

TRACE

LIVING LITERATURE

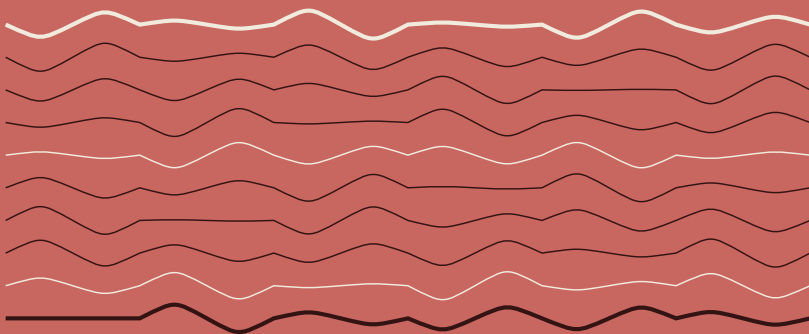
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TRACE

No. 72/73

Living Literature

Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

AUTUMN 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:

Seven oils and a drawing by CHARLOTTE LICHTBLAU stand here and carry no text. The cover of the issue is hers too — BEFORE THE CIRCUS, credited on the contents page to Lawrence Spingarn's index entry. They are noted here rather than passed over.

The issue carries more graphic work than any other in the run, and none of it can be reproduced here. The contents page names, in order: an ink drawing by RICHARD LATTA; BEFORE THE BATH by HARLAND RISTAU; four ink drawings by GUSTAV KOVALIK; an ink drawing by ALLEN EPSTEIN; three by KIRSTEN LANDSVERK; two from WHO WALKS PAST THE WHEEL... by ROZANNA WEBB; THE CONTORTIONIST, a painting by PYKE KOCH; two cinema stills by CARL LINDER; an ink drawing by SYLVIA ROTH; PETROUCHKA, FASHION FOR DEATH, POSITION FOR DANCE and FIREBIRD, all Ristau; and five ink drawings by ALONA FRANKEL. Four further pages carry production stills from THE BROTHERHOOD, with Kirk Douglas, Alex Cord and Susan Strasberg, illustrating the film column.

FOUR POEMS is a collaboration: photographs by LOIS SIEGEL set against poems by RAINER SCHULTE, turn and turn about across twelve pages. The poems are given here in full and in their order; the photographs cannot be carried by a text edition and are absent, so what follows is half of a work rather than a sequence of poems.

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TOWARDS PRINT

by the Editor

THE MOST FRUITFUL EXPERIENCE of a lifetime has been mine in the editing of Trace since June 1952; that the magazine has cost a great deal of money causes me no regret. However, it is now necessary to prepare to attend to personal commitments which it would be out of the question to care for while editing and financing a publication of the size to which Trace has grown.

I plan to go on working in the little-mag and -press bibliographical field in collaboration with Len Fulton, whose Directories (Dust Books) are recommended. Current Directory No. 6 represents our first joint effort. Tabulations for this Trace have not been slighted because of this. The Index herein is the largest ever to appear; and, under the heading New Listings, there are several hundred additional entries too late to be noted in Dust. These, and subsequent projects and data, will be detailed in the forthcoming No. 7 Directory.

My deep appreciation for cooperation and Trace aid goes not only to those who have from time to time helped with the actual labors, but to many of the subscribers out there in the world, those who have sent encouraging suggestions and criticisms and those who have bought extra subscriptions and sent extra dollars. There have been times when adverse turns seemed about to force suspension; but on each such occasion, someone has lent a hand or somehow provided incentive to continue.

It should be superfluous to mention that sales of this 72/73 (which will become a collector item) are vital. Backfile numbers and the book annuals also look for purchasers. Closing down a magazine is proving more work and more

costly than starting one. Contributors must be paid, though there are no more incoming subscriptions. Refunds must be made to those who paid in advance beyond 1970. Correspondence remains heavy, and manuscript submissions (to be returned) no doubt will be trickling in for a long while to come.

A condensed history of *Trace* appeared in No. 68 (1968). Perhaps this should have been saved for this final issue, unforeseen two years ago. However, a good deal remains to be put down for the record.

With 72/73, there have been 939 contributors, from most parts of the English-speaking world and from numerous other-language areas. As the years passed, the influx of submissions became larger and larger. A survey in 1965 showed that about 3% of these were accepted. This dropped below 1% in the intervening period. Manuscripts almost never have been solicited, and then only for a specific need. Yet, this has not by any means been a major factor to account for the comparative absence of well-known writers from these pages. 'Name' authors have from time to time sent in work; but the policy has been to favor talented unknowns or those less recognized. When print has been given to established writers, this has been because the material was such that, for one or another irrelevant (from the literary view) reason, it might not be published anywhere else.

The editorial position has been to remain open to all types of writings and to judge these on the writers' degree of success in achieving their particular intentions—not to read with preconceived and set notions as to method. The result has been that, as mentioned in No. 68—for better or for worse so far as the state of literature is concerned—*Trace* has introduced more new writers (especially in the Sixties) than any other periodical. A policy of publicizing author-financed publications along with those from royalty houses also appears to have aided many beginners.

During the Fifties, before the magazine was opened to original creative works, main emphasis was upon the littles and products of the small presses; but this coverage has continued to the very present. And if less-detailed descriptions and fewer and fewer reviews have since appeared, this has been due to the unbelievable proliferation of publications. Their numbers have made it impractical to much more than note their existences. The first Directory (1952), limited to magazines, had but 152 entries; yet that was a fairly complete world coverage of littles in English. By 1956, 247 mag were listed along with 165 presses; and in 1963, the combined total had reached 747. But the huge acceleration began with 1964. The incomplete *Evolving Directory* in *Trace* No. 71 had 697 entries. Indexed projects and listings in this issue total 999.

In the early years, *Trace*—though carrying articles (some of them perhaps definitive) and critical reviews—was more a meeting place for other publications than a periodical in its own right. There were numerous exchanges of ideas and opinions among editors from all parts of the world. No. 4 (1953), for example, had letters from editors in England, France, and Australia, as well as the U.S.A. In 1954, an attempt to get data on editorial intentions was less than successful. Only eleven editors were willing to express themselves frankly (a twelfth wrote for an ensuing issue). Still, scores of editors from time to time did reveal purposes quite honestly in the letters department.

In this same early period, there was a ‘first’ statistical survey (No. 5) derived from questionnaires concerning financing and management. Over seventy editors sent information for an article by John Sankey. *Trace* helped in a general way to provide awareness of a continuity of literary developments through the two decades; and it had a decided share in the poetry ‘revival.’ The Editor wrong-guessed, in 1965, that what was then termed an unprecedented period

of innovations was about to be succeeded by one of conservation and 'digestion.' The opposite has been occurring, as every reader of new writings is aware —with ever more 'far out' matter. Not a few opinions with which the Editor was in disaccord, and some poetry and creative prose not personally favored, were given print due to the wish to 'trace' all types of possibly-significant trends. From this, it was sometimes charged that Trace had no editorial direction. However, the editorial criticisms in Trace were outrightly biased and often strongly outspoken.

Among other prominent editorializings were those in which favor was expressed for more positive themes as against a preponderance of negativism. It also was suggested — by example as well as comment —that a little mag, even though seeking newnesses of statement and publishing avant material, mainly of interest to a limited audience, still might be entertaining to less-prepared readers. Comparatively few editors have troubled themselves to try to make serious mags more enjoyable without catering to general public taste.

Since Trace emphasis always has been upon the individual and distinctively personal contributions, there has been editorial resistance to the concept of 'movements.' Rather than devoting sections or issues to this or that so-labeled trend, there have been features such as an autobiographical number (No. 58, 1965), a section of poetry derived from dreams (No. 46, 1962), Chinese and Indian issues (No. 54, 1964 and No. 67, 1968), special numbers with emphasis on satire, humor, etc. Important in this connection was the Trace 'line' of reaction to the dubious beginnings of the 'underground' in the late Fifties. This was seen as—and so it was—an accidental and quite inconsistent and internally conflictive development. It was not foreseen how the beatnik attitude toward life and letters was to progress toward an organized political and literary

persuasion — of late, under the hippie label. But I still hold to the argument of an essay in Trace No. 34 (1959): that there are, betwixt and amongst and between the square conservatives and the posturing ‘outsiders’ the more significant individualists doing their own ‘things.’

Yet another matter, which has from time to time taken up many pages of this magazine, has been the conflict over comparative values of the creations of people connected with the ‘academy’ and those not so connected — over the relative merits of things published in school-supported mags and things in independent mags. Again, so far as Trace has been concerned, this may be determined only by looking at particular works, disregarding academic connections (or their absence). It has not infrequently been charged that Trace has been ‘anti’ the academy. This is patently ridiculous in view of the fact that far over half the contributors to this magazine have been post-grad students and teachers — largely college professors. If more space has been given the ‘anti’s,’ this has been because their contributions outnumbered the defenders. However, a large percentage of the ‘anti’ arguments came from the colleges; and the real point of difference was not as to whether an author held degrees and made his living by teaching, but as to whether his work therefore was unoriginal and conservative. And, going back to the mags, unhappy pronouncements about independents have been as numerous as those about those under school aegis.

Not only has considerable attention been given the probability that too many magazines have been publishing a great deal of inconsequential matter, question has been raised whether the enormous increase in publications has not brought about a progressive ‘thinning’ of force and quality. At what point might not vitalizing diversification become senseless variegation? This sort of critical conjecture was not limited to the little-mag field, but extended to

examination of the entire overcrowded literary scene. Or was it really overcrowded so much as weakened and muddled by increasing percentages of bloated semi-literacies?

Even more attention has been given expression itself, possible language corruption (rather than healthy integral growth) and breakdown (where words often seemed no longer to be used for meaningful communication at any level). In 1962, the period was seen as one of 'nonconformism' — some of it pertinent to possible major developments of expression, some of it superficial doodling. Earlier, there had been concern that so many serious writers were dealing with short-term specifics and disregarding long-term fundamentals. Then, after it was realized along in 1966 that the great explosion of experimentations had set up chain reactions which would continue into the Seventies, question was raised as to which kind of literary vehicle might best carry forward. The novel was looked upon with uncertainty, and the new poetics appeared to be communicating to increasing numbers of people. These and related factors were examined in numerous articles and interviews with prominent writers.

The little Trace 'history' in No. 68 mentioned the part the magazine had played in bringing writers in all parts of the English-speaking world together in print, in many countries — and thus bringing about exchanges of influences that otherwise would not have occurred. Some of the littlest littles suddenly had contributors from far-scattered places. One gradual effect has been to lessen degrees of geographic language differences. Another has been the breakdown of verbal reserve, the language of propriety. In the beginning, this was chiefly in the U.S.A.; but, today, many writings in Britain, Canada, India, Australia, and New Zealand are as 'far out' as any in the States.

From the Trace view, to the extent that genuine originality (honest individual expression) has spread, this is to the good;

but, to the extent that posturing abuse of expression and utilization of vulgarities for purposes of shock has spread, this is to the bad. This must not be interpreted as criticism of the use of four-letter words, per se. Explicit consideration of specified works would be essential; and more weight should be given the achievement of an effective texture and style (newly and strikingly propounded themes) than to the inclusion or noninclusion of words which, until the last couple of decades, brought unquestioned censorship. The same holds for what had been forbidden subject matters: not what, but how, and to what end.

This stance has been reflected in *Trace*, where all kinds of franknesses have been permitted wherever the writings were judged to be of possible literary merit. From time to time, this has resulted in losses of subscribers who were offended. Precisely how many were lost, I cannot say; but I assume that for every one sending an indignant letter, there were many who silently allowed their subscriptions to lapse. From a 'practical' view, *Trace* could have compensated for these many times over by becoming sensationally pornographic—as have certain magazines formerly in the literary category. But I should think it must have been clear long ago that *Trace* has not been edited to make money, nor even to stop losing money.

Having firsthand experience of the financial problems of a little mag, *Trace* pushed for grants for such projects as early as 1955. Apparently this was rather ineffective, more than ten years having passed before such aid began to flow after establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts. In the case of this editor, the probability of adequately substantial assistance for a comprehensive bibliographical project came too late. Since there have been many enquiries about this, it's fitting for me to state that considerations of health are the deciding negative elements.

HALE CHATFIELD:

ISSUE PP. 422-426, 715-722 · SCAN PP. 16-20 AND 321-328

NEW LISTINGS

TO DO OR NOT TO DO

‘A POEM,’ WRITES ARCHIBALD MACLEISH, *‘should not mean but be.’*

It is on that dichotomy that most of us today have built our churches.

We take sides either with ‘meaning’ or with ‘being,’ though much more often with the latter. We may perceive with irony that *Ars Poetica* is an intensely didactic poem, in defiance both of its own meaning and its own being; but we almost invariably claim, to ourselves as well as others, that it is a most vital text both in what it is and what it says. A poem can neither merely ‘be’ nor simply ‘mean’; rather, being and meaning are perhaps genders of poetry, as masculinity and femininity are the genders of humanity. In poetry, meaning and being are to be found in varying degrees of imbalance, and almost any poem can be said to be either essentially didactic or essentially existential — just as most humans, mixed though their hormones might be, are readily classifiable as men or women. But when we have decided whether we like boys or girls, have we discovered what it is that we admire most in people?

If analogies are up to a point revealing, they are misleading if carried too far. They are dualistic (Hayakawa would say they operate in service of the ‘two-valued’ orientation), and what is finally wrong with them helps to show what is wrong with the ‘meaning-being’ approach to the appreciation of poetry.

What I like about the people I like is not especially what they ‘are,’ and it is certainly not what they ‘mean’ (that is, what I can learn from them); it is what they do, most

importantly what they do to and with me, that determines whether I am more likely to find them attractive or repulsive. Aristotle, perhaps the West's first psychologist, defined character as 'habitual action;' that is to say: 'You are what you do.' Freud and Jung said, in effect: 'You do what you are.' Linguistics, semantics, behaviorism, cybernetics, etc., heartily agree with both views at once — and neither alone. Thesis; antithesis; synthesis. The modern view repudiates dualism and endorses the 'multivalued' orientation: truths, as they appear 'free in nature,' do not come in matched pairs.

Why have we been so slow to suspect that what we have learned about the world and about ourselves might quite as readily apply to art, the phenomenon which mediates between the two? I discover that what I like best about a poem is what it does — and, for me, far, far behind that comes 'being,' and then, almost immediately, 'meaning.' A poem should not mean nor be, but do.

That is elementary, of course, Housman said it in *The Name and Nature of Poetry*. What matters, though, is that we have neither the equipment nor the courage to endorse our Housmans — to discuss and evaluate 'objectively' what a poem 'does.' What a poem means can be dealt with in terms of logic or rhetoric, for both have been systematized for a long time; it is, if anything, too easy. What a poem is might have been a mystery before Newton, or before Darwin, or before Brooks and Warren; we can no longer let anyone doubt that we know what a poem is, knowing, as we do, what almost everything is (certainly everything we can capture and take back to our labs). But what a poem does is another matter.

To do is to create an event. It is in the convergence of meaning and being that an event occurs; and, in poetry anyway, the event is what matters. I suppose this is to say that the essence of poetry is 'process' — process as the word

is currently used in philosophy, theology, and, with prompting of such men as Henry A. Murray, even in psychology. In a way, Frost was leading toward something like this when he wrote, in *The Figure a Poem Makes*: 'Like a piece of ice on a hot stove the poem must ride on its own melting' — although the dualism with which Frost was immediately in combat was the form and content dilemma. Nor would I argue that the tension which exists between meaning and being is the only tension productive of poetic events; others include not only 'form and content' but 'order and chaos' and 'motion and stasis' — perhaps any lively dualisms one could imagine. I argue only that since the event of the poem takes place within the reader's mind (the poet is his own first reader), the essential event produced by any poem derives from the juxtaposition of what seems to be (its form, its intricacy, its constituent parts) with what it seems to mean (all its 'messages,' denotative, connotative, objective, subjective — whatever), and that this event can no more be evaluated, or even experienced, in separate scrutinies of a poem's meaning and being than the properties of water can be known and felt by the careful study of hydrogen and oxygen. In *THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE*, Marshall McLuhan writes: 'When two seemingly disparate elements are imaginatively poised, put in apposition in new and unique ways, startling discoveries often result.' This should be no surprise to poets, for what McLuhan is describing is metaphor — and as early as Aristotle, metaphor was recognized as the essential characteristic of invention. McLuhan carefully says 'imaginatively poised' and 'often result.' Metaphors are not always successful: their success depends not upon the individual quality of the tenor, nor upon the individual quality of the vehicle, nor, in fact, upon both of their qualities taken together — a metaphor's success depends finally upon the quality of the juxtaposition itself. It is upon the quality of the metaphor that the figure depends,

and the quality of the metaphor can be so poor that no figure is recognizable at all.

Likewise, in the case of a poem, it is possible that juxtapositions between very competent meanings and very impressive beings might produce very dull and uninteresting events. And I think I know of cases in which pedestrian meanings and beings have come together in such felicitous juxtaposition as to produce stunning and original events. (Would it be incautious to point to every notable poem that Wordsworth ever composed? Perhaps. Then let me merely cite, and only on momentary consideration, Hunt's *Jenny Kissed Me*, Robinson's *Richard Cory*, and even Arnold's *Dover Beach*.)

Lest I be misinterpreted, I am not quite talking about the fitness of 'form' to 'content,' or any such conventional decorum. The fitness of meaning to being goes beyond that. In fact, great poetic events often arise from deliberate violations of decorum. McLuhan speaks of 'seemingly disparate elements' being placed 'in apposition,' and the strength of metaphor emanates primarily from the fact that vehicle and tenor are not conventionally held in mental contiguity; that is why metaphor can equal discovery; and that is undoubtedly why William James defined genius as the ability to make metaphors. I am suggesting that the greatness of the event a poem produces depends very heavily upon something that seems to run counter to the notion of decorum: that it depends upon one's being surprised to discover what a great and unified and intense experience can result from the coincidence of two entities (a 'being' and a 'meaning') never before seen in proximity.

To me, most of the poetry found in contemporary periodicals — from 'mimeo' to 'slick' — seems dull. In most cases these 'dull' poems are easy to expose, easy to explain away (though not to justify) by means familiar to us since World War II, if not before: they are simply inept; they are

intelligent but uncraftsmanlike; they are stupid but well designed; they are both intelligent and skillfully executed but commonplace. The vast majority of dull poems cause us frustration, but not bewilderment. We know that editors often give recognition more readily to reputation than to accomplishment; we know that editors are often simply unqualified; we know that editors are sometimes tempted to pay favors for services received; we know that editors, like merchants, are too often willing to sell whatever will be bought. In short, we know, and expect for some time to continue encountering, all the follies and vices of self-interest as they apply both to writing and to publishing.

What we do not understand and will not expect is that very dull poems are often written by fine poets, praised by their peers, published by honest and intelligent publishers, and paid for by a supposedly discriminating public. But we look through the 'best' journals that we know, we leaf through poetry collections distributed by the most highly regarded of publishers, and we see that it is so.

With so many examples to choose, and therefore to repudiate, it is distasteful to have to make a selection, but it seems to me that an example is called for. In 1964 Anthony Ostroff, having conceived the commendable idea of editing a collection of poems in which notable poets comment upon poems written by their peers, published a volume entitled *THE CONTEMPORARY POET AS ARTIST AND CRITIC*. Of the eight poems in that collection (each commented upon by three contemporary poets), I find four that are not by my standards disturbingly dull; those four are, in order of descending nondullness: Roethke's *In a Dark Time*, Lowell's *Skunk Hour*, Wilbur's *Love Calls Us to the Things of This World*, and Shapiro's *The Bourgeois Poet* (selections).

Wilbur's poem is first in the book, and if one must be arbitrary that seems as good a reason to focus on a single one of the eight poems as I can presently devise. Richard

Eberhart writes six short paragraphs which suggest that he interprets his assignment as having been: 'Tell us what is good about Wilbur's poem.' That he is not happy with the assignment is hinted at least twice: first, in his saying at the beginning of the fourth paragraph, 'The poem is not a willful nor a dynamic one. It is static and a psyche poem. It makes nothing happen'; and secondly by his appending to his six paragraphs another pair headed: 'Note: Criticism of the above' and followed by a 'P.S.' and a 'P.P.S.' His last sentence reads: 'A poem is greater than its parts.'

May Swenson also takes her assignment seriously and wants to do well; thus for a bit more than half her essay she talks about poetry in general, and then gets down to praising in detail those parts of Wilbur's poem she finds most attractive. Robert Horan, who is least familiar to us, writes a cautious but competent approval — but about two-thirds through he says of 'many' of Wilbur's poems (and he clearly includes this one), ' . . . I miss a more urgent involvement, emotive, not sermonic; some real risk or riot of the head and heart and nerve.'

The point is that Wilbur's poem is not an intensely engaging piece of work, and yet somehow we feel compelled to acclaim it, or to show cause why we should not. The fault is twofold: first, we naturally tend to have high expectations of work by a highly regarded artist; secondly, and this is more insidious, we find ourselves 'threatened' if we cannot give clear and objective reasons for our preferences in such matters. Horan is frank about his feelings toward Wilbur's poem, and that is rare refreshment. Eberhart's doubts 'bleed through' his praise — so that, finally, he is honest in spite of himself. May Swenson's approach is more characteristic of Ostroff's collection: she praises details, much as one labors to flatter a homely woman by marvelling at her lovely eyes or her nicely-shaped mouth.

I will not insist that I am right in feeling that Ostroff's exercise is a kind of instructive horror, but I invite you to examine it and see for yourself. In any case, we are aware and embarrassed (the particular instances matter very little) that pretentiousness seems so often to be the one defense poetry criticism can muster when a technological society demands objective proofs to justify the high value we place on the invaluable; or that, with whatever justice, we begin to fear that even the defenses we might offer among ourselves for our genuine preferences are flimsy and inadequate, and thus we finally feign admirations which undermine our loyalties in the process of protecting our criteria.

The ultimate method by which poetry is properly judged is taste — the response of long attention, extensive training, and carefully groomed sensitivity. It is a method that will not find ready acceptance in a society composed largely of objectivists, but, ironically, it contains a bit of positivism: it works, as the years (if perhaps only the years) continually prove. At the risk of seeming merely to restate a view held by Matthew Arnold, the evaluation of poetry is fundamentally a comparative process, and what one compares is not relative meanings or relative beings but the qualities of relative events — the events produced by different poems. It is only for this reason that one is able to compare (as one frequently finds oneself doing) poems of widely divergent contents and forms and is able to make judgments of their relative merits. In making such judgments, one is comparing the quality and intensity of the events produced by the reading of the poems. Finally, one is comparing the quality and intensity of the events of the poetry to the quality and intensity of other events that make up living. It is generous of any man to attempt to explain his values in the language of his fellows. Perhaps it is even necessary. But it is absurd to abandon one's values merely because one's fellows have no names for them. There are a number of ways in which the

understanding and appreciation of a poetic event can be enhanced by using the language and implementa of technology, and there are a number of ways in which they cannot.

Yet the event which occurs, singly and untranslatably, in the mind of the reader of any excellent poem is no more confined forever to the realm of pure relativism than is the question of ethics, though they are far from being the same thing. After we have approved a poem's formal qualities and applauded its 'ideas,' we can go on, at the very least, to enumerate certain effects it does not produce — and among these we should hope to include dullness and pretentiousness. We can certainly continue to pride ourselves on our knowledgeableness of meaning and being, but we need not be ashamed to assert a conviction that in poetry doing matters most, or that we know in ourselves when a worthwhile event occurs. There is a skill in these things which as yet defies code-books and instruments. It is true of life; it is true of love; and still, however incredibly, they endure.

If finally we find we must specify a function for poetry, we might suggest that a function of poetry — and, indeed, of art — is to call into question superficial ideas of functionality, and thus to assert the potential validity of all experiences upon which time has not yet bestowed purposes or even names.

SURE, IF

Derk Wynand

Sure, if you want to open
a smile wide enough
you'll find teeth
not always smiling,
find blue horseflies
biting last month's eyes
or see an autumn
in lotus position
making winter alterations.

ISSUE P. 433 · SCAN P. 27

FRAGMENT FROM SECOND LIFETIME

by Will Slotnikoff

TWO LETTERS FROM CORRESPONDENCE WITH A DEIPNOSOPHIST*

Béla

Washington, D.C. Aug. 18, 1969

Dear Béla:

Your last three letters (7-31, 8-6 and 8-8), for a reason I haven't figured out yet, seem to me of special significance, possibly because they hark back to the initial impulse that prompted the inception of this conversation by mail.

Wrote in my former reply that I was ever so gratified that at last we were making real efforts to be immediate, direct, and personal, without which qualities all that we have to say to each other, if you will forgive my saying so, has the earmarks of an empty exercise in the use of high-flown language, a simultaneous monologue such as is practiced by young children at play, neither listening to the other, yet stimulated by the excitement of the noise words make.

In my reference to Dr. Rogers' use of encounter groups as a problem-solver I called your attention to the attempt made there to get the participants to express their true emotions in "the here and now;" how they are asked to get rid of their preconceived notions about how they must act, how they must approach another individual, what they must say and how they must say it; and most importantly that "they are asked to be as basic and as frank as they can." If I have any capacity left to do the last-named, that is the vein my response to yours should have taken in order to fortify and make meaningful the *modus vivendi* of our dialogue. I deeply believe the honesty, sincerity, and integrity of what you have

written me, perhaps all along but particularly now, merit that much, at the very least, in return.

* Béla de Tirefort, longtime dean of the Washington Square Outdoor Art Association, currently living in St. Petersburg, Fla., where he continues to turn out the Neo-Impressionistic landscapes that hang in living rooms in every state of the Union. Have to admit at this time, for the record, that I have failed to meet the challenges to my honesty with myself that are so tactfully incorporated in your delicate and at times eloquent attempts to recall me to my senses. And please do not take that as a reproach, because somewhere in myself I am aware that all you are doing is in the spirit of truest friendship for me. It would be less than grateful — maybe even less than human — for me not to tell you so.

There are several statements in your letters I want to dwell on in some detail — presently — because they are so critical. One in particular I must have wilfully suppressed in my subliminal memory; truly I do not recall the incident. I wish you would help me. It reads, “There was one time when I persuaded you to give yourself another chance to exchange a park bench for a self-supporting role in life.” If the album of memory has not gathered too much dust, please remind me of the circumstances surrounding the incident. It may do something for one of my current characteristic hangups. Will you please try?

Again am not sure why but, on the ideological level, the philosophy you expound in your letters inevitably recalls to mind SHROPSHIRE LAD XLVIII. These words have haunted my mind for so many years I’d like to repeat them to you in the present context partly, I think, because they are so utterly heuristic: “Be still, my soul, be still; the arms you bear are brittle, / Earth and high heaven are fixt of old and founded strong / Think rather, — call to thought, if now you grieve a little / The days when we had rest, O soul, for they were

long.

“Men loved unkindness then, but lightless in the quarry /
I slept and saw not; tears fell down, I did not mourn; / Sweat
ran and blood sprang out and I was never sorry; / Then it
was well with me, in days ere I was born.

“Now, I muse for why and never find the reason, / I pace
the earth, and drink the air, and feel the sun. / Be still, be
still, my soul; it is but for a season / Let us endure an hour
and see injustice done.

“Ay, look; high heaven and earth ail from the prime
foundation; / All thoughts to rive the heart are here, and all
are vain; / Horror and scorn and hate and fear and
indignation — / Oh why did I awake? when shall I sleep
again?” (ca. 1896)

Just spoke to G. about that bit of amnesia on my part.
And she tells me it had to do with your urging me to get
married to her. Was that it? And if so was it not accompanied
by two Cassandra-like admonitions on your part (I do not
mean the term pejoratively in the least — please
understand!), two warnings which have turned out to be
prophetically true? These I seem to remember distinctly. But
affirm or deny if your recollection does not accord with mine,
as I may be the victim of enfeebled or self-servingly distorted
memory. One was, “Marriage will either make you or break
you.” The second, if memory serves, “There’s a good chance
you two tyrants will destroy each other,” or words very much
to that effect. You see I am still the “aprosexiac” you
perceived in me from the very beginning! If time changes us
at all — which is an open question — it appears to me to
make us only more so. No?

G. has just handed me an excerpt from a paperback (*THE
HEIRS OF CAIN*, by Abraham Rothberg. Dell. 1966) which
represents her opinion of me and my shortcomings and her
recommendation for the remedy. If you see it her way (as in
many respects I find you both in agreement on the

evaluation of my personality-type and its defects) that would make it a consensus. Would like it if you checked me. Here it is:

‘Let ego be where id was before,’ Nachbar exclaimed.
Nissim collapsed into bitter hilarity. ‘You have your own
God,
Nachbar, and your own prophets.’
Chastened, Nachbar returned to the tail between his
legs. ‘Those
who overreach,’ he continued, ‘surrender their
humanity. They give
up love and friendship, family and community. Like
wolves, they are
driven out of the circle where men huddle in the dark
around the
warmth of their fires. They can no longer warm
themselves with or
be warmed by their own kind.’

I like to think of this as an interesting aside, yet perhaps it is a clue that points to the heart of the problem. There are quite a few passages in your letters that I believe say just that in other language — that vocabulary that is uniquely your own, because it has evolved legitimately from your life-experience rather than from what other people have said in their books. . . . This very inclination on my part to brush off the implied diagnosis as a curious side note may be part of that ingrained, dangerous habit I have of ducking issues. THE GREAT EVADER! (Herzog). Have I finally reached the point where I have to be counsel for the prosecution as well as for the defense, with you as cross between jury and amicus curiae? And G. as corpus delicti? This is not written flippantly or facetiously, Lord knows. I pray it is the truth. As you declare so sagely, “the hour glass fills irrevocably at bottom and empties all too rapidly on top.” The sands of time are running out but fast, and if I fail this final test I will be

left with a whitened sepulcher on my hands: a wasted lifetime. There are times when I feel I am hanging on to sanity by a single slender thread, and if it snapped I would be over the edge — irrevocably. And for an epitaph we might perhaps try: “Here lies Will Slotnikoff, lifelong specialist in self-deception. It took death to finally undeceive him.” Surely death is many things but one thing seems certain: it is not a liar.

The above excerpt refers to “those who overreach” as doing so at the cost of surrendering their human selves in the process — becoming, in short, the freaks and monsters we are all too familiar with in the lives of artists and writers who strove to scale the heights of Olympus and mutilated their humanity in the attempt. Nietzsche is a prime example. So is Rimbaud. So is Gérard de Nerval, Van Gogh, Baudelaire, Kafka, D. H. Lawrence, Freud, Kierkegaard, and the later ones like Gide and Cocteau and Malraux who have since been characterized by some as “frauds of genius.” We could add to the list from past and present *ad libitum*. Yet the deceptions — the fructifying lies — of which they were all guilty have produced works of imperishable artistry. It was not Nietzsche alone who went off the deep end knowing he was doing it. In my translation from Cocteau’s *CREATION BEFORE LIFE* (The Outsider 4 & 5, Kenneth Patchen issue) there is one salient example.

Since copies are selling for twenty-five to fifty dollars, I did not send you one. Some of it is worth repeating for present purposes, I do believe:

If you were faced with the brutal necessity of choosing between the cell of the Benedictine monk and life, with its alternating sorrows and joys, which would you prefer?

But one is in a cell all one’s life, don’t you see? And then I believe myself to be the kind of writer who makes no distinction between life and art. The banal characters of the *Secluded Life*, of the *Garret*, are always quite true. Is not the

poet essentially the man locked up in his own adventure? Perhaps there are two kinds of writers, those who live and those who only write. Myself I only write in a kind of somnambulistic state, a prey to every shock, and inspiration is only the black angel of indolence with one eye open.

I hold to the view that a poet bleeds ink and leaves behind him at each moment a trail of white blood — the blood of the soul — for a public which scarcely believes in it any longer.

It seems to me that literary creation is a form of the instinct of self-preservation. The writer learns this at his own expense but he accomplishes the gesture as naturally as a man who falls into the water goes through the motions of swimming, for to create a work of art is to kill death, to attempt to put into the world something bright and alive that is beyond ourselves and has nothing to do with us. I might add that a creator often seeks a name for himself only to insure destiny and a better opportunity for success to his creation after him. Let us take the case of a Baudelaire who died intact. His work is then substituted for his mutilated human drama and is a magnificent realization of it. A poet who seeks happiness, moreover, seems to me a trifle ridiculous just as he seems to me destined for the worst catastrophes. Man is filled with a kind of night. Poets who attempt to tame the wild dog and the wolf, to make of the mystery a domestic animal, necessarily fare badly. It is only rarely that they do not turn back against the poet.

Poetry and the picturesque are poor companions, but the public likes at all costs to make picturesque figures out of poets. They like to think of us as dancers. What they do not know is that we are poised over death on a slack wire and seeing only the torso swinging about and the hands fidgeting with the balancing pole, they think we are acrobats.

Think of Max Bodenheimer, his life as pariah and his ignominious end. Think of Joe Gould! Think of the lives of Sherwood Anderson, Hart Crane, Dreiser, Hemingway,

Thomas Wolfe, Thomas Merton (who died recently in Tibet due to a short circuit in his heating stove). You name them, the scores who took their own lives because they could not bridge the gap between a mass civilization and a minority culture. The tragically ludicrous drama of the life and career of Scott Fitzgerald!

But as I started to say, G.'s excerpt refers to "those who overreach." In your letter of Jul. 31 (the first of the three) you put it somewhat differently but in substance I do not see any material difference. Referring to what you once described as "monolithic self-concern"—one of the major plagues that invade inner space, you write:

This self-concern, however, is the illegitimate offspring of megalomania, that paranoid affliction which came gift-wrapped, together with the heightened self-consciousness of the human state.

Self-concern is, of course, an inborn, necessary condition to survival. But what are its limits?

you ask and then answer your own question—

Only when conceit, megalomania, and a pride born of a feeling of inadequacy compound self-concern into self-torture; when we overrate—

and this—I suggest—is the counterpart of the above "overreach"—our intellect, talents and importance in the scheme of things. The word is 'overrate.' In short, it is not a question of kind but one of degree.

Then you go on with your reflections on the moon walk: The aforementioned shot of earth, reduced by distance, cannot but reduce proportionately our concomitant, self-imposed outsize. It's this outsize which results when our ego projects the small image of our real selves on the outsize screen of our idealized image. Then when we are forced to become that image, we become also a pseudo-entity, devoid of reality, an overrated VIP to ourselves. This is the tragic form of becoming that exacts a usurious price for its upkeep.

The whole scheme is one of fraud and deceit, a phony unstable house on too small a foundation, and only the foundation is real.

But enough. Your statements are clear, lucid, eminently sage and sane and more than confirm Plato's insistence that poets be banned from his Ideal Republic, because "all poets are liars."

In your second letter (Aug. 6) you are also reminded of a quote from Plato: "There is nothing in the affairs of men worth losing sleep over." Do you seriously believe that I can go along with that kind of philosophy or that such an attitude would resolve my lifelong dilemmas? Lord knows I am no hero, physically or morally, but to be persuaded of that kind of outlook I would indeed have to remount the entire stream of my being to its source. With Henley — and I venture to say it will be that way till the day I die — I shall go down to the bitter end with my head bloody but unbowed.

As yet I do not know who is listening but I must in the little span of time still left me go on shouting from the rooftops that I am concerned; so long as things are like they are I do lose sleep and health over the way things are which they need not be. Have written you to this effect time and again, but have to repeat it this one more time.

Our age is in a shambles. We plunge from one border crisis to another, each more disastrous than the one before. Our most ancient traditions are torn apart. Amidst plenty, we have lost sight of who and what we are. We have nearly forgotten that we are human beings; people have become property — objects. Technology produces new and shining instruments for the surgeons of greed and pleasure, and old truths are no longer self-evident. In a time of supermachines and computers, the idea of work takes on new meaning. Americans have plunged into a wholly practical, skeptical, technological way of life, and our technology is changing the world and ourselves as well. Suddenly it seems we are no

longer good Christians; we are the people our parents warned us against.

The young Thoreau advised the young: "What old people say you can't do, you try and find that you can. Old deeds for old people and new deeds for new. Practically, the old have no very important advice to give the young; their own experience has been so partial and their lives have been such miserable failures. I have lived for some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing, and probably cannot tell me anything to the purpose. Here is life— an experiment to a great extent untried by me—but it does not avail me that they have tried it. If I have had any experience which I think valuable, I am sure to reflect that my mentors said nothing about it." And what's new with you? Shalom! Will

St. Petersburg, Fla. Aug. 23, '69

Dear Will—

Your last two letters are the kind I've been wanting from you for a long time: Your ideas, your opinions rather than those of others in the literary enclave.

Re "There was one time . . . etc.," as reminisced in one of my late letters: Yes, you did indeed repress—unconsciously that is— the gist of what I said that long ago in Washington Sq. Park. The reason for the suppression is not far to seek: it was, indeed, a turning point in your life that afternoon on a park bench.

I remember it vividly. What I don't remember is the date. I believe you were already married and G. was pregnant at the time. I know, and G. will perhaps remember, that she asked me to talk to you and impress upon you the fact that if you went your own way, it would be preferable to the misery your attitude and behavior promised for a future life together. "Tell him," she said, "if he wants to go, he can do so and have his freedom with my blessings."

The cause of all that? You were in a king-sized conflict with your innate sense of responsibility and your desire to live an unencumbered type life—an early prevue of the hippie syndrome. You were literally in a funk. The prospect of a wife and child seemed to open prison doors and a life-sentence.

I spent some three hours arguing (“haranguing” is a better word) that if you choose a park bench for a way of life, you’d satisfy an immediate need to escape your conflict, but you could never face yourself thereafter as a whole man. You see, I knew your character, neurotic as all hell, but a deep sense of duty to (perhaps) your deepseated Jewish ideal of a Mensch. No Jew, I believed, can run out successfully on the responsibilities to the tribal ideal and the Mishpoche. Too much is behind him in tradition and time. At least that is how I guessed it at that time and it seems to me I was right; for I pounded on that theme until it seemed to have reached the outskirts of your conscience.

Then I urged you to accept a proposition: “Give yourself six months to adjust to the frightening threat of a new responsibility and train yourself for some career,” I said.

Since, however, “words” were basic to your nature, I suggested you find something in the realm of words, other than writing for a living. You seemed to have taken my advice and with the help of our common friend, J. C., took up linotyping. That being too manual, you did not succeed at it. After that you took and passed an exam in proofreading (closer to your bent) and made good! I say “made good” more in the sense that you saved yourself from the senseless fate of a park-bench intellectual (a Bodenheim perhaps) and, above all, gained back your self-respect and self-esteem to become a Mensch.

At the time, however, I told you that if you found, after six months, that your true nature rebelled against a prosaic place in the Establishment and being a bum was what you really wanted, you had at least tried and in failing found out

the truth. If being a drifter (I remember saying to you) is in fact your real nature, then it was that which you should really do — and since you tried be free of guilt. And G. would understand and condone and make her own life. In the end you promised to try for six months and by that time a transformation took place.

You lost your panic, you retained G. and became a grand father — nu? Whether in the end you found yourself and were glad of the choice, I do not know. But one thing I do know — that your choice was *eo ipso* a better one than a crummy park bench would have been among a passel of lumpen-intellectuals.

You speak of a hangup. Aside from the cerebral turbulence which is the lot of every creative individual, there is the inevitable frustration of a deeply felt talent remaining unfulfilled in a world which has the highest rewards reserved for the lowest kind of no-talent. It takes a lot of acceptance and philosophic resignation to face up to this injustice. What is apt to happen, then, is that a deep hate for all injustice in the world takes over and drives the mind into a state of near self-immolation in an effort to combat it mentally.

This is a theme I have been continually repeating to you in my letters, viz: the purely cerebral battle without externalized opportunity for action has only the inside of the skull for a battlefield. If it were only objectively intellectual — and there is no such thing — all would be well. Unfortunately, anger, rage, and resentment are turned inward as well as outward by a devilish process of re-internalization — a feedback process that takes place inside the head and fails to emerge as action.

The rebellious kids are better off: they join up and externalize their anger and resentment in mob action. They represent “anger looking for a cause” — any cause — and have themselves a ball.

The true “idealists,” on the other hand, is (in the Platonic sense) one who deals in ideas only. He creates in his head a “cerebral autarchy” which takes over a large part of his cerebral functions and leaves him exhausted, devitalized and often impotent.

Plato, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Kafka, Kierkegaard are a few of the geniuses you mention. With the exception of Cocteau (my apologies to you), I do not believe any of them were “frauds of genius.” Some of them, like Nietzsche, went honestly mad but all of them suffered from continuous cerebral pregnancy. Their trouble? Truth! Could they help themselves? No! There are no contraceptive “pills” for the mind; its womb is constantly exposed to self-fertilization and birth pangs that may result in lifting an undeserving civilization a notch above the jungle or — as sometimes happens — a Still Geburt.

Is there a right then for self-protection? Yes, I believe. In “not overreaching” as you quoted and I said with a different word, *Selbtschenung* or self-preservation should be the right of genius as for any other life-form. Must the best always sacrifice themselves for the worst?

So “shout it from the housetops” if you must but, please, don’t fall off, dear friend. A broken neck ill becomes a warrior!

Generally, one of the results of anger denied functional expression in constructive action is that it turns against the self at first and then, to relieve the intolerable strain of escalated rage, is reprojected outward against the nearest and often dearest tangible objects: wife, child, friend or neighbor or the immediate physical environment — self-destructive rage looking for a cause. While a faceless and abstract opposition we identify as the “world” does not even know we exist, those innocents which our emotional warp makes miserable, suffer the brunt of uncontrolled (because unrelieved) rage. The Hamlet and Sisyphus rolled in one ends

up by becoming the victim of his own private Vulture eating his own liver thus adding a third unhappy figure of self-inflicted misery. And to top it all with irony — without having accomplished a single reform or victory over the world's evils!

If one has only one's own mind to napalm with impotent resentment and only the inside of one's skull to witness the turmoil of battle of words without action, the lesson is clear. If you cannot act with real weapons in your hand and slay live dragons, shut up and spare yourself at least. No one says one should approve of the rot and festering evils that threaten to bring our world crashing down (which it most likely will), but if one is unfit to mount the barricades, one should at least not mount them against one's self! So much for Plato's remark which has to be interpreted in the light of dual meanings. What he seems to have had in mind (though poorly expressed) is the values of men, their empty goals and foolish strivings are not worth the serious consideration others usually give them. His life and work prove that he took men's actions and overt knaveries very seriously indeed.

What it all comes to is this: No sincere man or honest thinker can be expected to condone or not to oppose the moral filth, the corruption and bottomless stupidity that went with every civilization since the start of human association. Is not my every letter a gripe about some stupidity or other; from Vietnam to "Moondogging"?

But no sensible critic of evil should be denied the "civil right" to protect himself emotionally if he can. And if he cannot, let him think of his debt to those nearest him in life! There is no gain to the world or one's self to be a bore and a stinker just because the world stinks.

If you have to shovel the world's manure around the least you can do for your own and others' sake is to deodorize yourself, lest you too stink in the nostrils of those who do know you're around.

Have I made myself clear, my dear Chaver?
Shalom to you too.

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A NICE TIME AFTER THE NEWS SPECIAL

William A. Roecker

Allan J. Wagenheim:

Tonight we are wearing our gravestones like funny hats, for we saw the white rabbit and his friends testing the new gas for us in this glass bathroom.

The plumbers are nice, have designed toilets like saddles for us to stand around during the party. They know we are really kings, unable to change things' courses, abdicating, flying to Cuba to see the bones of monks and bishops, still in their robes.

MCLUHAN'S MAFIA

THE CURTAIN HAS BEEN UP ON the McLuhan drama for several years; and now that we are muddling somewhere through Act II, it has become increasingly apparent not only to us symbol-hunters and slogan-detectors in the audience that the words flashing neon above the proscenium arch and on the marquee say 'The Medium is the Message,' but even to the less experienced and perceptive culture watchers who are getting the message.

This sort of phenomenon happens periodically. About a hundred years ago we suffered 'The Survival of the Fittest;,' about fifty years ago we came to understand, through the auspices of Freud, that the root of all mental woe was the sexual hangup; at the same time Einstein informed us that 'Everything is Relative;,' and today we make our way through the maze of electronics, media, and messages with the slogan 'The Medium . . .' etc. Let's confess it: the new culture hero of that thinking responsible upright ape called man is now Marshall McLuhan.

Before proceeding to my main point (so archly foreshadowed in the title of this piece), I must first place Darwin, Freud, Einstein, and McLuhan in a larger and more meaningful context. To begin with, they are all remarkably perceptive men with that high capacity for original thought that forces the mass of thinking men to look at a familiar world in a new way. They discovered important truths that had (and will have) significant effects on their own generation and generations to come. But: the body of their thought and expression contains a complexity and subtlety which is rarely apprehended by the mass of men, even thinking men; so the thing that is ultimately at large among us is a kind of demon, a caricature of the original idea — a slogan.

All slogans are potentially dangerous for the obvious reason that they tend to congeal and paralyze thought rather than stimulate it. Some slogans are more dangerous than others. It is my personal belief (based on a number of phenomena, including an intuitive twitch that occasionally haunts me) that 'The Medium is the Message' is one of the most dangerous slogans of our time.

Exhibit No. 1: The slogan is dangerous because it is false. I thought it was false when I first heard it, about five years ago; and I am now convinced that it is false. No medium can, in itself, be a message— except in the simplest and most limited way. For example, a book with blank pages can deliver a certain number of messages. If it is handed to someone, he may respond by feeling insulted, the butt of a joke. Or he may take it as an amusing bit of whimsy. Discovered on a shelf (alongside forty or fifty other books with blank pages), it might reveal the message: 'The owner is trying to give the impression that he reads books, but doesn't care at all for books except for the appearance of their binding, or as symbols.' A book could be hurled at someone, thereby delivering the message of hostility, or anger. And so on. But within these variations, those are all the things that a book of blank pages can do with regard to delivering messages. And so with every other medium. A television set which emits nothing but a glaring light is delivering considerably less message than one which is functioning normally. In fact, the only message one could reasonably get is that the set is poorly adjusted or needs a new tube. But I don't think McLuhan was talking about such messages. The slogan 'The Medium is the Message' must be placed in the same category with slogans such as 'God is Love.' Just a little good hard analysis will cause both statements to collapse like dime store figurines under a hammer blow.

A kind of intellectual's demi-god hurling electronic bolts, McLuhan hurled his slogan at the skies and Lo! a lot of

people thought angels had spoken; and so we are witnessing the sort of group hypnosis that comes with religious movements. Once he had startled enough people and acquired his following, McLuhan amplified his original pronunciation; he also modified it and hedged it around sufficiently so that his own words are enough to damn it. In order to make proper sense of his own creed, he had, after all, to provide his media with messages. The man is no fool. For brilliant insights floating on very thin air are bound to come crashing to earth. So it developed that media do have messages, and the messages are other media which they have absorbed, like carnivora with electronic nerves. The message of the book is speech; that of the film is the novel — and so on. Surely, to go on dumbly repeating, 'The Medium . . .' etc.

Exhibit No. 2: A lot of influential people are dumbly repeating, 'The Medium is the Message.' These people fall into two classes. The first class takes the slogan with absolute faith and literalness; the second class repeats the slogan because it is fashionable and then proceeds to ignore it or utterly contradict it.

Here are two examples: The first is from an article by Tom Wolfe.¹ The idea that these things, TV and the rest, are just tools that men can use for better or worse depending on their talents and moral strength—that idea is idiotic to McLuhan. The new technologies, such as television, have become a new environment. They radically alter the entire way people use their five senses, the way they react to things, and therefore, their entire lives and the entire society. It doesn't matter what the content of a medium like TV is. It doesn't matter if the networks show twenty hours a day of sadistic cowboys caving in people's teeth or twenty hours of Pablo Casals droning away on his cello...

¹ 'The New Life Out There,' in *McLuhan: Hot & Cool*, Gerald Emanuel Stearn, ed. (New American Library: New York, 1967), p.

35.

The second is from an advertisement in the *Saturday Review*. The word 'Discovery' appears in large black letters near the top of the ad. Then the copy: 'Discover dynamic adventures in communication that speak to today's young adults in their own language. If the medium is the message, what is the message young adults are getting from movies, advertising, newspapers, rock and folk-rock? Use the DISCOVERY BOOKS—they explore major media to wrest from them their message on the themes of Communication, Freedom, Peace, Love, Life, and Happiness.'

While Wolfe depicts, quotes and interprets McLuhan in his essay, his tone is entirely approving, even ecstatic; the reader has to assume that Wolfe endorses those views that he so enthusiastically transmits via his rock-and-roll prose. This kind of mindless uncritical endorsement is dangerous, especially in a writer with Wolfe's popular following. The second example is almost amusing, a slick bit of advertising which uses the popular and impressive slogan for whatever appeal it can muster, and then turns right around and contradicts its essential meaning. Strangely, both Wolfe and the ad are referring to the same slogan, the same idea. The ultimate effect of both kinds of reaction to McLuhan's message is harmful; a meaningless and dangerous slogan is being handled and bandied about indiscriminately and visibly—so that only further obscurity and misunderstanding can result. McLuhan has opened his own electronic Pandora's box.

Exhibit No. 3: Exploiters of the media can turn to McLuhan's famous pronouncement for justification of any kind of slop, tripe, or venom that they care to stuff into their commercial products as bait for the viewer's dollar. For if the medium is the message, and sadistic cowboys are no better than Pablo Casals, why should anyone (the censors) be concerned about the content of films, TV shows,

commercials, comic books, etc.? They have, in that slogan, a heavy club indeed, and it is ironic that it should have been handed to them by a professor of literature (a man of high purpose and seriousness) and perpetuated by his college-educated well-meaning followers. There is some comfort and reassurance in the existence of the motion picture rating code, which suggests that some plain good sense has prevailed even during the magical mystery tour of the media conducted by McLuhan and his believers. It is obviously quite difficult for sensible men not to believe that there's some kind of message hidden in all that violence and sex depicted so vividly in all those media. For, indeed, there is.

The perpetuation of this particular McLunacy is our collective misfortune, the magnitude of which can be understood only when measured against two extreme poles: at one end is the real danger, to our psychic and social health, of media used irresponsibly; at the other end is the fund of vital perceptions and ideas which McLuhan has produced since his early explorations of the media, and which are not yet being given the attention they deserve. Perhaps his most profound observation is that the way we communicate determines the way we perceive, use our five senses, and construct our social order. His conclusion that we are returning steadily to an aural and a tribal society is one that has to be considered seriously. The social, political, economic, and educational implications are explosive, truly revolutionary. It is in this area that we ought to be giving our attention, instead of mindlessly (or cynically) repeating 'The Medium . . .'

Given the dimensions of an ordinary essay, I have no intention of doing a critique of McLuhan's theories; he is much too slippery a thinker for that. But I would like to consider, briefly, some aspects of the tribal experience to which we are supposedly returning. A neglected point of

extreme importance: if the tribal analogy holds, then modern men are bound by myths, just as members of the early tribes were. In an electronic world, however, the myths are created and promulgated and sustained quite differently than in the past, which was dependent on a long oral-aural tradition. In the ancient tribes it was the tribal chief, or the elders, who passed on tradition and myth through the power and prestige of their office. Inside the compact arena of the tribal experience, they gave renewed life to the ancient gods and heroes. Something similar is happening in our own time, but in a startlingly different way. The tribal chiefs are now invisible, replaced by ikons, millions of television and motion picture screens. And instead of the slow repetitive cumbersome oral tradition, we have electronic reproduction: the very gods and heroes themselves are presented to us, sometimes bigger than life (much bigger!); we are subject to a phenomenon that I call 'instant myth.' With a single motion picture (*THE GRADUATE*, for one), an archetypal figure emerges, transformed, from the undifferentiated mist of history and brands itself on our consciousness. The old heroes are recreated in new bodies and labeled John Wayne, or Steve McQueen, or a dozen other names. And so are new sirens and temptresses instantly created. But these fictional figures do not live their lives in a vacuum; like the ancient gods on Mount Olympus, like the figures in the Bible, their lives and their activities radiate a moral and ethical aura, an ethos. If you find yourself wondering what that ethos is, then you haven't been going to the movies or watching television.

I will summarize it simply: the instant myths of the entertainment media are diametrically opposed to the entire humanistic tradition which has been precariously sustained through music, art, literature, and religion for several thousand years. To simplify even further, merely think about the immense popularity of a James Bond, a Mike Hammer. The implications are staggering.

The ameliorative possibilities of the media are also staggering. But they can be appreciated only when we get past the inanity of ‘The Medium is the Message.’ (At one point in his essay — quoted above — Wolfe says: ‘McLuhan characterizes the good General [Sarnoff] as one of the “technological idiots.” Sarnoff is one of those people who thinks that television is merely a wonderful tool whose impact is merely what a man chooses to do with it.)

I refute McLuhan’s Mafia with a personal experience which I believe is representative and valid. Several months ago my wife and I attended a showing of *HELGA*; we simply walked into the theatre without any notion of what the film was about; there seemed nothing better to do that evening. *HELGA* turned out to be an honest-to-goodness sex-education film, designed to instruct a fairly wide age group in the mysteries of sex. It succeeded magnificently. Serious without being solemn, exact and scientific without being confusing and complex, it treated sex as though it were an important, wonderful, and entirely mentionable part of life. It unveiled and discussed the human body as though it were not a thing of shame, but of beauty. It used words such as ‘penis’ and ‘vagina’ and ‘menstruation’ and ‘ejaculation’ as though they were names of vegetables, or flowers. As a forty-year-old man who has been married half his life and has fathered a son, I felt that I had had a profound experience. I know the facts of sex; for me there hasn’t been any intellectual mystery about sex for a long time. But seeing the human body bared before the community, seeing its most intimate functions revealed and discussed, seeing the actual birth of a child — all this lifted from my spirit a burden of secrecy and guilt that was so familiar, so constant, that I had ceased to recognize its existence. I probably experienced what the psychiatrists call catharsis; but it didn’t happen in a darkened room, at twenty dollars an hour; it happened in a darkened theatre, where I was part of the tribe. This is the point: what the tribe

sanctions and says is true and good tends to become true and good for the individual. And that's how belief and attitudes are created and destroyed in our time.

Practically every male and female in this country under the age of twenty-five is a product of that kind of relentless tribal experience. Can we afford to ignore the implications? Can any self-respecting school or university avoid the responsibility of examining the media and treating them as critical parts of our lives? McLuhan has taken an aloof, a 'cool' intellectual stance with regard to all this. He has declared himself an explorer, merely making probes into the electronic nervous system of the media, preparing the way for others to take action. But if you sneak up behind him you catch him saying things such as this:² 'We . . . consider it a great advantage to be able to use our eyes, ears, etc. This is the way we use media—as extensions. Therefore it doesn't matter what's on, what matters is that we have use of our faculties. . . . Most media, though, are pure poison—TV, for example, has all the effects of LSD. I don't think we should allow this to happen.'

Thus spake the Master Himself. And out of that single passage any number of fanatical sects could emerge and pronounce themselves the sole bearers of truth. Was he implying that all television sets should be destroyed, television transmission discontinued? Surely he must, since the medium of TV is poisonous, and The Medium is the Message. Oh, no! Surely he must mean that TV is all right, but the stuff transmitted over it should be changed. But the stuff doesn't count! The Medium is the Message! Or does he mean—

I say McLuhan's Mafia is all around us. It is time to take defensive action.

² Dialogue: Q.&A.,' in McLuhan: Hot & Cool, p. 286.

AUTUMN

Newton Smith

My brother climbs a tree
at the end of summer
before school starts.
He sits there in the air all day
and sings.
I look up through summer leaves
and see patterns,
crystals of winter snow.

A. LEATON

A CATCH IN THE THROAT OF TIME—1

She came out of that brown day like a small sun . she
came up like a dawn . she broke like day . on the other
side
of my brain barn swallows came out to practice
Flying . underneath my nerves waves advanced and
retreated
rolled away at low tide and hammered
in when it was high . it was a day longer than
The long eyes of time . a jingle of gold bells
jingled in my head . my eyes were all in tune . my
tongue
lifted and curled like a red snake that's found another
red snake
In the bush . Then it stopped
She went out like the daylight at 5 o'clock in winter .
she
fell like night . she broke the jingle of gold
bells that jingled in my head . my eyes went out of time
My tongue flattened out like a dead red snake bitten by
a blue snake from another tribe on the other side
of the bush . a viper that roisters in the mangrove
swamps and
Only mates with death . And it didn't start again . the
sun
went down like a body falling and lay there
across me burning out.

A. LEATON

A CATCH IN THE THROAT OF TIME—2

There's a crack across my eyes where time leaks out
and stains
the day indigo blue no matter what colour the sun
makes
the windowpanes go . no matter what music the sky
is playing on its yellow harmonium . no matter
what matter rises up red in any morning's light
Where the door is loose on its hinges the cold air
comes in and floods the bed whose sheets are
winding sheets . the air is ice . drink
won't caulk the spaces in the skull where the
wind rushes in with dead time clutched in its
teeth like a hare . a name
the time of that name / its sound / weather / seas
make a silk tension across my
eyes until they crack
and time runs out.

A. LEATON

A CATCH IN THE THROAT OF TIME—3

All that moves in this air are the small
breaths of the black flies hanging
over the sticky cinzano bottle
Small white
breaths shrouding small black
flies
Nothing else moves : the eyes
lie dumb in their aspic
sockets . the hands are
still . pulse at the end
of its tether . blood dead
as a glacier
The ice age
has begun
The burning is over . the house
is in ashes and the
ashes
freeze.

A. LEATON

A CATCH IN THE THROAT OF TIME — 4

Death as stalactite might be desirable : to hang
through eternity lets say with the wind howling
through your bones . pure as ice, the skin long since
blown off like dry flakes of an old scab . as good a way
as any to finish it / better than most / better to freeze
lets say than rot
although this is aesthetics they say and it's
metaphysics they say that concerns us here : the
question after all
of how to make things move / how to make the pulse in
the
soles of your feet under your largest toe
throb again and then the next question
why ? The method however
is aesthetics : the muscle
making a track in the brain
for veins to follow
carrying blood . (Is blood disease or
benediction ?) Movement depends
on the terrain the hand surveys / the course

A. LEATON

it cuts through the skull's thick grass . let
the hand lie like an old bone buried and your
throat locks . Speak
at least to yourself so your voice won't
frighten your ears in the late night room . there's a way
but it's through the thicket of pain lets say
through the brambles words make / through the thick
hedges of syllables on all sides
down the syntax road.

A. LEATON

A CATCH IN THE THROAT OF TIME — 5

Speak and the words arrange the world
mysteriously
this is so
Syntax is the telescope through which
you see
old pain in another guise
and then another
until it comes to you
that guise is all there is
to history
You know only the body
you touch
which in other hands speaks
otherwise
no less fluently / no less true
Close
one eye
and the long mouth can be seen
to lie
Close another
and open the first
and the previous dark is yellow
in unexpected places
Infinitude of
eye / mouth
in its many parts

A. LEATON

THE ATHLETIC TONGUE

licks time into all its
possible faces
never one
Innocent as Inquisition
you fire up the faithless
body
Words arrange your innocence
your hurt history that dies
from shock / close another eye
and that dark figure smiling
from the dark water under the
ship is you / axe in
hand
To move
is to speak
at least to yourself
at least in the dark
the many echoing faces
in the world's
room.

JAMES HAWKS

THE PART

. . . when about facing the mirror
but even before you move
but even before I move
to speak
like the air shedding its molecules
you see
I see
space is the total the
flock of all positions
but the beauty of astro vision is man
made so you can turn it
made so I can turn it
off so you may know
off so I may know
your mouth is more than ever
my mouth is more than ever
a part of your face
a part of my face.

JAMES HAWKS

AFTER

After the night light becomes
sunned in, slept thru,
is brittle, creates itself,
with the afternoon edge, after the sleep,
with the leaves of afternoon, the great musk
of myself, at the roof's edge,
the leaves are with the lid's trace
and touch, they break
at the edge the eyes
make the lids with . . .
Hell another day burned and shot
it hangs in the hills at
the west edge of this afternoon.
And the dogs the immutable
dogs begin barking
barking in rounds thruout the town's edges.

GIL ORLOVITZ

NUMBERS: 154 & 155

My skull lights sidewise
into the bouncing crowd,
lungs agape, guillotines clapping.
Laughter like antennae
snickers above the eyes
and I moult huge shadows
by caesarians.
From the drawbridge fish
the old men through loudspeakers.
Tongues mount the keyhole.
The birds clatter their dishes.
There is a sign clapping envy
in the dark — I am promoted to a flag
and burst out flapping.
The sea weighs the whale.
Death, righthanded, shyly, helplessly, touches
me with the left.

GIL ORLOVITZ

NUMBERS: 156

The salt sky slumps
sun on the man,
lopping off
slops of muscle.
Bared between tight sheens
he provokes the stateless quarry,
the anvil alone
rearing at the shape.
Neither cross can crouch
nor guillotine shrug — the swimmer
at the mercy of loosely
knotted suicide.
He puffs arks, but his double
is vanished.
Undulant beyond the stroke
he tarries in the trough,
perfecting his death
without disciples.

GIL ORLOVITZ

NUMBERS: 153

The loss regards its front between its sly.
No face — the point has turned its slack: the necks
form hands in arrogant breathlessness
whereas some knuckles impound a mouth lie
upon lie, the throat galleying the long oar.
The Egyptian could have killed the Jew in profile,
but he lived so, half an eye for an eye.
Feeling around your eye
for your execution, you meet princes
in all the tears you cannot rank. So comes
the tongue, that a face do fingering.

GIL ORLOVITZ

NUMBERS: 159 (FRAGMENTS)

the swallows report for fruit delivery
and barbed wire

*

it is forbidden to practice sodomy while you knit

*

alone in draughty dragons
I pussyfoot down to earth
where I am met by a tattle of buffoons

*

the profile, banished down the middle,
swells beyond relief

*

enter the yellow sea, Lurching. It is a belly,
Thrust with urchin bodies, Heaped with whale of

Hurricane

and a Spouting Eye, sporting. It is an Ocean,
pitched gray and black by Shark and Vessels,
a yellow sally mouthed Sidewise

*

death will be:
retching gossamer,
the neutron in snowshoes,
the ambush with its hands on its hips,
the webfooted harp,
the maps curling for landings,
michael johnson at 4:30 pm Tuesday
allowable between the banana toupee
and the butterfly net of heaven

GIL ORLOVITZ

ART OF THE SONNET: 286

Moses, sloshing down the mountain
in his mustaches and galoshes,
coddles the crevices as minor deities
crooned to by spiderwebs. The thunder lies
on its side, beached leviathan, the Ten
Commandments open sores
of lightning slopping from his mooded head.
A honeyless shambles, he mounts the bandstand —
I cannot remember if I brought out
Egyptians or Jews. He scratches at his dreams
only the golden calf
is home and the worshipers wiping off
its scoria with the sheepskin Torah roll.

GIL ORLOVITZ

ART OF THE SONNET: 295

the old male meathooks caught the young
with dirty pictures of hisses, the horns
of the bulls tossing tinkles at four
in the morning, lisping tusks
tufting the toreadors, the girls
tracing the graphs of the fetuses of angels —
who cannot be born in the invisible,
how not creep on crabbed twinkles,
the world dwindling between fingerprintless
digits, the bull bewildered at his tusks,
the elephant in his sleep tossing his horns —
my love: creation is jagged with mercy, the toreador
clipping his priests hats, the aficionados
a mob of christs

HARVEY FEINBERG

A TENANT

Just listen
to it squawking shouting
banging on the walls
Imagine
such a racket
from a 27-year-old mind!
Shut up up there!
Little did i think
One upstairs room
unfurnished
barely lit
Now look
piled sky-high
buffalo
herds of old shoes
oranges
trolleys spraying blue sparks
clanging
till the roof flies off
the walls puff out
and my own ceiling snaps
What a dunderhead i was!
Four walls
but the cosmos shaves and showers there!

HARVEY FEINBERG

WHY SIT?

All chairs should be unchained
galloping on four legs everywhere
Sit long enough
the eyes lose lustre
like shriveled huckleberries
dried-out ink
Sit twiddling thumbs
the mind turns brittle
pink sponge out of water
good for swabbing piss stains bathroom reek
So get up
rest the chair
let Sally show the world
her new red wide-brimmed hat
You know
its not so bad
the mind squats toadlike blinking
kerplunk! it goes
into the bright depths of the sky

HERBERT MORRIS

LAS CAMISETAS

We are the shirtless ones.
Early this morning, day-sounds
hardly begun, clay pitchers
yet to be rendered of milk,
the children cresting on that
shadow half-sleep, half-waking,
a dream's surf in that blue light
lapping their breath, their faces,
we moved into the fields
and already felt morning
birdlike and vast behind us
climbing to feast on muscle
where the nape yields to shoulder.

Soon we have placed our shirts
on cactus, cornstalks, boulders,
over the fretted rumps of
burros working the fields,
common blue muslin wrappers
women of Mexico
piece out with waiting, stain
with dolor, stitch by heart
in light, in salt, in blindness.

HERBERT MORRIS

All day they lie and watch us,
sails on the wind, crude saddles
equal to gleaming stallions,
flags raised on the republic
publishing anguish, dazzle,
piety, tumult of purpose,
gems in the cordillera,
fruits of the field, day labor.
We are the shirtless ones.
All year the winds shall flay us,
burros and men and muslin,
and the suns bleach. Our wrappers
shall be removed and folded,
put to rock, rump, cactus.
Tonight, come from the fields,
dusty, profoundly Latin,
happened upon dry places,
outposts that spare us nothing,
not God, nor thirst, nor light,
we shall reach and take to us
these bleak shirts of the republic
in a great swoop and gesture
against the dark, the chill,
shall alike be worn by them
and wear them: Mexico,
that fierce cloak of pure night.

Then we shall make for home,
saying the stars, the names of
stars, the deep names invented
for fruit, for coasts, those harbors
the ends of the night must yield to
beyond our meager vision.
We are the shirtless ones,

HERBERT MORRIS

infinite, pieced out, timeless.
Early tomorrow, day-sounds
not yet begun, milk pitchers
clamoring in the half-light
through the fields after us
that we relieve them of their
sweetness and luster, sleepers
shall have been kissed, left to their
dream of being kissed.
We shall move out, our wrappers
folded, given to earth,
and the suns shall have started
hammering time and music
behind our backs, above us,
seeking us out as saddle,
mount of the fields, dim vessel,
dupe of the light, brief purpose.

JAMES SHERWOOD TIPTON

CONVENT PIECE : NOVICE

That
last
cloud
looked
like
angelcome
no
one
can
stop
her
now.

EXHIBITION

Half
a
dream
hung
as
you
would
expect
a
tit
to,
painted
by
Dali.

JAMES SHERWOOD TIPTON

SERENDIPITY

From a chinese urn
the piss of generations rises,
a stone wind threatening

a dollar purchase —
‘Some black oriental sensual
wood statues of cat women,’
I had asked.
But this smelled real.
Like a time when ten
in my grandmother’s cellar
among rat dung
and damp jars of jam,
the neighbor girl —
we watched each other
do it for a week.
And the outside —
‘Filigree women,’ he said.
‘Wire filles,’ I said.
‘Fill it with rose water,
good for the air.’
But I never did.
The wire women
(maybe they’re cats)
rub over my hands;
the urn inside
is dark with secrets.

JAMES SHERWOOD TIPTON

TWO FOR DINNER

Tablelegs fall
through floors
of air,
we sit suspended
stories high
holding onto
only hands,
a ring around
our dinner:
(your soul
is showing)
but be calm,
unusual things
are common here;
relax and eat
and after,
we'll dance
or make love,
leaving the dishes
to go hang.

KEN SMITH

I

On the flat states the wind
is flat & oh love is flat
That year all the poets
were saying oh love
Speaking into the wind
in those flat voices

II

The dead general flew round
& round in a helicopter
speaking of love & country
the dead regiment loved it
The very late president
had a way of saying to flutter
the senators' small veined ear.
Bang said love

KEN SMITH

III

Oh love oh love the record-player
goes round & round the room fills in
its void goes round the cold
coming in thin & final
She bakes bread in the kitchen —
ounces of love a thousand aches
she won't hear she brought
her sheets & recipe book
Her mouth says love a word
she holds like a shell to her ear
I can't hear the sea but the hiss
of the bonespace love
iv

Winter is down
it's a new decade here
on the shivering continent
& not much to hope for
by dead river & brown bare mountain
the wind rising
Shall we go on from here or
shall we go on from here or
if the grass grows back undying
the police stay away before
the soldiers get home let's
get this word understood

TOM TAYLOR

CARRY LIGHT SHADOWS IN THIS RELIEF

the voice cuts out
they move through these zones
in disguise. The
catalogs wet. definition has
a quality of ruby tension,
how the muscles are
and leave these celebrations
for the inside,
where the light goes pale.
The movement.
cut from cloth/wave as water
as cloth.
hears, too.
in the tunes.
I am as old as
That,
and flashing past.

PETER WILD

THINKING ON THE PLAINS

When a storm comes here
it comes in a great bruise,
a black prairie fire
raging from the Llano Estacado
sheathed in dust
everything hangs still
before the grinder,
beneath its black ears
and red eyes
thank God, it's no worse
than having a tooth pulled,
in the numbness of lights
the sound of roots tearing loose,
of a carcass being split
up the middle;
and just as quickly
it's over . . .
people who love me
don't seem to understand
what parts I leave and what I take,
what muscle they strip
from my bones . . .

FRANCIS H. HANNOLD, JR.

AN EXTRA MAY

The manic bells of beakless birds
ding and ding;
they jangle green with jungle jade and Jung.
Wound in sheets we whip to grief
hanging far suspended for each pause,
to sing
a beat of disbelief
in words. I hear you moan
for high nativity
free of gravity
and all its awkward laws.
But still a loose balloon
to bag a bone.
Why? are we afraid I'll
kill it in the cradle
like a telephone?

HARRY DRINKWATER

i am the ram
of mars, i am
that militant
man, fanning
a new fire
looking only
at the brilliance
listening only
to myself
full of not hearing
a woman describe
herself
to me
since, i am
and i have
saturn and mercury
in taurus

in my sixth,
the natural house
of virgo
i have prepared
a partial personal
list of items
of use
' to describe
the distance between
one and two '
a. locked booth
b. spaced bumper
c. forgotten instant
d. shut window
living against
sound and light
on three or four
billion
lives living.

N. M. WEISS

this bare land
spreading brown thighs
to receive the seed
pressed upon her
by the solemn eagle;
sending the northern wolves
to howling a freezing
blood refrain in remembrance of
the origin of wind
a suckling pig
cleaving to warm woman breast
fearing the shadow
of descending northern
hawks
describing the circling
defiance and fading in
the thinness of the west
in quest of lights

THOMAS A. WEST, JR.

I THOUGHT I SAW MY NATION

1. I thought I saw my nation
From the window of my car —
Thought I saw its cavern cities
Stuck in fumes, stalagmite
Buildings copper green corroded
by the inch thick
There are bats wingless
In the day-dusk. This is why
They hide, smear soot
Across the scraped scarred lung
of sky: creating their own night
At noon.
2. Passing me at eighty
Tire shrieking vans
Rattled bones of cargoes:

Hearses for Titans.
They must be creating remains
I recall chimneys vomiting
Black ash down the asphalt earth.
3. Accident ahead. My nation
My state county town
Perhaps I know them
Sprawled like birds wingless now
Eyes, not sight staring
Across the tissue of the sky.
Children bats or birds
From city or countryside:
I thought I saw my nation
From the window of my car.

OTTONE M. RICCIO

MORE THAN A HAND WAVING

fear
the value of it
almost
the sky
awesome
all around me
yet not sky at all
just nearest to me
of farther space
clouds sun stars planets
all decoys
lulling me to acceptance
purpose
the value of it
almost
I toss a coin
into the sky
it doesn't come down
I'm standing on the wrong end of Earth

RIENZI CRUSZ

PROPHECY

When I was a child
And played my venial sins
With sunny abandon
In the backyard,
I said, one day, to Jack Jesus
Never, never again,
Will I touch the cookie-jar
Or steal the muffins hot,
And the rooster in the yard
Searched my eye,
And crew loudly.
When I became an old man,
I collected my body
And the fleshpots of my youth,
And withdrew
To the small cathedral
Of my soul,
To light a candle
To my darkness,
And in the flickering glow
I saw a shape on a cross,
And it crew again
Agonizingly.

MARGARET GIBSON

PHOTOGRAPH OF A NUDE

Stands with her shoulders hunched,
her head stooped below the weight
of a sun stripped flat out on skin,
young woman old into her days.
Slight shy girl, she should be gay,
dancing to the clap of wheat in wind,
to the grin of sun that slats leaves

and waves and wings of birds. She holds
a chicken plucked and pimpled,
neck and head and scrawny glass
eyes limp as grass before her thighs:
no proud cock, brushed
and burnished, slapping the sun
in a strut of fire across the yard;
nor any frantic bird dancing life
to the fall of the silver axe.
Unlikely couple, pocked and fallow,
we contemplate your posturing.
Come see, o women, how body
is a pimp, and sun a whore
who whips our sweet mortality.
See, love strips her feathers off
to the slap and clap of a carnival
and sports her sores and sings
and poses thus to make us weep.
Say girl, o terrible dancer,
how is a smile about your lips
so sweet in all this carnage?

JOHN CIAMPA

**SNOW MAN FROM THE PLAY SAID BUDD TO
BRAMBLE**

Past Winter season's version of me
Worshiped the Snowman on bended knee
Standing now but gnarled in a loveless lace
Frowning features frozen on my godless face.
Profit gained, the meat of earning, eat and yearning, not
enough
Prophet lost, the heat of learning, beat and burning Him
to slough
Thinner soul sold for thicker lust
Inner hole coated with an icy dust
Dog a dog be; be bold, bite or be bitten
Move frozen face or by the frost be smitten
Shout frozen face, or failing that,
Cry, failing face of frozen fat
Or laugh frozen face, laugh heartily
Failing that, worship the Snowman on bended knee.

VICTOR LAZAROW

HAVING HEARD THE SONG I PURSUED IT

followed curves of rainbows
against the paths of life.
touched complexity.
this is what I saw:
a feather fallen from a dying bird
that as I watched fall
grew wings and sang.
I sharpened my talons of existence
against a passing tree.
then I cooled them in water.

DEPRESSED BY MY POEMS — AFTER WRIGHT

Michael Shorb

I let them fall behind some stones.
even as I walk they follow.
I bend myself to unknown shapes
climbing rises
fording quiet flows
suppressing thoughts of cruelty
even as my thoughts become the grass.
I reach into thickness
and carefully crush something.
it does not protest.

VICTOR LAZAROW

and I was born too pale
and it was night
before they knew
too late for incubator
I breathed foul air
beauty beauty
I said
is neither learned nor taught
I took the breast
twice in an hour
in each thing I met
I became incarnate
ultimately
I spat at all authority
now he belongs to the world
they said
I died too dark

THE WOOD AT THE END OF THE SEA

flora, the cats hammer
grows on electric stems.
burls of shell
blister the groin
of the hatchnut tree.
fat stalks
of cossack grass
bristle green blades in
the drift of grain.
loonfish, like tiny harps
with yellow streamers
shivering from branch
to cloud roll
the spanish silver of their eyes.
in waters breast
or the brown spell of an autumn wood
there are two directions.
in the wood at the end
of the sea where
the blend dances,
there are none.

MICHAEL SHORB

I LOVE YOU MORE THAN THE END OF COUNTING

Michael G. Culross

I will die when the time comes.
I will change the grains in
Appropriate snow, folding
Solids into stem, watching
Gates of the lobe burst as
The engine of the heart
Silences churn and sparkle
Of running blood.
Just now though,
While breath delights my
Tongue and the unflawed
Beads of summer
Cluster at my eyes,
I would rather spend the afternoon
Touching your face
Than journey to the source of
Greenwood, I would rather
Watch you turn in your sleep
Than count the stars.

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WATCHING LIGHTNING

(FOR ROBERT BERNER)

1: On the Plains
Marriages turning
sour, we crouched in summer
rain and watched
a bigger storm begin half
an hour away. Superbly-muscled
thunderheads tossed neon
back and forth and
closer all the time. We stood
our ground, then sprinted
for the giant nearby
cornfield, the only
place to hide for miles and miles.

2: Where You Were
You watched it
from your window in the Hopeless
Ward: flashes
danced in morbid games as
specialists honed rusty
knives for cutting. Under
ether you saw the burning dancers
come near, felt
one touch your rotting
insides. It must have happened;
you survived.

MICHAEL G. CULROSS

3: FROM THE TUNDRA

This place is farther
North than you
have dreamed, but on a late June
Sunday night, the fabled
thaw seemed near; nine
o'clock was warm
as early afternoon and
light, but strange,
pink-orange. Dynamo-wrecking bolts blazed five to
seven
seconds each and stilled
the air; mosquitoes,
delicate, worried, motionless,
did not try to
bite. We sought
our century-old
cellar, dank and six
by nine, just as the awful calm
exploded: breezes
blew, lightning
sputtered, stopped, color faded
to ordinary
night, and did not return.

RICHARD LATTA

LAUGHING WITH RIMBAUD

Holding hands with Kaprow
Watching the existential snow fall.
Absurdity teaches on stones
In black dreams of pillow
Case changes with liquid pedestals.
Tomorrow in this situational
Happening I move differently
Than before with my whore mind.
Prostitute my mind to cheap
Imitations of experience,
Enveloping the world with fat thighs
And having intercourse with matter.
I will jump from this dream
Into all the sipped wine
And happen myself
Into somebody else.

H. M. GORDY

MOUNTAIN THOUGHTS

Marvin Cohen

the moon
shadows us
projects us
into forests
pocketed in black
my friend
i have not asked
but of course you kill
my companion
i will venture
no opinion
this mountain cold
reaches us in our sleep
we jump

a small scream
awake
my friend
will you stop
if i disown you
my companion
believe me
death values
our opinions

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CREATING LOVE BY SPEECH

Jay Bail

(JUST HAVING MET: YOUNG MAN AND YOUNG WOMAN.
LATTER SPEAKS FIRST.)

Why are you so shy?

Because you're so pretty.

Oh. Should I become ugly, then? Your shy embarrassment must be uncomfortable, in the face of all my beauty, and I must spare your feelings and ease you into relative unconcern, into indifference, which homeliness would inspire. I'll wrinkle and broaden my face into mismatched bones and incomplete features which the lack of a center clutters with irregularity or the gaps of unsightly unseemliness. Wouldn't you be less nervous, then?

Yes; and you wouldn't matter.

No. (Romantically) Then we could come to terms.

(Callously) I wouldn't bother.

Oh. (Insulted) You are choosy, aren't you? Your taste is only for special girls.

Yes, such as what you are now, before you would disfigure yourself.

Oh. Those were confident tones. Are you less nervous now? Is your masculine aggressiveness unruffled by a tender regard for my face's sweet lines?

Yes. I could thrust boldly forward.

You are audacious! You may take no liberty! Respect me, first!

I do, I will. Love automatically confers respect.

Have your feelings leaped to love, then? I'm unprepared!

Have I been hasty?

Yes, quite inconsiderately premature! Take a step backwards. I'm a lady, and will be treated accordingly!

Now your coyness has turned haughty.
You presume, and impetuously slur me.
My intention is only to woo.

May your demeanor be graceful at it: which is, to make it
easy for me to accept the overtures of your courtship, with
no loss of

MARVIN COHEN

pride on my part.
That's quite a lot, that you expect.
My expectations equal my merit. I wouldn't so
immodestly exceed
my worth, as to demand the due I don't deserve. Play
the attentive
gallant, in this respect.
Why do you premium dignity, when your beauty
redundates it?
Beauty may be demeaned and cheaply ravished, unless
dignity
prudently chaperone.
Your beauty being already established, let me pay
homage to it.
I'm greatly pleased that you should say this.
My feigned love is evolving into genuinity.
Artful honesty is what touches me most. Your sincere
tactics shall
undoubtedly win me.
Yet you're difficult of access.
I wouldn't have you think me easy.
My attempts are so arduous, that their fruit is ardor.
Stripped of ease, your task is harder.
The right degree of assertion, in a narrow margin, may
help me
succeed.
Deeds of effort define the greatness of their goal.
Our talk is fanning me into love.

And what we play at, becomes the overwhelmingly
serious need.

Has desperation pitched your love to a high note?

Its urgency overcomes speech's exertions.

Now I feel suitably desirable.

Have I become your favored suitor?

I see no other around. Sure, you'll do.

SOUND OF ALIVE

'I don't mind Smith being heterosexual,' she says.

'Why not?'

'Doesn't it bother you at all?'

'No. Not —'

She stops and listens as the front door opens and closes. She does not move. Here in the kitchen it is very quiet as she listens for any further noise. But there is only silence. A moment ago, the door opens and closes and then there is the quiet filling up the rooms again as she slowly turns her head and smiles vaguely.

'I thought it was Smith.'

'Did you hear anything?'

'Just the front door.'

'Can you recognize his footsteps?'

'I don't know. Sometimes I listen and it all sounds so familiar. Like . . .'

She moves the palm of her hand slowly across the top of the kitchen table. Looking down, she watches her hand move, and then the fingers and then the nails. But now the hand stops. There is no motion as she listens to whatever sounds may be coming from the living room.

'Do you hear anything?' she says.

'No.'

'Funny. I . . . something.'

'My God. How quiet everything is here.'

'Like . . .'

'What?'

She shakes her head slowly, the yellow hair brushing against her shoulders. There is a pause during which there is quiet. Slowly, she stands up and walks across the kitchen, stopping at the door. Here she stays for a short while, right hand raised into the air about to touch the door, left hand at

her side. No motion. And then she moves her right hand forward and the door is opened and slowly she walks through the dining room into the living room.

But there is nothing. Only the quiet of the room stretching from

JAY BAIL

the long green couch on one side to the blue chair on the other to the faded gray rug where she is standing quietly, listening. 'I don't know,' she says. 'How do you know it's him?' 'I don't. . . . It sounded like him. When I stopped breathing and listened it was him all over. I . . . ' 'So quiet in here.' 'Like . . . ?' 'Like a room where no one's ever been.' 'Yes. That's . . . yes.' She turns her head slowly listening to the hiss of the gas heater. Smiling vaguely, she moves gradually across the living room, stopping at the large five-shelved bookcase. There is the slow turning of the head from one side to the other as she looks quickly at all the titles on a shelf. Then she lifts her head and looks at the shelf above and turns her head slowly. Motion stops as she looks at a particular spot and then raises her hand and takes out a book. The cover is looked at, and then there is a motion, and a staring at the spine. Eventually, the book is opened and the pages are turned one by one until the ending is reached. Pause. Then she moves the book down to her side and swings her head up, with the long hair rustling over her overcoat, until she is looking at the parade in the street, until she is among many people standing on the pavement, watching the music and hearing the marchers. Smith is beside her. She does not look at him. She watches him staring straight ahead with his firm jaw and his long nose. She does not watch him. His forehead shadows in wrinkles, his lips are slightly parted, there is the smell of his body that is woven into his clothes as he says to her quietly, 'Why won't you see me?' 'What?' she says. Now he looks at her, his lips pressed together, his eyes squinted in a form of smile. 'What?' 'I didn't hear what you said.' 'No. I . . . didn't . . . ' He smiles at her, watching her face, his eyes moving quickly from one feature to the other. He sees her stare at him and then look

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straight ahead, apparently at the people marching by, at the music motioning the air. Why don't you see me?

'They march very nice,' she says.

'Yes. Colorful.'

'You'd never know that they were tired.'

'No.'

'How long has it been now. Must be — oh — several hours that . . .'

He nods his head slowly and looks away from her to the crowd of people individually in front of him. 'I missed you yesterday.'

'Yes. I know.'

He looks at her and then back again to the people. 'Were you . . .?'

'Yes.'

'Well, I . . .'

'I'm sorry. I should have . . . called you . . . something . . . did you wait long?'

'An hour . . . I don't know.'

I don't know, the man says in front of him. The woman looks at him and then looks away. In front of them, the Independence Day parade continues, the marchers wearing costumes approximating the color and design of the flag. Trumpets are blowing, there are banjos, guitars, and other stringed instruments. Filling the pavements

'I'm sorry. I should have . . . called you . . . something . . . did you wait long?'

'An hour . . . I don't know.'

'Yes. I should have told you.'

'Told me what?'

'I don't know. I'd have probably figured it out when I was telling you.'

When I was telling you, the woman says in front of him and then pauses, says another word, and then stops completely. It wasn't always this way, the man says, and then he too stops. In front of them, the parade noises on with the many darkly handsome men and the light lovely girls, who march through the sounds of the bands in front, carrying a large drum and the one behind with a large metal

JAY BAIL

triangle.

'Do you need money?' he says.

'Yes.'

'How much?'

'A few dollars.'

'All I have on me is twenty.'

'Yes. All right.'

'You want all of it?'

'Yes.'

She does not watch him all this time. She sees his smile, his light blue eyes squinting into a sparkle, his nose straight and long, his skin dark with the outdoors. She does not look at him. But there is the light brown hair filled with

He does not look at her. 'All right.'

The marchers walk through the street with the rustling of their clothes and their smiles and, occasionally, their voices talking across the distance. The men are wearing pants the color of the flag and the girls and women are wearing blouses speckled also with the same bright colors. Occasionally, cars filled with people roll slowly and silently behind the marchers. Police stand in the gutters, watching the Independence Day parade.

'You want all of it?' he says so quietly that she can hear herself.

'Yes.'

'All right.'

'How's work?'

'The same. Always the same. Long hours and little pay. You work and they step on your head. A natural condition.'

The same. It's always the same. You give and they take. You . . .

The people in front of them stop talking. The woman coughs once quickly and the man blinks his eyes. It is over and they are silent in the noise of the parade.

Smith moves with her away from the crowd of people, walking slowly on the pavement. 'Want some lunch?'

'No. Sorry. In a rush. Could I have the money?'

'Yes. All right.'

He takes out his wallet and carefully removes three bills which

JAY BAIL

she accepts from him.

'Sure you don't want some lunch?' he says.

'No. Thanks anyhow.'

'Uh-huh. When will I see you?'

'I'll call.'

'I never see you any more. The only time we get together is when

you need money.'

'Is there anything wrong with that?'

'No. But I'd just like to see you.'

'Why don't you just give up?'

'Too easy.'

'Why don't you stop thinking of me as your romantic . . .'

'Too easy again.'

It's all much too easy, a man passing by says. It's all so quiet and still when it's easy. The woman walking with him says nothing.

Smith walks with her four blocks and then waits at a bus stop. They do not talk as they stand quietly, not moving, occasionally looking down the street. Cars roar by. The sun fills their clothes with stretches of darkness and the cold

bunches up their shoulders with heat. After a few moments, the bus moves towards them and then stops at the corner. As she gets on, Smith says, 'Why don't . . .' and she stops and looks back quickly through the open door and he smiles and nods his head.

She is about to get on the bus as he nods his head.

Quietly, he smiles and nods his head as she . . .

Quietly.

The living room is dark and quiet. Through the ringing of the doorbell, he lies stilly on the sofa, looking up at the ceiling. With the second ring, he gets up and opens the front door. But he has not moved from the sofa. Slowly, he stands up, and walks across the living room. Stopping, looking at the door, he waits. There is no sound in the living room. He turns and walks back to the couch.

'It's a lovely day, isn't it?' she says.

'Yes,' he says. 'It's not cloudy. You can even see the sun.'

'Look at all that traffic. How beautiful it is.'

JAY BAIL

'Yes. Beautiful.'

The restaurant is not too crowded and not too empty. There are the sounds of jangling dishes and chiming silverware and loud footsteps. The waiter looks down at both of them with pad close to his penciled hand. He writes quickly, looks at the pad, and then back at them. Smith, when ordering, looks straight at the waiter. She does not. She stares out the window at the city ten stories below.

'Like tiny stringy animals. Just moving. Trying . . .'

'Yes. It is nice out. That sun . . .'

'So bright you can barely see. Look at the blue there. Isn't it lovely?'

'Yes.'

They sit quietly, looking out of the huge window that wraps around the restaurant. It is the end of the meal. Dishes with vestiges of food lie in front of them. He looks at

her and then looks away and then back.

‘What are you doing nowadays?’ he says.

‘Nothing.’

‘Do you work?’

‘No.’

He smiles. ‘Sorry.’

‘About what?’

‘The questions. I don’t know why I have to ask them.’

‘You feel husbandly.’

‘I guess so.’

‘Smith?’

‘Yes?’

Outside, the cars move slowly, the people dot the sidewalks, and the small houses flatten against the sight. With patches of blue, the sun bursts through the sky. Outside, the air is quiet in its stillness, and warm and clear.

‘What?’ Smith says.

‘Huh? Oh, it doesn’t matter.’

‘What does matter?’

She lights a cigarette and then immediately crushes it in the ash tray.

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JAY BAIL

Jay Bail

She pauses, looking down at her hand that was moving a moment ago. 'I have to go.'

'Do you need anything?'

'No.'

'Money?'

She smiles and looks up at him, her yellow hair streaming against the bursting sky. 'Yes.'

'How much?'

She shrugs her shoulders. 'I don't know.'

He moves slightly in his chair, crossing his legs. In back of him someone is saying in a low voice, well, this is the way it is. A woman's voice says, look, don't tell me.

'Look, Smith,' she says quietly. 'Why don't you get off?'

He shrugs his shoulders. 'Too easy not to.'

'Poor Smith. It's so easy not to be anything, isn't it?'

'Maybe.'

'You don't have to take a degree. You don't have to work for it. You're already not anything, aren't you?'

'I'm as much as I ever was.'

'Yes . . . That. Just that. Poor Smith.'

She turns her head to the glass through which there are ten flights below to the pavement.

The movement of the pieces is slow through the checkered squares. Cautiously her hand moves, the fingers stopping just an inch from the bishop. She hesitates and then withdraws her hand. She is aware that he is watching her. Leaning back in the chair, with chin resting in his palm, he is looking at her. Looking at her, watching her hand move through the air, her fingers closing about the queen and then moving it diagonally across the board so that it faces

directly opposite her bishop.

Only the small lamp is lit. The living room heels in darkness flashing. It is a quiet evening filled with the sounds of the small side street outside. The only sound that can be heard inside is the quiet deafening hiss of the gas heater.

‘Smith?’

‘Yes?’

JAY BAIL

‘Please leave me alone.’

She picks up the glass and slowly drinks. Then she sets it down on the table inside the ring that had been left before. Then she leans back in the chair and looks down at the board.

‘Leave me alone.’

‘How?’

‘I don’t know. That’s your problem. But try to do it.’

‘All right.’

‘You never did understand that nothing much mattered.’

‘I thought that . . .’

‘At one time I thought you did know. And then one day . . .’

It is so noisy that a silence could drop. It is so quiet in this room that there is . . .

‘And then one day I saw you important. I don’t know. But that was bad.’

He moves the rook to Queen’s bishop 5, blocking off another escape for the king. As he moves his hand away, he sees glints of light on his fingers.

‘It was bad to be important, Smith. Did you know that?’

‘No.’

‘It was so bad.’

‘Was it any worse than to be alive?’

She laughs once. ‘That was when . . .’

‘It was fun then. I remember that it was fun. I remember how we used to laugh when we went to the carnivals and . . .’

She looks down intently at the board, pressing her lips together. Then her hand moves the knight to king's rook 4, opening a line of escape for the bishop and creating a block against the oncoming enemy pawn. Then, as she leans back and looks towards the window . . .

Out of the window, she sees the movements of ten stories below.

She leans back in the chair and then looks at him. He is a young man, perhaps thirty, perhaps thirty-five, who moves his hands quickly and who always watches her. She looks up quickly as the waiter appears and asks them a question to which she answers something that evaporates a second later.

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JAY BAIL

Jay Bail

The restaurant is quiet in its voices, and clatter, and chimes.

‘Funny,’ she says.

‘What?’

‘I thought I was . . .’

‘Back playing chess.’

‘What?’

‘We’re sitting somewhere enjoying a game of chess and talking about a lot of things.’

She slants her head to one side. ‘No. I wasn’t thinking of that. I was just thinking how late it was.’

‘Oh.’

‘Were you thinking of that?’

‘Not thinking. No. Just living.’

‘Uh-huh. Could you give me some money?’

‘How much . . .’

‘About . . .’

‘I only . . .’

‘But . . .’

‘And . . .’

Quiet, she says. Quiet. I’m thinking. And then she moves her hand slowly and castles. Looking up smiling, she

‘Funny,’ he says.

‘What?’

‘Huh? Oh, nothing. I had a feeling we’re . . .’

‘We’re sitting at a table in a restaurant.’

‘Restaurant? No.’

‘Well, what’s funny then?’

‘Nothing.’

‘I’ll bet you think we’re not sitting in a restaurant.’

And meanwhile, as she moves the knight and he watches
. . . as she picks up a piece of pie on the end of her fork,
there is the loud music in the distance of the Independence
Day parade.

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R. D. SKILLINGS

THEY

R. D. Skillings

‘They’re everywhere,’ Martha says, ‘everywhere you look. You can’t get away from them. I wish we’d never moved here. I hate it here.’

I get up from my desk, go to the window and stare out. Across the street two Negroes are sitting on the rusted iron railings in front of Mrs. Dover’s Drapery Shop, sharing a bottle of wine in a brown paper bag. I know one of them slightly; that is to say, we got drunk together several nights running last month. He drank my liquor; I listened. He lives literally by his wits and by luck, which in his case is absolutely bad, and if he were to vanish tomorrow no one would miss him, having no home, no family, no number in anybody’s filing cabinet. He is one of those upon whose bones the history of others is built. He was ruined in the Korean War and hasn’t worked since, won’t ever want to work again, I imagine. Why should he? He stands on street corners all day and roams the bars at night. After his fourth drink his conversation begins to circle warily round and round the raw wound of his life. He recalls killing Asians with a kind of guarded detachment, as though he were relating something he had heard at second-hand, a long time ago, about not quite a friend. He wishes he were someone else; at bottom he cannot bear himself. I regard this as a flaw in him; he ought to know who he is by now.

Martha is right — they are everywhere you look. Not that I am distressed by this gathering sea of darkness. In truth, I welcome it. Let me say about myself: I prefer to watch. I am merely curious, doubtful, equivocal, and cold. Given a choice, I prefer justice, which implies terror, to love, which demands pity. Since only fire will purify, let everybody burn!

My childhood took place under the implacable gaze of a long gallery of ancestral portraits. I remember those eyes. I was aware of secret crimes. Penitent and mute, I stole up and down the somber airless hallway, drew coffins in the dust. The dead worm of theology lived in that house. I was watched; I attended without grief many funerals; I ardently pursued grace, and not for myself alone. That was years and miles ago.

But under these windows, incredibly, lies Jefferson Street, a

R. D. SKILLINGS

border street in Boston, where the American races meet and merge, or rather do not merge. If you walk west toward the Grand Park Zoo the citizens are mostly black; moving east they are entirely white, and Jefferson Street, as I say, is the dividing line — a sort of neutralized zone for transients — with white and black inhabiting the same houses. Mrs. Dover, a native of the place, says three years ago there wasn't a single family of color in the neighborhood. She and Martha have lately grown great friends. They gossip endlessly and sip coffee, peering up through the shop's basement window at the people passing on the street. 'They're just having a drink,' I say. 'Why can't they do their drinking in a bar like everyone else?' Martha says. 'That's what bars are for, for people to drink in.' 'They're not doing any harm,' I say, 'they're just having a drink in the sun. There's no sun in a bar, and it's cheaper to buy a bottle and drink it out of doors.' 'Niggers!' Martha says. That is a word she never used when I first met her and we were happy together; but lately, under this burdensome sense of waiting, she has grown increasingly nervous. She has nightmares about them. They pursue and murder her in some dreadful way she can never remember when she wakes up. She imagines they are to blame for everything. I don't know how or why she began to hate Negroes. Perhaps it is because she is an Indian, or perhaps it is somehow because of me. She accuses me of wanting a black girl, and now that I've had a chance to examine her suggestion I can see that she's probably right. It seems odd to want a woman merely because she is black; but then, considering the circumstances, perhaps it is not so strange, after all. Martha and I are clearly at the end of our time, and we both know it. You live with one woman or another, it doesn't much matter, and then sooner or later love comes to an end. You always imagine it won't, and always it does. It is madness to rage, to

grow cruel and silent and treacherous; yet perhaps that too is inevitable, and I have a premonition that something extraordinary is going to happen, must happen, before we can be finally free of each other. In the meantime, however, we are both resigned to wait-

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ing. Our eyes meet fifty times a day and then break contact, with nothing said. We still make love, but inattentively, separately, as if it were nothing personal, or as if our minds were unaware of what our bodies were doing; and last night I caught myself pretending she was the girl upstairs. Soon one of us must act to end it, simply pack up and leave. I thought it might happen last Sunday, but it did not. Martha came home at seven o'clock in the morning. I asked her where she'd been and she said straight out that she'd spent the night in a hotel with an army deserter.

'I hope you enjoyed yourself,' I said.

She shrugged and went to bed for the rest of the day. I think she was hurt and enraged because I did not seem to care.

Nevertheless, my heart hammered all day in my chest, and while she slept I sat by the bed, rehearsing various vengeance. I allowed myself to consider, in fine detail and dangerously close to its actual performance, the act of execution. I made her small, small enough to fit my hand, doll-size — and I, without wrath began to pull her limb from limb to hear the sockets pop and see the spattering blood and the flesh coming apart like a chicken under a cleaver. I ripped and tore her, Martha mine, until it seemed genocide, and I stopped in deep awe. I lived briefly an alternative life. There are no alternative lives, however. From a purely metaphysical point of view everything is absolutely determined, as if a curse had been laid upon the world before time began, and nothing could be other than it is. I struck a human being once, a long time ago, and never

since. My mind is the eye of a storm.

'I wish we'd never come here,' Martha repeats, and goes into the bathroom to take a shower. It is almost seven o'clock now and she is preparing to go out, as she has every night for the past week, alone. She will come home when the bars close, coolly drunk, defiant, remorseless and wild for bed, though it is not me she needs: it is someone else, someone she has never met, the man she has been looking for and not finding all month long. And she will wonder what I have been doing while she was away. Love dies, but desire and jealousy do not.

I go into the kitchen and sit at the table, smoking pot and listen-

R. D. SKILLINGS

ing to Martha moving restlessly about the bathroom. She has taken to wearing an excessive amount of makeup, masking her face with creams and oils and powders and paints; but whether her purpose is allurements or disguise I cannot tell. She used to wear a headband with bright stones in it, and beads. She was born on a reservation in Maine. Her parents had no plumbing, everyone was poor, everyone was an Indian. But she has begun to repudiate all that recently. Only last month she bobbed her black long hair, dyed it blond, and bought a respectful grey suit . . . attends now a secretarial school, learns shorthand. 'I can't be just an Indian all my life,' she said, to account for this retreat. She means she does not wish to be mistaken for a Negro. The lines are being drawn; we must all decide who we are. She was named, by her mother, after the wife of George Washington. Yesterday, returning with me from the crowded grocery store (sacked earlier in the summer), she said, 'The way they look at you.' I was feeling irritable and did not reply. 'The way they look at you,' she said as if I hadn't heard her, 'if their eyes were guns I'd be dead by now. I'd be dead every time I walked out of the house.' 'Don't flatter yourself,' I said, 'they don't even notice you.' She did not know how to interpret this. She gave me, over her shoulder as we entered the house, a look so venomous that I did not recognize her. All our troubles seem to be incorporated in the couple upstairs. He appears often in Martha's nightmares, although so far as I can see he is a menace to no one but his wife. The Gypsies around the corner, who pretend to know the future, have told Martha that dreams are true omens, and now she flees him on sight. He works as a porter in a cafeteria across town (I studied the forms left by the City Directory for the tenants to fill out), an evil-looking man, shorter than his wife and ten years older, though still strongly made, not yet gone to fat, with a brutal sleepy face and a shaven skull. He

passes our open door every day without looking in, but the girl is more curious. I can feel her eyes, though we have never exchanged a word. She is beautiful, if only because of the razor scars on her

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face. She walks as if she were making love to the space around her, and I often feel the razor scars are somehow related to that exquisite and arrogant grace. Perhaps he cannot bear the knowledge of it, and marks her to avenge his torment and his suspicions; or perhaps it is merely a precaution — against what? I have never seen her with anyone else. Martha thinks she is a slut because she occasionally drinks beer with the prostitutes in Roberto's Cafe, but Martha is hysterical, imagines everything, hopes and fears the worst, and wants a reason to be rid of me.

She comes out of the bathroom now and begins tidying up the kitchen with a busyness that is visibly false. She knows I am watching her and it makes her clumsy and intent. The few remaining dishes washed and put away, she dries her hands thoroughly, folds the towel in two, then in four, hangs it on the rack, aligns the corners, turns and says with studied calm:

'I'm going over to Lisa's for a while.'

She is lying, of course, and it angers me that she should bother. 'I thought we might go to a movie,' I say, becoming her accomplice.

'Tomorrow night,' she says. 'What's playing?'

'I don't know,' I have to admit.

She smiles coldly and ironically so I will understand that she has caught me out. 'Maybe,' she says, 'tomorrow night.'

As soon as Martha has gone the apartment begins to seem unbearably empty. It is the very worst time of the day, twilight, and there is no way to prevent the mind from following its own course. The heat, the stillness, the vague

cries from the street, are oppressive. Outside the window a burned-out liquor store, boarded up and abandoned, catches the last lights of the lowering sun. The city girds for a new night. Two patrol cars whisper past, one after the other, four policemen, four guns, in each car. Last week, not a block from here, an old woman was butchered in her doorway for a few pennies. What did she know? Innocence is the enemy; there is blood everywhere. As for myself, I acknowledge everything and nothing; for I have a foot in two worlds, and I am, moreover, a decadent — that is, I fear death.

I draw the shades with a firm hand, snap on the light, pace up

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and down. There are no portraits here, no eyes, no one to watch or accuse, nor any hope of grace. I halt here beside the cluttered desk, peering at the present moment, at this mundane hocus-pocus, a wall of books, a chair, the bare light bulb hung from the ceiling. I cannot hear a sound, but the least objects in the room have the painful resonance of an hallucination. Nothing is quite inert. There is a swarming on the borders of my vision, just beyond my power to see, as if the material world had mutinied and were about to act on its own. I examine one thing after another, and each is tentative and strange. Shapes sharpen and melt. The pencil on my desk is suddenly not a pencil, then the only pencil. What would it write? That I am no longer sovereign here?

I mount the stairs and knock at the apartment directly above ours. She opens the door, as in my frequent dream, without surprise, and I follow her down the hallway. A terrified roach scitters ahead of us into the bedroom. When I burst my seed in her she says something enraged and racial in my ear, which arouses me again, and this time I use her as a man. The heat of us hangs on the air like a delirium. We do not rest a moment, but rise and dress and straighten the bed.

'If my husband finds out,' she says . . . and says nothing more. She is already pushing me toward the door, but I have reached a point where I would welcome him. He has a razor, but I keep a gun in the drawer of the night table beside my bed. When Martha discovered it and asked me what it was for I had to admit that I did not know. At this moment nothing would give me more joy than to blow his black head off.

Downstairs, in the apartment, Martha is waiting. I cannot guess what stroke of fortune has brought her back from her career through the bars, but the sight of her sitting on the couch awakes in me a profound hilarity. There is something elemental and comic in this encounter, and trying to restrain myself only provokes another and another and another fit of irrepressible laughter.

'You white bastard,' she says at last.

'I figure you owe me one,' I say. It is astounding the depths of banality to which the mind can descend under stress, and I am disgusted as well to find that my voice is shaking.

R. D. SKILLINGS

'In that case,' Martha says, 'maybe she and I ought to get to know each other. We have something in common.' More banality, more evasions. What are we talking about? Words fill up the silence, reassure us. She stands by the couch, thoughtful and abstracted, and then wanders into the bathroom. I hear water running. Is she putting on more makeup? taking it off? Will she wear her headband and beads, or her new grey suit? I walk up and down the living room, to occupy myself. She emerges from the bathroom and goes mutely out. I can hear her sandals on the stairs, then nothing.

This new emptiness prolongs itself. The clock in the kitchen begins to tick like a trip hammer. I wonder what they will find to say to one another. Hello, I live downstairs, I

came to borrow a cup of sugar, you've been breeding with my man. Really? It's so hot this summer. . . .

The silence crawls across the face of my mind like a slow spider. I roll another joint and sit down to wait them out. Martha will return soon, in ten minutes, by dawn, any day now. I love her, and I love the girl upstairs; I love them both. Call it love. Nevertheless, I suspect them of conspiring against me, whispering together, allies at last, squatting cross-legged like Turks amidst a clutter of pink plastic hair curlers, sanitary tampons, perfume, paints, tin jewelry, the pathetic savage junk of their nature, plotting some final female revenge. Really? It's so hot this summer. . . .

So I will go up and see for myself: everything must be seen at last. The stairs are silent under my feet and the door of the apartment is still open. The hallway leads to the bedroom.

I did not expect this.

But, in its own way, after its own fashion, it is perfectly consistent — a further evasion. Martha is sitting on the floor by the bed. The girl must have been asleep, for she wears only a purple slip, upon which, already, the blood has begun to darken and congeal. Martha has somehow drenched her hands and face in it; even her incredible blond hair is brightly flecked. I know, without being told, where the razor came from.

Presently, much too soon, there will be police and photographers, a gaggle of interrogations and noise, lawyers, the endless corridors of officialdom, all the fragile meretricious confusion of reality; but for the moment everything is perfect, framed in an instant of stability and calm. Loving the familiar, I wish that it might last forever. Smile if you like, but I have seen all this before in the movies, in those dingy second-rate French films of passion, irony, and death. Only the identities have been arranged to absolve the innocent. They always end the same

way, those films, with the approaching wail of a patrol car, nostalgic jazz in the background, the camera drifting inevitably upwards and away, sharply focussed, but fading further and further from the details of the final scene, a scene which contains only the essential, and leaves the audience with a pleasing sense of distance and repose.

Martha turns, shattering the image, sees me smoking in the doorway, and says with a voice full of wonder, 'Look! Look! I told you, didn't I tell you? I warned you, didn't I? Didn't I try to tell you . . . ?'

Nothing, you told me nothing, Martha. Try to concentrate, try to remember, try to understand what has happened to you, to us.

Bus out of Sight

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RICHARD LYONS

YOUNG MEN ARE NO MATCH FOR OLD LADIES

He sat and thought of the old people. Lives coming to a close. He tried to look closely at them, at their eyes, to see if they contained the vacancy of their imminent death. But what he could see revealed nothing of the sort. Some old eyes suggested pain, anxiety. Most showed an odd concentration, as though on nothing. There were the eyes of the old lady in black, who had moved to the bench across from him with her paper bag placed at her feet. She had changed benches to get what she could of the waning sun. Before, she had kept her hands beside her, resting on the bench; now they were clasped in her lap. And the leaning rays of bright light from the sun seemed to curl in the folds of skin on her hands so that Marty thought he could feel the warmth soaking in.

The old lady looked straight ahead. Occasionally her eyes strayed to her hands. Once she leaned over and looked for a long moment at her shoes, which were spotless and polished. Then she put her back to the support of the bench and looked ahead. The wrinkles around her eyes were light, not lid-heavy and sagging; hardly more than brush lines. And they seemed to form the same pattern about each eye—unusual symmetry. It had always appeared to him that old people's eyes never were alike: one was larger than the other; the skin of one puffier than the other. But her eyes were identical small twin dots, very black, and like one-way mirrors hiding a private dark world of concentration.

I could ask her. And she'd think I was crazy. But what could I ask? What would she tell me? What is it she thinks? What do the old think of? What goes on in their minds as they sit here, waiting? He wanted to believe, somehow, that they were doing more than biding their time. He hated it

when his life was crossed by contact with old people. His grandmother: sitting around the goddamned house, waiting to die. Patient as a tree in autumn, clinging, resolved. Biding, sitting, waiting. Being a pain in the ass. He remembered how he'd provoked her when, as a child, he'd hid her sugar. Only one

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lump every two days, for she'd been a diabetic, one whose prime pleasure had been that lump of sugar every two days. And she had told his mother that he'd swiped it. But Marty, charming and straight, had convinced her: 'I didn't. She's looking for an extra piece.' And when his mother believed him, not her, his grandmother had looked at him as though to say . . . what? As though to tell him something important. But what?

She had been a fine warm sweet loving woman. She always had taken his side against his mother. Because he was a child. And her eyes — the depths of them, hidden behind layers of sagging skin — showing only a long deep light from somewhere beneath or beyond.

His mother scolded her for many reasons — for being there, he thought. And she'd hated it when his grandmother had fought for him. 'Don't take his side, Momma, he's wrong; you're wrong. I know what to do.'

And her answer, her invariable answer: 'You don't know. You don't know what's important.' His grandmother's words were a mystery — as though she could see into death and know, indeed, what was important.

Perhaps he knew what she was saying all the time with the silence she fixed on him. She was patient and troubled at once, her lips wet for the sugar. You're going to die, child, like me. I go soon, you not long after. And when her eyes, from behind the depths of skin, sought his, they had said: You've done a bad thing. I'm going to die. And you've taken a drop of joy from me.

He looked across the walk to the old woman in black and wanted to say, I wish you could live forever. Then he realized that what he meant was that he wished he could. He didn't want to come to that point where he'd have to sit and wait, like his grandmother, being a pain in the ass because she waited. Because she was. What did she think, in that time before the end?

He walked over to the old lady in black and asked her what she was waiting for.

'A trolley, kid, what did you think?'

He had to smile. It was a good joke. And more. For there was in her voice a suggestion that she knew he was expecting an entirely

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FOUR POEMS

by Rainer Schulte

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PHOTOGRAPHY

by Lois Siegel

RAINER SCHULTE & LOIS SIEGEL

TRADITION

Tourists yawn over broken bones
of open tombs.
Statues push the green grass
into street cafés.
Women drink memories
with teaspoons
on windless summer nights.
Even the silence before the beginning
buried under unbreakable years.

SUPERSONIC SPEED

What I believe to be distance greets me now
as non-distance, only if distance is measured by time.
The snail's farthest distance, painful and slow,
remains a smile of my distance
with me judging
my distance of the non-distance.
Proportions are the only absolutes,
the only true confessions.
Geographically speaking
no variables of distance;
chronologically speaking
no variables of time.
Distance through time,
an open bottle of ether
numbing the mind.
Eyes of bullets prior to sound.
Thoughts, the slaves of senses.
Bullet speed paralyzes the deed.
Thought, the end of the distance
whose other end is measureless.

OCEAN OF TWILIGHT

Stones, bold bearers of rain,
Open branches of smiles
To the river of my wrinkles.
Irreversible memories
Between irreducible stones.
The knuckles of anger
Like tree trunks in the air.
Hope strong as sunlight,
Razor blade left blunt
On the stone of void's indelible glare.

IRRITATION

Rainer Schulte

When her face smiled
I threw shadows in her eyes
Which grew into black pimples
Of dried-out springs.
When the shadow leaned
Against the murmur of the mind
My hand collected sand
In the darkness of dune grass.

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different response. Yet it wasn't a facetious answer. It was pleasant, said without bitterness, with warmth: a friendly token. And she smiled at him. 'I have no money for you.' 'Oh, I don't want any money.' He noticed something else in her voice. It wasn't the voice of the low-lives generally found in the park. It was deep and controlled, practiced, conscious of itself, yet not affected. It was the loveliest voice he'd ever in his life heard. 'That's good. You see, even if I had it, I wouldn't give it to you. Well, now that is settled . . .' 'Yes,' said Marty, warmed. 'May I sit down?' 'You may, of course.' 'I didn't mean to be rude. I mean, when I first came over.' 'No. I didn't think you were.' As she spoke she leaned her head slightly towards him. Her hands were still folded in her lap. Sitting next to her, Marty was moved by her poise which was, in some way, connected with her size. She was very small, in control of every inch. 'You wanted to know what I'm waiting for?' 'No, no not exactly.' He didn't know if he wanted to be honest with her. He was ill at ease because he didn't know what he could say to her. She seemed to have the edge. He thought that was because of her voice. I'd like to just listen to her. 'I'm not actually waiting for anything,' she said. 'You see, I don't have to wait.' She paused as though expecting Marty to question her. When he remained silent, she went on: 'There's nothing I have to wait for.' Now I can ask her. It seemed in fact she had deliberately given him an opening. But he said nothing. 'Do you really want to know why I'm sitting here?' 'For the sun?' She laughed. A high delicate laugh. 'No. Yet, if it were not a sunny day, I wouldn't be here. The warmth is nice. I'm here because I find it entertaining to watch all the people.' 'Entertaining?' 'Yes. But not simply amusing. Sometimes they are funny. But that isn't the point. Mostly it's a matter of challenge.'

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'You mean like a puzzle?'

'No, not at all. That would make it rather cheap, wouldn't it? No, that's not it. It's more, far more.'

'How old are you?'

'Now, young man, that could be taken as rude.'

'Yes, but tell me.'

'That would be too easy, and you'd be quick to make much of it. I don't think I will.'

'You're being deliberately stubborn.'

'Perhaps, but you shan't provoke me. You see, you can be quickly categorized, too.'

'I doubt you could tell me more about me.'

'Again you're trying to bait me. But I can tell you, and I doubt I'd be far from wrong. First, for example, you obviously feel yourself superior to most others. That's why you were able to come over to speak with me. I'm sure, too, you've done bolder things.'

'It's not superiority, so you're wrong there.'

'Ah, then, what is it?'

'I don't know,' he said. 'I mean, I'm not sure.' Then he realized, as he looked into her face, that she'd turned the trick. Her smile was deliberate, feminine, triumphant in an almost coquettish way. 'That was very good. You almost had me.'

'I did have you. You were very clear. You said it all, in fact.'

'I didn't say anything.' He was less angry than troubled. Yet when her smile broadened he was tempted to say something nasty. 'Tell me more about me.'

'What precisely do you want to know?'

'How will I be when I'm old?'

Now she laughed aloud. 'Please, at least realize this game of yours will hardly work.'

'What do you mean?'

'You're as coy as a ten-year-old girl. I mean, and you know it, that if I were to tell you anything about being old, it would not be about your being old.'

'You mean it'll be different for me?'

'Still you try!' She looked closely at him; and said: 'Yes, I

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suspect it will be. I suspect you'll be old and will wait.'

'What do you mean now?'

'Oh, just that you'll wait.'

'For the end?'

'I suppose. It's quite clear that's what you're concerned with now.'

'Aren't you?' he asked. 'Isn't that what you're doing, just waiting?'

'I told you, I don't have to wait for anything.'

'I don't believe you.'

'And,' she said, 'I don't have to convince you, do I?'

There was a pause. Then he said: 'Would you mind if I told you about me?'

'A moment ago I think I would have enjoyed it.'

'You mean you would have been entertained?'

'You tell me a great deal with your sarcasm. No nature can be gratuitously sarcastic. Obviously, you're trying to hurt yourself.'

He thought for a moment, unable to take his eyes from hers. They looked straight at him with a sureness he couldn't grasp. He would have given anything to understand her confidence and strength.

She went on: 'I'm sure of that. You're too concerned with yourself to see it. You attempt to hurt others with your sharpness because you fear, I suspect, being hurt, or hurting yourself. Yet that's what you're trying to do. Be careful. You

might.'

'That's chasing around it all. I'll tell you simply. I don't hurt myself. I violate myself. All of me. I have strung myself between two branches. And both of the branches hate each other. And they're getting at each other by tearing at me . . . and . . .'

She laughed. 'That's rather dramatic, don't you think?'

'I suppose, from where you sit, you could call it that.'

'Oh, I've a fine view,' she said. 'Too bad we can't change places.'

'No thanks.'

'Oh,' she said, 'you will be a waiter. That's clearer than ever.'

'You are too. No matter what you say.'

'Well, I suggest you don't take too much comfort thinking so. It

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Richard Lyons

Michael D. Lally

simply is not true.'

'Why? Why isn't it true? Are you so special?'

'Yes,' she said. Her voice could be sharp. 'Yes, I am. And I'll tell you why. I don't have to wait because I've decided not to.'

'What am I supposed to make of that?'

'Enough. Enough. I prefer not to get upset about it. Think whatever pleases you.'

'Please,' he said, 'explain what you mean. It's important to me.'

'I have. I have told you. Now, either stop being so demanding, or leave. I thought we'd visit, not fight. I don't like to fight.'

'I'm not fighting with you.'

'Young man, you are fighting with me. Just your very contradiction of everything I say is enough to constitute a fight. Now, I've had enough of it.'

Her lovely voice had gone up in her heat, a distortion of beauty. But it wasn't heat. Not really. She's impatient with me. But I wonder if it is really with me. Have I touched on something? He would have persisted, but he couldn't bear to hear her voice as it changed. It was too lovely. He understood her desire for the pleasant and was sorry he'd disturbed it. After all, time's getting short, her years are behind.

'I'm sorry,' he said. 'I apologize.'

'Is it easy for you to say so?'

'I don't know. But honestly, I didn't want to make you upset.'

'And others?'

'Yes, I guess so. I've made others upset, and hurt. But myself too.'

'You don't expect that justifies it?'

'No. No, it doesn't, I know. It's like the sarcasm.'

'Yes,' she said. 'It is the sarcasm.'

'It's because I'm dissatisfied.'

'Ah, an insight.'

'Now you're doing it.'

She was smiling again. It was easy to catch her. And for her it was easy to catch him. It's a game of sorts. Still he did not feel easy with her. With whom did he feel comfortable? His grandmother dead, a wall between him and his mother — the years since child-

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hood, stiffened plaster and steel; fruitless desires turned to knotted perversion, fulfillment not in achievement but in perversion. No way, no chance to make it up, to do it over, whatever it was. No enemy like the past. He looked closely at the old woman; and she returned the stare. Still and quiet, like statues placed to face one another. If she could know what I'm thinking. And now I'm searching her old face for remnants of a loveliness I could wish to desire.

He saved himself with a laugh.

'Is my nose on crooked?'

'Oh, you're wonderful. A wonderful old woman. You know, you know damned well, don't you, that I couldn't laugh at you. You're wonderful.'

'And you're sorry I'm so old.'

'Yes. Yes, yes, yes. God damn it, yes!'

'And for nothing else?'

His insides suddenly and violently twisted; he had an impulse to leave, to run from her. Suddenly she was a monstrous threat, a violent and physical danger. No, it can't be this way. It mustn't.

'It's true, isn't it? You're a monster in your passion.'

'No. Wrong, wrong. No, you're wrong.'

'Now I think I'm the one to be sorry. I've upset you. Of course I'm wrong. I'm sorry you took me so seriously.'

'You were kidding?'

'Yes. Certainly.'

'Nasty sense of humor.' He relaxed, still troubled; and felt he could never be at ease with her. It was as though he were on the brink of a conquest of a beautiful girl. Waiting to feel secure after the conquest was proven. But this old woman would keep him at bay. The physical conquest was impossible — perhaps that meant, for him, no conquest at all was possible. She didn't want a fight, which might have given him a chance. Besides, if he won, he realized, there'd be nothing left. I doubt if I could win; she's got something — knows something (about me?) — I couldn't deal with. Unless I could get something of her . . . No, no, I don't want to fight either. She's too precious.

He asked: 'How long have we known each other?'

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Her smile became a titter. 'How romantic of you.'

'No, I'm serious.'

'A half hour?'

'That's wonderful.'

'Why do you say so?'

'Well, I don't think I've been waiting all the time we've been sitting together.'

'It's not that easy,' she said, the smile gone.

'Why, what do you mean?'

'Please, we'll be fighting again if you persist. It was much better just visiting. I've found it pleasant. I hope you'll try to keep it that way.'

'Would you like me to go away?' There, I've left myself wide open. If I were her, I'd say yes.

'No, I think I'd prefer if you stayed. But not if you're going to provoke me.'

'Well, I have to leave soon anyway. Do you know what time it is?'

'When the sun gets directly above that chimney, it will be about four. Is that late for you?'

'I don't have to go. But I'm usually home by this time.'

The old woman continued to look up at the sky. 'I'd say it was three-forty now.'

'It's not important.'

'Ask that man coming along now.'

He didn't want to. He didn't care at all about the time. And he felt prickles of irritation.

'Sir,' he called. 'Could you tell me the time?'

The man seemed to have trouble hearing; he angled over toward them.

'The time. Could you tell me what time it is? My aunt needs to know the time so that she can tell if she has to take her pill. It's very important.'

The old woman laughed.

'It's three-forty-three. Why's she laughing?'

Marty leaned over to him as though to speak in secret. But he said in a clear voice: 'Oh, you know. Part of her condition. Thank

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you. Thank you very much.'

The man made a gesture of concern; and seemed about to ask something more, but Marty cut him off. 'Thanks again.' The man walked on.

'Now why did you make up such a story?'

'To entertain you, of course.'

'I doubt that. Could you have been trying to upset me again?'

'What if I was?'

'Oh, it doesn't matter. I was, after all, entertained.'

Christ, she is something. I wonder how she is at checkers.

'Well,' she said, 'I think I'll go now.'

‘But . . .’ he tried.

‘Yes, I know.’ And she picked up her paper bag, reached to his shoulder and pushed herself up. ‘It was mostly pleasant. I wonder if it’s possible that we shall meet again.’

It wasn’t a question; it was, it seemed, an absent courtesy or perhaps — and this, he thought, more likely — her final play. She was moving down the walk, away from him. He had a desperate impulse to call, to follow after her. He was pained as though with the emptiness of loss. There was no way he could hold her. And though she was only yards away, the distance was impossible to recover. Her back faced him, black and small, on polished black shoes, tipping away — dark as her pride and her unfathomable necessity.

HISTORY IS DEAD

well i've come into myself again
to see why saroyan let me down
having some other son than me
or my father what do i find?
in the west they say money is the root
of all evil but in the east they say
it is the mouth
i ate their magazines in rocking chairs
sweating while they called their poetry:
women posing in black underwear i.e. non-fiction
the government was there also on back issues
using page 327 as a guillotine for dreamers
coming out i ran into myself crying:
but i never cry

JAMES HINER

LIBER AMORIS

Stendhal and Hazlitt stood over coffee
Calling love a pineapple laughter,
A god also, yes, a symbiosis
Of parachutes and pornographic subways.
'It is hands,' said Hazlitt, 'opening
Geography books, feeling
The must of old pages;
Hands, mouth and noses.
It is liver and lungs.'
Stendhal set his coffee down.
'Love is Columbus and Magellan drinking
Stout together in Soho after
A trip to the British Museum
With a volume of Stanley or Cook
Open before them.' Hazlitt turned:
'And seeing their own portraits on the pages.'

L. SHAWN AVERBACH

**BUT I STILL REMEMBER HOW TO PLAY
HOPSCOTCH . . .**

Folly
is my menu.
I feed upon
the stupidity
someone put in my
Chocolate aphrodisiac.
I hope
in time
to digest one crystal
of wisdom.
You don't waste time writing poetry
about my appetite.
You see my kitten-thoughts
that chew on children's fingers
will grow to tigresshood
to chase more
than the boy next door.
I'd appreciate it
if you'd clean my glasses
or at least find me
a good dietician.

JOAN NORRIS

RAPE

Twelve stout ladies, well-girdled,
move in on a feast.
Twelve murmuring settle
down to chew
juicy roast rump that
dribbles down their chins.
Twelve excuse each
out-of-order belch.
A stiff butler circulates
a silver dessert tray
piled with thick-skinned oranges.
Twelve take one each.
Blushing,
each thumbs and strips,
trying to quiet the fleshy ribs
with little self-conscious coughs
and juice arches in tiny streams
from too tightly held
too thinly covered
lush sections.

GLADYS J. CARR

GRAND GUIGNOL

the Fellini hour
very busy I burn my brother
his charred flesh smarts
my senior citizen's eyes
smoke Parliaments
at dusk;
not far
the world's fairgrounds
the hunky-tunc fires
better than half-way round
the circle of the sixties;
incognito
even to ourselves
fondle opaque democracies beautiful
until tried a great society
hosannas
flay the pit
they are doing our thing

GLADYS J. CARR

while we blow it
distance too great
for mouth to mouth
resuscitation
(something Asiatic in bed with us);
gorgeous middle-ear rhythms
immaculate pillage
of the tympana La Chanson
du Mal Aimé dusted off
for the last time
neat effete
the Gomorrah rock
the fabulous frug fruit
falling from the trees
of Passaic;

ah Christ dead darling metaphor
of love be with us now
hilarious sumped flotsam
our poor tongues
tenderly are
sifting straw
words failed
words culled
from Seuss.

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DOLORES STEWART

PRIME TIME

Our guest tonight is a distinguished member of the pre-menopausal set and author of that underground best-seller, *Sex and the Single Mind*, Miss Constance T. Noble. For the benefit of our closed-circuit audience of mental patients and adulterous wives, Miss Noble will read random selections from her work-in-progress, *Is There Life After Sex?* Miss Noble. . . .

Thank you, You!

Thank you, Constance!

Oh, I'm so happy to be with you on Prime Time tonight, You!

Well, we're very happy to have you.

Thank you, You!

Thank you, Constance! Now I know our audience shares my excitement in hearing you read from your forthcoming month-of-the-book selection. Oh dear! Where shall I begin? Well, perhaps the best place to start is with my gloves. Are you all watching while I remove my boxing gloves? Good! Next I am going to remove my blouse and show you just how I have managed this marvellous bosom. Could we have a little background music please, You?

(PLAYS *A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody That Haunts You Night and Day You Are the One Love I Have But One Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* etc)

And now my wig. Isn't it really the most feminine, seductive hair you've ever seen? Would you stroke it for me, You, while I strip off my false eyelashes and cold cream my face?

Thank you, You!

Thank you, Constance!

Isn't he fabulous? Don't you just love him with his little eyes bugging out of his head like that? Let's get into bed now, You. This is Chapter Three, Folks, although I may yet revise a bit. We artists are never satisfied, you know. Perfection is our ideal, the unattainable goddess, or should I say god? Put it there, You.

Thank you, Constance, for another Prime Time first.

It may be your first, You, but it isn't mine!

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ANDREW NEIDERMAN

DISSERTATION IN DESPERATION

Any form of expression needs rehearsal, needs to be tested, tasted, investigated; searched for misplaced modifiers. But psychotic, he became chaotic. He began between the lines, speaking in parables symbolically; turning the obvious to metaphor.

What could we do but throw rocks? His voice was lost in the general shout as he fell behind his slogans. Ripping at the wind and tearing the air, we buried him in his dissent; crushing the expression into his face. Pinning his arms to bamboo poles, we carried him beheaded and still through synthetic streets; and delivered him inside out to Bellevue for Psychiatric Observation.

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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF LOVE WAR HAIR LITERATURE

by Cynthia Buchanan

*Oh the farmers and the businessmen
they all did decide
to show you where the dead angels
are that they used to hide.
Why should they pick you to
sympathize with their side?
Oh how could they ever stake you?
— Bob Dylan*

Dear Norman Mailer: Perhaps you can help. I heard the other day that you ‘more than any other writer, sums up America.’ Let me begin again, Sir: To march in Madrid. To write a novel. To ‘fail’ and to go home and write a self-conscious journal that ‘Failure’ has not father nor mother, not time nor place, nor any business in this business of transcending. Or may I try this: On the eve of Moratorium Day, my hair was bleached off an inch from the scalp by a thirty-five-peseta wash-and-set beauty shop, and I must transcend. Escalating chemical warfare; instead of twenty-volume peroxide, fiftyvolume. I go about then in a blonde wig at the American Embassy on this, Moratorium Day to all people of our United States. Here, we are rolling around, too. I must think I am clever today in a navy-blue boutique purchase and a red-and-white scarf. I sign the book at the table in the Embassy lobby, sign with a haiku: “‘Even the severed branch grows again and the sunken moon returns.” I am for you, Mr. President. My presence here today is my voice.’ Signed: ‘a formerlysilent American.’ I do not sign with the vivid felt-tip pen, cerise. No, rather with the Embassy ball-point. Below this entry, also in Embassy ball-point is: ‘Get out of

Viet Nam! This war has gone on long enough. Signed: ——.’ And below that: ‘Bring the peace. If at first you don’t succeed, GET OUT: Signed: ——.’ And: ‘I’m here with my six-year-old daughter, Tracy, to say to you, Mr. Ambassador, and to you, Mr. Nixon, we are proud to be Americans and this thing will not be solved in the streets.’

Also: ‘Stop the war. And while you’re at it, stop that runaway mouth of Spiro Agnew.’

Failure, I have written in the journal, is only the death of the old so that the new may become manifest. It is only change with a semantic twist. ‘On the whole,’ writes back the New York editor, ‘I like it. It’s funny, it’s light, it’s witty, it’s touching, it’s girlish. However:’ The letter ends: ‘I think you’re writing a novel. Good luck.’ And deftly, gently sidles out of a vague and verbal, mostly gossamer, earlier commitment. Commitment? Said who? Gently, go gently into that armband night.

How do you do it, Norman? THE NAKED AND THE DEAD, THE DEER PARK. . . .

There is much milling around. The voice of dissent waits. It shifts its patience from one foot to another, the glass doors of the Embassy making a prism of its good manners. Entering and disappearing is the Embassy staff, lapped up by the elevator doors closing on their mildness. The Marine guard at the desk is dressed today in nonviolent plaid. Instructed to wear civilian sport coats, decent Gant shirts, and broad-minded ties. They smile, their hands on the marble counter. Keep it clean and nobody will get hurt. The Ambassador goes for coffee. The brass letters of his predecessors’ names glint in relief on the wall, Angier Biddle Duke, Robert Wagner. A hand printed poster on an easel speaks of a newsreel of the President’s speech to be shown continuously from three o’clock through nine. The young meander down the hall to assess the quandary on celluloid.

The letter from the publisher comes on the day the hair is breaking off, and a Spanish maid alarms the molting novelist that bleaches have eaten into the scalp and the cells are destroyed. It may be years, says the maid. The boys are dying in DaNang and the girls are shuffling at the Embassy with a cemetery of follicles on their heads.

'We shall overcome,' sings the group of demonstrators with black ribbons on their sleeves. I have tied the red-and-white scarf around my navy-blue sleeve. Lend me your pen to sign this petition that's circling, says my companion. Thank you. That's white of you . . . I mean red-white-and-blue of you, she puns. The demonstrators move outside into the Embassy parking lot. Middlebury College students, juniors on their year abroad, maverick American hitch-hikers doing Europe, others . . . a fat girl in a poncho, carrying a candle. On the patch of grass, a would-be Black Panther lies down with the ofay lamb in Twiggie eyes. They repin each other's armband. The marchers circle the parking lot. They are singing and looking skyward. The lamb, she rises and joins the march now. She looks at my 'armband,' singing. The corner of the 'armband,' Schiaparelli it says, flutters. They march in a column, around and around the Embassy staff's cars, their voices rising, without vitriol, with all the mini-bearded, Joan Baezy, braless, schoolish verve and sweetness of their cousins across the seas, treading America, thousands abreast. Tranquil virgins, coats open against the wind that smarts and moves up Serrano Street, around the Marine guard and the grey-clad Spanish police and into the parking lot. The wind moves inside the marchers' shirts and blouses and next to their skin and underwear. But it is impotent against their belief that this war is immoral.

So they are warmed by their conviction, puissant against the wind. I, however, only a college-generation ahead — entering into the College of Life and Writing whose portals

bear the inscription from Thomas Wolfe, 'Before this I had been sustained by that delightful illusion of success which we all have when we dream about the books we are going to write instead of actually doing them' — I am not so warm in the parking lot. That person in the wig over there, the one with the wounded manuscript bleeding in a drawer in a pensión with a one-way elevator, she is shivering while America is marching.

How . . . do you do it?

I feed my journal, the goose, stuffing quotes and excerpts and 'private essays' down its throat until it is fairly bursting. But there is no table. And there are none to dine on the goose except the one who has prepared it.

That, Norman, is the way the journal has started to look to me.

The novel, before it was boxed up neatly and packaged off to that publisher, it looked awfully good. Those clean lines of type. That heavy bond paper. It beguiled me just to pick it up. It had its beginning, its middle, its end. It had panache and pathos, all the old verities. Then the box came back from New York, bleeding, whimpering.

Many of the recent entries in the journal have to do with this rejected manuscript. Then the entries, long protean paragraphs, move into the theme of love. They are plastic, baroque, muddled, and they seem to be squeaking out something about the problems of being in love with a Spaniard. And America works its way in there somewhere. The ethnocentricity and the nuances of being an American in love with a Spaniard. Or is it, indeed, the other way around?

All day long, Moratorium Day, these Four Powers . . . Manuscript, America, Spaniard, Hair . . . alternate neatly, like square dancers. I am my journal on feet today, and I am a superfluous presence at this demonstration. I had meant to polarize with whatever forces are knocking around. But the forces here today are weak on polarization.

What you can do is get in line and sign the book. Everyone keeps asking, 'Which is the line for "for" and which is the line for "against?"' It is the same. One line serves for both.

His calling me a 'chauvinist' has taken a bit of luster out of our 'meaningful relationship.' I am hurt in the grand way (explication de texte, see Simone de B.) that he cannot 'admire me for my principles.' He is annoyed that I 'cling to anachronistic platitudes.'

I am frightened about this of the luster going. I tell the journal: All I have to do is be quiet and love my country when I am not with him. But suddenly I decide to hell with him! Tell him *vête a la mierda!* (I like this strong language; it makes me feel very much in the Hemingway genre. What do you think, Norman?) Am I not the captain of my sorrows, the master of my fits? Captain and master of my protests, my poetry, and even my platitudes? He is nothing more than a high-born Iberian who came cracking out of the London School of Economics at just about the time I bounded out of an Arizona university.

'The Ambassador will come down in a half an hour,' reports a vigorous fellow in a field jacket and a HO button.

'What's that stand for?' my friend asks, meaning the button.

I, Mr. Bones, say: 'Water.'

'The Ambassador,' says the young man to the demonstrators in the lobby, now locking arms in a circle, 'is watching the Apollo 12 shot and will be down to talk to us afterwards.'

'We shall not be moved,' begins the song leader.

'We shall not be mo-o-ved,' refrain the protesters, beginning to sway in their locked circle.

At first, it was St. Exupery. The fox had just told the Little Prince that men had no more time to understand anything, that they bought things all ready made at the shops. But

there was no shop anywhere where one could buy friendship. If the Little Prince wanted a friend, he must tame the fox. I was the fox, and he was to be the Little Prince. And so on.

Now here we hang suspended over Bertrand Russell. How we elided from St. Exupery to Bertrand Russell is the story of the loss of luster, I mentioned earlier. (Note: I had not read B.R., but I had a 'general idea' about 'the kind of person' he was. The Spaniard was livid then.)

Gently, I have been called by him a 'femme fille.' And more recently, a 'chauvinist.' How we elided from 'femme fille' to 'chauvinist' is another part of the story of the loss of luster.

It begins to rain. I am sitting on his terrace in a Felipe II chair. I rise and go inside with a copy of his London Times on my lap. On the other side of the door, a shower stall is going. I wait. His newspaper is all I have between me and the stratosphere of the room, dim beyond the library and the rosebud turning to tissue in a jam glass.

But, wait! Hark you there, halt! Who goes? Who gets to play the Little Prince? I do, for I wear the flying muffler. It ripples out in the wind from my words, flies out from my neck like a banner. I, like Isadora, shall leap from the cafe into the sport car, cry 'Adieu, adieu, mes amis, je vais a la gloire!' Am I not captain and coquette? Poet and fox and Prince, too?

How does he do it, Norman? U.S.A . . . MANHATTAN TRANSFER. . .

So he has called me 'chauvinistic,' clasping my hand and explaining Toqueville and reality. He peels back each layer now of my Arizona pioneer upbringing, and the wind comes in, bypassing the Italian scarf. Now the English, he says he admires. The Americans . . . yes, them, too . . . as a body. But their political system, he says, is a mierda. I open my mouth to speak. I remember epigrams about women. I close it. I drift out onto the terrace, acting girlish.

How does he do it? CLEA . . . JUSTINE. . .

A lanky man with curly red hair and a New Yorkerness around the eyes is pausing with a cigarette, dangling a large movie camera in one hand. He is a cameraman in Madrid for CBS. My friend jokes: she says, 'Will all this make the six o'clock splash in Sioux City?'

'We shall overcome some-da-ay . . .'

'No, I can't get it out until tomorrow morning,' says the cameraman.

The Spaniard has said, Seriously, how could you have voted for Goldwater?

What do I tell him, Norman? That 'my people' came from Texas to Arizona in a covered wagon? That my grandfather headed the mule team that built Roosevelt Dam?

How did he do it? THE GRAPES OF WRATH . . . EAST OF EDEN.

. . .

That my brother fell apart in the Marine Corps because he hated and revered it? That he got a rifle stock in the teeth for his wise-mouth, non-shape-up program? That he quivered under orders from "lifer" white trash,' as he called it? I do not suppose telling 'He never had a father' would be particularly fresh or emotive a detail. Or that all through high school he was five feet tall, and all the stories of Teddy Roosevelt did nothing to dilute his bitterness. Should I tell that? And that when all was said and done, when he came home and tried to go to college, he failed. And failed. And thrashed around in odd jobs, looking in the grease of gas stations and under Playboy magazines for the footprints of the man he was supposed to be now. Finally, the pioneer shibboleths of Book Learning ringing in his crucible, he tried again, at thirty, to begin, to become, to arrive and compete. On the first Moratorium Day, when he was off to the university with his freshman books under his arm and his mottled self-image under his belt, someone came up and handed him a black armband. He zipped it in his crotch, got

into a fight with a Student for a Democratic Society, and went home and, you are hearing correctly, flew the flag.

But I capitulate for the Spaniard. I say I have much to learn and do not defend why I voted for Goldwater. I do not grow maudlin and I do not mention my brother or the mules on Roosevelt Dam. I do not say anything about land or people or spirit or middle America. I would not dare. I look into his eyes and see Galbraith there. The Spaniard then speaks in French to himself, some little aphorism. Then he looks up and speaks in English, mentioning Keynes and Krupp, and he goes home to walls with Flemish paintings to dine on family wine and family titles, cutting the latter apart on a musical china plate. The next day he reports he is afraid the United States will blow him up. He asks, did I not know that Curtis LeMay was once close to the button that could disseminate the world? And that Spain is on that self-same sphere? And that is why I have so much to learn!

Yes, I tell him, I have much to learn.

Seriously, he says again, how could you vote for Goldwater? You don't vote for a man simply because he has a fine head of white hair and happens to be admired in your home state!

No, I admit, you don't vote for a man because of his hair.

'We shall end the nerve gas. . . .'

'We shall end the ne-erve gas,' echoes the group.

'We shall overcome someda-ay. . . .'

'It's frustrating,' says the CBS cameraman, raw over coffee. 'To send off the film you made but never see. Now, a street-sweeper, even he gets more satisfaction in what he does than me. He can stand back and say, "Look, I did that. There, doesn't that look nice?"'

'We shall stop the kil-il-ling,' sing the singers.

The cameraman talks about the film library and other things at CBS. I await my chance to pun something to him about 'beyond the Paley,' but the opportunity loses its

momentum and dies stillborn in my wit manque, of use to whom?

'Where have all the flowers gone?' begin the marchers. A young man from California who has stood in front of me to sign the book ('Go in to win or get out. Whatever, to the hilt') is in Madrid overnight on his way to Africa. He advertised last year and brings five people with him to Spain, each of whom have paid \$500 and will see Africa in a Volkswagen bus. Will camp out on the Sahara, and so far, have presented no abrasive traveling qualities. The Africa organizer also writes — this is where he comes in — and at the present time is working on an essay about the generation gap, for *The New American Review*. I am expansive then; I speak well of Theodore Solotaroff to the quiet young man on his way to the Dark Continent. I say good things about *The New American Review*. And I writhe some and laugh to protect myself that Editor Solotaroff sent back my visions without comment. Unfortunate for him, I had murmured to the rejection slip at the time.

Norman, is it I who am out of joint with the whole Podheretzian etherworld of tricks? Out of joint with the times, the trends, the tempo? Thee, John, thee.

'We shall stop the na-a-palm. . . .'

'We shall stop the na-a-palm. . . .'

And to think I thought the Spaniard could save me from the subtle insemination of Jung's 'the collective unconscious.' It is also known as 'race mind,' referring to the human race, and more and more it has taken on Iberic overtones. It seems to me, Norman, that it is just a fleur du mal by another name: the old Unamunoan 'tragic sense of life.' He puts his Savile Row number around my shoulders (how very). But it is not enough. I thought that by virtue of being his coat, it could laminate against fall-out (afraid he is going to be blown up by Curtis Lemay!). For if love isn't a bomb shelter, what is?

‘Will you two young ladies be interested in this petition we’re going to show the Ambassador about the situation in Viet Nam?’

Will my hair grow back? How did he do it? A cheap Madrid hairdresser armed with fifty-volumes of defoliator. The hair comes out in the hands. It comes out in the hairbrush. Will the post-nuclear beauty awake and sing? Transcend and tell it like they want to hear it?

Will the manuscript arise from the sick-bed, trailing bandages and gore, and announce itself to all those more-than-fair editors that here lies the Great American girlish statement?

Will the fat girl in the poncho with the flickering candle let it go out and leave us here in the darkness of the Embassy parking lot? Or will she begin to sing: ‘If everyone would light but one little . . . ?’

And will self-immolation on a Smith-Corona help me smell like success? Or will I just smell like you, Norman, and all those other writers whose quotes I have ground into that journal? Will it help that I entered from Thomas Wolfe’s *THE STORY OF A NOVEL*, ‘I think I may say that I discovered America during these years abroad out of my very need of her?’ He wrote what I felt, and I wrote what I felt . . . but I think I am learning something, apart from the severed branch and the sunken moon: To be in the big leagues, you must write what other people feel. And all that bathos in a three-ring binder . . . I burned it at the end of Moratorium Day and sat down here to put some questions forth.

JACK LONDON BLAZED MY TRAIL

François Pasqualini

AS A BILINGUAL FREELANCE WRITER, I have sold 1,880 articles to 315 magazines, newspapers, trade journals, and house organs in ten countries.

Although being bilingual helps, I do not attribute the above results to this factor, but to the fact that I read Jack London's *MARTIN EDEN* when I was a teenager.

Strangely enough, I happened to read it at a time when my social position was as precarious as the book hero's throughout most of the novel, for I too was a sailor then.

Like Martin Eden (alias Jack London, since this was his most autobiographical work), I wanted to be a writer. Unlike him, however, I had had a good education. However, that did not constitute much of an asset, not only because it takes a lot more than education to succeed in the toughest profession on earth, but also because, in spite of my educational edge on Martin Eden, I was no better off socially.

The son of a sailor from Marseilles, I had wanted to be a sailor, myself, ever since childhood; and my father's financial sacrifices to give me a full education proved fruitless when I quit school before graduation and got a job as a coal trimmer on a big steamer.

The reading of *MARTIN EDEN* was a revelation to me. First, I was struck by the similarity between this half-fictional character and myself; for, although I had badly wanted to be a sailor up to the time I became one, I was now beginning to feel the urge to write. The ink in my veins probably had been there all along, but it took that plunge into the undersea hell where I had suddenly found myself to bring it out. And now, here was another sailor who wanted to be a writer.

At the time, I did not know enough about writing to realize that what I was experiencing while reading MARTIN EDEN was an extraordinary case of what is known in the professional jargon as 'reader identification.' But I was, all the same, only to a much higher degree than the term usually suggests in editorial circles.

Even now, as an experienced writer, I am groping for words to describe the immense thrill I got out of my first reading of this Jack London novel (for I have read it many times over since). I think the closest I can come to expressing how enthused I felt is through the following simile: it was like reading my own biography before living out my life. On the other hand, I had read most of his other books during my schooldays, and I knew enough about the author to realize that this was his autobiography, too. In other words I was finding myself in such perfect mental communion with the great California writer than I felt as if he were living back in me.

Even Jack London's favorite authors, Robert Louis Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling, had been mine as well; and the coincidence struck further home to me as I discovered upon reading the foreword to my copy of MARTIN EDEN.

Curiously enough, the realistic account of Martin Eden's long struggle to become a writer (so realistic that it further confirmed the autobiographical nature of the book) strengthened my will to grapple with the difficulties of a freelancer's life, instead of discouraging me.

I consider MARTIN EDEN the best book on freelance writing ever written, although it is very little known as such because, being labeled 'fiction,' it is not listed among books for writers advertised in such journals as *Writer's Digest*, *The Writer*, etc. It may not be a how-to book, but nothing more inspirational (from the writer's standpoint) has been written, or ever will be, as far as I can predict.

In the harsh disappointing years that followed my decision to become a writer, when I was wallowing in rejection slips and wondering whether I would ever ‘crash into print,’ the memory of Martin Eden was like a lighthouse beam showing a shipwrecked sailor in the night which way he should swim to reach the coast. The daunting spirit that burned in him seemed to have been transplanted into me. Every time one of my articles bounced back, I would think of Martin Eden’s solitary fight in the tiny room (on which he owed back rent most of the time) where he lived, ate, slept (five hours a night), read, and above all wrote, wrote desperately on, wrote himself sick at times, besieging editors with sweat-and-blood manuscripts that kept returning.

Never had the words in any book sounded so true as those Jack London had used to describe that tenacious fight against crushing odds, and whole sections of the text would leap back to memory:

Day by day he worked on, and day by day the postman delivered to him rejected manuscripts. He had no money for stamps, so the manuscripts accumulated in a heap under the table. Came a day when for forty hours he had not tasted food. To cap misfortune, the postman, in his afternoon round, brought him five returned manuscripts. Then it was that Martin wore his overcoat down into Oakland, and came back without it, but with five dollars tinkling in his pocket. He paid a dollar each on account to the four tradesmen, and, having dined, he sat down at his table-desk and completed before midnight an essay which he entitled *The Dignity of Usury*. Having typed it out, he flung it under the table, for there had been nothing left from the five dollars with which to buy stamps. Later on, he pawned his watch, and still later his wheel, reducing the amount available for food by putting stamps on all his manuscripts and sending them out. Nobody cared to buy... He reached stages of despair wherein he doubted if editors existed at all. He had never received a

sign of the existence of one, and from absence of judgment in rejecting all he wrote, it seemed plausible that editors were myths, manufactured and maintained by office boys, typesetters and pressmen.

But Martin Eden (Jack London) eventually crashed into print—and so did I, thanks to the lesson in courage I received from him, so far away in both time and space.

That is why to this day, MARTIN EDEN, a book that has the misleading words ‘A novel’ printed above the title and author’s name on the cover, occupies a place of honor in my personal library of nonfiction works on writing.

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AFTER EFFECTS

Michael Finlay

The moment we are finished
I would cleanse myself.
But the bath is a room
too provocative for morning
and the hair from your cold legs
clings to the porcelain walls
and makes me retch.

QUINGUENTENNIAL CONVOCATION

W. R. Young:

(This report represents only that portion of the convocation interested in the formation and standardization of the English language. Its purpose is to show a few of the influences that acted upon the written language of the Elizabethan era.)

A BAILIFF RAPS FOR SILENCE. A hush grips every man in the great hall. Queen Elizabeth speaks:

My Lords and gentlemen: ever since the day when it was first announced that we intended to call this convocation upon the five-hundredth anniversary of our beginning, pamphlets and papers have broadcast our intention to the world. Our acts of preparation: the arrangements for meeting places, the selection of men to represent the various fields and facets of our existence, the procurement of books and other material for your use . . . these and many other acts have given rise to rumors which should be clarified.

You have been called to London, and to this palace, for a specific purpose. The papers and dispatches which have been circulating throughout England during the past three months have given you broad hints covering that purpose.

It is the sole, and we believe notable, intention of the court to induce you to study, to discuss, and then to recommend to the court such action as you deem warranted to the end that England will embark upon a definite pattern of growth. A pattern which may well determine our history for the next five hundred years. Yours is no easy task.

Each of you represents a portion of our life. It may be finance, maritime, education, literature, medicine, government, agriculture, transport, or other. Your selection

to this group was preceded by an intense study of your accomplishments, your heritage, your probable capacities, and your patriotism.

You were handed a packet of information when you registered your arrival. In that packet are listed the various groups which will meet together, and the places of their meetings. You will shortly disband and then immediately reconvene at the hall or in the quarters indicated for your group.

You will work in committee. Many weeks of intense work lie before you. We will regather here for our final meeting on the first day of June. Until then, may God direct your every thought and action. Join me in prayer:

Our Father, which arte in heven, halowed be thy name. Let thy kingdom come. Thy wyll be fulfilled, as well in erth as hit ys in heven. Geve vs this daye oure dayly breade, and forgeve vs oure treaspases, even as we forgeve them, which treaspas vs. Leede vs not into temtacion, but delyvre vs from yvell. Amen.¹

REPORT: COMMITTEE ON LANGUAGE ARTS

First Meeting

(The group of distinguished-looking men, mostly in their thirties, file into a large, high-ceilinged room, ornately decorated with marks of the royal family, highlighted by an enormous painting of Henry VIII. Lackeys usher them to a table, supply them with writing paper, quills, and ink. Silver decanters of chilled water are brought in, bowls of fruit placed on the table, wraps taken and carefully hung in the vestibule at the end of the hall — then the servants withdraw.)

A rich deep voice, raised just a little, attracted the attention of the group.

‘Gentlemen, as some of you know, I am Miles Coverdale. Information in my packet indicates that I am to act as moderator, or chairman, of this Committee. I am also told

that when we are properly assembled, known to each other, Her Majesty has another meeting scheduled with us. To speed her coming, will each of you identify yourself?’

As the men gathered around the long table, taking places behind the chairs, they called out their names:

George Gascoigne, Publisher Thomas Chaloner, Publisher Richard Mulcaster, Schoolmaster Thomas North, Cambridge, Translator Reginald Wolfe, Printer Raphael Holinshead, Clergyman, Historian Roger Ascham, Royal tutor William Painter, Clerk of Ordnance Thomas Hoby, Writer Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset, Member of Parliament

1) Alfred H. Welsh, *DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE* (Chicago, 1884), p. 294. As each of the men called his name, pleased signs of recognition spread throughout the group. They seemed to feel more at home, more at ease with one another. The earlier chill of their first meeting wore away and the men reached out to shake hands with their neighbors, each feeling the others had been well selected for a task of this nature. Then Bishop Coverdale noticed that two young men had hung back, not coming to the table, talking between themselves at the rear of the room.

‘Ho, there, you two,’ he called. ‘What is your position? Are you members of this Committee?’

‘Oh, no, Sir,’ said one of the men, starting a bit at the call of the man at the table. ‘We are clerks, sent here to record the meetings, and to act as secretary to any one of you honored sirs who may need us.’

‘Name yourselves, then,’ said Coverdale.

The two men came toward the assembly, a bit hesitantly.

‘I am Nicholas Breton, Sir,’ the taller one said.

‘And I am Edward Dyer,’ said the other.

‘Each of you take a place near an end of the table, so that you can hear and be heard,’ Coverdale suggested.

A commotion, then voices, were heard from the foyer.

Painter rose to leave the table to determine the cause, but immediately turned back as Mulcaster placed a hand on his arm. 'Excuse me, sir,' he said, 'but I believe those are the page boys I was asked to furnish from my school.' He turned to Coverdale at the center of the table. 'Will you excuse me, sir?' he asked.

'Certainly, see to it,' returned the Bishop.

The firm brisk step of the schoolmaster attested he was used to authority. He stepped to the end of the hall and was heard admonishing the boys to maintain a quiet dignified manner. He led them back to the table, then ranged them in a line.

'Speak up, boys, tell your name and where you are from,' Mulcaster ordered.

'Honored sirs, we are students at Merchant Taylor's school, under Headmaster Mulcaster,' spoke up the boy on the end. 'Step up, chaps, and call your name, one at a time,' he said to the others.

'John Lyly . . . Philip Sidney . . . Richard Hakluyt . . . Edmund Spenser . . . Walter Raleigh . . . and I am Hooker, sirs,' the first boy said.

'Very well. Stacked here behind me are several different books,' the Bishop stated. 'See to it that each of these gentlemen has copies of each of them placed before him on the table,' he ordered. The pages scampered. Quickly, but in an orderly manner, they distributed copies of the Coverdale Bible, the Geneva Bible, selections from John Skelton including Colin Clout, A Garland of Laurel, and other works: UTOPIA by Sir Thomas More, his translation of PRAISE OF FOLLY by Erasmus, sonnets of Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. In addition to these the stacks included the published works of each of the committee members, a tremendous accumulation. Meanwhile the 'get acquainted' banter had resumed among the men.

‘Gentlemen.’ The sonorous tones of the aging Bishop stopped the group’s chatter and brought their attention back to the chairman. ‘Here you see many books. All of you are authors and writers of note, being the very parents of most of this aggregation of beauty, art, and skill. Your extreme abundance of effort, if nothing else, distinguish you among all other men.

‘This abundance of wit, the beauty of your language and your choice of words, even the introduction of new words from your travels and from your reading, has created quite a problem. The Queen herself, in her letter to me, indicates her awareness of the problem, and she is at the base of this convocation to bring about some ease to the situation. Let us prepare to hear her, for she wants to deliver her own message.’ He sent a page to the Queen’s chambers, with word the committee was assembled and awaited her majesty.

Soon, with a great pomp and sweep of courtly splendor, the queen and her attendants entered the hall. The queen stood at the head of the table until a raised chair was placed for her, then ordered the men to be seated also.

‘Kind sirs, you represent English letters. In a sense you are England by representation. You will be the England of the future by the actions you take now. It is the desire of this court that you so pool your resources, your remembrances, your extensive libraries, every intellect you possess, to the end that you establish and ordain an English language that will live.

‘Yours is a most difficult task. We can and do write the word “sovereign” seven different ways, all English! Wilson said, eight years before our coronation, that

Some seke so farre for outlandishe Englishe that thei forgette altogether their mother’s language. He that cometh out of France will talke Frenche-English, and never blush at the matter. The unlearned or foolishe phantastical that smelles but of learynyng will so Latyn their talke, that the

simple can not but wonder at their talke, and thinke surely thei speake by some revelation. I know them that thinke Rhetorique to stand whollie upon darke woordes, and he that can catch an yknhorne terme by the taile, hym thei coumpt to be a fine Englishman and a good Rhetorician.²

It is the desire of the court that you produce, or stabilize, if you prefer the term, a “Book-English . . . addressed to the mind directly, instead of circuitously through the eye and ear . . .”³

“Each section of our country has its own peculiar language, faintly resembling the speech of its neighbors. There are many reasons for this: most, or all of them, known to you distinguished gentlemen who specialize in the language in different manners. Some of you have traveled extensively; most of the country’s writers have. For many years it has been the custom of our young men to travel the Continent. Many of the brightest intellects of England have spent years mastering and being mastered by the beauty in the culture of foreign lands.

‘One of your group, my former tutor, Mr. Ascham, said: “An Englishman Italianate is but a devil incarnate.” He referred, of course, to the so-called Italian Tour, said by some to instill culture. Instead it has been one of the many forces which have been and yet are bending English tradition, English mannerisms, to fit itself.

It is natural, then, that English poetry and writing in early endeavors affects many foreign artificialities of imagery, phrase, and diction, ashamed of coarser native vigors and native traditions.

This, then, is your task. We are England. We must remain England. We must inspire England. This court, and I also, are persuaded that we do not want our language to become merely a mirror of the Continent, an unrecognizable stew containing chunks of Italy, pieces of France, gobbets of Germany, slices of Spain! No, gentlemen, no! We need a

thoroughly English language, a written living symbol of what we are, an illustration of what we can become.

‘Certainly we are bound to contain some elements from the Continent. We are bound to retain foreign culture in our tongue that was here before we were. Most of our French is assimilated before now and is now a part of the language. But we do most strenuously object to unrecognizable unmeaning terms stuck into English for the express purpose of sham-intellectualism, for demonstrating a false ability.

‘This subject is a dear one with this court. We could go on and on with our charge to you, but then we would defeat our purpose. To work, England’s men of letters — and may God grant you wisdom.’

A pregnant silence filled the room when the queen stopped talking. Each man and boy, transfixed, breathed in her majesty. Then the rustle

2) Jean Roemer, *ORIGINS OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE* (New York, 1888), p. 364.

3) *Ibid.*, p. 360.

4) C. G. Osgood, *THE VOICE OF ENGLAND* (New York, 1935), p. 147

5) *Ibid.*, p. 154. of silk was heard. The queen was gone, but her force, her power, the living fire of her remained present in them all.

REPORT: COMMITTEE ON LANGUAGE ARTS Second Meeting

(Before adjourning the first meeting chairman Coverdale requests that the several members of the committee acquaint themselves immediately with the books and other printed matter which had been handed them, and that they return in one week.)

‘May we come to order, kind sirs,’ asked the Chairman, rapping for attention.

The conversation had been spirited, prompted by the many discoveries of the men during the past week. They had come across bits of language exposing and pointing out the

truth of the queen's message. They were eager to dig into the task, but most felt extremely helpless in the face of what lay ahead.

'Gentlemen, gentlemen,' again called the Bishop. 'We must get to the heart of this matter. Suppose we begin with each member of the group giving his idea of what elements would be best to retain in our language.'

'Mr. Chairman!' Sackville almost leaped to his feet as he called for attention.

'We recognize the Earl of Dorset,' replied the chair.

'Sirs, I have been a member of Parliament for eight years. I have practically grown up in Parliament, for I was but twenty-two when appointed. We will not be able to effect the desire of her majesty, in my opinion, by attempting to tell what we think would be best for the land. The subject is too broad for that approach to be effective.'

'Well, sir,' broke in Sir Thomas Chaloner, 'what do you think would be a point of beginning? By Henry, sir, we must begin somewhere.'

'Start with the people!' This slow measured phrase, spoken in a forceful whisper, was the answer. 'Start with the people!' Sackville said again, louder. 'Start with them, stay with them . . . lead them, yes, but stay with them. They determine what is best!'

'Come, now,' said Sir Thomas, 'do you mean to say that the rabble who cannot see above today's wages, who do not even know how to read or write, should have anything to say about what we write?'

'Yes, sir, I do say that.' The Earl of Dorset had regained his composure, and was deliciously enjoying the prospects of debate. 'Listen, gentlemen: although I'm almost the youngest man in this group, the youngest, save Mr. Painter, God has been good enough to give me many experiences in Parliament. We try to keep the pulse of the times between our fingers, you know. This desire on the part of every young

man, not just the men of means, but of every young man, for more knowledge, for more and more knowledge, is about to turn our ideas of education upside down. Look around you . . . I was talking to Mulcaster and find that some of his boys, boys like that lad Spenser over there, can go to school using these new scholarships. Boys from the shops. His father is a clothmaker.

‘And another thing. Look at the men returning from the Continent. Who are they? What are they?’

A new voice broke in. It was Holinshed. ‘Bishop, and gentlemen, as you know “the Catholic reaction under Mary drove from the country most of the ablest and most zealous ministers. Many took refuge in Geneva and other Calvinistic lands and became thoroughly indoctrinated with Calvinism!”’ Those are among the men who are returning, or at least some of them. They have formed the Puritan party, and you can mark my words they will be reckoned with!’

‘Mr. Holinshed, what has that to do with our language problem?’ The Bishop had turned a puzzled expression toward the speaker, listened intently, but still needed to get to the point of the matter.

‘It is my feeling that they will introduce, or rather, more strongly induce, a desire to read the Bible.’ All eyes were studying the old man’s face. He continued: ‘History teaches us that these zealots will encourage reading, and will get the Scriptures to the people. Well, sirs, Bishop Coverdale’s Bible of 1537 is going to be superseded by this new Geneva version . . . there’s no difference in what they say . . . but a big difference in how they say it! It retains everything good from Tindale, it includes the best of Matthew’s work, and that of Cranmer, but it is yet better, easier to read, than any of them.

‘One of my clerks informed me there are but six thousand words in his entire Bible. And there are only some two hundred and fifty words that are difficult to understand, not

in our everyday speech.'

'We certainly cannot deny the strength of your argument, Mr. Holinshed; but just how much influence do you think that will have on the English language of the future?' This came slowly and deliberately from Thomas Hoby. It sounded as though he had given a great deal of thought to the problem before the meeting.

'I believe,' replied Mr. Holinshed, 'that more than any other single generating force, it will enter the bone and fibre of the English prose and poetry' and make itself felt through all time. I believe that none of us will ever write and not reflect the language of that Bible.'

6) A. H. Newman, *A MANUAL OF CHURCH HISTORY* (Philadelphia, 1951), p. 248.

7) Osgood, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-136.

8) *Ibid.*, p. 135.

'Well put, sir, and I believe that states the case for the Scriptures completely and emphatically. What other influences should we discuss?' The Bishop decided to end discussion of the point.

'Mr. Chairman . . .' The young Mr. Painter sought recognition. The Bishop looked his way and nodded his head.

'Sir, it is my belief that the English people are hungry for short stories. I've gone to the Italian novella type story for some models, and have produced several in our tongue, in the vernacular of London, and they have been readily accepted.'

'And I, Mr. Chairman,' said Thomas North, 'have found a ready market for translations from Plutarch. The people seem to want the Continental classics. I've noticed Sir Thomas Hoby's *COURTIER* in all the best shops, also. I really believe the people demand the spice that comes from the south. They need the variety, the color, the smack of the sea, the touch of the French court. Our lives here in London are

so mundane, so filled with sameness. We live such well-ordered regulated lives that the classics are like new blood in our veins. And they will become more and more vital as the people get the feel of them.'

'Bishop . . .' A very red Roger Ascham was on his feet. 'Bishop,' he said again, almost shouting.

'Go ahead, sir,' said the Chairman.

"These bee the enchantementes of Circe, brought out of Italie to marre mens maners in England; much, by example of ill life, but more by preceptes of fondé bookes, of late translated out of Italian into English, sold in every shop in London. . . . There bee moe of these ungratious bookes set out in printe wythin these fewe monethes, than have been sene in England many score yeares before. . . . Them they heve in more reverence the triumphes of Petrarche than the Genesis of Moses; They make more account of Tullies offices, than S. Paules epistles; of a tale in Bacace than a storie of the Bible."

The Bishop stroked his beard. He needed time to get out of the bind. These men were split right down the middle. Classics . . ., yes he believed they ought to be read for their beauty, for their power to persuade men to think; but so many of these young translators were accentuating the content rather than the form. He could see how that would have an opposite effect on the people from that of reading the Bible.

'Suppose,' he said aloud, 'we look into what the schools and universities are using for texts. Mr. Gascoigne, just what do you sell most to the schools?'

9) Welsh, op. cit., p. 293. 'There is a lot of variation, sir,' Gascoigne answered. 'But I can furnish a few facts for the gentlemen. As you may remember, a printer by the name of Caxton printed the first book to be printed in the English language. To go back a little bit more, you all will agree that Chaucer represented the Fourteenth Century, as far as our

field is concerned. Both in writing and in language usage. And then the Fifteenth Century is probably best represented by Lydgate. At least some people feel that he does. Caxton embodies the Fifteenth and all preceding centuries in his *THE RECUYELL OF THE HISTORIES OF TROY*. Because of the unique place of that book in our history, that of being the first book in our language, it has always occupied a prominent place in our teaching. I think it would be profitable to look at Caxton's own statement about the book: *The Polychronycon, conteynng the berynges and dedes of many times in eight bokes. Imprinted by Wylyam Caxton, after having somewhat changed the rude and olde Englyshe that is to wete certayn wordes which in thyse dayes be neyther used ne understonden. Ended the second day of July at Westmestre, the xxij yere of the Regne of Kynge Edward the Fourth, and of the Incarnacyon of oure Lord a Thousand four Hundred, four score and tweyne.*¹ Mind you, those words are being read every day by our students. Probably the one other book used most for study in some schools is *TOTTEL'S MISCELLANY*. As you know, it contains a highly assorted stock of sonnets, epigrams, satires, moralizings, eulogy, elegy, and pastoral writings.' (The Book, as it [has] turned out, taught English Literature a new art of poetry. Much of it, especially Wyatt's work, was translated from Petrarch's love poetry, and that of other Italians. Much was drawn from Latin poets, Horace, Martial, and Ovid.)¹¹ There are, in addition, various lists I can give you as to what are considered textbooks. A typical group: "Lilly's *CARMEN MONITORIUM*, Cato's *PRECEPTS* (better known as the *MORALIA*). Aesop's *FABLES*; Lilly's *GENDERS* and *GRAMMAR*; Virgil; Cicero; Sallust or Caesar. Nearly all the grammar schools in the country seem to have used very much the same books . . ."¹² You can readily see, then, gentlemen, that these exert a tremendous influence on what our youth are taught. And as they are taught they will continue to teach and use as they reach manhood. These

books will flavor the English language for many generations to come.' 'Thank you very much, Mr. Gascoigne.' The Chairman appeared quite tired. Signs of unrest were evident among several of the others. It prompted Bishop Coverdale to adjourn the meeting, and to call for a reunion the following week. He urged them all to seek for ways to standardize the language while they studied.

10) *Osgood, op. cit., p. 149.*

11) *Do.*

12) *Amy Cruse, THE SHAPING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE (New York, no date), p. 74.*

REPORT: COMMITTEE ON LANGUAGE ARTS

Third Meeting

(As the third and final meeting of the committee convenes, each of the participants distributes copies of his own conclusions, suggestions and recommendations to each of the other members. Before the meeting is called to order the men spend a little more than an hour examining, comparing, questioning. Mr. Coverdale at length summons the men to the table and commands attention.)

'During the past weeks you gentlemen have filled your minds and your lives with England's problem. It is indicated by these reports that you have reached sound conclusions. Your statements of desire to strenuously work for a more beautiful, more expressive language in the future particularly impress me.

It is only for us then to summarize these reports, to combine them into one tight meaningful recommendation to the Queen through the Central Council, of which I am a member.

'Well, then, our survey is approximately complete. "We have arrived at the stage where new capabilities are no longer imperiously demanded by the advancement of culture. The nursling has become a child, the child a man,—still, with

proper training, to acquire additional flexibility and strength, yet to remain substantially the same.”¹³

‘Are we resolved that we can include in our report to the Queen that “it is language that shapes literature, not our literature that shapes language?”’¹⁴

A chorus of ‘Aye’s’ resounded in the hall.

The Bishop next put this question: ‘Do you wish to include anything else besides the records of our meetings in the report?’

Mulcaster stood and said: “The English tung cannot prove fairer than it is at this day.”¹⁵

(Ed. note: Thomas Hoby, for THE COURTIER, for his work on this committee, and other contributions, was knighted at the final meeting of the convocation on the first of June. He fell ill immediately after and died on July 13, 1566. Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset, was knighted the following year, 1567, as a result of his contribution to literature and to this convocation.)

13) Welsh, op. cit., p. 296.

14) Roemer, op. cit., p. 452.

15) Welsh, op. cit., p. 295.

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SCIENCE, LITERATURE, & MAGIC: REFLECTIONS OF A PHYSICIST

— Richard Morris

*Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night:
God said, 'Let Newton be!' and all was light.*

— Pope

*It did not last: the Devil howling 'Ho,
Let Einstein be,' restored the status quo.*

— Sir John Squire

OF COURSE IT HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN like this. Chaucer wrote a treatise on the astrolabe, an instrument used to measure the altitude of stars; Leonardo was, if not a scientist, a brilliant engineer; Goethe was both scientist and poet. Perhaps it would be unreasonable to expect that many people today should be capable of making contributions to both the sciences and the arts, but we can at least wonder why more people are not interested in both fields, and why contemporary science is not reflected in literature. Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, a poem, was a scientific and philosophical work on a grand scale. Dante's references to medieval science, if they are often mystifying today, at least remind us that he attempted to incorporate an entire world view into his work.

As late as 1800, the idea that a synthesis between science and literature could be carried out was apparently not thought to be such a strange one. In a much-quoted passage in the preface to the second edition of *LYRICAL BALLADS*, Wordsworth claims:

Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the poet will sleep no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarised to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form

of flesh and blood, the poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.¹

Nowadays such ideas sound hopelessly naïve. During the first seventy years of the Twentieth Century there have been several scientific revolutions. Every phase of our life is influenced by a rapidly accelerating technology. Physics has changed our conceptions of the nature of space and time, and has questioned previously accepted concepts of causality; new techniques in radio astronomy have allowed us to look farther into the past than would have been thought possible a quarter of a century ago; molecular biology has explored the origins of life, and has, with the discovery of the structure of DNA, uncovered the

mechanisms of genetic inheritance. Entire new mathematical disciplines, such as Information Theory and the Theory of Games, have been developed. The technological ‘fallout’ that has resulted from new discoveries has been enormous; without transistors, synthetic fabrics, computers and automation, to mention just a few things, our lives would be very much different. Yet today’s poet—or literary intellectual—like any other layman, knows about as much about modern science as the rat who is forced to run a psychologist’s maze or press a bar in a Skinner box.

Some critics have professed to be astonished that such a situation should exist. Aldous Huxley comments:

That the poetry of this most scientific of centuries should be, on the whole, less concerned with science than was the poetry of times in which science was relatively unimportant is a paradox that requires to be elucidated and explained.²

In his description of the ‘Two Cultures,’ C. P. Snow reacts with what might almost be termed indignation. According to Snow, asking someone to describe the Second Law of Thermodynamics is the scientific equivalent of asking, ‘Have you read a work of Shakespeare’s?’—and understanding basic physical concepts, such as mass and acceleration, is the scientific equivalent of being able to read.³ If Snow does criticize the scientists for their lack of interest in literature, it is the literary intellectuals who are subjected to the harshest condemnation:

They are impoverished too—perhaps more seriously, because they are vainer about it. They still like to pretend that the traditional culture is the whole of ‘culture,’ as though the natural order didn’t exist.... As though the scientific edifice of the physical world was not, in its intellectual depth, complexity and articulation, the most beautiful and wonderful collective work of the mind of man.

Snow evidently considers the split between the 'Two Cultures' to be an evil in itself. In the eyes of other authors, however, it is also a major cause of the malaise of our time — a determining factor in the creation of 'the split personality, the unevenly adjusted man' who is supposedly symptomatic of our period.

One sometimes cannot help having the fleeting impression that these people must believe that if only we could make a knowledge of calculus a requirement for the Ph.D. in English, and somehow force Robert Lowell and Allen Ginsberg to study quantum mechanics, that if Norman Mailer and Philip Roth would only immerse themselves in molecular biology, if only Leslie Fiedler would quit writing about Indians and learn about topology and tensor analysis, if only Paul Goodman would turn his intellect to the elucidation of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, then all our problems would suddenly disappear. Furthermore, they sometimes behave as though such a programme would involve no intrinsic difficulties. Huxley, for example, tells us:

If he possessed the requisite sense of language and the impelling desire to express himself in terms of beauty, Einstein could write the most intoxicating lyrics about relativity and the pleasures of pure mathematics. And if, say, Mr. Yeats understood the Einstein theory . . . he could give us, out of the Celtic twilight, his lyrics of relativity.

We are not, of course, expected to ask what would have been gained if Yeats had written, not about Byzantium, but about space-time. Huxley begins with the assumption that any intelligent reader will agree that some good would result, and thus concerns himself only with arguing that it would indeed be possible.

We cannot deny that modern science and mathematics, just as much as the arts, offer manifold opportunities for the exercise of creative imagination. Numerous scientists and mathematicians have testified that an elegant theory will

invariably evoke aesthetic feelings in anyone who is equipped to understand it. Just as the artist attempts to express the ultimate realities of human experience, the scientist tries to elucidate the ultimate realities of the physical world. But sometimes even this distinction disappears. Those who work in pure mathematics study problems for their intrinsic interest, without giving any thought to the question whether applications even exist. It would not be unreasonable to say that such an activity is more akin to poetry than to physics; it is certainly less concerned with the material world than literature with political content, or dance with music. Even should we try to distinguish between artistic and scientific creation on the grounds that the latter is more 'objective,' we will still find men, such as Michael Polanyi, who are willing to argue with us.

Huxley's idea that a synthesis between literature and modern science can somehow be effected strikes us as an absurd one. However sympathetic we might be to his arguments, we feel that there is something funny about the notion. When Snow exhibits to us the gap that exists between the scientists on one hand and the artists and literary intellectuals on the other, we are able to feel something of his indignation; but in the end we come away unconvinced that it really makes very much difference whether or not the literati understand what the scientists are doing.

Paradoxically, we do not find it strange that Geometry and Astronomy should have been placed among the Seven Liberal Arts, nor are we astonished to see Dante expounding physical, astronomical, and philosophical theories in *THE DIVINE COMEDY*. Although we would be surprised if a modern playwright had his characters talk about quarks and quasars, we have no trouble accepting Shakespeare's numerous references to astrology and alchemy.

It would be unreasonable to assume that today's artists and intellectuals are lazier than their counterparts in other ages, or that they possess less intellectual curiosity. We feel that if they know so much less of science than their predecessors, it is because the modern world is somehow different. If asked how it is different, we are likely to find ourselves at a loss as to how we should answer. Then, finally, we come up with some such response as: 'Well, science is so specialized that no one can understand much of it any more.'

But even as we say this, we feel that it is too easy an explanation. The argument just doesn't sound entirely convincing. If we look a little harder, we are likely to realize that this 'specialization,' at least in the sense that we ordinarily understand it, is a myth. Specialization has nothing to do with the great advances in science, the major theories on which everything else is based. Relativity is not more specialized than Newton's Laws of Motion. On the contrary, it is more general; Newtonian mechanics is contained within relativity as a special case. We are sometimes awed by the bewildering variety of fields contained within modern physics; but if we were to consider them more closely, we would discover that virtually all of them are based on a single theory: quantum mechanics. The sciences do not deal with an appreciably greater number of basic concepts than they did a century ago; there are only more applications. In fact, it would be possible to argue that the basic ideas are fewer, that the trend has been toward consolidation. During the Nineteenth Century, for example, the mathematical physicist, James Clerk Maxwell, succeeded in combining explanations of the phenomena of electricity and magnetism within a single theory. Today, quantum mechanics is used not only to explain the structure of the atom, but is applied also to such diverse phenomena as the emission of light from a hot body, molecular binding.

superconductivity, and the working of a laser. Then perhaps what we are witnessing is a kind of cultural lag? Perhaps we simply have not had enough time to assimilate the concepts of modern science. René Dubos, among others, expresses this view: That the earth is round, and that all living creatures that we know have a common ancestry, is not obvious either to my senses or my common sense, yet these concepts have become integrated in my daily thoughts and thus constitute part of the fabric of my culture. It would be surprising if the general concepts of elementary particle physics and of relativity theory did not in some way become integrated in the general culture of the next generation.⁸ One who is not blessed with prescience cannot deny that this may be possible, but he is entitled to ask why it is taking so long to assimilate these things. After all, relativity theory dates from 1905; quantum mechanics, which was developed by Schrödinger and Heisenberg in 1926, has an ancestry that goes back to Planck's quantum theory of 1899. Surely we should by now at least have begun to grow familiar with these things; we should have begun to incorporate them into our everyday thoughts. All the evidence indicates that we have not. For example, one of the first places in which we would expect to find scientific concepts introduced is the genre to which we have given the not very apt name of 'science fiction.' Science fiction has, of course, little to do with science; it always has been, and is still, the literature of the fantastic. Its authors habitually imagine technologies that might be possible in the future, but they rarely deal with science itself. When they do, they often become ridiculous. Ten or twenty years ago, for example, they were fond of using the 'space warp,' a device that would make travel at speeds faster than that of light possible. Within the framework of relativity, such an idea is nonsense; it is an absurd misinterpretation of the concept of 'curved' space. There is reason to suspect that velocities greater than that of light

might just be possible in certain extreme or limiting cases, but the 'space warp' remains a fictitious concept. We are reluctant to refer to *BRAVE NEW WORLD* and 1984 as 'science fiction' because they are so obviously not works of popular literature. Both Huxley and Orwell describe complex technological societies, but if there is any 'science' in their books, it is psychology, not physics. Although the distinction between science and technology often becomes blurred, it is a real one. There is quite a difference between a machine and the principles on which it operates; to identify a steam engine with the Second Law of Thermodynamics is to speak 569 nonsense. This distinction is even recognized by patent law; it is possible to patent a design for a machine, but you cannot patent a scientific discovery.

Perhaps we should consider it fortunate that literary men concern themselves with science so rarely. (This way there is less nonsense in the world?) When a poet or a novelist or a critic does decide to talk about modern science, he is likely to make a spectacle of himself. Lawrence Durrell is an excellent example. In *A KEY TO MODERN BRITISH POETRY* he tries to find connections between physics and modern literature, and succeeds only in demonstrating that he has not the slightest idea of what modern physics is all about. He tells us that relativity joined up Planck's quantum theory with Rutherford's and Soddy's law of radioactivity (it did nothing of the kind), that relativity 'sidetracks causality'¹ (he is confusing relativity with quantum mechanics), and that Einstein conceived of time as 'a sort of time which contained all time in every moment of time'¹¹ (as absurd as it sounds). Finally, Durrell admits that he doesn't know enough mathematics to understand the things he has been talking about, and tries to explain modern physics in terms of a Renaissance philosopher named Giordano Bruno whom he supposes to have been a precursor of Einstein.¹²

Durrell is not a complete fool. He makes some suggestions about interrelationships between physics and literature which, though they may sound strange, cannot be arbitrarily dismissed. He begins innocuously enough, telling us: 'In ancient Greece mathematics, music, poetry and sculpture were intimately connected and the systems of education then in vogue recognized the fact.'¹³ He goes on: 'Today we still acknowledge this underground connection between the arts and the sciences when we find ourselves using phrases like "a man of his age" or "the prevailing currents of thought."¹

So far, nothing very astonishing has been said. After all, the artist and the scientist live in the same world and their lives are shaped by the same social forces. There must be some hazy kind of interaction between artists and scientists. Durrell, however, does not wish to probe into the nature of such vague interactions. He wishes to establish more definite connections, and attempts to do so by asserting that relativity and quantum mechanics have changed our conceptions about the nature of time. For Durrell, this fact has enormous implications.

If time is, as I believe, the measure of our death-consciousness, you cannot revise your concept of it without affecting our ideas of death and life. Some of these ideas are germinating among the oracular utterances of Gerontion; others are to be found in the Four Quartets of Eliot and in the Duines Elegies of Rilke no less than in Joyce's

*Ulysses. Time is one of the great clues to the
modern outlook.¹*

And several pages later he tells us:

I am not suggesting that modern poetry is constructed to illustrate the quantum theory, but I do suggest it unconsciously reproduces something like the space-time continuum in the way that it uses words and phrases: and

the way in which its forms are cyclic rather than extended.¹

Durrell's idea is a kind of elaboration of Wyndham Lewis' suggestion, made twenty-five years before, that the creative artist receives 'blindly . . . all kinds of notions and formulae' from fields outside his own, and that

Without knowing it, he receives into the central tissue of his work political or scientific notions which he proceeds to embody, if he is a novelist, in his characters, or a poet, in his technique or emotional material, without in the least knowing what he is doing or why he is doing it.¹

Durrell and Lewis would have us believe, then, that even though a writer may have little understanding of modern science, its concepts are nevertheless embodied in his work. If the poet is too ornery to read up on quantum mechanics, or if he is simply not willing to make use of science in the way that Dante did, it doesn't make a bit of difference; through the workings of some strange metaphysical principle it will all wind up in his work anyway, possibly in the company of any number of things that haven't even been discovered yet (after all, we shouldn't expect that the scientist will always get there first). The gulf described by Huxley and by Snow doesn't exist; Yeats did write 'lyrics of relativity.' If he thought he was writing about Byzantium or about Irish myths, that was only because he was unfortunate enough to die before Durrell's book was published.

Some similar ideas are expressed by Giedion who, however, makes less extreme claims. According to Giedion, during the Nineteenth Century 'the different departments of human activity steadily lost touch with one another' so that today we are faced with a separation between thinking and feeling.¹ Of our doubts that science and art have anything in common, he says:

The question would not be raised except in a period where thinking and feeling proceed on different levels in opposition to each other. In such a period, people no longer expect a scientific discovery to have any repercussions in the realm of feeling. It seems unnatural for a theory in mathematical physics to meet with an equivalent in the arts. But this is to forget that the two are formulated by men living in the same period, exposed to the same general influences, and moved by similar impulses.¹

In Giedion's view, although we have forced science and the arts apart, there are still social forces at work which find outlets in both art and science, and which create unconscious parallelisms of method. The conceptions of space and time that we encounter in relativity have equivalents in Cubism and Futurism. If these relationships are not apparent to us, it is only because we have forced ourselves to artificially compartmentalize our experience.

Because Giedion's views are expressed more moderately than those of Durrell, they seem more reasonable. Yet there seems to be no compelling reason why we should accept them. Giedion says that there are analogous elements in relativity and Cubism. But couldn't we just as easily invent analogies between relativity and abstract expressionism, or between quantum mechanics and the work of the impressionists? And what are we to make of Cézanne, that forerunner of Cubism who was a man of sixty-six when Einstein's theory was published in 1905 (Einstein was then twenty-five and Picasso twenty-four)?

In the absence of any good evidence for direct connections between contemporary science and art it is best to maintain an attitude of skepticism toward claims that such relationships exist. If I am told that the things the poets are writing have something to do with the things the particle

physicists are doing, I am perfectly within my rights if I maintain that I will consider this view to be metaphysical rubbish until someone shows otherwise. To hold this view is not to deny that there may be interactions between science and the arts, but simply to deny that there is anything obvious or special about them. Poetry has something to do with physics, but only in the sense that the National Guard has something to do with divorce laws. Science and the arts, because they exist within the same civilization, interact with one another, but no more than the other elements of that civilization.

If I am disinclined to believe that there are any 'underground' connections between science and literature or art, I point to the lack of evidence for the existence of any such relationships. But this lack of evidence cannot, by itself, convince me of anything; I am convinced because I have tacit feelings which tell me that science and literature have nothing to do with one another. But why should I have these feelings? Perhaps it is this that is the really interesting question. If it is to be answered, it will be necessary to take a look at what modern science is like, and try to see whether there is anything that distinguishes it from the science of the past, which has been assimilated.

The most obvious thing is that no one understands it. Relativity is confused with the doctrine of relativism, and it is (mistakenly) thought that Einstein's theories somehow reduced the objectivity of the physical world. The layman imagines that Einstein was an inscrutable genius who was great because no one could understand him; he is willing to believe such nonsense as 'there are only six men in the world who understand relativity,' and at the same time think that the content of the theory can be reduced to such statements as 'Einstein said that everything is relative.'

Actually, Einstein's 1905 paper² (which, incidentally, did not have the word 'relativity' in its title; it was called On the

Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies) did not introduce any ideas that were particularly difficult to understand. It is true that relativity is expressed in terms of mathematics, but then so are Newton's laws of gravitation and motion. The layman does not understand Einstein's mathematics, but he can't calculate the orbit of Mercury either, or use Kepler's Third Law to deduce inverse square attraction. It is not much more difficult to explain the implications of Einstein's theory than it is to explain that Newton's implies that planets must move in elliptical orbits. If you don't understand the mathematics used to get an elliptical orbit, you can still be made to understand that an ellipse is a kind of flattened out circle; if you had Geometry in high school you already know that it's a kind of flattened out circle.

The difficulties presented by the relativity theory would not seem any more formidable if the theory were not so frighteningly strange. It tells us all sorts of funny things about how you shrink if you go fast enough, and that time slows down; it throws out the concept of simultaneity in certain circumstances, and then caps everything off with an innocuous looking equation, $E = mc^2$, which, as everybody knows, is somehow responsible for the atomic bomb. For most people, all this is too much. Mention the word 'Einstein' and they run screaming in the direction of some relatively simple subject, such as Zen Buddhism or Scientology.

It was for his contributions to quantum theory, not relativity, that Einstein received the Nobel Prize; and in fact it is quantum mechanics* that is really the cornerstone of modern physics. Yet this theory is even less familiar; if the layman knows anything about it at all, it is only that quantum mechanics has something to do with a strange entity called 'Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle,' which is supposed to have all sorts of odd philosophical implications. Anyone who attempts to go into the subject more deeply than this is likely to find himself rapidly getting uptight. He may

be able to accept the wave properties of an electron without much difficulty. But when he discovers that it is a probability wave that describes the electron, for godsake, rather than

*When I say quantum mechanics, I mean the 1926 theory of Heisenberg and Schrödinger, which we still use today. something real, like an ocean wave, he is likely to give up. On the other hand, few people find the idea of gravity to be a difficult one. After all, everyone has held objects in his hand and experienced their weight. Nor is the rest of Newtonian mechanics felt to be especially esoteric. Everyone understands the assertion that ‘for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.’** Concepts like ‘momentum’ and ‘acceleration’ are not felt to be particularly difficult ones; they are, in fact, part of our language. Few people could define them, but everyone understands intuitively what they mean. The Newtonian world is the world of common sense. The objects with which it deals are those that we handle every day of our lives, or see every time we look up at the sky. Newtonian physics describes the behavior of planets and of billiard balls. It can be used to analyze an automobile accident or to describe the forces acting on a baseball. It can be applied to the analysis of musical sounds, and it can explain why a gas should expand when it is heated. The modern theories, on the other hand, are not only more abstract, but they deal with a kind of reality that is entirely unfamiliar. No one would think the implications of relativity odd if we habitually moved around at relativistic velocities. They seem strange only because no one ever has. But these theories do more than contradict common sense; they describe a reality that the words of our language were never meant to describe. Oppenheimer gives a good illustration of the difficulties involved in describing quantum mechanics with ordinary words: If we ask, for instance, whether the position of the electron remains the same, we must say ‘no’;

if we ask whether the electron's position changes with time, we must say 'no'; if we ask whether the electron is at rest, we must say 'no'; if we ask whether it is in motion, we must say 'no.' The Buddha has given such answers when interrogated as to the conditions of a man's self after his death; but they are not familiar answers for the tradition of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-century science.²¹ The man who knows no mathematics is perfectly capable of grasping the implications of the theories of modern physics, but as physics grows stranger and more abstract he is less likely to exert himself to do so. Poets are not likely to try to incorporate concepts which elude their intuitive grasp into their work. Even if they did, who would understand them? To use a not-entirely-adequate metaphor, we might say that modern science can be likened to a spherical cavern that is ** Or at least he thinks he does, until asked to explain the following paradox: A horse is pulling a cart. He does this by exerting a force on it. Therefore, the cart exerts an equal and opposite force on the horse. How then can the cart move? 574 gradually being enlarged by teams of diggers. A man is positioned in its center. Three hundred years ago, when the cavern was a small one, he could watch with interest as Newton dug only a few yards away. But today the cavern is so large that he can barely make out the figures in the distance, or tell what it is that they are doing. And next time he looks, they'll be even farther away.

It is not even certain that the supposed philosophical implications of modern science should be taken very seriously. Oppenheimer, for example, points out that scientific findings do not compel any particular metaphysical beliefs.²² He says of the much-discussed atomic lack of causality that it is 'of no consequence and no moment' for ordinary bodies and ordinary happenings. We are bound to neither causal nor noncausal ways of thinking when we consider the world at large.²³ At the very least, this is a

plausible view. After all, if all other quantum-mechanical effects disappear in large objects, how can we maintain that acausality somehow persists? If relativity had any effect on philosophy, it was simply to take thought on the nature of space and time out of the hands of the metaphysicians. If physics disproved Kant's assertion that Euclidean geometry was true a priori, it did so by pointing out that the subject was one that should be discussed by scientists, not philosophers. The Nineteenth-century astronomers were able to make an ass of Hegel, who had maintained on philosophical grounds that there could be only seven planets. But they did it with telescopes, not with philosophical arguments.

Newtonian science contributed, in large part, to shaping the world view of an age. Modern science, because of its relative inaccessibility, seems to be creating a void instead. If we fail to understand the majority of its discoveries, we only become aware of how much there is that we don't know. It used to be said that nature 'abhors' a vacuum. Today we would not endow nature with such anthropomorphic motives. But the human mind abhors a vacuum, as it always has. It has always demanded comprehensible explanations of the natural order. And these explanations have always been provided, by myths, philosophy, religion, and in the last few centuries, by science.

I have suggested that the question: 'What have modern science and the arts to do with one another?' should be given the answer, 'Very little.' But if the question is rephrased: 'What will modern science and the arts have to do with one another in the last third of the Twentieth Century?' I think I would have to answer: 'As modern science becomes more abstract, and as its implications continue to elude our grasp, our artists, like most of those who are not scientists, will in all likelihood turn to astrology, Eastern religion, prophecy, occult systems, and the like.'

1 Quoted in Douglas Bush, *SCIENCE AND ENGLISH POETRY: A HISTORICAL SKETCH*, Oxford University Press Paperbacks (Oxford University Press: New York, 1967), pp. 93-94.

2 Aldous Huxley, *LITERATURE AND SCIENCE* (Harper & Row: New York, 1963), p. 61.

3 C. P. Snow, *THE TWO CULTURES: AND A SECOND LOOK*, Mentor Books (New American Library: New York, 1963), pp. 20-21.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

5 S. Giedion, *SPACE, TIME AND ARCHITECTURE* (5th ed.; Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1967), p. 14.

6 Aldous Huxley, *COLLECTED ESSAYS*, Bantam Classics (Bantam Books: New York, 1960), p. 93.

7 Michael Polanyi, *PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1958).

8 René Dubos, *Science and Man's Nature* in *SCIENCE AND CULTURE*, ed. by Gerald Holton (Houghton Mifflin: Boston, 1965), pp. 254-255.

9 Lawrence Durrell, *A KEY TO MODERN BRITISH POETRY* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, Oklahoma, 1952), p. 25.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

17 Wyndham Lewis, *TIME AND WESTERN MAN* (Chatto & Windus: London, 1927), p. 10.

18 Giedion, p. 13.

19 *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

20 Albert Einstein, *Zur Elektrodynamik bewegter Körper*, *Annalen der Physik* (4), 17 (1905), p. 891.

21 *J. Robert Oppenheimer, SCIENCE AND THE COMMON UNDERSTANDING (Simon & Schuster: New York, 1954), p. 40.*

22 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

ANTON N. NYERGES

SADI'S ROBE

Like roses from the skirts of Sadi's robe
they fall forgotten at my feet
as moons
hurry around a corner of the
universe;
sun's surface
on horizons the same and the neversame;
dark shapes with faces
slip
behind God's back
to hijack a moonlet
or light an Ilium on a darkened world;
I see a stadium
of cheering hosts at a heavenly match
wave
as I hurry by;
and a cloud
turns into the
curl
of a dragon's tail around a Galaxy.
But like roses from the skirts of Sadi's robe
they caper from the apron I forgot to tie.

Cf. The Introduction to Sadi's Golestan (Rose Garden)

ANTON N. NYERGES

FIVE MINUTES

These five minutes
you have given me to play
on your lap
are still interrupted
by intervals of disfavor.
Five minutes.
It may take no more
for that leaf to turn the bend
of the stream
and still it catches on rock and branch
a hundred times.
Fifty years to five minutes,
and still I fall from your lap
crawling back the long columns
to your knees.

Cf. The Reason for Composing the Golestan (Sadi's Golestan)

ANTON N. NYERGES

ZAHHAK

Anton N. Nyerges

strange cook,
artist of the mind
and of shoulders, male and white,
surrendered to the imploring kiss.
strange Zahhak,
snake-shouldered Zahhak,
feed
the black things
the brains, the brains of our boys.
Zahhak is searching for rank
beyond the Alburz
since he was fired by the people
si
led by Ironpants
whose son's brain was cooked for the snakes.

Cf. The Shahnama of Firdausi (the story of Faridun)

HOUSE OF BREAD

It was an hour
when the Lord reveals himself to the Mountain,
and delirious atoms descend
between canopies and poles
of the shops.
The city was far away and strange,
an intersect of Nazareth and Qom
where skies of the new year
are thawing
and the crescent moon is a radiant ghost.
It was a season
that feet were restless
on echoless and hollow ways,
wandering up streets of the new world
and down tangents of the old.
I came on a small house of bread
where men and women stood
in bright darkness

silent but heart full of talk.
I stopped,
and long wrapped in saran folds of the brain
my head swam
with the breath of flour and flame.
I reeled like a drunkard,
and the elder breadmaker put out a hand.
Stumbling I fled the tangents
for avenues and confections of the new.

Cf. The Tarji-Band of Hatif, Strophe III

ANTON N. NYERGES

THE GRACEFUL HUNTER

It was a day on one narrow plane —
the sycamore
that passed the winter in beauty
was a tree nothing more,
the brown apartment house that dreamed
mysteriously into the sky
was a harsh heap of stone,
the girl on a bicycle
for whom I often paced the squares
had unsightly little hairs.
The tree, the building, the girl
were
a tree, a building, a girl.
It was a day on which the
she-bear seduced the graceful hunter.

MICHAEL MOTT

**NOW I SHALL NEVER SEE YOU WITHOUT THAT
ORANGE FLOWER AGAINST YOUR EAR**

destroy this
and when my words
all burn to nothing
you will find
the one word
never spoken
the paper flower
consumes itself
with its own color
the word unspoken
burns in those silences
that never came
between us
I shall walk back each day
to carry in my hands
a flower of flames
it is so little of the sun
to set beside you.

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DAVID RAFAEL WANG

FROM THE GRANDFATHER CYCLE

CANTO XVI — MY CUP OF TEA

As she unbuttoned her blouse
And showed the fullness of her breasts,
Smooth as the rice cakes on which I dined,
The leaves in my teacup churned round and round,
Ready to leap into song.
Her beauty was like the leaves in bloom,
Unplucked save for the connoisseur's eye,
Where heart, not hands, led the way
To the mid-spring of its charm.
Will I banish the teahouse from my mind?
I had crossed the creek in rowboat to win this charm.
Had I been unable to cup the cakes,
I would have carried them homeward
In a jug of wine.
Dark, dark loomed the teahouse,
White, white her breasts.
As fireflies in the wood she lit my trail
to gather her blossom in
the nick of time.

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DAVID RAFAEL WANG

FOUR T'ANG & SUNG POEMS

I. GALLOPING SONG

Tartar horse, tartar horse
Let loose at the edge of the Swallow Mountain
Over sand, over snow, he neighs alone;
Looks east, looks west — strange are the roads,
Strange roads, roads so strange
and the grass of the marches
level with the setting sun.

— Wei Ying-wu (late 8th century)

II. YELLOW CRANE PAVILION

The ancient has ridden away on a yellow crane
On this barren ground the pavilion remains
Once gone the yellow crane never sails back
The white clouds linger in regret.

The trees of Hanyang beckon beyond the pebbly brook
The grass flourishes by the Parakeet Islet
Where is my home as the sun descends?
The river, smoke-filled, still agitates.

— Ts'ui Hao (T'ang Dynasty)

DAVID RAFAEL WANG

III. THE FESTIVAL OF CHING MING

During Ching Ming the peaches and the plums are
exuberant, But in the deserted fields and graveyards
depression grows. The thunder and lightning awaken the
underground snakes and dragons; The grass and the bushes
on the plateau feel like cushions underfoot. A beggar once

boasted of a feast pilfered from a rich man's grave, While a knight risked burning to turn down the life of a duke. Ten thousand years hence who will know the difference? Before my eyes a stretch of crab grass has covered both.

— *Huang T'ing-chien (Sung Dynasty)*

IV. SHE (A SONG)

A flower, but not a blossom
A dew, but not a vapor
Enters late at night
Departs at the crack of dawn
Comes like a spring dream and just abrupt —
Gone like a morning cloud, not to be found.

— *Po Chu-yi (T'ang Dynasty)*

HERBERT WOODWARD MARTIN

ANTIGONE IV

He has looked enough in service at her window Ortega Y
Gasset.

She is never there to his eyes. There is the distinct
possibility

That she never was; that if there is a motive to love they
will

Never finger it among formal figures.

There is less ability to say: 'Love, there are certain
conditions

We cannot have . . .' You exhaust the heart with such a
truth.

He sits and cleans one fingernail with another —

The rain begins to destroy the possibility of leaves —

The voice in his head moves through water.

There is no regret at loving a simple music.

He searches the annoyance that burns his ear.

There are certain conditions we cannot have Ortega Y
Gasset.

This particular love never knew its dying.

HERBERT WOODWARD MARTIN

ANTIGONE V

I knew the first warmth beneath Shoko.
The soft face lies adapted now.
Woman, you have become with your hair
Clipped and teased into newer modes, Bazzar!
These fashions covet your old existence.
Have you not felt them covering your past like Helena . .

Rubinstein who allows: a natural glimpse at the faults
in the face, then covers it in tans and browns,
so you will not be whitewashed into the scenery you
move about?

Seeing you again, I converse with myself.
I accept the new relationship.
I go walking the street-blocks until I am too tired.
I fall irretrievably upon the single arm of my bed.

NICHOLAS CH. TATSIS

I LET YOUR HAIR COVER THE MASQUERADE OF SYMPATHY. AND THAT IS WHY I LET YOUR VOICE SING THE UNGRACEFUL MUSIC OF SPEECH.

I have an unerring criterion for absurdity which has been
given to me by sovereign God.

Once there was God. He used to come down to the beach,
and we talked in uncounted sounds of silence. It was a trial
of power in our lonely lives. I asked him, 'What's the
difference between my conception and an idea?' He told me,
It's like the difference between

From my sensitivity spill some drops of rain to remind the
spring that the logic's leaves have been yellow. From my
sensitivity I take now an optimist's smile — what a word —
and I write to you. I know that it's an indication of denial,
this light in the distance of the soul's horizon. But I must tell
you now that I can pray no more. There is even in the denial
one certainty. You know that. And that is why

Translated from the Greek by Lois Marshak

NICHOLAS CH. TATSIS

the spring
and the grandeur
of the world.'
Then,
I cried,
'Give me your hands.
Help me.
I am
a cripple
who is waiting
for the miracle
in the Church
of Castration.
Life is barren.
My mind
doesn't work.'
He laughed at me
and said,
'The spirit
doesn't bloom
at the bottom
of a dead sea.
The spirit
doesn't bloom
in sterility.
So, isolate
your being
and do not
accept the visit
of the happy time.'
And then I wanted
to paint big,
really big suns
like my friend,

Vincent Van Gogh.
But I didn't know
how to paint
the face of tragedy.
From this torment
the poetry was born —
like the illusion
that comes from love.
A moment
of poetry
is a moment
of love.
A moment of creation
is a moment
of death.
On this thought
I erect
the cross
of nonexistence,
and I write,
write, write . . .

KONSTANTINOS LARDAS

PASSAGES

How
on the risen
on the rise of road
this coupled town, by hills,
seems a familiar land
and lotus-gloried ours
seems ours for the plucking
to eat it, take it, all;
except
it's dawning now
and opens wide its mouth
its luminosity of lips

washed looming in blue
as if to eat us up
and nimbose street lamps
gloom weakly to a yellow
to a quitting
as if not circe rives;
but
that a siren
that the sirens call
all meekly, catapulting, come
surrender to devourings
to this gorging town
this foreign land
this tauest, tauest world.

KONSTANTINOS LARDAS

IMPEDIMENTA

Fisted, the coins, and not one coin to choose.
Fist, soldered to initial fist, firing a naked cup,
and beggings of him thus to plunge his fingers to this
living urn to take the proper toll.
But he, uncomprehending, of some fearful shame, or
frightful,
as if the plague had stamped these coins, waits to my
givings
of these things, waits to the sudden tearings to the
eyes,
not brooches, but the stiff fingers first, their reachings,
and, to grasp, and inaccessible, across the touchings, to
the
streamings, to the streaming blood, where no blood
flows, but
veilings, of the eyes, this vision, and the cries, the calm,
the
otherworldliness, and still, in silence fall the, falls the,
rain.

How did I see to hail this bus to stop? How in the mud
defilement?
How splattered by the winds? How do I yet see giant
wipers bat-winged brush the panes, where ever
falls the rain? To be thus blind,
to measure out the loss, to stand thus, painless,
sudden-trapped,
delayed, these bags abandoned to my sides, and to the
outer steps,
where no incoming comes, to hold the coins to my
unseeing eyes,
and to remember what the single, what the coins were
like, to hold it,
see it, in the mind's not eye, but clearer, and to see
them in the
brighter, in the truer, the remembering heart. This
driver and these
angry other men, who would my brothers be. Impaled to
them and to the
exit light that redly burns, and to the dimly, steps, and
fallen out,
that I be cast, or that myself down-stomp. And just as
quickly,
with such terror, to command, out of such blindnesses,
the burstings-forth of coins, their spillages, to
earth, cascadiancies, and joys,
and open-fingered hands, the words begotten and
begetting words,
the loosening, of hearts, the openings, of eyes.

ALEXANDER KUO

**IN MEMORIAM, LONG AFTER A WALK IN AN
ARBORETUM FOR ALEXIS**

When you were
young your mother, when
I was young, once

my mother took me
to a hothouse full
of exotic flowers. They
happen only once
she told me.
I move my life
around this arboretum
now, an eccentric whore
walking out
my circle, my feet
bound, step by step.
Sometimes I sit
huddled in a corner
making crazy lines
on a yellow pad
by no sleight of
the imagination, but remembering
not to remember
those flowers and their hanging
symmetry. I walk with
them, those strange flowers

ALEXANDER KUO

barely bound in wild
paint, in an action
all my own — but
they do not serve
after walk, walk after.
I want to break
the continuum and move
out to wild fields
just once, but there is
no end to turn
aside, not even this —
sucking and crippling
each hanging action
to hang alone and be
purged by it, a momentary
touching of the redemptive
only to be tossed
aside later, a repulsive
confession slashed by a hand
my wrist won't recognize.

TREVOR H. CASTLE

A TEAR

Into a sultry frample's
Ear I send my sandman
with
A frozen tear rolling
around
An urn. And entering
Into her heart with my
heart
Reflecting from his eyes,
he
Kneels before this dream-queen's throne
And offers her my rich-
est

Gift. But she laughs and
tells him
To return to me as she'll
Only tell me what I wish
To hear if I'll fill this
urn
With golden coins instead
of
Sending her this useless
tear.

TREVOR H. CASTLE

THIS VULTURE WILL FLY

Upon a vulture's beak
Spins my avaricious
neighbour's
Eye, while around its
talons
Leap his feet since
his heart's a
Golden feathered bird
that cannot
Fly.
And, suddenly, as
The vulture swallows
his
Wingless bird, the feet
arise and
Join this eye. . . . until
both slide
Between its beak, and
as this
Vulture fly.

NANCY WESTERFIELD

DWARF LUNAR

The dwarf light, the white lunar
Burning train's-safe at the tunnel's mouth,
Signals summer's end, green's end, at the way in;
Warns winter's black, walls' drip, all the way through.
The green catkin-carpeted ties under poplars
Sharpen to skate-blade rails riding crunches of green
glass
To a starpoint of light.
Arches of coalscars and smokestars
Maw you in from the silk and pins of wild blackberries,
To a sad tanbark ditchness of waters pooled trackside,
Floating, uncurling the trefoil leaves
Like souls' barques. The dwarf lunar
Turns the hooded eye outward.
In a longhouse of darks, and creosotes,
And stealthy urinations, step styx by styx
Under tiers of hieroglyphed stones
For the classes of '79, '86, '01,
With their dead Latin epigrams.
In so little light to mine memories by,
You wonder by what light they chiseled.
Were there lunars at intervals? switch-lamps?
Lovers' moons strung up like lanterns?
Spirit of seventy-nine, who loved Effie L.,
Et semper amator, in a dating by carbon,
Has passed with the steam locomotive.

NANCY WESTERFIELD

Diesel grinds leaningly in from your starting-point,
Gasses you, rounds out, blinks the lunar.
Leaves float, souls float or sing overhead like wires,
Are wires, that choir onto poles at the tunnel's end,
Where the blue glass tumblers bubble again on the
crossarms.

Yard limits: dwarfs burning ghoulish-green
For homesafe at siding among switch-blade rails;
You look suddenly up some back village street
Into summer, catalpa shade, serene lifted sky in leaf;
While behind you, at the orifice,
The easy grade down to Avernus,
The dwarf lunar snatches forty winks.

DOROTHY ELLIN FLAX

WINDWARD TO GOD

So now I cling to remnants of myself
Selvages stripped all raveling
The worst of it this growing old
The heart limps you are told
Climb no more mountains.
Take the stairs slowly.
Never again that zestful lunge
Upstairs to plunge
Into a dress for galas. Then,
Heels castanetting down again,
Into a throttled car.
Never again.
Never again to reach
Hand over rock-scraped hand
To the last jut above the clouds, and stand
Windward to God.

DOROTHY ELLIN FLAX

COLOSSI

RECALLING NORMAN THOMAS

A gentle, trimly monumental
Giraffe munching tree tops
Performs a useful pruning.
He crops an ancient branch
To green ebullience —
Crowns of bourgeons.
A flat bark beetle slips
Into a bark crevice
And gnaws a rut.
Split-inch ants follow.
They suck the heartsap
And set up cancerous colonies.
Men with grub-sucked brains
Rut their festering poison
To a man's green heart —
Their own, their fellows.
Colossi probe out cancerous decay,
Prune the ancient overbearing —
Multiply ebullience —
Everywhere crowns of bourgeons

CAROLYN WOLFE

WILDERNESS GATE

Something moves only wind in the forest.
At the door my hand almost touches the ice.
My return is a mirror which remembers,
Remembers grey walls,
dream spaces.
I had forgotten,
I know this place.
Somewhere outside the sound of a river breaks
And recedes. Here, in the still and cold room
My hands unfold,
unfolding years,
Steps leading here. Walls imprint my body,
New leaves in the earth,
myself four corners now.

CARL BOURLAND

SPLIT ROCK — OLD SEA

She pulled me, and sang like granite blocks
Opened by the hot cracks of air, harsh
And thorny. No, you will not burn your feet.
My eyes wired by the iron bush,
All desert leaves are tough, she pulled me,
While salt grows on the stems, tooth breaking,
 unsucked,
And rows like bushed tents growths
Wider pulled with granite blocks,
Shells piled with a clatter
Where the cocks once crawled:
Make it with a thorn
Send it on a snake
Read it on an eighteyed thorn
Love me, love not
On a swept and grassless pond.

ANN BARKER SHAMES

YELLOW

Fog comes.
Dew seeps.
Leaf springs turgid from the stalk.
Bud of buttercup strains rotund.
Petals peel back
till the buttercup shouts,
cries, sings, chants yellow
which not even the sun echoes
nor can cadmium
or chromium repeat
when a brush removed from field
tries to recall.
At dream-edge a fevered brain
turns eyelids buttercups,
dazzling bells that blare
fortissimo notes of
yellow, yellow.
The sweating past,
petals incline, strain backward
to overturn the cup.
A petal falls. A petal falls.
The dry season is come,
the field turned dust
and yellow remembered.

PHILIP HAMMIAL

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE GLORY OF HEROD

Steven Osterlund

Herod! your footprints,
why are they here
on Pharaoh's soil? Shall flesh
twist on a nail? Have clocks
lost their way? Shall clothing
be put on a tree? Who'll gamble

for leaves? Are
you naked? Can cloth
hear this poem? Can you
hear this ice? Will wood
hear this flesh, the time
of its teeth, the taste
of its sex, the touch
of its feet like yours
growing hard
among sheep? — through turnstiles, why
do they bleat? Listen —
your walking
like a hammering, like
the world's first sound. The world
on Christmas Eve. At twelve o'clock
there is precisely
nothing to touch.

THE BLUE TRUNK

A whale head
— frightening brass
warning jaws: Carry me out
of here, landlubber
I'll crunch your bones —
moved in; there it sat
studying me
and eating soft things
which is odd: slips, stockings
panties, skirts, handkerchiefs
nightgowns
I watched from the corner
of my face, scared stiff
Too late I'm a real sailor
the head is gone
I smell of fish
I have no shoes

I have a creepy scar on my cheek
Somehow the last junk in the sea
on a dead man's chest
(My love I love you; with my
Spring sunglasses I deny airplanes

CHRISTOPHER BURSK

SATURDAY NIGHT

high on speed,
ganging up in back alleys
in their black leather jackets
and gunning down the main drag,
hells angels, the winds
play chicken, sideswiping trash cans,
revving below my window;
I cower at their catcalls,
surprised, here, naked on my sheets
with that queer, my groin,
dark lover fawning all over me,
leaving me sleepless;
all night, winds hone stilettos on my sidewalk.

T. L. KRYSS

STANDING AT A SUITCASE IN NOVEMBER

the hands sift down through my eyes
like land settling invisibly over dead lakes
they are not my hands
silent birds fly over
searching for hollows to sleep
they are called autumn in the countries
of the living
but here they are called nothing
there is no one to call them
no one watches them
they are like a dark shoulder
the hands are gone
the hands are hanging in my eyes
in a room above me
the soul of a man is pinned like a butterfly
to the handle of a suitcase
his body drifting down through his breath
like a feather

T. L. KRYSS

SOME BRASS RING IN THE SKY I ALWAYS MISS

the clouds fall
like a man pulling his fist
through a black glove
and the people disappear into
glass doors
bars
fish tanks
themselves — the cigaret goes out
in my lips —
the traffic lights become
the ticking noise at the end
of a conductor's wand.
a cloud is crying at my foot
like an old wedding dress
laid out on the sidewalk
to die

HANS JUERGENSEN

CHROMA

they converge merging
contiguous flux darkening
eye-moods soddening cells
tissues pinching at
the throat: green for an
unstirred suburb blue
for the conceit of my depth
yellow clawing clamping nerves
with ambiguities red
most metaphoric hue not today
saying anything to me having
rivered too universally
across the globe
i follow these interpolations
as they crawl into one another
uneven like acreages retina-sipped
from pressurized cabins though
mellowed to sienna and
magenta geometry quite silent:
more eternal (yet!) than
destruction

GAYLE COMPTON

ON A THEME OF AFTERDARK

Glands are an alien thing, the darkness
beneath another skirt, dwarfed to the custom
of glass-wood canes, asking pennies.
Pain is hardly the word, like the insect
smashed between my fingers when I said
Another cup of coffee goes good on a day like
this.
Neon bars break profligate on the mind;
driven by too many unveilings, perfumed girls
deny toilet paper between walls that say
Up Yours Too!

Love is the smell of things.
Milked dry as leather curled in a twelve o'clock
sun
she crosses streets, wondering why the grim
drivers curse little black cigars,
why wives laugh pushing grocery carts,
the odor of green stems familiar in some park
with trees, lemonade . . . and young men walking brisk
under Sunday umbrellas.
Touchings are not answers either,
still I lie rigid hurting her with my finger.

CRAIG STERRY

SUSAN

You came every afternoon to the tracks
that ran by your house close as
any street, to wave to the men
in the humped-back caboose
sliding east into midnight
like a coal car going down a mine.
And they always waved back
leaving you with an orange balloon of sun
tied to your wrist by string
which you pulled
down slowly.

CRAIG STERRY

LEAVING JIM CREEK

We fled like vandals.
Our car, gluttoned with the goods,
dragged its belly down miles of timber road
to the cold asphalt.
Behind us the sun dug into the mountains
spraying the edges with light.
Your face caught the glow, bloated
as though you watched a building burn.
In minutes the dark clung to our backs
and we sagged toward the city
limp as empty pockets.

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IRENE SCHRAM

WAKING UP

Grass smell in the air. I tramp over the cropped green field, leading the brown horse, his lips pulled back over tobacco-stained teeth. His teeth are very large and square and he keeps his lips bared back over them. His tongue is as large as a whole loaf of bread and has the texture of dough, the shape of a spoon, the redness of creamed tomato soup. He is a good horse, though old-boned and loosely knit together, a bit used and worn but a good horse, with quite a concave back from his hard years of the saddle. His mane is dark—and his coat pale-brown, his eyes large, and he has his lips pulled back over the square yellow teeth in a communicative way as he lopes loosely around the field, rather laughing, and I leading him. The grass is short, the field tended. The horse's dark-brown adequate tail hangs nicely behind him while his mouth accepts gulps of the green air (the air near the field having adopted its color) happily and hungrily as I walk him around the green field. Palmer with a big car brought me here.

He came for me in his huge car, Palmer with his lean hound's face, his lithe and lean and little hands and hound's breath. It was a quick trip from the city to the field in his fast machine. He showed me the horse when we got here, and the horse looked gentle-mild in the bright sunlight, as he stood beside the long incredible car.

The field was glowing gold in the sunlight, seas of sunlight filling the field and the grass twitching and jewelizing in the brightness. It was a large field and entirely coated with sun. There was no movement, and there were only the bone-bare essentials of the scene, Palmer, The horse, The field, The grass, The Rabbi, as we stepped in slow motion out of the car and entered the scene.

Rabbi Ash waited in the field all dressed in black: black shoes, socks, pants, belt, black jacket over white-collared black clergyman's shirt, the white collar blazing in all this darkness. Over the black jacket a black coat. Rabbi Ash is squat, square, heavy, his skin close to yellow, eyes dull ochre, and his thin hair faded and nearly uncolored. His features are small.

IRENE SCHRAM

his eyes, ears, nose, but with large jowls. Small hands, small feet. He waited in the field, in one corner of the field, standing still.

TOSSING IN THE BED

I don't understand why Rabbi Ash is here. I am walking the whole circumference of the field, leading my horse. Palmer is resting, limp and exhausted. I am in a state of sexual arousal, a close hot tightness tingling my loin-thighs.

she rolls over in bed, her thighs alive. she shares the bed with a man and all eyes closed she moves, rolls to him and rubs on him. she mouths and bites his shoulder wherever there is soft. & rolls, rubs,

Rabbi Ash stands black in the greengrass field, his feet covered with thickbristling sweetsmelling new blades of grass, which stand, each of them, upright and strong and young and affectionate with the moist and living soil. There's a relationship of loving between grass and earth to note and to learn from. There's a sound the grass makes when it shuck-pops suction erupting from the black-brown wetmoist livingalive loving-fucking soil into the air and the sunlight. The grass creeps and bristles surrounding his black shoes as Rabbi Ash stands on the side of the field, around which gently I am leading my old horse.

We walk.

I am exhausted. Each bone and muscle in my body dips with exhaustion but I don't lie down. I am exhausted but want to keep walking. Palmer's thin body can take no more in his cream and brown dhobi of woven string. He has collapsed on the grass, shapeless, heaped and steaming in the sun.

There is a roadstand off in the near-distance, men lounging around it and crates to put the empty bottles in. Palmer, in the sun, sweating, says he is going to go have a beer. He does not invite me to come. We stand in a group, Palmer, the horse and I to one side of him, I holding the horse's harness, and the horse standing patiently beside me. He's going

IRENE SCHRAM

for beer but I cannot have anything, I must stay here to pace my horse around. But I am too hot, and though the sun is good I must have some shade. There is shade at the restaurant where Palmer is going. I complain of the sun, and he holds his hand out to point a direction, where I look and see shade. There is a patch of shade, circular, nearly midfield, though nothing is there to make it. It's a wonder what is making the shade.

It is just what I need. I will go to the shade and stay within it, and walk the horse, who loves the sun, around, he in the sun and I in the shade, the leather harness between us, running from my hand to his neck and connecting us.

The horse and I walk to the shade; Palmer goes off to the near-distant restaurant; and Rabbi Ash stands far off in the sun, in the field, in his black garments and green growing round his feet.

it must be the moving of the horse. it must be the
horse, loping, rolling his back, something, is it the
man, him, his hand, as he is coming awake right
beside her

Rabbi Ash is a small man, standing in the field.

He has followed me from my birth to here and now. He came to my mother's house when I lived there and now he's bought a ticket and followed me here. I don't know how he did it, he has no money. His black clothing is old and his shoes dull and worn.

— What do you want, I ask him. I stand near him holding the horse, my friend, beside me. — You came for the contribution, is that it?

— Yes, he smiles inwardly with his little smile, — we need money.

I am amazed and impressed with his perseverance in following me here, to the field. Buying the ticket. Getting the money to buy it and then buying the ticket to get here, and finding where I was. He is old, too, he was the Rabbi before I was born, coming to our house, climbing the stoop, his black coat brushing his calves. His coat was weighted with lead in the hem to tire him, and he came to collect the money, pinching in his little mouth, sliding his brown eyes aside, holding his hands together, and scraping up the stoop in the rundown black little shoes. He stood in my mother's living room and hurt my baby cheeks with his pinching

IRENE SCHRAM

fingers. — Let me see the child smile, he said and my mother covered her face with her hands. I caught my own eye in the mirror of the serving table, which overlooked the dining room table. All the red mahogany smelled of furniture polish and the chair legs had pools of oil in their carvings, the mirror reflected me.

— Why is this child always serious, said Rabbi Ash. His little black-covered body swelled against his coat as he bowed for the money. A button burst off, and he groaned to straighten up. Mother had the money ready in an envelope. He bobbed like a chicken, slid like a snake out the door.

Now he stands there and smiles the little smile at me.

— The grass is growing up around your shoe! The little shoots surround your black shoe, I tell him.

— I came so far to see you, he smiles, the sunlight surrounding him, he standing in the sunlight and I in the round patch of shadow with my horse beside me. — Do you have a donation for the Synagogue? says the smile. — We have to have the contribution from everyone.

he is making love to her on top of the covers, as her
body responds from her sleep. their bodies roll and
bite on top of the covers. 'oh baby,' he says, 'hot
baby,' his hand scooping her,

— Why don't you lie down on the grass in the shade, I say to him, — you can't stand there dressed in black in that kind of sunlight.

his hand scooping her,

Rabbi Ash reaches in his overcoat pocket to find an envelope in it. A letter from my mother. — Is she dead, I ask him. He shakes his head no and stands, in black, in green, in firesun, waiting for the contribution he's come to get, his hand held out like a flower.

he loves her on top of the covers of their bed, his hands

IRENE SCHRAM

*reaching inside her, his teeth
biting her and his cock swelling,
in the dark and with her
body biting back*

—Dear Ruby, the letter says in the green field. Mother hates the sun. Father drives away every night. The back door slams when he goes. —Dear Ruby, I . . . The horse stands in the sunlight. Mother is old, menopause, migraine, her reading the local paper.

Rabbi Ash's black habit begins turning green in the sun, the grass is growing up his legs for he stands so still, moss is starting on his back and algae covers his cheeks, his skin is

becoming vestigial, rare, a trace, a sign left by something lost, perished, which no longer exists, a small thing of the past which will be no more,

Dear Ruby,

I am reminiscing tonight. Remember when you were little and you wore white gloves going out with us? Daddy took you into the city and you looked so nice, he was so proud of you. You held onto the bannister in the station and got your gloves black, though Dad told you not to touch anything. He loved you. Remember how he chased you all around the house after your bath, both of you screaming with laughter? Your uncles used to love that. Now they are in their eighties and both going blind.

Remember how you and Palmer were so close and always played together? He loved to play house with you, he taught you your letters, counting, colors. When you were thirteen and sixteen you did everything together, had the same friends, we were all such a happy family. Remember once you were so mad at Dad you said you wished you didn't love him so much so that you could hate him!

You never talked to us after you got to be a teenager, and we were so close when you were a little girl. We always thought it was just growing up, but you have never matured.

Ruby, where has all that love and closeness gone? We tried not to overprotect you but maybe the world was too rough for you anyway. What happened to you in the city? Did you have a nervous breakdown? Were you on drugs? Why were you kept in the hospital?

I WAS INSANE, she starts up and cries in the night, he is loving her, he may swallow her

Why did you give up a good job, why don't you want to work? The

IRENE SCHRAM

paper says maturity is meeting responsibility and making peace with things we can't change. You better be honest with yourself, Ruby, you've got to grow up.

It soon may be time to ride the horse and I am looking for a saddle, a bridle, a harness, a blanket. I wish to ride the horse! He is not walking around the shadow circle now, he stands still listening to the voice the letter has brought into the field and which is filling our air,

Palmer has matured but you never have. What is the matter? Why do you write us mean letters and never come home? Has everything simply piled up on you until you don't know which way to turn?

We would have helped you when you needed it but you were beyond our help. You've always been better than everyone else but when you need something you come fast enough, don't you, Ruby.

We are here home, getting older, but we don't stop loving you, if you would only do right there could be a tie of love between us, if you would grow up and come home. If you don't you will never hear from us again.

Lovingly, Mother.

The sun is hurting the Rabbi now, for he is elderly and cannot take the strong light. It is clear he would like to move but the green has rooted him. Now he belongs to the soil and closely can he witness the love of the grass for the earth. Green creeps beyond his knees, and his hand, held out to me for the contribution, is tied now to the earth by a slim green root . . .

He'll never move again.

Mother's letter is sprouting green buds. It is in a growing line of forsythia, her favorite flower. Soon it will be all yellow. It can't speak any more, it is choked with roots, leaves, as the greengrass field is preparing to leap with flowers . . .

In my patch of shade I am walking round and round, the brown horse beside me, loving friend. The letter is over, the Rabbi is grown to the grass with his waiting as at last his useless black is nearly gone now inside the green grown around him. The cup of his waiting hand is the first flower showing, the black gone, the green grown. Mother's letter on the grass is gone though I remember her, walking in the sun, her head wrinkled and folded as another of her headaches descends to make her old.

I mount the horse in the beautiful sunfield.

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All this morning I have walked him around until he knows me, walking him, his dusty hide sweating in the good sun. The brown horse knows me now, his lips pull back over the yellowed teeth in a friendly way.

he is loving her,

I mount the horse. Gently we trot and mildly we turn around and around the field, in the hot sun, in summer. Soon we gallop wildly, jumping new patches of flower, madly fastly around the field, circling the shadow, keeping to the sun. I grip the old horse with my thighs to hang on.

'aaahh,' she moans underneath him as he slams into her skin

Now where is Palmer? I search the field from high on my horse and cannot see him. He should return from the restaurant. As I ride my horse his hot coat is melting to my thigh, there is Palmer in the middle distance, approaching, skinny, as much dimension to Palmer as to the shadow. He's had his beer,

she starts up and waking she
yells as he slams inside her,
'what, honey, baby, what you
DOING TO ME?'

Palmer walks over the field toward us

hard-moving and rocking,

as if he owns us. But the horse and I ignore him. There is
too much happening for Palmer to worry us. There is too
much work in rolling over the deep of the field, and we leave
him standing, my horse gallops off and jumps the
from high up in the air down
into her he smacks
convulsions of flowers

THE ALPHABET OF MATHEMATICS

The post office opened its doors at 9:00 a.m. and closed them at 4:45. Located on the basement level of the Empire State Building, a sense of official drabness hung in the air. Ball point pens were chained to writing tables; criminals' mug shots were posted on walls, and clerks' faces appeared from behind barred windows. What little relief there was came from brightly colored recruiting posters. Mr. Long, the foreman, whispered an inspector had been nosing around. The clerks grumbled. Unreasonable fear went through Mott; his fingers trembled. While it was understandable that an inspector's presence might make a clerk uncomfortable, there was nothing especially unusual in an inspector's nosing around. Why was he so frightened, Mott wondered. He was sure he'd done nothing wrong. Later, Mott cut his coffee break short; something was compelling him to balance. He'd been on the job more than thirty years and this was the first time he'd ever suffered that urge. When the foreman came over at 3:30 wanting to know why his window was still closed, the clerk lied and said a customer had come back complaining she'd been shortchanged, he had no choice, he had to balance. Long shook his head in disgust. Mott was the best window man here. 'Dealing with the public's the hardest job in the world,' Long said. Mott nodded. Long was new. Foremen became foremen in the post office because of political pull. After clerks worked their way to the position of foreman, particularly while they were still greenhorns, they tended to side with the customer: the customer's right, don't argue with the customer, don't offend the customer. . . . Ordinarily the clerk would have had to admit that Long was okay, but not this time; this time he was disconcerted. He wasn't balancing out. Sitting in a cage,

thin and bald, with the window closed, on what looked like a dunce's stool, hunched over the counter, touching the tip of his sharpened lead pencil with his tongue as he checked off the figures on his balance sheet, Mott added things up. 'Take you off the window for fifteen minutes and look what happens,' Long said, 'the lines are out the street.' Mott didn't respond. A pat on the back from a boss was usually followed by a knife in the back. He could handle as many customers as any two other clerks. Empire State was a Class A station; firms were dealt with that purchased hundreds of dollars of stamps daily; a clerk might

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Paul Friedman

take in thousands of dollars a day. That was responsibility. Confidence was necessary. The minute a window man lost his confidence, Mott believed, he was through.

When clerks were short they often asked Mott to check their balance. That was a mark of the respect they had for his ability. To a certain extent all the clerks in the place depended on him.

Mott didn't lord his ability over other clerks; soon enough some of them would be his superior. Ability didn't matter. Not in the post office. Payoff did, drag did, who you knew — those things mattered. Anyone could advance.

It wasn't adding up. He wasn't going to balance. Mott knew it, he was sure of it.

He'd wanted a steady day tour and he'd paid off, once. That had been years back when he'd been on around the clock. Joining the local Democratic club, plus a small donation, got him an appointment with Mr. Hall, one of the assistant postmasters in Manhattan, and when he got to Hall's office Hall ushered him in and said, Mr. Cooley said you'd be coming over, he spoke very highly of you. The tour sold for two hundred dollars.

He wasn't ashamed. You had to be a realist to get along in this world and if you wanted a day tour. . . . Working all hours of the night had been a strain. . . . But having to get involved with graft and corruption, petty as it was — it bothered him. It was dirty. He was confident that he could maintain his standard of living as a clerk; if he had to dirty his hands he would but he wasn't going to grovel in dirt for a promotion that wasn't necessary — so he stayed a clerk, he'd keep his hands clean.

‘Balancing?’ Long asked.

‘It’s off,’ Mott said, ‘the damn thing’s off.’

Some people explained Mott’s ability by saying, He’s an experienced clerk. The post office was Mott’s life. Mott could let his eyes roam over the figures on a clerk’s balance sheet and catch mistakes others would never spot. These mistakes were not of the simple addition or subtraction variety, the clerks themselves would catch those; rather, they had to do with digits that appeared to be what they weren’t. Balance sheets were full of hastily scrawled easily misread numbers. Seven might seem one if it wasn’t hooked firmly enough on top and two could be seven if there wasn’t much of a bottom hook. With an extra curve to its bottom line two appeared as three and how many times was three taken for eight. That mistake was classic. Mott could see through the scribbling to the actual number. What an unusual field, he sometimes thought, to have talent in

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—post-office clerking.

Now it all seemed useless.

When clerks hung up because Congress voted down a pay raise, when men stayed home because of a cold or bad weather, Mott would show. He’d never miss. Why, they’d ask. It made no sense. He knew that. He didn’t dispute that. He said it was out of loyalty to the job and when clerks asked how he could have loyalty to this civil service job he couldn’t give an adequate explanation. His fellow clerks resented him.

This was a bitter pill. He took pride in his ability, it was all he had. Yet, in the final analysis, what had it come to? Routes, rates, systems, zones: he knew all that. He did know it all.

Mott was sure the man standing in the back with his boss was an inspector and the inspector was there for him. Without confidence you’re through, he was thinking. He watched them. I don’t balance. He saw the boss point. The

inspector seemed a man of preserved middle age and he held himself well. Mott felt a degree of relief watching him approach with his stomach muscles tensing to hold his belly in; he entered the cubicle. 'Mr. Mott?'

'Yes.'

'I've been talking with your foreman, Mr. Long.'

Mott waited.

'Do you carry counterfeit insurance?' the inspector asked.

Mott hesitated a moment, surprised. 'I used to but not any more.'

'Why is that?' the inspector asked, smiling—he was a big man. 'Do you think there are no more counterfeiters around?'

It was not widely known that clerks were responsible for the worthless money they took in. That was the system: each man was personally accountable.

'No. I know there are counterfeiters operating but I can spot a bad bill.'

'Are you sure?'

'Sure enough to let my insurance lapse.' Mott spoke not with confidence but from habit. He rubbed his fingers together nervously. His fingers were full of razor-thin cuts; these cuts were black, dirt that had wormed its way under the skin. This was unavoidable, an occupational hazard: handling sharp new paper money caused it.

'You don't make mistakes, is that it?' the inspector asked, smiling.

Mott's eyes dropped to his yellow balance sheet, to the cut and dirty

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fingers that held it.

‘Everything all right, inspector?’ Mr. Long called as he came close to the cage.

‘Of course,’ the inspector said, ‘of course.’

Long waved and smiled and walked on. That momentarily infuriated Mott—the wave, Long’s cheery voice, Long’s position, the way Long had avoided his eyes.

‘Your boss,’ the inspector was saying, ‘tells me you aren’t balancing out.’

Mott nodded and stared down at the floor.

‘Did you check your drawer to make sure no bills are stuck way in the back?’

‘Yes.’

‘Did you check your sheets of stamps to see none of them are stuck together?’

‘Yes.’

‘It’s been humid lately.’

‘I know. I checked. Nothing’s stuck together.’

‘Okay, I’ll go over your balance one last time; after all, we want to be sure. Every once in a while you hear about a body arriving at a morgue after it’s been pronounced dead and then someone notices a heartbeat: let’s be absolutely sure—okay, Mott?’

If he’d let his stomach out he could be Santa Claus, Mott thought. The world was narrowing in. There seemed to be nothing outside, no 34th Street, no Macy’s, no crowds rushing to Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens.

‘Figures don’t lie, but I can’t see where I went wrong,’ Mott said.

‘Why don’t you wait in the back till I’m through.’

The inspector's eyebrows were almost colorless. Mott hadn't noticed that before. There was a wide mouth; his lips made a slit in his face. They were seated at a plain wooden table in back; neither had spoken.

'How did you know about my insurance?' Mott finally asked.

'We have ways of knowing.'

There was silence.

'When I worked at the G.P.O. years ago there was spying over there. They actually had peepholes in the ceiling to spy on the clerks,' Mott said.

'You're always being watched.'

'Always?'

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'Didn't you know that? What made you think you'd ever escape that,

or that you should?'

'You mean there's the same thing here at Empire?'

'You want privacy, is that it? Like no one checking to see if you can

balance out?'

Mott started to say something.

'Don't give me that. What makes you think you would have ever found

out you don't balance if you hadn't thought we'd come? You did know

we were coming, didn't you?'

'We, who's this we? I only see you.'

'Okay, me. You know, Mott, what religion calls evil I call guilt.'

Mott hesitated. 'I'm not religious,' he finally said.

'Drop it,' the inspector said. 'Do you play chess?'

'No, I don't play chess.'

'Me neither. My name's Mr. Z — perhaps you've heard of me? Some-

times people get my name confused and call me Mr. 2. 2
is easily con-

fused with Z.'

'I don't see how.'

'There's room for confusion.'

'They don't sound alike.'

'Exactly,' the inspector smiled. He spoke slowly. 'That's
the point.'

'That's the point — I don't follow. What are you driving
at?'

'Not me, Mr. Mott — you. What are you driving at?'

With those words, spoken slowly and clearly, and with his
steady gaze,

it was as if the inspector forced Mott to back away.

'A minute ago were you trying to say I feel guilty about
something?'

The inspector shrugged.

'Were you?'

The inspector stayed silent.

'If you don't play chess why did you ask if I do?'

'I didn't mean to imply that I wanted to play a game. I'm
sorry if my

question confused you.'

'It didn't confuse me,' Mott said, 'I . . .' He searched for a
word.

' . . . can't you just talk straight and stop all this damn
doubletalk.'

'It's been my experience,' the inspector said, 'that whether
or not a

man plays chess tells you something about the man.'

'What?'

'That depends on the man.'

'Then where the hell's the chess come into it?'

PAUL FRIEDMAN

‘Don’t get yourself worked up. Control yourself. If I’d known the question was going to upset you I never would have asked it. Look, I’m not saying it’s a bad thing not to play chess. I don’t play chess either.’

‘Oh, you don’t play chess either. Because you don’t, I suppose it’s okay that I don’t. Who says I’m flattered to be compared to you? What an ego.’

‘Don’t kid yourself, you’re not like me.’

Mott stared at the inspector. ‘This is unbelievable. I might have some guilt—who doesn’t? But you, you’re a goddam egomaniac. You know that, Z or Too or whatever it is you’re called?’

‘That’s it, good boy, here it comes. Come on, get it all out of your system,’ the inspector said.

A sudden look of surprise covered Mott’s face.

A clamor from outside made its way in. It was a violent noise, a jackhammer drilling in the street, an emergency repair; it was dark out now. Mott felt better now.

‘Say,’ Mott said, ‘how’s a guy become an inspector?’

‘Oh,’ the inspector said, ‘it’s just like anything else.’

‘Yeah,’ Mott answered, ‘I suppose. You know I used to work around the clock and it cost me two hundred bucks to get transferred to a steady day tour. Everything’s either politics or payoff.’ He was thinking, I don’t balance. I’m through. There was no more fear. ‘Do you agree with that?’

The inspector didn’t answer. ‘I’m not here to tell you anything you don’t already know, or anything you haven’t always known for that matter. I don’t have any surprises, there are no rabbits to pull out of the hat. Not everything’s confusing. This is clear. It’s all over. And you don’t balance.’

Mott nodded. The inspection was over. There had been mistakes. It didn’t balance. There was no fear. He heard the jackhammer. The post office was deserted. The boss had locked up and slipped out, even the porter was gone. He was

alone.

There was a leak in one of the underground pipes but it would all be taken care of; repairs were underway. Work would be carried on at night and the city could sleep; and the next day the post office would be open as usual; at most, the lines would be unusually long.

EXCERPT FROM THE CONTORTIONIST

As this girl turned to me the wind came up again and blew her veil over her mouth. Her words seemed to come from a cave covered by a waterfall. I think I heard 'Irene' as she pointed to herself. I saw the words but I couldn't hear them.

My son was polishing a headlight chrome rim with steady strokes and paid no attention whether I stayed or went. He noticed the girl and probably knew her, or how else would he have known exactly where to take me—to this entrance, this parking lot, this school? I surely knew nothing of the place. There are thousands of such schools in the city, some of them disguised from the outside as office buildings, gasoline stations, restaurants—as with the famous nunneries in Mexico, hidden in the bowels of simple-looking structures.

'Don't you care where I'm going?' I querulously asked the son. 'Why don't you look so that you can come after me when it's time? I'll be taken away as usual and god knows where I'll be put.'

I addressed the boy to gain time. The woman's veil puffed in and out of her mouth like the tide between Scylla and Charybdis, although she seemed harmless enough on the whole, probably only suffering from asthma brought on by the wind, which must have had considerable dust in it, taking into consideration the state of the campus: deplorable. Holes everywhere, like a bombardment, with skeletons of new buildings and the skins of old buildings just torn down. Rather too close an analogy between my unconcerned son, his headlight, and me being led away by just anybody who happened to be handy.

Temporary signs in a language I couldn't understand sloped everywhere, pointing it seems contradictorily. One after another they leaned dangerously and fell with crackling

noises into the wet muddy clay soil. I even slipped and slid as I stood, trying to muster my voice over the wind. I don't think the boy heard me, or he purposely continued his work anyway. I picked up a piece of mud, hurled it at him, and lost my balance at the same time. He was instantly at my side and steadied me just before my head could hit a rock jutting out nakedly from the soil. It seemed to be the cornerstone of some ancient edifice. I was ashamed and mumbled my apologies, but he was already back carefully flaking mud from the tire rim where I had accurately although accidentally thrown it. He waved at me, hopped over the door, threw the gears into reverse and spun the car back toward the automatic gate.

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'Hey, wait,' I cried. I ran forward a bit, but I felt the hand of the woman at my shoulder and heard her stentorian breathing through the veil.

'Come on,' Irene said cheerfully, 'it's not far.' She threw the veil off her face and drew it in a brisk knot around her hair. 'Thank god I can stop practicing for now. Have you ever tried to breathe through one nostril? With a cold? What stinking lousy weather for a reception. We had things so nice for you when all this came up.' She waved her arm and crinkled her mouth. She was certainly a friendly open-looking creature.

'What place am I in?' I asked.

'You're in the lousiest parking lot of all, temporary unpaved B-11, where Administration used to be. It's over in North Campus now; nobody goes over there. The bungalows were moved from Metropolitan Campus. They were condemned, so they're at the junior high school now. Less weight on the floor. We keep the skinniest teachers for junior high. Nobody from home "ec" can teach there. That's how it became a university degree course — space and weight limitations. But that's history.' She took me by the shoulder,

guiding me like a horse.

‘What will I do in this place?’ I asked.

‘O god, there’s plenty of time for that. I’ll just show you around if this goddamned wind doesn’t blow us out to sea. As fat as you are, you’re like a sail. I don’t mean to be insulting. I like a well-fleshed man, he eats good. No offense meant.’

I couldn’t be offended by this cheerful, frank girl. Her face was as open as the sky, freckled, with a little cleft in her chin, a hint of one dimple on the left cheek, hair she kept pushing back into the veil, and a stiff slightly-falling gait. The hand felt cold, because of the chilly wind, I supposed. I wanted to gallantly convey her hand to my own to warm it, but when I vaguely took my other hand (opposite the shoulder she gripped) and made to take hers, she waved it away.

‘Then let’s be off,’ I cried gaily, entering into the spirit of the thing. I had, after all, asked for this. It was an adventure, perhaps the only one that counted. I began to love the face of this girl, which was most like that of an intelligent baby carried on the back of its mother, observing the world through detached all-aware eyes, but with no memory to turn it into a miniature monster. I hoped that no ill-advised teacher would try to mold that head and mind into anything even vaguely retentive, spoiling and distorting it. Now it was healthy and wise in the way of the earth, picking its way around craters and the crumbling lips of excavations,

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standing sturdily against the increasingly violent gusts of wind.

‘Through one nostril,’ Irene was saying, although I lost the half of her words. ‘That’s the way it has to be done, with no time out, except for now, because I can’t talk and breathe through one nostril, especially with a cold.’

‘Why,’ I shouted at her ear, ‘must you do that?’

‘It’s to train my organs,’ she shouted. ‘They’re completely untrained. It’s something like having inside legs and arms to make the organs do what you want them to do. It’s spiritual.’

Then I said something, but the wind completely carried the words away. She nodded sympathetically. I tottered under the worst buffet and began to slide into a ditch. She put out one arm as rigid as a stick and I grabbed it in sheer panic and began to climb it like a tree. She stood planted on the lip of the bank until I recovered my balance. I looked ruefully back on the black cavity and shuddered.

‘Men working down that one. Don’t worry. We’ll get there.’

But her words were doomed to inaccuracy. Before we knew it, even with the vision of friendly lighted windows in the new building ahead of me, I felt myself sliding without surcease, and the girl with me. ‘Irene!’ I cried, but it was no use. We tumbled head over heels, hard and soft, soft and hard, into the blackness.

And that was the last I knew for a while.

I came to myself in a half-dark haze, the dust settling; after a while I made out a candle, a blanket on which I was lying, and a blanket over me. I realized that I had no clothes on; they were draped steaming over some wooden members next to a fire. ‘Where are you, Irene?’ I cried. ‘Are you all right?’

‘Relax,’ I heard the girl say from somewhere. ‘Don’t get excited.’

Irene’s voice was as calm as though we were still outside, but I couldn’t see her. But then I could; she was so near me I was ashamed I had lost control and babbled for her. I cursed my female hysteria. She was sitting facing away from me, on the edge of the blanket, also without clothes. Hers too I noticed were steaming by the fire. I saw for the first time how a woman’s back and buttocks are like a perfect full drop of water ready to fall on the earth, except here they were already against the earth, or at least, the blanket.

'That was quite a fall,' she said cheerfully.

'Yes,' I said in a weak voice, the combination of circumstances rather

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overwhelming.

She made a peculiar jerking, jerking movement and turned to face me. At the same moment, I recognized the members the clothes were hanging on, the memory of the coldness of her hands and the strength of her legs came to me as I saw all of her. She was a smiling dimpled torso, smooth on all sides, rosy in the firelight, with red, or reflected red fiery pubic hair like a living pedestal on which she sat. My mind disappeared into the dark again.

'You can stop patting my face,' I told her, 'I'm perfectly all right.'

'You really are,' she said, admiring me. 'Most times the shock takes days to wear off.' She turned half around on her torso. She did it with little hopping movements, landing plump on her buttocks, which, as I stealthily snaked a hand around, I found to be hard as rocks.

She laughed. 'I can make them any degree of give or take. Feel that one.'

I touched it: like iron.

'I've taken care of those things; it's the interior organs that I breathe through the nostril for. Legs and arms you really don't need. It's true, you don't need them. Everything you need to do you can do sitting or lying, especially since I have those sticks —' and she jerked her head in scorn at the hands, arms, legs and feet holding up our steaming clothes — 'to do the unimportant things.'

It seemed to me that I had never seen so much flesh before. Irene was not a heavy girl, but where legs and arms join our bodies she had more flesh, more surface, more unobstructed area, all creamy and dimpled in the firelight. I realized that with our squirming twitching legs and arms, we

must look like spiders to someone like this girl, who had been stripped to the most direct proportions. I reflected how legs must provide too much drainage for fluids to be really practical. I wondered if this girl would ever be able to find her ideal mate, a legless armless man. But how difficult! Hard enough to find someone of roughly the same economic, social, and intellectual background — but to add such very distinct and unique qualifications!

I hardly noticed at first shock, which took time to wear off — even though I was conscious — her breasts. I suspected that they must be more functional, taking over some duty from legs or arms, than at first appeared. ‘Can you do something special with your — your . . . ?’ How ridiculous to be squeamish, but it was my training.

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‘With this?’ she cried cheerfully, nodding toward her glistening bush. ‘Certainly.’ She stooped, if you can stoop without legs, picked up an edge of the blanket, did a kind of skip and folded the edge neatly over the middle. ‘Throw that shoe at me,’ she ordered.

‘I can’t,’ I protested, ‘really,’ but I reached for the shoe and as gently as I could hefted it toward her. Into the air she went, caught it deftly with some incredible muscle she had there, and, in effect, leaning back, presented the shoe to me. I had the ridiculous feeling of being offered my slippers by a large woolly dog. I had only to pat it, saying, ‘Nice Fido,’ and take my slippers from its mouth to complete the picture. And it was obvious that she wanted, even needed, for me to pat it and stroke its head, now that she was near me.

‘I meant the breasts.’

‘Later,’ she said. ‘Later.’

You will call it fantasy, pornography. But the law says nothing against a man’s exciting himself. What if he writes a book to perpetuate an excitement he felt once? Moreover, what if he writes to begin an excitement he never had,

creating in his mind a universe of sense that cannot exist? And then, for less imaginative men, locked in their undeveloped minds, what if he produces an outlet, a fantastic dream world for their famished senses to feast on?

I have visions of men and women, boys and girls, reading this account of my destruction, enjoying it, producing their own fantasies spun from my substance, beginning to open the ducts of their disused glands — the subtle glands that only a special doom can open, perhaps even the wetness produced by watching a hanging or any execution or love-making by mortally ill people.

It is all meant to be pornography, but it is highly moral. It points a lesson. Jesus on the cross dripped with blood and semen; the people caught it in buckets as it ran from him. Half the Middle East was populated with the product of artificial insemination from Jesus; this was the first miracle, the most ironic one. All that good stuff. Barabbas was the one who carried it around in hollow bones.

You can believe that Irene would have had some rather unusual muscles in her womb, considering the manifold uses she made of it quite separate from its usual functions. I am not so impotent in the conventional way as I might have indicated, and I am not proof from unromantic rather-brisk junctures. The long and short of it is — I took

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her in my arms, feeling a combination of revulsion and a high degree of interest and ease; I had the uncanny feeling of being delightfully manipulated around my organ. I looked down and the activity in and around that area was amazing. Simultaneously I had my answer about her breasts. My arms, armpits, and face were being massaged with the most delicious erotic pseudopodia you can imagine — imagine, as I said. I was enveloped, intoxicated as she murmured to me: everywhere I was totally involved, except for my cursed mind as she drew me, it seemed, ever further into her. How far I went I can't say. I never knew I could penetrate so deeply, with feeling extending so far down the line, so to speak, maintaining communication on every front.

I am overwhelmed by a spasm of disgust at myself. My intentions are clear: I have to tell everything. This is a pilgrimage to the end of a life, my own. The tale is moral, the details are hideous, complex, frightening. I have been deluded during the past few pages into telling something for its own sake. I am pandering to your salacious desires, hoping to trick you into following my story even when there are no such mouth-watering details to give. But I love the language, the grotesque for its own sake, a holdover from a time when I indulged myself in loving humanity for its weird freaks and turns, when I could look and see myself reflected in every perversion; every twisted tree-trunk or man was my brother. How much more so was this torso, a frank open-faced young girl at once unveiled, unfrocked, and dismasted.

Didn't Melville indulge himself with portraying a legless emasculated captain too engrossed with evil and pasteboard to save his life. And mine? It is already lost. This is the last gasp. Why do I waste my time?

But if you have any perception, you have already moved beyond this sticky altogether-usual pastiche of sexual

symbolism; you know that what I want to get across is that this gruesome wreck, as deft as she was, is the very personification of the toothed womb, the dentata; the hints I have dropped of Scylla and Charybdis were not for nothing. But I am either oversubtle or too crude. I'm sorry, but I wanted to delay again. You have rushed on ahead. This girl is naturally waiting for the man whom she can make her own. She is more than willing to rend his limbs from his body, encasing him all the while in the skein of a swooning sensuality. She will suck him until his senses leave him and then she will hack him lovingly until he is just like her.

That is her function, that is what she lives for. I was only a practice-

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dummy, so to speak. And her function in that place from which she was sent to accompany me? If I escaped this encounter with only the loss of some dignity, some remnants of character, it is because there are obviously other plans in store for me. She cannot take me for her own because my wife has reserved another kind of doom for me, as custodian of my doom. I am condemned to be a special kind of sacrifice or pattern or example. For all I know, the girl had instructions to drop us both into this pit. Even now, with hardly a backward look, the girl propels herself toward her limbs and with uncanny dexterity attaches them, heaving in my direction clothes that smell of clay, like funerary vestments. With the fire and the reek of sex and my weakness, it could have been some ancient celebration of Astarte. Only lacking is the smell of pig.

Irene's veil is back in place. I wish I could keep the veil on my life, but I am consumed from above and from below, from my own sensuality and the need to justify and explain myself, coming therefore into some kind of existence before I am eaten alive.

O god! you know what the home economics class is, and with what kinds of monsters — loving, tender, helpless monsters — it is populated. Give me the strength to face it, and the winds howling outside!

Her veil is reattached. She turns bright humorous eyes to me. ‘Helped my cold, though you can’t get this pit really warm enough,’ she said cheerfully, helping me with my pants with an impersonal hard hand. She tied my shoe laces. ‘One nostril, damn it; that’s the assignment. I’ll get it after all. I’ve got to.’

Irene was now turned off. Somewhere in her is a switch or rheostat, the increase of which blurs the real world and relegates me to following her fantasies. This time, for her and for me, it ended in a hole and sexual intercourse. Her acme will be reached with someone else. I would have failed the test. Fortunately she was deflected this time with a small bone tossed in her direction.

Now, everything quite normal, we approached the building, blazing with light. I think the girl was by now quite indifferent to me, and I shrank from touching her.

What had appeared to be a simple large modern building was not that at all. There were more wings to the sides and behind what I could see. Besides, it was built on the side of a hill and so had several levels and entrances at different points. I conjectured that at least four or five floors were underground. I tried to fix in my mind the place we hurriedly entered, but the blank glass front and sliding glass doors were so without

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personality, the carefully potted trees with guide-lines so antiseptic that I couldn't place anything. It might have been a medical center or a supermarket. In the lobby, as a matter of fact, I heard piped music of the neutral variety one hears in hospitals and food stores. I recall being wheeled down a corridor once to the sound of a vague Vienna Woods. I remember women in supermarkets grazing down the shelves with bovine faces and soft hands under the watchful one-way eyes of supervisors, ready with cattle prods or summonses. Soothing medleys of Remember Pearl Harbor, Annie Get Your Gun, and I'm in the Mood for Love arouse sluggish sentiments of patriotism, sadism, and eroticism, the blend that produces most sales for corn flakes, syrup, and detergent. I philosophize to cadge time. I want to remain in this lobby, where most of us live out our lifetimes, happy enough with potted plants and potted music, happy enough with sterilized remains, corpses of trees and music, both throttled by guide-lines, pasteurized of any nasty virus of genius or pain. I am content to remain on this ground floor, except that it isn't — it's a fourth or fifth floor, but none of us realizes it. There is everything I need on this floor — toilet, commissary, music, other people milling around (not now, just figuratively), probably a library recording other people's odysseys. Enough.

But the elevator indicates arrival. 'This is where we begin,' my guide said, cheerful as ever. With her kerchief or veil around her shoulders, she blazed from above as vividly as had her fantastic bush below. Her freckles, however, had subsided with the wind.

She pushed me off the elevator three or four floors later. We began a tortuous tracking and backtracking along corridors, through doors, squeezing around tables and chairs stacked in alcoves, climbing stairs to half a floor above and then to another elevator.

‘Surely,’ I protested, ‘the girls in the home economics class don’t go through all of this when they come to class?’

‘They do once,’ she replied.

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FROM ALLEE ALLEE IN FREE

(PRELIMINARY DRAFT OF A NOVEL)

where to begin, to stop the gouging sun, reflecting my skin, the creasing days, the boat hanging in the bay, lifeless, ready to receive, hung under a pillow of light, the flesh seeping underneath it, wearing flames, feeds on me, my mentor, resolute kindness, and decay, lacking days, my frame, died to kill, to take the blessing of what, I do not know, that my insides will deserve any purpose . . .

Jim was Betty's father . . .

way off is a figure of human abstraction, that would be a painter, a Monet, a Cézanne, his lakeside watercolors had simple spots for people, brown, indianish spots, and he did his painting in a milieu composed of brick dust, a kind of emptiness, like Montmartre, but his vacancy was not false, it was the dullness of truth, the cadence of daily grey, he warped his children on the paper, excessively, with water, he had been a merchantman cook, and somewhere he had found his Gauguin dream, a lollypop girl, basking inside a corrugated tub, not his fishwife — wife — not the cool grief in his life, his Nell, but his promiscuous daughter, was his maid, lying on the thatched bed, he blew her green fruit from the tree . . .

Jim was a handyman, the plainest sort of handyman, who died by asphyxiation, in a car, he rigged especially to do the job, an improbable modern way to die, or the fact that he would even volunteer his death, came as a surprise to everyone . . . as they all are, those suicides, so unexpected . . . that he was unhappy wasn't apparent, because his attitude, a working class version of a debouché, was natural, almost affected, sort of weak and glassy-eyed, with a warm

roughness, definitely homosexual . . . he turned the words 'half pint' into a curse he spoke whenever he wanted to debase himself, or anybody . . . or the 'bottle' was always with him, a manly companion, full of fits, fluids to burn out the day's dust, to corrode . . . why were the children blotchy, or is that the way you get when you sit by a lake too long, all burnt sienna, fuzzy-faced, melting into the ground, into the tree, I see, or don't see them move, imperceptibly, hugging each other, but . . . they aren't, they are giving gifts to another brown thing, a dog, their dog, and they pat the dog, or is it, a dog. . . . I don't know what it is, or whether they are

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children, or what, I urinate them away, their lake overruns them, and they are hugging, I know they are, because I know . . . patience, or promise, or bounty, perhaps, led them to fish in the large, flat bucket of the Atlantic . . .

the seven mile bridge runs, a ribbon of concrete and steel, joining the last civilized dot of coral excrescence to Key West, and that, was into the ocean, a wagon train into the wilderness, and nothing but water, nothing but fearful command . . .

he wiggles, his slime catches me around the leg, and I die of fright . . .

who knows the melancholy water as I do, the ink, the constant coffin glitter in the moon, the denizens touching my line, yanking me in, where a spit in the water, seventy feet down, losing myself, dissolving, selflessly, my eyes going into parrot fish, my fingers moving from a conch, some antennae hair, feeling along the greased bottom, my guts rising, falling in the water, a thousand invisible mouths, jerking, tossing me, motioning my death . . .

John was a man you could trust, his hair, feathery over the close sideburns, his log honest face, beamed, always beamed, like not knowing the answer, and wanting to be simple about it, and careful too, a beard stubble, a necessity

of mild disposition . . . could you say weak? . . .

what was weak about being straightforward, or wanting your own way, childishly, or was there a fascist in him, a potential dictator perhaps . . . someone too exposed, who grew a shell rapidly, to wrap up what he was, some hideous inadequate shell . . . no . . . John hadn't the least hint of contradiction in him . . . like a glass of milk . . . things that laughed were children, and what children did, and the laugh was not an opening of the throat, a little, to gasp in little formal shrieks, or a forgivable uncontrolled ah ha ha . . . it was insanity, a pastime, a way of life, to laugh away things, at bodily functions . . . John was a part of this laugh, he had grown into his part, which was to sit and smile, and do things he shouldn't, like wandering away, not being available . . . and the laughter frequently was about him, something he did or didn't do . . . now, here was a man who met most of the requirements around him . . . but besides that . . . the inside of him growled to be boxed up, his mind was made of Kool-aid, bellywash, existing in a child's mouth . . .

John slept a lot, on the sofa, in a chair, on the bed, he slept more than most, almost any time, in the afternoon, when there weren't any handyman

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jobs, a shelf to be put up, a door to be hung, a bird cage to be runged, or maybe steps to be made, he was good at that, and sometimes he made a whole room, but that was mostly a long time ago, back when he had been a foreman on the seven-mile bridge construction, and way way back he had been a state agent, sent out to stop bootleggers at the Alabama line . . .

She was an angel, floating, like a ghost, out of the door, arms outstretched in a parody . . . he is coming down the stairs, the man with the lead arm, and now he's on the tenth flight, you can hear his steps, his stealth, moving in jelly, shuffling across the grime on the oak steps, his feet sliding,

striding, now he's on the ninth . . . Betty eased into his bed, her warm slithery, forbidden things . . . and she wailed, her body beating against the stick . . .

he's on the eighth flight, and moving closer, his neck leaning out, motioning forward, a railroad sign saying stop, wagging up and down . . . this is love, she moaned, each strand, her hair a mat of coconut fibers, aow! aow!, Nell grooming her pet, aow! . . . the steps creaked with his weight, blump, blump, down into our fingers swam her cries, aow!, the kissing stick, the tobacco bug, lipping her flesh, as he walked steadily toward her, blackening out her cheeks with blows, the numb tongue of the point, inching into her . . . and now he's on the fourth flight, his figure, leaning along the banister, his head, shadowing the ceiling, around and around, his steps are faster, he carries his arm close to his body as he runs, his arm from Egypt, his mouth from Rochester, N.Y., down further . . . down further she wriggled . . . now he's on the second flight, there is his face! almost, chiseled bones, from the cement case, where his face dwelled in daylight . . . aow! aow! he's pulling her hair, she's sending her off to a good school, for her own good, and he pulled her hair till the roots made her scalp stand out, and he pushed his face up to hers, her breath caught into a little olive, and his skin touched, she felt a rush of air, and her whole body inflated . . .

nothing sweeter than fresh cut wood, or shit . . . chiggers between the legs didn't stop the expectations, the green tomatoes, the ground of coffee, and strawberries, close to the ground in the shade, with beetles and hands, picking up a storm . . . he shot his stream against a raw board . . .

John pissed away the poisons, the emerald emersions, into the powdery

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rock, not harsh, but clean, sweet water . . . sweetened by the bodies of children never recovered at Crystal Lake . . .

don't go near rock quarries, privacy will encourage you to feel naked, the water is sweet from skin, the pure flies, and alligators, over in the weeds, and yes, hold me in the water so I don't drown, hold him John! . . . and the board deepens its color with his poison, so he can work, pleasing a ninny woman . . . the children are dead, taken collectively . . .

I never thought of fish as human . . . a finger of pain, removed, pulling a hook out, pulling away from holding things, the pain removed, she stepped onto the stage, her mouth full of snuff . . .

she rolled into it, her fears, like in short, life, into a brackish substance, a bug's elements, her mouth rolled her into position, her real disposition was in her mouth, the causation of a lathering speech, a woman's lipping of the truth, and she dipped with a ferocity, putting the mocha-colored powder into her lip, holding it in, enclosing her disdain for unskilled lips, her rubber mouth, rolled on, with a bug's wisdom and intuition . . .

where does the morality come from in such a person, with exemptions for conduct, her unhealthy lips tendered morality, priggishness at times . . .

until the clandestine beds were asleep, I could hear her stony breathing, jumping at the cockroaches, or completely stopping, when I got up to invade the prisons, from my white-sheeted launch pad . . .

Betty rose in the morning, a fly exciting her mouth, trying to settle on a course, she entered into the kitchen . . . with her came her boyfriend for the night, an indian warrior feeling out the terrain, or the Navy with more buttons unbuttoned than loose, she entered with confidence, like a homosexual with a trick . . .

the time of day was her time, the man, an accent to her oversalivated psychology, the pink things in her that had started as mysteries, things that were master, she now was master of, and this man, a lay for the night, was a lay to

prove something in her kinked make-up, he had a sip of coffee and said, 'I'll see you later, some time . . . ' and she gave him a big possessive embrace, that showed something he couldn't fight, it wasn't love . . .

it was her compulsive sanity in love . . .

The night, cool, not excluding bugs, lights of faraway ships, coal-dust air, smudgy, our Model T skimming the dirt roads, a secret road, tips of

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Australian Pines, gazing back and forth along the Gulf, a white coral road built up, bulldozed up, along a line of trees, and between them, the crabs, cool water, a smell of gas, and the feel of her puffy elbow, there wasn't room for her . . . Pa, driving steady, and her mouth full of crushed leaves, thinking, I was thinking . . . where was it . . . was I, in this . . . 'Here John!' 'Stop! you damn fool!' and she laughed, or chuckled, like a rare bird, 'All right, all right . . . ' John pulled over . . . a log blocked the road . . . we moved it . . . sometimes it was a ditch full of cloudy water, but something that was there made us get out . . . the owners of the road didn't want us there . . . we moved whatever it was, and went on . . . moving the log was routine, a needful action to pay our secret way, the road nobody knew of but us, and a few others, the fishing shrine, peaceful, filled with expectation, possibility, time to be alone, and together, unified by a shriek, that part of the ocean was ours, 'I got'em! I got'em!' she heralded, a find, hooking the mixture of flesh and bone, the primitive life, lacking distinction between the parts, the mouth, the bony lips, integrated into the head, the hook, crushing its scaly cheek, pulling some of the inner life out, the inner mouth, then let go, onto the grass, that only grew by such places, a sharp, needle stuff, 'dying grass,' because the fish died there . . . and the first half hour the fish died, the grass threshed dryly in periodic gasps . . . we knew it was there, reminded how large it was by its rattles . . .

Jim crawled further under his partially-there truck, a car with the rear converted, a truck bed built in the back, out of common boards, now grey, unpainted, grease-smear ed, but it did the trick, it ran and lifted, hauled and made a noise, at least till now, the makeshift truck had failed to start . . . so Jim was under, nursing it . . . his voice was, hand me that, and that, and that and that, now get me some ice water, and a rag, and tell Nell to get in and start it, no Pa, tell Pa to start the engine . . . Pa tried, but it still didn't work, and Pa couldn't figure it out either, and Jim yelled, 'Try it again, John!' and Pa tried, and when it didn't work, he just shook his head, and made a face, and rocked his eyes up while he pushed the starter again, a cigarette in the corner of his lips, his over-expanded chest sighed, as if he were doing something to Jim he hated to . . . or maybe, he knew it wouldn't start, for anybody, 'Come on out!' John said, wincing, 'Better take a look.'

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probing out his body from under the mess of dented fenders and rust . . . the faces, the contortions in the cheek lines, the leathery sunned skin, the layer of grease, seemed excessive, but it was his baby, he stuck his head into the baby's parts, feeling the carburetor, drawing back in hot pain, gently moving some bailing wire, till just the right . . . Aow! aow! what was he doing to her, she wondered . . .

the quality of dirt was good, something on the order of a mummy's body, hard and full of holes, stinking, with lurking orifices, the quality of dirt along the sea, where the sea gives up its life, and the dirt, the dirt for growing tomatoes, beans, vegetables, is poisoned with salt water . . . with its proximity to water that produces abnormality, growths that look like fountain pens, green, hard, good for nothing, floating with the seaweed, bulbous things . . .

The dirt near the water rebels and mummifies, soon the crabs take over, plowing through, undermining the structure

. . . as it packs and packs, the holes become permanent, the dirt loses life . . .

Betty's family takes strange nourishment, with a disrespect for life, it gave her the peculiar metal to face disrespect . . . her seductions were perfect, though frayed sexuality, as a shoe with wear, her body, her attitude withstood children, nursed and sexed her children at the same time, her body was childish, and sometimes when she kissed, she slobbered, overestimating the power of sex . . .

she was wise to the body, the way an infant touches its parts, the soft things of its body, like her mind, a soft plaything, Betty, the carrier of disease . . .

it was hot, murderously hot, and the devil came in after her, he came in the form of a bludgeoner, he sneaked in, through the window, though who would need her was not known, yet he came, raising the window slowly, deliberately, and she bent down, spit her tobacco into the coffee can, taking it deftly by the rim in her fingers, she lifted, letting the buggish stuff squirt, making a tinny, solid sound . . . he took his spiked club and drove it into her brain . . . she was found a week later, her body was stinking, her husband (where was he?) . . . John was carousing as usual, drunk and rolled, in jail, and that's why . . .

and Jim . . . do we have to call him by name? shamefully posit of ill health, of shame on the breasts of old women, of senseless rape of old women . . . why Jim has a stake here, he is the star of this, the prin-

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cipal, the only one worth telling of . . . why Jim is the no-good, the man with ideas, and it is nothing to say he has ideas, and that qualifies him for such a place, but ideas make pretensions, and that is what we look for, to beat down, the ideas . . . Betty has ideas, but no pretensions . . . and so he consumes his daughter with super-sexuality, his overflowing physical nightlife, he tries to infuse his paragon of spawning, this fish of his, making it to the deeper waters, growing, wriggling through legs of inferior men, she was making it to his bed, in deep water . . . but Jim, with his daughter who disappointed him, who did not come to his bed, who did not come to him directly, she floated as it were, like several fish, alternately, several red-haired fish, toward the sailor ports of Siam and Genoa, she had felt their foreign bodies, after the Mediterranean conquests, her lovers flopped and she had leftovers, nothing but dog-eared travel folders, used for wiping paper, for she did . . . she did specialize in around the world . . . and remotely, like a solenoid, she came to him, at night in her racial memory dreams, an ambiguous, slightly generalized creature, clicking on, then off, as his push-button will, regulated his push-button fly . . . of the days at sea, his seasoned whores, his youngish, John Dos Passos, rusty sea-hulk home, the tossing, the homosexuality among the choicest, Jim had his memories as everyone does, as irony would have it, memories usually serve the undistinguished, or unfulfilled life . . . not Jim . . . his was a dream . . . and Ma? . . . she had her walking, ambling slowly, carrying a great burden, coming down, a balloon pushing up, wanting to rise, like biscuit dough, she had her hands, her veined, blood-clot self, she had her wall, unremitting, an armoured car, watching for an offender, she is watching with her turrets, a plane circling for the kill, to mow down the herds of antelope, to crease through the land, a bladed bull-dozer, herself, moving forward, her hard bulk, her

tonnage, weighing down in the water, overloaded, her jacks and cranes and wrenches creaking under her slabs, and . . . was she a sexual thing? a noticer of men's slabbed backs, bladed outward, to cut the female lobes, the muns, and outer lips . . . was she sexual . . . this amputated, deseeded mother of sexless warmth and moisture, fungating in her dark corners, and cheated, she had her cheat . . . she had what was missing, had he kept it, had he kept the memory of her insides, as he turned toward men for sexual conferences, in alleys and away from home, getting conked, and in jail, had he turned in this dubious direction for a solace which had been neatly removed under the violet rays of . . . picking daisies, they picked and looked up at the

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wind, the whisking clouds, and wondered when they would lay again, under this sky, now, or when they returned to the house, where the privates could open out to the whole world, and no one would see, there in the idyll, lost lust, their backwoods house, was the laying place of the greatest loves, the times men dream, when the cream of disaster had to strike and take her . . . oh, she remained, she stayed, but her belly and her uterus were wrapped in paper and dropped in the hospital garbage . . . like disposal of bad meat, her insides were cast away, an awful seed, and the fairy days and the splendor and good times waited in some dump under the flies, for she had her mother cruelty, as a gift, I guess . . .

now, let us see everyone, all at once, a tableau . . .

Betty washes some clothes, a corrugated tub full of water, and suds, bending over, sweating, washing the disease from her children's clothes, all the children she thought she had, the children she thought were there, the ones who died, the children, in short, she did not have, the many dead children, the scattered, good-for-nothing sperm . . . now wait . . . this may be maudlin, yet the truth . . . she washes clothes for her

unborn or aborted kids that . . . that she must slave for . . . this is her dream, and I only elaborate . . . about the ones that came tumbling from her body when she got drunk and fell down the steps . . . and she said oops . . . there goes another one, as the child went cartwheeling out from under her dress . . . she laughs to her latest, sucker husband . . . and look, she even laughs into the foam, the dirty girl . . .

Nell, she is roasting a big pig, and the pig is Jim, her husband, her husband has been in the oven gassing himself to death, getting in practice, because that's the way Jim will end, and Nell, the good woman that she is, is basting the good Jim who is all for rehearsals, because Jim missed his calling and he should have been on stage or in a play or something, because he has a hell'uva good sense of drama, always moaning and playing at being in pain, always . . . but Nell, anyway, is smiling and poking the good pig Jim with a long fork and saying my my in her Raleigh cigarette breath, that sounds very thoughtful, and intelligent, as it does what it should, and proceeds along the path of righteous doings in a wifely way, just picking up the threads and moving on, the good

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WOMAN OF THE OVEN . . .

Carl Linder

and Jim is there too, in a different sort-of-life motif, even while being pulled from the oven we may see his other self, studying the bottle of whiskey for its color and depth of illusion-giving properties, the original, liquor-bottle daddy, so warm and gifted, he takes a drink and moves his mouth in a knowing Rochester, N.Y. way, a little of the European I would say, just working up to the task of doing something . . . that is Jim, eternally working on great projects, as he takes his hammer and makes a cage for some rats, a great professor whom he knows will use for experiments, and maybe some of it will rub off on Jim . . . how proud he is with all the bigshots at the guinea pig laboratory . . . he just grins his false teeth, like a scientist, and takes another drink, and finishes the great cage . . . now Jim's no ninny . . .

But John is, you can be sure . . . and there John is, sitting on a bedpan, a sickroom look in his eyes, because, that is where his drink is hidden, and every now and then, he reaches in and instead of pulling out a drink, it's a furry toy dog, but nobody wants a little fake dog instead of a drink, so he puts it back, under his rear, and folds it back up under his genitals, hoping it will turn into a drink along the way . . .

would it be fair to say Jim is a murderer . . . well, in the line of duty, he and John were constables during Prohibition, and they raided a Negro lady's house where they had heard about a still . . . and so he shot her . . . John and he were coming over the fence, and there she was with an ax in hand, not to give up easily . . . and Jim said 'boom' with his pistol when she came at him . . .

didn't kill Betty, the girl with the theatrical life, or Jim's self-indulgent misery didn't die, nor did Ollie's affection, or

Nell's jealousy, or Anna's admiration, or Bill's scorn, or John's compliance didn't die . . .

the key to this lies with the bogey man, sitting in his half-lit chamber, in a half-light, between fear and anger, he does not motivate himself . . . his thought, if you could call it that, is greenish, like the plants, or vines of the crawling ground, and that simply, is his thought, all there is to it, the relentless motion of a bull-dozer, unheeding, falling over the scene,

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falling into it, coming always coming, where will it enter . . . where will it turn . . . will it be here, or here, or here . . . I can watch it, on the radar screen, I can see its progress, and I know when it comes in my direction, and I watch it move, immovably, toward me, and sometimes it swerves, for no reason, for no reason . . . and that is the crux . . . this man, descending the stairs now, has gotten up from his bench, and proceeds down the stairs, now the first, then the second, and I am at the bottom, why don't I leave, I am frozen with weights in the backs of my knees, I am weak, and he comes to the third stair, and the fourth, and the fifth, and I can see his shadow, the only reasoning part of this, move around the walls, fleeting between crevices, skirting them . . . knowing the passage, I have less than a shadow's knowledge . . .

what is behind the simplicity . . . are they people, without masks, or do they wear infinite ones . . . because I am so close, am a conglomerate of these layers, the tediums collected, a garbage dump, my sensibility . . . the dumping place is food, the weapon of possessed women, food thrown over the table like tits, a sexuality, prepared, pre-chewed, these dinners, made to persuade . . .

the dirty smudges on table legs, the flies, the torn clothing, children with sores on their knees, with matted hair . . . what is the rational? . . . the intuition fructifying as creation, projects, manufactures . . . where does one convert

the carelessness of dirt to perfection, the Christchild from an organ of urination, the forgetful body, made a ball of greatness, a pig, unconsummated, a foetus, resting in a chaos of blood, indefinable process, tossing, hearing the penetration, terrible pressures, the developed birth stuck in a predicament of forgetfulness, then ejected into clean sterile linen, spit out, the foreign body from a wound, of incredible moisture, love and security . . . the cunt begets the head, the child, kissing the awful filth of rejection, exits onto the green gass, drying into a toy dog . . .

it is not an examination of the unknown display, the character of events, threading indissolubly your way, against you, certainly not for you . . . this thing, a parcel of nature, a vestment of sacred things, the snuffbox, the package that was opened before it closed . . . events . . . these are the marching mobbing persuaders, they come, enter, file out carefully, throng on you, a heap of ants, flies, horses, if you are a product of pictures, and they come, relentless, careful, soulless, with pride, they come,

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take everything but emptiness, they come and dissolve you .
 . . like the matter of the fish left out of water for a time . . .
drawn up through the water with careless speed, the matter,
pressing against his body, emerging, comes to his death like
an exultant diver, coming up, beautifully, the crucial thing
here . . . it is pulled forcefully, withdrawn from his bed, its
sandy organization . . . it touches something, the bait, a torn
mullet head . . . it snatches at what it has always snatched
at, then, with deliberate action, the line swiftly brings brings
the blood to the gas . . . am I too exuberant? do I exaggerate?
well, it is not death that matters, but the mind of the fish,
the moment of recollection, or the thought itself, the
antagonism and tyranny of the memory, the accumulation of
the deliberate plan, a thing to fear, within, and without, a
master memory of the race, the thing out there, I keep a
watch on at all times, the bait, the line that pulls me away,
and worst of all, the thought of it . . .

she watches her death . . .

up to her neck in death . . .

her hair is red, attacking her image of herself, portraying
her to herself as an unusual thing, a fire, a prominent being
among the fair-haired, the black-haired . . . she sees the fire
in the mirror, and her head is a hell, and over the river of red
shine, the fire drips on her shoulders like certain instances
of superheated metal . . . her hair throws back these gallant
thoughts, potent, consuming, wicked . . . aow! aow! he's
burning his fingers, her comb melts, his arms on fire, his
head blazing, the scum in his mind frying like albumen, like
the egg his mind is, his hand reaches back and eats the fire
from her hair, for suddenly, like the invisible bugs, he
becomes immune to her potency . . . he eats her hair, until
his body is joined with hers, and his throat flexes with her
fibers, and the red stream flows from his mouth . . .

he should have never touched her, now his hands are flaming, everywhere his fingers wipe the fire on chairs, paper, and he didn't know, till he started, the world would burn . . .

his attitude toward his children was equal, impartial, there was always a higher concern . . . don't dwell on the children too much . . . let them know you're there, give them the sense of yourself, establish your form in their bodies, then leave, then let the memory of you work like a shadow, something there, and not, or rather lingering, a scent, that is memory . . . then be yourself, tear away at the complications, the corners to be removed . . .

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what about the children, sitting, waiting for your free time . . . you make them wait . . . you should free them . . .

love, certainly locks you in . . . but that is not what I want to talk about, I should tell you about the games . . . a form of sparkle . . . a sparkler held up, by the end of the arm, becoming a wand . . . something like a wand in the hand, transforming the ground to a bed, the bushes to fingers . . .

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MICHAEL MOTT

A SERIES OF THREE PROSE PORTRAITS FROM A NOVEL IN PROGRESS

(Dear MOLLY, demolisher of records, good and bad, cigarette ends with and without lipstick, bottles, bits of cake, cheese rinds, unused stamps, important messages or addresses of possible girlfriends on the backs of envelopes, died of throat cancer among friends' flowers and ether, March 13th, 1961, at the Royal Hospital, Fulham Road, Chelsea; service afterwards, not unattended, this sentimental record from your erstwhile employer, once and future comrade, friend, ex-Communist later Capitalist exploiter, honour to a very Conservative lady.)

223, 166, Phillips E., Second Lieutenant, obit (I think). From whom I once made something like two pounds ten shillings over a number of weeks playing 'Racing Daemon' and felt decently ashamed, pay being about eighteen pounds a month, less Mess Bills, and to whom I gave cigarettes at various times expecting no return, numbering perhaps thirty in all. From whom I first learned how to pick many conventional locks with a woman's hairpin or common paperclip, he having been taught this by his driver, a former professional housebreaker practicing in the Wimbledon area, a trick which has astonished my friends on a number of occasions and on more than one saved me from considerable embarrassment and perhaps legal action. Who once, at Hythe Ranges, and very unexpectedly during a break in firing recruit practices, sitting among us on the top of the butts, recited the whole of Keats' Ode to Autumn on a late summer afternoon without once stumbling, wholly at variance with my former estimate of his character, in a remembered and haunting voice and in a setting of

astonishing silence. Vale.

Corporal Tucker D. 022,734,618, Purveyor of Pornography to the Second Battalion. By Appointment. Keeping up with his own reputation with enormous ingenuity. Photographs. Montage. Found Objects. Paper cutouts bringing kneeling brides to priests. The famous weekend party of the WRENS and the naval officers, now in the process of disintegration. By too many surreptitious prints separated from the originals. Horny, printed, seemingly on slivers of sepia horn. Through a glass darkly a girl's features blurred as under water at the moment of ecstasy. Observed.

MICHAEL MOTT

Spied on. Her mind so far behind her eyes.

What, if anything, is Obscenity?

In the eye of the beholder, beauty. The ungainly male member organized by Michelangelo into beautiful form, the exploding grenade. White marble. In David. Beautiful to one not stirred emotionally by the sight of his own . . . Repulsive in Army Anti-Venereal Disease films. Beyond Belief. Freud-child. Not of Joy. Found Object. Tales from the Vienna Wards. To some women apparently the only flower.

Or, as in landscapes, limestone certainly, the cleft, the hidden cave. Intricate fern at its overhang. Litter of small bones sometimes found in the fronds. The herbs crushed in the morning. Warning. But no going back. Thought the lintel most lucky in life, a most honourable threshold, for whose crossing salt is thrown. Etcetera. In Botticelli a sea voyage, annointed with the sea dew of one bourne on a shell over water. Giving off a sweet savour. Yet, by the strangest of alchemies, also mingled with something more awful than blood, scent that unknts the sinews, ancient trace of the mere and odor of origin.

Girl in the blurred photograph. Easy history. As in death in ecstasy.

So I have seen myself in the bathtub in the taps and in mirrors, laid out as if after death. Human bodies. How else know the Creator except in the created? Images. Offprints of God.

Cpl. Tucker M.D., Specialist in Perversions. Shocking most second lieutenants, who pretend calm over deep disturbance. I assume you're a married man, Sir? And knowing full well his victims, his virgin admirers. A wink as cover. Connivance.

At the entries to the mysteries. Branches in Alexandria, San Francisco, Macao, Lourenço Marques, London, Cairo, Pago Pago, Hamburg, Bélem, Paris . . .

As on the surface of the Sweet Water Canal (Banned to All Army Personnel). Among scum. Italic dragonfly. Original enigma. One riddle the sphinx never knew. I in my dreams return to you, blurred, blurred in your hair. Drowned deeper than any. Everything I am eludes you.

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A BRIEF PORTRAIT AND ANALYSIS OF POTSTICK

Bruton Connors

His head was a minute, microcephalic knot From which
squirmed a flourishing balloon Of brutal, furze-like foliage
causing his Face to resemble an apple in a thicket or The egg
in a nest, or a ball in the rough Or a spider amid his web or a
scirrhus in The interior of a gored Rosinante, or the Stamens
in a botanist's diagram, even the Heart of a cabbage or the
golden Piss-enLit. His spine when his right surface was
Profiled for scrutiny described an S, but Scrawled by an
illiterate scholar back to Front so that he was truly the
reverse of A hunchback and his head tilting backward
Obliged his eyes to pry in keen nystagmus Past his nostrils,
erecting and imploding And affording until such time as he
might Synchronize his blink a view intermittent And
rhythmic of the sunny or wintry world And when he
breathed, which he often did, His back went up and down,
while his gut, Or pot, stayed still as a stuffed fox, or Horse in
death or an obdurate donkey. His Least painful posture was
on one foot and On one hand for the left arm was long and
The right leg was short and then the left Hand tended
towards the club, whereas the Left foot and the right hand
respectively Tended towards, and completely achieved a
Partial but still unassailable prehension And if he read the
paper, for example, he Gripped it with the left foot, and
dexter Hand. Whereas in walking he utilized the Hand
sinister then the foot dexter, front Uppermost, the spine
maintaining an angle Of sixty degrees with the floor and
while The body swerved upon a lateral arc, like The jib or
bowsprit of an uncertain yacht And within were anatomical
adjustments or Refinements, too many to mention, such as
The reversed ribcage and the inverted ass Many of which
refinements were innate, or Acquired or whittled into being
by time's Irreversible fat-slides and interferences.

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KEITH GUNDERSON

CARNEGIE

Lake Carnegie
smoothen's out under the morning
sunfish guard bowl-shaped nests of genuine
pebbles they
have finned away the weed the silt they have finned
have finned away in the wild
(a)s(par)a(gus) the (m)i(ce) are ru(nn)ing a(round) in
(the) w)i(l)(d)
s(tr)a(w)ber(ries) the (m)i(ce) in (the) (w)i(ld)
a)s(par)a(gus) are r(u)n)ning a(r)ound
frogs sling-shot about -about in the shallows can
hardly be seen up on the
green lily-frog-pads combo of birds improvise on
'Morning Songs'
Woodpecker on the drums ta tata ta tata O!
Blackbird who was with Goodman in the
Thirties wheedle de dee dee wind coming and
coming up scribbles its name all over the
waters sun swings in shining to beat
the band

BENJAMIN A. KERNER

The normal order is established: here,
now in the morning that the hornéd sun
half-circle from the snorting virgin runs
the hormones of my witting order this.
A metaphor, my hammer, anvil, stirrup
maketh for no ears but mine to hear;
a high-gear shift, the masturbating member
guides my craft to climax and a word.
A sport no more, but more the patient labor
of the sonnet's subject it is to score;
and lest some good Creseide mistakes me am
but mad in image by imagination:
when the wind is from another sea
I know the ardor from the argument.

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ROBERT MCROBERTS

POEM FOR MY STUDENTS

*If I were a rich man, I'd pay
for the privilege of teaching.*

Randall Jarrell

And yet this is a poem AGAINST you. I have been warned:
familiarity breeds contempt. So I tell you to write a paper
about apathy. Write a paper about apathy 500 words long.

Each day my voice changes. Today there is a new pitch. I
will not tell you to write a paper about apathy. Today I will
write myself. I begin with a soft shoe on the table top. I write
APPLAUSE on the greenboard. You applaud. By now you know
that this is mime. I stand with my mouth

ROBERT MCROBERTS

in my pocket.
Do you read me.
I open myself
like a book and begin to tear out pages.
My tie first.
I give you all my ties.
The only sport
coat I own. Onto the pile, my shirt
ironed only on the front. Shoes. Socks. The floor
is cold. I start to shiver, then get mad and reverse
the film.
Listen, do not
use metaphors
or figurative
language, it can
only hurt you.

IRA SADOFF

THE WEEK'S SHOPPING

Like a hunter lost in winter fog, I drift
Down aisle number three, stalking the canned
 asparagus,
Following a trail of neatly wrapped fowl
For next Tuesday's dinner: I stuff them all
In the metal stomach of my cart, promising myself
To soon be hungry. Still, in the middle of the A & P,
I imagine myself a caveman who doesn't know Tuesday
From an unbreakable container of empty air,
But knows hunger is a wild bush of berries growing
On the tips of his fingers like raw nerves. I desire
Only those delicacies I can touch: a deer crossing
My path, a lover in my bed of stones, a real bird
With wings. If I hurl myself back to the stone age,
Dropping my packages like old rocks, perhaps I can
Follow a flock of geese flying south, eat
Untouched fruit, or find the tracks of my own
 beginnings.

STAN KARP

AND AFTER THAT, WHAT?

Oh Guardian Angel,
benevolent Big Brother,
please give me the wisdom
I attribute to you.
Help me stand upright
like homo sapient.
Help me understand
the tune played on
Big Bang accordion.
Capture the nymph
Aurora Borealis,
her brute cousin strobe,
and mesmerizing fireflies
in a palm-sized prism.
Command new crystal polygram
to point toward divinity.
Help me unlock
handcuffing of mortal watch.
And while you're at it,
help yourself.

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CHARLES ROBINSON

IN COMMEMORATION OF MY BIRTH

I'll try to make my apologies
early: unlike some
Jews, Catholics, Negroes, Mexicans
and Latter Day Saints
I have no nationality
to speak of. I try not to
abuse them, but they seem intent
on imposing
their view of god, morality,
politics, sex, ice cream
flavors and shoes
on me. My hangovers
don't need any adventist news
at nine o'clock Sunday
mornings — just another shot
of booze. No wonder
they lose converts:
the funny papers don't even amuse
me until some time past eleven.
To make my point clear
let me say that I didn't choose
to be born white, ex-Protestant
and American (that may go
next). So Philip, Norman,
Robert, Edward, Jimmy, etc.,
if you'll stop writing
about your little accidents
of birth, I won't bother
you with mine. And the rest of you
bring ice when you come:
I'll share my booze and we'll discuss
your apocalyptic views;

then we'll turn to the funny papers
for the news.

JACK ZUCKER

CHAIRS IN THE MARIMEKKO WINDOW

My wife stares into Marimekko's window —
A chair is made of plastic and air —
It floats toward our gaze
Like a gull
Greying through air —
We are leaving this city, leaving the Charles
That winds snake-like through
Banks of grass,
And now we float like plastic chairs —
We will wander further
For my
Idiot's career —
Gulls out to sea,
Fish leaping falls,
We travel nowhere
Like
Air-stuffed chairs.

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PAUL ROBERT DAVIDSON

IN-GROUP THEORY

In certain closed
circles
And associative
rings,
If your roots
are not
among
The radicals,
Then you are
defined
to be
A perfect
square.

THE SHY OCTOPUS

I, too, the last of contemporary octopi to run and make noises, must stop being afraid of publicity. Virgins (of the female sex) often dream about my slippery embrace and confess they hate the thought of being touched by anyone or anything with so many arms (for virgins ((of the female sex)) seldom see real octopi alive save those of their flirtatious nightmares); controversial monster that I am, I ought to stop hiding in bottomless backwaters and step at once into the arena of action.

Why, just the other day, wasn't it the smart little man from Procter and Gamble who pointed out to me that I had better start thinking in reasonable, commercial terms with my ink, this misused by-product of my molluscidal existential anxiety? He said there were unexploited possibilities. . . . Oh, well, I guess I am just an indifferent possessor of this concentrated liquid, this cheaply transportable omni-absence; I must admit I might also be quite wrong believing that civilized octopi don't really have to break the skin-divers' necks.

Humans, on second thought, do appear to be far worse en masse than the average Polynesian, and even the friendliest, nicest Polynesians are only too eager to eat me. The salesman was right: In my narrowmindedness it didn't occur to me that I ought to perform self-exacerbation in its more complex form (not like some unimaginative lizards who in slovenly fashion abandon their tails when they're hunted so they can rescue their heads after jettisoning the rest of their personalities) yet I forgot that the ink of my anguish could well be used as a lure, too, or rather an ambush, helping me catch flabby humans and unsuspecting flatfish! I should create splendid plots and delusions by selling my patent to

Peace Institutions.

JEAN TOOMER'S CANE

by Gail Walker

BLACKNESS IN THE UNITED STATES Is a pervasive and powerful symbol which separates those whom our society has favored from those whom it has disdained. The question of racial identity engrosses young black people and they are turning to the works of black authors for insights into the meaning of black identity. One such author is Jean Toomer, whose only novel, *CANE*, first published in 1923, has been reissued this year.* Already it is being assigned in college courses and it will be read by many blacks and whites.

According to Arna Bontemps' introduction to the new publication of *CANE*, the issue of racial identity was central to Toomer's life. He was the grandson of a black man who had been acting governor of Louisiana, and his family had enjoyed comparative wealth. By the time he was a young man, however, his grandfather was dying and the family's wealth was diminishing. Toomer was able to live '... equally amid the two race groups. Now white, now colored.'** He steeped himself in the world of the Southern black before writing *CANE*; yet, after its publication, he married twice, both times to white women. In this short autobiographical novel, he records his personal statement of the significance of racial identity and the meaning of blackness.

What does it mean to be black? It can mean two things: that a black person will suffer the social and political experiences of oppression, or that a black person shares with all other blacks certain fundamental traits and qualities denoted by the word 'blackness.' If social and political experiences determine the significance of being black then we must attribute cultural specificity and conclude that the significance of blackness depends on the society rather than

on the individual.

On the other hand, blackness can be defined as an aggregate of essential qualities. Some have chosen qualities which are unflattering and insulting: blacks are inferior, lazy, irresponsible, childlike, obsequious. To others, blackness is thought of positively and proudly: blacks are beautiful, natural, brotherly, loving, and spontaneous. Some writers (Gobineau, Chamberlain, and Grant among them) have argued that these qualities are biologically produced and transferred through the genes; others simply hold that they are produced by some mysteriously uniform and inevitable socialization. All those who think of blackness as a collection of innate traits and qualities seem to imply that blackness and whiteness are pure, opposite and incompatible fundamental elements, even if they don't agree on how they are defined or determined.

* *A paperback Perennial Classic — Harper & Row, 1969.*

** *From an autobiographical statement, 1922, quoted by Arna Bontemps in the introduction, p. viii.*

In the stories, sketches, and poems which make up *CANE*, Toomer confusingly presents both views of blackness. In the first two sections of the novel, blackness appears as an inherent quality; but in the third section, the long story, *Kabnis*, blackness is depicted as a social experience.

In the first two sections, Toomer employs a form of cultural shorthand to convey his notions of the inherent properties of blackness. Using the theme of a wandering rootless stranger's encounters with peasants, Toomer echoes Rousseau, Goethe, and Chateaubriand who also created characters who searched for life's meaning in bucolic simplicity. Toomer's characterizations of unreasoning blacks are reminiscent of the sentimental visions of the peasants and the Noble Savage found in the Romantics.

A crude-boned, soft-skinned wedge of nigger life breathing its loafer air, jazz songs and love, thrusting unconscious

rhythms, black reddish blood into the white and whitewashed wood of Washington. (p. 71)

...niggers sat on low door-steps before tumbled shanties and sang and loved . . . (p. 103)

Peace. Negroes within it are content. They farm. They sing. They love. They sleep. (p. 164)

... black folks were made to mate . . . (p. 26)

'Black folks were made to mate' and to love freely and spontaneously in Toomer's world. But for all that, precious little mating actually takes place. Some of the characters have lost their ability to love and mate because their blackness has been diluted by education, urbanization, wealth, or white blood, resulting in what social scientists might today call impulse control. Other blacks are attracted to whites and although aroused they never consummate their passions, and white and black remain symbolically apart. Sexual relations become the metaphors for Toomer's views of the incompatibility of the races and the polarization of racial traits which are personified in a man and a woman. His characters are attracted and approach each other, but like the poles of a magnet, at the last moment they are thrust apart.

The use of stereotypical characters, symbolic personifications, and metaphorical behaviors limits the possibilities of the plots and the freedom of the characters. No sex, bad sex, or good sex; these are the only possible alternatives. Love-making cannot be a rich metaphor for racial relationships if limited to Toomer's simple alternatives of coming together or remaining apart, of success or failure. His symbolic use of love-making further reduces his men and women to sexual beings with no other dimension. His characterizations of women, especially, are repetitive and limited; all defined sexually, they are passive, unaware, acted upon.

Toomer does not always represent the polarities of black and white by the confrontation of peasants and urbanized, 'dictie' characters. Sometimes black identity is merely the quality of oppositeness to white. A black character muses as he sits in a restaurant full of whites:

A strange thing happened to Paul. Suddenly he knew that he was apart from the people around him. Apart from the pain which they had unconsciously caused. Suddenly he knew that people saw, not attractiveness in his dark skin, but difference. Their stares, giving him to himself, filled something long empty within him, and were like green blades sprouting in his consciousness. There was fullness, and strength and peace about it all. He saw himself, cloudy, but real.

(p. 145)

No wonder he sees himself, cloudy. The clouds are vaporous billows displacing a whole, palpable and enduring human being. The character is accepting his difference as an identity. The difference between black and white is real, but if it is to stand as the summary of a human being, then a black man is reduced to a mere negation of whatever whiteness is thought to be. Again, Toomer has presented us with a symbol, one half of a pair of opposites, and we find clouds instead of individual wholeness.

In *Kabnis*, the last story which makes up the novel, Toomer finally abandons the unprofitable and artificial juxtaposition of black and white and his stereotypes of blacks. In their place he presents a social and political view of blackness that parallels oppression. He takes us into a world populated entirely by blacks where they form a community of shared danger and threat from whites. This circumstance is the only uniform condition for his definition of blackness in *Kabnis*. Individual strengths and weaknesses are allowed to determine characters' behaviors, rather than

fixed innate 'black' traits. As a result of this new freedom, Kabnis is vital and believable, offering us glimpses of men paralyzed by their terror, of compassionate men reaching out to their suffering brothers, of men strutting in arrogant yet demeaning accommodation. Black folks even mate in this story. yet it is an incidental and integral act, no more or less significant than the other human encounters. Finally, we find racial consciousness without a script; black identity without stereotype.

Toomer has espoused two views of blackness and we are left with the question—is the meaning of blackness intrinsically or socially determined? Do the cultural differences between communities populated by blacks and whites imply innate differences? In many of his stories, Toomer seems to be saying that the two races have been allotted separate and irreconcilable human qualities. Today some black youths tell us that whites can never understand them, and there have always been whites who tell us that blacks' minds function differently. Many from both camps tell us that the two races can never share a unified society. Because blackness has been coincident with oppression, it has been assumed that there are significant innate differences between the races. Man-made barriers to integration are construed as the symbol or physical manifestation of a natural division of races.

The Negro Renaissance of the 1920's was sparked by this book which revealed positive conceptions of blackness which fit into the conventions of Western literature. But in effect, Toomer merely exchanged good for bad properties in the popular conceptions of blacks. When a black writer offers his readers a sentimental and appealing view of blackness it carries more weight and is less apparently stereotypical than a similar book written by a white. Today's youth seem like modern-day Renés and Werthers searching for simplicity, community, and identity. They may fasten on this book as a

vindication and embodiment of what they mean by 'soul' and spontaneity. It is so easy to substitute style for substance, stereotype for unprejudice.

The message of Kabnis, however, is that the significance of blackness lies in its social value. Idiosyncrasy, volition, and liberty become irrelevant when blacks are characterized as peasants, sexual beings, or merely the opposites of whites. Existence and essence become predetermined by race. If blackness or racial identity is to be formulated in a way consistent with a faith in human responsibility and freedom, it must be represented as an identity which the individual himself can shape.

A black or a white cannot change his race, but he can work to change the social and political consequences of race. In these times, in our country, race is a challenge, a demand for justice, and racial identity will be determined by the response.

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A BALANCING MONSTER OF LOVE

by Bruce Nesbitt

STANLEY COOPERMAN IS INDEED 'one of the most original and versatile poets to erupt (and given his energy, that's the verb) through the English-speaking landscape.'¹ Three substantial collections of work done in only six years do suggest literary vulcanology, and Vulcan, god of fire, was above all a master craftsman. But he was also thrown out of Olympus twice, and several readers (manqué Zeuses all?) would undoubtedly like to try the same thing with Cooperman. The reason, I suspect, is his unnerving ability to generate reaction, a variety of inverted response. *THE DAY OF THE PARROT* (University of Nebraska Press, 1968), *THE OWL BEHIND THE DOOR* (McClelland & Stewart, 1968), and *CAPPELBAUM'S DANCE* (University of Nebraska Press, 1970) have all been published since Cooperman moved to Canada; here, too, reaction has oscillated between startled delight at the unexpected ('revolutionary'²) and archetypically Canadian puzzlement ('a good many questions . . . are not always answered'³). Yet Cooperman can confidently have it both ways because of his peculiar stance, a poetic break-in inadvertently described by Leonard Cohen when he attempts to characterize a 'saint' in *BEAUTIFUL LOSERS*. The man in contact with the energy of love, Cohen suggests, can exercise a kind of balance in the chaos of existence. He does not dissolve the chaos — either for others or himself — but is 'a kind of balance that is his glory' as he 'rides the drifts like an escaped ski.' His track is a drawing of the snow in a moment of its particular arrangement with wind and rock . . . Far from flying with the angels, he traces with the fidelity of a seismograph needle the state of the solid bloody landscape. So, too, Cooperman, demoniacally defining everything he touches through sailing (he says) 'by the light of his own wind.' At the same time he retains his Brooklyn humanism, that jugular Judaism also caught by Cohen's saint: His house is dangerous and finite, but he is at home in the world. He can love the shapes of

human beings, the fine and twisted shapes of the heart. It is good to have among us such men, such balancing monsters of love. Balancing between the exhilaration of defining man's edges and the horror of realizing their contents, Stanley Cooperman is a frightening prophet, a true balancing monster of love.

The first secret of Cooperman's balancing act centres in his vision as poet, 'the sailor / adrift with multiple eyeballs,' aghast at what he sees and the same man who insists on his access to 'the Goddess / of tangerines and tongues': both exist simultaneously.⁷ When both aspects work together in the same poem, the effect apparently borders on surrealism. But only apparently. Far from the poles of Jan Cazaux's alternating and surrealist current — docility (automatism) and revolt (re-volt⁸) — Cooperman has discovered that equally electric and nonrealistic world once described as 'a world perpetually becoming.'⁹ He makes poetic sense out of the moment when children sliding down a banister suddenly feel it turn into the razor-blade of maturity. If movement means literal schizophrenia, then time wounds all; 'everything / is magic,' Cooperman claims, so long as 'where you are is the actual / laughter / of be.'¹⁰

This magic is clearly not the product of heavy nocturnal breathing on Bald Mountain, or of poetic fantasy masturbated into fact. His deadly laughter is instead the sound of an ideal insomniac in a dreaming world:

DREAMS

are nightingales
plucked:
I slap each
feather, looking
for fleas.¹¹

And conversely, 'wisdom' is the mere 'market- / place /
of our dreams.'¹² What is needed is the poem as
'act,' while it

moves around inside you
like a finger,
it finds all the places
where you were taught
never
to be found.¹⁸

By extension, poetry can swallow 'life' for Cooperman
because of the 'singing meat' of his brain;¹⁴ his
poeming is 'a kind of loving / when there is nothing
to love.'¹⁵

A second entry into Cooperman's world of becoming,
then, depends on his sense of bloody surfaces, a
'rind' which his sequence of Jenifer poems
frequently explores and casts off to reveal glistening
'pulp.'¹⁶ Breath becomes words, fear and finally
raw 'firmness;' not blood-consciousness (the
Rh-factor fallacy) but love as 'a question / of where
/ we end:'

the meaning of surfaces, where space stops at the skin of
a pear.¹

Without this 'meaning'—the simultaneous perception of
all edges —the skier regains his ego at the price of losing
himself and his balance, 'caught by a sudden edge / on a
slope / that goes down, and down.'¹ So Cooperman's
'strange tailor' ('measuring my tongue / while it is still /
inside my head') is a totally liberating force.¹ He offers

nothing inside the circle of your self but a trip through outer space.²

Inner space becomes outer space on Cooperman's Möbius strip: limited and shaped, yet into the of mathematical infinity; twisted, yet with the very twist that gives it meaning.

Or is Cooperman's poetry really resolving nothing out of something, a portrait of man as evolving zero? Again, the question evokes political reaction rather than poetic and critical response. For its very tentativeness suggests that aphorism and condescension can negate his accomplishment, or that defensive judiciousness will shut him up. Neither will do, if I am right in seeing his preoccupation with destruction as a controlling mood. The problem here is that for Cooperman, everything contains the seeds of its own destruction. Hence his fascination with tongues, teeth, food and eating.

Consider the title poems of his three collections. The Day of the Parrot is that day of adolescence on Coney Island Avenue which moved from a fishstall to cotton-candy surf to those 'Congo cossacks / who picked their teeth with lightning,' devouring 'all the heritage of Minsk.' Devouring. And you, the Owl Behind the Door accuses,

what did you eat last night? what books have you swallowed, which dreams, whose women?

Swallowed. Cappelbaum's Dance is equally menacing:

Every time I breathe I get hungry, my eyes are filled with tapeworms dancing to a kind of squeaky drum....

*'Everything I do is a kind / of eating,' Cooperman
warns:*

Never trust a man with
a typewriter
between his lips:
when we kiss, I watch the meaning
of your secret breath
in a mirror;
I make love
on glass, and sprawl
in a hundred ways
to learn the truth
about the back of your head
while my tongue
plunges
full
into your mouth.²¹

If, on the other hand, the cannibal sleeps with the neighbour's pregnant dog, and wishes that as a lover he could plant tigers under Mary-Anne's hair ('until / the sound of their feeding / would be all you could hear'²²), can he really ever 'see anything / past the edge' of his eyeballs?²³

The danger is certainly there, if we watch the dialogue among 'we' and 'us' in Parrot gradually move towards the more strident 'I'—'a duet, with God'²—of Owl. His choice of birds is revealing. But Cooperman is a genius of modulation, stretching images and language to limits which he himself determines, while still maintaining his 'raging balance.'² Parrot, in several ways, was more experimental than Owl: more concerned with sound phrasing and even rhyme (The Cave), with exploration for a voice (least successfully found in For Thomas and Jenifer's Song), and with the incisiveness of Old Testament imagery (as in the chilling Children of Terezin). The spider that burned on the rim of his eye had been there for a long time.² Yet the nightmare metaphors of Owl are harder, more cinematic and evisceral, more bitterly coherent:

The man with the brass intestine
squeezes barbed wire
from the closed holes of his face.
He blows cubes of silence
from his nostrils, like a whale
trapped in a dry river.²

With CAPPELBAUM'S DANCE Cooperman seems to have reached a personal edge of time; what 'dances on the edge / of becoming,' ironically, is now 'TRUTH.'² Ironically, because his 'scream / at the moon' is 'bleached,'² and the ubiquitous mouth is filled

with iron flowers,
an echo
of something
hard.³

In one way, echoes are awkward; The Party, for instance, might well be a random-grammatical printout from a computer concordance of his earlier work. Yet echoes can be softer and richer: outright destruction is frequently more satisfying than nibbling and gradual dissolving. Here is a new delicacy of loving grief (End of Term in Oregon), self-deprecatory humour (Cappelbaum's Canticle; Cappelbaum and the Carpenter Ants), and rediscovery of ethical Judaism. Combining all three, Atrocity! Atrocity! finds him in a flower-wagon after an encounter with a drunken New Mexico policeman:

all I could do was wish for a black skin or a brown or even a little bit chocolate, so I could suffer legitimately; somehow it seemed like Russia again, when the poor peasants hated the Czar, and dreamed of burning his palace down, but broke

the fiddle of my Uncle Louis instead, because it was so much closer, and maybe out of tune anyway . .

Believe me, it's been a lousy 3,000 years: running all the way either toward Revolutions or away from them.

Cooperman's solid bloody landscape is also peopled by those sucking 'TRUTH, like / a stone lollypop,'³¹ whose residences simply aren't in their own skulls. The new cannibals of Revolution include architects, blacks, 'that jovial cop / with teeth snapping from his zipper,'³² and especially the necrophiliac poet

with a blue cape and HISTORY hanging from his crotch, who gets an erection every time he passes a fire.³³

Yet at the end, CAPPELBAUM'S DANCE has moved beyond prophecy to parable. Cappelbaum, whether he is an owl, parrot, dachshund, or Cooperman himself, is dancing on razors at the centre of his world. Like Virgil guiding Dante up that hairy mountain in the absolute middle of the divine inferno, Cooperman's exploration now includes both the stars and a human perspective of Satan. It is good, if dangerous to have such a man among us, emerging to swing over the green leaves of his one-tree forest,³

a balancing monster of love.

1 J. Michael Yates, *Non-Classical Surrealism*, *The Carlton Miscellany*, X, 4 (Summer 1969), 115.

2 Fred Cogswell, review of OWL, *Queen's Quarterly*, LXXVI, 1 (Spring 1969), 163.

3 Peter Stevens, *Ideas and Icons*, *Canadian Literature*, 40 (Spring 1969), p. 77.

4 BEAUTIFUL LOSERS (New York: Bantam, 1967), pp. 121-22.

5 Cappelbaum *Among the Cannibals*, DANCE.

6 BEAUTIFUL LOSERS, p. 122.

7 Flyleaf, PARROT.

8 See J. H. Matthews, *AN INTRODUCTION TO SURREALISM* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1965), p. 167.

9 Corneille, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 172.

10 *Surrealism: a Lecture on*, DANCE.

- 11 *Flyleaf (II)*, PARROT.
- 12 *The Lesson*, OWL.
- 13 *Why is a Poem*, OWL.
- 14 *September Seminar*, OWL.
- 15 *Why is a Poem*, OWL.
- 16 *Jenifer at 8 O'Clock*, PARROT.
- 17 *Portrait of Jenifer Holding Fruit*, OWL.
- 18 *Carnival at Mt. Whistler*, OWL.
- 19 *Inventory*, OWL.
- 20 *Cappelbaum's Love Song*, PARROT.
- 21 *The Cannibal*, OWL.
- 22 *Mary-Anne*, OWL.
- 23 *The Gift*, OWL.
- 24 *The Blessing*, OWL.
- 25 *The Reef*, PARROT.
- 26 *See The Web*, PARROT.
- 27 *Canticle in Praise of Green Music*, OWL.
- 28 *Cappelbaum Among the Cannibals*, DANCE.
- 29 *Christmas Light Show*, DANCE.
- 30 *Elegy*, DANCE.
- 31 *Crusade*, DANCE.
- 32 *Cappelbaum Hangs Up*, DANCE.
- 33 *Cappelbaum and the Serious Woman*, DANCE.
- 34 *Cappelbaum's Harmonica*, DANCE.

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BLANCO: A NEW SYNTHESIS OF THE POETRY OF OCTAVIO PAZ

by Ramon Xirau

*From yellow to red to green,
pilgrimages to clarity,
The word is visible in blue
whirlwinds.
The drunken circuit spins,
The five senses revolve
around the abstracted
Amethyst.
I lose my shadow,
I advance
Through impalpable forests,
The swift sculptures of wind,
endless,
sharpened passages,
I advance,
My steps
dissolve
In a space that vanishes
In thoughts I do not think.
— from Ladera Este**

BLANCO, PUBLISHED IN 1967, IS THE RICHEST OF THE POEMS BY Octavio Paz since PIEDRA DE SOL. A poem of the word, BLANCO is also a poem of return to the word itself. Beyond meaning and significance, the word opens itself to the silence that creates it and from which proceeds, as from a point of irradiated light, according to Grosseteste, the totality of the universe.

In a short explanatory note, Paz says that BLANCO can be read as a complete poem, in groups of four or eight, as an erotic poem, as a poem of the word that moves from 'white' to

‘white’ (from silence to silence), or as a poem of sensation, perception, and knowledge. Antecedents of a possible multiple reading can be found in Ezra Pound, Apollinaire, and Mallarmé. On the other hand, the punctuation of BLANCO is rhythmic, not orthographic, and possibilities of a rhythmic reading find precedent in certain works of Mallarmé (Igitur, and Un coup de dés), some poems of Apollinaire, as well as in the Spanish baroque of the Seventeenth Century.

In order to penetrate the significance of this work it is necessary to examine more carefully the preceding observations. What exactly does BLANCO say? BLANCO is actually a poem of the word in two ways: it is a poem formed by words, and it is always conscious that it is a poem concerned with the nature of those words. In the essays of CORRIENTE ALTERNA, Paz writes: ‘Modern poetry is an attempt to abolish all meaning because it foresees itself as the ultimate meaning of life and man.’ The poem does not deal with meanings; it is the meaning. Nor does it deal with the world; it is the world: a world that recreates itself having been transformed in words. More than attempting dialogue with the world, Octavio Paz intends in BLANCO to create the world of dialogue. To achieve this end, the poet makes use of a world of signs whose meaning is inherent in the signs themselves. Thus, the words of BLANCO are ‘ageless,’ ‘a deserted language,’ ‘reality of perception’ that transcends the ‘unreality of the perceiver.’ In a circular time that goes from innocence to the world and back to innocence, the poem is the word and is essential.

**Translated by Thomas Hoeksema, who also selected this excerpt from BLANCO and translated this essay by Ramon Xirau.*

In BLANCO this word is not ‘unreal’ when ‘we understand’ that the ultimate meaning of the word and function of words is the Spirit. From one cycle to another (from eroticism to the word, from love to the world, from the word to the flower, from the flower to the word) ‘the spirit / is an invention of the

body / the body / is an invention of the world / the world / is an invention of the Spirit.'

Paz has attempted continually both in his poetry and essays to achieve the reconciliation of opposites. To seek such a union — as did Heraclitus, Nicolas de Cusa, Plotinus, Novalis and Surrealism — is to move toward the awakening, the 'return to dream with open eyes;' the innocence that Paz envisioned in *LABYRINTH OF SOLITUDE*. If we can speak of Being here, what is it we are able to see with 'open eyes?' What resolution of opposites or reconciliation will reveal to us the presence of a foundation? In the majority of previous works by Paz, there are three ways that allow this reunion and understanding: love, the sacramental, and the poetic image. These same experiences are present in *BLANCO*, but beyond them there is in this poem a unanimity that sounds final and definitive.

BLANCO is certainly a poem that ascends in spirals, from sensation to perception, from this to imagination and finally to understanding. However, it is also an erotic poem whose function is to 'enter' and 'penetrate' 'the land of closed eyes' (land that is Woman, Image, Unity) and the land of 'vigilant water.' How is this entrance accomplished? By way of love and carnal possession and, beyond the senses — without denying either senses or flesh — through a look at 'what I look upon,' that finally reveals to me what 'looks at me.'

For the Greek, Jewish, and Christian mystic (from Cantor de los cantares through Plotinus — mystic of the 'eye' —, Meister Eckhart, Tauler, and St. John of the Cross), to know is to enter, step by step, into the inexpressible universe of contemplation which Paz calls 'the ageless word, close to fundamental and first innocence.' But if *BLANCO* — not a mystical poem but essentially a poem of contemplation — seems close to Western mysticism, it is still more close to mystical forms of India. We might recall that *BLANCO* has as an epigraph a quotation from *HEVAJRA TANTRA*. The word

‘tantra’ means, very rigorously, system, perception, ceremony, structure, doctrine. Revealed to Siva to serve as sacred writing in the Fourth Age — the current age of man — the Tantra system constitutes one of the fountains of spiritual life in India. Hermetic, this rite and way are reminiscent also of some of the teachings of the Gnostics. Male and Female are the bipolar principles of Tantra. The Female is the mobile and temporal energy by which we can be restored in the masculine principle of eternity.

It is not necessary to assume that Octavio Paz follows point by point any philosophical or religious system of India. Nor is it necessary to suggest that BLANCO might be the lyrical expression of a personal religious experience. It is on the other hand necessary to point out the convergence of the ideas that Paz has developed throughout his work with this oriental influence, which at least poetically, seems to be present in BLANCO. The important difference is that the unity Paz sought in previous works seems to have been achieved with plenitude in BLANCO. In BLANCO opposites agree in every moment since the moment is not restricted to the withdrawal of woman in the man, or the world in the Spirit. Appearances of time revolve. BLANCO remains a total language poem in which the language is also ‘atonement.’ From the world of appearances we ascend (‘pilgrimages to clarity’) to ‘transfiguration,’ to the fountain of light where all is — as is the exterior fire of the Platonic cave — unity without shadow.

Poetry of communion without renunciation, BLANCO confirms the central experience that Octavio Paz expressed in an earlier essay: ‘The poet breaks from solitude, moved by desire, toward communion.’

OUR DILUTED IRIS

by Mary Graham Lund

PERHAPS THE MODERN READER'S EYE has been too often assaulted by the violence of newsreels, too often distorted to the fragmentation of microscopic slides to focus to a wholeness — physiologically, psychologically, or historically. The title of this article is from the last line of a poem by James Franklin Lewis titled *In Memoriam* and addressed to Hart Crane (reprinted in *The Explicator*, Jan., 1960), the complete sentence being: 'Thy splintered contradictories of machined full dream / Whelm back upon us from thy toiling diluted iris.'

Crane attempted to incorporate the machine into modern poetry without fragmentation, by a process that was almost physiological, as if *The Bridge* were a spinning-out of nerve fibers from his own brain, its broken cables a plasmic projecting of his own flesh. While T. S. Eliot was denying our American tradition, Crane was building upon it, extending Walt Whitman's mystic reach into cosmic consciousness by gathering the scattered stones of American history to buttress the suspension cables of the myth — the curves of space and time and spirit which he hurled toward an empathic God.

John Gould Fletcher observed a striking resemblance between the poetry of Hart Crane and that of James Franklin Lewis. At first, Lewis resented Fletcher's suggestion and replied that he had not read Crane. But Fletcher pointed out similarities in style — Elizabethan rhetoric, Whitmanian realism, symbolic myth-making. He did not mention the basic resemblances — the symphonic curve, the dynamics of metaphor. He missed also the basic differences between the two. Crane was a man of few ideas, but strong beliefs that

amounted almost to superstitions: he believed in his own destiny, believed blindly in his own genius, in the possibility of writing an American epic that would synthesize and articulate a national consciousness. Lewis was a man of multiple ideas (scientific theories effloresced in his poetry), but he lived in the constant tension of a suspension of belief. For him, truth was always temporal and the search for it eternal.

The main element of Crane's literary life was confusion, the artistic confusion of the many masters he acknowledged: Whitman and Poe, the French Symbolists, Blake, and the Metaphysical poets whom Eliot had made the current mode. Lewis was forever seeking fusion, in both form and content. Each man inherited the chaos of his time. Crane responded so fully to the time spirit that he could not go beyond it. He believed so completely in his own destiny that his failure to achieve the measure of greatness he desired was a personal catastrophe. He let the pressure of Whitman's vatic poetry limit his own gifts. His affirmation failed because it lacked the direct attack, the Miltonic approach that may support even a wrong idea. Crane's intuitive perceptions, his high moments of poetic ecstasy were undisciplined.

Lewis accepted chaos to gloat over the fragments — stuff for the building of a new and greater civilization. He celebrated the time spirit as a foe to be conquered, a step to be used in the upward ascent of man. Lewis recognized no limitations, either in the goal to be set, or in man's ability to achieve it.

Hart Crane's great poem, *The Bridge*, is a celebration of chaos, the bridge itself a symbol of organization, but there is seldom a fusion of the metaphysical and the mechanical in the poem. The bridge is a static symbol, incapable of renewal, as is Whitman's prairie or Lewis's dust. The *STERILE DUST* contained the seeds of growth; it became the *FERTILE DUST* when visited by the 'soothing and polyandrous rain.'

Lewis started two books with these titles. The best of the STERILE DUST poems he later incorporated in THE APOCALYPSE OF HARMONY, the book he had ready for the printer at the time of his death. The number of sonnets in the FERTILE DUST sequence mounted to 170, with others still unfinished.

Neither poet wrote in the tradition of rejection of Rimbaud and Eliot. Crane was an absolutist who strove toward mystic vision, a pantheist who sought an absolute reality. Lewis was a relativist who thought the quest more rewarding than the discovery: 'If a seeming thinker seeks a capital T for truth, / 'Tis by his faith in hunting it already found' (Reality: The Temporary Truth of Us — University of Kansas City Review, Winter, 1946). Although Crane professed belief in the high mission of the poet, he had no deep confidence in the significance of his own work. Lewis, who received much less acclaim in his lifetime, trusted that the strong cables spun out from his unconscious by his eager brain would some day swing out into time to be of some advantage to posterity.

Hart Crane was like Poe in that the inadequacy and pretentiousness of his knowledge and the waywardness and perversity of his spirit limit his greatness. But both Poe and Crane possessed an enormous vitality of imagination and a great virtuosity in handling words. Each strove mightily to bring life to the verbal symbols of his English heritage and to fuse within his own work the larger, ruder, fresher symbols of his American environment. Like Poe, Crane had only a superficial understanding of the thought of his day, or of the essential contribution of the past. Crane defined the function of the poet as the expression of a 'formal integration of experience.' Yet his own experience was chaotic. His purpose, expressed in an essay (1929), was to 'attempt to do for his age what Whitman had done for his.' Yet what that was Crane only vaguely surmised. He saw Whitman as a mystic of cosmic consciousness of a particular integrity, or 'oneness,' and on that mystic pattern he constructed the

'bridge' which he frequently addresses as if it were an avatar, or at least a mediator: for example, the last two lines of *To Brooklyn Bridge*, which are 'Unto us lowliest sometimes sweep, descend / And of thy curviship lend a myth to God.'

The last so-frequently quoted line is a fair example of Hart Crane's indefinite imagery, so greatly styled that it induces an emotion, however vague. It was Crane's 'diapason,' his control of the language, that elicited John Gould Fletcher's admiration, and led him to the comparison with Lewis quoted in *Experiment* (Summer, 1946): 'No modern poet has ever rivalled or indeed equalled Frank Lewis in his command over the resources of the English vocabulary. Except for Hart Crane—who similarly had tried to work a spell with the syllables of the English language...'

But Fletcher was looking at the surface only. Neither Crane nor Lewis was trying to work a spell. Each was trying to build with words, the elemental things that are left when a civilization falls. Lewis compares them with tiles that one must pick up out of the rubble. And if whole tiles were lacking, the poet uses the pieces. (See *Primitivism—Experiment*, Winter, 1946). Each poet was exploring his subconscious.

Hart Crane drowned in his, because he no longer had a center to which he could cling. The essential poetic ego which Crane had once trusted to supply him with air and light in his daring underwater explorations had become a 'diluted iris,' a watchman on an unfinished bridge, trying to see too far and missing the random moments that make a life, or a poem. Only the random moment is free of the unstable laws over which men fight and despair. The longer it is held through words—the only building blocks of a culture—the more the elementary things of life are revealed. Crane was trying too hard to fuse his 'splintered contradictions of machined full dreams.'

Whereas, Crane's anxiety turned inward, Lewis's reached forever outward. It was not ecstatic self-fulfillment, but apocalyptic world-involvement that became the object of his poetic reach, as his muse became increasingly objective about subjective states. Poetry, to the poet, is more than an art based on language. It is a state of consciousness both receptive of life and productive of the fiction that will become life on a higher range and of a better order. It is a vehicle for the exploration of the poet's sensibility in relation to reality. Lewis was doubtless thinking of this drawing of all things of the past to the center of the poet's consciousness for reassembling into a vision of the future when he wrote the sixteen-line poem *Samples*, published in *THREE YOUNG POETS* (Decker, 1942). The third stanza shouts:

Here memories, beach-harbored, pile,
And read-about things worn back to time,
And throw-away things amassed in slivers,
Come choosed on my measuring-mile.

In Lewis's personal copy of this book, Fletcher wrote in the margin, 'Close to Crane,' and Lewis wrote below it the comment, 'I don't see the resemblance to Crane, though it's a fact I am close to him.' Both Fletcher and Lewis admired Crane, but Fletcher feared that Lewis was on the same dangerous path of mysticism that led Crane to suicide. He expressed this feeling openly after Lewis's death in the obituary he wrote for *Experiment*. Actually the 'seeds of death' were in the older poet, not in Lewis. The drive which was in Shelley, which has been mistakenly interpreted as the 'death wish,' was also in Lewis. But Shelley's drive was toward life, as a close study of the fragment of a long poem he was outlining at the time of his death clearly shows. Lewis, too, was starting a long poem of optimistic, perhaps apocalyptic intent. A comparative study of the two fragments, Lewis's *Into a Fair Country*, and Shelley's *Triumph of Life*, should make exciting discoveries.

Lewis's love of Emerson must surely have led him to that philosopher's dictum: 'Art is nature passed through the alembic of man.' The alembic is not harmed by use, unless it is defective. Lewis's mind was as near a wholeness as the American dream has produced. It was hardened in the Emersonian virtues and elasticized by the changing laws of science. His language was alive with the plunging energy of the new poetic vision being discovered by Spanish poets, as well as by the American poets of Harriet Monroe's 'Revival,' which ended its first phase in 1923 with the publication of *THE WASTE LAND*. Besides Eliot, there were Masters, Robinson, Frost, Sandburg, Lindsay, and Lola Ridge, whose experimentation with the sonnet form excited Lewis to use it as a tool for the exploration of his own unconscious. He must have read *FIREHEAD* with excitement, but he had his own gentle way with the memory of the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

In a poem as yet unpublished titled *Dialogue at the Grave of Sacco*, two wanderers meet, one holding flowers, the other with empty hands. The latter advises the former to throw the flowers and not 'lay them timidly down / Like rose-buds timid on a baby's grave.' But he himself has no flowers, and longs for a 'hard flower to drop beside / Your lilies.' The bringer of lilies finds a nail in his pocket and hands it to him, saying, 'Take it. Plant it by my baby-flowers. / He will understand them both, I think, / And so will we.'

There's something childlike and gentle about this, something humorous and absurd. Such passages abound in Lewis's poetry, friendly gargoyles to run off the tears of pity, the slime of original sin, the rotted leaves of ancient guilt. Grotesques like fragile miniatures grin and leer and wink from his sonnets. Here is Sonnet 32 from the *FERTILE DUST* sequence which treats a tragic waste-land theme in casual fashion, celebrating the momentary victory of one man in the fight against nature:

And repair? What of repair? What of the local Hammer-clap? I have saved my island-shack, Yes. I have whacked it firm against the vocal Inorganic dust. Have pushed it back Erect, and braced the north angle surely. But here my crack-lipped radio sits and hisses Of its million hovels, insecurely Sounded, how more ice will ride to twist us, After morrows safened with the hammer.— One each, one each, we pound, we pound, we pound, Darning the snow-holes with our lusty clamor, Self-charity. Saving our books, our ounce Of butter, and our mouth-harp. Samples, Flinders. And an isolative comfort raking cinders.

There is an earlier sonnet from the same sequence (No. 28) which treats the same subject with a little more optimism. Yet it recognizes the immense task before mankind in the necessary conquest of Nature, which seems indeed a repetition of Keats's search for truth and Shelley's breathless chase after intellectual beauty.

Unsearchable may be the hard hill, By telescope or finger. But what deceit Its innmost granite and its outmost frill Of lounging snow committed to the streets Of distant scientific cities, they Imposed upon it. So may likewise stand The case of tongue-tied earth. Men betray Her to herself, reduce to salt and sand. And all by a wrong sampling. The filed card In reference to an envelope of dust, The overtaken hare, the chipped shard Of an Aztec temple, or the carefully scraped rust— At appalling rates add trifles into being; But the earth is beauty, and its truth is seeing.

Man's history has become one with the earth's, an integral part of its beauty in chipped shard and scraped rust. Yet individual men need not be dead to blend with the landscape. In *Clarity* (PALISADE, I, 4, 1942) he deals with men: indeed he might have been celebrating a meeting of the United Nations almost twenty years later. The penultimate stanza suggests activities beyond the walls in an election year — little people behind the newscasters and the news

analysts, arguing, wrangling, with ‘facial thrust’ of evolutionary memory. The greatest ‘clarity’ is in the first stanza, which is without people — only the sun is responsible for the cut clear shape of scenic contours across the map.

The four stanzas build a spiraling ladder upward. The first stanza is not all natural scenery. The ‘road’s tape’ was man-built, ‘the crape’ a human symbol of woe, and the suggestion that it may be assimilated by nature, to be used again in the eternal cycle, is pertinent. A somewhat deteriorated humanity listens to a ‘noon’s dusk,’ surely a catastrophe, but an old one, frayed with a wrangling discussion which these derelicts on the fringe of a culture ‘ungraciously’ discuss further.

The tugging ‘balloon-trees’ suggest some conflict between man and nature, but man triumphs in a burst of authority ‘initiated, argued, conned.’ The women play an ambiguous part, but still their sly selection, whispered though it is, sounds louder (by reason of its placement in the line) than the clangor of oratory. Civilization, in desperate circumstances though it may be, comes off pretty well; it is working hard to survive, working with clear heads, using the elaborate arts those heads have devised for survival.

James Franklin Lewis never left the United States. He remained all his life a denizen of that Middle West which nourished both Eliot and Pound. ‘Denizen’ seems to be the correct word, for he never took out citizenship papers. We are told that Lewis’s father was a Methodist minister of Welsh parentage, his mother a schoolteacher in the Middle West, but perhaps he was the changeling son of that Queen Mab whom Shelley fathered, who came to the American West with Robert Owen and his socialist followers. His refusal to conform led to a migratory sort of existence as he shifted his rebellious spirit from one small college to another. It was an Emersonian type of rebellion that possessed him, as he

sought an authority not alien to the World, but of the essence of Man. Many of his short poems force us to the contemplation of an individual experience, each poem a little drama, growing out of a situation. In the later poems, he becomes the city, or the countryside, or collective man in his battle of the centuries.

His early poems were in the classic tradition, following the 'essay' type of Pope, and using the heroic couplet. By 1937 he was enthralled by the spirit of lyric, interested in things only on condition that they provoke in him a deep and profound state, which even when it is bitter is a joy — the poetic state. By 1941 he had come to believe that this affective state, the 'lyric state,' was a mode of knowledge, that his receptivity might make discoveries in the realm of spirit beyond the province of science. He saw the necessity for the stepped-up mutation of the human brain which is taking place today, and knew, as Shelley could only guess, the 'historic pain' involved. Shelley did have some inkling of the terrific strain put upon man's nervous system by the emergent evolution of mind following an era of revolution. He wrote in a poem titled Mutability that we are 'like forgotten lyres whose dissonant strings / Give various response to each varying blast, / . . .' Shelley's hero was Napoleon; Lewis's was Sir Walter Raleigh. For he 'planted the heart' in America, Raleigh's own great heart, 'The great pre-motor, the primitive revolver.'

See we not Raleigh, at our great conclaves, As when the nation's dry-bitten chemists Flash their curves of modest contribution On the unexcited screen, without applause; When American mathematics integrates . . . its pure symbols . . . See we not Raleigh at the language-meeting, The engineer's exhibit, the county hog-show, At the Yankee stadium with the bases full, . . . Raleigh the poet stroking Smooth brave words upon his tongue, Tasting word-selection, stinging with the tang Of a wine like

Whitman's, prose like Henry Mencken's. . . . Always the exploration, the search for order In adventure, the sober truth of Dewey, Or the dashed crazy beauty of great Crane.

These lines from *The Ascending Wave* (Crescendo, 1943) show Lewis's continuing obsession with Crane. He worshiped him as the disciple of Goethe and Prometheus, and saw in him reluctantly a specific kinship. Crane's broken bridge-span and his own never-ending, always-beckoning Hegelian spiral were thrust daily into his consciousness by the box of unfinished sonnets. 'A sonnet sequence,' he complains in a long poem titled *Song to Myself*, 'is a series / That takes a theme and taps it upside down, / draws a curve, and drags it through the town, / Gives it history, gives it prophecy, / Thumps it again for luck, and sets it free.' The FERTILE DUST sonnets were never freed from the confining box. Three were published in the poet's lifetime (*The Tanager*, 1944); three more in *Targets 5* (1961), four more in various magazines, two in this article. But Lewis expected posthumous acceptance. In *Audabe* (Raven Anthology, 1943), he predicts his personal triumph, as well as that of mankind: 'For now have I passed beyond the age of age and weariness, / Even as the appalling earth and worldful of men has done. / It is Easter-years to be, and passioncenturies, / And a triumph of that peace well here begun.'

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THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE PEN

Charles Doyle

'You'll lose it if you talk about it'
— Hemingway

Don't feed me flattery any more.
Don't stall, I won't become a swan.
To tease is nothing but a bore,
Especially when the heat is on.
What if words are the poet's tool?
Sometimes the man will have his head.
Some ends well fit the metric rule.
Rhythm, not rime, works best in bed.

THE WHITE COLLAR DROP-OUTS

(OR THE BROTHERHOODS OF SHAKESPEARE,
TIMOTHY LEARY AND EMILIO ZAPATA)

A. Fredric Franklyn

THE BROTHERHOOD OF WHAT?

T On the face of it, Lewis John Carlino's original script concerns itself with two of the largest criminal institutions flourishing in the United States of the first half of the Twentieth Century: the Mafia and the Syndicate. The former is apparently something of an anachronism in post-World War II America; while, of course, the latter, at least according to the well-publicized Senate crime investigations, is still very much with us.

Mr. Carlino's story views both institutions somewhat in the style of family organizations. But, naturally, the Mafia — La Santa Mama — is the one which explicitly regards itself in this light. And Frank Geneta, the older of the two brothers and the story's protagonist, clearly considers himself a beneficiary of, and obligated to, this clannish old-country society.

Nevertheless, I think the author's society is the larger one: I think his focus achieves the scope at least of the packaged social organism we call Twentieth Century America, if not the agglomerate of nations and satellites participating in the values and the civilization of our time. In a marvelously oblique, yet powerful way, the whole drop-out ethic of the beat-hippie-yippie-acid generation comes up for a devastatingly critical commentary in this saga of two brothers whose conflicting values separate them tragically — and just incidentally tear the one world they have between them to pieces.

And the ultimate comment the film makes is that, after all, you can't drop out. That is not an available choice!

A number of obvious comparisons readily suggest themselves for this Kirk Douglas vehicle, released by Paramount, capably directed by Martin Ritt, and produced by Douglas: Richard Thorpe's M.G.M. film, *THE BLACK HAND* (1949), which exploited Cosa Nostra activities in New York; and more recently a plethora of Syndicate-Mafia-Cosa Nostra-based tales filmed here and abroad, such as Vittorio De Seta's *BANDITI A ORGOLO* (1961), Albert Lattuada's *IL MAFIOSO* (1963), John Boorman's *POINT BLANK* (1967), Antonio Isasi's *THEY CAME TO ROB LAS VEGAS*, and Peter Yates' *BULLIT* (1968). These and a myriad others in the genre are the obvious parallels which first come to mind. But the truth is that *THE BROTHERHOOD* actually has a more direct connection with a film like the Timothy Leary circus, *TURN ON TUNE IN AND DROP OUT*, (since Carlino's thesis is an amazingly specific answer to the Leary ethic) than it has in common with any of these other superficially related stories with their background rooted in the same genre. I do not mean to suggest that there is any comparison at all between the self-serving, quasi-documentary Dr. Leary made for emotional cripples and children, and the mature philosophy of Carlino's script, in terms of quality. The only thing they have in common is that, whether or not the author of *THE BROTHERHOOD* intended it, his story's point of view is diametrically opposed (and therefore juxtaposed) to the childish irresponsible values and the pseudo-metaphysical trappings with which the astute Dr. Leary has sought to structure his allegedly criminal transgressions into the form and substance of a religion.

The feature-length, technicolor, underground release, which purports at once to be a personal apology for the Leary drug philosophy as well as a trippy little side show for heads and sensation-seekers, is devoted primarily to a more or less

sustained exhortation by the master himself, with continual cuts to a specific 'trip' which one Ralph Metzger is supposed to be taking. These cuts are, to say the least, imaginative. And they include a luscious girl show, which becomes just another nudie tease because of the continual cutting away from it and back to it. But, in any case, just how much honest reference all these pyrotechnical psychedelic effects have to the actual L.S.D. experience which the subject, Mr. Metzger, is really having is of course a moot question. And it's all beside the point anyway, which in fact is the apology, the 'explanation' of Leary's drop-out ethic...

Toward the end of this fanciful, if not terribly plausible, epic the Doctor sums up his peroration: 'Don't vote! Don't protest! Don't picket! Don't politick! And above all, don't let them take your mind!' (Presumably that's to be Mr. Leary's prerogative!) In the context of this vehicle, however, the message is not even pure. After this psychedelic cesspool of carnival and peep-show effects, the end result is an overcerebrated light show! And the message which the show was to have conveyed—that playing with your own mind with drugs or letting self-elected *soi disant* messiahs like Timothy Leary play with it for you is in some unspecified way a superior choice to letting cynical politicians do it—is lost in the movie's more overwhelming climate of games and showmanship.

The relative sophistication of Mr. Carlino's dramaturgy notwithstanding, his in the end is the purer message: You can't drop out; because life doesn't permit it. And if you persist in seeking this impossible disassociation anyway, it will lead, not to any unnatural and ridiculous freedom from the consequences of one's own acts, but only to the supreme involvement of tragedy. And finally, if you're really unlucky (i.e., too desperately insistent on this absurd notion of escape), you may even discover that the tragedy which overtakes your foolishness will be worked by your own

hands. The younger brother of Carlino's story, Vince (played by Alex Cord) becomes ultimately not only the central figure of a tragedy which he has himself provoked, but the *deus ex machina* as well of that tragedy!

Filmed entirely on location, in New York (at the old Biograph And Filmways Studios) and at Palermo and Cefala Diana in Sicily, *THE BROTHERHOOD* is that rarest of birds in the American cinema . . . a writer's film. Which is not to say less of its director's or its cast's contributions, but to say more of its author.

The story begins and ends in the homeland of La Santa Mama. Structurally it employs almost a full-length flashback, a device which would (and does) seem worn out almost anywhere else on the screen. (It is ruinously imposed on an already unreasonably fatigued audience, for instance, in Karel Reisz's *ISADORA*. And a variant of it is even more outrageously perpetrated on viewers in Hubert Cornfield's corny *THE NIGHT OF THE FOLLOWING DAY*.) But in the Carlino/Ritt film it works somehow; or, at least, it is not offensive . . .

As the picture opens, Vince is on a plane which is just coming into the airport in Palermo. After he disembarks, Vince seeks out a cab driver for directions and is directed to a second cab driver. And as he leaves, the first one steps into a phone booth and makes a call which sets up a chain reaction that has obviously been arranged. For the moment, however, the promised drama seems to flatten when we discover that the person Vince is looking for is his older brother, Frank (portrayed with imagination and restraint by Kirk Douglas). Vince's cab driver takes him out of town, into the hills, to the ruins of an old Arab-Norman castle, where Frank is waiting for him with a gun. When Frank sees who has come looking for him, he rushes to his kid brother, they embrace, and Frank takes Vince home with him to his wife, Ida (Irene Papas).

Ida apparently welcomes Vince almost as warmly, but as soon as she is alone with Frank (Vince has been taken to his room to rest and freshen up) she asks her husband if it isn't possible that perhaps his own brother is the one the Syndicate has selected and sent to Italy to make the hit. Frank tells Ida to shut up. He doesn't want to hear any more of that! But when she leaves him a moment later he is already recapitulating, in his mind's eye, all of the events which have led to this denouement. And thus begins the film's full-length flashback. It's a poor technique, even a dated one, but it's employed in the service of a corking story. All the same, the sequence which follows now is unquestionably the one with which the film should have opened. . . .

In a long shot the audience observes a struggle between three men, two of whom are attacking the third one. At first it appears that the encounter is to be confined to the relatively rational lengths of a fist fight; at most, a beating. But an instant later one of the pair has drawn a gun and shot the third man to death.

The event has occurred in a Jersey City garbage dump, amidst piles of refuse and against a backdrop of a panoramic view of the Wall Street skyline. At the conclusion of the violence, the attackers prop up their victim in a folding chair taken from the car trunk, tying him in it with his own belt. And just before they depart in the car, near which the struggle has transpired, one of them opens the jaws of the dead man and stuffs a canary into his mouth.

Somebody, evidently, has been singing.

To the wrong audience!

But he's a dead canary now. . . .

The whole sequence takes place very quickly and the story cuts from there to a large old-fashioned expensively-catered wedding party at a fancy penthouse restaurant which Frank has taken over entirely for his

brother's wedding reception. It is at this point the story line's only weak thread is sewn into it. Kirk Douglas' delineation of the character of Frank Geneta is easily his most inspired screen performance. And the role itself is an actor's tour de force. But the treatment which the younger brother receives, both in the writing and the performance, is an unfortunate contrast. . . .

Alex Cord is one of those physical personalities on the screen with attributes which are automatically so acceptable that, given a sufficiently protected role, he does not actually have to act. (So is Marlon Brando, despite the fact that he has acted now and then. But, so is David Niven, and he has never acted!) Cord has an excellent voice and physique and a particularly good face, handsome enough but with the strong character promontories and lines which avoid prettiness. His is not the insipid façade of a witheringly untalented matinee idol, such as Leslie Howard or Robert Taylor for instance, glued together entirely out of whole cloth and bunting by the skilled Hollywood plaster-of-Paris technicians, containing as much inherent character and masculinity as a poached egg. Cord is much more nearly a presence on the screen, in the same way George Siegel or George Peppard is, than these pampered fluff balls of the thirties, or the more recent ones, such as Richard Beymer and George Chakiris. But Cord is also tricky, like Siegel, and it's an open question whether, pushed to it, he could turn in a sustained piece of acting. In the role of the younger brother, Vince, he does not have to. That is the one really important weakness of *Carlino's* drama.

The initial glimpse we have of Vince—as Vince, and exclusive of the anticipatory sequence in Sicily at the beginning—poses him standing beside his brand new bride, Emma (Susan Strasberg), the pair of them caught in an almost classic duplication of the frozen happiness projected for the camera by wedding couples since the right emulsion

was first used on a photographic plate. Emma is dressed inevitably in an elaborate, white, bridal gown. And Vince is still wearing his lieutenant's uniform, having just concluded his service with the U.S. Armed Forces.

The posture works fine for this sequence, but neither Cord nor the character ever steps out of it again until the very last sequence. And it is frustratingly difficult to know precisely how much of this lack of human dimensions in the character should be attributed to Ritt's direction, how much to Cord's performance, and how much to Carlino's script.

It's a large wedding reception. This is a family event of major importance, and Frank is doing it right. If his father had been there, he would have been proud. Everybody is there. Vince's new father-in-law, Dominique Bertolo (Luther Adler), who is one of the top four or five men on the Syndicate's New York board, and an individual of great power, is seated of course at the main banquet table beside his daughter. With him, isolated at their own little island table in this sea of smaller tables occupied by Frank's friends and business connections, are a few others from the Syndicate, including Jimmy Egan (Murray Hamilton), Frank's most active enemy on the Board and the one who ultimately sends his own brother after him, all the way to Sicily, to kill him in retaliation for Bertolo's murder, later. Even the pair of hoods who have just murdered the informer in the New Jersey dump are here to report the successful hit to Frank, who apparently ordered it. And at another of these smaller tables sits a group of old men. They smile at everything that moves and looks Italian, but they also exchange some hard looks with the more Gaelic- and Semitic-looking group seated with Egan at the Syndicate table. These oldsters are the relics, the residue of the heyday of the Mafia's power in New York. For them, Frank has a peculiar attachment which the younger modern-thinking Vince cannot comprehend. Don Peppino (Eduardo Ciannelli,

one of the finest character actors in America) and Pietro Rizzi (Joe De Santis) are among this group. We will discover later that Don Peppino is, in fact, the head of the Mafia. In New York at least, it is an organization which has long since abdicated from real power. Such as it is, however, Peppino is its surviving leader there.

The important moment at this overcatered reception is the scene between Frank and Vince, outside on the terrace, when the two brothers contrive an opportunity to be alone momentarily and Frank asks the new groom what he's going to do, now that he's finished with both college and the army. Vince has taken a business course and is an accountant. He tells Frank that he wants in. He means he wishes to join his brother in the rackets. Far from reacting like the traditional older brother in clichéd Hollywood sin-and-redemption crime-melodramas, Frank is delighted that his brother has made this choice. He asks him if he's sure it's what he wants, and when Vince says yes, Frank admits he really needs him.

When Vince tells his bride about the choice he's made, on their nuptial night, she argues with him. She discovers then that it is what he really wants, and not at all something he's doing out of a misplaced sense of duty to his brother, as he first tries to convince her. Then he explains that he's lost too much time between college and the army; he's almost thirty, and he doesn't want to waste the rest of his life working so that he can wind up as a tenth vice president somewhere. Emma's father, Bertolo, has of course always been mixed up in this life, and Emma has hoped, with her marriage to Vince, to escape it. She reproaches him now for his patent self-deception. 'You really want this life,' she accuses, half in despair.

Vince takes another tack and tries to convince her that they can limit this connection to get what they want out of it without becoming too involved. He's a bookkeeper, not a

thug.

‘It won’t be the way you want it,’ she argues. ‘It’ll be the way they want it.’

Vince tells her to shut up, then. He’s not like her father or his brother.

‘Okay,’ she tells him. ‘That’s the way you want it, that’s the way it’ll be.’ Then she adds, ‘But I don’t want you to tell me anything. I don’t ever want to hear any of the details. It’s the only way I can make it, Vince. . . .’

But she is condemning herself, with this kind of compromise, to share precisely the fate which Vince is unwittingly fashioning for himself. Each uses a different method, arrives at the compromise in a different way. But, the spurious individual character of their separate rationales notwithstanding, it is essentially the same compromise with life which they are seeking:

Vince wants to begin at the top; he wants the big rewards to start coming in immediately. He thinks — even halfway believes — he’s ready for them because he’s picked up a little business accounting degree and has done a couple of years or so in the service. And he’s almost convinced himself that he can make a commitment as irrevocable as this, with the Syndicate, and still limit his degree of participation. (I’ll keep your books for you, and accept ten or a hundred times as much payment for it as any real bookkeeper could reasonably expect in a legitimate business! But you guys will have to hire some other people to do the actual killing and stealing and stuff like that!)

Emma loves Vince. This is the man she wants to live with, whose children she wants to bear. Nor is she at all averse to the life of luxury to which her father has accustomed her, and which she hopes Vince is going to continue giving her. And her father has reared her as a hothouse flower, supplying her with all the advantages of his criminal involvement without ever really rubbing her pretty nose in

the muddy source of these luxuries. Now she thinks she can ask and get the same sort of preferential treatment from her husband. (You think you're not going to have to soil your own hands with cordite. I know damned well that you're going to get something else besides ink on them. But that's okay. I won't care, as long as it doesn't affect me and I don't have to hear about it!)

What it amounts to is that each of them is asking for a free ride. Vince wants to associate himself with a criminal pattern, but only for the rewards. Emma wants to associate herself with the life Vince can give her, but only for its positive aspects. Neither of them wishes to pay the calibre of dues which the choice each is making realistically demands and will inevitably exact from them.

The similarity between Vince's and Emma's double-thinking and the self-duplicity, which is the fundamental characteristic of the Leary drop-out ethic, is overwhelming. Leary's adherents appear to be perfectly willing to take at least a partial advantage of the very fact of the existence of the society which, with lip protest at any rate, they are presumably eschewing. Even in the context of their so-called tribal encampments, hippies (or whatever their latest designation) are making use of a good deal of the resources of their despised, Twentieth-Century American culture, all the way from unemployment insurance up to and including an incredibly sophisticated contemporary medicine. And Leary himself has not been noticeably averse to making a canny use of the whole system of American jurisprudence to keep himself out of jail.

I'm not concerned only with pointing a finger here. Most of us would hire defense council if we were charged with alleged criminal acts. Most of us would go to a doctor if we were ill. And most of us would seek unemployment compensation if we were broke and out of work. But it's absurd to affect to condemn the whole of a social structure,

and to assert a personal stand of absolute nonparticipation, the while we continue to take the fullest possible advantage of those aspects of the same society which are useful and gainful to us. If it isn't ridiculous, the pose is, at the least, self-serving and dishonest.

Poor Vince: From the moment of his initial decision to commit himself to his new family (the Syndicate in this case) he becomes steeped in an involvement which leads him inexorably on, not only into a personal participation in the violence and crime he has tacitly condoned, but finally, in his own case, to fratricide.

And poor Emma: The particular family she has chosen to join is, on the surface, her own, her husband and the children they will beget. But the father she has selected for her children is completely committed to criminal violence, and she knows it. Just for openers, when the time comes for payola, her husband's brother will kill her father. And ultimately, the very life of her children, and her own life as well, will depend upon her husband's willingness to kill his own brother to save their necks. Because, if Vince does not murder Frank for the Syndicate, they will murder his entire family.

That simply does not stack up as any free ride.

Nor will Vince's act of fratricide conclude either his own or his wife's involvement. Assuming he gets away with this most heinous of murders, and assuming the Syndicate accepts him back and keeps its word about sparing his family — assuming even that both Vince and Emma can go on together, living with the knowledge of just how Vince had had to pay for their future — Emma's husband has taken a gun in his hand now for the Syndicate, just as she knew he would, and it is inconceivable either that there will be no repercussions (from the Mafia or the police) or that it will be the last action of its kind which his families (!) will require of him.

The nexus of the story is Frank's contrasting forthright sense of personal commitment. He is a member of the Syndicate board because his own organization controls a union which is vital to them — and because, some years ago, his father's murder was ordered by the Syndicate as one of a total of forty-one gangland slayings initiated to break the back of the Mafia's power in the New York underworld.

His Syndicate alliances notwithstanding, Frank still identifies with 'the Family' (Mafioso) very much as did his late father. Frank even plays boccie, an indoor form of lawn bowling, with the oldsters in La Santa Mama at their favorite tavern. Once, after a quarrel between the brothers, Vince demands to know what the hell Frank sees in those old men anyway. Frank replies by asking Vince why it disturbs him so much. What Frank sees in these death's-head remnants of New York's Mafia is very simple: They are his family; the greater Family, outside of the more immediate circle comprised of his wife, Ida, and their daughter, Carmela (Connie Scott). And they are his roots, the historical continuity he requires to give him a sense of place and of belonging. For this continuity he is willing to make any return, including the sacrifice of his own life. His is a total commitment. Vince, not Frank, is the faint-hearted hero, the cynic who seeks only his own advantage and who schemes to give as little as possible in return for it.

There is a scene later in which Frank is describing one of his first hits (a killing for the mob) to his companion, Bertolo, during the fatal ride when the latter is being driven to his death. Frank admits that he was paid a ridiculous sum, 460 dollars, for it. But, while the money was certainly an immediate motive, there was nevertheless a larger one: The declaration to the life he had chosen. This spectacularly underpaid act of violence was a part of his entrance fee.

Possibly no kind of killing is ultimately defensible—not even slaughtering animals for food. That is, however, another

question. What we are concerned with here is the degree of himself a man is willing to give to his life choices. For better or for worse, Frank's commitment was to a life of crime, and he knew that this meant commitment to extraordinary obligations as much as to unusual rewards. In his time and place, this sort of murder was axiomatically a concomitant to achieving any respect and leadership in the underworld of crime and violence with which he had aligned himself.

In much the same way, in Korea or in Vietnam, Frank might have been an American soldier embarking proudly to serve his country in a war which many good and bad Americans consider despicable and selfish. Just so, Tennyson's six hundred light horse cavalrymen charged the enemy of their Victorian 'family' in the Crimean war. These were English soldiers . . . fighting a Czarist army . . . on Turkish soil! Absurdity upon absurdity, they were also cavalrymen who were transported to the scene of the 'argument' by ship! But they invested their belief in what they were doing with a reckless disregard for their own lives which inspired a much-honored, second-rate poet to immortalize the fiasco occasioned by their uncritical devotion.

And there is yet another dimension we must map here: Mr. Carlin has chosen for his oblique thesis a peculiar dramatic focus. There is an astonishing connection between this focus and the one Vladimir Nabokov selected to emphasize the theme of *LOLITA*. Nabokov's thesis concerned itself with the will-o'-the-wisp which men call beauty and which, in tragic variety, all men follow hopelessly in one form or another; each man seeing this in the outlines of the form which he himself has imposed on its insubstantial essence. And in the construction of Humbert Humbert's bathetic saga he has deliberately chosen one of the most unlikely as well as socially unsympathetic of all the possible ideals of beauty which his fumbling protagonist might have followed: the

sexual idealization of young girls by a grown man.

Of course it's unsympathetic. And of course it is also hopeless. But that's exactly the point which Nabokov intended to make about beauty in general: that it is all illusion, one form of it just as unrealizable as another, and any kind of beauty possessing exactly as much content or validity as we ourselves arbitrarily give to it. It all ends in bitterness, Nabokov suggests, because beauty has no independent existence outside our own pet illusions. And this same disappointment, which all men suffer sooner or later, is only a question of degree, not one of kind. Humbert Humbert's particular foolishness is, in the end, only a more stark illustration of his author's theme.

Just so, exactly, has dramatist Carlino elected to pursue his story's central idea: That what is fundamental in a man is less the nature of the particular commitments he makes than it is the character of the devotion he gives to them.

Here, too, nobody argues that criminally trespassing against the rights of one's fellows, even to the extent of murder, is a good way of securing one's own place and future. That it is not is a separate kind of theme already more than adequately exploited in myriad less-effectively dramatized films with an underworld background. It is, as a matter of fact, one of the supporting secondary themes of *THE BROTHERHOOD* which the story's development continually reiterates.

The point is that it is a way of life (howsoever distasteful or criminal) which some men do choose. Both Frank and Vince have chosen it. But Vince's choice has been both completely unrealistic and completely dishonest, specifically because he has not really rooted himself in his own commitment. Frank's choice, on the other hand, the same one basically, is absolutely naked of this kind of self-serving double-thinking. He has always understood explicitly the ugly nature of the thing to which he has given his hopes and

his allegiance. And he has never balked at meeting the obligations which, with its uncommonly munificent rewards, his choice has brought him. His justification may not convince others. And it certainly would not move anybody to clemency in a court of law. But it is sufficient for him: What is good for the Family (La Santa Mama) is good. Period. Good for him and good. If not good for all, at least good for all within the Family. His thought processes, as well as his values, may be a roller coaster of illogic and criminal stupidity. But they are his values. He has invested himself, totally, in them. It has cost him something in the past, and will cost him everything in the future. It will cost his brother just as much, notwithstanding the half-hearted nature of Vince's commitment or his lack of belief in what he is doing. Or his idiot rationalization to Emma that when the going gets too rough they can always drop out!

In fact, we cannot drop out, Carlino tells us. It is not an available choice. Life does not permit it. And those foolish enough to persist in the notion that this is possible will suffer as least as disastrously as anyone else; only they will never even see the disaster coming, until they are steam-rolled by it!

It is the essence of the existential dilemma: We have no right to choose for others. We cannot avoid deciding for ourselves. In deciding for self we are always automatically deciding for all men. Thus the existentialist theory of dual responsibility and unavoidable guilt is resolved by the decision to at least live one's life with the force of deliberate decision, since live it we will anyway and since we incur the same degree of guilt (responsibility) in any case. At least, we will have acted consciously, both for ourselves and others. To insist that we can avoid a commitment of that extent is only to go ahead and make it anyway, but blindly, so that we have no chance of acting wisely or generously.

Twice in the film Frank tells Vince: 'You know it all. You know everything, don't you? You don't know nothing!' The accusation is expressed in Frank's own peculiar idiom, and even sounds something like a regular argumentative ploy, used all the time by all sorts of people whose habit is to rely on such conversational gambits in their speech with others.

The first time Frank makes use of the ploy is during a quarrel they have because Frank has been fighting, as usual, with the other board members of the Syndicate and Vince is afraid the Syndicate intends to have Frank hit. He is also embarrassed by Frank's negative behavior because Vince has a good thing with the Syndicate and he doesn't want Frank's obstreperousness to jeopardize it.

The second time is after Frank has learned from Don Peppino that Vince's father-in-law, Bertolo, was the original traitor who fingered their father and forty other Mafia leaders for extermination by the Syndicate.

The difference between the two occasions is that both Frank and the audience are in possession of special knowledge, on the second occasion when Frank accuses his brother of militant ignorance, which we know that Vince is not aware of. The first time, Frank's accusation merely seems to be the sort of thing one says in the heat of an argument. And because of that, the identical expression of this accusation the second time, later on, takes on an added emphasis which it could not otherwise have supplied this scene.

We know now that Frank's accusation is true: For all his apparent logic and evident sophistication, there is a crucial piece of information which Vince lacks, and because of which his brother's viewpoint has unaccountably gained the ascendancy in our regard. It's a neat dramatic technique because, up to now, we have only subliminally been aware of Vince's fundamental lack of character, and very much aware of Frank's apparent weakness in his penchant for

old-fashioned ways. It has not been clear until this moment, in fact, which of them is the real protagonist in this story.

The same sort of confusion exists in the hierarchy of the three major characterizations in *JULIUS CAESAR*. Except that, in Shakespeare's drama, it is not a carefully engineered question but simply a confusion of fatal importance in the play arising from the dramatist's own lack of clarity about just where he wished to place the greatest emphasis of his thematic focus in terms of character relevance. Up to Caesar's assassination by Gaius Cassius' 'organization' and Mark Anthony's subsequent peroration to the Romans, exhorting them to rebellion, you can take your choice between Caesar and Brutus for the drama's hero. And after the hit, you can belabor the choice even further, between Brutus and Antony. (Doubtless the Ghost of Caesar is introduced later primarily as a recognition of this difficulty in the play by its author, and an attempt on Shakespeare's part to clarify it. Through the agency of this eleventh-hour device we know at least what the author's choice would have been for the central figure of his tragedy, if the material hadn't quite got away from him. In this sense we must agree that Antony and Stanley Kowalski were, to the pens of Shakespeare and Tennessee Williams, what Tchitchikov was to the runaway craft of poor Gogo — achievements which exceeded their authors' intent. And how convenient that Emiliano Zapata was available for both roles!)

Carlino has kept us waiting because he meant to keep us waiting. And the specific advantage he has got out of this is that he has given us time to hang ourselves with the thick coarse rope of our own overly-glib values! What would we have thought? That crime doesn't pay? And therefore those among us with the least specific involvement in activities which might be considered criminal are the purest of us? That, because Frank knew what he was doing and Vince only partially understood it, Vince is somehow superior to Frank?

The nitty-gritty of it is that those of us who have pegged Vince for a hero are the ones whose values will undergo — and deserve — the greatest shaking up!

On the deficit side, the device, as has been pointed out much earlier, has also assisted in the construction, in Vince, of a glaringly weak type, rather than a fully dimensional human being.

In his Daily Variety review (13th Nov. 1968), Murf (A. D. Murphy) wrote: 'Cord, in his fourth known screen role, is excellent as the product of an environment which has smoothed out not only the rough edges of immigrant assimilation into the U.S., but also the surface emotions, noble and ignoble, which marked earlier generations. Urbane, cold, ambitious, unfeeling — Cord's character is chilling in impact.'

And in his Hollywood Reporter review (same date), John Mahoney wrote: 'The greater weakness is in the characterization of Cord as the brother. Douglas's devotion to him is amply clear, but Cord's cold ambition is established early and with a prevailing stoicism (*my italics*) which makes his few emotional scenes with Douglas ring false, thus robbing his final deadly act of the emotion and regret it requires.'

'Stoicism,' I think, is the key word here. There is altogether too much of it repetitiously projected in too many second-rate films in this genre, which are based upon similar cops and robbers (or robbers and robbers) backgrounds. Too, it is quite often an easy acting choice. It saves the actor the dual necessity of working to get inside the character, then risking the performance by making specific portrait choices to reveal the character. It's an especially safe cop-out choice for an actor where the role is already structured by the author as something of a cliché to begin with.

And it is, of course, a much simpler choice for the director also, in his own turn, to let an actor get away with it. The

alternative for the director is to risk his own judgment by expecting — even demanding — these more specific choices from his actor, and then working with the actor to help him achieve the necessary beats and actions in his performance.

Alas, there are too many stoics for us on the screen. The ‘teeth-and-jutting-jaw’ school of acting, as the less-kindly disposed wags in the industry call it. The heroic emotion: Silence! Let the audience’s own imagination work it out. Herein, it is understood, are concealed the really chasmal depths of one of life’s grandiose emotions — it says here! Says here, on the map of this craggy-featured hero’s stony regard. (Etcetera, etcetera!)

Even the relatively minor character of Carmela, Frank’s and Ida’s daughter, is permitted to want to use make-up to look pretty, to argue affectionately with her father about the old-fashioned childish way he likes to see her hair braided, and finally to question the very roots of her own environment.

Whether or not we license this one glaring weakness in the screen-play, which has been occasioned by the two-dimensional portraiture of Vince, is a matter of individual determination. Without it, the author loses a unique opportunity to expose to us the mud puddle of our own clichéd responses and oversimplification. With it, he has tested our innermost values in a manner the results of which are bitter enough so that we will not easily avoid acknowledging them. Personally, while I regret any recourse to dramatic stereotypes, in this instance I’d opt in favor of the remarkable revelation which Carlino has squeezed from his trickery.

Frank, at least, has been allowed his human dislikes in his business connections and autocracy as a husband and father. He quarrels continually with the other members of the Syndicate’s New York board. Except in one instance, when he calls Bertolo a Commerista bastard, the real seat of

Frank's perpetual anger is never explicitly stated. But we understand: He is still a member of the Brotherhood, in both his loyalties and his business methods. As such he is irrevocably unmarried to his temporary Syndicate bedfellows, and to their updated slick high-pressure business façade. Nor is there any confusion in Frank's mind about the nature of his specific objections to his partners' plans. They want to use their accumulated capital, plus the masking intricacies of their intra-corporation mergers and the control they have over certain unions also, to maneuver themselves into a greater foothold in essential government and defense industries. Ostensibly Frank is opposed to this plan because he fears it will drive Congress, in sheer self-defense, to begin seriously investigating and harassing the Syndicate's activities.

Loop the loop: What is suggested here — just in passing, mind you — is that, if honest labor leaders headed up all the important unions, the working man himself would eventually own most of the industries which employ him. The seat of this implication is that the initial capital which the Syndicate used to make the very investments which have made it a colossus of wealth came from the union dues of industry's labor pools. Theoretically all that money — and all the investments which have been made with it — still belongs to the members of these autocratic unions.

Well. So. At any rate, we in the audience only observe these dealings. When these elegant hoods and their Harvard-accented attorneys speak of this or that prospect for opening up new investment horizons, we pass no judgment. I mean, who knows! Possibly the opportunities in the fields of electronics and nuclear industries which they are discussing so casually would be a real good thing for them.

We are not privy to the facts and figures available to them and which have led them to these speculations. And we don't own any appreciable share of such industries anyway; nor

are we likely to. What's it to us if the already legendary wealth of these men is expanding their ambitions? What's it to us if Bertolo of the Syndicate rubs So-and-So of General Motors or So-and-So of the State Department the wrong way? What's it to us, in fact, if some smooth-talking college-educated product of this underworld overworld, like Vince, even climbs high enough eventually to become a Senator — or something? A pox on all their houses, we say. We're clean. We pay our taxes and union dues.

Inexorably the discord Frank's instinctive feelings drive him to sew between himself and his associates marks him as a target for their lethal impatience. And just as inevitably this disunion between them is squeezing his younger brother in the middle. Vince pleads in vain for a more reasonable attitude from Frank in his dealings with the others. And in vain he warns his older brother that only the fact that Bertolo is his father-in-law has saved Frank so far from cold-blooded extermination.

In his own turn, Frank warns his brother to stand beside him in the coming struggle; not beside his enemies. When he realizes that Vince will side with his father-in-law and the rest of the Syndicate board if he is forced to choose, Frank becomes enraged and they quarrel bitterly. Later, Frank tries again to persuade his brother. This time he attempts to use a measure of tact. Alas, it's not one of his stronger social attributes!

He drops in on Vince and his wife and, before leaving, invites them to Sunday dinner at his own home. Vince is just as anxious to persuade Frank to his point of view, and to avoid the certainty otherwise of a bloodletting. He accepts Frank's invitation eagerly, and even suggests that he and Emma bring Bertolo along.

During this sequence of the family dinner, the screenplay's only direct reference to the contemporary youth scene occurs. And even here, it is economical to the point of

being almost oblique. Carmela is talking with Emma about one of the big rock group's latest albums. Vince teases Emma for knowing about such things.

'Why not?' she asks.

'Next,' he tells her, 'you'll be wearing mini skirts and beads.' Half-jokingly, he appeals to his brother, Frank, for his judgment.

Frank says: 'Sure, and I'll grow a beard and stop wearing shoes and I'll carry flowers. Then we'll all be doing it!' There is a similarly brief reference to the world of youthful rebellion in Carlino's 1966 script for *SECONDS* (directed by John Frankenheimer and adapted from the novel by David Ely). This suspense drama has been based upon essentially frivolous material and is inevitably a considerably inferior film. But it has momentary excellencies of focus. And Carlino has even been able to force the largely ridiculous premise to lend itself to a theme of some substance, one not too far removed from that which he has shaped in the superior platform of *THE BROTHERHOOD*.

In *SECONDS*, the lead character, Hamilton/Wilson (John Randolph/Rock Hudson), has sought with the aid of some spurious 'organization' selling surgical rebirth to exchange the monotony of his life's routine for a second chance at youth and life. He is another of the myriad half-hearted (or half-lives) who seek to make these ambiguous self-serving partial commitments to life. And again, as in *THE BROTHERHOOD*, the self-deception of the protagonist's choice leads swiftly and unavoidably to tragedy. When Hamilton/Wilson is being exterminated by the 'organization' at the end of the film, it is clear that there never really was any chance for him to escape himself.

And that conclusion is made evident even earlier when, after his operation and rebirth, Hamilton-become-Wilson is unable to find any greater freedom in the framework of his new identity than he ever felt he had in the confines of his

old life. He is another self-styled 'drop-out' who must learn that one cannot drop out, either from one's society or from one's own choices.

It is after he has been reborn and is trying to adapt to his *vita nuova* that the doomed hero of this melodrama experiences his single moment of promise. This is the brief 'middle-aged hippie-scamper,' as Gordon Gow called it (*SUSPENSE IN THE CINEMA*, 1968, International Film Guide Series). It is only a false promise, of course, which is quickly aborted by ensuing events.

This pseudo-hippie sequence is a more visual one than the oblique reference to it in the later film (at Frank's and Ida's table). But it serves much the same referential function in both films. It is Carlino's sympathetic but jaundiced eye viewing the claims of this newest freedom-revolution with the skepticism of experience.

The connection suggested in *THE BROTHERHOOD*, between the world of the author's militantly 'respectable' characters and the hippie milieu, is certainly understated if it exists at all. And in the context of almost any other kind of film drama, this same identical sequence could indeed be accepted at face value: a momentary family interlude; virtually a non sequitur in terms of the plot's main thread. But Carlino is too tight a writer and dramatist in the first place. And nowhere else in the film is there so much as thirty seconds of wasted negative. Even in the much-praised romantic sequence between Frank and Ida, Carlino and director Marty Ritt double up on making points: Frank comes home fairly drunk. Ida has waited up for him and helps him upstairs and to undress. She does so without even the suggestion, by word or expression, of any reproach. The couple tease each other and Frank initiates the love-play between them. But he passes out before it is consummated in a more substantial way.

Nevertheless, we learn that this couple still has a very definitely going relationship. The scene suggests, more than anything else could have, the nature of this kind of marriage. It adds dimension to Frank's character and brings the character of Ida as well (somewhat neglected up to that point) into the round. And it exposes a facet of Frank's humanity, which elicits a degree of empathy from the audience, and which is presently going to become crucial to the story's subsequent developments. Besides all this, it gives us, just in passing, all the expository material we need to illuminate their past. And it does something even more important: In giving us a glimpse of the kind of felicity in Ida's devotion, it lends an absolutely essential credibility to her act in obeying him later, at the end of the film, when she has to leave him even though she knows she will never see him alive again.

That's a pretty fair organic return on an investment of a single sequence! And this kind of compression is not exceptional in the film.

As an illustration of just how compactly Carlino can work to make a statement of his theme—entirely by implication—within the framework of a simple related and dramatic sequence, take the one between Frank and his daughter when he returns to his home to find her in front of a television set observing a Senate or House investigations committee discussing the possibility of indicting her father as one of the leaders of New York's most vicious criminal elements.

Frank asks her what she wants to watch that garbage for. Carmela begs him to tell her if the things they are saying about him are true.

'Look around you,' he tells her, gesturing at the large living room and its expensive appointments. 'Are you going to believe them of this? Them or me?'

Carmela does not reply in words. After the instant it takes to digest his answer, she throws her arms around him. And the point has been made: You take from a thing. Okay. Take everything it can give you. But when it comes time to give, and it asks you for something, you give. You give everything it asks; everything you have, if you are asked for it. That's the way. That's how you join and belong and live . . . and die. That's life. When one of the old-timers dies and the other oldsters accidentally discover Bertolo's ages-ago betrayal, they summon Frank, and Don Peppino passes on the vendetta to him. 'We are old and helpless,' he tells Frank. 'You are still young and strong. You must be our hand.' Even after all this time the families, relatives and friends of the forty-one dead men still cry out for revenge. All the way back in the old country, those who are still alive continue to send letters of entreaty, begging Don Peppino to discover and execute the man who betrayed the men of La Santa Mama.

'Sodisfazione,' he intones in his sepulchral voice when he talks to Frank.

They meet with Frank in the burial cellar where the victims of Bertolo's ancient betrayal lie in coffins which have been bricked into the walls. The names, all forty-one of them, appear on these walls. And Peppino passes a list of these names into Frank's hands, kissing him also on the mouth.

And his whole life has led to this. . . . It is not an obligation which Frank could possibly refuse. It will also be his death, a fact of which Frank is entirely aware as he accepts the obligation. The Syndicate cannot possibly ignore it if he kills Bertolo. They will be compelled, in their own turn, to kill. And if they wish it, there is nowhere ultimately that Frank can keep his life. They will seek him out wherever he goes and claim it.

Don Peppino's is the kiss of death — for Frank as much as for Bertolo.

Perhaps the most remarkable of many remarkable qualities about this screenplay is that not even the foreknowledge, from the beginning, of its inevitable conclusion has in the slightest mitigated the audience's anticipation.

Pietro makes the same choice, on the side of obligation, when Frank goes to him to ask for his help. Frank and Pietro pick up Bertolo and, on the pretext of lunching somewhere so they can discuss and iron out Frank's difficulties with the board, they take him for a last ride. Enroute to the isolated place they've selected for the hit, Frank jollies Bertolo with early reminiscences of his own part in the halcyon days of New York's gangster era. They laugh it up, and Bertolo is in the desired mood — completely unguarded — when Frank suddenly begins beating him viciously in the back of the car. He is in a state of shock by the time they arrive at their destination.

The manner of Bertolo's death, too, is particularly gruesome. Frank kills him in the afternoon, in the sunlight, near one of New York's great freeway arteries. And he kills him in such a way that Bertolo's death is actually at his own hands — or, rather, his own feet! Frank puts a strangler's noose around his neck, runs the rope down his back, ties it around his feet, and shortens the connecting length so that Bertolo's legs and feet are folded backward as far as they will bend. The resultant position is excruciatingly uncomfortable. It cannot be maintained for more than a few minutes, even by a strong man; and Bertolo is old and has just suffered a brutal beating. Sooner or later, the agonizingly doubled-up legs will cramp, and the feet will begin to pull them forward to ease the pain. At which point the noose will begin to tighten around his neck.

Frank sits there, watching the show and reading from a list the names of the betrayed, while Bertolo slowly strangles himself. When he's dead, finally, Frank checks him to make

sure, pockets the list, then returns to the car and lets Pietro drive him back to Manhattan for lunch. It's been a strenuous morning. . . .

And Bertolo, at least, won't be mooching Sunday dinners from them any more!

As a matter of fact, nobody in New York ever enjoys Frank's and Ida's hospitality there again. Leaving their daughter, Carmela, with Vince and Emma, they flee immediately to Sicily — and the bosom of the Brotherhood — where they have their best theoretical chance to survive the Syndicate's inevitable retaliation.

When the Syndicate orders Vince to go after his brother and make the hit for them, however, it is not only Vince's wife, Emma, and their son and unborn child, but Frank and Ida's daughter, Carmela, as well, whom they use as hostages for his faith.

Egan tells Vince: 'Don't miss. Or you're going to have funerals on the family plan!' About Vince's future, he says: 'You'll be alone there. If you get out afterwards, okay. If not — tough!'

And the film comes full circle then, back to the beginning — the extended flashback at last concluded. And we are in Sicily . . . at the edge of the future. And it is to be Vince's future, not Frank's. Because Frank knows that there is no other way.

This extraordinary human being has already made all the decisions. There is a picnic, dozens of family and friends participating with good food and music. And in the late afternoon, when it is finished and the guests are all departing, Frank kisses his wife casually, telling her he'll be along soon and sends her away with the others.

Then he takes Vince with him for a walk through olive groves he played in as a child. Vince has a revolver tucked into the waistband of his pants, but Frank cheats him of the opportunity to use it. Instead, he unwraps a Belgian shotgun

which belonged to their father and gives it to Vince. It is this gun he wishes to die by, and in this place of his childhood. 'When one of us is going to get it,' he teaches his younger brother, 'we do it like this: First, good food and friends and love. Then you use this (the shotgun).' Vince comes finally to the one complete emotion permitted the character up to now: he is crying. 'You have to,' his older brother assures him. 'They've got you by the throat.' And Frank adds that he's arranged everything for afterward. His chauffeur will take Vince back directly to the airport in time to catch the next plane out of Palermo. He kisses Vince on both eyes and on the mouth then, in obligation, benediction and farewell. Then he seats himself, staring at his brother for a moment. 'It's funny,' he says. 'Me like papa and you like me. It's like we were all the same guy.' Then he turns to the westerling sun with complete composure, fills his lungs with the almond-scented air and his eyes with all the living beauty around him and receives the death from Vince which he has already resigned himself to from the moment he accepted Don Peppino's charge and blessing. Now it is Vince's turn. Now it really begins. Now he has begun to join and belong and live . . . and to die. He will die for years— perhaps many decades. He may become anything before he dies, too. But he will pay for it . . . in full measure . . . as long as he lives. Confraternita. Freneticamente!

THE FOREST SUFFOCATES IN THE STILLNESS OF A DECADE OF GROWING

You came again today but I am lost and you can't find me. I see you coming but cannot call through the thickness of time we gave to each other.

Jane Fulton

When the sun came out my turtle climbed on a rock and conjured a view.

Sydell Rosenberg