lycidas —
Sunk though you be.
I won't be long about strophe
Or antistrophe.
Your absence puzzles the arthropods;
The greenhouse littles are lonely.
Now who will pose for our pictures,
Be our Cyrano? Round
Teutonic Buddha
Slouched by your Bo Tree,
Singing the stems up.

MICHAEL FRANKS

The critics collect like aphids:
Their mouths make the leaves pale,
Smother the sex in the spiral, prevent
The eventual ballet.
What shall I do, Patroclus,
Fight for your armour?
And what do they do with them,
The poems, after gelding?
They ship them off in boxcars
To make jerky.
They pile them up into slag-heaps.
But one day, at the edge of a field,
Someone casts the glamour, kisses
A toad, and bones are uncovered.
And it all comes down like Wales,
On innocent schoolchildren during Art.
Huge Ted, be with the whales!
With the pikes and ascending fishes!
The earth is your spouse.
The bees know where the Spring is.

LISA YOUNT

PARISIAN BOY IN RED WAISTCOAT

He comes in his armor, red like a shout of light —
 Strength and snarl, a force that makes him shine.
 But yellow curtains are eating his yellow face.
 Already their muslin teeth have worried his skin
 Down to the bones, and sucked out his juicy cheeks.
 Ten years: mother, porridge and diarrhea,
 One spoon, two spoons, three and a sugar-bowl,
 Hopscotch and puzzles fogged in the eye of God.
 The sallow curtains nuzzle his sallow face.
 They swirl and puff a gassy, tuberculous air,
 And swell their opulent bellies against his loins.
 'Between thy seed and hers there shall be war.'
 The shape of his body is clean, a lover's frame,
 But already his midnight eyes are older than suns.

LISA YOUNT

SPECTROSCOPE

What element is that
 which has dark hair, fine-grained
 as in a photographic print, steam, or rain
 Compounded of eyes,
 commentless words, the blur
 of a red dress frozen in motion:
 Damp scent of grass
 crushed, dandelions unseen: the lines almost
 multiples of small whole numbers
 Yet one line does not add up:
 one line, angstrom thin,
 it could be sky but is too narrow
 Perhaps only diffraction
 or my tired eyes, and yet could be
 that indivisible hair, your soul

LAWRENCE BARTH

WINTER AFTERNOON, 1923

The statuettes had glands,
Functioning in plaster throats and skulls.
The upright piano played an inner tune,
Wires unblemished by motion.
How valuable were the floors in polish may be judged
By the fact that they outshone Jesus God —
He whose light pushed well beyond the frame,
Pointing in sharp sticks outward from his body.
I was eight, and my penis hung limp.
(Though boys of eight do have erections, I was unaware
of this.)
My clothes were rumpled, snowflakes burst outside the
pane,
Making the afternoon a parabolic bubble
(And if there was a mortgage on the house, I did not
know about it.)

LAWRENCE BARTH

ONE GOLDFISH REFRACTED IN THE BOWL, HIS
MOUTH IN OPEN-SHUT DID SPEAK OF ALL. TELL
ME, GOLDFISH, WO IST GOTT? NAETHING,
NAEWHERE, HE REPLYIT. THEN DID I PLACE THE
NEEDLE ON THE RECORD, THAT THEY WHO PLAY
— DAH DAH DE DAH — LIFTING THEIR HORNS
INTO THIS BLACK DISK — MIGHT BLOW ME OUT
AN ANSWER: NOTHING: DAH DAH DE DAH. (THAT
THIS WAS ANSWER I WAS UNAWARE.) THE
RADIATOR MADE A WEBBY DREAMSONG HARD
AGAINST THE PAPERED WALLS ALL HUNG AND
GARNISHED WITH JANUARY SILENCE. I COULD NOT
KNOW THIS ROOM WOULD MELT TO GREEN ON A
JUNE MORNING IN THE YEAR NOT YET UNROLLED,
I SURMISED NOT A SWAY OF TREETOP WHEREIN
I'D STAND AND LEAN ON OXYGEN, NOR COULD I
SEE IN THE DEAD OF COMING AUGUST MYSELF
WITH BOX OF BITS AND PARTS, WALKING THE
WORLD TO CALL JUNK FOR SALE! IN THE PALE
VOICE OF ONE WHO WILL HOLD APART THE
JAWS OF LIVING TIGERS. SEEING NONE OF THIS,
I SAT AND LET TIME HIT ME, SURFING ME WHO
BROACHED IT IN THE RUG-LAID SILENCE OF THE
AFTERNOON.

HELEN LUSTER

CAP AND BELLS

wring out the new
like a dome of
party / coloured
glass
a multipak. .
behold the bunny cometh
looking just like
Pavlov in beard and flock/
coat astride a cannot
cannon sez his
ding dong
4 and de
if you wave
a carrot he
will salivate
bunny #1 is so dumb
her eyes get pink she
shakes and shakes

HELEN LUSTER

bunny #2 is high
up thru the sky
ears like antennae
they both wear
space caps a
pie in the sky
multicoloured
horns of plenty
those bells
wring wring
out an orange/ coloured
black apple
black Dunsany King
dunce cap zany cap
don't think a thing

white beard white
too dreams
wear this cap
just for Jesus
Salvation Army lass
sings
don't say a thing
like I say
Peter Rabbit doth
a/ bound. .

HELEN LUSTER

THE OPENING

up early
dawn
and I see . . .
a daddy long legs
reaching
fragile antennae
toward the light
(under LSD they say
spiders spin
wider webs)
and outside the window
a large gate
opens
by itself

HELEN LUSTER

when I notice
it is a man
bent over
carrying
a lunchpail
who opens it. .
that young student last night
rosy cheeks
farm girl from Fresno
I had hash last week
some Acapulco gold. .
people bring me gifts . . . it can be
so wide
I want others
to use my apartment now . . . ?
a shiver when
it fell in the water . . . and
to have to smash
that delicate spider. .

KAREN KOSHGARIAN

How pointless were those moons
By the cove where we sat
In the naked washes of salt air
And talked of psychedelic experiences —
Those dreams of color and brilliance
Bathed with glitters —
And the foolish silences of contemplation
That broke with the sounds of
The thumping waves.
And how vain were our
Attempts to distill the
Moments of quiet that
Shifted when the sea made
Still another attempt to
Overflow our thoughts.
How foolish to let
The moon drift out to sea
Not knowing how to
Bait a perfect moment.

D. CALHOUN

THE ACCIDENT

Hurrying the universe toward them
Two cars accelerate on a curve of being
Turn inward
Coincidental in time
Rushing toward a matter of creation.
One sound drags another sound to a silence.
Windshields shred
Passengers vomit into existence
And sliced tubes rage red
Shards of being splash
Pavement and field.
In measuring
The length of life
One measures an explosion.

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LAURENCE GOLDSTEIN

H. P. LOVECRAFT

He watched
rivers bring from the sea
its darkness
Rime-eaten
Providence wharves
Poe's alleys
Georgian brick
Unitarian steeples universities
no shelter
He was watched
by what he seemed to see
under the circles
under the wharves
ophidian things cunning
meaning death
Stars glared
batrachian eyes careless of him
their enemy
Evil shapes
swimming in elements star-spawned
uttering war
Hating them
one of them in terror
he wrote
giving names
illuminating each as it
possessed him.

LAURENCE GOLDSTEIN

AUBADE

'Cascade is my favorite word,' she said
and drew the blinds.
Sunlight smashed through the windows
gouging my eyes. I smiled.
'Mine is tundra; the sound is palpable as flesh.'
'My flesh?' her voice soothed in the sun's malaise.
I cuddled my pillow, wondering
what poetry would simulate her flesh.
At the bathroom door she turned
and asked, was I happy?
I said yes.

PETER STEVENS

NARCISSUS

Sun at his back
he sees an eye float
in the black pool
stare from the dark
side of the sun.
Above the pool his body
keen to slash the eye
thinking hurtles past
sight plunging into
the cold circle bursts
open the eye spurts
with black
and sun-red dazzle
then grasps the frail lid
hauls himself out
of the black well.
A dog-shake flings off
his shadow shining
in the centre
of his blindness.
Sacrifice to a darker self

he stands naked
in the blaze of the sun
hot as blood on his back.

JOHN HIDEYO HAMAMURA

DIVE FOR DREAMS

i sing as i swim
after Silver Perch down
through the pilings
of my mind;
sing for the dream there
under the sand and eel grass,
fish songs lonely as bubbles.
And i dig,
dig for the dream;
dig for the kelp dream, squid dream, cod dream,
barnacle brass rust beer can dream . . .
down,
between the pilings.
Dig for the crab dream
and sing (my fingers wish they were eel grass).
Sing as my fingers hit stone, tearing two nails . . .
Sing loud as i rise
to the surf board guys sharing my sea with their girls.
Sing (sea birds and temple bells
and fishing boats smelling of blue albacore),
breathe and my lungs are cool,
pale blue and early as dawn,
and dive back
singing down to the dream
watching with slant eyes
from the eel grass and sand slides.

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LOUIS ARAGON

RICHARD II FORTY

*You may my glories and my state depose,
But not my griefs; still am I king of those.*
(Shakespeare, Richard II)*

My country is a ship aground
Abandoned by her oarsmen
And I am like that monarch
More sorrowful than suffering
Who remained king of his griefs
Life is but a stratagem
No wind can ever dry our tears
If I must hate now all I love
What is mine no longer, let them take
Still am I king of my griefs
The heart may cease from beating
The blood run cold as ice
Two and two make what you will
And let my purse lie where it falls
Still am I king of my griefs
Whether the sun die or rise again
The sky has lost all colour
Sweet Paris of my youth, farewell
Farewell to Spring, the flowers, the Seine
Still am I king of my griefs

** Aragon's Richard II Quarante, the refrain of which is Je reste roi de mes douleurs, is obviously inspired from these lines in Shakespeare.*

LOUIS ARAGON

FLEE THE WOODS AND FOUNTAINS

Hold your peace, you querulous birds
 Your songs are placed in quarantine
 For you are laid the fowler's snares
 Still am I king of my griefs
 There is a time for suffering
 When Joan came to Vaucouleurs
 Ah cut my France in tiny shreds
 The day was strangely pale like this
 Still am I king of my griefs

(Adapted from Le Crève-Coeur by Rosemary Wells-Marie)

LOUIS ARAGON

OFFERTORY

I love that song always never begun like a dream
 I love that song which rises and dies
 I love that song never finished
 I love that song just like you and which stumbles in my
 mouth
 That song adventurous of you like a fear
 As one rounds a wall
 That murmured song that song held back in the throat
 That song of you that heartbeat of a song
 That pure song that lament one knows not why
 Still pale as it approaches
 Pale for nothing
 I love that unfinished song that pony in the meadow
 Who halts at the first white barrier
 That prelude unpursued that
 Arpeggio and nothing else but the sky
 A panic of clouds
 I love that song which will be neither verse nor music
 That outline so scarcely blued-in
 Bedazzled
 I love that song which is but the prefiguration of itself

Petrified of being before it is born
That song

LOUIS ARAGON

**I LOVE THAT SONG WHICH NONE WILL HEAR WHO
HESITATES**

Between the wind and the windowpane between silence
and sound

That song of a soul O hardly heard
Or of leaves that make in that distant land an Autumn
where

nobody goes

I love that song of furtive steps forever as though
The slightest word towards you that one dares were a
thief that the

garden alarms

I love that song that seeks you and loses itself
And loses itself in the transparent forest of ears
In a town without end its doors all just the same
Moving, roving hand incapable of grasping her
unleashed hair

Ship before living half-swooned

I give you this song like a clover

A clover is always a hole in the heart

And when it flowers, deep down there is bleeding

O mauve unhappy blood

But the leave the leaf frail at the slightest breath

And what do you care if it has three or four so long as it

Breathes that fragile clover

Towards your mouth

I give you this song like a poor clover fallen

From a book or the bed From my lip

This mute song this mendicant colour of a kiss

*(Translated from La Messe d'Elsa, in La Nouvelle Critique, avril
1965, Rosemary Wells-Marie)*

TUNNEL OF THE CENTURY

I.

Under a weird metal sky;
The prisoners walk, veiled drums;
The steel glove of night weighs
On their backs and communicating dreams.
The Erinyss, most ancient bleeders of the people, veiled
drums,
Walking slowly
Present arms of hatred, implacable fists.
Flesh is open to speechless fear,
Stone castles disintegrate
While heroes wave armored canes.
At night, the Erinyss reproduce themselves
And the mariner's compass card
opens at dawn.

II.

Under a weird tremulous sky
The statue of infancy is wounded
By the heirs of subterranean idols
Who acclaim their dancing sword.
They curse bread and wine,
Destroying the tablet of rosebushes, — The alphabet of
poor
migrants.
Blind men wrangle in a tunnel
Building their tombs.
Under a weird tremulous sky
Walk the clandestine men, veiled drums.

MORNING

No one knows if morning
Will bring promise of joy.
Anonymous concertinas
alternate with thrush songs.
Wind of yesterday changed,
it gently blows now.
A man leaves for his work,
Two, three, a thousand men leave,
Thinking of their return.
Yesterday that rosebush
Was not in bloom.
This moment's caress
Vanishes in air.
Arms startle
The remaining night.

*(O Tunel do Seculo and A Manhã are translated from the
Portuguese by D. M. Pettinella)*

MURILO MENDES

EMIGRANT

The errant cloud gathers the bird
Flying from the statue of stone.
I am the errant cloud,
The bird is the statue of stone.
Gathering ghosts,
I ran from desert to desert,
Ejected from the airplane's shadow.
My thirst is endless
No fountain can quench it.
Friend! Brother! I'll bring you
Corn from the land of Egypt,
Even the corn I do not have.
Egypt, Egypt! I have been thrifty
That I might give to others some day;
Now I am naked, lonely, and poor.
God's growing shadow
Spares me not a moment;
I shall remove this burning choker
And leave you my thirst,
Since I own nothing more.

(Translated from the Portuguese O Emigrante by D. M. Pettinella)

SIMON PERCHIK

(WAR PICTURE AT THE DRIVE-IN)

Like riding on the Flag, my old car dips
leaps across the stripes, then stops, pitched safe
behind a line between what would be red and white
had I come before the sun went down, before the peace
:a plain of armor tilted black
a thousand tanks below each crest
trenched for victory, a peace
that laid the Flag upon this field.
Parked
one hand at ease between my neighbor's breasts,
I see above the ridge
in the far west corner of this gentle field
each star has been dispersed.
Only sound.
Who cares now what war they are repeating,
where the Flag has gone.

STANLEY NELSON

LAMENT

To lie awake
With my right arm
Outstretched
And my left hand
On my heart
Is not the final
Midnight grief
Nor the final pain
At 4 a.m.
It is when I
Turn,
Knowing sleep will come,
And my hand grows
Older
By a hundred years
Searching the pillow for
Your breasts.

ADRIANNE MARCUS

FOR THE BARKER, WHO IS NEVER TIRED

Love, the loud midway calls.
Dimes drop onto shellacked boards;
The glorious kittens revolve
In their fur. Prizes beyond
Description or choice, the dimes
Leap from our hands, begging.
All we must do is demand:
Our fingers will follow,
Having lived too long to hesitate.
Believe this world no less
Real than others where
We balance between knowing
and dreaming: possessors,
Possessed, turn towards
The voice that promises
Which one we shall be.

RICHARD MATHEWS

ELEGY IN ADVANCE

I.
The cat that grew unknown
will die tomorrow.
All that lime-eyed movement
will be spent
and lambent footfalls then
will only be remembered.

II.
Slouching half ashamed
in daylight,
the cat at night
was only feet and eyes
moving with a whisper
over fallen leaves.

III.
How that same cat's eyes

ripened in the greenhouse
at such a constant temperature
among the seeds
is still beyond
my comprehension.
IV.

That very sly-eyed cat
within an age of mercy
will die tomorrow
breathing the final blessing
of an almost painless sleep.

MARION SCHOEBERLEIN

THE OTHER TRACK

It rumbles on the other track.
It rumbles and it sings.
Past silver streets,
Past silent Christmas houses,
Steps of snow and chains of fire
We fly.
The other track must see us,
Our birds, our smoky joy.
The other track
Must listen to us coming,
Going in the night.
We get on it, slowly, softly, butterfly.
We are on the other track
And lost,
Swinging the night on wheels.

ROBERT LOUIS

RECURRENT DAYDREAM

Here am I
Invisible fragment of mind,
Poised,
Optically frozen along the barrel
Of a rifle.
Scene: only the shaft and the distant sight —
No lock, no stock, no tenuous connection
Between fingertip cold sweat and
Growing key around.
Now I only hear them;
Some day I will see them;
The shots, the bullets fired singly,
In succession through the broken circle —
No end to faces popping up
Mechanically
Smiling,
Never seen: too distant,
But there.

STEVE CUMMINGS

FAMILY PORTRAIT

The man dusts his son in the desert.
Furniture
in a landscape gone stale. The obvious
sun rakes in the sand.
Dust the corpse . . .
in all that ache of dryness
only the dead flesh sweats;
skittering violins, crab-like,
cover the rocks.
Dust . . .
imperceptibly
the horizon oozes.

LEE PENNINGTON

MAN IN UNIVERSE

Man, the creature that he is,
must have backed into the
universe
like crayfish
in quick retreat
forward.
Now in circular thought
he must be halfway
back around again.
He stands there:
Like a blind man
picking roses.
Like a deaf man
watching the orchestra.
Like a drunk man
waving goodbye.

WILLIAM MATTHEWS

AT THE WEDDING RECEPTION

My wife, my burning wife
in her green dress.
My body on the lawn
demanding fire
I cause to move
gracefully among the revelers.
My old friend, the groom,
is carefully counting his drinks.
His wife beside him looks
back down the 18th fairway
and he looks, too,
as if watching a shot backwards
from two feet from the pin
straight to clubface.
How much more accurate
the shot when played that way!

On the lawn I roast,
my spine a spit,
turning slowly.
From yards away
the green-dressed woman
looks at me with lust.

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EDWARD PHARR

PORTRAIT

A bottle of sleeping pills for lunch on a summer's day. Only pink would do for Miss LaBlanc, yes, only pink. A Lautrec lovely lounging in her negligee, fuzzy-haired until noon, reading Flaubert, Sipping a creme de menthe and saying, 'Once, I was very beautiful, you know.' And, 'The people and the heat here. Really, I must get away.' Near the end, Daiquiris, Burgundies, And Flaubert set on an aluminum folding chair.

Afternoon. I shuffled about the front lawn Watching two geometrical cops in regulation blues Carry the stretcher to the ambulance Flashing red and screaming children's polo shirts, Dangling locks flocking Ring-Around-The-Rosey Near the saturday-afternoon barbecue grill spitting fire in the carport at neighbors gossiping between the slamming of ambulance doors leaving me staring at shingled houses hugged close in a line pointing toward an ambulance.

STANLEY NOYES

BOMBERS AND MRS. BUNJES

Mrs. Bunjes, I remember,
pointing up, up
for me, little boy
those shiny wings in blue
formation
shining in the heavenly
air, drone, drone.
She wore a head-scarf and
German wooden shoes.
She pointed up:
How terrible the bombs
killing people in war.

Straight up I gaze
at shiny things
in long-lost blue
gone far beyond
white house, red
geraniums, empty shoes.
No longer little
on the outside
I think — what happy
innocence, then.
Goodby, Mrs. Bunjes. I
don't remember your face.
Goodby.

ELLEN WEIMAN

THE TAKE-OVER

YELLOW WALKS WITH BLUE
AND IN THE TEARS OF JOURNEYING
YELLOW IS NO MORE YELLOW
NOR IS BLUE EVER BLUE,
IN THE LAUGHTER AND THE COMPROMISE,
THE MAKE UP AND THE TOLERATION
YELLOW IS NO MORE YELLOW
BLUE IS NO MORE BLUE,
THE ONE IS GREENISH YELLOW
THE OTHER BLUISH GREEN,
SPOUSE HEART TO SPOUSE HEART
COMINGLES, COLORS, CONGEALS,
EACH WILD PRIMARY CHROMA
SHIMMERS INTO SECONDARY SUBTLETY
THOUGH THE WILD THING CRY OUT.

ISSUE P. 437 · SCAN P. 91

STEPHEN DOBYNS

HIGH SOCIETY, IOWA CITY, IOWA

— *Ever art thou dancing in battle.
Never was beauty like thine, as,
with thy hair flowing about thee,
thou dost ever dance, a naked
warrior upon the breast of Siva.*

Peter Cooley lives on Dodge Street, south, with his wife, Jacqueline, and small daughter. . . . Although a walkable distance away, I drive. My white VW bus rolls down the streets, an intractable tank. Snipers see me coming, shoot, run for cover. The twin guns over my head-lights, shatter their black frocks. Diplomas batter my windows and doors, converge on my tires. . . . I accelerate to thirty-five, ignore the light, turn to the children with small knives, sharp teeth, spray their faces through the trees. . . . Coming to a stop, a small conflict with a Doberman pinscher and a ten-foot whip. . . . I run up the steps, knock, Peter answers. Bursting through the room, I see Nicole, the daughter, rising, rising. My mind is as one that dances. Machetes drop from her hands like wild petals.

THE LAKE

At night he would always watch for the moon first before he went over the fence; and on the nights when there was no moon, he would travel slowly, going down on his hands and knees at intervals to feel the grass and the pathway which he made in his mind — for the pasture where the bull roamed was miles long and filled with ditches, trees, and rivulets that streamed off from the lake.

He would always wait in his shack until the moon began to rise. He thought of the moon as his eye, and when the moon was not out he would recall how it was the night before that one. Guided this way, he would go.

But the moon shone high on this night. A sheet of clouds — like a purple curtain in the sky — fanned past it, and the moon kept on rising. He moved out from the shack, making no noise as he slung the goatskin sack over his shoulder, walking with his bare feet on the grass instead of on the pebbles of the path. Tonight will be good, he thought. The water should be cool. The bull should be resting.

Coming out of the grove that ended where the long stretch of bitter weeds began, he broke into a trot, easy at first, then a bit faster. He thought of how he had known it would be when he came out tonight. All day — while the rest were patting him on the back sometimes and kidding him, telling him that he should not spend his time thinking about lakes, that there were no magic lakes at all — he was thinking of how he would break into a trot and then pick up the pace, then maintain the pace until he reached the fence . . . and then he would leap . . . and he leaped! A good fall, upright! He remained there, puffing silently and watching shadows down the field.

He thought he saw a shape move. He wondered why the bull was resting at this end of the meadow. There was no water here. Clouds, purple and black, unravelled. The moon was looking at him from behind a great mountain of dark clouds. He was charmed. The rhythm of his breathing slowed, and he peered into the night. His tongue was drying, and he knew that he had better get going, and he did. He felt something new in the meadow tonight, something vague but not formless. He gripped the neck of the goatskin water bag, feeling the oil ooze when he squeezed.

Going along the side of the fence for quite a distance, he suddenly broke away and, after peering into a large grove of trees, he sprinted for it.

The light of the moon struck the top of this grove like water striking long beautiful hair, and the water flowed to the ground. . . . Beneath

H. DUMAS

the grove, he stopped and his breathing came. But it was not the only sound of breathing. He knew now that it was not the bull, nor was it one of the cows. He looked where a slant of moonlight poured through the top of the grove, and there he saw her . . . stretching her arms skyward like a kitten, her bare back to him; and before he could say anything, she came toward him, and he broke through the grove, striking the open air and the moonlight like a panther. What was she doing there? He had better get to the water before her. Who was she, anyway? Why was she racing across the field? The lake did not belong to her.

They were far apart now, and he increased his pace. Then he discovered something. He was struck with the idea that whoever she was, she had not seen him at all! She was heading for the opposite side of the lake, running and picking up speed as the reflection from the water came closer and closer. He slowed near the bank, looking around for the bull, listening for its snort and smelling the air as animals

do, to try to sense if the bull were near.

He went down on his knees, crawling the seven feet to the edge of the lake. Just before he filled the bag with the precious water, he paused and stared across to the other side. He thought he saw a figure kneeling in a half-lit clearing, but a cloud made the moon blink, and he was thanking the lake for still being there and shaking with that great feeling which he knew would come. It always came at the lake. This was the lake which no one could ever find, no matter how many people he told about it. No matter how many people set out to find it, they always came back saying that he was lying. But he knew it was magic, and he dared not tell anyone else or speak about it or even try to discover the reason why the lake was there, lest it dry up or disappear. He remembered how he first discovered it . . . It was somewhere in his mind, at a strange time when he was growing up, when he was thirsty and there was no water.

He smelled something in the air, a strong odor; but it passed too quickly to tell what it was, although it smelled very familiar. Well, he was remembering things, thanking the lake, and wanting to know what else he could do for it besides love it, cherish it, and keep it.

The moon was out across the lake. Across the water! He saw her dipping an object into the water. The thought came to him that she was doing . . . she was praying . . . she was . . . no; and he pushed the thought aside . . . but it came sliding back and struck him. He stood up.

A slight wind was gathering. He hung his bag upon the limb of the tree and slowly went back to the clay bank. He cupped his hands and lifted drink to his burning mouth, and he let it go down slowly. It was cool good

H. DUMAS

water that made him drunk inside, strange water, filled with a power he could only trust but not understand — and, with the seventh cup, he looked up, his eyes closed, and turned to the moon, his hands outstretched.

Naked, he dove deep, deep, deep, for that was the way, his way, the right way; and, as he was coming up, letting the pressure of the current carry him, a thought flooded his body — a thought . . . but he was trying to remember how it would be when he came up and the wind would suddenly grow stronger and dry him off, and he would reach for his bag hanging from the limb, and then after a meditation break out across the grass to the first grove. But a thought came pushing in, a good thought, and then . . .

. . . the thought was before him, and beneath the water he saw her, and he could tell that she had not known he was there; but she must have known something, just as he had at first. And the light of the lake was bright, bright. They saw each other. They touched, and the current instantly wrapped them together, and the lake said:

‘If you love me, if you think I am beautiful, then give thanks to me by taking that which I give you. I am happiest when I give,’

and they were a song beneath the sky, and the lake was their first note.

Henry Dumas, a young Negro who was deeply concerned over the problems of his people, was shot and killed in the streets of New York in May, 1968. A doctoral candidate and Air Force veteran, he had been published in leading Negro journals with both poetry and prose.

MENDELSSOHN'S ITALIAN & THE SPRING OF 1964

E. F. Casebeer

Stars blank out in a fresh gray sky, a marmalade tom bellies homeward from a head-gashing orgy, the state rattles its night-stick on iron palings to test the city's hollowness, the last dead soldier tinkles on the pavement amid the splashes and eructations of its enemy. And I listen to Mendelssohn's Italian, Movement II (Andante con moto), still anxious and regretful because of the many months' loss by gouging of the first billowing liquid note: giant water drop secreted from a fleshy throbbing duct.

Gone is the note. Alas, poor skullless Yorick, my solid gelatinous bubble, I ache for your loss. Having never thought, now you thunk, dug into the somber black circle on which you spin, a hole in a groove.

There I lay, hand secure between my lonely thighs, spinning sophomoric conceits as futilely as the needle bumped in the last groove of the battered platter on my kiddy's phonograph. There I lay on a rug reeking with my last dog's urine, my head in a pillow intended for an oriental rump. There I lay in my favorite foetal position, harmony broken only by one hand groping for beer. There I lay, a murderer murdered, a murderer's murderer, I the killer, Killer I, deluding myself into life with incipient images.

Meanwhile, back on the Cyprian ranch, a nineteen-year-old Turk repeatedly rammed his bayonet into the genitals of a godless Greek whose sixteen-year-old daughter, her eyes flashing electrically, crouched toward the tableau and clutched a pitchfork conventionally applied to dead dry manure.

Who killed Cock Bubble? Why, the robin, the dirty Red-chested thief, shot a needle into his grave. Let me play, I whimpered, let me have some pun.

Barry smiled in New Hampshire: 'I goofed up somewhere.' Driven from the rocks, the armies of ignorance march on California, crushing Cubans and college professors — institution against institution manned by the murdered murdering the murdered. The assistant professor speaks clearly: 'Jonathan Swift is not a misanthrope. The Yahoo, whom the Dean perceives so excrementally, is man degenerate, debarred from civility.' He stares fixedly at the third head from the left in the third row and attempts not to glance down at his fly.

E. F. CASEBEER

Bub, dear Bub, sacrificing at the altar, I bashed your head in with a rock and went out among the Neanderthals who snitched carrots from the garden. It was 4:00 a.m., Spring Equinox, 1964. I had drunk eleven bottles of beer and had eaten three Colby cheese sandwiches, defecated once and urinated infinitely, my head averted from the sight of my nude wife lying in the bathtub, electrocuted while ordering groceries over the telephone. She bobbed gently as gelatinous drops dripped among skin sloughing in the stale gray water. But that was long ago. It never happened long ago.

A friend once said that a clear narrative line was essential to the narrative art, that clarity and order, alone, could cleanse a form corrupted by Beckett, Burroughs, Genet, Heller, Pynchon, et alii. I submit to his paranoia.

Once upon a time a child was born. He had a traumatic experience at four, divorced parents at ten, an orgasm at thirteen, a nervous breakdown at twenty-two, a wife at twenty-five . . . and, emotionally putrified, intellectually lacerated, safely socially mummified, he was awarded a Ph.D. at thirty. This finishes the story. Now let's return to

the point.

My wife — she's not really dead, she says — just walked in from out there with a splitting headache, she says (note the imagery: the fissure begins $\frac{1}{4}$ " above the outside of the mascaraed left eyebrow, crosses lightningwise right over the bridge of the ski-jump nose, strikes and shatters the cheekbone of that side and splits down to the same corner of the mouth in rictus, disappearing down into the nervous stomach — belly writhing with reptilian ganglia — and out the running bowels: one anus with two spiked track shoes, the left one tattered at the toe, the right bursting with the pressure against the granny knot of its broken lace); and she turned on the Beverly Hillbillies. Old Granny paralyzed the hell out of me with her trite twang, but I went South: I immersed myself in the Destructive Element and came out smelling like a rose (you do that one, yourself).

Somewhere in the Antarctic a snowflake falls. It is dull there.

Somewhere in Africa a Crocodile nibbles a floating Watusi. In his bone-backed brain, so far from the snout, he generates a coal of yearning: variety.

Somewhere in the middle east a Viet North and a Viet South split a can of World War II c-rations, mouth a stew, and spit it out. Bellies hollow, they slump to sleep in the dull jungle.

I resume foetaling, secure in the future. Granny's out of sight, yammering on the surface, hooking only minnows. The big fish is safe in his

E. F. CASEBEER

water bubble. Yea, we are such things as reality's made on: our little lives are squared by an institution.

Reality. Black charm-word. Reality : spermatozoa caking on the belly, ice-cold gelatin in the center — mortalities: 10,000 kings, artists, and saturnine satyrs, an equal number of morons with dribbling noses, and uncounted

millions of bourgeois, reading Time, Life, Stag, or Horror Comics during chaos.

Reality : forty-four freshman compositions employing cause-and-effect analyses with tight little smiles upon Communism, freedom, bad grades, good girls, and my '58 Chevy's drive shaft; neat and vacuous, messy and deranged, scrawly and hopefully facetious. Trivial, thy name is Junior. Trivial, Sr. buys my sensibility for sentence fragments, dangling modifiers, and unapostrophied genitives, dehorned by the careful ounce. Bless him, for he values me more than an oriental rump pillow, for which I would not give me for, to, with or without.

Reality : dusk and murder in the soul.

I have killed that which I loved. I have risen with bloody hand from the dream of a grass-blade in spring. With stunned surprise, I have fondled the rictus upon my wet jewels as I straddled a disemboweled boy and girl, strapped hermaphroditically back to back on a blanket by a dimmed campfire in the gentle river-humming woods. Howling, I have rammed a Bible into the anus of a lust-throttled child. Matricidal, I have stuffed my bloody burlap with the thighs, breasts, clawed faces, and torn hair of wives, sisters, lovers, objects of vagrant lust, and I have trudged the dusty alley to its stony end and there I have lain and wept into the garbage of my soul. Cain. Oedipus. Electra.

Doomed man. Poseur. Buffoon. Teen-aged man with the swelling sterile belly, the unanointed armpits and crotch and feet, pimpled yet at thirty, giggling professor, beat bourgeois, Ridiculous little whore.

And then there is I. Clean, virile, remorseless in my morality, objective flagellator of the fat man with the sorry face.

And then there is — a man to be murdered.

Give me his identity, his photograph, social security and selective service registration numbers, fingerprints, height,

weight, color of eyes,

E. F. CASEBEER

hair tone, identifying scars. He has scars, I know: punctured hands and feet and a lance wound in the side suffered for him with the black mustachios; a severed head unbaptized and with an apple in the mouth for number two; and hemlock-rigidified limbs for the man in the white robe.

And an assassin's self-placed bullet.

For now we are four, four dead, four against the citadel of the fifth comrade, shoulder to shoulder, older and older, chanting: 'Reality! Reality! Reality!' Please tell us, where is he? With brothers' embraces we will greet him. With brothers' kisses we will love him.

Why, he's the big fish at the bottom of the sea. About him weave the water snakes in scarlet, golden, emerald twine; but he sees them not. Grooved, fresh gray jaws set in unwilling grin, he grieves for his bubble, eyes lost in a giant waterdrop secreted from a fleshy throbbing duct.

THE MANNEQUINS

Jay Bail

She does not wake him. She gets up as quietly as she can from the bed and goes out of the bedroom into the living room. She turns on the lights and stands for a few moments not doing anything and then she goes over to the window and looks through the venetian blinds and there is no one on the street below.

She moves away from the window and sits down on the couch. A cigarette is knocked out of the package and lit and she takes a deep breath of smoke into her throat and then exhales it all at once. Through the smoke, she sees on the opposite wall, the painting. It is a lighted store window and in it there are three mannequins close together and a few yards farther off is the fourth mannequin. All four are wearing different dresses with the hemlines coming up to slightly above the knee. They have black, red, yellow, and white hair. The one with black hair, long black hair resting on her shoulders, is a tall girl with a wide-open laughing mouth who is not looking directly out of the store window but slightly to one side watching the man with the black overcoat and the red hair. He looks in the window from one mannequin to another. He is with a woman who is of medium height with brown hair and she is wearing flat shoes. She has on a colorless dress with the hemline slightly below the knee and she also looks from one mannequin to the other, finally letting her eyes rest on the street below where there is nothing and no one and finally she closes the venetian blinds.

She walks across the living room and then she walks back. She runs a hand over the side and back of her neck and then lets the hand drop to her side. She sits down on the

couch, crossing her legs and uncrossing them and then she inhales and lets it out quickly.

She puts out the cigarette and goes into her boy's room. He is lying on the bed, curled up, sleeping, with a teddy bear near, and she watches him, looking down, with both hands hanging at her sides, and her eyes close slowly and she is walking on a road she has always known, and then they are open and her boy is lying on the bed, curled up, sleeping, with a teddy bear near, and she watches him, looking down. She turns around and as she goes out, a pain is in her chest, and she knows her son is looking at her, with wide-open eyes, too wide for a boy of four, shining across at her back in the darkness, and she stops and it is not her son and she does not breathe and it is not her son and she turns around and he has a sharp nose and a sharp chin and there are pits in his face from where he had acne when he was fifteen. He is looking in the window at the

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mannequins and he smiles as his mouth moves and she does not hear him and then she does and then the sound is whirled away into the air, dispersed and then solidified into another form and this is the form she hears as he looks at her and smiles and for a moment she is looking through him to the edge of the glass window and then she sees him, black overcoat, red hair tips moving slightly with a nonexistent breeze.

'Do you want to go?' he says.

'Where?'

'I don't know. Somewhere. Want something to eat?'

'No.'

'How do you feel?'

'How do you think I feel?'

'Sorry.'

Drawing in her breath, she parts her lips, hesitates, and then lets out her breath and looks away at the darkened

street. There is no one there and she shuts the venetian blinds. It is morning and the light crams itself through her eyes and out onto the pavement in front of her as she walks slowly, forgetting sometimes and walking quicker. Slowly the street spreads inside of her until the people walking by her are a portion of a path in her chest moving from left to right. And then she is one of those people and she is looking out on the part that is looking out on herself and she sees everything falling and then it is gone and for a moment she closes her eyes and then they are open, wandering, still, dark spots, large semicircles of blue on a linen surface of white. The dress billows down to a very narrow waist on the mannequin and then up over her small breasts and finally ends in bands of white at her upper arms and neck. Above the dress, she is smiling and there are dark hollows stretching in a straight line from the ends of her lips to close to her ears, dark hollows within the red rubyness of make-up, and her red hair is gathered in a bun and slung down the sides of her face being disarranged only slightly by the pillow as she pushes her face into it and not at all as she lays her head on her husband's side and reaches across and touches his penis, not feeling it grow, squeezing it mildly so that it will not wake him, running her hand up and down until he grunts and turns over and her hair is disarranged only slightly by the pillow as she pushes her face into it and weeps.

She knocks on the door and waits. There is no answer. She knocks again and still there is no answer and she opens the door with her key. The furniture is in the living room and kitchen and bedroom and there is nothing else. There are no shoes lying on the floor or coat wrapped

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around the sofa or pajamas on the bed and there are no sheets or blankets on the bed. The furniture is in the apartment. It is quiet. She listens to the quiet and she draws in her breath quickly and there is the hollow of a breath being taken in quickly. She makes a sound in her throat and there is the hollow of a sound in the air. She says a name quietly and then she says it louder and there is the hollow running in straight lines from the ends of her lips across her cheeks close to her straight yellow hair. She is naked with her right arm slightly bent in a downward direction and her left hand at her side. Between her legs can be seen the pants leg of the man behind her, who is handling a dress of stripes of yellow, blue, and green. The stripes were horizontal above the waist and vertical below. Her legs are slim at the ankles, rising thicker toward the middle, and then narrow again at the knees. There is no feminine gash nor hair of any color at the point where her legs meet and there are no nipples at her breasts. She also looks out of the side of the window, seeing the daylight shift through the streets, and she smiles just slightly, her hair resting on her breasts that have no nipples, her yellow hair, combed carefully each night one hundred times, sitting in front of the mirror watching the brown of the sheen from her hair, holding it carefully in her hand and combing, seeing in the mirror her husband, undressing for bed, looking at his naked body, dark and unstruggling through the hair black, and holding the brown in her hand and combing, saying something that has meaning and he smiling, hollow, shrugging, looking away from him to her brown hair and then holding her left hand, the one with the brush, up in front of her and watching it tremble. And there is a shrug. And there is a tremble. And there is a god lost among the highways. And there is the brush moving down against her brown hair, thickening it aside, spreading the strands, the electric cracking about her as he moves his

hand to her vagina and softly up and down, through the wet of her field, smelling herself and the jacket spread on the couch, shoes on the floor, apartment unhollow, light crunching in from the sky and the fire escape outside, lighting up the table where they are both eating sunny-side-up eggs and bacon. 'Very good,' he says. 'Thanks.' 'No. I mean it. The only time I get to eat something like this —' 'Is when you seduce someone.' 'Well, I didn't mean that. How do you feel?' 'All right.' 'In other words, not so hot.'

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'In other words.' 'You know, you're a very pretty woman. I mean that.' He pauses, looking at her, smiling. 'Very pretty. But — why do you have to feel guilty?' 'I have to go soon.' 'No answer?' 'No.' 'I see. Well, I'm sorry.' 'For what?' 'I don't know. But I thought it might mean something if I said I'm sorry.' She smiles, looks at his red hair. 'I'm sorry too.' 'That we didn't work out?' 'No. That we did.' She stands up, letting the early morning sink into her. She does not stretch and she does not yawn but she goes to the mirror and looks at herself. There is no sound behind her and then there is. Her husband rolls over once and there is silence and then twice and then he sits up and mutters something to no one. He asks her a question. 'Seven-thirty,' she says. Her husband says something and then gets up and goes into the bathroom. She looks at her face in the mirror and she does not turn it to one side or the other. She looks at her eyes and her lips and her nose and she does not move her face. It is there, somewhere between the stars and the disinterest, and she does not know what it is because she does not know, cannot picture a death before a birth. She listens to him urinating and then washing and she goes over to the telephone and dials a number. She lets it ring fifteen times. Her husband comes into the room and says something. She puts down the receiver slowly. 'It wasn't important. Just trying to get someone.' She stands with her hand near her waist, near the dress which is a white one with very small red circles down and up and the cloth ending in a square neckline that effectively hides. Her neck is long and accentuated even more so by the unsmilingness of her lips which is again accentuated by the smoothness of her skin and lack of hollows at the cheekbones showing. Her eyes are slitted shut. The store window light does not bring out either her dress or her face because everything is fair here, nothing leaping to the indented impression. But the light brings forth

the other mannequins with the black hair, the red hair, and the

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yellow hair who are all looking slightly to their right. But the mannequin who is separated by a few yards from them, the mannequin with the white hair, looks directly out of the window through eyes that are slitted shut and do not see anything as she looks down at him, both hands hanging at her sides, and he is lying on the bed, curled up, with the teddy bear on top of the covers near him.

She walks out into the living room, lights another cigaret, and inhales deeply, enough to hurt. She paces slowly across the living room and then back, moves her hand, fingers apart, through her hair, rubs the back of her neck. She sits down on the couch, crossing her legs and uncrossing them. She picks up the phone, dials three numbers and then hangs it up. For the first time she smells it and she does not know what it is. She goes quietly into the kitchen and her boy's room and her own bedroom but it is not weaker and it is not stronger. She lifts her head up and she draws in her breath three times quickly. It does not have the odor of anything. It has the odor of everything. And nothing. And it is there in the air and she can smell it and her eyes water quickly and she looks up at him, seeing out of the corner of her eyes the mannequins unmoving.

'How do you feel?' he is saying.

'How do you think I feel?'

'Are you all right?'

'Leave me alone.'

'Can't you see it has to be this way?'

'No. No.'

'Don't cry. Not here.'

'I'll cry where the hell I want to.'

'All right. All right.'

'Why does it have to be this way?'

‘Ahhh.’

‘I know. I know it’s too much to ask you. But can’t you tell me in simple words. What is it?’

‘It’s everything. It’s nothing.’

‘It is. It is. Why?’

Why do you always hide my clothes, her husband says, Or else he says, what about the money you needed? Or does he say nothing and just look at her, uninterested, because it is the early morning and he is given to fits of staring blankly at something.

She goes to the kitchen and prepares coffee. She dials a number and loses count of the number of times it rings. She knocks on her son’s door and says something that she does not understand. In his room, she looks

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down at him, and he smiles to her in the early morning light, red hair, sharp straight nose, pitted face of ten years before, and he looks down to his plate and he cuts the pancakes, and takes them on the end of the fork to his mouth. 'God, it's wonderful.' 'Thanks.' 'Tell me something. Don't they miss you?' 'Who?' 'Your husband. Your — . Well, your husband.' 'I don't know.' 'I mean, doesn't he wonder where you spend the nights?' 'Not really.' 'You don't need me much, do you?' 'Does it bother you?' 'Never a straight answer, is there? Always the feeling that if you talk to me for too long, for a few seconds or a minute, you'll stop feeling rotten.' 'I'll be here tomorrow about nine, all right?' 'Suppose I said ten?' 'I'd come ten.' 'Wouldn't matter, would it?' 'Not much.' She brushes off a crumb from her blouse, her hand moving up and down three times, fingers spread and clutching the blanket and underneath the sheet and part of the mattress. She cannot see through the dark. She lies with her head back, eyes alternately opening and closing, hands clutching the blankets. Her hair lies almost symmetrically about her head on the pillow, her brown hair lies almost symmetrically. There are wrinkles on her forehead that alternately become smooth and then wrinkled again. There are the black marks on her face, round and many, of acne. Her lips are open and she is breathing through them slowly, colored red, with block-white teeth, laughing open mouth laughing, black hair falling to her shoulders, just touching them. The dress is a little off her shoulders with the neckline in a straight line across. It is a dress of red and white splotches, flaring out below the small waist, ending a few inches above the knees. The right leg is crossed in front of the left leg with only the granule of a shadow due to the burning out of a twohundred-and-fifty-watt bulb directly overhead. The filament has not quite been broken through yet. The light is dimmed. The mannequin looks slightly to her right at the

man and the woman standing in front of the

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window, watching the dimming of the light. There is only the granule of a shadow.

Her husband says either, could I have some more coffee, or, it's a nice day out, or, it'd be nice not to go to work. She does not know what he is saying. Perhaps it is nothing. She listens and the sentences fly apart into words and the words equalize themselves into letters. Her son comes into the kitchen and sits down and she gives him some dry cereal. The cereal clatters into the bowl and then two teaspoons of sugar are put on top and then the bowl is three-quarters filled with milk.

She gets up and goes over to the telephone. Her husband is busy eating and he does not look up. Her son crackles in his mouth and milk stains are around his lips. A little milk has also stained the tablecloth.

She dials a number and it rings many times. It rings and there is no answer. She opens the door with her key and goes in. There is the furniture here. There are no rugs messed on the floor and no cap thrown across the sofa and no bathrobe on the bed. She walks around the apartment. Her footsteps thump out the hollows, getting larger and smaller, and then almost not existing as she stops moving. She turns her head quickly and there is the sight of a woman turning her head quickly. She blinks her eyes and closes them and there is the sight of a woman blinking her eyes and closing them. She presses her lips tightly together and then she utters one loud cry and her husband turns over in his bed and grunts in his sleep. He pauses for a few seconds and then he grunts again. He is sleeping on his back, the covers pulled tight although it is not cool in the bedroom. The windows are storm-proofed and the temperature is always close to sixty-five degrees. Though the radiator is only

slightly warm, she is not cool, lying on her bed, hair symmetrically about the pillow, face down, weeping.

Gradually the radiator gets warmer, waving the heat slowly across the room, over the single large bed. She is asleep in his arms and occasionally it is difficult for her to breathe. Occasionally she wakes up and does not move her eyes and does not move her head and just for a moment there is the sound of hollow and then it is gone and she closes her eyes slowly and slips beneath the covers and curls up, her knees pushing her breasts warm, her head resting on his stomach, her hand holding his penis.

She is combing her hair slowly, her long brown hair. She counts the strokes with her lips but does not make a sound. In the mirror, her husband has finished taking off his clothes and for the moment stands

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naked. She looks at his dark hair on his chest that is only slightly lighter than the hair at his crotch. His penis is small, almost lost among the black hair. He moves his body, taking up his pajamas, and she sees the penis swinging. She moves her eyes slightly upward and watches her hand moving the brush over her hair. It is now that she stops the brush directly over her head, sees the trembling that is growing, and she moves her eyes downward and there is nothing and nobody on the darkened street below and she closes the venetian blinds. One leg in front of the other, giving the appearance of motion, she stands in the store window. She is naked. A man is standing in back of her holding a dress with green, yellow, and blue stripes running horizontally above the waist and vertically below. He moves his hands over the dress, detaching catches, zipping zippers, pleating straights. He holds it in front of him, close against the back of the mannequin with the yellow hair. He takes the dress and folds it across his arm and as he does so he sees that the mannequin has no buttocks. He moves out of the window, closing the little door behind him. When he is gone, the mannequins remain alone in the early morning. There are four mannequins. Three are very close together and the other is separated by a few yards. One of them is naked and she has no buttocks and her vagina has no hair nor slit and her breasts are wet from being pushed against the covers in the hot bedroom. She rolls over and breathes quickly, her hair lying symmetrically about her head on the pillow, her nose sharp, her chin sharp, her face covered with the small blotches of black that are acne. She breathes in, holds her breath, and moves only her eyes. She takes another breath and now she moves her head slowly, looking around the room, but there is only the blackness. She cannot see where the smell is coming from. It is a peculiar odor that has its strength in weakness. As it gets closer, it becomes more

remote. It is the smell of nothing and of everything.

The odor fills the store window. It rises and drops around the mannequins who look away from it, either to one side of the window or straight out. The people on the outside do not notice the odor and they are only vaguely aware that a two-hundred-and-fifty-watt light bulb has dimmed. He is a tall man with a black overcoat and red hair and she is small and her dress is drab and comes down to slightly below the knees. She has her arms folded across her overcoat. Then she lets them drop and with her right hand, she knocks on his door. She waits and she knocks again and then she rings the bell. There is no sound. The hallway is quiet. She listens and then she takes out her key and opens the door. And she stops then, and it is there at first almost inaudible, growing in intensity until

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there is the loud sound of clicking behind her and she turns and looks at her face in the mirror. She does not move her face from one side to the other and her eyes do not move. They stare at once at the lips, the nose, and the eyes themselves. A sound behind her of ruffling, another sound, and her husband perhaps sits up in bed and yawns and perhaps asks her a question or two. She answers briefly. Perhaps she does not answer at all. Perhaps she is not sitting in front of the mirror looking at the features of her own face but is riding in a railroad car or exercising with heavy weights or being killed by an automobile. She continues looking without the slightest desire to turn her head or move her lips painfully and her features have no expression as she listens to the sounds that are dispersed and solidified into the air.

‘Let’s go somewhere.’

‘Leave me alone.’

‘We can’t stand here all night.’

‘Why here? Why did it have to be here in the middle of the sidewalk?’

‘I didn’t plan it this way.’

‘Oh you bastard. You dirty rotten bastard.’

‘Sure. Sure. Come on. Let’s go.’

‘Please.’

‘Please what?’

‘Please let —’

‘Look. I’m not doing it to spite you or anything like that.

It’s the way things worked out. Don’t you understand? We’re both just not important enough.’

She walks through the streets slowly, sometimes forgetting and walking quicker, but soon slowing down

again. It is midmorning and the sun crumples the pavements into smoothness. She walks up the outside steps, opens the door and goes in. From then it is a simple climb of two flights. Watching her feet, the stairs go by swiftly. Her hand holds onto the bannister and her finger dials three numbers and pauses and then hangs up the receiver. She walks from one end of the room to the other quietly taking smoke into her lungs until it no longer hurts with pain. She rubs the palm of her right hand over the back of her neck. It is quiet. The oven in the kitchen occasionally cracks. The radiator occasionally twangs. She puts out the cigarette and lights another one and then immediately crushes it out. At first, she does not hear the sound because at the same moment, the floorboards creak. And then there is silence except for the

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sound she does not hear. And then she does. She stands still as she hears the clicking sound behind. It comes closer and closer to her and she does not move and then she turns around and pours her husband another cup of coffee. He says something she does not understand and she nods her head quickly. Her boy looks up at her and asks a question and she uses a series of words, that might mean anything. She sits down at the table and eats her toast. Her husband is either talking with her boy or drinking his coffee and saying it is too hot or sitting indifferently waiting for another scene to end. She looks at her boy's schoolbooks. 'What are you studying in school?' she says. He does not look up from his cereal as he answers. She nods and then goes back to eating her toast and drinking her milk. Patterns are made on the tablecloth by the early morning sun coming through the partiallyclosed venetian blinds. The street below is empty with darkness and she pulls the cord and completely closes the venetian blinds.

The man unscrews one arm very slowly. The other he unscrews a little quicker. He puts both arms on the floor in back of the mannequin. He takes off the yellow hair and puts that next to them on the floor. It is a sunny day outside with only a few pieces of white in the sky. There are small traces of ice on the ground from the night before. No one is in front of the store and there are very few people passing by at this time in the morning. He looks at the head he has just pulled out of the body and runs his fingers over any scratches or indentations he comes across. There are very few, and after he has looked at it carefully for a second time, he puts that also on the floor. Finally, he picks up the torso with the iron stand, and carries it with difficulty out of the store window. A few minutes later he comes back and takes out the arms and the hair and the head.

What are you doing, her husband says? Or does he say, I shouldn't have eaten that mustard last night. Or is he silent watching her hang up the receiver. She stands looking at him, sleeping, curled up, with the brown and white teddy bear only a short distance away. She reaches down and touches her husband and he rolls over in his sleep. Symmetrically her hair lies about the pillow and there are tears in her eyes.

She closes the door behind her and there is hollow in the apartment. There are no miscellaneous articles scattered about the floor and there are no gloves thrown carelessly over the sofa and there are no blankets or sheets. She touches the bed and there is a tingling of her fingertips.

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She touches the door to the bedroom and her hand moves it slightly closed. Brushing back her red hair, her face consists of a sharp chin, a sharp nose, and the pits that acne once made years before. She listens to the quiet and then suddenly in back of her there is a loud clicking and she turns around quickly but it is too late for it is on top of her.

In the lighted store window, there are four mannequins. They each wear different dresses that end slightly above the knees. Three of the mannequins are close together and the fourth is a few yards off. They are all very pretty but perhaps the prettiest is the mannequin with yellow hair. She smiles pleasantly and there is the stance of contentment about her and she does not notice the peculiar odor as she stares out of the store window and sees the woman suddenly turn to the man and cry.

RONALD B. KOERTGE

IN THE UNDERGROUND STATION

Her conversation is interminable.
Throughout it she looks about brightly.
At intervals she faces each important
Direction. No doubt she informs her
Party that she is standing in a
Nearly invisible booth; she marvels,
Then leaves and I move to her cubicle.
Ah! It is she. I hold the warm plastic
o my cheek. The perforations are briny.
suck at her warm cigarette. I
ocket a kleenex. I inhale once, twice :
old. Her stink reels me, reels me.
p. What? Tap, tap. I am wary. I turn,
casual caller. A female in the next
mpartment leans toward the glass, plants
r open mouth there. She tilts
head, urges her lips apart. I see her
gue, a slug, on the glass. I come to it
a connoisseur. Then we retire, straighten,
for coins and leave, each in his own way.

RONALD B. KOERTGE

*Every year some 20,000 women
leave their homes to go shopping
and are never heard from again.
(from an article on missing
persons)*

THE WOMEN

I know where they go. In the caves and fens
Beyond the freeways there are shoals of them,
Naked or frocked or cowled. Their din
Is terrific: they are a rebel army
Of the vain and unsatisfied, now led
By the fey, the sphere-born instead of the
Fools and mendicants of this world. They breed
Enormously: their issue are the ghouls,
The gelded, the six-fingered, the barely foetal,
The splay-footed and the double-sexed. They
Bide their time, endure the stench and fatal
Den. They wait for the ultimate revenge
On their dun and faceless former keepers:
And they move soon. In the haze and dank
They will stumble and clump into the rank
Cities and butcher every living male.

GERALD LOCKLIN

CHRISTMAS AT SUNSET BEACH

blessed by a superfluity of egg nog bedtimes,
yea verily, and comforted by football games
galore, a veritable grab-bag of vicarious
safety blitzes, embarcations from the
i-formation
while i raise my voice in praise of
miniskirts at midnight mass, while i
insist that one can only find salvation
in intoxication (be drunk, quoth

baudelaire, be quite eternally
 buddhistically blottoed on ripple,
 jacques prevert, or albert dangerfield-
 schweitzer . . .),
 with all due gratitude to moloch anti-x
 for voyeuristic favors granted,
 the question still remains:
 can love survive the sobering banality of
 shoppers hoarding hickok cuff links at the
 seal beach shopping center ? ? ?
 can love survive a santa claus who's wired
 by the c. i. a. to nip incipient satyrs in
 the balls ? ?
 can love survive the ride up to Hancock Park
 through Watts, that de chirico nativity of
 loneliness and exile on a charcoal alley ?

GERALD LOCKLIN

can love (my love it is the second christmastime
 we've made it through, which augurs madness taking
 hold now where we least expect it, electric lights
 for nerve endings, nonsense for a carol) can our
 love survive the circumambient dying of the dear old
 double standard (curses on the misguided liberals who
 anglicize the mass and masochistically civilize the male)
 ?

can love can love
 (my love, let us belabor love throughout
 the christmas holidays until my balls are blue with
 frankincense
 and mirth . . .
 (my love we'll take our baby to the
 beach where she can listen to the
 finitude of sand, the adolescent
 turmoil of the waves . . .
 (my love at sunset beach let us
 begin again to live as once we

did at belmont shore, disbelieving
in the income tax, incredulous
at vietnam, in utter scepticism
that tomorrow is worth worrying
about . . .
and if this christmas be the last for us together
let it be recorded by the silly evangelic seagulls
at the sunset parleys that never on this beach
before or since did two so truly want
to free each other of the consummate indignity
of two thousand years of christian calculation)

L. STANLEY CHENEY

THE DAY SEEMS BLOATED

The day seems bloated
with overweight
yet
the dream is undernourished
as
bold cities are built
by men
from blueprints fashioned for joy
still,
crowds are crowds
and ask
we are overdrawn on progress
and underpaid with peace,
when shall the merger begin

ROBERT PETERS

ON TRYING TO WRITE

false starts —
a cliché boiled
into fish flakes
nothing promises

to yield, barren
field.
the sun dries the
fig, the yucca
eats its own smoke.
the rattlers have
all gone underground
the toad is slow
and I sit here.
nothing.
fat green nothing
transpires, as
sparrows skitter
past, settle on
telephone wires
produce a hum —
I seem to read
death's teeth
and slip through
the crevices, am
fragment, am
baleen.

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JOHN TAGLIABUE

A GATHERING OF HAIKU FOUR . . .

1.

Children on bicycles
have always made some of
the music of the spheres.

2.

Philosophizing
about laziness one's not
lazy enough

3.

Barking nuisance
Little devil of a muzzled dog,
grey rag,
nasty gnat.

4.

I love to overhear
people snore; it's such an
occult Morse code.

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DONALD FREED

PROMETHEAN FRAGMENT

Donald Freed

Prometheus (Reviving) Ah, ah-ha, agkgh! Mother?

Mother? Dear Mother Earth of all

Yellow Scythia, yellow sun

Hear my call! Rivers run,

Wild winds blow news of the fall

Of me for the 'crime' I have done!

Chorus

Prometheus, none can bear your face

And your groans are killing.

Why of your godly race are you

Selected; our Father show no

Trace of pity, all unwilling to

Rescue you from this trackless waste?

Prometheus

In this desert my suffering is the only fact.

Chorus

But why? For what unpardonable act?

Prometheus

Fire and hope!

Chorus

Fire and hope?

Prometheus

Fire and hope. I mingled in men's minds

Fire and hope that they might cope.

Poor men — so they could cope.

(Excerpt from a new translation-adaptation from Aeschylus)

BARRY N. SCHWARTZ

EVERY CELESTIAL BODY LOVES SATURDAY NIGHT

Sitting in the bar among the carbon crowd
All stoole[d], and drinking of the energy
I see this iodine baby
Study her and yearn
And when I yearn I act
Hello, I say to her
She rotates, silently
Now baby, I say to her
I have an electron affinity for you
She studies me
I wait expectantly
She says finally
I have an ionization potential for you too
I tell her confidently
She should make potential an actuality
She asks if I'm free
And I say certainly
We split
Later in her field, I'm happy
We're making it ecstatically
When at the final moment
Sacred marriage spied upon
From beneath the sheets
Triumphantly, inevitably
Slips entropy

Bruce Cook

THE JEW OF FRANKFURT

I knew a Jew in Frankfurt. This is more remarkable than you might suppose, for I was in the army, and the Jew was a civilian, and it was in 1958 — a good many years after the war. In case you haven't heard, there aren't many Jews in Germany any more — and no wonder. Most of those who escaped with their lives left at the earliest opportunity for Israel, England, America, anywhere they might go to forget their ordeal and those neighbors and false friends, the cowardly goyim who had condemned them through their indifference. They left. They marched out. It was a second Diaspora more purposeful — at least better understood — than the first. They knew what they were doing. They knew what they were leaving behind, and they were happy to go.

My Jew's name was Yakov, but everyone called him Jake. He was from Poland originally and had come to Frankfurt by agony and stealth by way of Lodz and Auschwitz — first to Berlin, where he had spent two years bribing his invalid sister out of Warsaw, and then to Frankfurt. I was never quite able to understand why he hadn't taken his sister and proceeded west — over the Rhine and on at least into France.

Oh, he had a reason, I suppose — or at least a kind of feeling. Jake was very sentimental about Frankfurt — Frankfurt of all places! He had some feeling about the Rothschilds and European Jewry, and I suppose that if one is sentimental about such things, then one could muster a kind of esteem for the city. For, at one time it was more or less the Jewish capital of Europe, and the old Rothschild estate is still there in the heart of the city — a park they call the Palmengarten. It stands as a reminder for those who wish to remember.

Jake lived with his sister across from the Palmengarten in a high third-floor apartment from which he could view every

corner of the park. On weekday afternoons he would sometimes walk its curving shaded paths and carefully inspect the labeled botanical specimens set along the way. But he never took his sister with him on these strolls: she was all but paralyzed from the waist down as the result of a beating and kicking she received in the last three months of the war. She could have accompanied him in her wheel chair, but she preferred not to; it was only on the high holidays that she consented to leave the apartment at all, and then only to travel to and from the temple by taxi. Except for these trips she never left the apartment.

I remember that when Jake told me this, I was quite astonished that anyone could live this way. 'But what does she do all day?' I asked.

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'Nothing,' said Jake with a shrug. 'She sits.'

'She sits? Well, doesn't she read or anything? Doesn't she talk to anybody?'

He repeated the shrug. 'Me she talks to sometimes. She asks me about things before the war. She was too young to remember it all. So I tell her, and she thinks about it, and then she asks me something else. But usually she sits and thinks.'

'What about?' I persisted.

'What about! What about?' Jake exploded, losing patience with me at last. 'What are you — mishugeh? She thinks about what happened to her. Are you such a little boy you can't imagine for yourself? You have to be told such things?'

No, I didn't have to be told. I had read enough and heard enough that I was able to fill in the spaces he left blank. I probably wouldn't mention this at all, except that I remember it as the only occasion Jake was angry or annoyed with me. It was, as a matter of fact, the only time I remember him speaking sharply to anyone.

He was a lovely man, one not given to melancholy, nor, in spite of his own ugly past, inclined to think the worst of people. His was the proper personality to sustain him as proprietor of a bar, but not really the kind that would make him rich at it. Jake's bar was across from the Gutleut-kaserne in central Frankfurt, quite near the main railroad station. Originally an old German Army cavalry barracks, the Kaserne had been taken over by the SS during the war. When the American Army came in 1945, Gutleut was passed on, by devastating military logic, to an MP battalion. Little by little, however, the MP's were replaced by such nondescript military office workers as myself. We — clerk-typists, translators, code clerks, etc. — had inched the real soldiers into a small corner of the yard. In and out of the gate we traveled, at all hours of the day and night, more often than not in mufti. The MP's were visibly ruffled at our unsoldierly procession. But we had history on our side: we were the new army.

I don't recall when I made my first visit to Jake's bar. It must have been Herbie — Herbert Brownell Packard III — who brought me there. He was a fat and charming roommate of mine who drank to excess; and he did most of his drinking right across the street at the Chicago Bar. That, God forgive him, was the name Jake himself had chosen for the place. It seemed he was sentimental about Chicago, too; he had a rich uncle there.

It was the name on the sign that kept me away for months; the Chicago

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Bar — it suggested a crass GI joint, loud, brawling, and whore-ridden. I was surprised when I heard that it was there Herbie spent his time, and I was doubly surprised when I had gone with him and found that it was not at all the sort of place I had imagined. And what kind was it? Well, if one were to imagine (as I so often did) the sort of Kneipe that might have thrived during those wild pre-Hitler days in Berlin, Munich, or even Frankfurt, then perhaps Jake's place might come close to fulfilling expectations. Dark and dank and slightly disreputable, its greatest charm was its proprietor.

Naturally, because there always were soldiers in the place, there always were a few whores. But there were fewer of each than one had a right to expect; fewer, too, than Jake would have hoped. 'Not that business is bad,' he would assure me. 'It's just that I want nobody should be lonely by me. It is a terrible thing to be lonely.'

And I would nod at that.

'You know what it means to be lonely? Have you ever been lonely?' Yes, I would tell him, I sometimes felt lonely over here — meaning Germany, of course.

And then Jake would laugh uproariously as though I had just told a very funny story. 'Lonely!' he would bellow. 'You think that is lonely? That is only Sehnsucht. You get a nice girl you like, and you will not feel this way.' Then he would clap me on the shoulder and wave a hand as though he had solved my problem forevermore. This conversation — or a variation upon it — seemed to be repeated about once a week. The words were different, but the solution was always the same: get a girl.

On this, Jake was an expert, for he had a girl, himself. Her name was Gertrud, although everyone but Jake called her Trudi, and she was sort of an employee of his. How can I explain their relationship? Perhaps best by telling how I first came to understand it, myself.

It was only after my second or third visit to Jake's that I learned about the two. I had come in with Herbie on a week-end night — Friday or Saturday — with the intention of leaving after a drink or two and going on to a movie. A perfectly reasonable intention, it seemed to me. But, this once, Herbie seemed determined to keep me with him there. This, at least, was the message he started sending when I made my first gestures toward the door.

'Come on,' he coaxed me as I drained my glass. 'Stick around.'

I looked at my watch. 'Well,' I sighed, 'if I left now, I could make the ten o'clock feature over at the Turm Palast.' I cocked my head toward the door in half-hearted invitation. 'Why don't you come? Good

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flick — French.'

'No, stick around. Look,' he said, digging deep into his tight pants pocket and pulling out a crumpled ten-mark note. 'I'll buy the next round.'

I hesitated. 'I don't know. It's got Jean Gabin in it.'

'Come on, you can see it tomorrow. Stick around for the floor show.'

'Floor show?'

'Yeah — well — sort of. You'll see.'

Vague as this was, it was enough to persuade me to stay. I doubt that anything more explicit would have worked as well. I settled back, let Herbie order the beer, and waited. Just about that time Jake walked by, your friendly host, nodding and grinning in our direction, just making sure that we weren't lonely. Herbie beckoned him over. 'Wann kommt das Fraulein Trudi?' he drawled out in his most precise accent.

Jake frowned slightly, then brightened suddenly as though the answer had just been relayed to him from some outside source. 'Ach, ja, Gertrud! Sie kommt gleich, nur ein

Momentchen.’ He turned to me and added for my benefit: ‘She is here soon.’ Then he smiled at us both quite happily and proceeded down the bar.

‘Who’s Gertrud?’ I asked Herbie.

‘Oh, you’ll see, you’ll see.’

I supposed I would, but in the meantime I surrendered to the grossest fantasies — stag tricks up on the bar, that sort of thing. And because of this, I was quite unprepared when Trudi actually appeared a few minutes later. I hardly noticed her — a small frail-looking woman who moved with a little difficulty from the door to the bar. When she pulled off her coat and handed it over to the barman, I noticed that she wore a brace on her left leg. Although it was a bit thin and wasted, it was straight enough; the right leg, equally straight, was much stronger and quite nicely shaped. How old was she? It was hard to tell. As she passed us, walking down the bar (throwing her braced leg out and around just slightly every second step), I would have guessed her age as about my own — around twenty-four. But in another minute she had reached the little piano platform at the back of the room; Jake had appeared and, without a word, lifted her up to the bench. And as she sat down, a single hard red light flashed over her and she looked about ten years older.

I turned back to Herbie. ‘Is this it?’ I asked him. ‘Is this the floor show?’

‘More or less, but just wait. You’ll like her.’

He was right: I liked her. The way she sang that night — and the way

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she sang all the nights after that — was less an entertainment than an education. Hers was a voice apart from all others — dry, mordant, filled with ugly wisdom, but never simply sad. It was a voice that came from some narrow room beyond despair, one in which the doors and windows had long before been shut against every sort of intrusion.

The songs she sang were the right ones — the only ones, I suppose — for such a voice. I remember very well that she began with that old thing from *The Blue Angel*. How does it go? *Ich bin von Kopf zur Füße / Für Liebe eingestellt / ja, das ist meine Welt / Sonst gar Nichts....* Or that's how I remember it, anyway. She borrowed extensively from the Dietrich repertoire, as she did from Lenya's. Nothing surprising in this, but she also used a few Piaf songs — *Padam-Padam* and *Il Pleut*, I remember in particular. She faked the French magnificently, her head cocked to one side, mouthing those phrases she could remember in a raw whisper; and failing that, throwing back her head to deliver the rest in an unearthly crooning moan.

I was, I'll confess, a bit overpowered. It wasn't until she had finished five or six songs and pushed back from the piano in an attitude of stiff attention that I came to enough to applaud. When I did, I'm afraid I made a bit of a scene, clapping so loud and long (even Herbie looked at me curiously) that I extorted an encore. She glared in my direction, threw out a little arpeggio and began to sing *My Man* in English. It was corny and broad and full of burlesque the way she did it, full of dramatic pauses and crescendos, and yet at the same time it was very moving. I knew, just listening to her, that I had never before heard it done quite so well.

More applause. But Trudi did not wait to listen. She rose quickly from her bench and, with two fast faltering steps, moved to the edge of the platform. For an instant, I was sure that she would fall; but quite suddenly Jake was there, his hands at her waist, lifting her down. Together, they moved off to a table in the rear of the room and sat down — both a bit weary, it seemed to me — in adjoining chairs.

'Hey,' I said to Herbie, 'she's great!'

He nodded a little pompously. 'I thought you'd like her. That's why I wanted you to stay.'

‘Like her? Why, she’s — she’s just great, that’s all.’ Then I sucked in my breath with sudden resolution and pushed off the bar stool. ‘And I’m going to tell her so.’ I wheeled around and started for the corner where she sat.

What followed is a little too embarrassing for me to describe in precise detail. It’s not that I’m trying to dominate things here, to play the hero,

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it’s just that like all the rest of you I have a tendency to forget what is unpleasant to remember. But—to summarize: I came on very strong with a little impromptu speech addressed to both of them about what a marvelous experience I had just had and how I wanted to thank them. But, before I had had a chance to do much more than begin, she had turned angrily to Jake and was asking him, in German, who I was, what I wanted—something like that. Jake tried unsuccessfully to interrupt me, but I kept right on talking until Trudi looked up at me suddenly—directly at me—and said in clear and expressive English: ‘Go away, you bastard.’

That did it. That was too much even for me. I turned and rushed blindly out of the place with only just a muttered ‘See you later’ to Herbie. He seemed to understand. Anyway, he showed me a sick kind of sympathetic smile and made no move to follow. For that I was grateful. I missed the last show at the Turm Palast, so I went out and drank too much. How much is too much? Enough to make me sick the next morning, though not enough, curiously, to allow me to master or even forget what started me drinking.

But I didn’t want to forget; I wanted to understand. After that first agony had passed, I was left with a consuming curiosity; I wanted to know all about that woman; I wanted to know who she was and what it was that had created in her the bitterness behind that rebuff. It was knowledge that I was after—her knowledge, I suppose—and I was willing to pay a price for it. I was even willing to open myself to Herbert

Brownell Packard III to find out what he knew. I suppose it was worth it, because he seemed to know quite a bit.

We wasted no time. ‘What did she say?’ he asked as soon as we met the next afternoon. When I told him, he shrugged, apparently unimpressed. ‘That’s not so bad,’ he said. ‘I mean she’s been much, much nastier than that. You know Andy Vollandsen up on the third floor? Well, I mean he’s a pretty quiet and inoffensive type—right? One night he went up to her just like you did last night and told her very politely that he had enjoyed her singing very much.’

‘What did she say?’ I prompted.

‘What didn’t she say! Wow. What she didn’t call poor Vollandsen in English she covered in German. I mean, it was pretty bad. Jake finally had to call a cab and send her home.’

‘Well, I don’t understand,’ I said. ‘Why doesn’t he fire her? It must be pretty terrible for business, a scene like that.’

‘He doesn’t want to fire her. Trudi’s his girl.’

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‘His girl?’ For some reason, the idea was particularly hard for me to grasp.

‘Oh, sort of. I guess you’d really say she was his mistress.’

That word, which seemed so outworn and old-fashioned, hung awkwardly between us for an instant until I picked it up and repeated it. ‘Mistress?’

‘Oh, you know. She comes in a few nights each week and she sings a couple of songs, but she leaves whenever she wants to. And — well — Jake takes pretty good care of her, that’s all. She’s got an apartment in Sachsenhausen, I hear, that Jake paid for; and I don’t know whether you noticed, but she dresses pretty well.’ He hesitated, not knowing quite what to say, it seemed. ‘He just takes pretty good care of her, that’s all.’

‘Oh,’ I said a bit weakly, ‘I see.’

‘Besides,’ he said, ‘she’s not so bad for business. You’ll be back.’

Herbie was right, of course. I was back a couple of nights later, in the middle of the week. I neither expected nor wanted her to be there, for I had immediately developed an interest in Jake that was at least equal to the fascination I felt for Trudi. To tell the truth, I had hardly noticed him before. I must have known that he was a Jew — or perhaps I didn't know. Who was there to tell me? The point is that before I knew about him with Trudi it didn't really matter whether he was a Jew or not. But now it did: he was the Jew with a German mistress. Knowing this, I wanted to look at him and think about him and maybe talk to him a little, too.

There was no trouble in talking to him: the difficulty was in getting him to stop once he had started. For instance, that first time I went in the middle of the week, he came over quickly to the bar where I was sitting alone. He was the very picture of humility as he stood before me, abject, downcast, his hands clasped before him in an expression of surrender. 'I must speak with you,' he said in a voice so quiet that it was barely audible.

'Sure,' I said. 'Certainly.' How could I refuse him?

'Please,' he said, stretching out a stubby arm toward a nearby table, 'we sit over here. I will talk to you private.'

He was making a bigger thing of it than I wanted him to. Once at the table, he began by begging my pardon for the 'sad thing' that happened the other night. I should understand, he told me, that he wanted everyone to be happy in his place and when such sad things happen, it made him, personally, feel very bad. (This I could believe.) And it also made Fraulein Gertrud equally unhappy. (Of this I was not quite so sure.) He must have

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read the disbelief in my face, for he quickly reassured me: 'Oh, yes, it is true, I am a very dear friend of this lady and she is very sad about this thing. She cry about it. You must believe me.' And then he blushed suddenly and began stammering, as though he had said something that he shouldn't have.

So I believed him, more or less, and I listened agreeably as he told me about 'this lady' and instructed me in the ways of artistic natures such as hers. I was to understand, he told me, that these people were not like us. They are so sensitive, so subtly attuned to the atmosphere in which they create their art that when there is some change — any change — it frightens them, disturbs them, makes them strike out like some wild beast in the jungle.

I thought that one over for a minute, and then said: 'She didn't seem frightened to me.'

'Ya, sure,' he nodded emphatically, and then a slight smile played on his lips. 'I think maybe you are right this time. But still, she is disturbed — by you.'

'By me?'

'Ya, sure. You are too nice to her. She does not understand that, and so—' He made a quick motion with his hand in imitation of a cat striking out with its paw. 'You see?'

I laughed very hard then, I couldn't help myself. 'Yes,' I said at last, 'I guess I do.'

We were good friends after that. I needed someone like Jake to talk to for all those same old dreary soldier-away-from-home reasons that you have heard about a hundred times before and may know first-hand yourself. Jake's reasons for talking to me were more complicated and more subtle. It was first of all that I was goyish, and every Jew needs — or thinks he needs — a gentile friend. Then, too, there was Trudi: we shared her like a secret that is hinted at, touched upon, yet never quite articulated.

I thought about them a lot. Too much, really. It's embarrassing even to recall the kind of things that fascinated me, that stimulated my fantasies during those few weeks. And, my God, what fantasies they were! For instance, did she take off the brace to make love or simply throw that dead leg off to one side, rigid in its steel truss? What would it be like to feel the coldness of the thing against your thigh? And so forth. Call it an obsession, call it a monomania, call it what you like, but I recognize now that my feelings about them — all right, about her — were a little sick.

One night Jake told me that he would have married her long ago

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‘except for the conditions of my life.’

‘What do you mean?’ I asked him. ‘What’s keeping you from marrying her?’ I would have supposed that what the Germans had done to him would have given him all the reason he needed.

But Jake was more practical. ‘My sister,’ he explained. ‘How can I marry while my sister is with me? These two cannot live in the same house, believe me. They are too much alike. Both know too much hate. Both have too much to remember.’

Yes, I believe that Jake would have married his Fraulein Gertrud, had he been given the chance. His intentions were quite honorable. There was, in fact, something — a very big something — deeply and unchangeably familial about this man. You could see it in the way that he talked to me and to Herbie and the others who came into the bar. He loved us all, and loved us, not as sons, perhaps, but as nephews in some nepotistical incestuous oriental court — he, the chamberlain, and Trudi, his empress.

There could be no doubt that she reigned as a sort of lurking presence, always there above us. Not that she really ran things, of course — she left that to Jake and was only

physically present about three nights out of seven. And yet, the place was hers rather more than it was Jake's. You had only to pay it a visit on one of those three nights to see for yourself. It was most alive then, yet quieter and better-behaved than at any other time. There was a subtle and intricate protocol governing conduct while she was present. It was wrong, for instance, to notice her too much when she entered the room: you looked and then you looked casually away, and under no circumstances were you to try attracting her attention. (All this, I suppose, was in deference to her brace.) I discovered that when she stopped for applause, you gave it to her, but again not too much, because it embarrassed her or something. (I had goofed here, of course, and simply didn't know she was putting me down with My Man, which it seems was her favorite put-down song.)

I found it annoying, to tell the truth. I resented the rules and the royal treatment she received, and I believe that Jake resented it all, too. I think I was important to him — at least as important as he to me — because I was his friend, too, perhaps the only one he had there those three nights each week. I believe he lived in mortal fear of being cuckolded.

I kept coming back. Why? Oh, to listen to her, I suppose, because she was good; she was really good. I remember one night when, as a sort of whim, she sang all her sets in English. She began to sound a little like Gertrude Niesen toward the end of the evening, with all that nostalgia from the Thirties and the War: I'll Be Seeing You, and a lot of Cole

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**PORTER, WHAT IS THIS THING
CALLED LOVE AND MAD ABOUT THE
BOY.**

For just a few minutes, it was like living that cool New York life I had imagined for myself when I first heard those songs; and that part, I enjoyed, of course. But then I looked up to find the drones buzzing around the queen bee (it was the middle of the evening then), and it made me just a little sick.

But, as I say, I kept coming back — also because of Jake. He told me about his sister, and the Rothschilds, and what Frankfurt used to be, and about a hundred other different things that I would never again have the chance to hear from anyone else. He was, let me tell you, a decent man, and the better I got to know him, the more his life with Trudi bothered me, puzzled me, and fascinated me. In the beginning, I thought: What a fine fellow Jake is and what a good girl, Trudi — Jew and German, yet they have made their separate peace, have learned to live together as all of us must ('We must love one another or die,' etc., etc.). But in the end, well, let me tell you about the end.

It was early in the fall. It had to be, for it was right at Yom Kippur. Jake wasn't much of a Jew — not in any religious sense, that is. He would go with his sister to the temple on the high holidays, but he had decided that it would only be hypocritical for him to close down the Chicago Bar on such occasions; besides, it would be bad for business. And so the place stayed open without him. The bartender had no trouble during the week, and for the weekend, had taken on an assistant to help out. All this, Jake had arranged in advance; there were, however, a few more details to be attended to, and those he left to me.

'But, Jake,' I said, 'I don't even know her.'

He nodded vigorously. 'Ya, sure, that's right. But I know you. You are my friend. That is why I want you to take care of her tomorrow night. All you do is be nice and put her in a taxicab when the night is through.'

'But —'

'Please give me no kwetch. Kwetch I get plenty of from other people. From you, I want some sense.' Jake had a strange expression in his eyes; he seemed a little too serious about it.

And so I shrugged my assent and agreed to fill in for him the following night. In a way, I suppose I felt flattered by his trust; but it made me uneasy, too, for this was the first hint he had given me of any real trouble with Trudi. I didn't like being put on my honor.

When she came in that night, I was waiting in my usual place at the bar. She marched past me without a glance, carefully maintaining an air

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of great hauteur. But when she came close to the platform at the end of the room, I suddenly panicked, realizing that Jake would have been there to lift her up. I started toward her then, as did three or four others from different points in the room; yet, she made it on her own, reaching up with her single strong leg and then pulling the braced leg recklessly after it. She teetered for one perilous moment on the edge of the platform, and then recovered, turning to throw one very evil glance directly across the room at me.

She sat down at the piano and opened her set with *My Man*. It was done as before, with all the same pauses and crescendos, and yet it came out even broader and more vicious than it had that first night. All for my benefit, I was sure; and yet, perhaps not — probably more for Jake's. After that, the songs went in quick order; I can't even recall them now. The point is that I was there when she finished, ready to lift her down as the applause rang lightly around us. Trudi was standing before me on the platform; yet, she was so short that her eyes were almost level with my own. I thought for a moment she meant to push me aside and jump down; but she stepped forward quickly and allowed herself to be lifted. She was very light; for no good reason it occurred to

me that the brace she wore was very likely heavier than the leg it supported.

‘You are Yakov’s friend?’ I’m sure she had intended her tone to be quite flat and expressionless, but there was just an edge of sarcasm to it, as though amused at the idea that Jake might even have a friend.

I nodded very seriously and stepped aside so that she might make her way to the table. ‘He asked me to —’

‘I know all that,’ she interrupted sharply. ‘Here. Hold the chair for me and then sit down yourself. We will talk. Yakov talks to me, so you must.’ When she was settled, she asked my name and sent me off to get her a drink — a raw German brandy that she called for by name. ‘Don’t worry,’ she said testily, ‘you do not buy my drinks. I earn my drinks here.’

I did not object when the bartender poured out an extra for me, nor did I make any gesture toward paying — not even for my own. I felt as though I were earning my drinks tonight, too.

Back at the table, she called out Zum Wohl to the room at large and tossed down about half the glass of brandy. I began to sip my own. ‘Well,’ she said to me in her hard little whisper, ‘how you like my singing now?’

I mumbled something that was unintelligible even to myself.

‘I remember,’ she laughed. ‘One time you try to say something better

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than that. Only I don’t let you. I be mean to you then. Very often I be mean.’ She shook her hair lightly and looked around her. As I looked, everyone in the bar seemed suddenly to have just turned the other way; I knew they were all staring, and I didn’t like that. ‘You think I sound like Dietrich? Like Lenya?’ She was glancing at me out of the corner of her eye. It was hard to return the look.

‘No,’ I said. ‘You sing some of their songs, but you sing them your own way. You sing like yourself.’

‘Well,’ she said, smiling scornfully, ‘this is good only if I like to be myself. Sometimes I don’t like this, you see.’

And then I remembered Gertrude Niesen. ‘Once,’ I said, ‘you sounded like someone else to me. It was the other night when you sang everything in English.’

‘Yes?’ The suspicion in her voice was only thinly disguised. ‘Who do I sound like then?’

And then I told her about Gertrude Niesen — who she was, the kind of things she used to sing, and tried quite unsuccessfully to describe the particular plaintive quality of her voice. Throughout all this, Trudi gave me all her attention. Her suspicion softened to curiosity, and then deepened in wonder until she was listening like a child, eyes wide in concentration and lips slightly open; never before had she looked quite so pretty.

When I had finished my little recital, she nodded her appreciation and asked: ‘Why don’t I hear about this other Gertrude now? What happen to her?’

‘I don’t know,’ I said. ‘I think she’s dead.’

And then she was back in character, laughing in nasty amusement at that. ‘First you tell me about somebody who sing like me, and then you tell me she is dead. That is very nice to know. Here,’ she said, shoving her glass toward me, ‘get me another drink. Also a cigaret.’ I tossed a pack down on the table and retreated to the bar for more drinks. As I looked at the others seated around me — I miserably wished that one of them, any one of them, would come over and pay her court. Was this the way she treated them? No, I was sure that it was not. I was sure that I was being given some special treatment.

Back at the table, she tossed down all of her second drink and reached across and took mine. ‘Please,’ she said, ‘I am thirsty.’ She took about half of it and began to seem a little

morose. 'I drink too much, but it does not matter. Pretty soon I be dead like the other Gertrude, the one who sings like me.' She thought about that a moment, and finally gave a

BRUCE COOK

slight shudder. 'When I am dead, his sister, she will be glad She know about me, and I know about her, too.' She turned to me suddenly, staring so intently that I knew she was not drunk. 'He didn't tell you about his sister, not the truth. He tells you she was in dem Kozentrationslager. That is a lie. Only for a little while. They make her a Feldhure! You know what is a Feldhure? It is a piece of meat they toss to our German soldiers to keep them away from the animals and each other. A Jewish army whore, an animal like any other. And she thinks she is so good — too good for me. She is a Jew, an animal like all the rest of them. Ich scheisse auf solchen Tieren!'

And then I became aware of something hard and cold against my leg. 'I don't sing more now. Not no more tonight. Come on,' she said, 'you take me home now. Yakov said you take care of me. You show me you can take better care of me better than him.' She smiled at me then, looking at me without quite showing me her eyes. And then I realized that the metallic thing pressing against my leg was the brace she wore on her dead leg. Without intending such suddenness, I pulled back from her immediately, scraping my chair awkwardly and noisily across the floor and stuttering something friendly as I went.

'Come on,' she snarled. 'You go with me and show me. Yakov is not even a man. They take him and make him not a man, in the camp. And I laugh at him for it when he tries. Only a Jew would do such things as I make him do.' The light shone queerly in her eyes as I felt her fingers grasp at my knee. 'Go with me — now,' she whispered. 'Go.'

Yes, I went. But with her or without her — it would have been all the same to poor Jake whose nakedness was exposed to me and to all the others within earshot. To my shame, I admit that I did leave with her, driven, fascinated by the power of raw volition that was in her. Yes, I bowed before that will of hers, but I didn't break. For, beside her in the taxicab as she clutched and gasped at me, I caught a peculiar rank smell that suddenly calmed me. It was as though some deep fissure had opened in her and I were smelling her soul. Maybe this was the knowledge I was looking for. I left her, ran from her at the door, astonished to have escaped, glad at my good fortune, yet knowing I could never tell Jake how lucky I was.

SOMEONE ELSE

I discover that the girl will leave. She steps from the mirror where she fixed her coat against the flickering gestures of the party. Now she is about to go. I feel my breath turn cool.

All evening this girl has disturbed me. She departs for the staircase shoulder first, then more easily, among the crowded and pleasing guests and their vague good-byes, but I fail to go after. There is a slowness on me, waxen inertia, and I linger at the wall like a sinking candle. The cause perhaps is innocence or that my mind seems clotted by something I do not remember, the thick fact of not remembering something.

She has slight shoes. Her steps are quick. I see that the heels of the shoes must be tapping out a brief quick sound. They touch with precision on the polished hardness. Her strides mark a tick tick tick while I stand here despite my desire. The silent tapping leads her farther till she is lost among the other men and women. For the moment she has gone from sight and has left me only the thought or sense or image of her in the stillness of a dance. I saw refusal as her eyes grew nervous and heard it in her careful voice: O no : I could not.

Her face was near me. We hardly moved, almost did not. Round we went, slowly, so slowly round, her eyes on mine. There was no one and nothing to see beyond and so scarcely an idea of movement, but a viscous, lovely, fearful slowness. When she indicated that the music was finished I had not been hearing any. I watched her tell me and the words floated after one another, so slowly, so fearfully.

People slip backward from me as I hurry. A woman lounges in the hallway door, bracketed by the high arm of a man in conversation with her and with a drink and with a

looming shape of himself that I can guess he imagines. It is a confusing path for me to go so swiftly. Figures of people stand out from the walls on either side. I evade an elbow, a gesturing hand, and no one says excuse me or thanks me for my apology. Not a word.

And here is the only woman in the world who loves me, approaching with a touch. The dark thing empties: I no longer do not remember. Then she settles her warm hand on me. ‘Well, what are you doing?’

The girl’s absence grows clear now. Anxiety slides round within me like ice. I must go past these people.

Here is the woman who loves me. ‘Well, what are you doing?’ she says with a frank voice, with her hand on me. ‘Well, I asked you . . .’

DANIEL EIGERMAN

That is how we talk to each other. Well, this. Well, that. ‘What are you doing?’

I have been stymied for minutes. In a painful instant I see the faces of the people near us. It is a moment, a flash.

‘Well, where are we going?’

I shake my head.

She grows quiet. Now she knows. ‘Well?’

I am not afraid. I am not sad. I look at her. Her hands are warm. Her lips will be damp. They always are.

I seem naked. The shapes recede. I search farther, and the distance welcomes me and I enter it at greater, greater speed, as fast as I like now. My wrists, neck, my skin all over is bare as after alcohol evaporates. I see the hallway chinked with door frames and alcoves. The idea of its length seems to come to me in sighs and then to be exhaled again, is no more than suspicion. Not even. As I run I see my shadow spill like water down this shiny floor. They are gone now, dropped away, and I cannot make myself believe I ever lingered. My body is soundless. The wind fills my eyes.

A FILM SKETCH, BY N. H. TAYLOR:

SUDDEN WILDERNESS, WOMBLESS IN SELFLAND, POET'S BURDEN,
OR — ALL RIGHT, FELLINI, TAKE IT!

A COZY COCKTAIL PARLOR. Assorted types at bar. Juke box (or piano player) in action. The usual forced gaiety and bravado prevail. Without warning, the establishment begins to shake (earthquakelike), and a spine-tingling rumbling and creaking is heard. All talk stops among the inmates, who freeze in various attitudes of shock, bewilderment, fright. As the rumbling and creaking reaches a crescendoing climax, the walls of the saloon dissolve away, revealing beyond, to the horizon in all directions, nothing but flat desert.

First to find voice is the brash b-girl type WAITRESS (thirty-ish), whose standing policy is 'make it funny, sonny, I've had enough bad scenes.' She claps her hands cynically, grinning and saying: 'Good show! Anybody want to top that?'

The PROPRIETOR-BARTENDER, a predatory type of stolid-sour mien, scowls at the damage to his saloon. A fervid 'What the hell!' is his comment.

Slowly the patrons of the bar unfreeze, begin to move and examine what has happened. They are: THE POET (a Brendan Behan-Dylan Thomas type); ROMANTIC GIRL (a twenty-ish chorus-girl type of limited intelligence, but unlimited expectations in idyllic sentiment); a dumb and defensively truculent TRUCKDRIVER (in his late twenties); a forty-ish WHITECOLLARMAN (engineer or accountant) of dull personality and a stubbornly-statistical view of life.

Hesitantly, all step into the dry sand beyond the saloon floor. The juke box continues blaring, courageously holding on for civilization in the midst of this barren wasteland. The WAITRESS (still trying for laughs) speaks again: 'If you ask me, we've been deserted.'

There is no laughter. Instead, another eerie sound is heard; and all turn to see the remainder of the cocktail parlor, whiskey and all, dissolve into nothingness.

The BARTENDER swears loudly at this new disaster.

ROMANTIC GIRL: 'Do you think somebody dropped an H-bomb, or something?'

POET (vehemently): 'It's an Act of God!'

WAITRESS: 'The insurance covers that.'

POET (looking heavenward with a dramatic frown): 'Look here, Supreme Intelligence, I've sung the praises of your creations. Is this my reward? This is too much. How can I function without drink? I must have alcohol!'

He drops to his knees and scrapes desperately in the sand with his fingers, searching for a bottle. The others watch him, hypnotized with hope. Then, they too start digging. They find nothing but sand and more sand.

WAITRESS: 'Well, so much for that. Which way is downtown?'

ROMANTIC GIRL begins to cry, at which the WAITRESS advises her:

'Better save that — you'll get dehydrated.'

A conference is held to weigh their dilemma: should they stick together and wait for the cocktail parlor to come back as miraculously as it disappeared, or should they try to find their way out of the desert? They decide that waiting would be their death-warrant. WHITECOLLARMAN outlines the statistical probabilities involved: if they stay together they might all flounder and perish, whereas if they break into teams and go in different directions some of them may find a way out. This logic is persuasive, and they pair off as follows: POET and ROMANTIC GIRL; TRUCKDRIVER and BARTENDER; WHITECOLLARMAN and WAITRESS.

With awkward 'good-bye's' and 'good luck's,' they tramp off, each pair aiming toward a different point on the horizon.

We follow the pairs in turn:

ROMANTIC GIRL: 'Do you think we're going to die?'

POET: 'Of course, silly girl.'

GIRL: 'But I've dreamed of doing so many things.'

POET: 'Rejoice, then — you'll be in the real dreamland any minute now, with this scorching heat.'

GIRL: 'It's not fair.'

POET: 'Nothing is.'

GIRL: 'I mean, one of my dreams was about getting lost somewhere with a romantic poet — like you — but not just to die. I saw us in a beautiful meadow, with velvety grass and purple wildflowers.'

POET: 'You're in luck again: the meadows of eternity are just around the corner, unless some miracle saves us.'

ROMANTIC GIRL begins to cry again. With a grimace, the POET puts an arm around her and they trudge on.

At another point in the desert, BARTENDER and TRUCKDRIVER plod along, both preserving noncommittal expressions camouflaging their private fears.

BARTENDER: 'Maybe we'll find a gold mine, or something.'

TRUCKDRIVER: 'Some babes, huh?'

BARTENDER: 'Yeh, sure.'

TRUCKDRIVER: 'You think we'll make it, Sam?'

BARTENDER: 'To hell, you mean?'

They fall silent, plodding on.

We pick up WAITRESS and WHITECOLLARMAN. She strides forward determinedly, while he has fallen behind.

WHITECOLLARMAN: 'Dot, I wouldn't go so fast if I were you.'

WAITRESS: 'Well, you're not me. I have an appointment with a glass of water somewhere.'

WHITECOLLARMAN: 'That's just what I mean. We must conserve ourselves. You'll be exhausted much sooner at that vigorous pace. It's a known fact.'

WAITRESS (stopping to catch her breath and grin at him): 'Don't you ever stop quoting facts, buster?'

WHITECOLLARMAN: 'I was only trying to keep us levelheaded. We are in a bit of a pickle, you know. You don't have to be so hostile. It isn't my fault.'

WAITRESS: 'How do I know it isn't your fault? If there's a bad scene, look for a man behind it, is what I say. And if you're going to blame it on God, like that poet jerk, it's still a man, isn't it? Everybody calls God a He.'

WHITECOLLARMAN: 'You're full of hatred.'

WAITRESS: 'Thanks for the compliment. Hatred is what keeps me going, buddy. If you don't like it, cut out. I don't need you.'

She strides off as fast as the soft sand will allow. He stands in glum indecision, then follows her.

We next find the POET and ROMANTIC GIRL struggling to the top of a dune, where they stop and stare in astonishment: before them, on the far side of the dune, is not more desert, but a mountain meadow dotted with multicolored flowers and bordered by wooded slopes.

POET (astounded and afraid): 'What, have we entered Elysium already?'

GIRL (frightened): 'What's Elysium?'

POET: 'The next world, my dear — for dead people only.'

GIRL (touching herself, then him): 'But we're still alive.'

POET (scowling): 'Yes, curse the luck. I can feel my swollen tongue.'

GIRL (rhapsodic): 'It's my dream — my dream come true! It's my mountain meadow. Come on!'

She takes his hand and drags him forward. Some deer raise their heads out of the grass, looking warily at the intruders. Butterflies move among the wildflowers. The meadow is alive with birdsong. The GIRL giggles ecstatically, pulling the POET further into the meadow. They come to a silvery stream. The GIRL pulls off her shoes and stockings, sits and puts her feet in the water. The POET kneels and takes a long drink, then splashes water on his head and

face. Refreshed, he throws himself on his back and stares gloomily at the blue sky. Idly he reaches out and plucks a petal from a yellow flower.

GIRL (remonstrating): 'Oh, look what you've done! You've hurt that flower!'

POET (bewildered): 'Huh?'

GIRL (taking petal from him): 'I said you hurt the flower. You mustn't do things like that. It's cruel.'

With a pout, she returns the petal to its original mooring. The POET sits up, glaring at her:

'See here, my little prosecutor for Mother Nature, I have guilts enough already. I simply won't stand for having flower-molesting added to my long list of crimes.'

She still pouts, but relents a little:

'All right, then. I'll forgive you if you'll recite me one of your poems.'

She props herself on her elbow beside him, gazes down at him with storybook infatuation.

POET (settling back): 'I'm exhausted, girl. I've got to sleep.'

GIRL: 'Oh, please, just a small one.'

POET (groaning): 'Will there be no end to this romantic madness? All right, here's one.'

He recites a bleak four-liner on cruel destiny.

GIRL: 'Not that kind, silly. A love poem.'

Reluctantly, the POET obliges. The GIRL becomes starry-eyed under the spell of his lines. In a trance, she gets to her feet, begins to dance as if she were a wood nymph. She trips through the grass, turning, leaping, fluttering her arms and hands like a solo ballerina. The POET raises himself to stare at her. His voice falters, then falls silent. A sudden rain falls. The GIRL does not notice it. She begins to remove her clothes, soon is dancing stark naked through the meadow, caught in a transcendental frenzy. Her bare flesh glistens in the rain and her hair becomes a sodden mess. She continues to smile ecstatically. Her leaps into the air

become higher. The POET watches her superhuman acrobatics in astonishment. A rainbow appears. The GIRL is now leaping a hundred feet high. She lands on the rainbow, poses there gracefully, blows a kiss down to the POET, then raises her arms skyward. From the rainbow she sails off to a fleecy cloud and is carried out of sight. POET (watching her disappear): 'Dear Lord, is it not I, your true servant, rather than that dull-witted girl, who should have had so glorious an exit. Why have you left me here, throbbing with the anguish of drinklessness, and wondering what is to be my fate? Can I not at least have a tumbler of good Irish whiskey to see me through these miracles of yours?'

He stares into the sky, as if waiting for an answer. As he does so, the mountain meadow disappears and he stands once more in the endless desert.

At an abandoned placer mine, the BARTENDER and TRUCKDRIVER, dust-caked, are forlornly panning for gold.

TRUCKDRIVER: 'Think we'll find anything, Sam?'

SAM: 'Dunno.'

TRUCKDRIVER: 'What if we do?'

SAM: 'Dunno that either.'

TRUCKDRIVER: 'You mean we might strike it rich then die anyway?'

SAM: 'Wouldn't surprise me.'

TRUCKDRIVER: 'Tough.'

SAM: 'You said it.'

TRUCKDRIVER: 'Sam — '

SAM: 'Hmm?'

TRUCKDRIVER: 'I'm cuttin' out — you can have my end of it.'

SAM: 'Go ahead. No one's keeping you.'

TRUCKDRIVER: 'I'm young. I got a lot of livin' to do yet. I don't see this bit at all, pannin' for gold. You heard of them desert rats dyin' out in the middle of nowhere, never findin' nothin'.'

SAM: 'I ain't got any business to go back to. May as well give this a try. If I make a strike, it'll stake me to a noo joint somewhere.'

TRUCKDRIVER: 'Maybe there's no "somewhere" left — anyplace.'

SAM (unmoved): 'Yeah. Well, that's the way it goes, kid. Good luck. See ya.'

The TRUCKDRIVER trudges off downstream. A MONTAGE sequence tracks him through ever-more-forbidding badlands: bare buttes; rocky spires, treeless canyons . . . a nightmarish backdrop to his frantic search for a way back to life. At last, exhausted, he falls over a cliff. As he plummets downward, we hear the voice of ROMANTIC GIRL calling to him eerily. She too is tumbling in space. They come together in cloudland, and we fade out on them in a lovers' embrace: a fairy-land ending par excellence.

For the WAITRESS, an icy cynic, and WHITECOLLARMAN, a cold statistician, the original desert loses itself in a bleak snow wilderness, in which the pair manage to fight their way to a vacant tumbledown

woodsman's cabin. Automatically, she rages against her rotten luck

in being holed up with the dull data man. Had her cabin mate been

either the POET or the TRUCKDRIVER, she would rage just the same.

WHITECOLLARMAN's practical mind turns immediately to problems

of survival: food and warmth. He is able to fashion devices which

help them stay alive. His second great concern is trying to soothe the

savage WAITRESS, whose witticisms become more and more vicious.

He learns to take her jibes stoically, but this only goads her to greater

malevolence. Driven by necessity, he puts together a crude still and

cooks up a batch of hard liquor from some berries he has ferreted

out of the snowbanks. It is a foul brew, but the WAITRESS downs it as

if it were nectar. She grows drunk, disorderly, and violent. WHITE-

COLLARMAN is saved from mayhem only when she passes out cold.

He, also drunk, begins to give thought to a quiet undisturbed rape

of his paralyzed tormentor, and is moving in that direction when a

thunderous knocking on the cabin door stops him. The knocker turns

out to be the POET, seeking shelter from a raging blizzard. Guiltily,

WHITECOLLARMAN lets him in.

POET (inhaling): 'Do I smell booze?'

WHITECOLLARMAN: 'There isn't enough. I can't spare you any.'

POET: 'What! You miserable miser. Refuse me a drink and I'll tell

the world I caught you assaulting this defenceless woman.'

WHITECOLLARMAN: 'What world? We've lost it — remember? I can

do as I please now.'

POET: 'Hah! Do you think you can develop a new moral code

overnight? You're stuck with the respectability you were raised with,

my inhospitable friend. Now, what about that drink?’

WHITECOLLARMAN: ‘Sorry. I need all of it to keep this shrew tamed,

and to accomplish my nefarious purposes with her. This is an oppor-

tunity I’ve dreamed of all my life. Respectability be damned. Primary

instincts are in charge here. Off with you, Mr. Poet.’

Strengthened by his aroused passions, WHITECOLLARMAN is able to

eject the POET into the blizzard.

Footsore, heavily bearded, his clothes in shreds, the POET staggers

against the snow-laden wind, his head bent low to protect his eyes.

The snow fades away, and once more the POET is in the flat desert,

whipped by a dust storm. The wind dies down, the POET opens his

eyes. A look of disbelief overtakes him, then a weak smile. A few

yards from him is the cocktail parlor from which he and the others

were banished. (The walls are still missing, but everything inside is as

before. The juke box is playing and all the characters of the story, including the POET, are at the bar drinking and swapping jokes. They pay no attention to the tattered figure standing in the desert outside the saloon.)

The POET, his face lit with relief, staggers forward, tries to step into the saloon, but bumps into an invisible wall surrounding it. He pounds on the wall, asking to be let in. He is not heard and no one notices him. He cries for a drink again and again. Even his own image at the bar ignores him.

Panicky, he backs off from the saloon, and as he does, it bursts into flame. The inmates stampede to get out of the place, but the fire consumes them.

The POET is left alone in the wilderness.

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SMOKE AND LITTLE FIRE

He smoked his way to heaven
twirling swirls of ease
Red shirt. Black pants.
White sneakers.
Green shorts.
It was all to please
he liked to please.
Laughter in a cold throat
skin so deep you lost the bone
and gaps a smile wide.
A pack a day keeps the resolve away
Decisions like friends can be found at arm's length
and nothing was everything in the fog he lit to live by.

Martin Tucker

DECLINE & FALL (ONCE AGAIN) OF THE SHORT STORY

L. W. Michaelson

PICK UP ANY COPY NOWADAYS of a major, or a nationally-circulated magazine, a medium ideally suited for the short story — and what do you find? Novel excerpts.

Not that the short story has been in any great shape for twenty-five years or so, due to what such critics as Dwight MacDonald and others have attributed to ‘article-itis,’ a stifling growth on the body of belles lettres that has resulted in a ratio of — say — ten articles printed to one short piece of fiction. True enough, an emphasis on the ‘how-to-do-it’ material is fairly inevitable in a pragmatic society.

Then, too, there is an embarrassing ratio between blacksmith shops and bookstores in America. According to an off-the-cuff survey made in the late 1950’s, the Village Smithy was still more in evidence than the Book Shoppe. Although things have changed for the better since then, very likely the city of London can boast more second-hand book stalls than forty of our states put together.

However, the novel-excerpt fad seems to reveal more of a failure of nerve on the part of editors and publishers, rather than any decline in the short-story-reading public. Editors, once upon a time, devoted more space to new upcoming young writers, giving space to short fiction that very likely would never achieve publication in book form.

A few examples of the excerpt trend: the August, September, and October issues of 1967 of Ladies’ Home Journal all had long book excerpts or novel condensations; Good Housekeeping, in November, 1967 issue, had one novel and three short stories; Red Book for the same month had one novel; and the November issue of Cosmopolitan had two

book condensations, one, a nonfiction book and the other, a mystery. Other surveys for November showed: Saturday Evening Post, too crowded lately with articles about sport stars to run a novel condensation, getting around this lack of space by running a mystery novel in serial form; Mademoiselle, instead of a novel excerpt, publishing a three-act play. Seventeen, perhaps lagging behind, did have four short stories in that month. A survey of Harper's Bazaar and Vogue was hampered by a three-inch-thick layer of perfume and brassiere ads.

Lately, Atlantic Monthly, serving somewhat as a house organ for Boston-area book publishers, has delighted in running bulky excerpts of the novels of Philip Roth and several of the longer works of Louis Auchinloss, although most of the Fall, 1967 issues were devoted to the short story. Perhaps a more pertinent case in point is that both Harper's and Life (ordinarily a news-photo feature magazine) published long sections of William Styron's new 'novel,' THE CONFESSIONS OF NAT TURNER.

Harper's, for more than one hundred years a stronghold of the short story, seems proud of its about-face in the matter of book or novel excerpts; and, not long ago, devoted an entire column to listing twenty-five such condensations. Among the novels were: VALE OF LAUGHTER, by De Vries; IS ANYONE THERE?, by Asimov; THE SONS OF MARTHA, by McKenna; O THE CHIMNEYS, by Sachs; AN AFRICAN SEASON, by Levitt. Only seven of the twenty-five books, both fiction and nonfiction, were from Harper & Row. Understandably, the company would want to publicize its own productions; but, to print long excerpts from those of other firms, is to rub salt in the wounds of the languishing short-story form.

Now, to be sure, if a magazine feels called upon to act as the publicising agent for a work, a novel soon to be printed (in many cases, by a house adjunct to the periodical), a good long enthusiastic book review might be adequate—or perhaps

lengthy notes in a column entitled: 'Forthcoming Exciting Events in the World of Literature.' This simple procedure should interest readers in buying the book; while, with the offering of a lengthy excerpt or a condensation, many readers will no longer feel constrained to buy. After all, Harper's and Life seem to have extracted the meat of NAT TURNER, so one may safely put the book out of mind.

As to the failure of nerve: editors seem afraid to stick out their collective necks any more; apparently, it is safer to lean on the supposedly-superior judgment of the editorial staff of a large book company. Some editors in an important staff position felt a novel was good enough to risk—say—\$60,000 in publishing costs; therefore, it is a better risk for a magazine to run an excerpt than a short story. That is to say, if there is any reader failure to respond to such a judgment, such failure can then neatly be shared with other editors: in excerpts, then, is strength.

Good college quarterlies do run many short stories; so, the picture is not all black. Antioch, Prairie Schooner, Carleton Miscellany, Colorado Quarterly, etc., have not to any extent entered the excerpt field, although one of the 'little magazines,' December, gave a whole issue to a complete novel, ANACONDA, by Jerry Bumpus. Then, too, a few major-circulation magazines such as New Yorker and Playboy are pretty much faithful to the short-story tradition, though New Yorker has had occasional departures in the cases of Salinger and Hersey. Playboy may be suspected of using short fiction mainly to keep the girly nudes a bit apart from one another, but they do manage to run consistently good short pieces by Isaac Singer, Gerald Kersch, Ken Purdy, and many others. Buried in between garish men's fashion ads, Esquire prints excellent short fiction.

Meanwhile, many good young writers with good short stories no doubt are going unpublished. Surely, William Stone of HALL OF MIRRORS, Walker Percy of THE MOVIE GOER,

John Williams of *STONER*, perhaps Brock Bower of *DEBRIS*, and Carol Oates, to name just a few, have stories catching dust in their files. And most turned-on book readers will buy a novel anyway, if the reviews are impressive to them . . . and, to repeat, this current book-excerpt fad is self-defeating and eventually will dry up the book budgets.

On the other hand, the reading market for short fiction may well be kaput. The pocket-size Short Story International started out bravely enough a few years back, printing the 'top' short stories culled from magazines in Australia, Africa, France, Arabia, etc.; but it folded from lack of reader response in two years or so. Readers are seemingly disenchanted with short stories, and only long historical, half-fiction material such as Capote's *IN COLD BLOOD* and Styron's *NAT TURNER* lure them in large numbers. It's likely that many writers themselves have more or less abandoned the form; for it is hard to sell a short story to the movies, even although Capote and Hemingway have done so. And unless there are movie or TV sales (the actual book-buying and magazine-buying public being so skimpy in our business-technical culture), it no longer appears worthwhile for an author to spend weeks and months polishing up a short work that will very probably be rejected in favor of the latest novel excerpt.

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ONE OF OUR SMALL WINGS IS MISSING

he went through the June-bugged window at 3.31 A.M., slid
in the dark-thought hillside, Christ, O sweating Buddha, he
flew into nothing, as a shadow thrown among yards of
sunshine suffers and is gone.

Charles Goldberg

KEENO TO CANNES: A JOURNEY

by A. Fredric Franklyn

*(A review of MAN AND THE MOVIES . . . edited by W.
R. Robinson, assisted by George Garrett — \$7.95
— Louisiana State University Press)*

THE ARTS OF MAN DRAMATIZE MAN. Nowhere is this more compellingly evident than in the dramatic media he employs to objectify his troubled sense of place and significance in the universe: the stage, radio, cinema, and television.

The first of these, the stage, dates back at least as far as the Hellenic Age, the later period of Classical Greek history, some twenty-five hundred years. The last three — radio, cinema, and television — all were developed in this century. (Marchese Guglielmo Marconi's first successful experiments with wireless telegraphy were conducted near Bologna in 1895. But he didn't patent his magnetic detector until seven years later, in 1902. His horizontal directional aerial wasn't patented until 1905, and the timed-spark system for generating continuous waves wasn't introduced until 1912.)

The early photographic experiments with a moving image also date back to the early Nineteenth Century: to the experiments, in America, of men like John D. Isaacs, Eadweard Muybridge, Wallace Goold Levinson, Coleman Sellers, and Henry Renno Heyl; in Europe, the similar investigations into 'the persistence of vision' by M. Emile Renaud, Jean-Louis Meissonier, Dr. E. J. Marey, William George Horner, Lt. Baron Franz von Uchatius, William Friese-Greene, Louis Aime Augustin Le Prince, Peter Mark Rojet, Dr. Joseph-Antoine Ferdinand Plateau, Dr. Simon Ritter von Stampfer, etc. But, in the United States, Thomas Alva Edison's and William Kennedy Laurie Dickson's Vitascope and Kinetograph and Kinetoscope, and C. Francis

Jenkins' and Thomas Armat's Phantascope, rotary lens camera and 'beater movement' projector were introduced only a few years before the turn of the century. And the improvements which Albert E. Smith made on them, with his movable framing aperture and split movie shutter, were already ushering the merely-five-year-old motion picture industry into the first hours of the Twentieth Century.

Of all the inventions of man, surely the one with the most colorful history is this absurd little entertainment gimmick . . . the 'peephole' show, which is all motion pictures were at their inception: an infinitely more elaborate keyhole than anyone had ever bent a knee to put an eye to before. There is a story about the scientist who left a monkey alone in a room and, as soon as he was outside the closed door, knelt down and peeked through the keyhole to see what the monkey was doing. All he could see was an eye.... I think Ezra Goodman (or perhaps Terry Ramsaye) somewhere tells this same story as a parallel for what, in effect, man has done with his invention of the cinema.

Even the handful of names mentioned so far, in connection with the beginnings of movies, are an almost unimaginably rich vein of motion-picture lore. This is a history of a gimmick, and an industry, which mushroomed so swiftly that it had already become a multi-million-dollar business before the men who were reporting the advent of the cinema had even begun to collect the threads of that growth. Criticism, any real analysis in depth of the runaway phenomenon, had to wait until long after most of the realizations of the facts.

Ultimately, the serious journalists, critics, and historians did come along; and their story, too, is something of a separate saga. Not the least interesting peculiarity about them is the unlikely and disparate walks of life from which some of them came. Most of us are familiar with names such as Sergei Eisenstein (FILM FORM AND FILM SENSE), V. I.

Pudovkin (FILM TECHNIQUE AND FILM ACTING), Terry Ramsaye (A MILLION AND ONE NIGHTS), Ezra Goodman (THE FIFTY YEAR DECLINE AND FALL OF HOLLYWOOD), and (among the more recent historians and critics) Arthur Knight (THE LIVELIEST ART), Pauline Koel (I LOST IT AT THE MOVIES), etc. These and others were the professionals, and their work merits the closest attention from serious students of the cinema.

But there also was an equally wonderful and unexpected array of amateurs. Often these included names celebrated greatly in fields having nothing to do with the motion-picture industry. Their only claim to attention from us as critics is that, with amazing frequency, they brought keen minds and special kinds of perception to their self-imposed task as amateur observers. These are the kinds of names which one might have expected W. R. Robinson to gather in this collection from what we must regard as, essentially, a supplementary body of parallel but nonetheless enormously exciting literature in the genre. Unhappily, that doesn't seem to have been the motivating factor for most of the book's selections.

The editor's aim, to collect in one volume a miscellany of such authors and articles, a humanistic dialogue as he calls it, is an interesting and a fairly modest one. Yet, despite the deliberate simplification of its scope (and the rarefied academic taste which has dictated the selections), the book has other shortcomings. While inevitably most of these derive from the hodgepodge of the range of ideas, not all of them have this justification.

Thirteen photographs appear together in a cluster at the center of the volume, five of the pages doubling up on these photographs so that only eight pages were required to present them. It goes without saying that a book this size (almost 400 pages) could have used many more stills. But more important, the individual articles, as well as the stills themselves, would have benefited from more specific

juxtapositions. While it is largely true that the subject matter of these various articles is unimpaired by such shortcomings in the book's design and arrangement, it seems something of a pity, nevertheless, that university publications always so predictably have the appearance of university publications!

Again, one of the appendixes groups all the contributor notes together. These background notes on the various authors are interesting and useful, but they would certainly have been more conveniently and more usefully placed at the head of each article.

Both of the indexes, the one for film titles and the one covering names, are only partially complete. Names and titles are frequently missing altogether. And even where a reference does appear in one or the other index, it cannot be relied upon to list all of the relevant pages.

More immediately damaging are certain of the editor's own personal views and assertions, appearing in the Introduction and later in his own essay. In an effort, for instance, to accredit the chiefly literary authors in this collection with a more evident license for their cinematic views and opinions, Robinson dwells at some length in the Introduction on the essentially-literary basis for films. So far, so good. But just incidentally he asserts: 'Even when words have not been overly prominent in the work [i.e., [motion picture](#)], a movie has had a verbal title and has begun with a literary property, usually a novel or a play, which is made into a script by a writer.'

This was probably more often true at the inception of films than it is today. Although even then it was certainly not 'usually' true. To mention only one genre of many which were sources of original screen material, what of the incredible number of one- and two-reel comedies by people such as Chaplin, Laurel & Hardy, Fatty Arbuckle, Mack Sennett, Ford Sterling, Mack Swain, Al St. John, Marie Dressler, Mabel Normand, and the legion of imitators of these

originals?

The proportion of material produced for the screen, in America or anywhere else, has probably always exceeded that of screenplays developed specifically from novels and stage plays. And this is perhaps more true now than it has ever been, with whole schools of films and styles of direction based so firmly in the director's personal contribution to the motion picture's story.

Japan's Akira Kurosawa works so closely with his scenarists that they are referred to as the Kurosawa team. Italy's Vittorio De Sica, who collaborated for decades with the same screenwriter, Cesare Zavattini, achieved a whole approach to direction in those earlier films based upon working deliberately with as little actual script as possible, favoring rather the kind of outline which permitted him to obtain the maximum naturalistic effects from his 'nonactors.' The *nouvelle vague* and *cinéma vérité* directors, such as Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut, Jean Rouch, and Chris Marker, the documentary style of Mario Monicelli, and the aforementioned Italian neorealism have almost violently divorced the cinema, in our own time, from any such *trompe-l'œil* literal reliance on this so-called literary tradition. And the militant underground cineastes of almost every country in the world with a cinema of its own are rapidly deepening the rifts in that break with the heritage of another medium.

Mr. Robinson couldn't be more assertively at sea!

Again, in the teeth of the universally acknowledged effect which television—in a sense, the *enfant trouvé*—has had on its parent, the motion picture, he declares: 'Clearly, in terms of sheer quantity, visual narrative is the greatest aesthetic and educational force abroad in the world today, and the movies—the largest in scale, the most graphically vivid, and the most widely diffused of the visual narrative media—qualify unchallenged as the art of our time.'

In his own essay, a critique on motion-picture criticism entitled *The Movies, Too, Will Make You Free*, the editor sometimes comes a cropper in an oddly incidental fashion. He makes an entirely valid point, for instance, about the unconscious assumption many of us share that only the enduring is artistically commendable while all else is meretricious. He says: 'The principle [is] the more transitory the less valuable . . .' When we examine this habit of equating creative excellence with durability, we perceive the absurdity of it and we are easily persuaded to agree with Mr. Robinson's viewpoint. Unfortunately, he adds: 'They [the movies] come and go at the theatres with great frequency and in great haste, never to return, and they are not possessable like books or paintings or records.' It's not easy, in the same breath as it were, to be so completely wrong in so many different ways.

To begin with, the number of films, all the way from *KING KONG* and *GONE WITH THE WIND* to *CHUSHINGURA* and *THE CHILDREN OF PARADISE*, which are brought back decade after decade for reruns, are legion. So much for ' . . . never to return.' Furthermore, film engagements continuing for weeks and months, and sometimes for years, are almost too commonplace to mention. And, going back, Walt Disney's *FANTASIA*, which was released over a quarter of a century ago, had an initial New York run of a year or two (this is also another of the myriad perennials which keep reappearing at the nation's box offices). In our own time, Claude Lelouch's *A MAN AND A WOMAN* had a first-run engagement in Hollywood which was going into its third year when it finally left the Regent Theatre.

And there is an even more unfortunate error in Mr. Robinson's 'evidence.' Someone has said that history is a difficult taskmaster. That's spectacularly the case with the history of the future! It's really painfully necessary to guard against any hasty estimates of the future, such as: ' . . . and

they [movies] are not possessable like books or paintings or records.’ Very shortly, possibly even before the appearance of this article, an amazing little cartridge is going to appear on the market to achieve just that: to make it possible, in fact, to collect our favorite movies precisely as we do books and recordings and prints of our favorite paintings. A television attachment will enable film buffs to review the movies they like as many times as they wish in the privacy of their own homes.

It is especially unfortunate that Mr. Robinson was at the business of taking the critic himself to task when he stepped out on this particular limb!

Elsewhere in his article, he suggests: ‘The movies . . . need no longer be an illusion of the “real” but are at liberty to be artifice and even to call attention to their fictional character, as Tony Richardson does in *TOM JONES* and as Richard Lester does in *A HARD DAY’S NIGHT*. . . .’

He is referring specifically here to the kind of sequence gag where a character turns away from the others in the scene, looks out at the audience and addresses them out of context and definitely out of character. This is tantamount to telling the audience: ‘We don’t believe in what we’re doing here, so why should you?’ And this invariably has the effect of kicking to pieces any identification the audience may have made with the characters, as well as any belief in the plot situation. David Niven does this in the opening sequence of Fielder Cook’s *PRUDENCE AND THE PILL* (1968), and an offensive little brat does it repeatedly in Roy Rowland’s desperately cute *THE 5,000 FINGERS OF DR. T* (1952). It’s a cheap bid for a fast laugh; and, in my view, nothing justifies either the faithlessness of this kind of tricky artistry or the damage done to the autonomous nature and structure of a screenplay.

Of course the editor’s personal views are far from the most controversial ones exposed in this collection of

sometimes intensely individualistic perspectives. The variety and plethora of ideas in just the few really good essays in the range of the book's 'amateur' reportage defy detailed analysis in anything less than at least another volume. Robinson has divided the twenty articles (including his own) under three section headings: 1 — The Art And Its Forms; 2 — The Artist And His Work; 3 — The Personal Encounter.

The first section supposedly contains only articles dealing with the different genres of cinema, such as the westerns, skin flicks, horror films. . . . Actually, only three of the seven pieces here do this in a pure way. Another of the articles approximates this approach, concerning itself with films adapted from classics. But the remaining three are so far from being moved by this leitmotif that their inclusion in the section is entirely confusing. The editor's own article appears here as mysteriously as any; but more about this portion of the book presently.

The second section purportedly includes essays which each deal with a specific directorial talent (i.e., Hitchcock, Griffith, Bergman, Antonioni, Fellini, and Visconti). Five of the six articles in this part of the book do conform to this obligation. But, again, the remaining article is a ringer! Not that it lacks interest, for all its departure from this kind of pseudo-organizational contract. In it, Nathan A. Scott, Jr. takes juicy-range-potshots at Marshall McLuhan (who is always fair game); he genuflects to *le cinéma* (and *theatre*) de l'actuelle (or *le roman objectif*) of Alain Robbe-Grillet, Samuel Beckett, Nathalie Sarraute, Jean Cayrol, Claude Simon, Michel Butor, and Alain Resnais; and he even makes a (friendly) pass at *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*'s root assumption (which Leslie Fiedler takes a more critical shot at in the third section) of the motion picture director as *un auteur*. More about this section, also, later.

The book's final division is the only nearly autonomous one, with a half-dozen articles all in the style of

reminiscences. But even so, one of the pieces is something of a slight departure: whereas the other five are immediately-personal memoirs, the one by Joseph Blotner is a biographical (rather than autobiographical) vignette about Faulkner's Hollywood period. This is an excellent sketch, and still at least literally within the purview of the essays in this group. But, four of the baker's dozen of articles in the other sections would have appeared more advantageously in a fourth (and miscellaneous) division at the end of the volume.

Well, now (pow-pow-wow, wow) for that first group of 'form' articles!

Those most accurately classified are the pieces by Larry McMurtry (author of HUD and commenting — oddly, unfavorably — from a partially-inside perspective on the issue of realism in the western); Fred Chappell (in what is not so much an essay as mere notes for a piece on the skin flicks); and R. H. W. Dillard (juxtaposing terms like poetic and human with the root elements of horror and danger in the horror film).

Martin C. Bettestin's piece on adapting a classic for films is also not too far removed from the subject of forms. He concerns himself expressly with John Osborne's and Tony Richardson's refurbishing of TOM JONES. And Bettestin, the author of THE MORAL BASIS OF FIELDING'S ART, is perhaps uniquely qualified to discuss Henry Fielding's Augustan fiction in its original form or in whatever character anyone else has reconstructed it.

In the remaining three essays, the subject matter of this section is most completely — and interestingly — abandoned.

Easily the most important of these, if not in the entire collection, is Alan S. Downer's The Monitor Image. The term is definitely television jargon, but is employed here as a remarkably incisive symbol for assaying the most fundamental aspect of any cineaste's work. In its virgin use, the term refers to the particular action on which all the

cameras of a television show are at any one point focused, from howsoever many different angles. In a control booth, banks of receivers pick up all these aspects or angles of the one central image, one screen for each camera. The technicians in this booth determine, from moment to moment, which aspect of this monitor image (the specific action being 'monitored' by all the cameras following it) is to appear on the set in Mr. and Mrs. America's home, selecting from the most advantageous angles offered by their multi-reception, and constantly changing the particular one they are broadcasting.

Downer has taken this term, the monitor image, as a symbol of the motion-picture director's specific awareness for — and concentration upon — his film's central theme. He has selected primarily a single director, John Huston, and three of his films to illustrate both successfully- and unsuccessfully-monitored thematic statements. *THE MALTESE FALCON* (1941) and *THE TREASURE OF SIERRA MADRE* (1947) are examined as two instances of an extremely pure and direct thematic purpose. And the same director's *THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE* (1951) is analysed as a failure in this regard. The central idea of Richard E. Peck's essay, *Films, Television, and Tennis*, is that television and cinema are two very different media—that where producers of either fall into the trap of emulating the successes and the style and means of the other, the results must inevitably achieve only mis-alliances because the nature as well as the limitations of each differ too greatly from the other. This is not primarily an article about cinema, but one much more concerned with television. Its inclusion, in any section of the book, is somewhat arbitrary, for all the excellence of Peck's viewpoint. He makes a subsidiary argument that, in his estimation, television has had, if anything, more influence on current cinema than the latter has had on television:

Within the past half-dozen years cinema has adopted the teaser, a device essential to the peculiarities of television but worse than useless in the theatre. It's not uncommon to find eight to ten minutes of plot preceding the credits on a wide screen, certainly to the detriment of the film's structural integrity. Nothing can account for such a mannerism except its accepted presence on the TV tube and the possibility of a television-trained director's having learned his lessons too well. In a theatre the audience is already 'hooked,' has paid, and expects to be entertained. No one would consider leaving during the initial credits; no one can switch channels. A teaser under these circumstances satisfies expectations aroused in the audience not by the nature or traditions of cinema but by hours and hours of that other medium. Cinema, once blamed for too slavishly following a three-act structure inherited from the legitimate stage, deserves no less criticism for its currently frequent and illogical turn to the teaser-four-act structure of television.

Peck especially inveighs against the misplaced effect that the stage approach to drama has had on both motion pictures and teleplays. He accounts for this by citing the fact that the methods of the stage, when adapted to either screen or television, make possible much lower production budgets than a fuller exploitation of the inherent potential in these more variable media would allow. In permitting the stage now also to impress its character on the means and style of television, Peck feels that the latter medium is actually adopting a choice that the cinema made originally, and one as out of place in television as it has proved to be in motion pictures. 'Don't give us filmed stage plays,' he reminds us the critics formerly reproached movie makers. Now motion pictures are going to give their audiences filmed TV. And television, in its belated turn, is going to supply viewers with filmed stage plays . . . and commercials:

. . . the public's insatiable demand for more and more televised drama forced TV producers back to the pattern of a small cast and few sets. Economics demands it; the audience accepts it, perhaps even considering it a new convention. . . . There's no denying it, TV is formulaic; it has its own logic or rhetoric. Each shows opens with a two- to five-minute 'teaser,' that capsule of drama which flashes on the screen to prevent our switching to Ed Sullivan or Lawrence Welk. In this brief span of time, the writer must (1) Get our attention with a 'hook' of unexplained action, striking character conflict, or a question important enough to make us eagerly await the answer; and (2) introduce the star or guest star for this particular episode. If he knows his business, he should also (1) introduce two or three other principal players, (2) distinguish the setting and historical period, (3) hint faintly at a secondary problem in the story to follow, and (4) conceal behind bright, forceful dialogue the fact that he is doing all this. If he is really good . . . he will also make us laugh at, cry with, or hate a character on the screen. All this is in the teaser, before the credits roll past and give us permission for a quick trip to the pantry. . . .

But the writer's problem has only begun. Ahead of him lies the creation of a four-act play whose acts average twelve to thirteen minutes. More, each act should ideally end as strongly as the teaser does, particularly the second, which coincides with the half-hour stroke of the clock and a viewer's recurrent impulse to catch at least the jugglers and the rock-and-roll band on the second half of Sullivan's spectacular. Once the viewer has switched channels he's gone to stay. He must be kept hooked, this time principally through effective dialogue. Each line of dialogue gets tested: Does it: (1) Define character? (2) Advance the plot? (3) Evoke emotional reaction from the audience? If it does not, out it comes. In the best scripts each line will achieve at least two of these ends. . . .

Given all these restrictions — time limits, formulaic act structure, economic limitations (about \$140,000 for a single episode as compared with about \$3,000,000 for a feature film) — television is forced into a mold. The writer exercises his craft as well as he can. . . .

Pointing out that the commercial interruptions and station breaks spoil tempo and mood of feature films on TV, Peck maintains that the problem isn't solved by feature-length film scripts specially written for commercial television. He cites *FAME IS THE NAME OF THE GAME* as a successful TV movie which will fail as theatre cinema — what with crises designed to prepare the audience for nonexistent commercials. Two distinct theatrical forms are confusingly equated, he says, adding: 'If cinema buffs complain that television turns leftover movies into Hollywood hash by mixing liberal quantities of commercials and interruptions, how will they justify Hollywood's creating the same hash, to order? Which is now the dominant medium, cinema or television? More of these half-caste creations are promised.'

The unique potential of cinema, Peck feels, lies in its special latitude for spectacle. He cites as evidence for this view the ever-expanding budgets of the movie spectacles that pumped life blood back into a failing box office in the Fifties, when the mass production of cheap television receivers initiated a serious competition to keep audiences home in front of their own screens.

This is, however, a multi-faceted article, embracing a number of subsidiary ideas, such as pointed criticism of deliberate and opportunistic 'camps':

Camp, that grand phenomenon which brought back to theatre screens Batman in all his serialized splendor, also eased the caped crusader and Robin into millions of homes in living, garish color. Prancing grotesquely in his snug BVD's, Batman camps through escapades designed to please the kiddies while letting all us sophisticates in on the gag to

enjoy the tasteless, consciously unconscious poverty of the scripts which guide him. 'Camp' becomes a national catchword; TV responds. Even Batman's slump in the ratings may well define the fad's finish better than anything Susan Sontag might say.

The author's major statement is that each medium should recognize and retain its own character, and confine its reaches to the kind of thing it does best: 'To consider each as *sui generis* is to recognize the merits, and shortcomings, of each. Even more, it is to admit that by confusing them one loses the virtues of both and is left with rubbish.'

W. R. Robinson's own article, *The Movies, Too, Will Make You Free*, is equally misplaced in the first section. It is concerned with movies chiefly as an instrument of morality. They invite us, he says, to participate in a moral dialogue to discover our own values. Robinson says:

Religious dogma focuses upon the conceptual truths of the spirit and science upon those of nature, art, a conjunction of spirit and nature, takes moral truth as its province. In effect, it discovers or creates values; by incarnating the Good, a spiritual entity, in a concrete form, art frees it to be.

... everyone instinctively recognizes that a movie — all art, in fact — invites him to exercise his taste in making a value judgment. He senses that a value assertion has been made and that a reply is demanded of him. And, except for the most diffident, everybody also senses that he is qualified to reply, for, despite the scholar's defense of his hard-earned learning, no special knowledge is required and no greater moral authority exists than the individual's own conscience — which must be defended at all costs, since his identity is inseparable from it.

True or false, incidentally, this is a proposition which, it seems to me, raises a fundamental question about the relative merits of formal criticism which the individual critic

is continually obliged to deal with each time he seeks to impose a personal set of criteria on a reader. In other words, the scholarly and reflective critic automatically assumes that, because of his background and his more disciplined habits of thought, his judgment is superior to that of others. Often it is. But—and this is my own point—that always remains to be demonstrated. And the only way to do that is through the (hopefully) more objective meta-criteria the critic selects and advances in defense of the lexicon of his own personal criteria he has established.

Later on in his essay, Robinson declares:

Because the movies play such a crucial role [he means, in this continual delineation and refurbishing of the moral spectrum] in our education, they must be free to follow moral truth wherever it may lead. This means they have to be as free from censorship as political thought and the other intellectual disciplines are. Censorship, long a bugaboo for the movies, defends the moral status quo, prohibiting search and discovery where they are most needed. Freedom of taste clearly is as important as freedom of speech. For the quality of our private and public lives depends upon their being nourished by living values, and only constant reassessment and refinement of the values we live by, through aesthetic meditation, can assure that. The complexity, nuances, and consequences of a value must be aired if the naive and pretentious ones are to be unmasked, the invidious exposed, and the confused clarified.

The fact that just a small part of the moral spectrum can be relevant to any individual's purpose is no argument against extensive reading, for to be able to choose what our own temperaments, equally committed to a specific value, need to clarify and strengthen their impulsions, we have to weigh the pros and cons of the whole moral truth.

We study the value spectrum so that we may become more precise about our specific good, with tolerance, it is

hoped, as a side effect.

And movies, the author feels, are as much a body of work on man's moral dilemma and choices as is his literature or any other art form:

Once the movies are acknowledged to be art and what they unveil is taken seriously, we have to face the fact, extensively argued by Existentialists, that the word has been superseded by sensation. The movies define better than any other art what we feel today to be the relation between the intellect and the senses. Among other things they make it quite clear, to the verbalist's distress, that the word is an adjunct of the image. In their version of the play between the eye's truth and the mind's, the ancient theme of appearance versus reality is reversed. In contrast to, say Elizabethan poetry, in which images decorate a rational framework, in the movies reason rides on the tiger back of images in motion.

Of the effect of a complex technology on essentially creative purposes, as in the cinema, Robinson asserts that 'the camera used with skill is a projection of an individual's sensibility, not a mechanical eye; . . .' pointing out that this always has been understood, and referring to foreign films (with quite different visual traditions from ours) as recurrent reminders of this. Not bound to physical reality 'by nature or moral precept,' movies, he says, are a means for the human spirit to 'escape material limitations once thought to be narrowly restrictive.'

Unfortunately, Robinson's thesis flounders in later paragraphs, in a welter of metaphysical conjecture, none of which is at all necessarily related to the subject:

...it [the camera again] has freed itself, too, at least from all debilitating forms of representation. This child of empiricism, repudiating its parent, has liberated form from the physical world....

Actually physics is mainly responsible for destroying the idea of substance, but the movies have done more to set the imagination free to dream upon human moral possibilities within a substanceless universe. By conclusively demonstrating that an image does not necessarily signify substance, they have destroyed the last vestige of our materialistic mental habits. Unburdening us of the hunger for an anxiety about meaning, the free movie teaches us that to be is enough....

Once regarded as a puerile, cowardly escape from life because they begot and simulated dreaming, the movies are now recognizable as an extension of the supreme power inherent in a universe of energy, chance, evolution, explosiveness, and creativity.... the movies' kind of dreaming gives concrete probability and direction to the oncoming drive of energy... The new freedom they reflect and extend is freedom within the world, contingent and not absolute, a heightened vision of existence through concrete form beyond abstraction. In a world of light and a light world — unanalyzable, uninterrupted, without substance or essence, meaning or direction — being and nonbeing magically breed existence.

In support of his major thesis (just as art in general takes moral truth for its province, the cinema is a uniquely and continually vital medium for its exploration), Robinson especially rejects the notion that the medium is essentially escapist, as well as the idea that the transitory nature of films is in the least debilitating. Well, this is a lot to take for granted. I myself, as cinema critic, am far from ready to deny that it is a viable art form, as legitimate, for instance, as the stage. Nor do I think the cinema's great need of technology is as enervating for the medium as in television.

Truthfully, however, most films made anywhere, in any cinema capital in the world, are commercial hackery. And, for that matter, most art films, even where we can assume

the highest integrity, fail to some extent of their purposes. Hell, it's no simple matter even to make a bad film. And there are immense obstacles in the way of achieving anything worthwhile or durable in such a complex medium: whole crafts to assemble and fit together; all sorts of conflicting personalities to deal with and to induce to work together in a semblance of harmony. That the traditional temperament of the artist fares least well in Hollywood is no mystery. Here, the image of genial trusting agreement, howsoever false and at whatsoever cost, is valued above all else, including talent. It has been said, with more than a little justice, that this whorish mecca is considerably more gifted at developing ass-lickers than it is at turning out actors or technicians.

Even more to the point, nobody has ever pretended that there is any general standard for selecting audiences. And taste is less simple a matter than bigotry, prejudice, and other ready-made stupidities. If the truth were accessible, probably a dismaying percentage of the people who comprise most of the reliable movie-theatre attendance have motives which will not bear too explicit scrutiny. Surely, for many of them, the cinema is a means to nothing more than mere escapism?

Be that as it may, Robinson's is one of the four most thought-provoking articles in the collection. And two of the others of these, in the first section, by Alan Downer and Richard Peck, are as inappropriately squeezed into it as is Robinson's essay.

Most of the articles in the second portion of the book deal, as has been mentioned earlier, with the work and style of some particular director. That's probably the most familiar subject of the professional critics; and one or two of those included here are very solid analyses. All the same, it's a pity the volume wastes so much space on material so common elsewhere, while the expressed aims go abegging.

The final article in this second section, Nathan A. Scott, Jr.'s *The New Mystique of L'Actuelle: A View of Cinema in Its Relation to Our Period-Style*, is the important exception. Marshall McLuhan is the target of the first third of his article. Before he is through with McLuhan, Scott says at one juncture: 'Mr. McLuhan's writing, like the electronic images of which he is so fond, gyrates off in so many directions at once and he so dislikes making a clean, direct statement about anything at all that it is extremely difficult to fashion a detailed synopsis of his basic argument.' McLuhan's precarious inclusion in this essay has, however, served the purpose of providing Scott with a specific target for the guns he'd like to turn on what he feels is the elevation of the impersonal in our contemporary art forms, over the more recognizably-human function of the creative purpose in the past: to track the human condition and dilemma with conspicuously-humanistic methods:

. . . the sensation of displeasure that we are given by
the new forms of art is very probably a consequence
of the extent to which they have ascetically forsworn
the dimension of 'depth.' And it is no doubt this
artfully deliberate superficiality of the muse — under

the charm perhaps of the electronic image—that puts us off... Or again: ...what is most basically frustrating in the new art of the present time is its radical depthlessness ... ours today is an art that is determined not to create forms symbolic of our feeling. And a little later on: ...instead of articulating the morphology of man's affective life, instead of analogically expressing the tensions and resolutions that make up the patterns of human sentience, a musical composition will simply present sounds—not sounds going anywhere or moving through a rhythmically ordered sequence to any sort of climax and thus satisfying expectations aroused by the musical experience, not sounds related to each other by any sort of human logic, but simply

sounds, in the sheer there-ness of their acousticality. ...the spiritual depthlessness that is so noticeably characteristic of the style being brought into existence by the new music (i.e., John Cage, Christian Wolff, Morton Feldman and Earle Brown) is by no means an isolated phenomenon in contemporary artistic life... Scott goes on to explore, briefly, examples of the new architecture (Mies van der Rohe's Chicago apartment skyscrapers: 'skeletons of steel and glass') and the new painting (Franz Kline's canvases: 'large white fields bearing broad strokes of black'), concluding: '...sound, glass and steel, primed canvas and black paint—nothing more, only the sheer there-ness of the raw materials, in their unhumanized facticity.' He progresses finally to the focal point of the essay and its real protagonist, Alain Robbe-Grillet, who: ...develops this mystique of l'actuelle more radically than anyone else [Scott has also mentioned, in connection with this new genesis, Beckett, Nathalie Sarraute, Jean Cayrol, Claude Simon, and Michel Butor], producing a fiction from which the human presence has been most rigorously expunged, in which the single subject matter is formed by the novelist's descriptions of the angles and planes and surfaces of the world—its streets and houses and skies and various other appurtenances: in this way he hopes to create le roman objectif. Through Robbe-Grillet's slender and evanescent French genius, Scott moves at last to the subject at hand: cinema — about which, despite the merely-relative fecundity of his hero, he makes a very creditable point: ...the most interesting films of the last ten or fifteen years [he could well have said, of the entire history of this medium] are very deeply stamped by the new [and just as much by the old] film-maker's intention to be an auteur. And by auteur the idealogues of Les 512 Cahiers du Cinema mean le directeur par excellence; they mean the director who is so thoroughly the impresario of the entire creative process issuing in the completed film that he is

indeed its primary cause and ‘author,’ having chosen his subject and superintended the preparation of his script, selected his cast and cameramen and controlled all the editing, and in fact having exercised a decisive hand in relation to every phase of the total sequence of actions whereby a film is made. The auteur is the master of the entire process of film creation, who uses his work as a vehicle to express a personal vision of the world.

Unhappily, Scott’s selection of autocratic cineastes is far from a list of exemplars of this approach to direction: he claims ‘ . . . this is indeed the role that is played today by a Truffaut [in my opinion, one of the poorest directors in Europe], an Antonioni, a Resnais [a pedestrian]. . . .’ But his list is not finished without a touch of the past: ‘ . . . as in an earlier time,’ he adds parenthetically, ‘by a Welles [yes] or a Cocteau [good Lord!].’

It is not this theorist’s basic ideas but rather his perceptive apparatus which is malfunctioning. The current French cinema is notoriously impoverished in respect to its directors. And even in their industry, ‘auteurs’ such as Truffaut and Resnais are bottom-of-the-barrel talents, ‘as in an earlier time . . . a Cocteau!’

To do this author justice, he has not been led down the primrose path by these practitioners, in music, architecture, stage, literature, painting, or cinema, of l’actuelle: The mere looking at a thing is of no use whatsoever; to gaze deeply at any reality is already to be by way of beginning to perform an act of theorizing. . . .’

Referring to Goethe’s THEORY OF COLORS, Scott suggests: ‘ . . . the great lesson that much of contemporary art needs to be learning anew [is] that strict attention to what the poet Richard Wilbur calls the “things of this world” needs finally to lead to a kind of “theorizing,” a theorizing, as Goethe says, which will be immensely “ironic” but which will, nevertheless, entail for the artist a kind of double reversal —

away from “the idea” to the things themselves [i.e., contemporary art] but at last back to “the idea.” This is the way that a Robbe-Grillet needs to take, that a John Cage needs to take, that surely must begin to be taken by the new painters if they are to avoid that absolute impasse towards which they often seem today to be heading.’

Many of us find a lot of something missing in the various media of contemporary art. And I find myself in at least partial agreement with Scott’s point of view. In the first place, by nature, I have an instinctive bias in favor of a more humanistic art. I don’t like John Cage’s music, for instance. I simply can’t help that. And (for completely different reasons) I don’t like the humorless film-journalese of inferior directors like Resnais and Truffaut. These two don’t appear to me to be worth defending, however. But, and for all our differences of taste, I would have to say something for Cage—at least, that I don’t believe Mr. Scott’s thesis has disposed of him!

For one thing, it is too oblique. Nothing in the essayist’s viewpoint has illustrated any reason—in my view—why the composer should agree with Scott’s use of Goethe and Wilbur (and incidentally, Lionel Trilling). Cage’s development in contemporary music (as that of Wolff or Feldman or Brown) is a reversal of the classic and romantic dictates. And a painful journey it probably was. Wherein precisely is he obliged now to court the experience of a double reversal?

I mean, I’d ask it of him in a purely personal way, because I dearly love some of the romantics—at least, Beethoven and Mozart; and even more, baroque music.... Scott quotes Goethe’s assertion (from Erich Heller’s *THE DISINHERITED MIND*): ‘... the mere looking at a thing is of no use whatsoever. Looking at a thing gradually merges into contemplation, contemplation into thinking, thinking is establishing connections, and thus it is possible to say that every attentive glance which we cast on the world is ... an act of theorizing.’ But I can’t for the life of me perceive how this

assertion is supposed to obligate Cage to reconsider polyphonic musical structure, or Charles Olson to abandon his theory of breath measure in favor of the more traditional metrical patterns in poetry, or Kline to break up his neutral canvases with color and representational figures and forms. I fear that, for all Mr. Scott's evidence, the new will journey yet farther out before it hears any siren voice recalling it to the shores of a more familiar artistic concern for the chiefly human experience. The new artists, despite everything, have their own rationale, too, about that experience and about art's obligations and possibilities.

The third and final section of the book is barely worth comment. Richard Wilbur's vignette, at the beginning, *A Poet and the Movies*, is just a little innocent bullshit to the effect that movies even inspire you to write poetry.... sometimes.... if you happen to be a poet anyway. In support of this enlightened conviction, he quotes in entirety one of the worst poems he ever wrote: *The Undead* (movie vampires).

This bit of personal memoir sets the tone for most of the other pieces in the section. Infinitely more risible, at least, is R. V. Cassill's childhood reminiscence: *In the Central Blue*. This concerns the limited sexual gratification from masturbating over a photograph of Jean Harlow from *HELL'S ANGELS*, and the even more limited sexual release in an elaborate strategy to substitute a blonde thirteen-yearold titless two-timer for Miss Harlow. The editor's assistant, George Garrett, has a piece entitled *Don't Make Waves*, which serves no high function. The author-as-hero is rescued fleetingly by a literary agent from the mediocrity and obscurity of his teaching position in a college, to help with the television adaptation some producer is interested in doing of one of his stories. Leslie Fiedler's *What Shining Phantom: Writers and the Movies* is a piece of practiced cynicism about Hollywood detractors, aimed chiefly against Edmund Wilson and the liberal writers of the Thirties who

were being brought into studio lots almost by the gross during a period when Hollywood producers unaccountably became convinced, for a very short time, that literature was a salable commodity. Fiedler's grievance is directed against 'idealists' like Wilson who viewed what Hollywood had done to the craft of men like Fitzgerald and Faulkner with compassion. But the most disgusting essay in the half-dozen lightweight forays in this 'addendum' section is one by David Slavitt entitled Critics and Criticism. Slavitt used to review films literally by the dozen for NEWSWEEK. Listen (as John Ciardi would say) to his sound: I could never even bring myself to say, with a straight face, that I was a 'film critic,' but used to admit to being a 'flicker picker,' which had about the right ring to it—glib and brassy.... It was a weird life. I used to see six or eight movies a week in a good week. In a bad week it could go to fourteen. Once, I think, it was twenty. Fantastic! And not entirely unattractive—I liked it, actually. [Gee, he even liked it. That must really have put zing in his little reviews!] ...with movie reviews, too, I started racing with myself. I did a standard sixty-line movie review in about twenty minutes. [That's knocking them out, alright, alright!] I have been trying to make this as homely and vulgar as possible, because it ought to be. [I'm convinced.] There is not any such thing as film criticism, and that gaggle of reviewers, magazine and newspaper reviewers alike, were all faking it, one way or another. Or they were lucky enough to be such natural fakes that they could do it sincerely, take it seriously, have commitment. But what good is the sincerity of a natural-born faker? [It's a neat rationale, anyway.] The critic is laughably impotent, has no influence either with the film-makers or with the film audiences, ... and perhaps worst of all, has no position on which to stand, from which to formulate a general theory of what he is trying to do or wants to say, and no way of rationalizing his intellectual career. [Well, I should imagine this is a true picture ... of the critic of

twenty-minute, sixty-line reviews!] The best article in this dubious section is Joseph Blotner's Faulkner in Hollywood. And, except for the Fiedler piece, it is the one most out of place here. The legends surrounding Faulkner's various periods of employment (and unemployment) in Hollywood and his muchdiscussed friendship with Howard Hawks are treasured by men who were both friends and enemies of Faulkner. The handful of anecdotes Blotner has collected for his biographical memoir of the Nobel Prize winner are fulsome, funny, and surprisingly informative. Many are worth quoting, but most are too long. Here's one that is typical, anyway, and brief:

Faulkner and Hawks had interests in common outside the studio as well as inside. 'He's a broken-down aviator like me,' Faulkner once said. Also, they both enjoyed hunting. Taking one break from the routine, they drove into the Imperial Valley for some dove hunting. Besides Faulkner, Hawks had asked another friend who liked the outdoors, Clark Gable. As he drove, Hawks began to talk to Faulkner about books. Rather than freezing, as he usually did when most people advanced literary gambits, Faulkner began to talk freely. Gable was silent for a while but then manfully began to hold up his end of the conversation. 'Mr. Faulkner,' Hawks remembers his saying, 'what do you think somebody should read if he wants to read the best modern books? Who would you say are the best living writers?' Faulkner answered: 'Ernest Hemingway, Willa Cather, Thomas Mann, John Dos Passos, and William Faulkner.' There was a moment's silence. 'Oh,' Gable said, recovering, 'do you write?' 'Yes, Mr. Gable,' Faulkner replied. 'What do you do?'

On the whole, it's a disappointing collection. The second section is, as mentioned earlier, a strong one. The articles on Visconti (probably the best one), Fellini, and Antonioni are particularly interesting. But such director-articles are the most staple subject of the professional critics, and they

appear continually in new anthologies of these, as well as in the flood of single-critic collections and book-length singlesubject studies. A half-dozen more articles like the renegade ones in the first section and like Scott's piece would have filled out a really original kind of book on the cinema, the subject and style of which has not been so plently duplicated elsewhere. And finally, the bulk of that agglutinated sloppily-sentimental third section could have been left out altogether. Most of the meat and purpose of the book is in the first section, as I've already said — including three of the book's only truly original articles.

Unmistakably, even without reviewing the contributor notes at the rear, the worst thing about the collection probably is its academic flavor. But these notes are conclusive! Of the twenty contributors, seventeen are or have been university teachers, one is a psychiatrist and an M.D., and one is still on a Fulbright Fellowship. Three, in fact, have received Fulbright and Guggenheim Fellowships, one has received a Wallace Stegner Fellowship at Stanford, and one was a recipient of a Sewanee Review Fellowship in Poetry, the Rome prize of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and a Ford Foundation Grant in Drama. Only two are full-time writers, and both of these have previously taught in colleges. The editor made his selections for inclusions in the volume too often on the basis of academic background rather than on that of writing ability or of material so original and arrestingly-connected with cinema as really to rate inclusion.

Candidly, but six or eight of the articles, at most, are worthy to appear in a supposedly-original kind of reference—even in a collection by gifted amateurs on the cinema. The rest of the content is simply padding, perhaps to justify the book's eight-dollar tag.

A POET, & THE ALCHEMY OF LOVE

WHEN THE WORLD IS ILL with the plagues of war and hatred we need the poet who is the lover of the world. To be able to remain in love the poet seeks every day to find some object or person or country to love. It is his profession, to warm and illumine all he touches, and his words are the most powerful antidote to the deadly pollutions we are exposed to. Sandra Hochman (LOVE LETTERS FROM ASIA—\$3.95—Viking Press) is exceptionally gifted with the power to make us commune with every experience which can dazzle or accelerate our life beat.

I have made love to yellow lilies, Turned my face against their cool skin

And I love Earth violently, and vegetables, Stars, and all things that will not break.

And so the day begins with a celebration; In The Inheritance, she asks with all of us : When will the war be over? I wanted A sea-change, a place where things grew into Secrets of color A place I imagined of festivals, Rocks, brilliant Reptiles, trees And serious things — wind bells That chime — a place Where I could be useful.

When all else fails, when politics are rigged, and games of art and literature rigged too, the poet Sandra Hochman is invaluable, dwelling on eternal values, human loves and nature and other places beyond the devastated ones. In these poems, the capacity to see, to feel, to know, to understand, and to encompass is limitless. From a Love Song to a Jellyfish:

How amazed I was, when I was a child To see your life on the sand. To see you living in your jelly shape, Round and slippery and dangerous. You seem to have fallen Not from the rim of the sea, But from the galaxies. Stranger, you delighted me. Weird object of The stinging world.

The style is always pure, clear, stripped of nonessentials, luminous, transparent.

In *Conversation of Poets*, she contemplates a place in China where 'poets are our kings.' A fresco depicts poets walking and conversing fraternally.

I envy their affection, Brilliant as colors, Their light-headed kindness To each other. They took Long walks and held each Other, fingers clasped in open gardens.

Her vision is farsighted. It encompasses exotic places, but emotions bring them near, and she has the feminine need to fuse them with the familiar, the feminine need to interrelate. In *Secrets*, she writes:

With my fingers I design blue mosques and temples On the linen, trace them On the pillows While my child Puffs like a pillow in my flesh And changes to a moonstone Or a pearl. Tonight My marrow flowers into coral.

In *Letter to Last Year*, she offers the key to her poems:

I have discovered that people lose shape, Drop limbs and flesh and arteries Until they are no longer blood but more than that, They become pure feeling.

This is the alchemy her poems achieve. She has the gift of intimate contact with people and places. Perhaps because of this she has written the most moving of all poems to the experience of bearing a child.

The flowering achieved by her touch is described: 'I wake with my senses wide open.'

The book ends with *Love Song to the Unborn*, which is symbolic of all creation:

*I shall meet you
The instant of your birth
When you emerge from the red leaves
Dripping from the sea shells in my skin.*

... *Poems of Being and Becoming*, in which the personal is the warm and fecundating abode of the universal. Anais Nin

IN UNKNOWN LANDS

L. Van Brunt,

L. VAN BRUNT, LIKE THE barren gullied prairies he left after his teen years, seems to be almost dying; but he and his poetry are very much alive underneath to the open and careful observer. Indeed, he has put together in his first book of poetry the nomadic life he has lived (UNCERTAINTIES — \$4.50 & \$2.25 — The Smith/Horizon Press).

Much poetry, much of it good, is readily available today, but very little of it has any bloody cord of meaningful philosophy as strong as Van Brunt's. And had he not traveled as widely as he did throughout the United States and Europe, I doubt that he could have gathered together such a range of strange scenes and manic moods; remaining in Oklahoma probably would have left him vastly spread out and disoriented. And this is how Van Brunt appeals, how he gathers his reader into involvement with him; he is restless and distant as dry flatlands, yet at the same time always very quick and compact: metropolitan — which is something he could only have assimilated in New York, practicing in a publishing and literary environment.

Perhaps the dichotomy of these two lives is what leaves the lasting impressions in his lines; there are vibrations of dissonance which he tunes closely, creating certain unique harmonies — as any frustrated man or woman needs to sound in this neurotic life today. And it is this attribute of Van Brunt's writing which must be regarded as a change in today's voice: a very new guard of literary figures coming out loud. The end of a long transitional period has arrived with the fading of the Beats and their mutants: Hippies and Yippies. Even more astounding, from this viewpoint, is how Van Brunt differs from the social rebel, the

complainer-of-culture, and sufferer-of-self; yet, how he brings together his own self-dissatisfactions with the times and the forces that can overcome these oppositions. Van Brunt is definitely a typical prejudiced poet; he is in favor of himself, but therein he shows the way to the honest and lasting causes of his feelings, behavior, actions. Unusually — although, for a poet (especially these days), he has no simple melodies, no theme song, no grinding-axe, no self to exploit. After reading the book through, one is compelled to turn back to it again and again.

Today, we are conditioned to seeking out various values, truisms, morals; but there is none found in *UNCERTAINTIES*. We feel left out, alone, ‘uncertain’ of what has just happened to us in the reading, the reflection of our chaotic and contradictory day-to-day life. This book does just that; it focuses our attention on the core of things, the wellspring of self-energy. And this is where Van Brunt found his answers, obviously; and intrusively he speaks directly to his reader, pointing out that this is where everyman will find his answers. He must look into himself: contemplate The Castle of his present life, the sensory World of his past life, the Call It Dream life of the future, the very uncertainty of his existence, The Silence of death — all of which must breed hope and love, the necessary nourishments for self-preservation and fulfillment.

Yet, it is too easy to look deep into *UNCERTAINTIES*. Perhaps Van Brunt, without knowing his own effects, carries the reader too far into the quagmires of the helpless unfamiliar unconscious mind. And while he accomplishes much in doing so, there may be some unnecessary poems included in the book. Impact could have been greater with a slimmer volume of fewer poems more in keeping with the poet’s concise and incisive economy of words and lines. The poems also might have been put together in a more enlightening sequence, such as one of time-related significance to

heighten the power of the book as a whole.

Van Brunt exhibits a technical craftsmanship combined with freedom of internal controls seldom recently encountered. Although his lines maintain consistency in length and metre, singing well, there is little regular rhythm and rhyme. There is much internal rhyme, which comes quite naturally and effectively, developing impressive prevailing sound throughout each poem. And although the poems do run very smoothly, Van Brunt's general architecture is rambling and does not necessarily add to the meanings of his lines, stanzas, or whole poems. Meanwhile, many rhythms of certain individual lines and stanzas evidence unusual creative originality; many lines and phrases burst out of a poem, making poems within a poem.

The Smith has been finding some very fine material and has begun putting out an impressive array of new-new literature, as well as a big black colorful magazine where Van Brunt first appeared. The paperback edition of *UNCERTAINTIES* was No. 9 of the magazine. Theodore Sloane 520

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THE LOVERS

by Kenneth Bernard

... in lust they burn ...

PARADISE LOST, Book IX

They, looking back, all the eastern side beheld

Of Paradise, so late their happy seat ...

PARADISE LOST, Book XII

**CHARACTERS: ADAM, EVIE. BOTH
ARE IN THEIR MID-TWENTIES.
NEITHER IS VERY ATTRACTIVE, BUT
THIS IS IN PART THE RESULT OF
DRESS AND ATTITUDE RATHER THAN
POOR FEATURES.**

SCENE: A darkened room. A disembodied voice recites the two quotations on this play's title page. A rusty alarm clock rings. ADAM moans. He wakes up slowly, sits on his bed, rubbing himself, then stands and pulls a string attached to a light. He blinks in surprise, then smiles awkwardly and rubs himself again, as if to make sure he is all there. He looks around the room in wonder. It is a nondescript clutter of odds and ends. On all the available wall space are blown-up pin-up pictures, some nude, some pornographic, often selling a product, also, with the lettering blown up. To one side is a table on which are a box, a pot of paste, magazines, a bowl of shriveled fruit, and several racks from which hang various pieces of hair, fur, string, and strips of colored paper, mostly in crescent and moon shapes. To one side of the table is a life-size female store dummy. It is nude, wigless, and dead. On the other side of the table there is a small portable

record machine. In the rear are a pile of junk, a bed, and a refrigerator. ADAM shuffles stiffly to the window, yawning, pulls up the shade, which breaks, and opens the window, which faces a faded brick wall. Dirt blows in. He coughs.

ADAM: (Shutting the window and brushing himself) God! (He shuffles, less stiffly now, to the table and eats a rotten banana slowly. For a minute he does nothing, in fact seems dazed. Then he looks out at the audience and giggles, just because he is there. He fingers several magazines, then selects *Life* and flicks its pages with determination, stopping at intervals to rip out pages from which he cuts out more shapes like those on the racks. He hums with pleasant absorption as he does this. Finally he cuts out a vermilion crescent that especially pleases him, and gives several grunts of approval. He stands up and kisses his fingers to the air.) MAGNIFIQUE! (He walks around the room, holding it aloft) Ummph! MAGNIFIQUE! MAGNIFIQUE! (He rushes to the phonograph and puts on several records. The first is a strong rhythmic drum piece, to which he dances ecstatically, still holding aloft his piece of paper. He changes to the next record before the first has finished. It is a Strauss waltz. With grace and excitement, more or less rhythmically, he rushes back to the dummy and the table. Using the pot of paste, he places his bit of paper between her legs, steps back, looks at her, takes the paper off and trims it, then puts it back. He adds, with similar care, a wig, pubic hair or fur, and nipple pasties in the shape of stars. Then he crayons in the eyes and mouth. Toward the end of this, his excitement mounts and he begins to laugh a little idiotically. Finally, he stands back,

slightly bent, with clenched hands, grinning, grunting, and laughing at his work. An idea strikes him. He rips off the nipple pasties,

rummages through the box on the table and comes up with two

baby-bottle nipples. These he jabs into the jar of paste and sticks

on the dummy's breasts, where they seem somewhat spattered

with milk. The result surpasses his wildest dreams. He leaps

through the air to the phonograph and changes the music to a

Latin number, to which he does a sensual, but essentially awkward

and funny, dance before the dummy. While he is doing this, EVIE comes to the door and standing looking, half-fascinated,

half-repelled. At the climactic moments of his dance, just after

he has grasped and pulled off one of the nipples with his teeth,

she walks across the room and turns off the music. His dance

disintegrates in confusion. He turns around, the nipple still in his

mouth, the pasty end showing. He is outraged, and odd sounds

gurgles in his throat.) Why the hell don't you knock? . . . Can't

a guy have privacy any more?

EVIE: I live here, you degenerate.

ADAM: (Angry and exasperated) A guy's got to relax, Evie!

EVIE: (With controlled anger, louder each time) And I want a baby.

I want a baby! I WANT A BABY!

ADAM: (Sits down wearily and sticks the nipple on the box) You gonna

start that again?

EVIE: (Screaming) MAKE ME A BABY, YOU STINKING CRUD!

ADAM: (Holding up his hands to pacify) All right, all right.
Don't get

in a sweat over it. I mean . . . (They are silent a few seconds,

each sunk in his private miseries) Jesus, your old man! I mean,

just because your old man wants to be a grandfather, I have to

suffer. What does he think I am, one of his goddamned rabbits?

EVIE: You ain't even a sloth. With fungus all over him, even a sloth

reproduces.

ADAM: You find me that fungus and I'll reproduce. (He laughs at his

wit)

EVIE: (Bitterly) Oh, I'd like to fungus you, all right! Right through

the floor!

ADAM: (Laughs at her frustration, then stops abruptly as a thought

strikes him) Hey, did you know I get nightmares about your old

man? He comes after me with this big fucken beard and

—

EVIE: Don't you dare talk about him in that tone of voice!

ADAM: What? Dare? What tone of voice?

EVIE: Disrespectful, that's what. ADAM: Well, he's a goddamned bully. He scares the living shit out of me.

EVIE: (Bitterly) You owe him everything.

ADAM: (Sweeping his arm to include the room) Yeah, yeah. You're right. I'm not grateful enough. (He is silent a few seconds, to let his gesture sink in) Look at it. A dump. Why did we have to move? Huh? We had a nice place where we was. Elevator, hot water, plenty of light, no cockroaches. But

you, YOU HAD TO MOVE! You put the bug up my ass. The Bronx wasn't good enough for you. No, not you.

EVIE: So I made a mistake. So what? You never made a mistake? I'm only human, you know.

ADAM: I know, I know. So look where it got us — Brooklyn! (With utter despair) Brooklyn! . . . Central Park South, you said. Beautiful swans we'd watch, gliding in the pond. Manhattan! Where the action was! The beautiful people! Fucking on the terrace with a view! Evie, your old man is a cheapskate.

EVIE: (Pointing her finger at him) You! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Adam. Two long years we been married and already you are a degenerate. That's what you are, a degenerate.

ADAM: (Cackling) Hah! So in Brooklyn what do you expect?

EVIE: We're married people, and married people are supposed to have kids. (She pauses a few moments, then yells) We're supposed to MULTIPLY!

ADAM: With you, I should multiply?

EVIE: What's wrong with me? I'm a girl, no? I got plenty on the ball. I am a swinger. I got a good shape. (She takes a few rapid steps toward him and raises her skirt) A GOOD SHAPE, ADAM!

ADAM: (Holding up his hands) Evie, I ain't eaten.

EVIE: Degenerate!

ADAM: So I'm sorry. Evie, you just don't send me any more. Maybe it's the air's polluted. You don't send me.

EVIE: (Dropping her skirt) In the Bronx I did?

ADAM: It was different.

EVIE: Whataya mean — different?

ADAM: (At a loss) I dunno. We had Van Courtlandt Park . . . and the zoo — Evie, I even used to go bird-watching. Me.

EVIE: So what's wrong with Prospect Park? It's got grass. I seen plenty of birds there.

ADAM: Ugh! Filthy pigeons crapping all over, that's Prospect Park. Don't talk about it. Even the fish are sick . . . Oh, Evie, it was just easier. It, it wasn't so hard. I mean — It didn't seem like . . . like so much . . . work. (Tenderly) You know? EVIE: Hah. Work, he says. I do all the work!

ADAM: I don't want to talk about it.

EVIE: You couldn't even take a pill?

ADAM: What kind of pill?

EVIE: How should I know? A pep pill. Serutan. One-a-day vitamins. Anything. Ask in the drugstore. You never heard what them Italian movie actors do?

ADAM: (Bored) What?

EVIE: Dope. (Pointing to her buttocks) They stick it in with a needle.

ADAM: And what happens?

EVIE: (Laughing to herself) What happens? Like firecrackers, that's what happens. All night. It should happen to you, ha, ha, I made a funny.

ADAM: You know, you're getting morbid. You shouldn't breathe so much.

EVIE: (A deliberate insult) You Brooklyn bum. (She goes to the phonograph, puts on the drum record and, after a few seconds, dances a wild and funny fertility dance in front of him, shaking, bumping, grinding, lifting her skirt)

(ADAM resolutely cuts shapes from a magazine until she slaps the scissors from his hands. He walks to the phonograph and turns it off. EVIE stands still, watching him. He picks up the scissors, returns to the table, and resumes cutting.)

ADAM: (Dispassionately) You're disgusting. (EVIE flops into a nearby chair) You hear me? You're disgusting.

EVIE: Sure. Sure, I hear you. And you, you over there with the valentines, you're the spitting image of an angel. I suppose? Hah!

ADAM: (Amused) Hah!

EVIE: Boy. How did I ever get hooked up with you? You are the Leonardo da Vinci of degenerates. For you, a whole Greenwich Village wouldn't be enough.

ADAM: I love you, too.

(She studies him as he works.)

EVIE: (Suddenly) Why don't you ever use a higher type magazine?

ADAM: (Interested, and pleased that the conversation has taken a different turn) Such as?

EVIE: Oh, I don't know. THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY. THE SATURDAY REVIEW. PUBLICATIONS OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION.

ADAM: Stupid. No color, that's why. Cheesy magazines. They don't do me nothing.

EVIE: It's got to have color?

ADAM: (Looking at her cautiously, unsure of her sincerity) Nooo. (He pauses, then, a little excited) Once I colored her all black, and

then I used only white. Typing paper. Bond. Damned good stuff.

EVIE: (Impressed) Jesus! What was it like?

ADAM: (Swallowing a grin) Pretty damn good. (With emphasis) Pretty

damn good. (He makes a strong snip with the scissors) All black,

with a white —

EVIE: Christ!

ADAM: (Slobbering) Yeah. (He waves his hand downward as his

tongue hangs out)

EVIE: You ever tried chartreuse?

ADAM: What's that?

EVIE: Sorta like a parakeet color.

ADAM: (Laughing a little stupidly) No — but I got a few feathers.

(Biting his lip) Crazy!

EVIE: How about spaghetti orange? You go for that?

ADAM: (Excited, holding up an orange crescent) Like this?

You mean

like this?

EVIE: Yeah, that's it. But with more sauce.

ADAM: (Proudly) Campbell tomato soup.

EVIE: Makes your mouth water, huh? A real breakthrough
in

cosmetics.

ADAM: (Surprised at her perception) Yeah. Yeah. Most of
them

soups are good. That's why I get GOOD HOUSEKEEPING
and the LADIES HOME JOURNAL. I had a great cream of
mushroom once. (He is practically jumping out of his
seat) And

the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC — oi, oi! Them African
tangerines!

EVIE: What's that big lump over there, like a wrinkled
turnip?

ADAM: (Pointing) This one?

EVIE: Yeah.

ADAM: (Sheepishly) That's for Hallowe'en.

EVIE: Hey, that's cute.

ADAM: (Touched by her interest) You really think so, Evie?

I . . .

I . . . (He cannot find words)

EVIE: (Softly) Adam?

ADAM: What?

EVIE: You know, I'd do anything for you, Adam.

ADAM: You would? Would you, Evie?

EVIE: What's your favorite soup or vegetable? Tell me. Go
on, tell

me. Any color at all.

ADAM: (Like a small explosion) Birdseye broccoli! — Oh!
(The words

do something to him. He jumps up excitedly, grabbing his
crotch

and stumping around. He makes several jerky
movements, lets out some smothered whoops, and heads for
the phonograph.)

EVIE: (Rising) Adam!

ADAM: (Turning, the arm of the phonograph in his hand)
What? For Christ's sake, what?

EVIE: Why isn't it the same for us in Brooklyn? Why?

ADAM: Ask your old man!

EVIE: Adam! Tell me why!

ADAM: (Indecisively, then determined) — Because, you fart
in Brooklyn! (He plays the drum music and begins to dance
wildly, putting a green crescent over the previous one and
adding a large hat, huge eyelashes, and a red navel to the
dummy's decor. EVIE watches for a few moments in complete
defeat. Then, defiantly, she runs to the rear of the room and
drags out another dummy, more decrepit, obviously one of
ADAM's discards. She stands it up and begins dancing with
determination. They dance competitively, EVIE putting pubic
hair on the dummy's head, chin, and chest. She stops twice
more, once to get two blue bulbs, which she hangs in front of
the dummy, and once to get a long salami from the
refrigerator to hang between the bulbs. She then becomes as
caught up in the frenzy as ADAM. They gradually drop,
quivering in ecstasy, to the floor and grope painfully toward
one another, embracing in a frantic clutch, as the lights dim

...

to EVIE's fervent) Oh, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!

**FIRST PERFORMED AT THE ACTORS'
STUDIO, 432 W. 44TH ST., NEW
YORK CITY**

Credits : Photographs by Alan Tepper

Cast : Judie West (Evie); Jeff Tambornino (Adam)

Director : Douglas Taylor

KNOWING

how things are
this summer morning :
curve of ripples hug
hips. I dive
under
then float, lulled
in the waves of August sun.
swish of wind
through white pine
leaves. quiet
washes in. you gone
with the tide
of the beach. I wait.

Joan Miller

**ERIC CASHEN: TWO FEARS . . .
DRIVE . . . & . . . A FRAGMENT**

Two fears affect our society. The fear of infidelity, and the fear of homosexuality. If we are jealous, does this mean we would secretly like to be sleeping around? Because we are down on queers, does this mean that we fear the queer in the mirror?

Yes, and much else. As Elsie Windham says, 'hold your nose, and keep your thoughts to yourself.' The less we know

about ourselves, the better. Life is too short for living.

*

They came out of the city like hard fast birds, driving the car between them, the sleek shining car of desire. Though on the outside, he sat between them: his lips up to suckle her nipple, his cock. The air blew through like a cigaret siren, and the red light of taillight gleamed in the orange — of sunset.

‘Do you want to eat?’ Why eat, when one is suckling? The night, like a curtain of mist, hung about them, like a shroud, or, perhaps, a silhouette torture-dance of tomorrow.

‘I’d like a cigaret.’ Like a, like a, smoke, smoke, smoke. Smut, smut, smut, some would say. And then we drove on, toward oblivion.

‘I’ll pass the bottle.’ We woke, and rested, like warriors, just out of high school. Life was young, and we were younger; we were old, there was thunder! The horn blares; and on, and on . . . The old man who said: ‘Smoking is suckling. All you want is your mother’s breast.’ Mothers’ breasts. I eat, I eat sweetmeats, and the fan, turned off for a second, leaves me cold.

‘Why not spend the night?’ The question, leaving me, coming to me, what night, where, which bar? Is there anything but sunset and sunrise? And the blotting paper in between?

O gorgeous black niggerheaven night, full of the spice of desire. Desire? Some desire their opposites! Others, dream.

*

And he remembered fields. And the fields remembered him. The turnip plants, all waisthigh weeds, now, remembered when he was their size, and they his. Innocence! Pass the bottle. What else can we have here in the church that is Grand Central Station, on the straight narrow path that is the Bronx River Parkway? Move, move on. Oh God, why do we drop our pants to become our Gods?

Wasn't it simpler, when we were younger?

Vicarious, he sits there. And gets the best of both worlds.
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authors)