

TRACE

LIVING LITERATURE

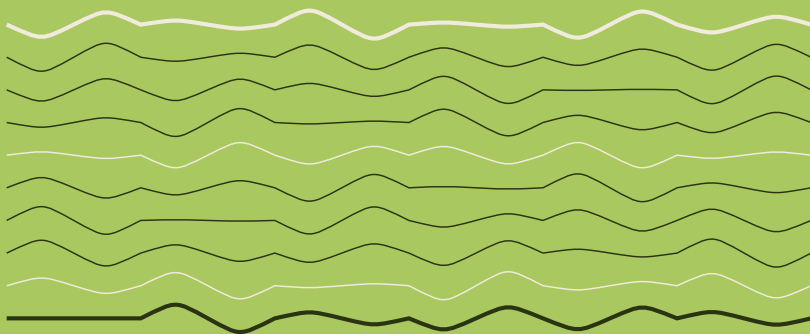
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TRACE

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Living Literature

Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

Mid-18th Year 1970

Edited by James Boyer May

A READING EDITION

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This reading edition preserves the issue's poetry, fiction, essays, correspondence, reviews, and other literary writing in their printed order. Advertising, subscription matter, mastheads, the magazine's own contents pages, annual indexes, address lists, and the running trade directory are omitted as reference apparatus.

The text was checked against newly rendered source pages. Poetry lineation, stanza spacing, shaped indents, and hanging continuations for long lines are retained; prose continuations are joined without false paragraph indents. Conjectural readings are enclosed in square brackets, while original spelling and punctuation are otherwise kept.

Artwork is not reproduced in this text edition. The visual material in the issue is described here so that its place in the magazine remains visible:

Eight pages of ink work by MARY J. ACOSTA, signed MJA in the plate, stand here and carry no text. The contents page names them: from the FRENCH CUISINE series; two from the CAVE series; EXPLOSIVES, from the AESTHETICS series; from the CITY THEATRES series; RHYTHMS #22; from the SOUND series; and ALASKAN SUNRISE. They are noted here rather than passed over.

Eight pages of visual work stand here, and this is the section a text edition loses most completely, because in it the words and the picture are the same thing. The contents page names an untitled ink by GIN EGGLESTON, three untitled collages by ROBERT M. CHUTE, and WATERFALL, from FLOWING AS IN RIVER, a concrete poem by JOE MICHAUD.

The Chute collages are photomontage cut with clipped phrases: over a Parthenon, a hospital bed, an old man at a tray, soldiers, and a Wrigley's Spearmint hoarding, the pasted line THE CIVILIZATION / THAT CHANGED / THE WORLD—, and in the corner TIME LIFE BOOKS INVITES YOU / TO VISIT FREE. The Michaud pages set wood-type capitals running

off the edge of the paper, OUT OF MIND repeating down the page and off it. What the reading recovered of the lettering is given here; the arrangement, which is the poem, is not recoverable.

Eight pages of photographs, named in neither the contents nor the graphics list. They are close studies of the body — an ear lit against black, an eye in a weathered face — printed two to a page in differing sizes. No caption and no credit appears on any of them.

Four full-page photographic portraits, also unnamed and uncredited — the first of them a man in an open-necked shirt laughing at the camera against a clapboard wall. They carry no text.

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TOWARDS PRINT (WHERE WE'VE BEEN ... WHERE WE'RE GOING?)

by the Editor

THE NOW-FAMILIAR SO-CALLED Underground publications of recent years (both members of the Underground Press Syndicate and those not affiliated) have much in common with many little mags and the earlier little-mag Underground which antedated them by several decades. They also have much not in common with any mag which did continue or now continues in the little-mag tradition.

The second sentence is not intended to mystify. A number of little mags, living on after the advent of the Undergrunder s, have been led to imitate — more or less — the often-crude flamboyancies characterizing the revolutionary tabloids; and not a few new ones have been hybrids from their foundings. Of course, the carefully-phrased and often indirect protests in the conservatively set up pages of mags carried forward in the historic manner contrast sharply — even though what's said hits the same marks. Lines of demarcation are less sharp between the declared Underground and little-mag late-comers and those recently influenced, except that little mags — including the wilder ones — usually exhibit better literary and artistic tastes of editors whose individualism is not sacrificed to current conformities of radical expression.

The basic similarities involving all UPSers and their kindred and a considerable body of both older and younger little mags, including scores long dead, have to do with: opposition to war and racial discrimination . . . advocacy of reform in the social structure and complete freedom of expression . . . abandonment of hypocrisies (sexual and other) . . . adoption of realistic educational methods . . . etc. There is nothing novel in the demands of the Undergrunder

s, but in their ways of voicing them. Many little mags began flouting censorship and attacking the Establishment long, long ago. There are and have been many grades of shading in these various secessions (as they were called in an article jointly written by Lawrence Lipton and this Editor, but only half-published upon the demise of *INTRO* [1953] and leaving the second half, which was to have borne JBM's name, unprinted). There also have been innumerable different notions as to how to bring about social change. In passing, Louis Brigante's *INTRO* provides outstanding illustrations of the literary Underground prototype. Mr. Lipton himself provides an example of change of style, as may be seen on reading his naughty-word-laden features in the *LOS ANGELES FREE PRESS*. But, I'll get to specifics later.

To be sure, a large percentage of little-mag editors evince slight direct social concern; but even among these, most (leaving all but a few academic quarterlies aside) at least promote breaks from old literary and art moulds. And, as far as the active liberal-minded little mag people are concerned, their fundamental purposes hold so much in common with the Underground that there is no widespread feeling of rivalry of consequence, though some little-mag editors, along with me, do criticise Underground presentations for low standards of writing and art — and sometimes flagrant bad taste.

It is undeniable that UPSers have gained larger public attention than had the little mags over all the years — and consequently, large attention for a few of the latter. They have taken the arguments out of the libraries and into the streets. The question is whether this actually aids the causes, whether the Underground isn't addressing chiefly its own supporters and not helping to move those who are in position to move events and who would be receptive. Many people, unresponsive to UPS tabloids, are nevertheless sensitive to the problems they pose and aware of the

groundwork for social and cultural change, in the forming of which little mags have played a more substantial part than most have observed.

About the only times a segment of the general public has been made aware of the little mags have been when their editors have been haled into court for publishing sexual art or permitting contributors to use precise language such as ‘cunt,’ ‘fuck,’ etc. The results of these cases almost invariably, whether or not anyone actually was fined or jailed, have been extinction of the projects attacked. The big press seldom has given them breaks. Little mags virtually never have adequate financial resources even to defend themselves in a lower court — know-how and money to capitalize on publicity. And this state of affairs continues. Weekly, it would seem, some little mag somewhere is quietly strangled. Frequently, bigger littles, enjoying support of school or other institution, are forced into editorial retreat or put out of existence. A recent instance of the former is MOTIVE (Nashville Tenn.); of the latter, NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY (Albuquerque — and concerning which, see Gene Frumkin’s exposé elsewhere in the TRACE.

UPSers have been and are doing better in this regard. Which leads to another matter — the ‘big’ press having been mentioned — the fact that many are better than self-supporting. A few are said to be profitable. They carry yards of paid advertising. In this, they are, by the usual definition, commercial. To what extent may not some them be sensational for the \$\$ sake? And, so corrupted, may they not become part (if contradictory) of the Establishment they ostensibly fight?

Thus, the Underground has learned that ‘yellow journalism’ does get their papers sold. Also, that sex has a ready market. But, meanwhile, the sexual revolution already had been largely accomplished and was making notable advances before — long before — the years of the

Underground. Many are asking in what way the continued over-stress on details of sexual habits is helpful toward meaningful reform in general. Is it desirable or in any way necessary, now that those four-letter words can be used with impunity so far as the authorities are concerned (though not, it seems, under the aegis of many universities), that they be overused? And plain talk is good; but need it be semi-literate? The same queries are made about prevalent pornographic art. It now appears to have been decided that pornography has, if not a high place, some efficacy in breaking down barriers of dishonesty; however, where, when, and how are important in relation to this. Several publications in the UPS category use pornography indiscriminately, without taking account of the quality of the possible art involved or the advisability of clever subtleties to gain worthwhile audience.

Repeated graphic descriptions of various sexual acts and repeated uses of street words become exceedingly boring. Crude restatements of opposition to social wrongs also become boring, while good writing and originalities of approach can keep arguments alive, can reach intelligent individuals. Shouted slogans and obscenities address only the mob; and I don't believe that even the most 'under' of Undergrounders really wish for mob rule.

From this, it should not be inferred I'm saying there isn't excellent writing to be found in UPS tabloids. There is — and occasionally in the most blatantly 'offensive' ones. The trouble is that admirable editorials and articles may be 'lost' — go slightly noticed, unthoughtfully read, and often unread in such contexts.

I'm able to say a few things from personal knowledge and observation about Underground influence in the little-mag field. First, that — despite the negative elements I've been stressing — considerable good has resulted, in that everything (literally) has been pushed into the open. Among

little mags which obviously have been influenced, not all change has been for the worse. Among the new little 'hybrids,' are many different percentages of admixture, some of which are effective. This has to do not just with political, economic, and social features, but with development of art and literature — which are tending to relate more significantly to the actualities and real problems of the day. It's entirely a matter of degree. When carried beyond sensible limits—for instance, with the intention of heightening shock to sell more copies—the efforts fail. An editor simply may be getting nonreaders, by selling more copies. I've watched only too many skim or skip seriously-meaty content, to laugh at the obscenities or look at the 'dirty' pictures. This can be verified by asking people what they got out of such-and-such a periodical.

Since most TRACE subscribers probably read little mags and Underground publications, a large number of references and citations should be superfluous—particularly concerning current mags and papers. But the mails indicate an ever-increasing proportion of those for whom the field is comparatively new; so, my assertions should be corroborated—especially those involving the past.

That little mags are the ancestors of the Undergrounders and that they anticipated them in their every crying of a cause (also, to a considerable extent, in their methods) is easily demonstrated.

Berkeley, as everyone by now is conscious, is one of the hotbeds of the young rebellion. Yet, scarcely anyone knows that things began to 'move' there way back in 1922 with the violent birth of LAUGHING HORSE, published by Spud Johnson, who still is around to write about things. The 'stifling' academy was bombed on many fronts (contributors included D. H. Lawrence, Witter Bynner, and others of stature), and so was censorship, and else. Obscenity charges were trumped up; Roy Chanslor, one of the editors, was evicted

from the University and arrested. The mag's appearances became uncertain and infrequent, and it was moved about the country—to Santa Fe, Taos and New York State—and once issued from Mexico. The final, in 1939, was but No. 21; still, those sparsely-spaced happenings of print had remarkable repercussions.

Others of that time, and earlier, might be cited. Along with them are the anarchist and libertarian littles—important because UPSers were largely to be so identified, philosophically. However, I'll move into the Forties and Fifties. Close connections are evident with mags such as RETORT (Bearsville, N.Y., 1942-57) and RESISTANCE (New York City, 1943-56). RESISTANCE is especially relevant because its content was transitional between earlier anarchist publications abstract argument and many subsequent mags dealing pragmatically with express conditions. The editor, David Wieck, and his contributors (among whom were many who later published in less-political littles, in bolder language) expounded views as radical as those of any UPSer, but with restrained diction. A high literary standard was maintained.

INTRO (the mag) already has been noted. Editor Brigante subsequently did a fine job with INTRO BULLETIN, a tabloid which endured until 1958. His relation to the foregoing was manifest.

In 1957, three greatly-differing publications of the little-mag genre were born, each typifying pre-UPS elements. The first, EVERGREEN REVIEW, also has a history which could be paralleled in some future transformation of a 'successful' UPS paper. In 1963, a gradual evolution from major emphasis on earnest probings of social ills to major emphasis on sex, a kind of 'soft core' pornography, was speeded as the format enlarged for a metamorphosis into a semi-popular 'slick.' Before this mag 'graduated' from the ranks of the littles, more good thoughtful writers of the avant

appeared, and the protest lines were very clear. Jack Green's *NEWSPAPER* (New York — expiring in 1963) offered mainly the editor's own crusading writings. These got him in trouble with the authorities, who (as in cases of numerous other mags) avoided the vital issues by objecting to his use of the simple word, 'fuck.' The already-accomplished 'sexual revolution' has been touched upon. One of Green's finest pieces of work was his documentation of the harassment of the author of the book of that name, a book which had a prime part in stirring that revolution — Wilhelm Reich. *DECEMBER* (Eastern Springs, Ill.) always has been more than 'a magazine of the arts....' Completing Editor Curt Johnson's cover statement, it is a mag of 'opinion.' His 'opinions' about the hydrogen bomb and several other achievements of modern man have been praiseworthily dogmatic; and through the years, he has found and brought to print fiction, poetry, and satire of sorts both entertaining and disturbing.

1958 saw the first issues of *BIRTH* (New York), *THE FIFTIES* (Pine Island, Minn. — later, *THE SIXTIES*, now, *THE SEVENTIES*), and *YUGEN* (New York). Tuli Kupferberg of *BIRTH* loosed an ensuing stream of provocative mags and booklets. Without doubt, he exercised a stronger immediate influence upon UPSers-to-be than any other single person. No one has excelled him in hilarious satire stated through cut-outs of photos, news clippings, old and new book excerpts, supplemented by drawings, ancient and modern; and he also published a number of his prominent contemporaries. No UPS message was not earlier voiced or depicted by Tuli. Robert Bly's *THE FIFTIES* (etc.) was, on the other hand (and still is), quite narrowly literary; but his ideas about what's wrong with the world definitely aren't in the least narrow or conservative. Nor are the statements underlying much of what he has selected for print. Another precursor was LeRoi Jones' *YUGEN*, published before its editor became obsessed with hatred for whites. The mag folded in 1962; but not

before exhibiting a large quantity of quality protest poems (comprising not overmany four-letter words) from writers of all skin colors.

The turn of the decade brought two kinds of projects typical of local protest. MT. ADAMS REVIEW (Cincinnati, 1959 — ?) has carried forward to the turn of another decade and appears to have gained support far beyond Ohio boundaries; yet, for most of the years, local controversy has been its strength. THE PAPER (Chicago, 1960-61)—an important UPS predecessor—was a tabloid of little-mag content, slanted decidedly toward protest in all channels, but in less sensational ways than the ensuing UPSers. The restraint upon language may have been because Lois Solomon and William Friedkin did not judge that the then-new permissiveness extended beyond books and magazines not hawked upon the streets. Or because they were in Chicago? They did publish work of merit, more than sufficient merit to earn the license accorded 'possible' cultural contributions.

Backtracking to 1955, the year THE VILLAGE VOICE (New York) was founded, it should not be overlooked that this paper—though conservative in comparison with later tabloids—is credited with having been a model for the LOS ANGELES FREE PRESS (1963 — ?). The 'Freeep,' in turn, is generally regarded as having exerted the chief influence on smaller rebellious tabloids. It now has big circulation and is a money-maker. In 1966, as one of the original six UPS members, its financial future is said to have been less than assured. At this juncture, the writing here is more 'professional' than found in most other tabloids; but journalistic, not literary. The Freeep features editorializing news stories and sharply-slanted reportage in a manner oddly similar to an ideological 'opposite,' the CHICAGO TRIBUNE, the most reactionary of Establishment dailies. Or, again, one may be reminded of those nightmare sheets of yesteryear, prophesying some cataclysmic disaster with each

scare-headed appearance. Perhaps there's something indicative in the fact that some member of the staff deserted it in 1967—notably, John Bryan. He is said to have become irked by a daily regimen too much like that imposed on employees of commercial newspapers.

Bryan had published two of the little-mag harbingers of the UPS: GUSHER (Houston, Tex., 1959) and renaissance (San Francisco, 1961-63). The first was purely literary; the second retained literary emphasis, but introduced more writings of revolt. Bryan's personal story has been a one-man parallel to the development of the Underground as a whole. His next mag, NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND (San Francisco and Los Angeles, 1964-66), incorporates sensationalisms with still a fair percentage of literary content. Then, after his brief attempt to identify with the Freeep, he founded OPEN CITY (Los Angeles, 1967-69). He and others who had left the old tabloid undertook to compete with the Freee by out-Freeeeping it. As had editors of violent protest papers all about the country, he found himself in serious trouble with the law. At this writing, the Freee itself faces suits and prosecution, but appears better able to resist.

Both little-mag forerunners of the Underground and UPS, and related publications, lived and now live in many countries. There has been EL CORNO EMPLUMADO (Mexico City, 1962 — ?), a prominent little mag, the literary material in which has been increasingly constricted in keeping with a dictum of Editor Margaret Randall. She holds that literature without radical social message is valueless. Eco CONTEMPORANEO (Buenos Aires, 1961 — ?) is a little mag which has become a UPS member. Outstanding in England, is AMBIT (London, 1959 — ?). Editor Martin Bax has maintained a consistent militant attitude, while holding to high standards. For one issue, in 1968, he broke out of conservative format, and AMBIT appeared as an oversize tabloid, displaying many of the far-out tactics employed by

the 100 per cent UPSers. A comradely gesture? Contributors included people of prominence in the literary world. In Canada, Henry Beissel (EDGE — Edmonton and Montreal, 1963 — ?) is positive in protest, but he holds to a more reserved stance than Bax.

There are so many offshoots with UPS characteristics than a book would be required to describe them adequately. Many are in impressive magazine formats, such as AMERICAN ATAVAR (Roxbury, Mass., 1966 — ?). A number of them might be sub-categorized as news mags — of modest, ample, or elaborate splendor. I-KON (New York, 1967 — ?) is one of the most colorful and also very radical, politically. WIN (New York, 1966 — ?), a UPS member, is a bit more quiet and more varied in its slants and targets. THE PROMETHEAN (Syracuse, N.Y., 1966 — ?), also officially identified with the UPS, is entirely student-owned and -managed. Taken together, the UNDERGROUND is not only young as a phenomenon, but powered by young participants. And these young people are notably international-minded. For instance, one who goes by the name of Dukardo Hinestrosa publishes the multilingual CUERVO INTERNATIONAL in Hollywood, Calif. (1968 — ?).

The tabloids tend toward local circulations; but they are widespread geographically and appear regularly and often. UPS members also allow anything in their pages to be used by any other member without special permission. This creates national and international readerships for particularly 'choice' items. Without conscious selectivity, moving at random through a pile of these, the eye is struck by the MADISON KALEIDOSCOPE (Wisconsin), founded in 1969 to succeed CONNECTIONS (first published in 1967). This paper is not only startling, but aesthetically pleasing in over-all aspect, as were many issues of GEORGIA STRAIGHT (Vancouver, Can., 1967 — possibly terminated, since not lately seen). The same may be said of SPOKANE NATURAL

(Spokane, Wash., 1967 — ?); and, with less color, NICKEL REVIEW (Syracuse, N.Y., 1967 — ?), which comes out with astounding frequency. This one is not identified on the masthead as a UPS member.

I could go on indefinitely. And there are the countless unmentioned books and booklets from hundreds of small rebel presses, integral to the radical progression. But my purpose is not bibliographical and more than it has been to tout what I might consider the 'best' or to single out the 'worst.' The sad truth is that several of the finest revolutionary little mags, such as THE OUTSIDER (New Orleans, from 1960 — later, Tucson, Ariz.), either have had to give up the struggle or are on the verge of doing so; and even if the publicity in these pages could be helpful — which is dubious — it comes too late.

My purpose just has been to call attention to the multi-faceted relationships of little mags to the Underground . . . to make a few comments from my own point of view . . . to ask a few questions . . . to drop a few biased suggestions in roundabout ways. I don't feel that anyone will be much influenced (TRACE readers always have been blessedly immune to paternalistic inoculations, the mail has kept me happily reminded); but maybe some who are not 'involved' will glean enough from this rambling editorial to persuade them that knowledge of both littles and UPS publications will prove helpful toward balanced understanding of the directions in which our bewildering 'civilization' may be turning.

EDITORS (AND OTHERS) WRITE

Details Concerning Mag Suppression

Dear Editors: To update you briefly on what has occurred with the Winter-Spring 1969 issue of the New Mexico Quarterly, I must report that the Regents of the University of New Mexico last August suppressed distribution of the magazine to all domestic subscribers. The suppression of the magazine was challenged vigorously by the Faculty Policy Committee and other faculty bodies; and, I am happy to say, the Regents last Dec. 6th reversed their previous action, thereby releasing the Quarterly through its normal channels. Probably a leading motive for the suppression was the difficulties the university has been having with the State Legislature and ultra-conservative elements in the state. The 'problem' with this issue of the Quarterly appears to be one of language, i.e., the taboo words used in four or five pieces, especially the poem on page 118 (Michael McClure's Plume Ode). Sur magazine of Buenos Aires wants to translate the entire issue into Spanish for its wide North American and European readership. Sur is planning to devote its entire Spring 1970 issue to the 'Contemporary American Imagination' theme and feels the New Mexico Quarterly issue fully represents its conception of this theme. Gene Frumkin, Special Ed. of NMQ

INCEST AMONG EDITORS*William V. Davis*

Dear Editors: It is without question that, today, poetry is big business. Numerous journals, periodicals, and little magazines devote much of their space to poetry and many of them publish nothing but poetry. And that, certainly, is good. But, because of the possibilities for publication and the interest that poetry receives, both written and spoken (virtually all colleges and universities and many high schools sponsor individual poetry readings several times a year, and many are members of one or more 'poetry circuits' which bring to these campuses and schools 'name' poets or — where such poets cannot be entertained because of inadequate funds or lack of prestige — 'younger poets' or simply versifiers to flood the stages and auditoriums), it is high time that someone say something about the use and misuse of poetry, both by poets themselves and by editors. Like so many things, what may have begun as a real need, having as its impetus a basic concern with affording a calling spot for what has merit and worth, the 'popularity' which poetry today has in the U.S. and in many other countries (often a popularity which extend back and forth across national and international boundaries) also has its hazards. I am speaking of the plethora of minor poetry or simply bad poetry (much of it is not really poetry at all) being published and distributed by so many magazines. For decades, newspapers have been guilty of such lapses of taste. Today, even some of the 'little magazines' are falling prey to the same clichés that were reserved in former days for vanity presses, tabloids, and small or private presses.

One need only glance at the numerous periodicals which publish poetry on a more or less regular basis in order to realize that it simply is not possible that that much good poetry could be being written. For instance, the Fifth Edition of the Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses

published by Dustbooks lists over six hundred places that publish poetry, and Jeanne Hollyfield's *Poet's Handbook* lists '923 Places to Send Poems.' I suspect that even these listings are incomplete.

Many of these 'little magazines' are continually calling for patron sponsors, and outright gifts. Most of them do not pay their contributors; some give them a free contributor copy. Others require contributors to buy a copy of the issue if they wish to see their poem in print. Now I am not implying that poets should necessarily be paid for their efforts; no one who is serious about writing has any delusion about making money, at least enough money to live on, from his writing. I recall last year attending a poetry reading given by Donald Hall; after the reading, a man in the audience stood up and asked Hall why he wrote poetry—except for fame and money. Hall simply laughed. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule. In a recent review of one of James Dickey's books, the reviewer for *The Hudson Review* (if memory serves me faithfully) noted, in the last line of the review that Dickey had earned \$25,000 on his poetry during the previous year. But such exceptions, Foundations and Prizes excluded, are exceptional.

But all of this is off to the side of what I am most concerned with. That is: the politics of editorial policy. As Anthony Hecht has said 'Literary politics have become a lively industry.' Indeed they have. And it would seem quite the case that the proliferation of the little magazines has been one (certainly not the only) cause of this problem.

One of the best ways to 'make it' today in the poetry world is to edit a 'little magazine.' I do not choose to use any names here, but one need only be familiar with the market to become quickly aware of the number of poets who are also editors. This in itself is not wrong nor should it be frowned upon. It is obvious that anyone who is a good poet may well be a good editor, and that many fine poets choose to spend a

goodly portion of their time and energy as editors is commendable—they should be lauded for their efforts and for what is, in many instances, an otherwise thankless task. I do not wish in any way to disparage them nor, by identity, confuse them with certain other editors, who deserve castigation. For while there are these conscientious people at work to save and salvage from the piles of poetry they receive (for instance, Daryl Hine, the editor of Poetry magazine, recently told me that he receives about five hundred poems a week) only the best work, there are also those others who tarnish the profession by a practice I think of as ‘editorial incest.’ By this I mean to refer to those editors who themselves write poetry and who publish their own poetry in their own magazines (is it the only way they can, or could originally, see their work in print?) or in magazines edited by other editors who publish themselves and their editorial ‘side-kicks.’ Certainly it must be the case that, where so many magazines exist, it is inevitable that an editor of one will be published as a poet in another. But it is not the case that issue after issue can, or should, be filled with poetry written by other editors, who in turn publish the poetry of their ‘exchange’ editors, virtually to the exclusion of non-editor poets.

This incestuous practice is counter to anything at all resembling honesty in terms of artistic truth and literary merit. It is anathema to any kind of legitimate creative, not to say honest, behavior. It is akin only to the lesser sin (because any editor who is ‘taken in’ only proves himself a fool) of writing the long notes in praise of oneself that so many poets include with their poems when they send them off for consideration, in the hope that their work will be accepted, not on its own merits, but because of some notion that an editor cannot afford to turn down their work once he has seen their credits. Certainly they were first published without credits (did they invent them then?). Why do they

need them later—unless they are only sending out trash?

It will be easy for someone to pass this off as simply a vent of anger from someone who has nothing better to do with his time. That would have been too easy. To be sure, I do not relish writing this — my own feelings are that I have much better things to do with my time (I should be writing poems); but, at the same time, I feel a moral obligation to announce my disapproval of a practice which has been bothering me for a long time and which I hope has been bothering others as well. I have written this only because I could not not have written it, and I could not be waited another day to write it.

GRAPHICS POETRY

EUROPEAN POETRY AT THE PRESENT time is in the middle of a turned on graphics-oriented revolution that by comparison makes the U.S. poetry scene appear flat and completely out of step with the age. In Europe the media revolution has not only affected the film-TV world but has invaded and transformed the whole concept of what poetry should be.

There are various names for the new approach. ‘Concrete poetry’ is the most general, but there are almost as many variations as there are individual poets: ‘action-writing’ (Julien Blaine); ‘plastic poem’ (Kitasano Katue); ‘symbiotic writing’ — *scrittura simbiotica* (Ugo Carrega, who also does ‘sound-strip poems’ and ‘visual-strip poems’); ‘spacialism’ — *spatialisme* (Ilse and Pierre Garnier); ‘semi-poetic’ (Corrado d’Ottavi and Martino Oberto).

The common denominator in all these schools or tendencies is SOMEHOW BRING GRAPHIC IMPACT INTO POETRY. In other words, the new poetry begins by incorporating into itself the visual-impact world of the post-media revolution where image is real — an image and not a word that must be first absorbed, then converted into an image by the imagination. Here, the impact is direct, not sequential, linear, logical, but simultaneous — ‘curved,’ intuitive.

Some of the more elemental forms of ‘graphics poetry’ merely build figures on the page out of words — as New York poets Richard Kostelanetz and Aram Saroyan do in the most elementary form.

Good examples of this architectonic word-structuring are poems such as Ilse and Pierre Garnier’s ‘*poemes mecaniques architecture*’ in APPROCHES 1, Valerian Valerianovich Neretchnikov’s poem APPROCHES 3, Pierre Garnier’s *Meer Stille* in a recent edition of concrete poems from Zurich

simply called *IN CONCRETO*, or D. C. Cadoresi's *Lettura di due Congiunzioni* in *TOOL* No. 6. Actually, though, pure word-architecture is on the wane and is being replaced by much more-penetrating experiments.

Chief among these experimenters is J. S. Bory, editor of *APPROCHES*. His *HIROSHIMA* (8 texts + 1) is a landmark in recent word-dynamics. In one poem, for example, a highly complicated word-swirl begins as a dot in the distance and, as the reader turns the pages, it grows until the edges move off the page and we move into a close-up world of individual letters, then blankness. This gives the effect of the page blowing up in the reader's face. In another poem, *Histoire D'Un* (Story of A), very tactile images ('cold . . . I touch my arm,' 'I listen to the breathing of a child,' 'I am on the Eiffel Tower . . .') are mixed with clocks on which the hands are slowly advancing forward. We move tactually through time. In another, *L'Oubli* (Oblivion), words are interspersed with photographic cutouts between them so that the words drop into our minds accompanied by these pictures (all small details of things such as headlights, a window, a segment of a coin — many of them unidentifiable) so that we get the effect of glancing at objects simultaneously with our movement through a word-accompanied 'environment.' In *Quelque Chose d'Arcimboldesque* (Something of Arcimbolesque), arrows are used in the same way as the clocks in *Histoire D'Un* to move the words along. Gradually the word-order begins to break up, the arrows begin to grow more arrows out of their fronts, and a total fragmentation takes place in which arrows (symbolic of any attempted total control?) take over menacingly, corralling and directing the by-now separate letters (symbolic of the 'human'?).

In *Saga* (*APPROCHES* 3), Bory carries this symbolic method even further and the only words used (on va) are interspersed between pictures in such a way that it is more like looking at a symbolic movie rather than a poem. First,

the words are interspersed with Assyrian and Babylonian sculpture, then this ancient mute monumentalism gives way to skulls, then only fragmented letters accompanied by mummies, more sculpture . . . the sculpture getting bigger, the letters more fragmented, until in the midst of a huge letter 'A' we see a tableau of naked women worshipping a stele made of glowing letters. Next, the letters are all mixed together, a young girl smiles out at us from this letter-chaos and we move into letters mixed with naked bodies which gradually form into a map. On this map, there are no place names but only the names of parts of speech: noun, suffix, verb, article. He seems to be moving from a primitive, primarily object-centered society into a word-worshipping world, until finally the word (with the Gutenberg revolution) takes over and reality (the map) is totally word-directed.

Certainly Bory's work is most stimulating and provocative, with strong sociological and anthropological overtones. He is moving into a world in which image-value serves as the basic cognition-unit and you feel that once you have the hang of the vocabulary (images) you move into an expression-medium of unexpected impact and penetration.

Ugo Carrega in Milan, editor of *TOOL*, is working with techniques similar to Bory, although without Bory's technical mastery. In his *VISUAL STRIP POEMS*, for example, the basic idea is to concentrate exclusively on *preoccupazione visuale* (visual preoccupation) and completely exclude words as thought-media. In one of his strip poems about Lenin, the text under the drawings consists merely of a series of X's, but meaning does come through: Lenin heroically posed in front of a huge 1917, crowds of people in revolt, then a final shot of Lenin smiling. Like silent movies without titles.

In Carrega's sound-strip poems, on the other hand, the concentration is totally on sound — sound for the sake of sound independent of meaning. Strips of words are cut out

of newspapers, completely ignoring ‘whole’ words. The result is complete fragmentation. Sometimes a word is recognizable, most of the time not. Instead, these word fragments create new sound combinations — at best merely suggesting or hinting at meaning. Carrega explains the purpose as ‘the invention of new poetic sounds’ (*inventare nuovi suoni poetici*).

Along this same line, Carrega has another kind of sound-experimentation that he calls *scritture ortofoniche*. This ‘phonemic architecture,’ attempting to create ‘ancient Latin sound rhythms’ (*suoni ritmici latini antichi*), creates a kind of semantic archeology in order to get to ‘essences.’ In a poem such as his *ti m mare*, ‘on diamo’ combines with ‘onde’ (waves) and ‘andiamo’ (let’s go). Multiple meaning-reactions are triggered, a whole series of semantic echo-reactions is set off.

Somewhat along these same audio-lines, the OU group in Paris and headed by Henri Chopin, concentrates on *poésie sonore* (sound of poetry); and every issue of OU contains a record. Here ‘poetry is blended into music, just as the work of Julien Blaine (for example, in his *Le Fabricant de I*, a huge black ball suspended ominously over photographs of Paris) often moves into pure painting. ‘Genre’ as such is abandoned and any device of either audio or visual impact is valid.

Although most of the contemporary graphics poetry stresses direct visual (or audio) impact, one magazine in Italy — Martino Oberto

ANA ETCETERA*

— tries to combine visualization with a complex linguistic analysis. Here, any kind of diagrammation or visualization is subordinated to linguistic and semantic dissection, and we move out of the emotional impact of art into the detached reasoning of philosophy.

At first glance it may seem that most of this highly media-influenced experimentation must have its roots in recent film and TV developments, but actually there is very little that is being done that wasn't already anticipated at least forty years ago. Cubism, Futurism, Dada, Surrealism and the other 'ism's' of the Tens and Twenties already touched on most of the techniques of Bory, Garnier, Carrega, Julien Blaine and Martino Oberto. Although ultimately traceable to Rimbaud's systematic 'disordering of the senses' (in a letter to Paul Demeny, 1871) and Mallarmé's typographic experiments in *UN COUP DE DES (A THROW OF DICE)*, 1897, 'graphics poetry' has its more proximate origins in Apollinaire's *CALLIGRAMMES* (1918).

Apollinaire totally breaks with lineal typographical patterns and mixes drawings with words (*Madeleine*), twists individual letters into various shapes such as falling rain (*Il Pleut*), a tie (*Le Cravate et la Montre*), and a fountain (*La Colombe Poignardée et le Jet D'Eau*). Once he even goes so far as to throw in a few bars of music for special effects (*Venu de Dieuze*).

In the same year (1918) Tristan Tzara in his *DADA MANIFESTO* calls for a total 'abolition of logic . . . absolute and unquestionable faith in every god that is the immediate product of spontaneity . . . Freedom' — and Dada poetry shifts into forceful and purposeful derangement, as in Hugo Ball's *Gadji beri bimba*:

gadji beri bimba glandridi laula lonni cadori
gadjama gramma berida bimbala glandri galassassa
laulitalomini
gadji beri bin blassa glassala laula lonni cadorsu
sassala bim . . .

Genre compartmentalization is eliminated and works in a manner similar to Picabia's Umschlag für 391 and his Portrait of Tzara, Max Ernst's collages (fotomontages), George Grosz's word-line-drawing combinations for DER BLUTIGE ERNST, Christian Morgenstern's and Man Ray's 'sound-poems' (Lautgedicht), and literally hundreds of other word-image experiments anticipate practically everything that is being redone today.

In 1919 in Milan, Marinetti, the futurist, in LES MOTS EN LIBERTÉ FUTURISTES, after calling for a complete abolition of conventional syntax and prosody, attempts some futurist poetry of his own that presents excellent examples of graphics-poetry. There is even one foldout poem in the book with the outline of a mountain on it, that purports to be a word-line description of a mountainside battle.

**Ugo Carrega is also an editor here.*

When the Surrealists opened up the subconscious and André Breton saw 'automatic writing,' uncontrolled or hampered by conscious reason, as the single most important source of artistic inspiration, another antilogic door was opened and whatever the Dadaists, Futurists and Cubists might have left standing was now brought to the ground. The visual experimentation had been completed; now, the last remnants of conventional thought-patterns were overturned. In Breton's world 'cocks of rock become crystal,' and 'sand is nothing but a phosphorescent clock which announces midnight through the arms of a forgotten woman' (Tout Paradis n'est pas perdu).

Apollinaire, with amazing prescience — he died in 1918 — wrote:

It would have been odd, if in an epoch when the popular art par excellence, the cinema, is a book of pictures, the poets had not tried to compose pictures for meditative and refined minds which are not content with the crude imaginings of the makers of films. These last will become more perceptive, and one can predict the day when, the photograph and the cinema having become the only form of publication in use, the poet will have a freedom heretofore unknown.

Recent graphics technology has certainly brought about a refining of printing techniques, and any edition of *APPROCHES* or *TOOL* is much more impressive techniquewise than anything the Dadaists or Futurists produced; but the contemporary European experimental poet is hard-pressed to find anything entirely ‘new.’

For the most part, the influence of this whole world of experimentation on U.S. poetry is negligible. Emmett Williams, of course, spent 1949 to 1966 in Europe and between 1957 and 1959 worked with Claus Bremer and Daniel Spoerri in the Darmstadt concretist group, and there are other important concrete poets such as Mary Ellen Solt and Jonathan Williams. But, in general, even the ‘underground’ is ‘spatially-oriented,’ and the graphic poets who have pushed their way into the public eye recently (such as Kostelanetz and Saroyan) are approaching 1870 in terms of historical novelty. Unless the people who have really attempted to experiment with visualization (RJS and d. a. levy, Wally Depew, Lynn Lonidier) get the necessary \$\$ and technical hookup, it may be years before U.S. poetry catches up with Bory and Carrega and Blaine. Recent U.S. poster art, the typographic revolutions of periodicals (for instance, the *SAN FRANCISCO ORACLE*), some of our Pop, Op and Kinetic art,

the antitraditional plot being engineered by Something Else Press, and our experimental film-makers such as Scott Bartlett, give the contemporary European scene a run for its money. But who makes the cover of TIME? T.U.S.A.'s contribution to antique airs and dances — Robert Lowe

WILL SLOTNIKOFF ON ANAIS NIN & A LETTER TO HER FROM THE AUTHOR*

UNTIL THE PUBLICATION OF Daniel Stern's review of *THE DIARY OF ANAIS NIN: 1934-1939* (*THE NATION*, Mar. 4, 1968)—which raises the 'piercing questions' about modern art in its relation to a world where old relations are falsified, historic institutions crumble, and where the whole organism of society has all the earmarks of being infected and man himself a disease—few critics have come up with such superbly perceptive and sensitive insights as those in *Princess of the Underground*.

Mr. Stern rightly implies, I think, that an approach to a resolution of our 'sense of crisis' lies in the quest for a 'new reality' in man's total outlook on himself and his world. The personal problem is no longer distinguishable from the world problem, because intrinsically they are one.

It is in this direction, to my way of thinking, that Miss Nin's voluminous body of work, her vast creation of separate novels and stories, all joining in one vast prose poem, makes its most significant contribution. 'I have wanted in my work,' she recently remarked, 'to unmask the deeper self hidden behind the self that we present to the world. I have written about artists (there are many in *COLLAGES*) because they have a greater internal freedom. Despite their neuroses, they know how to create their lives and transform reality.' And at a writers' conference in Los Angeles, she said: 'The need of pure research is recognized in science. In the same way, the

creative writer must remain open to the possibilities of his medium.’

Also implicit in Stern’s commentary on her major literary aims, in my view at least, is the appreciation that her work addresses itself to a growing chorus of her admirers in such a manner that each reader feels it is addressed exclusively to him and his personal predicaments in today’s world — on a personal one-to-one basis. As early as seven years ago, Adam Margoshes, reviewing *THE SEDUCTION OF THE MINOTAUR* in *THE VILLAGE VOICE*, pointed out that every word in his review was inspired by the light that book cast on his own life, and that his reaction illustrated the deep universality of Anais

**The opening is a fragment from The World Elsewhere of Anais Nin, a chapter from a work in progress: SECOND LIFETIME: Notes Toward a Study of Significant Oddities in Contemporary Life and Art. The letter is one of the earliest ensuing their meeting in New York, in a period when Miss Nin was dividing her time between her home in Louveciennes and frequent trips to Paris. The correspondence has continued, on and off, until the present.*

Nin’s writing. ‘It is about life today, everybody’s life, and so much so that I believe every reader will see his or her life in it, in a completely new way, in a way that deepens understanding and broadens compassion.’

Literature today has been forced into a new position of power to influence the events of contemporary history. It needs to direct itself upon reality now and to reach out to an audience ‘whose individual and mass being can never again be separate from the writer’s.’

MR. SLOTNIKOFF TITLES HIS 1935 LETTER INSIDE TRIVIA ARMAGEDDON SIMMERS

‘July 20 — Your second letter reached me this morning. Said I to myself: “What a scrupulously faithful correspondent is Anais. Wonderful!” Then I looked at the date. And I saw you had answered me even before you had received my letter. Even more wonderful! That’s the way it should be. That’s the way I like it. It’s precisely the way I feel about writing letters. Write ’em whenever the mood really seizes you. The ordinary way seems to me to resemble a game of checkers — First I move, then you move, then I move again, and so forth — I prefer the more subtle, more lawless pattern.

For example, I wasn’t entirely satisfied with my letter (July 5) — not enough meat, jism, juice, succulence, essence, intestine, fire, systole and diastole, pulsation — you know! So I planned to try again very shortly. Here goes:

‘When I read your ingratiating description of the Villa Seurat, the talk, the cafes, studios, Italianesque houses, I see how little there is to correspond to it in New York. I am sort of a lone wolf. I am throwing a great deal on my own resources. Elmer is away, a number of my other friends are away, my wife Clara left for ten days’ holiday at Wingdale, N.Y. — hardly anyone left to talk to. Plenty of opportunity to face out my own inner life to its most unplumbed recesses, laying upon deep layer, crevice, nook and cranny, shady corner and buried riches, light and confusion, inglowing and overgrown with the underbrush of dilemma — streaks of piercing light shining wholesomely through here and there, while the great life of New York goes beating on outside, mighty, strident, Niagara-esque. . . . Yet I know I shall come out on top, just as I am sure you will conquer the forces of all darkness at Louveciennes and Paris. . . . Do I detect a slight note of bitter irony where you speak of Villa Seurat — “It is all talk, cafes, and sitting, with a little writing”? . . . I do not know whom Chana Orloff is. Will you tell me about her? Also the “etceteras.”

‘Am very much thrilled to read about your movement and the Yo publishing venture. I want to know all about it as soon as you are ready with more news. Meant to say that in my last letter but in no excitement overlooked it.

No, I didn’t meet [Walter] Lowenfels. Henry [Miller] mentioned him, that’s all. It’s the first I hear of [Alfred] Perlès and [Michael] Fraenkel. Please do send on what you can of their work. I am immensely interested. Am also still looking forward keenly to getting copy of Chaotica.

It has been almost unbearably hot and sultry in New York since the 1st of July without letup. Today I am down in my sister’s apartment . . . using her typewriter (you see I had to give up mine). I told my sister about your Alraune. She was fascinated. She says she likes you even before she meets you. . . . We may get a little relief from the heat — there’s a real summer storm in progress outside the window. I am hopeful.

‘Anais, your D. H. Lawrence: an Unprofessional Study is in the New York Public Library. Ran across it quite by chance. It gave me quite a thrill which was exceeded only by the thrill I got from hearing from you again thus unexpectedly. It is listed as a rare book not open to the public. You should have seen me there filled with trepidation and self-consciousness at having had to approach the Director of the Library for a special card of admission, then at being admitted behind a locked grill-gate as to a rite or mystery; yet excited, eager to see what you looked like in print — and believe me you came opportunely to my rescue in a dreary hour with your gospel, the resounding great gospel of Lawrence. It brought back a whole train of mixed-sweet memories. It was an open sesame to my state of being at the moment. “What do you want with the book?” asked the Director. “Oh,” I said proudly, “I am interested in the author. I know her and am doing an article.” He stamped approval on my card and in I went.

“Marriage is no marriage that is not a correspondence of blood and of the deepest consciousness.” “The affinity of mind and personality is an excellent basis of friendship between the sexes but a disastrous basis for marriage.” “. . . a wise man learns to recognize the imperatives as they arise — or nearly so — and to obey. But most men bruise themselves to death trying to fight and overcome their own new life-born needs, life’s ever strange imperatives. The secret of all life is obedience; obedience to the urge that arises in the soul, the urge that is life itself, urging us to new gestures, new embraces, new emotions, new combinations, new creations.” This passage interested me profoundly.

‘Was very happy to discover in your book that you admired Blake. You mentioned his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. I have gotten a great deal out of Blake almost as far back as I can remember. The imagination he calls the “enlarged and numerous senses, the only source of vital, graceful, beautiful knowledge.” I am also enraptured by his doctrine of imagination as the only reality and the source of godhead. . . . His stress on the primacy of perception and his identifying the life of cold, analytical reason with dullness or the force of death. . . .

‘Was very much interested to see how many of your quotations from Lawrence corresponded to passages I had picked out for myself, especially from “Assorted Articles.” “The deep psychic disease of modern men and women is the diseased, atrophied condition of the intuitive faculties. There is a whole world of life that we might know and enjoy by intuition, and by intuition alone. This is denied us, because we deny sex and beauty, the source of the intuitive life and of the insouciance which is so lovely in free animals and in plants . . .” Did that one strike you?

My brother-in-law, Carl Victor Lind who as you may remember from an earlier letter is a noted Norwegian artist visiting the U.S., is in the habit of saying: Learn to trust your feelings. Don't be ashamed of them. If you get joy out of it it is good — any other approach is from the outside, hence meaningless to the artist. That was in the old days before we rediscovered that principle for ourselves.

This little saying occurred to me recently: Every artist is one against the world. Or, as Henry puts it, in the opposition between the artist and the world, the world is always wrong, because the world is always wrong. . . .

'Am going through something of a crisis again in the last few weeks. If it isn't the heat, as I suspect it isn't, in accordance with the well-established formula I am looking for the new life-lie, which kills (Ibsen). What in myself have I been false to? Where is the newest lie? I am waiting for the answer, knowing I cannot force the issue. Dream and the writing which flows outward from it will provide the answer again. Is it all a prelude to a new departure, another vision, further growth, enhanced strength? Dividing forces are fighting for my life again. I am aware of the struggle below the level of consciousness. Oh, for the unwavering faith of the great good artists of the past!

My writing is much wiser than I am. I am still a little in the dark as to my direction. "What Is Nowhere To Be Found" contains some clues.

There's practically no one I can talk to freely, naturally right now as I do when I am writing. "But, don't give up hope," says the voice of Anais, "don't give up the search." "We are doomed to solitariness yet we must go on trying to find the complement of ourselves, the self-completion, the cultivation of the opposite" that Goethe perceives to be the road to the artist's achievement of a self-contained unity. (This is a quote from myself.) 'In the course of my "Writers Dance" I say: "What is this feeling with which I sometimes

approach writing, as today, a feeling of doom, the feeling of a man going to prison or condemned to the chair, extremely overwrought, white hot with apprehension, thrilled with delight and terrified at the same time, something like a nervous bridegroom at the altar, like a candidate immediately prior to a decisive examination, or a father trembling outside the delivery room. As if something were dying and being born at the same time — resistance up to the very last minute against the dying thing; salute and invocation to the living. Farewell to the dead. Hail to the child new born this day.”

‘Another excerpt: “And so here I am on this Monday afternoon with the best of intentions to tell the rest of the story of ‘writers dance,’ but it turns out that this is not my day to work on the completion of that episode. It will have to wait. My mind has a way of choosing its own topic that it is ready to treat of and there is no gainsaying it. So for no good reason that appears we are back in the business past when Wilkie was an accessory to a typewriter and ‘tomorrow’ was an empty, dreaded expectation. But it doesn’t matter so very much any more. Let us pick up the story wherever we will there is a thread leading back to the center.”’

I wrote the other day that the writer in me has a way of choosing his own material that he is ready to formulate, i.e., give form to; writing starts only when the form-imposing process has been completed. The process works according to a hidden principle of its own which I cannot even state. All I know is in the intervals there is an almost unrelieved chaos and the sense of crisis. Some mighty conflict is tearing me apart while I cannot even detect the character of the contestants or the explicit issue of battle. When a stage of the struggle is completed, articulate vision begins to body forth, always by way of its own dark equivocal symbols. The bodying forth lasts for a while, then subsides again into a covering silence which conceals the ruinous costly agitation

as the opponents continue to use me as a battlefield, to what ends? Writing is thus a clue, the flashing on of a light, a key to what must otherwise remain undisclosed — clue to a state of being, entrance into life, key to a world, light over all. I don't care whether this work is thought of as literature or not. Literature in the traditional formal sense has little to do with it. It is more a matter of communicating a message as much to myself as to another. Do you see it my way?

'Another saying: Each live personality sets up powerful vibrations in its creative work that arouse hatred and love, dislike and sympathetic response. Do you like it? That is plenty for me. If not I still want to know but so what?

'Why do I read, I asked myself recently? One reason, to seek renewal of my faith, inspiration. To find men and women who share my unique neurotic configuration!

'At the Harlem River the other day I thought: Down by the water front with its quiet, hypnotic ebb and flow we can be natural, we can drop the persona — over the pier. Do I want you to drop yours? Yes, if I like you. So much of what I hear people say is said with one eye on an audience.

I can't help wondering to myself how these people speak when they are wakened in the middle of the night, face to face only with their own shivering, naked vanity, no one to applaud, nobody to admire, as if on their death bed.

'What is this desire I have to know everything at once? Burning impatience for absolute knowledge? What is it? Suicidal impulse? The lure of the abyss? . . .

'Well, we must close some time, I suppose, so let it be with Gide. He is a recent discovery for me. Whatever I knew about him has always fascinated me. Now I know better why. I read *Les Caves du Vatican*. Also *Pierre-Quint*, André Gide, his *Life and his Work*. Let me tell you a few things about him that I think are of special interest. . . .

' . . . His capriciousness as a friend. How he was immensely enthusiastic and then dropped them as suddenly.

How he loved to spring surprises on them, how he used to disappear. At 50 he found serenity. "I am no longer fighting my demon. I am no longer uneasy. I no longer resist my desires." He had to wait to 50; thank God I am only 33. At 50 after his self-affirmation his heart was light. He began to sing fresh Earthly Fruits. "I have lived too prudently up till now." . . . His expansion of spirit through self-acceptance brought the realization of the desires of his youth, one by one, along unforeseen paths. He found his disciples and his audience. . . the dream, said Gide, if it gives birth to the work of art, is itself an activity.

'If I were in Paris I would very much like to meet him. . . . Proust said to Gide, "Everything can be said without the 'I'." Gide proceeded to say it in *Si le Grain ne Meurt* with the "I." Nothing is terrible, said Proust to him, except that which has not yet been spoken.

'Remember me to Henry. Would like to hear from him again soon.'

THE SWEET FRAGRANCE OF JAZZ MEN

by Gene Fowler

In 1934 EZRA POUND PUBLISHED his Treatise on Meter as an appendix to a larger text, ABC OF READING. In this brief essay, Pound sets forth what every poet knows instinctively: that poetry is a time art. He points out that 'There is a great laxity or vagueness permitted the poet in regard to pitch.' And later in the piece he writes:

The writer of bad verse is a bore because he does not perceive time and time relations, and cannot therefore delimit them in an interesting manner, by means of longer and shorter, heavier and lighter syllables, and the varying qualities of sound inseparable from the words of his speech.

It wasn't until the 1950's that Dwight Batteau, developing his transphonemator for transliterating porpoise speech, discovered through physical measurement that the single phoneme was, itself, a rhythmic structure. This opened up the possibility of thinking of the poet's ear as an extension of the process underlying the operation of physical hearing of speech — while the nonpoet may be said to be operating on an erroneous set of assumptions or bad habits.

In an earlier article i stated that i assumed the Orpheus myth is to be read literally. I pointed out that the poet who truly has the poet's power can, given a susceptible reader, make the trees and stones (perceptions) dance. I cited the stage hypnotist as a contemporary demonstration that the power exists.

I would still defend that interpretation of Orpheus. Since my uncovering of Batteau's work, however, another interpretation of value presents itself.

The lyre is not language itself, but a particular (musical) use of the fibers in the inner ear when language is what is heard. And Orpheus, then, would be the mechanism for hearing language that transforms language into perceptions.

This clears up a problem that plagued Maria Montessori, who in her 1949 lectures (*The Absorbent Mind*, 1967, Boston) wondered how a child came to zero in on the human voice and to absorb language. Other frequent sounds were not taken up or abstractions of language made from them. Dr. Montessori had to postulate ‘nebulae’ or Ur-forms used in a kind of ur-recognition.

Batteau points out that we hear language not, as acousticians thought, by use of frequency (pitch) modulations or other such, but by time analysis or hearing of rhythm. Dr. Montessori’s problem clears up automatically. The other sounds present, except for a dripping faucet, will not supply the rhythmic patterns that draw the ear. The dripping faucet is too boring for sustained attention. Batteau’s work indicates that the speech sounds are identified this way. On a larger scale, the child begins to have a poet’s ear. The ‘little rhythms’ catch the basic ear: this is a different sound. On a larger scale it is likely a drone. Only the substance of the drone becomes a speaking voice. Then, with closeness of attention, the drone begins to break up into wavers. Here, an interest in music is born. A component of the wavers will be pitch variation. Particularly if the mother sings. Then there is further breaking up or articulating of the substance of the drone. Here sense begins to be possible, the larger phonemic figures begin to emerge: syllables, words, phrases. (Syllables and words are classes of phrases.)

McLuhan has made a great deal of money and a gigantic reputation asserting that the printing press gave our language its linear form. This is patently ridiculous (as are most things he says) if one considers that unwritten

languages are linear in their form. It becomes more ridiculous when one realizes that language is linear because our hearing works by way of time analysis and study of sequential delays.

To take another approach, we can look at the geometry of location. To determine horizontal declination by hearing we take the orientation of the head and the time interval between impact at two ears. Thus we have a base line across the ears and, then, one angled line to the source. A kind of half-triangulation. With the eyes, of course, we do not use the time-analysis system. We have a base line across the eyes and two 'shots' of the object — a full triangulation that gives distance as well as a double-checked location. In the visual we do not use time analysis in direct perception; in the auditory, we do. McLuhan may make of that what he will. Almost anyone could have told him that tapestries are printed and could conceivably be printed with matrix and interchangeable pieces of type. We print our books as we do (but needn't) because our hearing is based on a form of time series.

McLuhan would do away with time because he sees it as a scholastic practice. Einstein, Minkowski, and others also did away with time in a sense. They ran it into the graph, froze it, made it behave like the spacial dimensions. That is, they wanted it to behave in a way suitable to the eye, not the ear. Nicola Tesla, on the other hand, was a poet. He hated and fought Einstein for the latter's static universe. I must reconstruct Tesla's vision from a very bad description of his comments on it and from his later work. Roughly, that vision could be this: The spacial continuum is set in a larger and copenetrant spatial continuum, interactive in the dimensions of the inner continuum. inner continuum rotates in the larger. The rotation generates currents in the inner continuum. These currents and their interactions are energy and matter. The sense of the rotation is our sense of time.

Tesla's poem (or my translation of it from rough notes) may or may not be more true or a better poem than the Einstein-Minkowski. It appeals more to me because it leaves time alive. Borges, in his stories, articles, essays, is obsessed with the idea of time as a fallacy, a veil, something nonexistent, a trick played on us. And McLuhan may have that suspicion.

The poet should embrace time. It may or may not be a cosmic trick; but, without it, our art is dried to sand and frozen into death. A sand with no movement. The discrete particles robbed of their discreteness. And robbed, at the same time, of their position in motion, robbed of their valuable blur even as they are robbed of their crystal-line discreteness.

Most of the reputed poets today do not have a sense of time and they attempt to make up for this with a proliferation of dead 'things' or in the pseudo vividness of 'deep image' (in which the hope is that the archetypal symbol will cause the reader to supply a music).

For several years i marvelled with almost everyone else at the 'strange' fact that many of the poets who got the best music into poems were unable to sing— even the crude singing people will indulge in at gatherings. Yeats and Pound are the two best-known cases.

The matter was of some concern to me because i could not 'carry a tune' and could knock any group off pitch in about three bars. There was the fear that while my poems sounded 'right' to me, i might not hear correctly. My wife, who is a poet/folk singer, called by the collector Richard Chase, 'Sweetest of the sweet singers,' assured me that my music was fine.

There was a clue among the jazz men. Jazz is a very 'musical' music. Yet, it is polyrhythmic more than polyphonic. The 'tunes' used are generally not of great melodic interest. But i didn't make much use of this clue. My

interest in the jazz men was due to their ‘talking’ through the instruments. I studied phrasing from them.

Pound’s essay was important to me in that it discussed the tools i did have—and i missed the inference that these tools are, indeed, the secret to music.

Pitch is only one aspect of sense in the poetry, one of the things that can vary. The music comes from changes in time. This goes all the way back to hearing phonemes, comes through hearing speech, and ends in the poetic ear.

When one can hear fully, the rhythms of a properly constructed poem will pervade his tissues — and he will experience with all his being the essence of structures (universes) taken in.

This leads to an interesting concept of poetry and puts me into direct opposition to the so-far undisputed aphorism of Robert Creeley: FORM IS BUT AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT. I must first follow the lead of the physicists who found that any particle of content they came up with turned out to be a pattern of something else. CONTENT IS BUT A PHASE (EXTENSION) OF FORM.

Both aphorisms lead, of course, to the assumption that content = form.

And this is a concept showing up all over during the Twentieth Century. The most famous instances being Einstein’s $E = MC^2$ (omitting the square-rooted denominator). Form would be energy, content mass, changes the light factor. Roughly.

All visions are segments of one vision: how things go together in our essentially human universe.

Content is locked up form. The music of the poem is the radiant, coordinately unlocked and transforming form. We owe this form to our perception of time.

We could ask of our contemporary poets a greater sense of time and time’s value. And then we’d walk in tropic fields and enjoy the sweet fragrance of jazz men.

RAKESONG

Kendra S. Graham

With horoscopic leanings and
Right hand firmly rakebound
I step my gentle way through
Pavane-like poses of a milder self.
A sweeping motion of another voice
Calls rare rhythms into play
In a joyous fugue which
Circles out my wishings
Homeward and brings me there.

THE HISTORY OF POETRY AS ;

Rosellen Brown

SINCE, AS CLICHE RIGHTLY HAS IT, the form and content of (good) poetry are deeply congruent, what appear to be merely the symptoms of change often tell deep tales and take part in the tales themselves. An example, a casual observation which yields up history. Since the 1950's, the semi-colon seems headed for the same extinction as the earth's noble beasts who one day (but not suddenly) were no longer needed in nature's economy. Poets today who could fruitfully use new symbols on their typewriters might painlessly consider trading the :/; key for double slash marks or lower-case ampersands.

Look back ten or fifteen years. What better equipment for the poet, the exemplar of that diffident and overdefended decade, than this most indeterminate of all punctuation marks, the crutch of those who want to hedge their bets (;) finish the sentence but not quite (;) make a statement, then add to it or qualify it (;) link abstractions loosely with a leg shackle, dividing the weight of a declaration equally into two or three or four parts. The colon and semi-colon are the Talmudic shrugs of the grammarian: more often than not they distribute the poet's thoughts into one hand and the other hand.

Take these examples from the bluebook of the poetry industry of ten years ago, the Hall/Pack/Simpson anthology, NEW POETS OF ENGLAND AND AMERICA. Of all people, Robert Bly, whose punctuation these days tends to be as lean as Dick's and Jane's, wrote this:

The dove returns; it found no resting place;
It was in flight all night above the shaken seas;
Beneath ark eaves
The dove shall magnify the tiger's bed;
Give the dove peace.

And so on. That may not be the best example, since the rationale for the peculiar punctuation of such straightforward syntax is clearly to call attention to itself in order to let the final line stand out all the more finally. Still, it is hard to imagine Bly today feeling the need for such heavy-handed signaling. Here is a more conventional use of colon and semi-colon, in more familiar attitudes of strain. Bly is speaking in the (unlikely) voice of a Missouri Traveller Writing Home, 1830:

Day breaks, and the Pawnees on those cliffs Above,
shouting, keep pace with us; The warrior trains like rocks
against the sky: At dawn we see the crumbling cliffs at first,
Then horse and rider, then the Western sky; Those ash-grey
horses black against the clouds!

Whatever compulsion he had to connect those not-otherwise dissimilar parts, these days Bly is equally devoted to stark short sentences whose independence of one another sometimes demands connection in the reader's mind, and sometimes opposition. There is rarely confusion. In either case it is juxtaposition, not punctuation, that does the work.

But Larkin's Church-going is a better test, and appropriate because the poem was so serviceable an example of the antiheroic carefully-guarded mood of its day. In the first stanza, the punctuation appears at its most straightforward, unarguably necessary, if you like that sort of thing, to connect phrases that might be confusing if they were separated by commas: 'Another church: matting, seats, and stone, / And little books; sprawlings of flowers, cut / For Sunday, brownish now; some brass and stuff / Up at the

holy end; the small neat organ . . .’ All those delectable opportunities to exercise the limber caesura! But, farther on:

Yet stop I did: in fact I often do, And always end much at a loss like this, Wondering what to look for; wondering, too . .

Power of some sort or other will go on In games, in riddles, seemingly at random; But superstition, like belief, must die . . . etc.

The penultimate stanza even ends unaccountably with a semi-colon as though Larkin couldn’t let the thought go, had to drive home the connection, the well-soldered complexity of his idea. And yet, without it, the first line of the next verse can certainly hold still sufficiently to seem related to the subject. The same holds true in *Places, Loves, Ones*:

No, I have never found The place where I could say This is my proper ground, Here I shall stay; Nor met that special one Who has an instant claim On everything I own Down to my name; To find such seems to prove You want no choice in where To build, or whom to love; You ask them to bear You off irrevocably . . . etc.

The first semi-colon in the stanza is sensible; it keeps an incomplete hunk of sentence from floating off on its own. But the others, in spite of the discursiveness of the content, are compulsive. They are tics. They are the refusal to let go of anything that so beautifully characterized the collective anal-retentive mood of Larkin’s readers ca. 1955.

Lowell’s poems in this (1957) volume are full of the same overassertion of relatedness and overlay of parts. So are those of Thom Gunn and W. S. Merwin (whose most recent book, *THE LICE* [1967], contains not so much as a single period, let alone anything more subtle or devious). And James Wright, whose newer work affects the same plain speech and almost primitive directness as Bly’s, holds the bones of half a dozen poems together with ligaments of colon and semi-colon (You stand all day and look at girls / Or

climb a tree, or change a tire; / But I have seen the colored swirls / Of water flow to livid fire' etc.).

The irony of a reliance such as Larkin's on this rather thick texture of punctuation is, of course, that these poems were considered (by the relatively unadventurous poets of university and library, like Larkin) such a breakthrough into a kind of colloquialism and 'real speech.' It was disarming, the sudden confrontation of the inhibited undaring intellectual with all he'd pushed back under:

We all hate home And having to be there : I detest my room, Its specially chosen junk, The good books, the good bed, And my life in perfect order : So to hear it said

He walked out on the whole crowd Leaves me flushed and stirred, Like Then she undid her dress Or Take that you bastard; Surely I can, if he did?

and

Why should I let the toad work Squat on my life?

Obviously, the accuracy of these poems, the reality of the situation of their personae, was that these paradox-haunted overrational little men were wise to themselves all along, never really lost control, dreamed but then reasoned themselves out of it: I'd go today . . . if It weren't so artificial, Such a deliberate step backwards . . .

And what best dramatizes this unshakeable control is the careful syntax, the subtle rhetoric of a man whom one can picture spending hours dotting his i's, fastidiously weighing words for their appropriateness, and then attaching thoughts with those semi-colons, like elephants marching, each with his tail in the snout behind him.

It isn't only — or even necessarily — that the content of poetry has so irrevocably changed in the past ten years. Many, though not all, of these poems could be written today without sounding like throwbacks. But the attitude of the Sixties is admittedly much more confident (if not often defensively so) — for one thing, fed up to here with the

schlemiel as literary hero and the analyst as the real hero, with Everyman as existential drop-out. And our opinions on some very crucial issues of survival are so well-defined that, with the tracks of so many authentic animals near on all sides, the intellectual no longer needs to go bear-hunting in the mirror for the taste of flesh. Not surprisingly, the poetry of 1969 — expressive as is all art of these many changes in our preoccupations and self-image — is no longer such a neurotic tangle dependent on (:) (:) (?) and (—) to keep its rationalizations and qualifications and hesitations out of the already-devious path of certainties.

WHEN ALONE

Daniel O.

I relisten the silence of
spilled sand,
our glass broken
on an oceanless shore of castles —
and our first born
buried alive in your nakedness.

STUART FRIEBERT

ALL THE DISCOVERIES

You want
to become an officer.
She likes
getting on with them.
Your leave
has just begun to begin.
Soon she knows
you'll die a few days later
in Poland in 1939, a manly
gesture in your knees, your
thin mustache flirting, so
she stays in bed, gives you

the fluid pink rose.
All the discoveries
polished for sons
shine in the nude. She'd
rather not wear them now.
Everyone thinks
the pictures the little man
in the blue coat outside
the Paris metro is selling
are dirty. Look down,
Rubens is chasing Nijinsky
through Polish blossoms.

STUART FRIEBERT

THE LION'S PICTURE

Among the procreating animals
at the Zürich zoo
is the lion that mounts
not far from Joyce's grave,
a new page in the sex manual
for my son, who studies the
lion's current existential
problem & tosses it popcorn: a
major theological gesture
winning praise from passing
priests who like some Old
Testament Tarzans need a chance
to slay a lion on a day it snows.
It starts to snow. My kid
begs to buy the lion's picture
at the kiosk. For a franc
he finds a rich, positive content
in the lion's smile. We quarter it
& toss it down to James
on the way home past the grave.
Nora smiles shyly up at the priests.

STUART FRIEBERT

**MY MOTHER DIES IN WISCONSIN WHILE I AM
EXCAVATING IN EGYPT**

I turn off the noisy drill, the earth
hardly needs piercing after weeks of a
surgical sun. 'It is only a matter of
discovery,' our obscure doctor writes.
My father writes it is natural
to be ill. I come quick as a child.
Her room is musty green. (Another of
her Egyptian stories, the world blossoming
with ugly things and queens) Her lips
swell like Cleopatra's, the tongue
loops out of the mouth. (My father
pushes it gently back again) I am told
I may kiss her, but she does not
kiss me back. (Please seal her up, I've
had enough) The undertaker hammers down
the nails, my hands feel the wood like
a cryptic inscription. The coffin sinks
into my skull, the diggers work hard
in the hot ruins. I pay them well
and smile for discovering
something I had not known:
her death is the tunnel
to the deepest remains. The doctor
sews up my skull with chilly fingers.

ALFRED B. CAHEN

FINALE

I remember (three weeks) long ago
when the air was clotted
with light and the stars were matted
in strange constellations
and every word was night
or something blacker
and love was a piece of cave art
to be carved on large trees
(and if you came back the trees
were dead or rotted).
You know now that knives are not my domain
and that night is beautiful for what it is
and that stars take a long time to deliver
their heat (but it is worth the wait)
and even the sky is a hemophiliac
and christ how easy it is to be a great poet
hunched in sweat when vertigo is love
not fright when bacon is the big talk
of the day and the sheets make your laugh
and each leaf is a lyric.

TOBY OLSON

LIZARD (FROM PIG/S BOOK)

Pig tells an old tale
and writes an old book
about a lizard
who doesn't move
& just sits there.
Pig squats in the shade
and writes
a book about a lizard
who sits in the sun
and watches the pig
write, in the shade.

TOBY OLSON

COYOTE (FROM PIG/S BOOK)

Coyote makes a diary of sadness
in the mountains, deserts
and plains where he lives.
alone, and he sings from it.
At night,
even where Pig can hear,
it moves
in and across Pig/s eyes
and in pig/ears, near
where his brain
ticks: what they will do is make
meat of me
bacon and chops
a-roast-pig, and whatever else is
tasteful (Coyote
sings from it.
and Pig hears it
alone, in the barnyard
where he lives.

TOBY OLSON

SNAKE (FROM PIG/S BOOK)

Bright ringed and beautiful
coral . dry
and death rattle in a pig/sty
and in the belly of a pig,
dead. Yet
you are beautiful . ringed
turn of the wrist
whole arm in the belly of a pig.
And snake does walk out, turns
winter to spring
in a pig/s
eye fixed upon nothing.
The power that snake has
that pig should love him.

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TOBY OLSON

(FROM MAPS)

THE LAST MAP

which hangs in the study
(the bedroom / which is
the map of Ptolemy — Ptolemy
's/world (all ice flows & absence
of this place we live on
and off .
who sent
men out in all directions
to find if
the land ended
and where .
& the land was
at least the land —
and would be heard from
eventually .
What we have said
here in this room
or anywhere (
desire/love/death
is measurement
.THATS
what a map is (hope
fully correct.

TOBY OLSON

FOR PTOLEMY

whole continents
do not exist
are locked in the hands of dead men
in their poor dead minds. That's
the latitude
& the longitude of it.
Let each of us bring a stake
and plant it in the ground
Let the map
be realized . Let the stake
Bloom

JAMES BERTOLINO

A BLIND MAN

I am blind
fondling legless spiders
and ant-spattered hammers,
mouth dripping with the custard
of a toad's brain.
The smell of piss on clinkers
tickles my nose.
I wish I could eat glass.
If my god would make me
a mattress of pubez
and present an earthen jug
filled with the cool of seaweed
and fresh mushrooms
to soothe my hot eyes
I would lie quietly
and not mind being blind.

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WAI-LIM YIP

THE CROSSING (5 POEMS)

I

In the midst of talking,
it comes:
breaks knotted noises
nips budding blooms
That year — attenuated desires
That year — scheme of sadness stretched:
Beneath the barquentine, jadelike water
Evening crows were gone with the surge
Wife said: Let us set sail
eastward (It doesn't matter)
westward (It doesn't matter)
Lingering house ashes blown
Into threads as from bobbins to weave
Noiselessly
The cloth of memory
Don't we have the cradle of the sea?
Let our boy Begonia's dream
Seep into the surf off starboard
In the midst of our talking
Wife's hair threw behind her
The thudding of war
Sleep, baby, sleep
Bright snow we keep
Fear no brides
Stepping, stepping up to you
Sleep, baby, sleep
No waking, no fright
Although King of Wounds are you

WAI-LIM YIP

SLEEPING,

waterfall thunders from the dam
 So distant, so faraway — as if
 The high-hanging intravenous feeding
 Across the broken sundown
 Ferrying troupes of girls in white
 Whose fingers draw
 a chord of land, mist-masked
 a man
 Shakes an incensed bell, sprinkles
 Gold waves on parched hands
 When the crystal keel glides into the veins
 'The wind is up! Strike sail! Steer!'
 Boom! Instead of quicksand, a clear lake
 O King, why cry at the water's brim
 For your Lady, your cortèges?
 Shoulder up your city:
 Your sky-reaching footfalls are full
 Of your Lady, your cortèges
 O King, grieve no more
 Wherever you go, the city will be with you

WAI-LIM YIP

II

Leisurely, catkins hover
 In the limpid sun
 A dove, mouthing a little cloud
 Pierces the mountain road
 You lean on the window sill
 As if on your skirt
 (Darkly, sandalwood burns)
 And float a paper-flower boat
 Outside the window
 Checkered leopard's back
 Up and down moves. And from you:
 Winds circle behind Kings' Canyon

Like stars, white day and bird-songs fall
Amidst thick sound-blasts of the engine
A slanting big city blooms
Furrows and furrows of flowers
Making night
Like you
Lean on the skirt: crystal cold arms
Rimless gaze
As skating knives flash-flash cut into
The still, still circle
No other way. Thus, the King's reply:
Don't be sorrowful because you see no more
The torrential ocean
Leaning on the window sill
Let us harken: swelling tides in the veins

WAI-LIM YIP

III

Dear father:

Fruits die in their taste and nourishment
We say good-bye to fields and to work
Door beyond door, gate beyond gate
In a park, thunderous steps
We loosen our hair into flags
And — naked — sing:
Corpulent circle, turn O turn
You, outside the circle
I, inside it
Corpulent circle, turn O turn
Circle turns into a dot
You and I sleep on a cot
Corpulent dot, turn O turn
Often up on the steeple, we unmoor the stars
And speed on the five-strings among cloud-trees
And think of the death of fruits in cabins
Night comes: all mountains rise
Drumsticks fall, water-birds soar
We join hands to anchor one by one
By the sky-obscuring guitar's loins
And loosened hair flutters
Fluttering hair is our Name

WAI-LIM YIP

IV

Such a rare night of north wind
A thousand trees, a million trees of frost-flowers
(How lovely!)

A thousand trees, a million trees of frost-flowers
(Who's going to see?)

The portal is lost in a hanging shadow of sky
I stop to think: kingfisher after kingfisher
Pecks and pecks at the dripping color of spring
Because there was once you, O King
Once you: splash the Milky Way
ride on singing

break tree-walls
When two banks of mountain flowers opened like
 clouds
Bells and drums joined
and you said:
The fertile sun comes rumbling
Forests break, mountains end
We spray wine into mist
To find in it a hand
To pass a door
In a windless room, cock an ear
To a gushing fountain
To endless footfalls
O King, I hear only frost-flowers crack
You walk away on the fragile nervous system
At the fort, you seemed to have said:
Give you my blood, give you Begonia
City walls drowned in the dawn
A thousand trees
A million
Of frost-flowers
A thousand trees
A million
Of frost-flowers
When winds fall
Spring grass grows lush:
Begonia, O Begonia, where's my Begonia?

WAI-LIM YIP

V

Once there was a King
He walked among whistling poplars
Air gathered around him
He rushed toward trees among clouds
Cloud-trees carried sun's white shadow
Waves carried palls of satin

Our King, eyeless and lashless king
 His trembling lips, what do they spell?
 Once there was a King who had a son
 Called Begonia. (The rest we can't tell)
 Begonia rushed to skyward pillars
 Leaned on an ash-tree, watched gurgling springs
 A white horse flashed between stone crevices
 Air spread to earth-gray river
 On it drifted a guitar of hair-pendants
 Our Begonia
 His open mouth, what does it sing?
 Our King in the story had a wife
 On the dam she saw water-spray wash the sunset
 Listened to Sisters in white ring beyond the surge
 And doves coo on the sand
 But pine-clouds were so very nice
 Flower not flower, leaves not leaves
 She did not understand why a blast of wind
 Blew Sisters' black umbrella toward her
 She'd rather it be a barquentine

WAI-LIM YIP

ONCE THERE WAS A KING WHO HAD A SON

Called Begonia who had a mother
 She walked on the impregnable bridge-head :
 Seagulls combed buildings, night oppressed tides
 Fishes, the river-mouth; many hands wave windows
 Whose singing so very pleasing
 So very pleasing it was like an attentive Blue Bird
 Flap — flap — flap in the white-glaring mulberry woods
 Begonia's mother
 Leaning on iron-railings murmured, murmured
 What is she calling for?
 Sleep, baby, sleep
 Please do not weep
 King has satin sheets

Begonia has a white steed
Sleep, baby, sleep
No vigil to keep
Pine-surges will look after wife
Blue Bird will attend mother
Harken :
At the foothills
fresh, sudden rains
Down beneath, above streams
clouds over clouds fly

JAMES RAGAN

WAITING FOR THE BUS AT MIDNIGHT

A lamppost of finger streams,
The moon puffs a cloud
Past ghosts of autumn, slips down
In a moment's cue and kicks
Its muddy shoes and dusty bottom
Dry of the night serene.
The act begins. A willow
Sags to the steps, kneeling
Where the town hall clock whispers
Sermons to the monk, drunk
With Sunday talk. Crickets lying
In the mist settle to their pillows.
Only the car wakes, screaming
As the dog wags its tail
Along the center stripe; bitterns
Brag indifference to the star
And teenage lead, wearing slacks
Too tight and dreaming,
Who sometimes, when she tiptoes
Up to meet his tongue, stretches worlds
Apart her buttocks, round, hypnotic.
She does not hear my breathing
But lips her lines so boldly

Spinsters in bough-tressed windows,

JAMES RAGAN

Like tramps, crippled by the cold,
See the smile, the rippled silhouette
Of forms at rest, yet do not hear
His swoon stagger through the sweat
Beneath her breast. I strain
To watch the drama hands unfold
And kiss the neck, its naked moles
Like speckled dunes or shadows
Stippled on the moon while he,
Flipping the coin heads and tails,
Saddles the bench like Brando,
Vacant, and overplays the role.

DAVE MARGOSHES

TIME AFTER TIME

In time
the days will pass more quickly
than they do now.
The sun will rise like phoenix
out of the great dark damp ocean
and settle like an ash into another
in less time than it takes
to clench a fist
or open a hand.
And with this retraction will come
fewer moments for anger
less opportunity for pain
scarcer instants of anguish.
We'll run to each other for warmth
and comfort
take to the hills
for moments of peace
grow old and happy and

gloriously tan
sheltered in the heat of our dimming eyes
and time after time
you'll hear me say that I'm
so lucky
to be loving you.

DAVE MARGOSHES

HI-JACK

I hear the thunder singing
above my whipping sails
like bandit planes
swooping
kitelike
from naked skies
and shudder with delicious terror.
My eyes are dark,
compass shattered by storm,
rudder broken by the weight
of my crew
who
like seastung hopes have
abandoned me, ratlike.
But to what avail
come on me with broadsides,
waste my wealth
at envy sea's green bottem?
rather take me, take me:
I am undefended,
although closely observed
by the navies of impotent nations,
undefended completely,
and courseless;
and how my timbers shiver
for the dark Cuba
of my lover's bed.

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STANLEY COOPERMAN

CAPPELBAUM DROPS OUT

Never: because
the horizon is filled with exploding trees,
apples
mined with worms; because
when I run down the street
sniffing
fire hydrants,
a thousand dogs follow me
screaming
about Love.
Sometimes
it's a fat policeman
who puffs up
Shirley Temple's brassiere, and issues
benedictions
from the tip of his club;
with mortgaged teeth he
threatens
to foreclose
on ABERRATIONS, like
that woman poet
with dead babies hanging from her mouth,
ripping
another fetus
from the torn placenta of Art;
she suffers, she
suffers
all over Asia,
while her conscience
flows
toward New England acreage . . .
the Mother-of-us-All, her

in
dignation
knows no menopause.

STANLEY COOPERMAN

Even the Flower People carry
knives
in their petals,
hustling
another chemical
or smearing themselves
over toilets without water, typewriters
without keys;
and in front of the Pentagon
bibles
spread themselves over the grass
like flaps of melted bones.
Meanwhile
the soulbrothers
dream of corpses, and play
with an Africa
whose taste would make them vomit; climbing
the unwashed names
of Arab slavers who cooked a continent,
they boil a crazy goulash
of non-history, and
MARCH
burning
up their own assholes.
Never, never: I will stand
nowhere
you can follow, you
whose brains
have turned into iron pipes, whose
hips thighs beards dreams legs
are printed
like slogans

over all the sunlight and
possible
blue water of the world.

CEDRIC CULLINGFORD

And suddenly to be awake, and find her waking up beside me, and to feel the pull of sheets that fall with sudden end of dreams, until the intricate edges of the air are shaped by her breath, the room stirs and we hear the shadows of the clouds dragged along the road, while the snow kneads air, and listen to the fluff of feather against wind. These sounds are behind the tinkling of dust-bin lids, the revving engines, and we wake. Why did we know this was the hour to wake together, to take each other in the arms again; the air had changed our breathing; and we need each other now. Now cars scrape sounds against the windows, there are distant screams, sirens, the stepping of so many feet on snow: and yet we smile with threats to be so near together and to have so much, so many details we have time now to ignore.

CEDRIC CULLINGFORD

Where we lie cool as bluebells in the meadow,
there is shade, the cool grass, rivers loud skies
where clouds sweep the cherry branches, and the
wasps,
and heroes as it could be, the mirrored water
touched should be, love saying this as if I
knew
what flowers could decorate the mind, how to keep
you slicked and sifted with recognition, sponged
by the sky on a sweet hot day, on the curved lawn.
And insect spring is crawling from buds, twitching
in shrill grass, the daffodils throb in the eyes.
Your fair hair sprays as the sycamore leaves,
ferns bright with wind, oaks build new wrinkled
thickness while I remember clearly how it could
be, how we were unconscious even of the sun.

CEDRIC CULLINGFORD

In those moments beyond courage when we came together in the market or the shops, flags snap in the wind, with metal wrangling and clink of change, and our breaths hot and close and sticky as strawberries. Even the sun is full with deliberate fingering, still, warming the corners which old men build all day, and still the same light is wedged in glints between glasses, slides on tables wet with beer, makes curtains seem lace and clean, and then you glanced through the angles of the eyes (as if you made all this), at fruit noisy with wasps, each glass ready for your hand to hold. As your eyes informed, the sun makes cymbals of cars' rooves, engraving patterns in the trees; it seems there was much more made then than we were.

CEDRIC CULLINGFORD

The snow has sunk into your cheeks, your skin is ice. Your body is the plaster of each field, trees faint with cold, the corpses of your breath. The river that you dominate flows cruel over the earth, the air is marbled cold. You could not cause such grief, alive. No ice will crack or wind penetrate this glazed completeness, for not only your veins blacken with twigs; there are no distances but frozen stubble, the stiff snow. My breath freezes in the mouth, drops to the ground. You are too near all this to get away from. My hand dared touch this permanence, dared close round anonymous in circles as the hill, without a struggle, and be objectless as grey earth. And when wind clashes against bones and grass cracks underfoot, my skin is ice, and sinks into your cheeks.

DAVE KELLY

THE STRANGERS

If I speak now
there will be
too many objects
in this room
I have overfurnished
already.
If I ask you
how you like
the music
you will wait
too long
before speaking,
you will shatter
my slow smile,
it will not be me
you answer
it will be you
heavy, slow,
it will be you
and in another room.

EDWIN OCHESTER

A LINE OF PATCHEN'S

You are asleep
behind the golden mask
of your hair.
The winter rain
drains away
through our lawn
of sand.
The child
is struggling
against his enemy
sleep.
I love you so much
that war will die.

FELIX POLLAK

POET READING

Stares them into orbit
until the last flake of movement
settles, completing the pattern of
hush.
Then
The Reader's voice
slower than sound
syllables like mouth-blown glass,
multi-lit opaque transparencies
enunciating, Ecce Poeta!
Applauses from the
unchosen few
tiptoeing in felt slippers down sudden
canyons of silence.
Matrons among the co-eds
(spring's promise always brighter
than what we know of the ways of flowers?)
restlessly shifting gears, guiltily
eyeing exits where

Oblivion
(yes, even for The Reader)
already yawns & yawns
with a dark
Gothic
capital Zero.

FELIX POLLAK

**ABSTRACTIONS IN CONCRETE (FOR LISEL
MUELLER)**

We're buying tragedy like soap.
Our lives are regular.
Who lives by the clock
shall die of the clock
saith the preacher.
We kill by the minute. Our nights
are cut short by alarms :
lay-away hopes
hide-away loves
roll-away years.
We keep smiling, we brace
our teeth against life.
We shave our lies
we dye our eyes
we dust our passion.
But our fear is a chain of dark rings
between cheekbone and brow.
And our dreams
our dreams of dreams
drown in manhattans.

NANCY MARINO

WITH A PIECE OF BLUE

When I talk
and strange words escape
I know
I am not me anymore
and I rush back over memory
picking up scattered puzzlepieces
wondering where did I
why did I go again
then stop
with a piece of blue in my hand
because it tells me
I am a fluid
and will swiftly find
level in the uneven
of my new.

HARLEY ELLIOTT

BLESSED AND RESTING UNCLE

blessed and resting uncle
and your banjo
hand flowered, ill played
I would say it like that even now
an equation of sounds to say something other
as it was when we put him there
a general tearless day
typical with clouds, yellow grass
some swallowing horsemen and wives
dakota has no answers
for a man wasted on the banjo
but rock
self assured,
the granite fields with power not to suffer but allow
holes opened in them
or at best a line of farmers
in wide ties
kildeer were playing foolish at the grave
that time
pink boulders never covered well
the over ears norwegian haircut
whiskey halitosis
or the way he stood at windows
nictitating eyes
like some hawk caught
in fingers of a foreign tree

HARLEY ELLIOTT

NORTH FORTY

In the north forty
a morning wetness thick
there is stone emerging
in it printed the thin lined leaves
there are hard black rubber cows
stuck in the fog

fossils of some nights
not harmless
watching never absent sandstone
Winter time
and the sky looks drawn
the land is now exploding snow
a loss of sanctity sees farmers
blow themselves apart in flannel night
or farmers wives in overcoats
their legs a line of swollen blue intentions
sit there
it is the yearly huskiness of death
sky built
a cobalt blue black
easily bruised
ideogram
the dove outlined
monogamous and pearly on
receding country road and wires

HARLEY ELLIOTT

in the cold yards men
spill warm milk
in their dying the houses recede
those closest to life win
a bed with home made quilts
their faces lying flat
or turned and closed
stare uncommon
whitely out the window
just what is a north forty
under all that snow
said the farmer on the porch
he could walk out to it in overshoes
and make a line
explaining nothing

EMILY SION

RIDER

when breasts were hidden like polywog legs,
the ribs of a horse kept my legs apart.
they gave me an old horse because I was young,
they did it to balance things
and I rode him asking.
we balanced things :
I came frog, he died.
we found his bones
in arc,
buzzard white.
the clean birds,
the quick birds
have eaten him into my skull,
gaited him into my bones,
the horse they gave me because I was young,
the horse that I rode dying.

EMILY SION

SUCH A STORM

such a storm is in my trees tonight,
blowing horses, seahair, and old ladies underwear,
all the leaves are wind-side-out.
to-night, perhaps, if I stand on top of
my step-ladder and spread my arms,
it will blow me through that pin-hole,
the one I drilled
in
squid
battle.

EMILY SION

TOWARD ZERO

as I have seen priests carrying mummies, like ant eggs,
to new hiding places,
poems being used to stuff alligators,
and skeletons being packed by a crowd through the
subway
at rush hour,
I haste to become zero.
watch as I work,
wearing off the cells of my body
on this man,
these children,
these minds.

EMILY SION

MOUNTAIN GAME

When the mountain people set the cane fields afire
by tying an oiled rag to a snake and lighting it,
the men would leave our house
and ride like polo players with their machetes:
high stakes in this game
and no goalie.
My dead father came home
on a horse with a bit-bleeding mouth,
he came home the winner:
when he squatted down to speak to me,
I remember the smells of skin and leather,
the shape of fire-singe on his clothes,
sharp, green shoots in his eyes.

KEN McCULLOUGH

OPENING DAY

November plays his guitar with ragbag gloves.
It is the first snow and the wagons arrive
To ask my young wife if her father's about.
The dogs zig like severed figure skaters.
Through the window of her back
I see, in white, the pheasants
Rise like milkweed behind them.
The stud boar in his run
Watches them. Smells the warning.
Senses the smell. Before and
Before. The shot. Galvanic twitch.
In pairs they walk
Into bleak November ectoplasm
Search for a word as dry as asps
The river in every boy
The spreading red
The rape in the orchard
The smell of the breast
The pheasants rest
On possum gravestones.
Wait for the gift.

THOMAS A. WEST, JR.

GEOGRAPHY LESSON

The world is flat
yanked down blackboard space
by a Godteacher who
has a swagger stick
 in his fist who slaps
vast areas who says
here are arabs
there, chinks, there, niggers.
swollen red dot cities
from calcutta to new york.
asia ripped with wear
 where the stick has poked.
chalk dust in america.
scarlet dribbling wounds:
 rivers in nigeria.
students of the universe
shake their heads
and write their notes.

RON MILES

PENELOPE

Without you, the rain
beats seconds, the days
are rivers
nights ice. I
(touching only the deadwooden
floor and naked skeletal
chair
compose tendrils to
blossom at the spring
of your return.

RON MILES

POETRY

Lost in your hair
my fingers hunt the
source of your rivers.
In the jungle hills
hunger softly
for my will
is a cage.
Between your muscles
I plant screams
cultivate whispers, when the flesh
accepts, harvest winds,
when the nerve weeps.
ask, of your pores, no
songs, of your skin,
no stories.

DAVID RAINE

VINEYARD

My explanation is green & brown.
Its simplicity astounds even the wind
that flows thru my colours.
Their genre brings freedom to my eyes,
as they have understood the sun for aeons.
The month is August.
I live beside my vineyard, like a lover
toiling with jealous eyes over his beloved.
Each morning two men take a thousand kilos of grapes
for the market.
I watch, & have tears with bread for my breakfast.
Before the cool dew has dried on their full skin,
men, with a truck,
load the bursting boxes, & depart.
From above the green vines lay
like starfish
clasping the red/ brown soil.

I saw a very old man come as far as the wall & look,
he stayed for a while.
A few days later his old wife came to see
why he had died so happily.
When the rain comes I walk barefoot,
letting the earth ooze between my toes.
It's as if I become planted there too,
& I dread the 'morning men' that will pick my fruit.

DAVID RAINE

Across the vineyard, in a white two room house
like mine,
with a patio,
which looks out over the garden of my explanation,
I sit eating dinner.
We drink wine,
& out talk the wild noise of the night.
Both my friend & his woman are ordinary people,
with an ordinary explanation,
that is not coloured like mine.
The night has a strange chill.
My friend says, 'Feels like a storm.'
With more wine he continues.
'Once my father told me of a storm on the mountain
that uprooted every vine down to the sea.'
He talks quietly while his woman is making coffee.
I reply, 'Your father was an ordinary man.'
During the night the storm breaks
& beats its fury over the land.
Like the wife of a fisherman
I wait in fear of the dawn.
At first light I go out,
it's clear & calm, the earth smells rich.
The two 'morning men' are picking kilos of colour.

ARWEN UNDOMIEL RUSSELL

ROSARY WOMEN

i feel songs in my fingers and the sun on empty
benches.
the sun paints shadows behind old veiled women
counting their rosaries on catholic steps.
a sentence in my head runs through the streets by me.
i find a pencil in the early evening;
it vanishes and i sit dead by the window
with empty fingers.
the tambourine men wait on the steps in old shoes;
i whistle unheard from the window.
old women count prayers and wait for midday service.
shoppers stride face-down, money-fingered
to neon stores in the morning.
the cold talk of change frightens pale children
in the cashier lines.
the doors open at every block with rusted iron.
they swing shut unseen and school people walk
through
and cross streets.
i feel the cry of my hands in my pockets
and the poems on my mind
come to stay for a minute.
i want the sky;
old veiled women want new souls in candle pews.

ARWEN UNDOMIEL RUSSELL

on my mind are gray rain clouds before the sunset.
old men wait for churchgoing wives in the stormlight.
the music i hear wants to be put in words on paper . . .
the songs in the back of my memory
cause pain in my fingers.
i pack up my thought in suitcases
and find a thousand broken hotels
with dark hallways.
if i found heather for my room,
it would be lovely and purple,
but there is no heather;
there are rosaries in drug store windows.

PETER STEVENS

FUCHSIAS

blood drops belled
hanging in hedges
above the bay curved
under cliffs I remember
an island in my past
each year going
the short sea voyage
to the Isle of Man
where deep
fuchsias
sagged along undisturbed
roads made for toy cars
along narrow tracks for toy trains
toy island for toy people
dropped
into our tracks unaware
of the blood dropping from the hedges
onto the roads
the tracks
running to
Port St. Mary where

in a hurried flurry of men and spray
we saw the lifeboat launched
but it didn't save us
each year the
fuchsias
swelling heavier
running to
Port Erin with its toy lighthouse
on the toy headland beaming
a toy ray in the immense dark
running to
Peel where the Scottish girls
gutted the fish quick and cold while
fuchsias
broke blood-red
on the isle of man
rayed with bright calamities.

PETER STEVENS

SILK HATS

not for me
not on
my life doesn't include
silk hats
mind you
I saw just
the other day
man on jogging horse in a news photo
no man on stopped/jogging horse
caught suspended
man riding
silk hat firm on his head
man hat and horse susp
ended in a flat moor
Dartmoor
he was a minister riding his parish

his visiting suspended
in the picture
out of the picture
the prison
the man in the hat
stopped/jogging on a horse
was the deputy chaplain of

PETER STEVENS

THE PRISON DEPUTY WEARING A SILK HAT!

What does a full chaplain wear?
I don't wear a silk hat
feel nearer to those inside
(life su ed)
spend
than the stopped/jogging
manhathorse on the open moor
closed inside bars sus
in cages animals pend
in cages ed
when they ought to be free
to jog across moors not behind bars
or flick-whipped
by ringmasters
in preposterous
blood-red coats
and silk hats

JACK MICHELINÉ

POEM FROM A LETTER TO BOB BLOSSOM

I think of you Bob Blossom
as a young man with a beard passes me
carrying oranges
He is probably going home to write a poem
he is so fragile and delicate like you

and the world is still hard like the cobblestones
I am sitting on some side street in Paris drinking
cafe au lait
People are the same everywhere
young children are beautiful
and the waiters have no manners
whores stand in the light of the side streets
I walk looking at rooftops
there are songs playing nearby from a street carnival
Each one is united with the day and night
the worker cannot see the sky
for the wheels of machinery are everywhere
It is a big citylike all big cities
and mysteries are in every window
dark faces of night
young Algerian boys like Negroes
seeking skies and money
America is a big lie like all countries
despair like a knife cutting flowers
it is only the beautiful people that count
the individuals that tear at the roots of despair
the moments in our lives that will save us
I am tired of hotel rooms
and soon will go to Spain
and smell the trees in the country

THOMAS McKEOWN

LUCKY STAR (AMSTERDAM)

this is a bar
like any loud bar
the drumming music
the sudden turn of dancers
i take a long pull on my whiskey
noticing a dancer's well-turned legs
the way she throws her compact ass
but so much smoke
that tears stream down my face
my eyes are burning up
the music bangs on
i push through the powdered faces
the purple-shaded eyes
into the fresh dark air
of the cobbled street

THOMAS McKEOWN

THE NIGHT BEFORE MY THIRTIETH BIRTHDAY

twenty-nine years
cornered and tucked
gently to bed
without even
a drunken shriek
tomorrow
i am a different dog
with a hoarse dry voice
i ride the dark bird
of this labyrinth
grasping its feathers
as my life
screaming for i shall be
no part of silence
nor shall my shadow
reach the ground before me

THOMAS REITER

PRUNING

I.

Honed by the emery texture of sidewalks,
His wheelbarrow's iron tire buds with light.
The local orchard has been pruned. All day
Up Pennyroyal Hill he salvages
Cord upon cord of no one else's fire.
His approach like the grinding of a blade
To both his sisters who were singing
In their brown garden. But they move now on their
knees
With the silence of what they tend.

II.

And recall: yesterday among the arid,
Raveling orchids of the parlor carpet
He cried out to them what he called his shame —
That age had made of him a patriarch
Of pensioners among the cool hush
Of heirlooms from the father's wealth they'd all
Outlived. We do not understand, they thought,
We do not understand. But for reply
The usual dust motes blossomed
And fell from the light, while the room
Was conducted to repose
By the Old World mahogany grandfather's clock.

THOMAS REITER

SO THEN HE BURIED ITS KEY IN THE ARBOR

Where clusters of Concords hang like chandeliers;
He sat among rusting rakes and shears
In the toolshed until the gold rod
Pointed like a compass needle.

III.

As cord by cord he attains the dusk
Among begonia and dahlia stalks and vines
Drying to a graph upon a trellis,
His sisters probe, untuned, for perennial
Tubers. Trimmed of their hollow stems,
They wait each winter in apple crates
In the damp cellar below the pendulum
Rigid still as a tap root.

PETER COOLEY

GOING HOME

Steps, I cut the snow with,
leaving the yard, deeper
after ten years, to be crossed
as if they weren't, like an animal
blind to its own smell.
Too late now to discover
directions I might have taken
not to track myself down.
When even inside the house
windows can't be looked through
to be more than their mirrors.
The snowman in a corner of the yard
has almost melted down.

PETER COOLEY

AH, WILDERNESS

After watching all night from a petrified
side of the mountain for cougars,
jackals and lizards, hyenas, horned toads,
but noticing only a pigeon who left
a wet, threatening note on a stone,
I stumble down to the desert at dawn
for my breakfast of locusts and wild honey.
While I was hunting up the honey I tried
to think what to tell them later at home.
But just as I saw a bumblebee,
I thought I heard someone over the mountain
calling my name, and I ran
around to the other side to find
a cave like a mouth, yawning and hungry.
Outside I waited for thunder, flood,
the pigeon, even. Finally I whispered
my name and 'Who are you?' Five
minutes later a voice repeated
'Peter,' so I went inside
and went to sleep.

WILLIAM AIKEN

POEMS

don't persuade us not to drown, simply
tack to retrieve us from the sea,
the land not needing them.
They know the buoys
in their varied bob.
Gulls circle.
Fish school.
On the wharf
girls dance in a ring.
Sails work the wind
to find a slip in a shallow
near the wharf.

WILLIAM AIKEN

VALE

She put no limits to her wide fidelities
being one of those upon whom
love's not lost.
That was her trick:
hers the stated heart
of breakneck ardors,
shying away
from every bland encounter,
knowing of every battered thing
the heart was last extinct —
a fumbler to the end
with nerves like fern.
Who's taken by the wondrousness
of her morality,
the stout cadaverous parade
of her past moments?
She doesn't wait for pity,
nor messed up her farewell
from my thick autumnal heart.

KATHERINE GORMAN

TRANSIENTS

Morning, and they rise like Lazarus
from sour beds, from sleep without a dream
to reel from every weather's clenching fist.
Passing through,
they jolt through damask dark and count
milestones between no well-loved hills of home:
past Pittsburgh's burning slag, past fattened kine
rooted to the grass, past Jesus Saves,
past lovers' kiss, past youth and children's romp,
past Apples from Shinar and Pharaoh's shining court.

Like reckless harvest spoiling on the ground,
Somewhere waits
to burst in bloom
within the bubbles of their acid wine.
They curse industrious flies from scabs and spin
the day out in some private rookery.
They heave like ships on an abandoned sea.
In seasons green or white,
all landscape beckons till they reach a mound
without a slab to weight it down.
Or mark it.
Minutiae, their names endure enormous
in some woman left behind.

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MARVIN COHEN

THE WAY TO BE REAL

George W. Smyth

Does definition make you what you are?

No. First I'm what I am due to being what I am. The definition follows that.

Oh, so charity begins at home?

That's not the point. The definition of me is hardly charitable.

No, not if it's to be accurate.

Correct. So once identity is established, then defining has something to sum up.

Good. That's a good order of precedence.

Yes, when you consider its sequence, it is.

What are you, then? . . . Let's get to the point.

Me? I'm me, that's all.

Is that all?!

Why — what more did you expect?

I expected something much better.

Than myself? That's impossible, for I can only be what I am.

Yes, no sense outdoing yourself.

Well, I can improve. There's no limit.

But you'll still only be yourself.

Only!! What do you mean? (Expansively) That's plenty.

Are you clear in defining yourself grandiosely?

Sure, for clarity begins at home.

But what if you're not at home? — if you're outside, visiting somewhere?

Then — well — I'm not too clear about that.

No. And your lack of illumination on that point is contagious.

Well, you define me, then.

It would take hours.

That's less than all the years I've put together to become what I am.

You took all that time! ? Why?

To be a man, first I had to put my boyhood behind me.

I know. That's what lots of us do.

Then I graduated, and became myself.

MARVIN COHEN

Meaning what?

(Displaying himself forward) All that you see before you, here.

Only?

Don't say 'only;' say 'all that! ? '

Why?

To give me an enthusiastic reception.

Can I reverse 'all that! ? ' and say 'that's all! ? '

No. I won't be belittled.

What I say of you should be no less than the stature of your

person as it appears to be in real life?

As it is; as I am. Give me justice. Speak of me fairly, for my full

due. Accord me the courtesy to regard me as I am.

In a manner of speaking, I will.

Speak your full; but you don't touch the heart of what I am.

I neither violate nor negate you: I'll ignore you.

Ignore me! ? What kind of homage is that! ?

But the more that you deserve is what I'm not equal to. I spare

you my scorn; but I also withhold admiration. To respond to you

in the measure you demand is both difficult and unnatural for me.

(Begins walking away) You can go on being; but I don't have to

notice. (Walks almost out of sight)

(Shouting after) For you, then, I'll cease existing!

Is that a threat, or a warning? Anyway, it only applies for your-

self; I've stopped caring. Let your life be significant to others.

(Exits)

(To the audience, pathetically, pleadingly) Please care! I could

be one of you! Perhaps I am one of you! That could be the very

clue that my identity needs, if it's to reach you, and appeal to you.

(Enlightened, gleefully, decisively) Let me make contact by being

one of you! Make room. (Leaves stage to take an empty seat in

audience) I'll join you, and be among you. (Sitting securely back in

seat, as one of audience) There, that's much better: I have real

identity, now!

(STAGE IS EMPTY. PREVIOUS EXITED ACTOR RETURNS TO STAGE FROM WING, DISCOVERS ITS EMPTINESS, LOOKS DOWN HELPLESSLY

AT AUDIENCE.)

MARVIN COHEN

Where are you? Which one? I'm lost! I'm alone! (LOOK OF STARK PANIC. SEARCHING AUDIENCE EVERYWHERE WITH FRANTIC, IMPLOING EYES. FAILS TO SEE COMPANION WHO IS NOW ANONYMOUSLY LOST IN THE AUDIENCE. LOOKS DESOLATE, AS CURTAIN COMES HURTLLING DOWN, LIKE THE CRASHING OF A MERCILESS GUILLOTINE, SEVERING FOREVER HIS CONTACT WITH THE AUDIENCEENSCONCED ACTOR, WHO BASKS IN THE GRACE AND SANCTITY OF THE GROUP.)

GRAY TOWN

The town was called Pinesville. At one time, before the fire in the summer of 1954 when I was ten, there had been many pine trees rising stately and green out of the red clayish soil around the East Texas town. The fire in '54 ruined the trees, and now I wonder how Pinesville itself was spared from the flames. The country was heavily forested, and it burned for miles around. A number of outlying farmhouses were burned down, although no people were hurt.

In 1954, however, Pinesville wouldn't have made much of a fire. Old Mr. Warner's feed store and the old cotton gin, abandoned, and a few other ramshackle buildings and houses would have gone up, and probably the abandoned train depot, but not the post office — that being, for some reason I don't know, the only stone building in town. The church was made of wood, good and new pine, and it would have gone up too, faster for certain than the others. Sometimes I wonder which building the people would have tried to save first if the fire had come down into the town, Pop Warner's feed store or the church. The feed store was important. People had livestock. I assume they would have tried to save their homes first. They wouldn't have cared much about the post office, even if it would have burned. It seemed to me no one ever got any mail or sent any. Pinesville is very small, off the main stream of things. But the town didn't burn in 1954. It was the matter of the way the wind happened to be blowing that day.

Shortly after the fire in '54, I began to think of Pinesville in terms of colors, or, to be more precise as the case is, hues and shades. The winters and the falls were brown and red and green, with specks of white from early cotton, when I looked out over the cleared fields from Granny's front porch. If I went out in the yard by my old swing and looked straight

up, the sky seemed to be the deepest blue I thought it could be anywhere. Summers in and around the town were a kind of dirty yellow because of the heat and the sun, reflected from the dusty streets and the old brownish buildings. The streets were really lanes. There were only a few battered cars in town anyway. Some were left abandoned behind unused buildings and provided uncomfortable but necessary hiding places for experimental adolescent games.

I remember the summer when I was sixteen I tried to come up with a color for Pinesville that would apply for all the seasons. One day I thought of a color and looked up the definition. Gray, it said, was the

GEORGE W. SMYTH

color of white and black mixed and without brilliancy. This must have reflected my own dullness of thought that day, because I remember I looked around and all I could see was the dirty yellow from the heat and dust over everything. Now I know I couldn't have thought of a better color for Pinesville. Gray.

After high school, Granny wanted to send me to a state college, but she said the decision was mine and not to worry about the expense, my father, her son, having left a sum to provide two years of college.

'You can get a job and stay single,' she told me that summer, 'and finish with a degree.'

Granny always said my father got married too young — when he was seventeen. My mother died giving birth to me, and my father started drinking soon after that. He died when I was ten, and the gossip around Pinesville had it in a bar fight over in Houston. I wasn't supposed to know this, and for Granny's sake I never let on that I did. She had a hard enough time bringing me up with the little money my father left and the small income from the farm. Granny always said my father was a good man, but never got over my mother and had a wild streak besides. She never said what she meant by that. It's just as well. She did say once he was crazy for giving me a name like Hesper, Hesper Harper, but I don't think that's what she meant.

My decision was to leave Pinesville, but not go to college. With college, there would still be the ties to Pinesville, a place I had grown to hate, in the summers when I would be expected to help out, when there wasn't enough for the hired man to do. I had an urge to travel, but I ruled out the service until I was called. I told Granny to take the college money and fix the place up.

For a start, I went to Houston and took a room in a boarding house. After I had unpacked the few clothes I owned, I started walking to the center of the city. I stopped

by a hardware store to look at a display in the window, then went inside and got to talking with Mr. Glass, the owner, about the display. He asked me if I wanted work in his stock room. I said yes.

Mr. Glass let me wait on customers after I learned the stock. I took a keen interest and asked a lot of questions about the hardware business. He asked me about Pinesville, saying he had been through on the train before the line was rerouted.

‘A pretty place, Pinesville,’ he told me, being nice.

I decided to check the newspaper files to see what I could find about my father’s death. I spent three evenings in the library, but found nothing

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about it, so put it out of my mind. I did find out from the papers that bar killings were common in Houston.

Sometimes Mr. Glass would leave the store to me for the afternoon. It was on one of these afternoons that I met Andreth Allison. She walked up to the paint counter and asked for a pint of white for her father to paint their kitchen.

‘Are you sure one is enough?’ I asked her.

‘It’s a small kitchen,’ she said, smiling. Andreth was not beautiful I realize now; she was only the prettiest girl I had seen, with pale blue eyes, straw-colored hair worn long. She looked more like a country girl, only she was prettier than any I had seen. I must have stared at her, because she repeated her order for the white paint. ‘And a brush please,’ she added, wandering over to the gun rack and laughing when I asked her if she wanted to buy a rifle. She said she loved the outdoors, particularly the timber country, the pine woods, to the north and east of Houston.

‘This city is too big and crowded,’ she said. ‘Have you been hunting?’

‘No,’ I admitted.

‘Fathers should take their sons hunting.’

I said nothing. She told me her name and said she lived around the corner. Then she left.

I had forgotten to wrap the paintbrush in her package. I waited a day thinking she would come back. I told Mr. Glass, who said he knew Andreth's father, and he suggested I take the brush to him. Mr. Allison answered the door and took the brush without a word. I had hoped Andreth would come to the door.

After a week, she started coming to the store on errands for her father. Once she came in to buy a screwdriver and then came back later. 'I forgot to buy the screws!' she laughingly explained. We started meeting for lunch in the drugstore next door. My future with the hardware store was a favorite topic with her.

Mr. Glass was spending more time away from the store. At closing time he would come in to check the day's business, and then we would walk over to Andreth's house. He would chat with Mr. Allison, and Andreth and I would talk on the porch until it was time for her to prepare her father's meal. Her parents were divorced, and she never mentioned her mother. When the weather turned cool, we would sit in the living room and listen to soft music on the radio. Mr. Allison had the TV to himself in his den, which was fine with us. Andreth taught me a little dancing, and the evenings were spent dancing, talking, and embrac-

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ing softly. We never went out. Her father wouldn't permit it. He sat in the den with his TV, drinking and sometimes playing cards with someone. Mr. Glass didn't seem to like him as much as I first thought, and finally he stopped going over with me. I was glad of this, but there was one evening I wish he had been there. Mr. Allison stormed drunkenly into the living room and switched off the radio. 'Get out of here!' he shouted at me. 'You're backwoods trash!' I wish Mr. Glass had been there that evening. He understood me.

The truth is Andreth and I were in love and called it that, and do now. I had saved money to get married, and we decided this was for us. There was the problem of how to cope with her father; but Andreth, surprisingly, solved that. She didn't want to live in Houston.

I told Mr. Glass of our plans, told him I would have to quit. I was sorry, I said, but we couldn't live in Houston. He wished us luck.

We were married in Pinesville in the little wooden church. It was a beautiful day, not gray or cold or rainy, and I'm thankful for that. Granny was there, unconcerned about it all it seems now. Pinesville dulls your senses, your awareness, and it hasn't much to do with age. One of my old teachers and three or four other people were there. It was a sad wedding, of course, to everybody but us.

I had thought about going north to Dallas. It wasn't my intention to stay in Pinesville. We had married there because there didn't seem to be any other place. Andreth liked the town, which shouldn't have surprised me but did. There seemed to be a good enough reason for staying in Pinesville. Old Pop Warner had died and his feed store was for rent. Andreth and I looked it over and decided it could be made into a hardware store, stocking such items as work clothes, dishes, tools, a few guns, and paint. Every building in town needed painting.

I took a year's lease, and we went to work. We cleaned and painted the store, and I built shelves, counters, and a large display window. I unpacked my first small shipment of stock. I had ordered it from Mr. Glass, and in one of the boxes was a note from him. It said he missed us, but there was no mention of Mr. Allison.

I opened for business. I had lettered two large signs, one, Harper Hardware Store, that I put over the door, and another, Let's Paint Pinesville, in the display window with a nice assortment of paint, even gray. I waited for customers

that first day. A few people came in but bought nothing. I knew they were accustomed to shopping in Bluffton, ten miles away. The new enterprise would take some getting used to. I expected that. I watched the street and the faces, mostly familiar, peering at my

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assortment of paint in the window. I was hoping some of my friends from school would come in, but they had all left town when I did, apparently.

‘It looks right nice, Hesper,’ one old lady said. ‘Look at all that bright paint!’

‘What you got in mind exactly?’ asked an old man. I was too stunned to answer. ‘Granny’s nigger,’ as old Sam the hired man was known, came in to pass the time with me. He looked all around and chuckled. ‘It’ll never work here, boy,’ he said, shaking his head.

‘I’ll sell the paint at cost,’ I said. ‘What’s wrong with these people, Sam?’

Sam just looked at me and shook his head, and more than the sadness of age was on him. ‘It’s a strange town, boy, and you’re asking questions of it right out loud with this store.’

I stared at his black face bordered by his white hair until I saw the gray of Pinesville itself.

That first night I went home and recounted the day to Andreth. She became enthusiastic when I told her I was going to try a different approach. There were some garden tools I hadn’t yet unpacked. I would substitute these for the paint. I would advertise in the Bluffton paper and hire a boy to distribute circulars. Andreth said there was nothing for her to do at Granny’s. She would spend time in the store. Everyone would like her.

The next morning, Saturday, we set out for the store. The day was bright and cool, with a breeze. As we rounded the corner and came into the main street, we could see a short

way up a small crowd gathered in front of the store, and our hopes soared. I thought it had only been the fact that the store was so new that had prevented people from shopping the first day. As we hurried down the street to open for the first real day of business, I visualized the town in a completely different light. We passed by the small state bank, and I fully imagined that in a few days, workmen, brushes, and paint would appear and a new coat of a rich deep red would adorn the old frame building and strengthen it for the years of prosperity to come. I could see them painting the old train station and using it for a new school. The post office would surely be remodeled inside and out, and I was mentally picking out a good color for the church, which, like the houses around it, was gray and streaked and weather-beaten. I would paint Granny's house. Andreth and I would start planning a small cottage for ourselves. I thought there would finally be a transformation, a rebirth for Pinesville, and it would be a place with

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an enduring new life, a place for children and young people.

We reached the group in front of the store, and I was ready to introduce my wife to the people of Pinesville. When they saw us, they parted in front of the display window which was not there anymore. It was on the walk in hundreds of shiny pieces reflecting the early sun which also shone on the paint in the window. The cans had been smashed open. The paint had all run together, and some had splashed out on the dirt walk and was mixed in with the glass. Some of it was in a huge colorless blob on the floor of the store, and it seemed odd that it had no color. Some had been thrown on the few guns in the rack. Some had been thrown on clothes stacked on the counter. Empty cans lay about. The whole store resembled nothing so much as a crazy quilt, a hallucinatory nightmare of colors and shapes. Over it all hung the sickly odor of too much virgin paint and

an aura of rottenness and waste, death, decay.

I looked at Andreth. She was staring across the street. Then I saw Mr. Allison standing alone in the vacant lot across from my store. He was holding a hand ax, and his clothes were drenched with paint. He was laughing, insanely I thought, and shouting obscenities about me and my father. I thought of my father then, and how he had been killed in a bar fight and had surely been covered with his blood. It seemed better for my father, dead, to be covered with blood than this man, alive, to be covered disgustingly with paint.

I thought of the townspeople around me and looked at them. Their faces showed no hostility, just bewilderment and utter confusion. Their expressions must have been mirrors of my own disarranged features. I cannot know what was in their minds. I have no real conception even now of what was in my own.

I'm sorry that Pinesville burned, that all of it burned. I'm sorry that Granny's house and the church where Andreth and I married burned. I don't believe I really care about the rest of the town. I have no feelings of any kind about my store burning.

Andreth writes from Bluffton, where she and Granny are staying, that some former residents of Pinesville have formed a kind of committee (it is difficult for me to accept this) with the purpose of planning on rebuilding the town. She says she wants us to build a house on the hill where the pines are growing well. The fire didn't get to the hill, as it did in 1954.

There was only one death from the fire. Right after it started going good in the store, sparks flew across the street and ignited Mr. Allison's paint-soaked clothes, and he ran. He was a mass of flames before any-

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body could get to him. He had found out about my father at a tavern in Bluffton. Mr. Glass must have broken down and told him where we were. They tell me here that he went berserk over his daughter running away and didn't know what he was doing when he smashed the paint cans in my store.

I am informed by the doctors here of something else. They tell me I have a good mind with reasoning power, and it will help to know my background. My father, back in 1954, tried to burn Pinesville. He only succeeded in destroying some of that timberland and a few farmhouses. Some judge kept it quiet after he was apprehended, and no one in Pinesville knew this, not even Granny. He escaped from jail and went to Houston and got killed in that bar fight.

I think some of the people that were gathered in Pinesville that Saturday morning last month rather enjoyed the flames while they were confined to my store. But then the fire spread to other buildings, and the town was very small and the houses grouped close. They did try to save their homes and the church, but it was no use.

When I realized what was about to happen, Andreth and I ran to Granny's and got a few of our things, and the three of us went up on the hill and watched everything burn. We saw the town burn from about eight in the morning until noon. The Bluffton fire truck was no help. I watched the fire, and I remembered, as a sixteen-year-old, looking up a definition. Gray . . . was white and black mixed and without brilliancy. The town was now gray, but there was for a while a brilliancy before the gray. But finally there was the gray ashen ruins of a town. Finally, a pall of gray, deep gray smoke hung over the grayness of the town, and it was a mysterious and man-made cloud reflecting a dullness that, to me, had a meaning from the past, a hardly-understood meaning, but a meaning . . . a prophecy.

The doctors have conferred and have decided to tell me more. My father was a pyromaniac (I guessed this), had the uncontrollable desire to destroy by fire, but managed to attend to his affairs until the compulsion overcame him when he received a shock. He discovered the fact that my mother had colored blood, not so much as would be noticeable, but there all the same. This doesn't bother me. There are other things that bother me, things that can be helped.

The doctors say that what I did is classified as arson, the willful burning, they tell me, of something. I repeat to them (they like repetition): 'I tossed a match into the paint and the varnish and the turpentine

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and that started the whole thing.' I say nothing else. They are satisfied. They have decided it isn't their problem. They act like lawyers and tell me any court will be lenient, considering the fact I was upset and couldn't reason for a minute.

Andreth writes again that plans are underway to rebuild Pinesville. I can start a feed store and stock grain and the new insecticides and dairy and poultry supplies, and maybe paint. They will be needing paint now. I have decided to go back.

I think about going back to Pinesville, attracted to the place as a moth to wavering or steady light, as a night creature to deep shade or darkness. I think about these shadows and lights, and I see gray yet brilliant creations, even as Pinesville, gray town, dark town, flaming town, my town, needing me.

Pinesville, gray creation of an enduring and shining power, your former reality is fading, slowly, as the flames fade, and one thing only is certain, and it is enough. Alive or dead, you are mine.

LADIES ALWAYS CARRY

The girl blinked her eyes for a moment, to accustom them to the dimness of the light in the room, then glanced around and satisfied herself that there was no one within her sight whom she knew or who might know her. All this while, the waiter stood patiently beside her chair, holding a broad stiff menu Biblelike across his chest. Presently, when it became obvious to him that she was unaware of his presence, he leaned toward her in a time-trained bow and offered her the menu.

‘Oh, I’m sorry,’ Susan said. ‘I’m waiting for a friend. He should be along any minute. I think I’ll wait to order. You may leave the menu though. I’ll study it, and save you time later.’ She gave him a quick nervous smile which visibly offended him.

‘May I see some identification, miss?’ he said, his spine still curled slightly forward like a willow in autumn.

‘I won’t be having anything to drink,’ Susan said.

‘I’ll have to see something anyway. You have to be twenty-one to be in here. That’s the law, miss.’

Susan studied the waiter’s face for a moment or two, but he had straightened up and had either lost or discarded his careful patience. Tilting her head backwards sent sudden fingers of pain through her neck and shoulders, and dizziness swept over her eyes. The waiter appeared to be peering into her nostrils.

‘Just a moment,’ Susan said. She lifted her pocketbook, a black rawhide affair with shoulder straps, from the table and set it in her leg-crossed lap. She removed several articles — lipstick, nickel pack of tissues, matches, and a paperback novel — placing each carefully on the table beside her water glass, before she found her wallet. In the center fold of

plastic leaves she located the proper cards and handed them to the waiter.

'You're twenty-two,' he said, and shut his eyes, sighing. He picked up the menu, nodded to the girl, and withdrew.

Susan lowered her head and rubbed the back of her neck. A tear was trickling slowly from the hollow of her eye toward her cheek. She took a tissue from the pack on the table and wiped it away, then blew her nose, crumpled the tissue in her hand, looked about for some place to deposit it, and finally dropped it into the pocketbook. The little cellophane pack followed, then the lipstick and the novel. The matchbook she held in her hand for a minute or two, turning it over and over between

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her moist fingers. The matchbook was somewhat crumpled, as if it had been in the pocketbook for several days or weeks or longer, but it was full and the strip of flint was unscratched. Susan always carried matches, although she herself did not smoke, for the convenience of others who did. Years ago, when she had first known Leo and had accepted as fact everything he told her, he had chided her for not practicing that courtesy. Ladies always carry matches, he had said; and at that time she had wanted, second only to pleasing him, to be a lady. For the five years since, she had always been sure to have a book or two in her handbag, and it was only rarely, in securing a new packet or in lighting the cigarette of a friend, that she failed to think of Leo and smile.

Today, however, she didn't smile, although she recalled the incident; and soon she replaced the matches in her pocketbook with the other things, straightened herself in her seat, and put the pocketbook on the table beside her elbow. The pain about her neck had drifted away, but for several minutes as she waited she caressed the hollow beneath her skull with trembling fingers.

When Leo arrived she had managed to compose herself and she smiled into him as he sat down awkwardly beside her.

'Everything's set,' he said. 'Sorry I'm late. I spent some time over there looking around. Seems to be clean and orderly enough. We have to be there at five.' He looked around the room, much in the way Susan had earlier, then spotted the clock above the bar, and caught the waiter's eye.

'You haven't eaten, have you?' he asked, as he synchronized his watch.

'No, hello. I didn't think I should.'

'Hello,' Leo said. He smiled at her and unbuttoned his sports jacket.

'Good. I'd say that I'll buy you a big steak afterwards except I don't think you'll have much of an appetite. We don't have much time, but I could use a cup of coffee, and I guess that won't do you any harm.'

The waiter came up and Leo ordered two coffees, and loosened his tie and collar.

'Did you notice the dirty look he gave me?' Leo said when the waiter had gone. He lit a cigarette with a long-stemmed wooden match which he fished out of his shirt pocket.

'He was sore that you're so obviously over twenty-one,' Susan said, laughing.

'What? Oh.' He took a deep breath of smoke, and then held the cigarette in the fingers of his half-cupped hand while quietly tapping the tablecloth and studying the glowing ash.

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Dave Margoshes

'You didn't have any trouble getting the money, did you?' Susan asked.

I got it from Mike. He didn't ask me any questions, and I didn't tell him what I wanted it for. He gave me a grin like he was thinking up the right alley, but the wrong address, if you know what I mean. But he's got a good job, so he doesn't need it, and he knows he'll get it back from me.'

'And you'll get it back from me,' Susan said.

I told you to forget about that. Anyway, there's no hurry. We'll talk about it in five years when we're both fat and rich and famous. "Oh, here's that three hundred I owe you," you'll say, and toss it over like it was a dime.'

'You probably wish I had just gone to Mike, myself — don't you? I suppose he would have lent me the money, and you wouldn't have had to be involved.'

'There would have been questions asked that way,' Leo said. 'If you'd asked him he would have had the right alley and the right address, and you wouldn't want that — would you? Besides, my involvement is obviously more than just a financial one. Aside from Mike there must be a dozen other people who could have lent you the bread if you'd gone to them, not to mention you-know-who, who really should be putting it up. I'm probably the poorest guy you know, so I like to flatter myself that it was something deeper than money that you made ask me to help you, friendship or something like that.'

'Something like that,' Susan said. 'Let's leave you-know-who out of this, by the way. Anyway, this conversation is getting us nowhere except nervous, and god knows I'm nervous enough as it is.'

The waiter brought the coffee and they busied themselves with stirring and sipping and the passing of time marked by the metamorphosis of sugar.

‘What I meant,’ Susan said, ‘is that you really don’t approve of what I’m doing, and you probably wish I hadn’t involved you in it. Isn’t that true?’

Leo sipped at his coffee and lit a fresh cigaret. He ground the burnt end of the match against the glass bottom of the ash tray and observed the thin stick which remained for a moment before he broke it between his fingers.

‘Old Sue, you know I don’t approve or disapprove, and you know damn well, or at least you should know me well enough by now to know damn well that if I don’t want to be involved in something then I don’t get involved in it. This is a personal sort of thing. There’s no basic right

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or wrong. Personally, I don’t dig it. I mean for myself, or like if I were the father. For myself, I can accept other ways, adoption, like that. But if you, or anyone else, prefer it this way, that’s okay with me, too; and I’ll always help you or any good friend to do what they think is right for themselves as long as it doesn’t hurt anybody else.’

He drank a little coffee and glanced at his watch. ‘We’ll have to be going in a few minutes. Finish your coffee, though.’

‘How long will we be there?’

‘Not long. An hour or so. I’ll wait for you, then take you over to my place. What did you tell your folks? Out of town?’

‘Yes. They think I’m going to Janet’s.’

‘No luggage?’

‘I brought a suitcase with me, left it in a checkbox at the bus station.

Some pajamas and nightgowns. And a robe. I hope you won’t mind.’

‘I’ve seen girls in nightgowns before. And pajamas. I hope they’re not too sexy, though.’

Susan smiled and sipped at her coffee. ‘I doubt if I’ll be very tempting for as long as I’ll stay.’

‘I know you asked me to keep what’s-his-name out of this, but I’m curious as to what he thinks about it.’

‘What’s-his-name doesn’t know. I haven’t even seen what’s-his-name for over a month. As a matter of fact, what’s-his-name doesn’t even know I’m pregnant.’

Leo blew a feeble smoke ring and crushed out his cigaret, and said nothing.

‘As I’ve told you before, I’m not in love with him. And, although I found it out too late, I don’t even like what’s-his-name. And it’s not because of the mess he got me into. I realized that I didn’t like him, and probably never had, even before I found out about this. Don’t ask me why I was sleeping with him if I didn’t like him, I don’t know myself. Let’s just say I didn’t know that I didn’t like him. That’s why I don’t want this baby, Leo. If I loved him, or had loved him, and was just abandoned or something, I’d want to have the baby. Even if I couldn’t keep it, I’d like to know that it was alive and around. But I don’t want a human being adrift in this world who was born of people who didn’t even like each other. It’s bad enough for people whose parents grow to dislike each other; this would be worse. Does that make any sense to you?’

‘Sure, but it doesn’t matter whether it does or not.’

‘Yes it does, Leo. It does to me. You said a minute ago that this is a

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personal sort of thing, no right or wrong. You believe that, but I don't. Or didn't. All my life, or at least for as long as girls ever are aware of such things, I always thought that it was the worst thing that a person could do, worse than murder, killing something so helpless, something without even a name. But you just don't know, you can't judge or decide at all, until it happens to you, not even the judgement that you make, that it doesn't matter, that there's really no right or wrong, that it's personal. It is personal, but you don't really know that. I do. And there is a right and a wrong. I'm right, but just the same, I'm going to submit to something this afternoon that I always thought was wrong and therefore was. Going to bed with someone the very first time made something that had always been wrong right, but on the other hand going to bed with you-know-who made something that had been right for five years suddenly wrong. Do you even vaguely know what I'm talking about?

'Only vaguely. Do you?'

'Yes. Thank god for that. At least I do.'

They finished their coffee and Leo looked at his watch and smiled at her. He tightened his tie and put a cigaret in his mouth. While she stood up, smoothing the front of her dress, he fished in his pocket for a match.

'Have you got a match?'

'Sure.' She put her pocketbook up on the table again and opened it. 'On second thought, no I don't. I'm out.'

Leo got to his feet and reached into his pants pocket for change. 'No matches? Old Sue, ladies always carry matches.'

'I'm not a lady any more,' Susan said.

'Yes, you are.'

She looked into him for a moment, then pulled the crumpled matches from her pocketbook and lit his cigaret. Their hands touched clumsily above the warm flame as Leo leaned toward her.

'Thank you,' Leo said.

'Thank you.'

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MYRON LEVOY

GREEN WISH No. 2

Metsi, I call her; behind her grey eyes I watch her think all day, all day long. ‘What do you think today?’ I ask. And she answers: ‘Today, the kitchen sink should be painted blue. My horoscope has it good for you there.’ And I wrench it apart, right off the wall, roaches scurrying; and the blue paint slides over it, under it, blue as the cerulean sky. Metsi is never wrong.

And the old man comes in, Freilich or Friedrich, I don’t really know, I don’t really care. He can’t speak a word of English. Points to his mouth, I point to the bathroom. Good water there, clean, pure, no roaches, only the sweet smell of toilet. My sink has been created.

Metsi and I grunt it out of the apartment, down two flights; superintendent doesn’t see, doesn’t even dream. Grunt it down the street, three blocks to the H. Hapal Gallery. . . . Yes. He likes it. Yes. He takes it. I latch it to his wall with my wrench. Blue Wish No. 17. Metsi’s been on blue for a month.

Without Metsi I would be dead. Her thin pink lips, her half-closed eyes are my alpha and omega. She knows my itch, my merest shade of desire. I paint through her as you grope through a medium toward the living dead. She sees. Sweet lucky Metsi, I will honor the day I found you with incense and a love dance. Standing. Most delicate way. If only we can get Freilich out of the place for a few hours. If only.

But not Freilich. The man never moves. He never walks. He never eats.

Or rarely. Why does he plague us? A matter of rent. Metsi under-

stands. Eight a week for the extra room. How much blue can I steal?

But now he doesn't pay. 'Acht,' I say, lifting eight fingers. 'Acht.'

And he answers: 'Lindern unter der Winden unter der Schwinden.' He

paid at first. But now he doesn't pay. And he doesn't move.

Yet he's a brother. A painter. A maker. Like me. How can I throw him out?

Except . . . I detest his work. I loathe it. I can't look at it. Madonnas.

Only Madonnas. Some white-robed, some blue-robed, some red. I believe

he's mad.

But somehow, he sells. To the Greeks, to the Italians, who knows.

They go out of the house, those abortions, and they never return. I almost

envy him. I feel my blue sink will be back.

And he's quiet. You can't guess that in the next room a trained ape

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sits and repeats his millionth Madonna. Does he fancy himself Leonardo? Does he think in the year Three Thousand, Freilich will be discovered? 'Lindern unter der Winden unter der Schwinden.' I hate his guts. I hate his rotten-Prussian-Junker-Nazi guts. But I need the money. . . .

Today, is green. At last. Metsi says green and I almost fall out of bed. Green, green, green, is the color of my true love's spleen. Metsi loves my little songs. She smiles into the yogurt.

Today is green. But what? The sink is gone. The kitchen door is gone. Metsi's shoes are gone. Blue, blue, blue, is the color of my true love's shoe. The window? No. Sacred object;

winter cometh. What then? I prowl the rooms. Caged lion looking for a loose bar. Wait.

Aha. Freilich's bed. He doesn't use it. He never sleeps. It will do. Green Wish No. 1.

We must pull it apart. How, with Freilich in the room? Metsi knows. She snatches his Madonna and drops it out the window. Freilich's eyes turn black. His lips tighten like a Storm Trooper's. His hair stiffens like a cat's. Playful Metsi.

Freilich rises slowly out of his snake basket. Head moves, tongue darts. Then in a flash he's gone. To the bed. Hammer. Wrench. Screwdriver. Mattress off. Spring up and off. Left support bar unhitched; footboard skews inward. Right support bar unhitched; footboard collapses, bruising ankle.

Quickly, into the kitchen. The bars. The mattress. Everything. Hurry.

Freilich returns, Madonna intact. Sets it on the easel. Nothing amiss. Old German scholar-gentleman. Persistence in adversity. Visions of Schopenhauer and Emil Jannings in *The Blue Angel*. Visions of *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* and *Liebestraum*. Ja.

Then the breaking out of the green. I paint the mattress, stubborn absorbent mass, while Metsi, my aide-de-camp, puts the delicate feminine touch to the springs. Freilich hums airs from *Parsifal* to the blossoming Lady in his room. Metsi murmurs the Hare Krishna. Worlds in collision.

Easy apply, quick dry. Our Green Wish is accomplished. Metsi loves it. So do I. Parting with it is such sweet sorrow.

But it's forward to Hapal's. Difficult, difficult. The spring stands its ground like a mule. Curses and kicks. Threats. Denunciations. It makes the landing. Sweet coaxing. Psychology. Praise. It makes the street.

The mattress leaves by the kitchen window. Metsi again. Mere, sheer genius. It descends to the street, bounces on end, flops over and goes to sleep. We wake it and trot it to the Gallery.

MYRON LEVOY

Our green monument is reassembled. Hapal rubs his hands together like a cricket in heat. 'More,' he says. 'Walk-in art. Total environment.' He looks at me expectantly for my blessing. I pick green paint from my nose. Metsi sings slowly, softly: 'Rama Rama. Hare Hare.' Then she says: 'Yes.'

H. Hapal smiles. His face becomes a circle. Hapal, the apple. He looks good. I could crunch a few bites out of that face. Winesap. Or perhaps McIntosh. Luscious.

Metsi says yes. I hear the strange twittering of a sibyl. The Sphinx ratchets tick-tick-tick in the stone. The Mayan reads human entrails. I wish I could wear Metsi like an amulet around my neck.

We return. Freilich progresses. He is humming a little something from *Der Rosenkavalier*. Good! He is in his manic state. And I need my weekly acht for more green. Perhaps we shouldn't have sailed his Madonna streetward. But Metsi is in action again. She moves like a sorceress about to turn men into pigs. She slips close to Freilich. Ach zo.

She whispers, 'Miete, bitte.' Freilich paints on. She slips out of her sweater. 'Miete, rent,' she whispers. Freilich's left eye twitches slightly. He lightens the Madonna's robe with a thin crease of vermilion. Metsi undoes her blouse. Freilich's hand starts to flutter like a hummingbird's wings. The next crease becomes an untidy wrinkle. 'Miete; acht dollars,' whispers Metsi. Three beads of sweat appear on Freilich's forehead.

The man paints on. Stubborn Deutschlander. His eyes bulge, his ears are throbbing. Metsi removes her bra. She bends over him, seated at the canvas, and caroms her mammarian marvels off his bald pate. 'Bitte, bitte,' she says.

Freilich achieves an ecstatic orgasm of unadulterated vicious Nazi hate. I comprehend all via the laser beams from his eyes. We are defilers of sacred things! Metsi is a whore! I, a degenerate! We are monsters! Filth! Swine! Insane!

Metsi smiles and steps out of her skirt. Freilich unleashes a Third Reich curse that foams with baroque emanations. Then he exposes his huge continental billfold which ejects acht, count them, acht singles. He tosses them in Metsi's face. Miracle of Lourdes. Metsi and I scramble like Tunisian beggars while Freilich applies his next crease. It shakes and shimmies: the electroencephalogram of a rampaging lunatic.

We split. Metsi for more yogurt; I for gallons of green. Freilich settles down to his ablutions via the brush. He has had his week's exercise.

The green is as bright as new leaves. Just a whisper of yellow. Men

MYRON LEVOY

in desert places grovel for such green. As does the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

I set up quietly in the kitchen. Then I look at Metsi, deep in a yogurt dream. She shakes her head. No.

Metsi takes my wet brush and undulates like an Egyptian cat. She pat-pats toward Freilich's room. On one wall, she marks a huge X in green paint. Green Wish No. 2 is launched.

Metsi feeds me yogurt with a teaspoon as the green spreads. One wall has become a well-mowed lawn. Freilich doesn't care, doesn't even look. He works like a plastic surgeon on his Lady. Her face emerges from the smog of priming coats. Hail Mary, full of grace.

Two walls. Three walls. The room stinketh with paint. Dizzying. Freilich looks ill. We continue.

Two a.m. We've covered the ceiling. And the window. I've started on Freilich's chair. Our artist-in-residence has changed his palette. No more vermilion. Mob influence. His Lady's robes are as green as a pepper.

The room rings like a green gong. I've finished doing Metsi. She is green to her yogurt bowl. I'm green in front. Now Metsi does my back. My aide-de-camp.

The morning light filters green through the green window. Freilich is green from tuft to toe. Dense devil, he doesn't understand; we had to tie him to the chair. But Freilich paints on. He holds the brush in his mouth. Stubborn Bavarian bastard. He is doing Our Lady's cheeks.

Her lemon-sad face intrudes on my creation. Ugly mush. Her pink lips are full. Not like my Metsi's. Her black Spanish eyes are like olives. To be eaten for quick energy. I detest her. Sick solitary flower in our fabulous green jungle.

Metsi has found a razor. Hawk at field mouse, she swoops down on Our Lady. One circular cut and Our Lady's head is a hole. Green Wish No. 2 is at hand. Freilich screams. Metsi purrs. She drops the face down the toilet. Frothy sound of flushed bowl. Frothy counterpoint of Freilich's curse-cantata.

H. Hapal walks in with clients. We are not quite ready. No matter. They love it. They must have it. They'll take the entire apartment.

A moment more. Metsi adds one final touch. Behind the open hole, she pastes a grinning face of the Green Hornet. She's always right. It's absolutely perfect.

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SUZANNE OSTRO ZAVRIAN

ANECDOTE I

A: There they are again! Do you hear them?

B: What?

A: (Impatiently) The planes! Do you hear the planes again?

B: Oh, the planes. What about them?

A: (Lowers her voice) They used to come over almost every quarter hour — now they come over every seven minutes. I timed them. They're flying lower, too.

B: It's for the pictures.

A: I know. Do you want some more tea? Don't take too much; there's not much left. I'll add some water to your cup. Take a half cup. No, take a third — half's too much. Here, I'll put the water in.

B: You're stingy. Whose planes are they?

A: I don't know. If you drink your tea that fast you won't have any more sooner. Do you hear me? If you drink your tea
...

B: There's another one. Or maybe it's the same one coming back.

A: No, I don't think they ever come back. I think they always fly from right to left, never from left to right. (Sips her tea) Which way's left?

B: The other side of Broadway. The side I live on.

A: (Very interested) Do you hear them from the other side of the street, too?

B: Oh, yes. All the time. (Freezes with the cup in mid-air) Someone's knocking. Someone's knocking! Do you open the door? Are you going to open the door? Leave the chain on!

A: Oh, hush! It's only my nephew. I've been expecting him all week.

C: Hello. Hello. Sorry — I meant to come on Monday, but the subway wasn't running. I picked up your teeth for you. Here.

A: Thanks, love. What was it this time?

C: Don't know. The red flag was up is all I know. It said: 'Pardon the interruption.' Could have been anything. Could have been the cops for all I know. (Laughs uproariously)

B: You take the subway? With all the stops and the dark tunnels and the shaky catwalks and the scrabbling? Doesn't it bother you at all?

C: Hell, no. (Pulls out a switchblade and opens it, all in one motion)

B: Ah, that's a nice one. Do you hone it yourself?

C: Nah, it's a self-sharpener.

A: Wouldn't you feel better with a gun, dearie?

C: No good in close quarters. Subway lights always going on the blink. Wild shot, might hit myself. (Laughs loudly again) Teeth fit?

SUZANNE OSTRO ZAVRIAN

A: (Trying them on and wiggling them from side to side) Not bad. Shake a bit on the left, but I suppose they'll settle in. Dentist still there?

C: Yeah. It was Sixth Avenue that fell in, not Seventh. Lost part of a hotel — don't remember which one.

B: Anybody saved?

C: Don't know — didn't look this time. I was on my way to the unemployment.

A: Any luck?

C: Yeah. They said come back next month. One of the tunnels is going to be opened up for pedestrians, so they're going to haul all those old cars out and clean it and everything. The unemployment says maybe I can get a job on that if I get there right away. It's within walking distance. You been out today?

A: No thank you. I'm not ready for the rubble heap yet. Besides, with all the planes . . .

C: What planes?

A: The planes. The planes. The planes!

C: Oh, those. I don't even know they're there any more. How do you even hear them? I mean, after all! (Opens the window and sticks his head out) Two — no, three — sirens. Fireboats going off up the river. Ambulance picking up somebody in the middle of Broadway again. Now they're drilling underground. Something's booming downtown. There's a dog in the gutter. Honest to God, how do you even know the planes are there?

A: They fly over all . . . the . . . time. They fly so low that sometimes you can't even sleep nights. Still, it's comforting to know that they're there. You can count on them. They're always there, regular as clockwork. Do you know, sometimes they even put me to sleep?

B: Excuse me, but do you happen to know if we're at war?

C: (Bursts out laughing) Oh, you are the living end!

A: (Testily) Of course we're at war. We're always at war. Or we're going to be. Or we were. It doesn't matter; that's not what's important. (Lowers her voice) You keep forgetting the planes. They're closer. And lower. They're surveying the terrain. They're watching more closely. Something is about to happen.

C: (Hopefully) The rest of Sixth Avenue is going to fall in.

A: Be quiet! I am talking about serious things. (Draws herself up, pulls down her bodice and smooths it) Something is about to happen. It's clearer every day. Something very important is about to happen. And very soon.

B: I knew it. We're going to war. (Looks helplessly at A) Do you happen to know which side we're on? I mean exactly which side

is which? It's very important to know which side you're on . . . (Her voice trails off) A: (Ignoring her) People are dying.

They're dying all around us. So are things. Things keep disintegrating. Falling down. Going to pieces. Blowing up. Outside is drifting dust, piles of rust, broken dolls' heads — you know. (Thinks for a moment) I went to the seashore a while back. There was nothing lapping the land. When I was young there were sea gulls. C: All right — come off it. I have to start back. Get to the point. (Looks at her critically) Your teeth are going to fall out. A: (Looking from one to the other) I think that they are going to let us out. (Smiles triumphantly, then sits down and begins to rock feverishly) C: (Laughing and slapping his thigh) Oh, brother! You are a killer, you are. (Pats her on the back) So long — take care. See you. 'Bye, ma'am. (Goes out as there is a very loud explosion nearby) B: Oh, my. What was that? Do you suppose it was my hotel? Oh, dear — it was so close. Where was it? A: Where do you live? B: I live on the left side of Broadway. If you are looking downtown, that is. It's on the right side if you are facing uptown. (Thinks) It's across the street. A: Something blew up. Have some more tea. Don't take too much, there's not much left. There's another plane. They always come just after something's happened. There isn't much that escapes me, let me tell you. Of course, on the other hand, something's always happening. I mean, maybe they come just before something happens. No, I think it's just after. Yes . . . (Nods judiciously) . . . it's just after. B: What do you suppose that noise was? A: Something blew up. There goes another. I'll say one thing for them — they do run on time. B: May I have some sugar? A: There isn't any sugar. We're almost out of tea. The teapot will rust with all its cups and saucers. The tea cozy will fall to shreds and tatters. I have also heard (Pauses for effect) I have also heard through impeccable sources that we are running out of water. B: No! Water? . . . (A light dawns on her face) Is that how you knew? A: (Smugly) Of course. If they weren't going to let us out, we wouldn't be running out of water. You can't manage without

water. But I know something else. (Leans forward with a crafty look) Even if they don't let us out, once everything is gone we can leave. Once there is nothing left to hold us, we can walk out of our very own free will.

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ALVIN GREENBERG

THE DOUBLE AGENT

i entered your country in an obvious disguise, wearing many hats and an impeccable passport. who could have suspected me? i was, i thought, the only spy within a hundred miles. and yet, from the clumsy way you held your cigarette, i should have known.

i should have known from your open invitation to mine your harbors, dynamite your bridges.

i should have known when you brought your children, one by one, your fingers on your lips.

i should have known when you removed my penultimate hat, a homburg many sizes too small.

i should have known when your letters arrived from all directions with uncanceled stamps.

i should have known when you lay in bed in my arms at last singing ‘espionage o espionage! the spy and counterspy improve each other.’

i should have known, then, that the border signs had been reversed, the guards drugged, the alarm system retuned to play ‘hey jude!’ — or was it the ‘polonaise’ from bach’s suite no. 2 for flute and strings?

— all so that i could find you out in the end, a spy in your own country, waiting to decode the message in the sweatband of my last hat, an old straw boater: ‘you should have known: all the secret documents here are your own.’

THOMAS A. WEST, JR.

CHAMELEON CALLING

From a circus vendor our daughter took it home,
Placed the quick chameleon on the window screen
(we lacked a better cage), then fed him flies.
In days we saw it clean from brown to green and
Back again, as if it played all wrong. We said
Regrets to it in our good-by minds.
Then miraculously sea-green again, its throat
Blew a coral spinnaker
but back to Death it went.
Behold: next noon shredded skin (shed with torment
in such little lungs)
Which activated hormones
was eaten whole
we learned later.
Poor thing was calling to its mate to go along
An aching sail in vermillion silence on the screen.
Tiny eyes darted swiveled searching hope
along the screened horizon.
Some day soon we will buy another one and hope
To god it has a lust for sailing.

ROBERT KIRBY

LION

Yesterday my girl
And I ran down the road,
Her face made me a lucky tiger,
Her bosom made me an ordinary sun,
And when she saw my chameleon color,
I became a Greek mystery in a column.

THE BED

Yvonne, why do you sit on the bed and
Cry like a cypress-tree, a pretty bottle
Of beer in your hand? Is Narcissus lying under
The bed? My God, what do you do but worry about my
Paper-doll soul? Now you run to the mirror
With those demented skirts burning up the room.
Will you look for the dust and pins in
A dresser-drawer? O, the rug has slipped, darling,
And the faithful geese — your pretty little breasts —
Wobble across the sky.

L. W. MICHAELSON

OPEN LETTER TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

Yes, Dante, Death has undone
Quite a few; but this can't
Hold a church candle to the crowd
Life has unbuttoned before their time.
Virgil's closed down
His guided tours long ago
(He's no stomach for this enterprise):
But come with me to this vast
Plain where grass once grew.
Population explosion, a phrase
You never heard; jammed commuter trains,
And our freeways packed unto the bumpers.
And over all the smog
To take your breath away.
We've a slogan, too, over
Life's brave portals
So all that run may read :
'Abandon All Hope of Space
Ye Who Enter Here!'

RICHARD D. MCILRNAY

195-22-4788

I stand in the haze of exhaust
trying to see tomorrow or yesterday,
the streets empty,
only the blue-white of TV tubes
glowing from the unwinking windows.
Stranger, stranger, where are we going?
Have you met the 'enemy,'
the one we are supposed to hate?
Does he have eyes? Do his red lips
kiss like ours?
Do you think he hates children?
Somewhere a young man crouches,
his thumb twitching on a button,
and the dragon seeds drop.
Down in the darkness red flowers bloom.
How does a bomb bursting in intestines feel?
What does a hole where a home was feel like?
Does the 'enemy' understand?
Stranger, we are eliminating disease.
— Fifty thousand people a year die of automobile.
Stranger, we are conquering space.
— How far is the distance from loneliness?
Stranger, we have the highest standard of living.
— And one of the highest rates of suicide.
There must be something more,
something just beyond the edge of my ideas.

RICHARD D. McILRNAY

**SOMEWHERE THE TALONS OF RAIN GRIP THE
HIGH MOUNTAINS, THE SILENCE OF STONE
HUDDLES UNDER A MOVING SKY. SOMEWHERE A
LEAF UNWRINKLES TO THE SUN, A GRAIN OF
DUST SLIDES FROM A TEABERRY LEAF.**

Stranger, who are you? Who am I? You are the pepsi generation. You will never be half safe. You will never have rough, red hands. You are a worker, a tax-payer, doctor, lawyer, indian chief, one of the forty-two percent who had fewer cavities. I know, but who am I? You are a grain of dust, (remember the one on the teaberry leaf) circling in infinity. Sometimes, stranger, I think you are wrong. Sometimes I think that without me there would be no happening, that the I in the now is larger than the distance of stars and the spindling tape of time.

Listen. Listen. Up in the darkness, they are coming, arcing toward cities in a rush of air, screaming a last betrayal, a last fiery kiss. Tell me stranger! Speak!

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195-22-4788

MARGARET SECRIST

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

At first, I spoke of myself
as this feline's mistress,
but I am only a stewardess
of kidney, maid of all milk,
and brusher of maltese silk.
She requests a bed in the bureau drawer
and requires me for nurse through surgery
and fur-ball illnesses.
She insists I soothe her fears,
that I laugh at her sillinesses,
and pick cockleburs from her ears.
But for love, she never comes to me;
for me, she gives not a rap.
Oh no, she prefers my man.
She sits possessive on his lap
and purrs enough love for nine wives.

OLIVER EVERETTE

ONE FOR THE BIRDS

A vulture brooding
in a darkened mind
may give us ravens
and at times
an oriole
whom ravens think
they pay
to polish dirty feathers
with a yea.
A swinging nest decays
on molding hair,
becomes a compost
dangling there.
First fledglings flown,
a singer's voice is gone
and speckled eggs are snatched
for yellow ravens come.

BILLY DUNN

COLLAGE

Listen my children and you shall learn
of the smoke that curls from the Grecian Urn.
Of the airplane, the doors, and the grateful dead,
of Timothy, Jack, Allen and what they said,
and did,
kid,
it's a blow,
a blast on the scene
away from all that is mean,
and low,
human, and full of SIN.
Either you're out or either you're in.
The world of love
is brimming with hate, greed, lust.
America the beautiful is a lousy bust.

Turn on, tune in, fuck you!
screamed the coyote
and ate again the sweet peyote.
Lay down your fear, cat, hate, greed,
and straight world name,
commune with love in harmony,
play with your brain.
Throw the temple from the Jezreel wall;
zonk the fuzz, ball baby, ball,
fifteen or twenty on a freaked out mind
all that are willing to wait in line
or push in ahead;
do your thing.
It has all been said,

BILLY DUNN

I Ching.
Straight world society has stifled you nil.
Trode on your brain, and surely it will
render up wine,
 cool and sweet.
God! Love, brother, God!
God you'll meet.
Who flew over the cuckoo's nest
and snuggled again at his mother's breast?
Who will linger a nameless, faceless saint?
Timothy, Jack, or Allen can't.
The sunflower seeks the racing sun.
The mandella grinds on children's bone
rendering up wine cool, and sweet.
God! Love, cat. God you'll meet
on a first name basis
as anti-matter with dirty faces.

GYÖRGY PORKOLÁB

THE STUMP

That Saturday, both my feet cushioned
the 4:30 express to Berlin.
My hands were hanging on
but someone slammed the door.
The security precaution
for the München conference
required the extraction
of my gonads by the roots.
In Moskva time was short;
it was burning cigarettes
that probed
my eyes, ears and nose.
My tongue flaps about in neat razor cut strips
and my translator sometimes has to fake it.
I have total diplomatic objectivity.
War is surrealistic existentialism
at its religious orgasm.
I want to rape little girls.

GYÖRGY PORKOLÁB

THERMOLAYER

I shall go tonight.

Before the perfect mold of the statue embraces the
twilight, I must be gone. Let the perfection crumble by itself
in the used air. I will not satisfy by being witness.

I have been gathering for days. From streets, from rooms,
from bowels, from mouths. Now I am all here and you know
because I am sticky on your fingered faces.

The sun warms into the sea. Soon . . . with my mind in
crevices, my tongue shall upon the snow body of the
Himalayas.

WILLIAM M. WHITE

**UPON DISCOVERING THE PHOTOGRAPH OF A
VICTORIAN LADY WHO DIED IN CHILDBIRTH AT
THE TURN OF THE CENTURY**

Austere young lovers unbared
Hidden beneath her folded veil
You proclaim yourselves so proper
Why startle when I blow your dust away
Climb down from your attic mold
Into the fragrance of flowers pressed
When dresses swished and teased the ground
Still you lie content in musty cedar
Preening glossily from out a yellow-brown
As though you might step forward
To cane the rat that chanced to bite his hat off
Her primness masks a plea discreet
Toward him with the roguish beard
A dare to love and romp once more
To cast in hot succession a baker's dozen
Upon that sturdy featherbed
Even again the fourteenth
Which far too slow in coming
Stole her breath away.

POETRY CAN KILL YOU

by E. F. Wells

THE MORTALITY AMONG POETS is astronomical and, of course, inevitable; but sometimes they die before they are dead, and this is the area for concern.

Despite the fact that everybody secretly aspires to write poetry, the occupation is regarded as highly questionable. Those who learn you indulge in it are likely to avoid you. They catalogue you as a man with a schizophrenic problem. They eye you as if you were on ‘pot’ or knew where Barney O’Brien was buried.

Your family will try to dissuade you from your ill-chosen path, and failing this, they’ll try to hush it up. If you are lucky, they’ll call you an author. But chances are you will not be called an author, and it is best not to pursue that matter further.

If you survive family censure, you are faced with the ordeal of actually writing a poem, a struggle that results in many quick and fatal casualties.

If you’re going to do more than talk poetry, you must have a notebook or some form of paper; and the obvious approach is to hunt through the desk for it. Many poets never survive this crucial stage. They run across several snapshots that ought to be placed in family albums and they paste them in family albums. Sometimes they devote two or three years to this snapshot caper — more than long enough to forget their original intention.

You, however, eventually remember the notebook and find one you had in high school. It’s dissected with periodic parallel lines; but, since it’s the only paper available, you trust its lines will not hinder yours. The lines begin to fascinate you, each one, running across the page so perfectly

spaced from the one below. You let your eyes travel along the lines; the lines begin to dip, to merge.

Abruptly, you jerk your head erect. Clearly this is no way to go about the business of writing a poem. If you're going to be a poet, you must have proper equipment. Enormously relieved by this decision, you walk briskly to the stationers for supplies: paper, pens, pencils, typewriter ribbons, a used portable. Spending so much money adds enormously to your feeling of purpose. Now you are in hock and will have to prove yourself. But, while you're there, you stop to chat with the clerk. After all, a poet has to keep his ear to the heart of mankind. On the way home several hours later, you toy with a rhyme for 'clerk.' You think of one, but decide you had better discard it if you're going to continue trading there.

Arriving home, you methodically insert one of the white sheets in the typewriter. You study it. Strange, you never noticed before how prominent the watermarks are. No, wait! You rip the paper from the machine so you can take a better look. The manufacturer has imprinted his name in the paper. What right has he to get free publicity from your postage. You fume. You realize this is no way to woo the muse.

You decide you'd work better with a pen. After discarding several ballpoints, you hunt for your old fountain pen. It needs cleaning. You clean it. You refill it. Holding the pen in mid-air, you wonder if there isn't something a little too final about a pen. You get up and sharpen a couple of pencils. You find several others with dull points and sharpen those. You hunt through the desk to make certain you have found them all. You hesitate again over those snapshots; but, with a burst of iron will, you slam the drawer on them. Holding one of the pencils aloft, you stare at the huge blank space before you.

Yanking your head upright, you conclude you had best go down to the library and do some research on the subject of

writing poetry. After all, if you are to go about this thing in earnest, you had better find out what Ernest has to say about it.

Both Ernest and Richard Armour suggest you use paper that already has handwriting on it so your scribbling won't feel self-conscious. You choose last week's grocery list. You stare at it hoping you might find the ingredients for a poem. Along with potatoes, spinach, and several other difficult-to-rhyme words, your attention is stilettoed on the drug section. There is an item that has limited possibilities. '1 box no doze.' You ponder over that for several seconds, and the next thing you know someone is rudely shaking you by the shoulder.

'You've been sleeping,' she accuses.

'Who, me?'

'Where are the poems?' she prosecutes.

'Eee gads!' you shout, 'how do you expect me to do any writing with your persecuting me all the time!'

That night, just as Richard predicted, you douse the light, climb in bed, and, suddenly, you encounter several sheepish ideas madly jumping over tenses. You're afraid to frighten them by putting on the light so you jot them down in the dark.

In the morning you awaken to find that you have scrawled out those effervescent inspirations on a page already containing an earlier masterpiece. You will learn that all poems lost in the middle of the night are certain to be the finest things you have ever done.

During this painful period, you consult many authorities. They confuse you. Some say it's a good idea to have an idea before you begin a poem. This, however, say others, isn't essential, although it is pleasant to have an idea by the time you have finished your poem. Yet, even this, say others, isn't necessary. Some of the best-known poets get along without them.

Yet, despite obstacles that would have killed off Homer (and may have), you complete your poem — let's say. Let's say it anyway. You are now confronted with the problem of what to do with it. The family makes a number of unpleasant suggestions. But you patiently point out that incinerators have been outlawed in California. To prove they are wrong about your efforts, you determine to market it if it takes every dime you own for postage — and it may.

You refuse to be daunted by the fact that the marketing of poems accounts for more deaths among poets than any other single deterrent. Even after you have the complete list of markets, you will find that unless you send the poem out immediately, the magazine will no longer be in business. The mortality among poetry markets is even higher than among poets.

You've been told you must study the markets. You find this involves a good investment in money. Probably more money than you are likely to get back in the next ten years from all your poetry sales.

Your study soon shows that editors prefer short poems. Actually, they prefer no poems. But, if you must send them, make them brief. Some won't accept anything over sixteen lines. They reject your poem on the grounds that twelve lines is too long, and then, in the very next issue, feature a poem sixty-four lines long.

Which brings you to editors. Editors have murdered more poets than you would care to have discussed here. They keep your Easter poems until Christmas and then reject them because the subject matter is 'not timely.' And the poem you wrote about improving our relationship with Cuba — well — they kept that so long that, if they had printed it, you would have been in serious trouble with the government.

You are advised by writers who earn their living advising that manuscripts should be meticulously neat. Yet — one trip, and the pages are returned crimped and stamped 'N.G.,'

which is the editor's symbol for heaven knows what.

By now, you know you are supposed to enclose stamped, self-addressed, return envelopes, which is no small expenditure when you remember there is no guarantee you will be paid off in anything except paper clips.

You certainly have no assurance your poems will be accepted by magazines. If they happen to be accepted, you have no guarantee they will be regarded as anything but a free contribution to the cause of literature. As Frank Fesler explains it: 'Poetry is mailable, but seldom ever saleable.'

Long before you recognize a dactyl hexameter, you are on familiar terms with that whimsical bit of correspondence known as the rejection slip. It alone accounts for over forty-nine per cent of the fatalities among poets. It is usually a small innocuous-looking piece of hate literature bearing a cheery obituary to your latest poem. Its message confides that your poem is 'unsuitable for use at this time.' If they had asked, they would have discovered that you'd be willing to wait — indefinitely.

You will find these rejection slips are sometimes clairvoyant. They frequently arrive even before the material is mailed out. TRACE is, of course, the most prophetic, sometimes sending out the rejection slip before the poem has been completed.

At times you would give anything if they just wouldn't keep sending out that same printed form. If only they would write you a personal note! One day you receive a personal note, and in nine cases out of ten, you would give anything if they had only sent you that same printed form. These personal 'sympathy cards' have been known to contain comments such as: 'We find that this verse was written in a light vein that somehow became varicose.' Or: 'You really should put more fire in your verse — or vice versa.'

After the rejection slip, comes revision. You read the poem over. You smile. Terrific rhyming! Oh ho! What a punch line!

Maybe the editor never had a chance to see it. Maybe the first reader was too envious to pass it along. You reread it ten or twelve times. Its luster dulls. Maybe the first reader wasn't envious. Perhaps you'd better call in outside help. You do call in outside help the first couple of times, until you discover that friends are too noncommittal; or else, they are too committal.

Let's assume, however, that you do rewrite it, though let's confess, many times you never do. Let's assume, too, that it's printed. This period just glossed over has been known to consume up to twenty or thirty years; but, now, you are officially a poet. You have survived vexations that have killed off many a better poet. You have a right to be proud. This is your day.

You rush out and buy twenty-seven copies, because that's all you can find. You give one to each of your friends, if you have any left by now. Then you discover that the printer made several slight changes. Your 'united hands' became 'untied bands,' your 'angel' became an 'angle,' your 'friend' became a 'fiend,' and 'distant footfalls' became 'distant footballs.'

Should you survive this, you are then destined to fall into the hands of critics. If you were born yesterday, you may not yet know that 'a critic,' to quote Channing Pollock, 'is a legless man who teaches running.'

For the most part you will be protected from critics by the blanket of anonymity thrown over most poets. But you can be sure that somewhere, sometime, a friend is going to rush up and indignantly demand, 'Do you mean to tell me you got paid for this thing!' Tell him you did. Don't bother to explain you got paid in contributor's copies.

Yes, poetry can kill you. It probably will. But there isn't any nicer way to go — and so cheaply, too.

AD FOR A MINI SKIRT

I am trim in mi mini skirt in Main St
mi aim is trik man in sin skin im
trim skirt in mink — a nati kit
Nancy Marino
373

**THERE HAS BEEN A WEDDING! (OR
WHAT'S SO FINAL ABOUT MARRIAGE
ANYWAY?)**

by A. Fredric Franklyn

SINCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE novella (or short story, the earliest form of prose fiction), authors have viewed the institution of marriage as something like a final harbor toward which ultimately-safe bourne all lovers swim or book passage. The majority viewpoint of our contemporary American cinema isn't much different....

In *HOW TO SAVE A MARRIAGE — AND RUIN YOUR LIFE*, protagonist Dean Martin becomes involved with Stella Stevens when he mistakes her for the mistress who is jeopardizing his friend's marriage (Eli Wallach). His initial courtship is motivated by a plan to discredit Wallach's belief in his mistress' constancy so that he will return to his wife.

Gradually, Martin's interest in Miss Stevens (who is nobody's mistress . . . yet) becomes a personal one. Toward the end, when circumstances exonerate her and Martin realizes she is unattached — and really interested in him — he proposes. Before its conclusion, the story line cements the relationship between Wallach and his mistress, and even works something out for the superfluous wife. Presumably Martin has learned to mind his own business and he and Miss Stevens will go to work raising their own family now. And presumably everybody concerned will live happily ever

afterward (Read 'decay' for 'live' and 'in a state of paralysis' for 'happily'!)

Marriage, in short, represents the termination of the problem-solving phases of human life . . . not the commencement of a whole new phase of such activities.

In DOCTOR, YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING!, heroine Sandra Dee, who is 'in the family way' because of her lover/employer (George Hamilton), has no problem at all in finding someone who will pinch-hit as a husband. In fact, she has three suitors, each of them more than anxious for the opportunity of becoming a step-father for the unborn child. Unfortunately, Hamilton has no wish to be encumbered in this fashion. And even more unfortunately, Miss Dee is still in love with him and unwilling to make do with a substitute.

After the usual series of artificial contretemps, Hamilton eventually changes his mind and decides to marry her — for reasons, of course, which reflect no discredit on Miss Dee, who has carefully refrained from any attempts to influence him! All three suitors become instantly, even quite congenially, reconciled to the fact that she's going to find her happiness with another man. All the loose ends are neatly packaged for us, and we know at the conclusion that the ensuing marriage signifies an absolute end to all the little vicissitudes which have made up the story . . . as well as an end to all the conjecture and excitement of life itself!

Sophia Loren, in A COUNTESS FROM HONG KONG, tries and tries to show Marlon Brando that two people as deeply committed to each other as they are should be married. And it is certainly true that, under the circumstances, all Brando's problems stem from the fact that they are not married.

Unfortunately, he has allowed himself to be unduly influenced by a few trivial externals. For one thing, he'd never in his life seen her before she stowed away aboard ship in his cabin! For another, she is imposing on his limited

compassion in a perfectly outrageous degree. Also, he does not happen to be obligated to exhibit so much positive championship toward a stranger; and, she represents a definite threat — in the entirely unreasonable demands she makes on his convenience and charity — to his career and in fact to the complete structure of his life.

Incidentally, he also happens already to be married!

Predictably, after the sequential troubles have been padded out to feature length in sufficient quantity and variety, Brando comes to see the error of his position (which is more insight than the audience can manage!) and capitulates to love and a glorious to-hell-with-it-all perspective. It is true that he will have to divorce Tippi Hedren before he can actually marry the Countess. But we know that Miss Hedren couldn't possibly be his real soul mate by the very fact that she appears in such a limited segment of the film (only at the end, when the boat docks).

In addition she is slightly miffed by Miss Loren's presence, an ample indication that Miss Hedren lacks the kind of delicate understanding essential to our hero's happiness. Whereas, no matter how many pratfalls she takes, Miss Loren always regains her feet (and her equanimity) with a carefree touching smile. Come what may, she is ill-fortune's staunchest adversary. When these two marry, after Miss Hedren gives Brando his divorce, we know that even the unkindest of fates will seek its victim in another harbor.

Stanley Emiliano Zapata Kowalski and his COUNTESS FROM (the) HONG KONG (flu) are going to live happily ever after (the wedding)!

Poor David Niven's problems are almost beyond adequate description in *THE IMPOSSIBLE YEARS*. For instance, he's got some pushy little ghost writer (Chad Everett) who wants collaborative credit merely because he's doing the actual writing of psychiatrist Niven's best-seller non-fiction books!

(Everett is only an assistant professor, himself, and it just shows you about these kids. . . . They all want the rewards now. None of them are willing to get in there and work for the [somebody else's] future!)

There are other similarly malevolent troubles dodging the heels of this prominent psychiatrist/teacher. For example, his oldest daughter (Christina Ferrare) carries obfuscatory placards at student demonstrations on campus, even after he's just given a very positive lecture about how such things need never happen if parents know how to handle their teen-agers. And when some smarty-pants in the audience has asked him about his own children, Niven has assured everybody that his control over his two teen-age daughters is absolute! Even then, Miss Ferrare goes and carries a sign like that.

And naturally, everybody finds out about it. And naturally, Niven has been proposed as the replacement to fill the vacancy left by the retiring head of his department. And naturally, the school board knows about a lot of guys who could head up a university psychology department who don't have daughters who wave dirty signs and participate in campus demonstrations.

It's not bad enough that the younger daughter (Darlene Carr), too, has to lay a little more grief on him by dragging out a copy of FANNY HILL every time her mother (Lola Albright) is not watching her.

But the real hard core of Niven's difficulties centers around the sexual attention his oldest daughter is getting from the boys . . . the literate and the illiterate! Miss Ferrare is evidently generating a more than ordinary attraction for them, and their presence in her father's house is almost continuous.

The variety of suitors includes an upper-middle-class amateur musician next door, an acneyed square, a hippie painter on a motorcycle, and even an educated go-getter —

all of them enthusiastic (if not quite brand new) screen images! And all of them unselfishly devoted to Miss Ferrare's seventeen impossible years.

In fact, it turns out (somewhat expectably) that Niven simply worries too much. These kids are all clean cut, and they just wouldn't do anything like that to Miss Ferrare. And even if they would, she wouldn't let them. (She's pretty clean cut herself, despite her sexual attractiveness and the ambiguity of the language on the placards she carries at student demonstrations!)

Even the hippie, who has affronted psychologist Niven so irreconcilably by painting his daughter in the nude, was only concerned with art. Besides, the nudity was all in his imagination anyway. Miss Ferrare was actually wearing a bathing suit when she posed for him. (But of course!) Probably only a bikini, but still . . .

Poetic justice: The educated-type is the one who is stuck with Miss Ferrare at the film's conclusion. Her father (for whose books Everett is only an unaccredited ghost writer) couldn't handle her, but Everett thinks he can. (It just shows you how much good education does anyone!)

It should be stated that this particular wedding does take place a good half hour before the film's conclusion, and that the circumstantial problems do continue to proliferate even after Miss Ferrare and Everett are wedlocked. But that's only because Niven hasn't realized that there has been a wedding. As soon as he does, all difficulties and troubles are instantly resolved, concluded, wrapped up, and whipped.

By this we understand that there must not only be a wedding; people must also be informed! Otherwise, what's the good of it?

SPEEDWAY and THE MATING GAME are two especially cute variants on the same theme. In each, the United States Bureau of Internal Revenue capitulates to love . . . and marriage.

In the former, Nancy Sinatra is a Treasury Department agent sent to ride herd on Elvis Presley for back taxes. Presley is a stock-car racer who, despite enormous earnings, hasn't paid any income tax in years — and hasn't any money left to pay his bills — because he's blithely left all his business arrangements to a kook buddy (Bill Bixby) who is absolutely addicted to playing the ponies. Goodbuddy Bixby has squandered on the nags every penny which Presley has ever turned over to his management. Stock-car racing isn't enough for him. He's in love with the starter's gun!

In the second of the two films, tax investigator Tony Randall has been sent to explore the quaint business methods of Debbie Reynolds' father. Pop is a farmer who also hasn't paid any income tax for years. As a matter of fact he's never filed a return. He operates his cute farm on a system of 'hoss-tradin' and doesn't 'specalate' overmuch in cash. Gosh, what adorable naivete!

Happily one of the great truths of life, as we all know from a childhood diet of such films, is that not even the government of the United States can stand against true love and the institute of home and family. It (the United States) may cause a few problems for the lovers. For a while even these problems may appear to them insurmountable. But, matters of the heart, which would be folly in the mundane business world, take on the strength of giants.

At the conclusion of *SPEEDWAY*, Presley's buddy and his little treasury agent girl friend, as well as her employers, have so completely broken him financially that he cannot ever hope to race again, either to their benefit or his own. Of course, the only thing to do with a girl like that is to marry her. In any case (in the spirit of such inconsequential plotting) he has already decided on another profession.

In *THE MATING GAME*, all it takes to convert investigator Randall to a deeper sense of the fleeting moments and the ultimate transience of human life is a jug of good corn liquor

and the merry musical cavortings of the carefree Miss Reynolds. Incidentally, there is an extremely fortunate, if accidental, financial development in the sequence of all this larking about which does prove to be something of a factor in saving the day, as it were, and keeps Randall's future father-in-law out of prison. But all that doesn't transpire until the youngsters realize they're in love in a permanent way, which implies a wedding.

Marriage, marriage, marriage! That's the great answer . . . to everything . . . for everyone. And the films turned on this theme are endless: PRUDENCE AND THE PILL; WITH SIX YOU GET EGG ROLE; YOURS, MINE, AND OURS; THE GRADUATE; FOR LOVE OF IVY; FATHER OF THE BRIDE; GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER; PILLOW TALK; THE COURTSHIP OF EDDIE'S FATHER; THE HAPPIEST MILLIONAIRE; MORE THAN A MIRACLE; THE BALLAD OF JOSIE; A THOUSAND CLOWNS; ALWAYS ON WEDNESDAYS; and on and on, ad infinitum, message without end!

Some day they'll even have some form of legalized matrimony for homosexuals; possibly even for neuters! Doesn't everybody have the same entitlement to participate in the great society?

But what price, all this security, certainty, and finality? The end of adventure, excitement, the chase. And the beginning of — what? Decay? A stately — and secured — progression, downhill, into the grave. Twenty-five years to reach the apex of the human experience. And then another fifty years merely to get shut of it. Well, it's an interesting (if terrifying!) concept.

But some of us wonder, now and again, if that is quite the whole of our possibilities; if there isn't perhaps something we could be doing in that declining half-century, besides just recovering from the initial active quarter-century. The fact is, those of us who are adult — and already crossed over to the other side of the matrimonial fence — might even prefer to believe that the marriage experience brings its own

challenges.

And to believe that all the appetite and heart for it does not go out of existence, after all, in some lonely distant motel, a mile or so from Niagara Falls, on the wedding night.

A SCHOLARLY WORK — FOR NONSCHOLARS, TOO

MEN OF EXTENSIVE BOOK LEARNING generally are incapable of producing fresh original creations; and specialists in limited areas of literature rarely transmit knowledge in anything like a fascinating fashion. But Wai-lim Yip, author of *EZRA POUND'S Cathay* (Princeton University Press — \$7.50), is a widely published poet in two languages; and he has succeeded in addressing not just other scholars, but educated people at large — especially poets, who could gain much from his discussions.

Perhaps Yip's most important single accomplishment here is the unusual manner in which he bridges gaps between disparate cultures — simply by analyzing expression — utilizing the original Chinese, Fenellosa's transliterations, Pound's fabrications through use of them, his own interpretations, and references to and quotations from numerous other translators.

Although the book is focused upon Pound, many of its considerations are of wider import. It opens with aspects of problems of syntax in translations and then moves into an exposition of Pound's views and purposes in relation to those of others. The third chapter is titled: His 'Maestra' in Translation: Limitations and Breakthrough; and the body center of the book is incorporated in a long fourth chapter — In Search of Forms of Consciousness — with a multiplicity of references woven together for clarifications through contrasts.

There are two appendices, in addition to a selected bibliography. The first of these consists of material from the Fenellosa notebooks: the second places 'literal and readable' translations by Yip en face the poems of Pound's *Cathay*. The author states he has made no effort to produce poetry in

English as any sort of ‘challenge’ to Pound or other translators — merely to provide comparisons by line units to the Poundian format. In other words, he offers authentic translations of the originals, altered as little as possible for the sake of English sense to demonstrate the extent to which Pound took liberties, made changes, additions, and eliminations.

All of this is extremely interesting to anyone who works with language; and, as already indicated, the text itself is lucid and entertaining reading — not the flat and stilted sort of thing usually encountered in books of this kind. And, since Yip happens not only to be conversant with the ancient Chinese, but also with modern Chinese and English literature as a whole (plus poetry of the avant garde both in the U.S. and abroad), his presentation could prove to be of international value in helping to build better East/West cultural understanding.

J.B.M.

HELLO, JOHN O'HARA, GOOD-BYE

from John Tryford

IN MY MIND, I PICTURE JOHN O'HARA as a person straight out of the Forties, walking down Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood with a Panama hat, vanilla-colored suit, bow tie, and cane with a silver handle, walking into the best bars and restaurants and meeting friends and acquaintances, and being addressed as Mister O'Hara by the maitre d' and the bartenders.

It is all very interesting, and rather silly, presumably, to imagine the kind of life a successful writer leads, to think that he is doing the things I would like to do but cannot. Envy would not spur me on to greater powers in writing; perhaps all it would do would be to depress me. There's not even strength in numbers: there are probably a lot of others, writers and nonwriters, who envy O'Hara's seemingly-inviolable position. They think of him in his salad days in Hollywood¹ when he was making \$300 a week at MGM and ask: How did he do it?

This is the unanswerable question. Louis Armstrong once said, when someone asked him how he played jazz so well: 'If you have to ask, you'll never find out.' John O'Hara could, if he had the time and patience, sit down and explain to one person or a roomful of people just how he developed his technique and style. Then that person or persons would walk out of that room, just the same as they were before . . . because a great writer cannot make a great writer out of someone else; the someone else has to do the work, and to do the work is sometimes hell, no matter what the rewards are.

Now I don't know whether John O'Hara has suffered much or not. I thought there was some law that someone

had once discovered, that the greater the output of the writer the easier the work becomes — because the writer then has a backlog of characters and situations to draw from and to modify. If this hypothesis is valid, then each thing O'Hara does becomes progressively easier for him, as though he were just rewriting the remnants of old plots, discarded stories that had stayed in his mind for many years. I don't know whether this is the way O'Hara works; but it would seem to be so, for many of his novels have similar themes.

¹ *This fact, O'Hara himself revealed in a May, 1968 article in HOLIDAY magazine (p. 84 ff.).*

But O'Hara has written many things, and written them well. He cut his teeth on the NEW YORKER at a time when that magazine was in its infancy. His first novel, APPOINTMENT IN SAMARRA, hit the public in 1934; and since then he has turned out a steady stream of novels, short stories, and plays that turn into musical comedies (PAL JOEY). The only thing O'Hara doesn't write is poetry . . .

except maybe in secret, at night, under the covers. . . .

John O'Hara is the literary spokesman, self-appointed of course, for the American upper middle class, specifically that part of it known as the Eastern Establishment. This is the country-club set, those who gather after tennis for gin and tonic and talk about how the market did that day. Those who still curse Roosevelt and the income tax and don't like minority groups or campus demonstrations — or the threat of wiping out the oil-depletion allowance too much, either. John O'Hara writes of these people because he is of them; having been born in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, attended private schools — and also having worked for the NEW YORKER which is a kind of exclusive social circle in itself.

Now just because he is in the camp of this sort of American semi-aristocracy does not necessarily mean that he is superficial. Every writer writes first from the point of view that he knows about. Thus Joyce wrote of Ireland and

Dostoyevsky of Russia and Balzac of France because each was shaped first by those particular lands. There is a case to be made in favor of the Eastern rich, old families which used to be *nouveau riche* once upon a time until the Texas and California people started making their money. The Eastern rich have done a lot to preserve a heritage of culture and art that would have been unknown in this country if their money had not built museums, theatres, etc. They have turned away from vulgarity and unkempt extravaganzas, in which the Western rich now indulge, in favor of esthetic refinement. Not to say that their ancestors didn't use skul-duggery and immorality (?) to acquire the fortune, but if I have to make my choice which group of richniks I prefer, I'll take the Easterners any time.

So, these are the people to whom O'Hara has devoted a lifetime of words. And this is the subject of his very first novel, *APPOINTMENT IN SAMARRA*. This novel concerns loss of face by a character named Julien English, and what he does when he realizes he has lost face. The code of small-town Pennsylvania society was very rigid in those days, much more than today. And preserving face was awfully important just at that particular juncture because ostracism from the social circle could mean a decline in business, at a time when the country was in the midst of an economic depression. Julien English, having disgraced himself at his club, not once but twice, and having had difficulties with his wife who has heard through the grapevine that he attempted to seduce a dance-hall girl (very *déclassé*), figures he has no place to go except to his garage, where he turns on the car motor and asphyxiates himself.

Although I am not used to thinking in these terms, there are certain universal truths to be found in *APPOINTMENT*. Perhaps O'Hara is trying to get at some basic human or tribal condition which permeates mankind and which cannot be violated without penalties to the offender. This condition,

perhaps, is based on the assumption that the society or tribe as a whole is more important than one single individual. This may be hard to swallow; because, in the increasingly-liberal climate of America in the Sixties, all kinds of claims are being put forth for individual liberties in various areas—dress, sexual behavior, taking of drugs, etc. Yet, there are those who would deny these liberties or privileges because they say that there is a higher freedom, a higher liberty which would be sacrificed if the government or the various authorities yielded to the pressures of the moment.

There is no straightforward political argument in *APPOINTMENT*, because O'Hara never answers the question as to who is to blame . . . society or the individual. This is the noble quality of a great writer: that he is not didactic, and lets the reader's sympathies fall where they may.

Besides writing about the Eastern social set, O'Hara has taken time to observe America and has shown that he has a tremendous power of vision. By vision, I don't mean occult vision, such as Yeats had or thought he had. Rather, I mean the power to see, hear, and absorb the daily life that goes on around him. This is a tremendously valuable tool for a writer who sets out to do what O'Hara has done so well. Vision is what lifts O'Hara out of the category of mere superficiality. Vision is what distinguishes O'Hara from a writer like J. D. Salinger who is all affectionation and no profundity. Salinger is a firecracker that goes off once, while O'Hara is like a torch that may burn brightly for years. Vision is what makes O'Hara describe people so closely that you can imagine people like this as you're reading, because you have met people like this.

Take, for example, a book of thirty-odd short stories entitled *PIPE NIGHT*.² Most of them appeared in various magazines from 1939 to 1945. Here O'Hara talks about waitresses, servicemen home on leave, disillusioned adolescents, con-women, night-club performers, and

Hollywood starlets. The inside blurb describes O'Hara as a 'sizzling' writer. Funny, I thought sizzling was what steaks did when they were on a charcoal fire. Sizzling or not, the beauty of these pieces is that O'Hara is able to describe a situation, an era, even a whole world in the space of a page or two. He does this just as readily as he writes a 450-page novel about an entire family and its rise and fall. O'Hara is a short-story writer's short-story writer, and I would recommend a study of this little book to anyone who wants to find out what the technique is; although, as I said before, there is no guarantee that anyone can do it even if he tries.

² PIPE NIGHT, *Bantam paperbooks*, 1966 (first published 1945).

John O'Hara doesn't write very much any more because he doesn't have to. He doesn't even come to Hollywood any more because he doesn't like it. So I doubt if I will ever see him on Sunset Boulevard, cane or no. There is no class in Movietown any more, no style as there used to be style, great style.

In those days, John O'Hara would proofread for F. Scott Fitzgerald and have lunch with Peter Lorre. Now the colony of people he knew is gone — dead or dispersed to the four corners of the earth. Too bad. Everything is faster, more frantic and nerve-racking. No place for a successful writer in his sixties who was once in the heart of it; no place, in fact, for anyone.

John O'Hara now takes his place among the old masters. He is a man of my father's generation, and there is nothing to be ashamed of in that. His writing evokes for many a sense of deep nostalgia and a time of loss, loss of innocence, self-respect, and love. People want to go back to that time, which for each individual is a different time, taken chronologically; but on the other hand it is the same for everyone because everyone goes through it . . . once. But people also know that it is impossible to go back to those simpler happier days, when they were on the verge of

discovering the world. So, they read John O'Hara's books instead, because their youth and their happiness and their tragedies and angers and hatreds are captured in those pages. And reading those pages lifts them up from this turmoil for maybe — well — just a few hours and they can forget about hippies and high taxes and riots and racism and assassinations and all the other unpleasantries besetting this tired old nation. This is John O'Hara's service to his own generation: he was able, and is still able to be a mirror for that era, to help them remember how it was.

So, when they talk about John O'Hara's books, they talk about themselves. He knows this.