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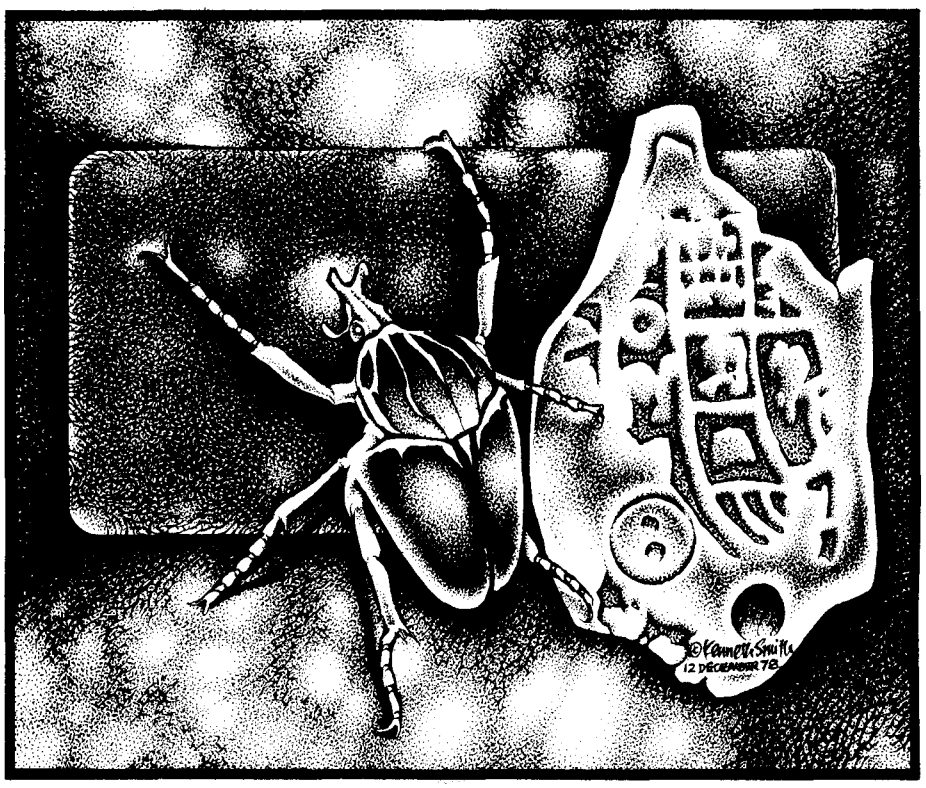

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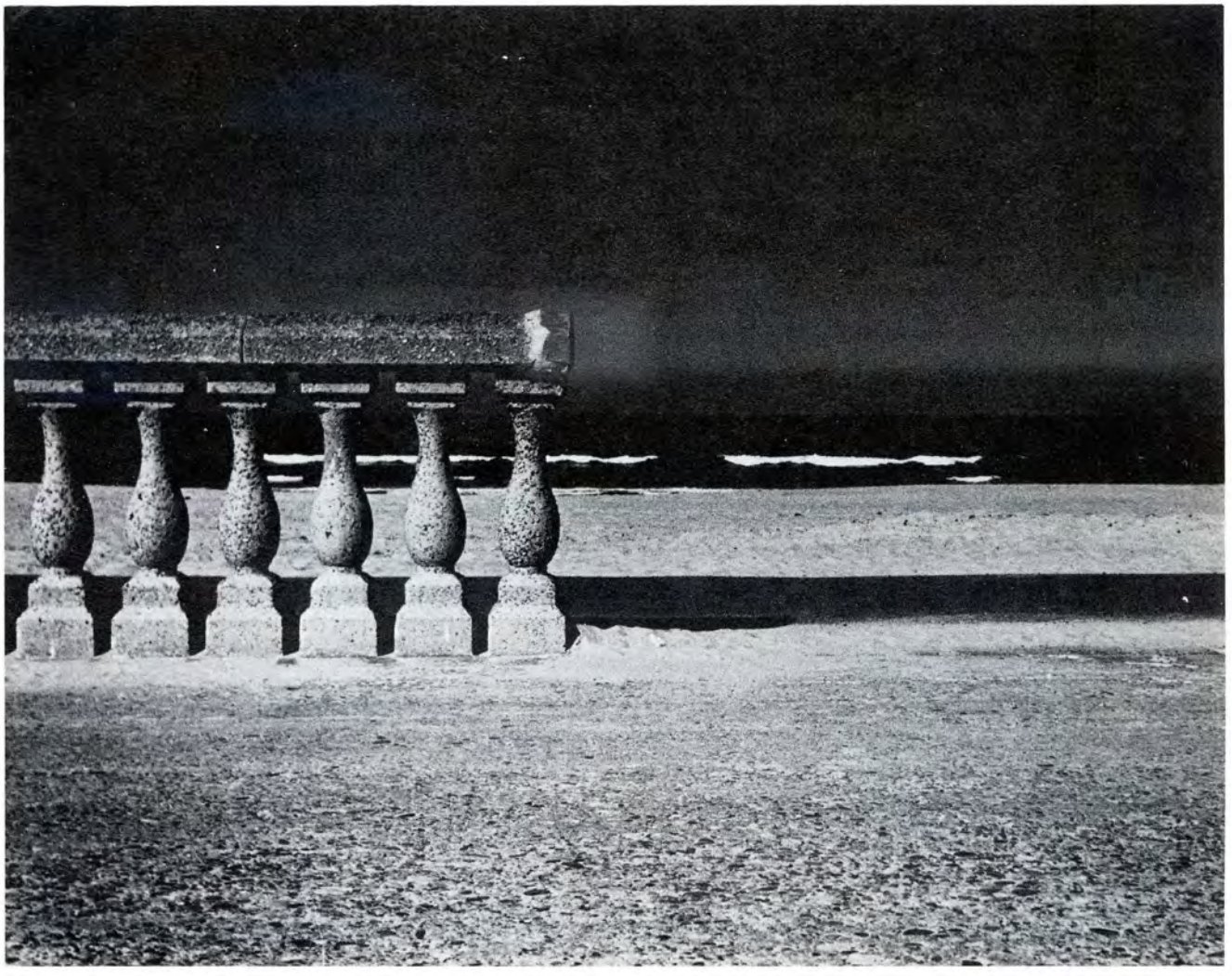


Keith G. Thienemann

Octavio Armand

WATER COLOR

Not one of them was capable of lying

W.H.A.

A resplendent piece of sea.
In the yellow beak
the bluefish
is a black star.
Alive only
in its wound,
like
Auden's convalescents.
It writhes,
grazes the kite
of a sunburned boy, throbs.

The sounding instinct,
its agony,
the depth now
so difficult,
heavier,
what are they saying?
what is the scream
of that distant line against the sky?

Amagansett, June 15, 1978

translated by Carol Maier

Helga Novak

EAT A GOOD MEAL

I am seldom in this city. I am here by chance.

I have an acquaintance in this city. She is a good friend. We carry on an intimate and extensive correspondence with one another.

I am here by chance. I don't want to run into my friend. I am stopping only for a day. I don't have any time. If I see her I'll have to devote myself to her. She always takes possession of me. She says, what are *you* doing here, or what *are* you doing here, or what are you doing *here*. I say, nothing at all. She pulls me. She drags me along with her. She says, and you didn't even give me a call. I say, I was just about to. She says, then it's perfectly splendid that we've run into each other. I say, yes. I ask, aren't you on your way to work. She says, nonsense, today's my housecleaning day. I say, then you probably have a lot of laundry. She says, I wouldn't think of washing now that you are here. I say, is there a movie around here. She says, movie. First a café.

She takes my arm. She says, when did you get here. I say, last evening. She says, that isn't possible. And where did you sleep? I say, in a hotel. She says, oh no. We'll pick up your luggage immediately and take it to my house. I say, that won't be worth the trouble, I am going on this afternoon. She says, you are going on this afternoon, you can't do that to me. I say, don't be angry, I hardly have time. She says, well what are you up to. I say, nothing special. She says, incidentally how did the story turn out. I say, what story. She says, the story in your next to last letter. I say, in my next to last letter. She says, his name was Roland or Ronald. You know what I mean. I say, oh that one. She says, what do you mean that one. You wrote pages about him and that you didn't know up from down. I say, he's gone. She says, gone just like that. That is fantastic. I say, yes. Isn't there a movie around here?

We go up to Kaiserallee. We sit down in a coffee shop and smoke. She says, why do you keep talking about a movie. We haven't had a real good talk yet. I say, no. She says, I'll get us something to eat. I say, I am not hungry. She says, but you must eat a good meal, do you want a sandwich or cake. I say, nothing.

She goes to the buffet. She takes two trays. She speaks with the help. I leave the coffee shop through the Königstrasse exit.

ICE CREAM

A young man walks through a green park. In one hand he carries ice cream. He sucks. The ice cream melts. The ice cream slides on the stick back and forth. The young man sucks violently, he stops in front of a bench. a man is sitting on the bench reading a newspaper. The young man stops in front of the man and sucks.

The man looks up from his newspaper. The ice cream falls into the sand.

The young man says, what do you think of me now?

The man says with astonishment, I? of you? Nothing at all.

The young man points to the ice cream and says, after all my ice cream did just fall down, didn't you then think what an idiot?

The man says, not at all. I didn't think that. After all anybody's ice cream can fall down sometimes.

The young man says, Oh I see, you are sorry for me. You don't need to console me. You probably think I can't buy myself another ice cream. You think I am a bum. The man folds his paper. He says, young man, why are you getting so excited? As far as I am concerned you can eat as much ice cream as you want. Do whatever you like. He unfolds his paper again.

The young man stands first on one foot and then on the other. He says, that's just it. I do what I want. You can't pin me down. I do exactly what I want. What do you say to that?

The man is reading again in his paper.

The young man says loudly, now you despise me. Merely because I do what I want. I'm no coward. What do you think of me now?

The man is angry.

He says, leave me in peace. Go on. Your mother should have whipped you more often. That's what I think of you now.

The young man smiles. He says, you are right there.

The man stands up and goes.

The young man runs along after him and holds onto his sleeve. He says quickly, but my mother was much too soft. Believe me, she could refuse me nothing. When I came home, she said to me, my little prince, you are already so dirty again. I said, the others threw things at me. Then she, you should take up for yourself. Don't put up with just any and everything. Then I, I started it. Then she, pshaw, you don't have to do that. The stronger one doesn't need to start things. Then I, I didn't start it at all. The others spat. Then she, if you don't learn to make your way I don't know what's to become of you. Imagine, she asked me, well what do you want to be when you grow up? I said, a nigger. Then she said, how naughty you are again.

The man got loose.

The young man calls, then I put something in her tea. What do you think now?

Translated by Allen H. Chappel

Laura D. Miller

VIRGIN LOST, VIRGIN FOUND

saccharine gushes inconstant from
his mouth
and his finger-
tips.
his
selfish
tongue will probe your
mouth full too. it
preys
in the
smog
of
empty
passion. it
lies
in its words. it
lies
in its excitement.
it is a
slicing, sliding
tongue. his finger-
tips
are
stagnant, scouring.
i
know what
cold
bones are the
ladders to that
self-inflamed
flesh. the
folly
of those finger-
tips
is your flesh and all
underneath.
and yours
and yours
and yours.
his are
only finger-
tips.
his
folly,
flesh and underneath.
i felt his hot flesh,
but underneath his flesh,
there was
only flesh.

An interview with James Wright
by Bruce Henricksen

POETRY MUST THINK

NOR: Mr. Wright, you wrote a short article in *Field* in 1973 in which you talked about the lack of intelligence in much contemporary poetry. I was wondering if you could comment a little bit more on what constitutes intelligent poetry.

WRIGHT: Well, I think that an intelligent poetry is a poetry whose author has given a great deal of slow and silent attention to the problems of craft; that is, how to say something and say it in a musical way, but I feel that ultimately any writer has to come to terms with ethical and epistemological questions about the meaning of life and of his life. It had often seemed to me at least up to a point, five years ago, that American poetry was full of discussions—endless nit-picking discussions about craft alone. And this was starting to get on my nerves. I wanted somebody to come to the point.

NOR: Losing its ethical dimension . . .

WRIGHT: Yes, I think that it's very significant that the poetry of E. A. Robinson is almost completely neglected, still neglected today. Nobody pays any attention to him and I think that this is because he's essentially a serious man. And I sometimes wonder whether or not we live in a serious age.

NOR: I think you used Pound in that article as an example of an unintelligent poet. I seem to remember the phrase also that he was "aesthetically offensive."

WRIGHT: I find his personality, his personal arrogance, aestheticly offensive and I find it morally offensive. When I criticize his intelligence I realize that he wrote and said a great many things that are helpful in the actual writing of verses, but it seems to me that in his own poetry there is a terrible, I would say, a fatal lack of wholeness most of the time. I had said something to the effect that to reject the past is to reject intelligence and you pointed out that Pound certainly didn't reject the past, and I admit that he ransacked it and he quotes people from the past all over the place. He's constantly giving you a quotation from somebody he's almost sure that you've never heard of so that he can get one up on you. But when he puts his own poems together, it seems to me that there's a failure of intelligence there, except, for the most part, when he's translating—and there he has an intellectual structure already provided for him that he can work on.

NOR: Well, would you say that writers like Eliot and Joyce ransacked the past?

WRIGHT: They ransacked the past and I think what gives them their crucial superiority is that they were to make wholes out of their studies of the past.

NOR: And by "whole" you're making both an aesthetic and ethical judgment.

WRIGHT: Yes, both an aesthetic and an ethical comment. I would say that in spite of the confusions and the mistakes and the fragments that I myself have published in my own work, still as far as I'm concerned I'm a

Horatian. I believe in the "whole" of a poem and the subordination of style to some wholeness of structure and some wholeness of vision about the nature of things.

". . .to reject the past is to reject intelligence. . ."

NOR: I'd like to pursue this idea of the past and of the tradition in poetry a little bit more, although I'm not quite sure what to ask about it. How, for instance, has your own poetry been involved in the tradition? Is that something you can comment on?

WRIGHT: I still regard myself as very much a conservative. And although after a point I started to write pieces in so-called free verse, I was simply trying to expand my understanding of what the form of poetry can be. I do not think that there is any opposition between traditional iambic verse and free verse, not any necessary opposition; they're simply two different kinds of form.

NOR: What writers in the tradition do you feel most kinship with now? You had spoken of Robinson and Frost as important early influences. How about at this point in your career?

WRIGHT: The authors that I feel closest to and feel most devoted to are not poets at all, right at the moment. I've been going through the works of José Ortega y Gasset again. Right now I'm in the middle of *Man and People,* his sociological study, and at least once a year I read through the complete works of George Orwell. For aesthetic wholeness and the ethical strength, I wouldn't trade his novel *Coming Up For Air* for nine-tenths of the contemporary poets I've read.

NOR: That's interesting. What about other contemporary prose writers?

WRIGHT: Well these people aren't exactly contemporary, some of the prose writers I'm referring to. There's E. M. Forester in the essay *Two Cheers for Democracy* and the essays of Graham Greene, and Ortega always: *The Revolt of the Masses* mainly.

NOR: The other night you mentioned Walker Percy whom you were reading lately, and I think you said that he is one of the few serious writers working today.

WRIGHT: Yes I say that he is serious. I mean that he answers some hunger that I feel for work that is intelligent and aesthetically significant and also has a deep ethical and even religious commitment. As far as I'm able to judge, Walker Percy, right now is the most important novelist writing with one exception I can think of; the other most serious one to me seems to be Larry Woiwode, who has published two novels. One is called *What I'm Going To Do I Think,* and a longer one that came out a couple of years ago called *Beyond the Bedroom Wall.* The latter book is a long novel in traditional form. It covers the experience of a North Dakota family through three generations. What is amazing about it is that he begins his novel simply sitting in his bedroom, closing his eyes and trying to imagine clearly and in detail every single house that was on the main street of his home town; and once he does this, he then in his next chapter immediately goes back to the experience that his father had in burying—that is physically with his own hands—burying his grandfather, and thoroughly imagines the whole past. The significance of the book is, I think, that Woiwode has the power of imagining his own life.

Richard Wilbur has a poem in his last book in which he argues, and I think very beautifully shows, that much of the time it's impossible to see what is right in front of one's own eyes without the use of one's imagination. Woiwode is a thinker, he's trying to think passionately about the true details of his own life. I think the true details of one's own life include the past.

NOR: And that's something that you do, in your own poetry, which is very autobiographical—you've written about family, brothers . . .

WRIGHT: Yes, it may be autobiographical in the sense that I suppose anybody's poetry is autobiographical, but I don't think it's confessional. I think confessional poetry is a pain in the ass. Most of the things that confessional poets confess are not worth confessing.

NOR: I suppose a number of poets have written poems without ever mentioning a brother or a father or a dead grandmother. There is that sense of family, a family myth. . .

WRIGHT: *Well my own life is the only thing I have to begin with. It seems to me an aesthetically legitimate thing as well as a morally legitimate thing to try to figure out what one's own life really is.* Maybe this is what draws us toward novelists like Woiwode and Walker Percy and Charles Dickens.

NOR: In the *Field* article you mentioned a couple of novelists that I hadn't heard of and one that I have since heard of—the author of *Ragtime,* Doctorow. You mentioned him and then a couple of others whose names I don't recall.

WRIGHT: Cynthia Ozick perhaps, who writes a beautiful prose. I'm thinking mainly of her stories. I think of her as a story writer more than anything else. She has written a novel or two, I think.

NOR: The name Saul Bellow doesn't pop up right away in your conversation then?

WRIGHT: Well, I admire Bellow very much. I guess I ought to mention him because he certainly is a serious

man and very beautifully intelligent and sensitive. I was thinking of people who had published things in the last couple of years, maybe.

NOR: What about this idea of criticism that you talk about again in the *Field* article, the idea that each generation of poets needs its own criticism?

WRIGHT: I simply mean that the effort to write poetry itself at least ought to be an intelligent act, an attempt to understand language and its relationship to life. I was trying to distinguish between the criticism as merely an academic exercise for the sake of promotion and criticism in itself as a living art.

NOR: Shades of Matthew Arnold in your considering art as criticism of life?

WRIGHT: Partly that, but also the kind of criticism which is concerned about the efforts of contemporary poets. There ought to be a really vital relation between those two things. In this century it seems to me that some of the very best poets have been among the finest critics. T. S. Eliot is the best example and he kept insisting that he did write criticism in order to help him understand what he was trying to do in his poetry. I think that this is true and I also think that this is what made his criticism so illuminating, not only when we try to understand his poetry but also when we try to understand poetry in general.

NOR: Does this criticism that the poets need have to come from the poets themselves?

WRIGHT: No, not necessarily, but a great deal of good criticism does come from the poets themselves.

NOR: Are there any examples of criticism coming from the academics that is useful to the poets? You talked a minute ago about the kind that's just done for promotion. It occurs to me that certainly there's no shortage of critical theory these days.

WRIGHT: No, I realize that a number of academic people have been writing about contemporary poetry and I can think of four of five such people who, as far as I can tell, have begun to write about contemporary poetry, often to put it down, in the same sense that they might have begun to write articles, perhaps two or three a year, about the works of James Hogg or Martin Tupper, or if they happened to go into some other line of study, monographs about the sex life of the date palm or homosexuality in chickens. In other words, I don't think these people are essentially serious and they have nothing to do with human imagination. They're time-servers. The power struggle, as always, goes on in the academic world.

NOR: Are there any examples of academic criticism that is useful from the poet's point-of-view?

WRIGHT: Oh yes, and there are many academic writers, scholars, who have published things that have, I think, very great value for a poet, simply because they lucidly explain problems of poetry and have enormous knowledge behind them and a clarity of style. I'm thinking, for example, of Maynard Mack's edition of Alexander Pope's *Homer*. I think that his edition, the Twickenham Edition, in his introductory essay, has more to say about the construction of a great poem and a great translation than most book reviews I've seen.

NOR: I've always been taken by Northrup Frye's criticism. It seems to me there's a sort of imaginative reach as well as a firm ethical sense that Frye works from.

WRIGHT: Yes, the serious critics who may come out of the academy, serious critics who are learned and intelligent, have themselves a clear style, an imaginative style.

NOR: It seems that everywhere you turn these days you're running into people who claim to be very knowledgeable about philosophers such as Heidegger and Godamer and Jacques Derrida. I was just reading a piece in the *New Yorker* about Walker Percy's emersion in continental philosophers before his career began. Do you think there's a necessary relationship between poetry and that kind of formal philosophical thinking?

WRIGHT: I don't know.

NOR: Are there philosophers that you read?

WRIGHT: Well, I mentioned Ortega and I read him all the time. He's extremely difficult but I think he's very rewarding.

NOR: What do you find most compelling in Ortega? Some people think he's a bit hard on the common man in *The Revolt of the Masses*.

WRIGHT: I think that Ortega touches significantly on a wider range of crucial modern problems than any other author I've read, and he does so with great clarity and strength. The notion that he is hard on "the common" man derives, I think, from a misunderstanding of his terminology. One of the great excitements of reading him, in fact is in following his long, careful distinctions of terms. In fact, he does not speak contemptuously of the "common man," but of the "mass man." The latter is not a social class—perhaps I should say he is not a member of a social class—but rather what Ortega calls a *barbarian*. Consider: in his huge effort to see life as it is, the noble man struggles with perpetual doubt. He must constantly live with the possibility that he may be in fact a fool. In this power of doubt, says Ortega, lies his intelligence. The barbarian, or mass man, on the other hand, assumes, in dealing with any problem, that the first idle thought that pops into his head represents an absolute solution. The mass man is not merely ignorant. His barbarism consists in his asserting his ignorance *as a right*. The very fact that the mass man is not merely the repre-

sentative of a given social class is what makes him so terrifying. A central horror of our century is the appearance of the mass man in the very seat of authority, with all powers, including the military, at his whimsical disposal. The mass man appeared, in all his shining putrescence, in Nazi Germany. But it is idle to dispose of the mass man simply by identifying him with a temporary—though spectacularly destructive—political group in Germany. The mass man crouches sullenly within ourselves, and it is within ourselves that we had damned well better come to terms with his existence. Ortega explores these and related matters with memorable force. He is a very bracing writer, a serious guide through the tragic times in which we now have our lives.

NOR: People talk about the stylistic changes that your own poetry has gone through. I remember the other night you talked about the response that the *Lying in a Hammock* poem got. It seems to me, if I remember correctly, that part of the controversy had to do with your changing from the more formal styles to free verse at about that time.

WRIGHT: It seems to me that the critics who object to a poem in free verse because it's free verse, have no way of knowing whether or not a poem has a formal structure except by noticing whether it rhymes or not. Perhaps they have somebody read it aloud to them so that they can hear whether it rhymes or not. Or maybe they are deaf as well as blind.

NOR: But your style is changing in other ways. How would you describe at this point what various kinds of things you've tried to do. What kind of changes have gone on?

WRIGHT: Well, I've tried to understand some ways that so-called free verse could still be shaped into a genuine form, and there are all sorts of formal possibilities, the parallelism of images and sounds for example. And also I've tried to slow down and pay attention to the things that were right in front of my eyes, more closely than I had ever done before when I was trying to write in more traditional ways. This has led me to write some prose pieces.

NOR: There's a quality in your writing that I find very attractive when you do it, and yet I think it's something you are suspicious of. Tell me if I'm right or not. It's this kind of ornate imagery that has a real loveliness to it. I think of the "Bronze butterfly" or the "Walking down hallways of a diamond," lines like that, and then, on the other hand, poetry in which you claim to be speaking in a "flat voice," as you say in one poem—just a straight conversational style, which I think in a few poems you almost present as a poetic—as though you're suggesting that this other, more ornate, style is perhaps something you've decided to be suspicious of for some reason.

WRIGHT: I've been trying to purge it away—or trim it away, maybe I should say. I have a tendency to get too lush with sounds and I have a tendency to get lost in the confusion of certain figures of speech. Surrealism is dangerous for me and I think for everyone. I don't think that I'm intelligent enough to manage a genuinely surrealistic style. The masters of surrealism seem to me to be comedians. Genuine comedians. One reason we've had so much bad surrealism in the United States is that some American poets have seen translations of some French surrealistic poems and have assumed that they were to be taken directly and seriously. Often they are comic.

"The mass man crouches sullenly within ourselves, and it is within ourselves that we had damned well better come to terms with his existence."

NOR: What would be some titles of poems of your own that have a surrealistic quality?

WRIGHT: Well, you've mentioned a couple of them: "Walking down the hallways of a diamond." That's not so much surrealistic as just a sort of Baroque figure of speech.

NOR: What about the poem *Miners,* where that word takes on a different meaning in each stanza. Would you describe that as surrealistic?

WRIGHT: It's influenced by surrealism. I don't think the poem itself is surrealistic. I think it's extremely formal, very traditional. The images are all parallel to one another. It's as formal as the end of Lincoln's Gettysburg address. I don't mean it's as good.

NOR: Did you read the piece that Stephen Spender wrote in the *New York Review of Books*? It must have been shortly after your collected poems . . .He reviewed a number of American poets. His praise of your poetry was less than complete, and I'm wondering if some of his reservations have to do with this very quality of which you have just said, you've tried to purge yourself. . .
Do you think, in other words, that as you criticize your poetry you would agree with some of Spender's . . .

WRIGHT: Yes, I agree with some of what he says. I think at one point he thought that he was . . .Well, he was sort of condescending to my work. He said that it had a Georgian quality in it. And he compared some of it to the poetry of Walter de LaMare. And apparently, to Spender, this was a condescending thing to say. To me it was great praise. I don't think I would trade four or five poems of de LaMare for my own work and that of Spender and all of his grandparents.

NOR: I think he also talked about a Spanish influence. Am I remembering this right? And he argued that this made your poetry less than authentically American.

WRIGHT: He was talking about a few poems I had written after I had translated some Spanish poems. And probably he was right. I was too heavily, too directly influenced by them. Nevertheless, I don't regret trying to write things like that because at that particular time I was trying to reach outside, rather, reach deliberately beyond the range of a certain way that I had been trying to write before. And I had to take some risks. And not many of the poems are successful. That's all right, I would gladly try it again if I had it to do over.

NOR: But are these the same poems we were speaking of awhile ago when we were talking of *Having Lost My Sons*?

WRIGHT: He was thinking of a poem called *To the Moon*. I had said something about a panther's footprints in the snow. The moonlight throwing things like that. He said, that doesn't sound like a person who has been looking at the moonlight. . .He's just been reading Spanish poetry. I think it was a fair statement.

NOR: You never saw a panther in Ohio.

WRIGHT: If I ever saw a panther I wouldn't "an-ther." No, his essay was a pretty sound and serious reading of that poem, I think.

NOR: Has translating influenced your art in any other way?

WRIGHT: Well, the value that translating has had for me, first of all, is that it was a way of genuinely trying to read some great poems in other languages. That's a complicated process. You can read such poems by trying to learn the language, and then read the poems as you would read poems in your own language. But actually if you try to translate them, you are forced to find some equivalents in your own language, not only equivalents of language itself but equivalents of imagination. In this way you can force yourself actually to try to understand the vision of the poet in the other language. It's bound to have an effect on you. I don't know, I wouldn't know how to describe the immediate effect. . .I hope that trying to translate some poems by César Vallejo has some effect on me just as a human being. He was a very great man and his greatness is in his poetry.

NOR: Are you still translating?

WRIGHT: Not at the moment. No.

NOR: You have future plans?

WRIGHT: One of these days Robert Bly and I are going to go back and make a new translation of the Austrian poet Trakl. We've made a few attempts at it. We don't have any immediate plans. Trakl is very beautiful.

NOR: You included him in the selected poems. Your translations of him . . .

WRIGHT: One or two.

In den einsamen Stunden des Geistes
Ist es schön, in der Sonne zu ghen
An den gelben Mauern des Sommers hin.
Leise Klingen die Schritte im Gras;
doch immer schläft
Der Sohn des Pan im grauen Marmor,

NOR: Can you translate that?

WRIGHT: On the yellow long - no -
In the lonely hours of the spirit
it is beautiful to walk in the sun down the
long yellow wall of summer
so: etc.

". . .perhaps I've been wastefully unhappy in the past because through my arrogance or whatever, and my blindness, I haven't allowed myself to pay true attention to what was around me."

NOR: That's nice. I wanted to ask you about one specific poem that you read the other night: *Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota*. Because you commented on it at the end, and I think I've understood it a little bit differently from what you suggested. You talked about the final line, "I've wasted my life," as being, perhaps, a realization that more time ought to be spent lying in a hammock, as I remember.

WRIGHT: Yes. I think that I didn't realize it at the moment, but looking back on that poem, I think that final line—I have wasted my life—is a religious statement, that is to say, here I am and I'm not straining myself and yet I'm happy at this moment, and perhaps I've been wastefully unhappy in the past because through my arrogance or whatever, and my blindness, I haven't allowed myself to pay true attention to what was around me. And a very strange thing happened. After I wrote that poem and after I published it, I was reading among the poems of the eleventh-century Persian poet, Ansārī, and he used exactly the same phrase at a moment when he was happy. He said, "I have wasted my life." Nobody gave him hell for giving up iambics. You can't win.

NOR: The line just before that describes the chicken hawk looking for home, and then earlier in the poem the farm house is empty. Those images have suggested to

me that the poem is leading to a realization of a sense of lost community.

WRIGHT: I think that's part of the mood. And the poem is, or I thought was, quite a simple poem, not an ambitious one. What I wanted to do was to record in parallel images the stage of a certain mood and not try to write something heroic, for example, but to try to find a concrete way of setting down the stages of a mood the way the old Chinese poets did sometimes.

NOR: Your last two or three books have dealt more with European experiences than with American experiences, and I understand you're returning to Europe in December. Does this mean that the Muse is over there for good?

WRIGHT: No, I don't think it means anything of the sort. To me it means that this is just going to Europe again. And writing about Europe is another way of trying to explore the meaning of my own life. In my last book there's a poem called, *One Last Look At the Adige: Verona in the Rain,* and this poem is partly about the Ohio River and partly about the Adige River. I had never felt quite the same way about the Ohio River as I felt standing there in Verona. And there are several places in the book that reach back to my own experiences in earlier years in the United States. It's only partly about Europe.

NOR: Can you pursue that a little more? How the European experience has modified your relationship to Ohio and to the United States. There are changed moods in those poems.

WRIGHT: It's hard to answer. There's a prose piece about the Colosseum at Rome in which I looked at those passageways that lie under, or used to lie under, the floor of the Colosseum where the starved animals and the Christians were kept waiting, and they were kept starving too. That terrible place reminded me in some ways of the Ohio River, which was a beautiful river, but kind of frightening. I called them both a "black ditch of horror."

NOR: The title poem in your last book, "To a Blossoming Pear Tree," returns to Minneapolis, doesn't it?

WRIGHT: Yes, there are two poems about Minneapolis right towards the end of that book, and they both deal with things that happened to me late at night in Minneapolis.

NOR: I wonder if there is any special significance for the fact that that's the title poem for the book, although the book is predominately European poems. With the title poem, you're returning to your native setting.

WRIGHT: I think that the significance of that title in the poem itself is that I was trying to say that I am committed to the beauty of nature which I love very much, but that commitment in me anyway always more and more has to be qualified by my returning to my own responsibility as a human being. And the life of a human being is more complicated than the blossoming of a pear tree. It's full of pain.

NOR: I thought immediately of Yeat's "Sailing to Byzantium" when I read it. He sets up a choice between a real world and an impossible world and chooses the impossible, whereas you make the opposite choice at the end of your poem.

WRIGHT: Well, this is the only life I have. In many ways it's a snarled mess, but I like it. You know Stephen Crane's little poem about the man sitting in the desert land. He found the creature squatting, naked bestial who held his heart in his hand and ate of it. " 'Is it good friend?' 'No,' he said, 'it is bitter, but I like it because it is bitter and because it is my heart.' "

NOR: Are you writing any poetry right now?

WRIGHT: Very Slowly. As always I write slowly. I have about twenty-three new pieces. I think some of them are going to be published. Some of them are about Ohio and two or three are about Hawaii.

NOR: Do you plan ahead at all? I know that you publish in journals and then bring them together in a book. But at some point as you are going along, does the book start to become a reality?

WRIGHT: I think when I've written for a couple of years, I start to perceive some sort of dim shape for the book and work toward that.

NOR: And is there a book that is shaping up now?

WRIGHT: Yes . . ., well it's accumulating. Put it that way. It hasn't suggested its own shape yet. I like to give myself plenty of time. I published too much, I think when I was younger. There are many poems that I wouldn't publish now, but they're over and done with.

NOR: The collected poems didn't include all of *The Green Wall* did it?

WRIGHT: No, and it didn't include by any means all of the poems that I've published. There are a great many more than that.

NOR: What journals would we be wise to look at if we want to see what you're writing right now?

WRIGHT: Well there are going to be three new poems in *Poetry* magazine in Chicago. Let's see: there are several that are coming out in *The New Yorker.* Some have already appeared in *Ironwood* magazine, and a couple of new ones have just been printed in a broadside called the "Poem of the Month Club" in Long Island. David Ignatow is editing that. One or two poems published a month. And those two are poems about places at the edge of the water, one in Hawaii and one in Rhode

Island. One is called *Entering the Kingdom of the Moray Eel*. That's about swimming at night in Hawaii.

NOR: How do we get to see these?

WRIGHT: I don't know. They're going to be on sale in New York.

NOR: In New York. Take a plane?

WRIGHT: I don't have any copies on me right now. I just signed them all and sent them back to the publisher. I asked him to send me some. Whe' 'e does I'll send you one.

NOR: Oh terrific . . .thank you. The one book of yours I haven't seen is the one with the drawings.

WRIGHT: Yes that was sort of a chapbook with drawings. That was published by the Dryades Press in Washington, D. C., called *Moments of the Italian Summer*. Those are all prose pieces, fourteen prose pieces.

NOR: And who did the drawings?

WRIGHT: Her name is Joan Root.

NOR: Which came first, the drawings or the prose pieces?

WRIGHT: The prose pieces.

NOR: And she did the drawings?

WRIGHT: From the prose pieces . . .

NOR: Was that a success, that sort of collaboration? Is that something you'd be interested in doing again?

WRIGHT: Yes, I enjoyed it. It was a success as far as I was concerned. I liked her drawings very much.

NOR: Did that come out as sort of a *livre de luxe* before it came out for the public?

WRIGHT: Well, there are some copies that came out in hardback, but most of them in paperback.

NOR: We were talking yesterday about the problems facing public education these days, and I had the impression that you might want to comment on those problems for the record.

WRIGHT: If I have any grasp at all of our current mood in the United States, we are suffering from one of our periodic fits of outrage against Big Government, against taxes, against inflation—in short, against the difficult forces that threaten to obstruct our simple progress through our private lives. I value privacy as much as anybody does, but I can't get rid of an uneasiness about us. In our anger against stupidity and mismanagement in government—an anger by no means unjustified—we are falling into the danger of damaging, maybe even destroying, the great living tradition of public education, which has been possibly our best American achievement. What does this rage mean, this rage against taxes and inflation? I just cannot believe that the majority of Americans, even comfortable Americans, are simply to be written off as greedy and selfish brutes. That is not my sense of most of the Americans I have known, and I have known people from widely varying social backgrounds. No, there is some madness in the air. I worry about it endlessly, for our system of public education is a fragile thing, and if we destroy it, or allow it to be destroyed, it won't automatically reappear. Huge numbers of young people have got to be shown the need—not just the social need, but the personal— for an orderly life and for what Irving Howe beautifully calls a life of disciplined hope. If we do not discover the significance of an orderly life in a democratic manner, the experience of the twentieth century instructs us that somebody else will provide discipline in another manner, probably totalitarian. It is beside the point to complain that public education as it now exists is a mess. I know it is a mess, that it has got to be sustained and improved. It will take enormous effort to sustain it, much less to improve it. I believe that we are capable of such effort in America. I often wish that the Rev. Jesse Jackson, to my mind one of the finest men in public life, would run for President. Win or lose, he could draw more serious attention to these problems of public education. It's hard to speak briefly here about an issue of such terrible importance.

NOR: I don't have any other questions written down.

WRIGHT: I don't have any other answers written down either.

NOR: Well, I'd like to thank you for submitting to this.

WRIGHT: In conclusion, let me pass on to you Nelson Auburn's advice:

> Never eat at a place called "Mom's"
> Never play cards with a man called Doc.
> And never go to bed with anyone who has more troubles than you have.

NOR: I'll bear that in mind, thank you. We could conclude by singing "Jr. Bird Man."

WRIGHT: O. K. are you ready?

> Up in the air Jr. Bird Man
> Up in the air upside down
> Up in the air Jr. Bird Man
> Keep your noses on the ground.
>
> And when you hear the door bell ringing
> And you see those wings of tin
> Then you will know a Jr. Bird Man
> Has sent his boxtops in!
> B-I-R-D-M-A-N Birdman! Birdman!
>
> growllllll.

Patrick Luby

Angelika Mechtel

A DAY LIKE ANY OTHER

Herbert Neidlich finds the woman shortly before eight.
He is about to enter the street superintendent's office and sit down behind his desk.
He realizes: A drunk lies in the yard.
An alcoholic.
And so he kicks the woman in her left hip and says: Wake up!
She lies, face down, sprawled out on the asphalt.
Because the body under him does not react, Herbert Neidlich kicks her with the other foot in the other hip.
Drunken jerk, he says.
He thinks of his desk.
Then he kicks again. He raises his leg, knee bent, foot at an angle to shin, and stomps on the backside of the body lying before him.
Herbert Neidlich laughs.
Neidlich likes to laugh out loud.
After that, he goes to his desk.
He says to his secretary; Edith, did you see that guy out there?
The secretary looks out the window.
Now I see him, she says.
She is one of those passers-by who will later testify that they had noticed the woman the previous afternoon in the city park.
Edith usually spends her lunchbreak there. If it is not raining she sits on a bench and peels an orange. She separates the white skin, takes it with the tips of her nails, and pulls it carefully in shreds from the orange. Then she bores with the long nail of her right thumb into the top of the orange and spreads the fruit in half, separates the crescents, and puts one piece after another into her mouth.
She has a small mouth.
When she speaks of old people, she becomes aggressive. She says that old people are annoying.
I saw the woman, she will state as a witness.
That was between 1300 and 1400 hours. I was sitting on the bench opposite the pool.

Several people were dangling their bare feet in the water. The woman walked through the park from the direction of the Court of Justice.
Of course, I noticed the sack.
She carried it slung over her shoulder.
Her left shoulder.
Was something in it?
I noticed that her long pants were frayed on the bottom.
She did not sit down next to me.
It is possible that she was drunk.
She picked up her feet very slowly and dragged them through the gravel.
I could hear that.
Once I thought she'd lose her balance.
First she sat down on the edge of the pool.
She bent over it and cupped both hands to drink the water. I cannot remember, but she must have put the sack down first.
Other people had their feet in the water.
Could it be that she laid the sack on the gravel?
She only sat there for a couple of minutes.
When she got up, I thought now she will lose her balance after all and plunge sideways, with her arms flailing in all directions, into the water.
I cannot swim.
She started to walk slowly around the pool.
She looked as if she were tired.
If she had been hungry, she could have eaten something.
But she was dirty.
On the other side of the pool she sat down again on the rim and bent down over her feet for a while so that I could see only her curved back.
She rolled up her pants to her knees, and then then she took her shoes off.
I would never put my feet in the water in public.
She dipped both feet into the water.
The afternoon was hot and sunny.
It is supposed to be a hot summer.
Later on I stopped watching her. When I am finished with my orange, I usually lean back if the weather is nice, and I close my eyes.
At eight minutes before two, I got up to return to work, and I saw the woman from behind. She was walking in the middle of the path. I felt nauseated.

With the five marks sixty I have in my sack I could also buy myself an orange. I could sit down on a bench across from the fountain and peel my orange.
The water in the fountain is cool. My feet feel tired.
They are hot and press against my shoes. I like my feet.
My mother used to say: The girl has pretty feet.
Do you see my feet? I asked a man, and: do you like them?
Ten years ago, when I started to go for walks, they would still get blisters, would get sore easily. But they became accustomed to my daily hikes. I make it easier for them,

and I like to walk in the woods. The ground is softer.
Now the water refreshes them.
Other people also dangle their feet in the pool.
I lean back and close my eyes. My head feels as it is were separated from my body: I imagine that my head is suspended at shoulder height above the edge of the pool, and I watch my feet as they stand by themselves on the gravel.
They remind me of pecking birds.

A week later, a relative of the woman will come forth.
She is my niece, he will say. Her name is Christine Radleff, nee Haller.
She was different, he will say.
She ran away from home when she was fourteen.
The police picked her up in Hamburg, she was sleeping on a park bench.
Christine gave us trouble.
On the afternoon of her sixteenth birthday, we found Christine together with my son Jochem in the lumber yard between two stacks of boards. The children could just as well have gone to play in the warehouse. But they were standing between the wood stacks and playing with each other.
We spanked them.
Christine did not look at Jochem anymore although it had been fun for her.
My brother selected a husband for her who was experienced in the lumber business.
She was supposed to marry him at eighteen and produce a son whose name would be Radleff-Haller and who would take over the lumber yard some day.
But Christine was of a different sort.
Because her mother did not want to see the girl earn a bad reputation, she locked Christine up.
As for me, I have never done Christine any harm.

At eight fifteen, the first delivery truck drives into the yard.
The driver almost didn't see the body on the ground. He steps on the brakes and curses.
From the office window, Herbert Neidlich looks into the yard. He watches the driver climb out of the cabin of the truck and walk over to the body. The driver leans over the woman, reaches out his arm and takes her by the shoulder. Hey, he says, shaking her shoulder.
You there, he says, get up.
He goes back to the truck and pulls a bottle of whiskey from between the two pillows of the leather seat. He brings it to the woman. Grabbing her by her short hair, he slowly pulls her head back. Now he sees her face.
He will report: at first, I thought that's a drunk lying there. Then I realized it was a woman. At first, I wanted to put my whiskey away; then I thought, she could use some too. Herbert Neidlich observes how the driver, in blue overalls with the orange protective signs for streetworkers on his front and back, shoves the whiskey bottle into the woman's mouth and tilts it slightly.

But she did not drink it, the driver will testify. It ran like water out of the corners of her mouth and into her sweater. I thought, it's no use. I will report it to Mr. Neidlich, and he can notify the police.
I figured, something is wrong with her.
She was cold.
The driver will state: once my father hit a woman with a car, and she looked just like that. With a dirt spot on her dress.
He never got over it.
His nerves.
Now he feeds the birds in the park every afternoon.
He says they calm his nerves.
He had not touched his whiskey.
She just ran into his car.
I learned from my father how to drive a delivery truck.
Herbert Neidlich watches the driver as he gets up. With one hand on his knee, he pushes himself up with the other foot.
When the truck driver tells the story at home, his father will comment between two spoons of soup: I saw her in the park yesterday. She had such a funny way of walking.
The truck driver's wife will wave her hand impatiently. I knew, the father will say, that something was wrong with her.
She ran from bench to bench.
The truck driver's wife will urge him to finish the soup.
She puts great pride in her soup and brushes her hair in the evenings.
The father, who also drives a delivery truck, will say:
The girl sat next to me on the bench. She kept her eyes closed.
I don't remember the sack.
Maybe she was carrying a sack.
She looked hungry.
I think she was asleep beside me on the bench.
Her feet stood neatly next to each other on the white gravel.
I was feeding my birds there.
The girl did not frighten them away.
I should have given her some of the bread for the birds?
When she opened her eyes, she smiled and turned her head toward me.
She watched the birds.
She sat very still.
She had troubles?
Later she got up and she walked along the path with small steps.
I said: Good Bye, Miss.
I do not know where she went.
She just left.
She tried to kill herself?

The old man beside me on the bench is feeding the birds.
I think they must know him.

He takes the slices of bread from a wrinkled brown paperbag.
Taking one slice at a time, he holds it with both hands and breaks it in two. The half in his left hand he places next to him on the bench. The half in his right he breaks again, and then he pulls the soft part, piece after piece, from the crust, crumbles them between his thumb and index finger and throws them on the gravel for the birds at his feet.
They are not afraid of him.
I could also buy myself a loaf of bread with my five marks sixty.
I could sit on a bench in the park and eat the bread together with an orange.
I would buy the bread warm from the oven, clutch it under my arm in its paper and feel its warmth penetrate my skin.
For a moment, I feel my stomach.
I remember a boat lying empty on the water.
The boats multiply. When I close my eyes, there is no more water, only boats floating.
They are rowboats without oars.

My brother, Fritz Haller, had arranged for the wedding of Christine to take place on her eighteenth birthday. He made a big affair out of it. He did not mind the expenses.
It cost him a pretty penny.
Was Christine cheerful that day?
In the afternoon, the guests and the bridal couple went across our lake in a paddle-steamer. That is the unique feature of a Haller wedding.
Christine's mother wept and covered her face with kisses.
Radleff was a good man. He knew a lot about wood.
In the evening, he approached Haller and said: Christine wants to go rowing on the lake.
We really had problems with Christine.
When she had a good day, I was able to talk with her.
The son was born when she was nineteen.
He was called Fritz like my brother, and they gave him the double surname Radleff-Haller.
On his grandson's first birthday, my brother turned the business over to Radleff. After all, it was he who had the heir.
They say Radleff had problems with Christine.
She thinks too much, Radleff once said.
In his anger, he threw books out the window.
Then he supposedly slapped her.
The little Haller boy grew up beautifully.
Despite all that, she must have loved the child. But she did not want a second child.
I produced a lumber business heir for you, she said; that, I think, ought to be enough.
My brother said to Radleff: If things do not improve with Christine, we will have to have her treated.
Yet, the Hallers had always been a healthy family.
The Radleffs also had good blood.

Nevertheless, we had the little Haller boy examined later on.
The doctor found him to be a completely normal boy.
But he resembles you, he said to my brother.
As far as I am concerned, Christine could have done whatever she pleased.

Herbert Neidlich says: Move her aside for the time being, so that the trucks can drive into the yard.
Herbert Neidlich himself assists him. He takes the woman by her feet and pushes her pantlegs up above her ankles so that he can get a better hold of her. She is not wearing stockings.
Neidlich grasps the woman's ankles with thumb and index finger; his hands surround them easily.
They lift the woman up the way she was lying there, with her face down.
The truck driver holds her under her arm.
Let's put her over there, says Neidlich, and motions with his hand toward a stack of wood.
Both men move in that direction, crossing their legs as they walk sideways.
The woman's body swings heavily with the rhythm of the steps.
Herbert Neidlich has the woman, still face down, placed on top of two boards.
Now you can drive the truck in, he says to the driver; he, in turn, walks back to the truck with its ramp still down.
Herbert Neidlich will testify: I knew from the very beginning what was wrong with her.
He lights a cigarette and throws the burned match next to the planks on which the woman lies.
His wife will say: I saw her.
She says it joyfully, the way she guards her recipes.
She was standing there and looking into a baby carriage.
I thought to myself: What does she want?
She carried the sack in one hand and dr? ,ed it behind her through the dirt as she went.
I thought: She is taking dirt with her.
The baby in the carriage will get sick from that.
For a while she looked at the baby.
Her kind should not be allowed to go through the city park.
Then she set out for the train station.
I saw her walking along the curb, the way children do: You put one foot in front of the other and can't step on the lines between the stones. She slipped off again and again, I thought: She will lose her balance and fall sideways into a car with her arms flailing in all directions.
No one would be able to brake fast enough.
She had surely been drinking.
Who will pay for the damage? I thought.
In front of the train station, she walked on the round grass patch where trespassing is prohibited.

I saw her speak to an old lady.
She was begging, I thought.
But she did not take a train.
Why would she harm herself?

Sometimes I look into baby carriages.
I walk on the curb like I used to do.
You are ruining your shoes, my mother said.
I also played hopscotch with other children on the squares of Heaven and Hell which we had painted with pieces of red brick on the sidewalk stones. I could cheat better than the others.
Then I enjoyed walking with one foot on the curb and the other on the road. I hopped home. During the winter, I liked to hop facing the cars and stare into their lights with my eyes wide open.
My eyes hurt.
With my five marks sixty I could also have bought myself a train ticket. I could have picked out a destination on the railroad map and then inquired about the next train that would take me there.
I would have told the girl behind the glass window: One ticket, one way. The girl would have placed the ticket on the revolving tray. I would have put in my money, she would have turned it, and I would have taken my ticket while she picked up the money with her finger tips.
I would have boarded my train.

Then Radleff found out that Christine cheated on him.
But she played a lot with the child. On his third birthday, she raced with him along the curb.
Radleff confined Christine to her room and locked her up for three months.
They say she was reading.
In addition, she asked for chalk, and then she drew on the floor small squares for the children's game Heaven and Hell.
She played it with the little Haller boy.
On the street, he hopscotched with the other children, and my brother was proud when he discovered that the Haller offspring was the best cheater.
Christine is supposed to have said to Radleff: I did not betray you because I am not making any claim on you.
He hit her.
She cheated on him again.
Radleff understood a lot about wood and was successful in the business.
Word is he tried again and again with Christine.
I never harmed her.
When I visited her once in her room, she asked: How is Jochem?
Perhaps I could have loved him, she said.

The following spring she ran away.
We heard from her occassionally.
A friend told us that he met her in the south of France.
She wore her hair long and looked happy.
They say she lived there with a man under whose spell she was. A year later, she wrote to me. After that, she did not write anymore. She wrote:

> I knew that this was possible, and I had hoped for a
> happy ending. But he left
> me. I was nasty. Now I
> shall cut my hair short; it is more convenient.

We heard nothing else from her.
The boy does not know her. We keep things that way, because it is best. Radleff is having him brought up in a boarding school. Later he will take over the business.
The boy is a true Haller.
Things were never quite right with Christine.

Around 10 a.m. Neidlich informs the nearest police station of the woman who is lying on the boards.
It seems that it will be another hot day.
As soon as the police car and the ambulance arrive, people begin to gather.
Two policemen prepare a report: A young woman, approximately thirty-five years old, hair dark blond and cut like a man's hair. Dressed in two black sweaters and one over the other and a pair of green men's pants. She is carrying a sack containing five marks and sixty pennies in change.
A boy, perhaps fourteen years old, raises his hand. One of the officers asks him to step forward. He places the boy beside the dead woman who has been turned over so that her face, smeared with dirt, faces upward.
I saw her yesterday, the boy says. We were playing soccer on the boarding school grounds, and the ball flew over the fence. The woman was sitting on a bench in the park across the street. She had watched us the whole time.
She picked up the ball and threw it back.
It was a good throw.
Later on she came to the fence.
She didn't smell good.
The police officer asks the boy for his name.
That was a coincidence. Christine Radleff-Haller's life consisted of coincidences.
Or she took poison, said one of the pedestrians.
The policeman asks the truck driver: How did you drive into the yard? Had you been drinking?
It is not my fault, says the driver.
She was drunk.

The corpse cannot be identified for two days.

Then the boy writes home. Every week he reports on his days in the boarding school.
Because something new had happened, he includes in his letter a photo of the dead woman who had thrown him the soccer ball.
Radleff sends his father-in-law's brother into town.
They had told the boy: Your mother died ten years ago.
They did not tell him that it was his mother who had thrown the ball to him.
They sent the woman's uncle. He was to have her cremated.
Without any fuss.

I talked to an old lady in the front of the railroad station.
I asked her: Are the full trees on the oval law magnolias?
In southern France the magnolias are already in bloom, I said.
The blossoms are as large as my hand.
I did not pay any attention to the boy. He looked as if he wanted to become an efficient lumber dealer.
I could also have bought myself magnolias with the five marks sixty.
I went to the flower store at the railroad station.
I said: Do you carry magnolias?
The salesgirl said: You are in the wrong place.

Translated by Gisela de Marco

Eight East German Poets

edited and translated by Almut McAuley

Two Months in the Literary Life of East Germany

In September of 1976, Reiner Kunze's novel, *Die wunderbaren Jahre*, is published by the S. Fisher Verlag in Frankfurt/Main. Two months later, Kunze is expelled from the Writers Union of the GDR.

November 10, after over eleven years of being barred from publishing and performing, Wolf Biermann is issued a visa to leave and reenter the GDR.

November 13, Biermann gives a performance in Köln before 6800 people. Three days later, the *Politbüro* of the GDR expatriates Biermann.

November 17, an open letter is drafted and signed, first by twelve intellectuals, later by more than 150 others. It asks the government to "reconsider" Biermann's expatriation. The GDR publication *Nueus Duetschland* ignores and refuses to publish the letter. It is never published or dealt with directly by any GDR publication.

November 19, the young writer Jürgen Fuchs is arrested as he steps from the car of Robert Havemann, prominent citizen and Biermann's friend. Two musicians, also friends of Biermann, are arrested in Berlin. The phones of Biermann's wife, Tine, and Havemann are disconnected.

November 20, some forty young people in Jena, sympathizers of the Biermann cause, are arrested. Nine of them are later deported to West Germany.

November 26, Havemann (who is in poor health) is arrested. Soon after he is released but remains confined to his house and is guarded constantly. Jurek Becker, Gerhard Wolf, and Sarah Kirsch (who were among those who signed the open letter) are expelled from the SED party and later from the Berlin branch of the Writers Union. Others are severely reprimanded, among them poets Volker Braun and Stephan Hermlin.

December 9, Nina Hagen—number-one East German pop singer and close friend of Biermann—is pressured into emigration to the West. Thomas Brasch and Katharina Thalbach, actress at the Berliner Ensemble, are shipped off to West Berlin.

December 15, Havemann's daughter is exmatriculated from the Humbolt University.

In January of 1977, writer Bernd Jentzsch decides to stay in Switzerland, despite the fact that his visa entitles him to reenter the GDR. Biermann's mother is refused entry into the GDR. Tine Biermann's lawyer is kicked out of the Lawyer's Guild; the party begins proceedings against him. A television movie starring Helga Schütz is cancelled. Her husband, producer Egon Günther who has just returned from abroad, is detained for hours when he tries to add his signature to the open letter. The publication of Jurek Becker's novel, *Jakob der Lügner*, announced for spring is cancelled. Ulrich Plenzdorf loses his job with Defa, the East German film industry.

A.M.

Johannes Bobrowski

LATVIAN SONGS

My father the hawk.
Grandfather the wolf.
And Forefather the rapacious fish in the sea.

I, beardless, a fool
reeling at the fence,
with black hands
strangling a lamb in the early light I,

who slew the animals
instead of the white
master, I following the clanking
caravan on eroded paths,

I pass through the glances
of the gipsy women. Then
at the Baltic shore I meet Uexküll, the Master.
He walks under the moon.

The darkness whispers about him.

JOHANNES BOBROWSKI: Born 1917 in Tilsit. Grew up on the German-Lithuanian border and moved to Königsberg at age 11. From 1945-49, he was a prisoner of war in Russia. After his return from Russia he settled in East Berlin where he worked for a publishing house until his death in 1965. His work includes: *Sarmatische Zeit; Wetterzeichen;* and *Im Windgesträuch.*

Wolf Biermann

SELF PORTRAIT ON A RAINY SUNDAY IN THE CITY OF BERLIN

Equipped with the knives of reason am I
Cool logic guides my bullets round the corners
Pride and sophistication smooth my paths
Relentlessly my brazen and nervous doubts
Torment this satiated city of stones
I swim securely even in its sewers
My scorn climbs higher than its latticed towers
I can be bought for the coinage of ready truth
In the shelter of my skepticism I'm safe
From the radiance of the great obscurantists
And yesterday's hatred protects me from tomorrow's
Storm. Take note of this: I am equipped

And yet I am left exposed, and often so
Again and again there I lie, freshly slaughtered
Torn open under the desolate sky of this region
Butcher hooks sliding into my belly
Parent whaling ships swim in my eye
On my tongue I hold the hopes of the hopeless
And my wild dreams at long last bleed to death
On the shambles of your offices and schools
Sausage grinders devour greedily my remains
The land at the edge of the settlements lurks hungrily
And the vast wet city licks it chops
For Biermann, its well-deserved Sunday roast.

WOLF BIERMANN: One of East Germany's most popular and most controversial singers and songwriters. Born 1936 in Hamburg. His father was a Communist who died in Auschwitz. In 1955, he moved to East Germany. In 1962 he was barred from performing his satirical songs and ballads. In 1963 the ban was revoked but was reimposed in 1965, following a concert tour of West Germany. In November of 1976, after 11 years of being barred from performing, he was issued a permit to visit West Berlin. On Nov. 13, 1976, he performed before an audience of 6800 West Germans in Köln (Cologne). Three days later, the *Politbüro* deprived him of his citizenship and barred him from re-entering East Germany. On Nov. 17, over one hundred fellow writers and East German sympathizers signed an open letter addressed to the East German publication *Neues Deutschland,* asking to "reconsider" Biermann's forced exile. In the wake of this letter and the ensuing controversy over Biermann's exile, hundreds of writers, artists, critics, prominent citizens, students, and other sympathizers of the Biermann cause were and are being held in jail, barred from publishing or performing, expelled from the SED party as well as the East German Writers Union, or shipped off across the border to West Germany. Biermann's wife and son are, as of this writing, still in East Germany. His work includes: *Die Drahtharfe; Mit Marx – und Engelszungen;* and *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen.*

Peter Huchel

SNOW

To the memory of Hans Henny Jahnn

The snow drifts,
The great drag-net of the sky,
It will not trap the dead.

The snow changes
Its lair.
It sifts from bough to bough.

The blue shadows
Of the foxes lie
In wait. They scent

The white
Throat of loneliness.

PETER HUCHEL: Born 1903 in Lichterfeld/Berlin. In 1932 he was awarded a prize for his first collection of poetry but withdrew his manuscript when the Nazis came to power. He served in the army during the war; in 1945 he returned from imprisonment in Russia and settled in East Berlin. From 1949-62 he edited the literary magazine *Sinn und Form*. His unpopular editorial policy resulted in his being fired from the position and in the prohibition from publishing his work in East Germany. In 1972, after 9 years of semi-retirement and disgrace, he gained permission to leave East Germany. In 1977, he was the recipient of the "Europalia" Prize for poetry in Brussels. His work includes: *Sternreise; Chausseen, Chausseen;* and *Gezahlte Tage*.

Sarah Kirsch

LEGEND OF LILYA

1 whether she was beautiful remains a matter of dispute
the testimony of the surviving camp inhabitants
is contradictory beginning with the color of her hair which
varies from statement to statement nor
was there a photo in her file they say
she had been sent from Poland

2 in the summer Lilya went barefoot in the winter too
and wrote
seven letters

3 six small wire-thin rolls pass
through prison-garb cross the inspection square stick
to weary skin trouble someone's sleep/reach him
whom no one knows (he cannot
be a witness at the trial)

4 the seventh someone handed over for bread

5 Lilya in the orderly room Lilya here and there Lilya
in the dug-out
lash with the whip the name why doesn't
she speak who knows that
why doesn't she say something anything in August when the birds
are singing in the smoke

6 one in uniform skull on his collar
connoisseur
of old plays (his dog with classical
name) came up with the idea
to let her eyes speak for her

7 a path was made through the row
of imprisoned men
a strange avenue of despoiled trees
opened there
here she should walk and betray one of them

8 use your eyes now Lilya command
your muscles your blood to be at ease you have
walked here often
here you know every stone every
stone

9 her face went by
the survivors said they
were trembling Lilya as if dead walked walked

until the man whose dog was named Hamlet
barked commanded enough

10 she hasn't been seen since

11 other witnesses said on her way she had
smiled at everyone had combed her hair with her fingers
had been taken to the gas chamber right away — that was
over twenty years ago—

12 everyone talked of Lilya for a long time

13 the judges of Frankfurt in the year 65
took this down in their records
obviously
legends were being told this detail
was to be erased from the files of the prosecution

14 they say that her letter said we
will not get out from here we have
seen too much

SEVEN SKINS

The white-peeled onion sits on the cold stove
It gleams from its innermost skin beside it the knife
The onion alone the knife alone the housewife
Ran weeping down the stairs the onion did that
To her or the sun slanting over the neighbor house
If she doesn't come back if she doesn't come back
Soon her husband will find the onion soft and the
Knife tarnished

SARAH KIRSCH: Born in 1935 in Limlengerode/Harz. One of the most important and prolific contemporary poets. Recipient of the Petrarca Prize for lyric poetry (with Ernst Meister), 1975, she was among the first to sign the petition in Biermann's behalf. Ten days later she was expelled from the SED party and blacklisted in East Germany. In the summer of 1977, she crossed the border into West Berlin where she now lives and writes. Her forthcoming collection is *katzenkopfpflaster* (selected poems). Earlier publications include: *Zaubersprüche; Die Pantherfrau;* and *Landaufeuthalt.*

Volker Braun

OF THAT WHICH IS SOMEHOW LIVING

1
A man was walking across the square beside a woman
Then the impact of the fire flung the woman up in the air
Then the woman was first beside him and then she was not
Then the frenzied people fled over the marketplace into a basin
To be in the water this night,then they boiled to shreds
Then those who could dig themselves out from the cellars
Came floating down the red street in a black storm
Then, much later, they lay embedded in the cooled asphalt
Then, on the fifth day, he finally saw his siblings
Then he almost recognized them, except they were black and still
Then, because the woods couldn't yield enough coffins
They were burned from the face of the earth between once historic buildings

Then he found himself in a day's deafening silence
Safe one more time in his bullet-riddled coat.

2
Then he washed his hands off the town, off the soiled shroud
Then he rose at night from his shattered bed: then
His foot freed itself from the rubble, his eye from the darkness
Then the new one grew around him quickly but was forgotten more quickly
Then he made believe some kind of life was still possible, now and then
Then he began to really live again somehow in the light
Then he dined on plums and said words with real letters
Broke into music, sat on porcelain bowls above the world
Producing something for someone, then he let go
Whatever would go: then he
Offered himself up to the light, then he was there
Then the skies had not yet been prepared for the heat
Then the cities had not yet been prepared for the ruins
Then he prepared his body for the gutting of the world by fire.

VOLKER BRAUN: Born 1939 in Dresden. Works as printer, builder, skilled machinist. Studied philosophy in Leipzig; later he worked as an assistant at the Berliner Ensemble. In November of 1976, he was among those who signed the open letter. The following month he was expelled from the Berliner Schriftstellerverband. His work includes: *Provokation für mich; Kriegserklärung;* and *Gedichte* (1972).

Thomas Brasch

SONG

What I have I do not want to lose, but
where I am I do not want to stay, but
those I love I do not want to leave, but
those I know I do not want to see, but
where I live I do not want to die, but
where I die I do not want to go:
I want to stay where I have never been.

THOMAS BRASCH: Born 1945, as son of Jewish immigrants, in Westow, England. Has lived in East Germany since 1947. He was among those who signed the open letter in behalf of Wolf Biermann. He was shipped off across the border to West Berlin. He is now a citizen of West Germany and recently published his first novel, *Kargo*. His work includes a collection of poetry, *manuskripte* (1976), and a collection of stories and parables.

Heinz Czechowski

LOVE TALK

In front of the factory gate they stand in the sun.
The suburb afternoon is alive with cock-crow.
In a blue smock: she. He: on the moped, his hands
Are buried in his pockets buried deep.
Back in the yard the scouts have gathered: women in black.
I hear their tongues jingling:
How they wait for the embrace: naked flesh
Into which they shove their kitchen knives . . .
But she is standing in her blue smock in the sun.
He on the moped has his hands buried deep.
The suburb afternoon is alive with cock-crow.

HEINZ CZECHOWSKI: Born 1935 in Dresden. Worked as graphic designer before becoming a freelance writer. From 1958 to 1961, he studied at the Institut für Literatur "Johannes R. Becher" in Leipzig. Lives in Halle. His work includes; *Nachmittag eines Liebespaares* and *Wasserfahrt*.

Reiner Kunze

THE SMALL CAR

1. Of the necessity to buy a car

There are sighs that
splinter off the soul

Thus
sighed the mother

Mysterious as the world of a deep-sea fish
is the son's writing of books

His name swims up
on a radio wave

But:
What good does that do

Other sons pick up their parents
in their car

2. The three conditions

Seven years of waiting
Seven years of piling up the treasure
Seven years of fear the parents

might not live to see it

3. The outing

One through Thum where I
was in service

Yes, we see: there's the bakery there's
where the mother fetched the rolls before
master and mistress awoke

And the royal prince who rides off into the sunset
with the chambermaid never
came

What else was there to do but bear
a son

And hope that he fulfills
all conditions

REFUGE EVEN BEHIND REFUGE ITSELF

(for Peter Huchel)

Here only the wind enters the gate uninvited

Here
only god calls up

He arranges for countless cables
between heaven and earth

From the roof of the empty cowshed
to the roof of the empty sheepshed
the gush of rain shrills
from the wooden pipe

What are you doing, asks god

Lord, I say, it
is raining, what
can one do

And his answer grows
green through all windows

REINER KUNZE: Born 1933 in Oelsnitz/Erzgebirge. He is a well-known translator of Czechoslovakian poetry and prose. Like his fellow-satirist Biermann, he was prohibited from publishing in East Germany for many years. In February of 1977, he received permission to travel to Salzburg, Austria to accept the George Trakl Prize for Lyric Poetry. In October of the same year, he was the recipient of the highest literary award in West Germany: the Büchner-Preis. His publications include: *Sensible Wege; zimmerlautstärke; Brief mit blauem Siegel;* and *Die wunderbaren Jahre* (1976).

Layeh Bock

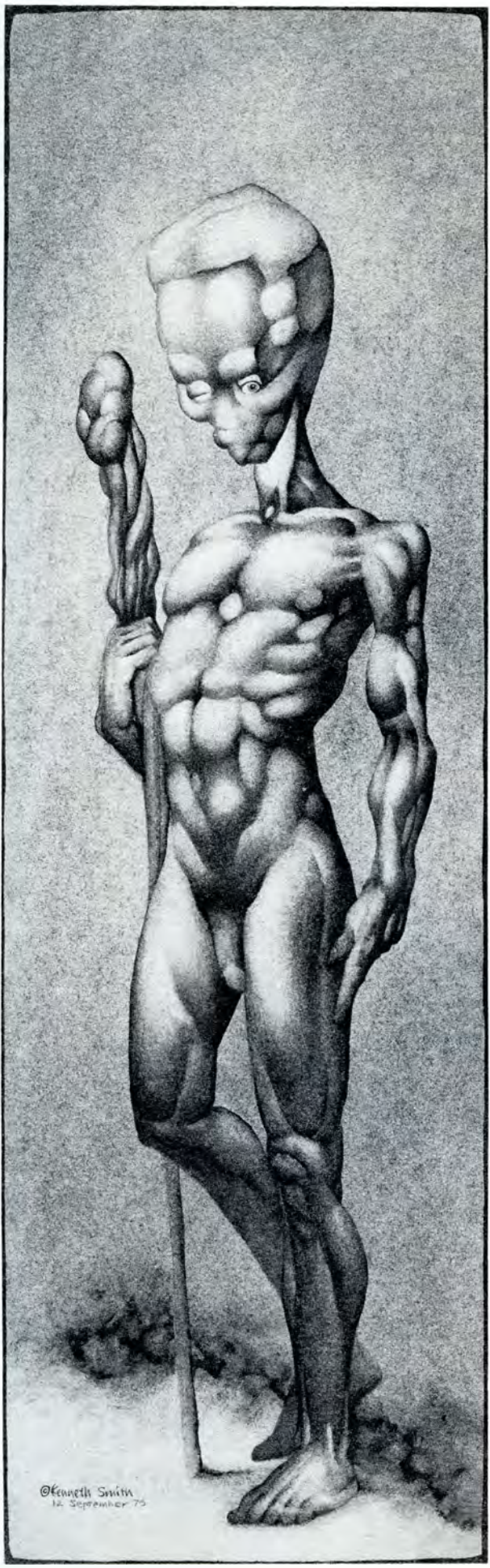
MYTHS, most of these.

How water began
to play. It came
weeping back. It
wanted to die. It
lay at the bottom
of all things.

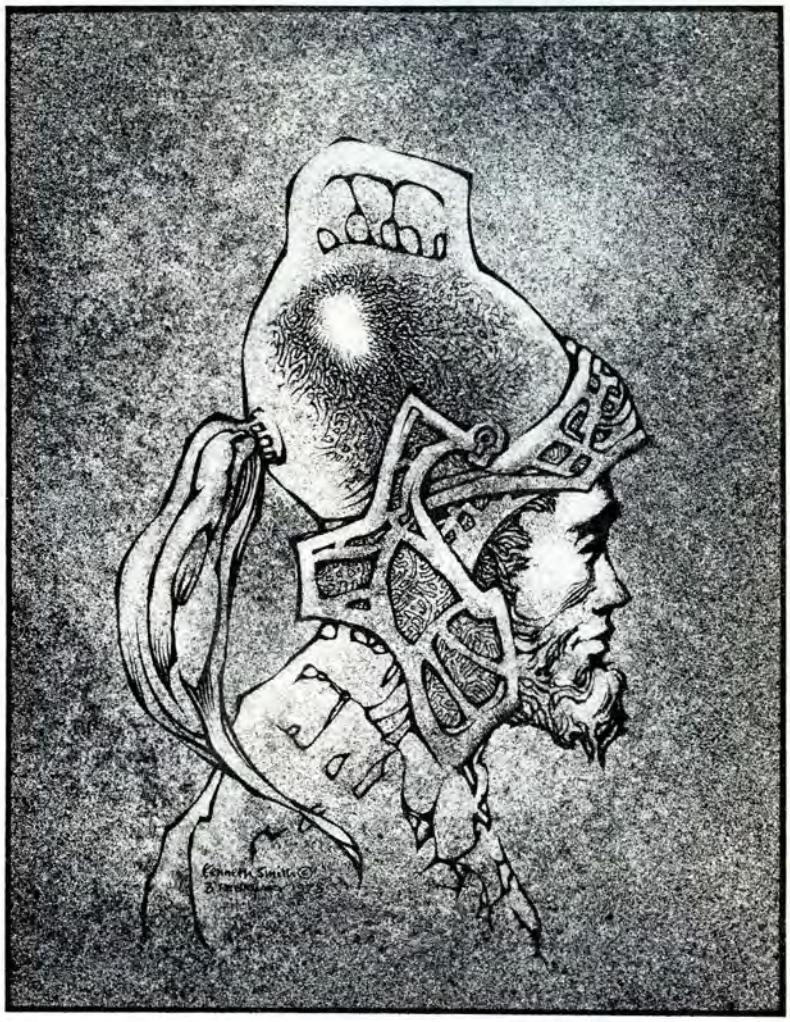
[who paid most?

1970, pen and ink, 6'' x 10''.

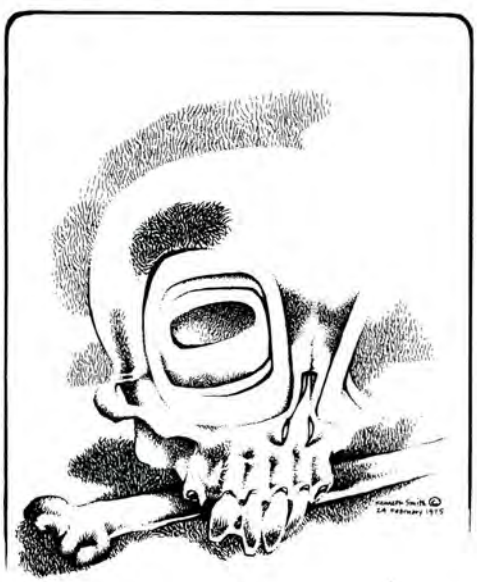
KENNETH SMITH
portfolio


©Kenneth Smith
14 September 75

Above, 1978, charcoal and ink, 14" x 8".



Clockwise from above right: 1978, charcoal and ink, 4" x 6"; 1975, charcoal and ink, 5" x 5"; 1975 pen and ink, 3" x 4".



1978, pen and ink, actual size.

Richard Easton

COLLAPSE

When Margaret Radnor rose from her chair and knelt on the beige carpet, Theodore dropped his fork and slumped over the teak dining table wondering why he hadn't called a doctor or the police long before. He was not at all certain that his wife wasn't being harmed by his delaying her medical attention. Yet he sat observing her as he had for many hours—so tired had he become, he could not remember how many. Theodore suddenly imagined Margaret's kneeling in her office before the patients who were waiting for her to clean their teeth. Then he imagined her kneeling before Mr. and Mrs. Nathan, his own department chief and his wife. Theodore was relieved that Margaret had not been outside their own apartment when the condition first occurred. However, he shut his eyes tightly and two hot tears squeezed from their inside corners and rolled down his cheeks. He could not yet understand why his wife's breakdown had manifested itself in this way.

When he opened his eyes, he stared only at the dishes before him, half filled with food he had uncanned and heated. The pink and lilac flowered china was from his wife's favorite service. He suddenly seized the woven white mat on which the dishes sat and sent silverware, plates, cups, saucers, coffee pot, all hurtling over the teak table top. As if he were surprised, Theodore stared down the length of the table as the eatingware toppled over its surface. Watching the coffee that had spilled across the oiled wood begin to drip onto the rug, he wondered how many items in the apartment he had already broken. He knew, however, the outbursts achieved nothing. Margaret hadn't blinked. She yet knelt in her thin white robe, her arms raised, her hands open, her long fingers spread, the smile on her closed lips, the smile which he had come to hate because it made her look contented. It was because of that smile that he wondered if she might be aware of something he was not. He watched the coffee on the spoiled table surface and again dismissed the suspicion.

Theodore realized that Margaret probably could not help herself, but he resented her for falling apart the way she had. She had known that because of the budget cutbacks in the city, the administrative office hadn't been able to spare him for a single afternoon. They had discussed the physical demands on him and had agreed on what had to be done. They had to lead a moderate life, eat balanced meals, take necessary vitamins, control their consumption of alcohol, get proper amounts of sleep and

exercise, have periodic medical exams. He wasn't certain where she had gone wrong—whether she had been overworking again, or not eating, or not sleeping, or whether her hormones had gone out of balance—but there seemed not a single day available to him, let alone the months of days necessary to heal a psychic collapse.

Theodore ran both his hands through his thinning black hair. He was close to sobbing. He really wanted to take Margaret in his arms and comfort her, to hiss her cheeks and forehead. His wife still looked young. Of course, she had kept her hair from darkening and graying so the tight yellow curls about her face helped to deceive. But her waist and limbs were thin: the skin of her oval face, soft and unwrinkled: and she was kind to him, never answering with anger his own outbursts of temper which, after all, were only caused by his fatigue. He knew she had years before accepted that he was too impatient to be challenged, and so she had chosen to make their lives peaceful by keeping her own emotions in check. He would have risen and kissed her directly on the mouth but for her smile and pose. Suddenly he was nagged again by the doubt that there was some reason for her kneeling that he had not yet perceived. He became aware that he was studying the empty sky which was visible though the closed casement windows in the dining area. Angry because he couldn't determine why he even looked there, let alone what he expected to see, he rose from his chair and drew the white nylon curtains.

Hiking the golden trousers of his pajamas, Theodore walked toward his wife, determined to prove that he could bring her out of this seizure and finally help her to control herself. If only she had, as he had advised her, been able to warn him when she felt the compulsion to kneel coming over her. How could anyone finally help her, if she herself weren't aware of her own symptoms? When she was behaving normally, she didn't even remember exactly what she was doing when she was kneeling. She prayed to the Creator, she insisted, but despite his repeated urging, she could not recall with what words, nor why she was doing so. Despite his efforts to control his suspicions, Theodore wondered whether the strange episodes were not some astonishing trick just to torment him.

Theodore snapped his fingers right before Margaret's brown eyes. He clapped his hands before her face. He shouted her name. Margaret's eyelids did not even flicker. Theodore felt the perspiration of a nervous reaction break out on his back and limbs. Nonetheless he stood between Margaret's outstretched arms and tried to join her hands behind his neck. When that failed, Theodore bent over and feeling her narrow rib cage beneath the gauze of her robe, clasped his own hands behind her back. He tried to lift her to her feet, but unfortunately Margaret came up from the floor in her kneeling attitude.

Although Theodore was a foot taller and weighed nearly seventy pounds more than she, he lost his balance, but after a moment he regained his stability. He felt ridiculous holding her; he shook her, hoping her body would go limp. However, her arms remained oustretched beside his ears; her legs below the knees remained perpendicular to his own legs. Slowly Theodore lifted his slippered left foot and tried to force her legs down. Then he tried with his bare right foot—he was not at all certain where or when he had lost his right slipper. The attempt had no success. Theodore began to shake Margaret angrily and he might have thrown her from him, but suddenly he felt the back of his pajama bottoms slipping down.

To prevent his pants from sliding further, Theodore placed his legs far apart and, taking a moment to consider what he was doing,set his wife gently onto the floor. He watched her kneeling before him as if he had never disturbed her. He was breathing heavily and could feel perspiration running down his sides under his gold and white striped pajama coat. He lifted the pajama bottoms high over his rounded abdomen: then he put both his hands on the back supports of the teak framed dining chair with the braided rope seat on which she had been sitting. He lifted the chair as high as his waist, then swung it forcefully against the white plaster wall in the apartment's dining area. The teak frame snapped, the chair collapsed, and he held two pieces of teak from which dangled the rope seat and fragments of wood. He glanced at Margaret. Her head was thrown back, her hair shining in the light coming through the dining room casements. Her breasts rose and fell rhythmically. She never even took an irregular breath so he could deduce she was aware and thus deceiving him. He thought for a moment of using the teak chair's supports as clubs with which to beat her. Then he tossed the fragments of the broken chair onto the floor by the wall.

Theodore groaned and staggered away from her, aware that he was capable of murdering her. He stumbled about their dining room looking for some weapon that he could turn upon himself. He knew that if his wife weren't acting, she would revive, only to slip again into another episode, and if he did for the moment hold on, he must soon go berserk. He knew that if he did break down and injure her, he could never endure that knowledge himself, nor live while others knew it. He also no longer wanted to deal with the questions of why his wife was acting in that bizarre manner.

He suddenly grabbed the white nylon curtains that he had drawn over the dining room casements and tore them down from their rod. The sun, smoking red, was low in

the sky. Theodore could clearly see the side of the cream brick apartment building across the wide court. No person was evident in any of the dark, rectangular windows nor in the concrete court to see him. Hurting the tips of his fingers, he loosened the aluminum fasteners of one of the screens over the casements, then allowed the screen to topple from the window frame. He turned the crank handle of the window and the steel and glass casement opened. He could smell what he judged was the smoky city air. Still no one was apparent in the court or in any of the floors of windows across the way.

Kicking off his left slipper, Theodore stepped up onto the inside sill, stuck his head and shoulders outside the frame of the open casement, and then, standing upright, inched onto the exterior brick ledge of the window. He glanced into the empty court below, hoping the eleven floor fall would end his life. He decided to dive head forward from the ledge to make certain. He looked back at his wife. She still knelt, facing away from him.

Closing his eyes, Theodore threw himself from the slanting window ledge. Arms and legs spread, he arched face forward into the space above the court of his apartment building. Then Theodore actually hung for a moment in the space over that brick court. As he hung there, Theodore imagined that he had lapsed into unconsciousness and that he was still plummeting, mercifully unaware, toward earth and a cessation of feeling and thought. He even believed he was plummeting quickly downward, when he instead felt himself rising upward and moving through space. He imagined in that situation all sensation was distorted, until to his horror he felt, as he was traveling through space, his pajama bottoms sliding down, first to his buttocks, then below his knees, then to his ankles, then over his feet. Suddenly Theodore became aware that his wrists were being held very fast. Although he didn't have the courage to keep his eyes open to study the creature that had hold of his wrists, he nonetheless did glimpse enough of its awesome, winged shape to know his anxiety was justified and he was being hauled half nude over the Ohio town where he had been an administrator toward an awful moment of judgment. As he traveled, feeling the cold air on his loins and legs, Theodore heard the wailing of those who had already been gathered to the judgment place. He laughed, certain that Margaret's deception could not possibly save her. Then sensing with terror the judgement that awaited him, he howled, writhing in the unyielding grip of the marshalling angel.

Margaret McCarthy

William Welsh

CARBON

there is a fable
generated
by some people
somewhere
a long, long
time ago
in the great tradition
of all myths and fables
that said
in the beginning
each one of us
had two heads
four arms
four legs
and as
people always do
some weasel
pulled a double-cross
and somebody
in charge
cut them all
in half
and sent them scurrying
across the planet

i think
it was plato
who said the
other half
of everyone is
out there
walkin' around
somewhere
and
we're all engaged
in a search
for them
it's not a conscious
thing—the search
we all just start
moving
like pins being
pushed by a
magnet
and every now and then
we flash
on the other half
—maybe they look
just like us

a lot of people
really get
into the search
some try
the process of elimination:
the more you go through,
the more you narrow it
down
some try taking out
ads in papers:
WANTED
my other half
apply inside
some try the
schooling approach
trying to
teach someone
to be your other half

i've given up
on all those 'cause
maybe i derive some
comfort
in being absolutely
sure
that at this
very moment
my other half
is half
way around the
world
walking across
a grey, wet street
smiling
on a windy day
or browsing in
a bookstore for a
fresh poet
or maybe she's
just sitting in
her room
wondering what her
other half
is doing right now
but with my
luck
she's most likely
sitting at home
with her husband
listening to my
favorite music
tapping my other
feet
holding him in my
other arms
thinking about
how happy she is
with my
other head.

TAKE FIVE

as i walk
through the cracks
into something
equally as bland
and i search through
the scuffed, dusty
trunks of reason
it becomes necessary
to examine the whys
and where-fors of
how and when

aside
i take time
to reach down
and run my hand
up and down
my arm
touching the skin
—being perfectly
marveled
that the cells that
make up this thing
that accompanies me
were made from the dust
of the hearts
of stars exploded
eons ago
in some space that
ceases to matter

time bulges
heavy and sags
even trying to think
back
one-ninety-ninth
that far

and then when
i sit back and look
around i often get
the urge for someone
to hold me close
for i see that
in all this time
since those stars
got me together
nothing has become tame
let alone
civilized
which isn't so
surprising
at least not
anymore

so let's forget
about the
holding me close
besides,
this is when
normal people
get drunk.

TOM WHALEN

THE GIRAFFE

The giraffe lay on its side in the dirt unable to get up. I asked it what was wrong, but it only coughed into its handkerchief and rolled its eyes upward.

In the tree above me two birds were smiling. I thought: It is the birds who are to blame, but then the giraffe said: No, you are wrong. It is you who has caused me to have this heartattack by hovering about like some noxious cloud. Then its chest heaved a last time.

I crouched on my knees beside it. The two birds flew down and perched resolutely on my shoulders.

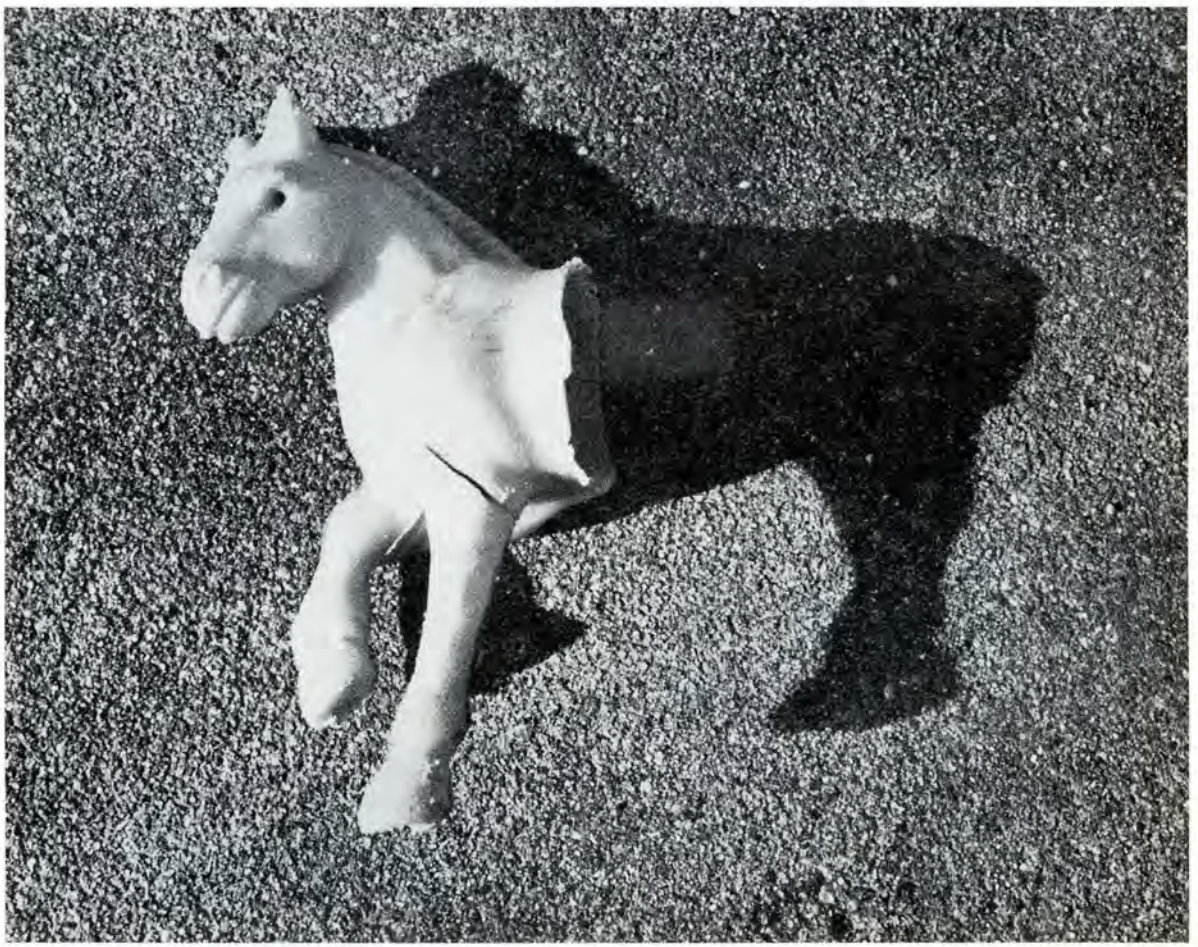
COMPOSITION WITH MOUSE

The desk top cleared, pipe in hand, about to strike the match, when I hear a soft thump, a mouse drops onto my notebook.

Description of the mouse: average height, grayish coat, long black whiskers, long bare tail, unblinking opaque eyes.

I am deathly afraid of mice, irrationally afraid, so I slam my dictionary on top of it.

Then dip its snout into my inkwell and use its crushed, limp body as my pen.



Si Dunn

Jeanine Hathaway

CONVERSATION WITH GOD

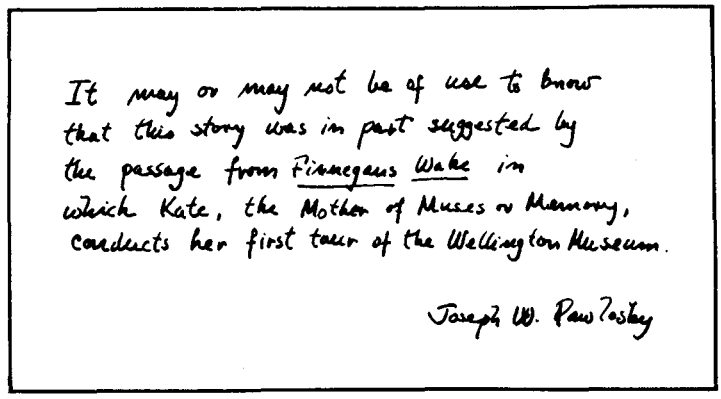
When I say my name, I am telling you
a story. I am giving you a song
singing. Singing in the crossroads,
at the intersection of planes,
in affection's impossible geometry:
reversing; angling; curling; tangential;
my own name circumscribing another's
while it is itself embraced, bound.

It is the story of a bursting suitcase,
a hole in the road, late night noises
in your neighborhood. It is the story
of good teeth, light around the corner,
seven fountains, a reserve of energy.

Inside my name, time collapses.
This too is the story. My name is
another language, not reasonable,
not hormonal, trusting. It blesses
as it moves toward your own.

Joseph W. Pawlosky

A NICE LITTLE STORY



Note: Chase Naremore, who currently makes his home outside Seattle, and whose own work has from time to time appeared in these pages, sends the following story that he came upon in the now-defunct little magazine, *Litterairy*. Aside from whatever its merits might be as a work of literature, what strikes one most about the story is its unaccountable reference to our *New Orleans Review*. While finding one's own real and quite verifiable existence actually foretold in a work of fiction may not be without some precedent, it has nevertheless to be a rare enough happening to give one pause. The original story, written in 1962, actually predates the *New Orleans Review* by some six years, which explains why Mathaeu Crowson, in preparing his "Introduction" for *Litterairy* in 1966, would have found no record of our journal, at that time still some two years in the offing.

Of this century's many promising but unpublished young writers, none was perhaps more prolific, yet more neglected, than the late Thomas W. Carboune (1929-1962?). His output was enormous. Having spent eleven years shut up in his Perry Street apartment in Greenwich Village and having supported himself by working nights and weekends at Wilentz's Bookshop, he produced, during that time, enough stories, histories, vignettes, reminiscences, and reflections to fill four standard-size egg crates.

About Carboune himself, little is known. While his youth was spent working on the family farm near his native Creighcian, Ill., he left there in February of 1950, shortly after the death of his father. It is as a rather shy and reclusive lad that Thomas is still recalled by many around Creighcian, and indeed, having been the last of his family to leave the farm, it wasn't until some three weeks after he was gone that his absence was even noticed.

Of one thing, however, we can be certain, and that is that once in New York, Carboune lost little time, as he records in an early diary, "in setting about (his) life's ambition to engage in literary work." In fact, so devoted was he to become to his "calling" that, judging from the sheer bulk of his *oeuvre*, he could scarcely have had time for anything else. Working in total obscurity for eleven long and solitary years (he never married), he simply wrote, revised, reworked, and rewrote.

Although eleven years of unrewarded labor might seem to some like quite a lengthy apprenticeship, it is, as belletristic careers go, not all that exceptional. Indeed, it is something of a revelation to note just how many "successful" artists have had to struggle for decades, and even lifetimes, before getting "discovered." It is not altogether unreasonable, therefore, to suppose that if fate had but allotted him another year or so, Carboune might well have made his mark in the literary world.

Such, however, was not to be. On the contrary, instead of enjoying some modicum of critical acclaim, Thomas Carboune is now all but unknown, and virtually unknowable. Sometime after February 9, 1962, the day on which he was last seen by his landlord, Mr. Chester Mirakos, Carboune disappeared, leaving behind, besides his writings, a personal library of several dozen tattered volumes, a worn-out Underwood typewriter, and a few articles of clothing.

It wasn't until some time later that Matt Lewis, the editor of *Litterairy,* learned about Carboune from Markus Thornberry, the poet, and eventually succeeded in rescuing from the authorities, "the Carboune estate." (So far as anyone has been able to learn, Carboune was survived by no next of kin.)

One day, then, about two years ago, Lewis, long a champion of unpublished writers, approached and asked me if I would consider reading through Carboune's work with an eye toward selecting some pieces for possible publication. The task, while rewarding, has been a lengthy one.

Since it was Carboune's shorter fictions that seemed best suited to *Litterairy's* designs, it was from them that I selected the three stories to be published in this and the two subsequent issues of the magazine.* The following untitled story was chosen to initiate the series for a number of reasons, only one of which I will be able to take up here. In a word, this story is a *tour de force,* an achievement of rare distinction, and what, more than anything else, is responsible for its pressing immediacy is Carboune's obvious mastery of that deceptively simple form, the epistolary story, a genre for which he displayed great fondness, having written no fewer than 183 other such stories.

But the epistolary device, especially in the hands of one as equal to its demands as Carboune was, can give rise to certain critical problems. When, for example, as is the case here, the author decides to bestow upon his narrator/protagonist, his own name, he does so at the risk of having the reader identify the author and the narrator as one. While most readers will, of course, be generally able to distinguish between the two, there are nevertheless occasions when the line does tend to blur. Because Carboune does achieve here such a rare and persuasive degree of verisimilitude and, also, as I say, because he and his protagonist are identical, the uninitiated reader could be misled into taking this for an historical, rather than a fictional, account.

It might, therefore, to avoid the possibility of any such misapprehensions, be well to keep in mind that while the "addressee" of this "letter," "Mia Legari," could very well be patterned after one of the author's real-life acquaintances, there is nothing to suggest Carboune's ever having known anyone by that name. Neither "Mia Legari" nor "Thomas Carboune-the-Narrator" is anything more, or less, than a conventional fictional device, a character conjured up solely for the telling of the story. This strictly fictional existence is borne out by the fact that while "111 Starmount" is a real enough place (it is the location of *The Rack,* a popular billiards hall on the Lower East Side), no one at that address could recall ever having heard of a "Mia Legari," or of a "Thomas Carboune," for that matter. It was, it would seem, especially in light of Carboune's having used the same address in numerous other stories, simply a name and a number that

appealed to him.

The further, and in my opinion, more conclusive evidence attesting to the fictituous nature of the narrative is its mention of the *New Orleans Review*, the magazine to which "Thomas Carboune-the-Narrator" submits his story, "The Museum." There is, in fact, no such magazine, nor has there ever been, and while there is certainly the respected *New Day Review*, none of Carboune's writings ever appeared there.

I would only say in conclusion, that while it will undoubtedly be some time before Carboune's work becomes well enough known to spawn any appreciative critique, it has been for me an honor to have had some small part in introducing an author so undeservedly unknown. It is not, I think, premature to suggest that someday, students of American Literature will be duly familiar with his work.

*It was, unfortunately, that with this, the Autumn 1966, issue, *Litterairy* suspended publication, precluding the appearance of the other two stories. Furthermore, according to Chase Naremore, who has pursued the matter, Mathaeu Crowson, who died in an automobile accident a year ago last April, seems to have taken with himself the knowledge of the whereabouts of the Carboune mss. They have yet to be found. *Ed.*

Mathaeu B. Crowson
Saugatuk, 1966

UNTITLED

March 5, 1962

Mia Legari
111 Starmount
New York, 12, N. Y.

Dear Mia,

As this is likely to be my last letter to anyone, it seems fitting that even after all these years I should be writing it to you, who shared so much of my struggle to become a writer. Although my telling you now is probably too little balm too late to soothe the scrapes and bruises of all those stormy years of ours together, I have finally managed to hoist myself up and over the palisade of pinkslips (spare the blue pencil, Love, I *know* it's alliterative), and into the Promised Land of the Published. Actually, it's about that that I'm writing though—about my shedding of the stigma of "aspiring" writer, which, after all, is nothing but a euphemism anyway, a prettily painted hatchet for "unpublished," and therefore "nonexistent." There is, however, something else I'd like to get off my chest first—a confession of sorts, or a recognition.

Do you remember, Mia—I'm sure you do—how, when we were still together, you always used to scorch me so for spending so much time reading books when, as you put it, I might have been out "living," and "experiencing life," and how you always used to insist that I would someday come to realize just how much I really needed people? Remember?

Well, you know, Mia, you were right. No, seriously, you really were, and while there was no way I could have admitted it then, I certainly can now,—and do. I suppose you could say that I've changed some, *n'est-ce pas?* Hey, but look, there's no need for alarm though. I'm not suggesting that we try starting over again, or anything like that. No, all I'm trying to say, Mia, is that what, because of my myopia, you never quite got me to see, something else has come along and—pardon the Poe—flung into frightening focus.

Of course you know that crow's one thing no one ever really gets used to, which is why it has taken me so long to get around to writing this, and why writing even now has got me so all snarled and twisted up in knots. And yet, I've got to write, Mia, I've simply got to. I've got to tell somebody, while there's still time, about this thing that's happened to me, and you're the only one I know who'll listen, or at least I hope you will, which is all I'm asking, really— that you *read* this. Nothing more. No strings. In fact, I won't even ask you to believe it, knowing how wild and unimaginable some of it's likely to seem. On my word though, it's all true, Mia, every last bit of it, and while I wouldn't mind being able to say that I just sort of made the whole thing up as a kind of nice little story, the

fact is that I could never have invented this one, not in a million years.

It all began, well, insofar as anything ever really begins, it began a year ago tomorrow night, March 6, 1961 (what Yeats couldn't have done with a number like that, right?), and I know, just as sure as I'm sitting here writing this, that *tomorrow night* it's all going to come crashing to some horrible climax, although I haven't the slightest idea how it'll turn out. And there's nothing I can do about it either, except wait and see what happens.

Anyway, as I was saying, it was a year ago tomorrow night that I met her. (Yes, there *is* a woman involved, but it's not the way you think, believe me.) For days I had been slogging around the ditches of my mind, trying to grope through one of the worst blue funks I've ever been in. God, I was a wreck—eating poorly, sleeping little, writing . . . nothing! And as if all that weren't enough, I had just finished plowing through Paulson's latest nightmare, *Amazing Muses,* as gruesome a romp through the Garden as you'll ever find. So anyway, around 11 o'clock, after getting rid of the last customer and locking up for the night, I decided to go for a walk and eventually wound up in that little park over on Tenth—remember, the one where we used to go to read the Sunday *Times?*

When I got to the park it was nearly deserted. I found a bench that was somewhat sheltered from the wind and I just sat there, staring back at the dark. Never have I been so close to chucking everything—especially this whole writer bit—as I was then. I mean, like it had been weeks since I'd gotten through so much as a single paragraph, let alone a story. I couldn't write, couldn't think—couldn't nothing. Like a mouse in a maze I kept chasing myself around the corridors of my mind, only to always end up back where I'd started—nowhere! For the first time I began to see myself for what I truly was—an absurd marionette, tripping around an empty stage and bowing, like some buffoon, to the applause of my own unhinged imagination. I mean, let's face it—for so long had I been throttled by my ambition to be a writer that I had become, literally, a parody of a person, a dupe more gullible than any character I would have ever dared to invent. There I was, thirty-two years old, right? and still gadding quixotically about the same old run-down dream. And for what, huh, for what? For nothing, that's what: for a few boxes stuffed with paper, and for the heckling memory of all those hours spent hunched over a typewriter, trying to coax from an incorrigible tongue, something more than just another pound of pulp. No, there was no use trying to kid myself any longer. I was finished, and I knew it. Washed up. And out.

But why should I be telling all this to you, Mia, when you know better than anyone just what a mess I've made of things. I mean, you've heard it all so many times before that you can probably recite the whole script, line for line, right? Really, there's no reason for going into all this, except to let you know what was running through my mind while I sat shivering there on that bench, when she appeared.

And that's exactly what she did, too,—she appeared. I mean, like there I was, sitting all by myself, not another soul anywhere in sight, and suddenly, like in one of those trick shots they use in the movies, there she was, standing and watching me from across the sidewalk as if she had been there the entire time. The whole thing was so bizarre, so unreal. It was like . . . I don't know . . . like she had somehow missed the stagedoor and accidentally ended up in the park. Like I said, it's March, okay, and the temperature is right around freezing, and everywhere there's all this slush and slop, and what is she wearing but some ridiculous summer gown and a pair of silk slippers. On her head she has one of these lace mantillas —you know, like the one Calypso is wearing in that *Picasso* over at the Met—, and her face, the way it is touched by the light from a streetlamp, is sort of like a cameo.

For the longest time she did nothing but stand and stare at me as if I, rather than she, was the vision. Honest, it was enough to give you the creeps. My only thought was to get the hell out of there as fast as I could, and I was just about to get up and go find myself another bench when she finally made a move. Holding up her hand to signal me to stay, she crossed the sidewalk and came and sat down beside me. Well, what next, right? I mean, the last thing I needed was to have to spend the night trudging through the swamp of somebody else's messed up psyche, which hers sure as hell had to be, or else why was she all decked out like that in the park, in the dead of winter?

"Of course, if you really want me to go," she finally said, again raising her hand, "just say so. I'll be glad to leave you alone. However, there are a couple of things you ought to know. First of all, just because you happen to think of your own psyche as something of a swamp, is no reason to suppose that everyone else's is a swamp too. And secondly, unless I'm badly mistaken, *you're* the one who's so desperately been wanting to meet me all these years, and not I you."

Honest to God, you can't imagine what a shock it was, Mia, to have been sitting there, minding my own business, and suddenly find my thoughts being filched from me as easily as berries from a bush. It sure wouldn't have taken any feather to have knocked me off that bench, believe me. But what was even more amazing than the way she

went so easily about the pilfering of my mind was the fact that she was right—I *had* been wanting to meet her. Don't ask me to explain it, because I can't, but the fact is that for years, I felt, without even knowing it, I had done nothing *but* search for her, who, or what, ever she was. The whole thing was so weird that I began feeling a little like Alice, except that Alice was a story, and this was really happening.

Anyway, after telling me that it was she, a perfect stranger, who was the object of my "quest," and being absolutely right about it too, she was off and away on an incredible stream of talk, telling me first about one thing, then about another, while I, still trying to get over my shock, could do nothing but sit there and listen. On and on she talked, weaving such a web of tales that, soon, the only world that counted for anything, or that even existed, was the one formed by her words. Like Scheherazade, she went on splicing the end of one story to the beginning of the next, and it got so that the only thing that mattered was that she not stop talking.

She did though, or at least I *think* she did; I don't know, because when it dawned on me that she was no longer talking, she was no longer there either. I mean, she was gone, just . . . gone.

And that's it, Mia, that's all there was. During the entire time, can you believe it, I hadn't spoken a single word, except maybe for "oh," which I must have repeated at least a hundred times. How long I remained sitting there after she'd gone, I really don't know, so overheated was my brain with all the wild and rare stories she had told me. And one in particular, which had to do with this museum up in Montreal that was run by a friend of hers, a Mr. Roget, kept crackling along the ends of my nerves like a brush fire. "If you're ever in Montreal," she had said, "you've simply got to visit that museum. It is by far the most amazing such place in the world, for it not only depicts the past, but actually re-creates it, and makes the past present." She didn't elaborate, and I supposed, of course, that she must have been speaking figuratively, but what, I began to wonder, what would it be like if there really were such a museum, you know, a place where you could go to bring back the Past, and make it Present? And not just a re-enactment either, but, truly, a re-creation.

And that's when it hit me—what a fantastic story a museum like that would make. And suddenly, there it was—"The Museum"—just like that! and there I was, alone (forgive me, it's just the Joypcee in my soul) aloft along a lovely and lambent line. It was sure something, I'll tell you. Never has a story ever come to me like that before. In an instant, I saw the whole thing, as complete and detailed as a mandala.

When I stood up I realized from the stiffness of my body just how long I must have been sitting there. I walked once around the park to see if the woman wasn't still someplace around, but saw no one. Starting back to my apartment—I'm still here on Perry, by the way—I walked rapidly and forced myself to concentrate on the passing cars, the streetlights, the garbage cans—anything but the story, for fear that the slightest attention might start the thing twisting and contorting itself all out of shape, or even make it disappear altogether.

It did neither though, and, as stories go, turned out to be a pretty docile charge. Getting it down first in longhand, then, making a few minor changes, I typed up a finished copy, sealed it in a manila envelope and headed for the post office. Back outside I was surprised to find that it was still dark. I mean, I couldn't possibly have written, revised and rewritten "The Museum," which was close to thirty pages, all within what?—two, maybe three, hours at most. Without realizing it, I must have written straight through the entire day and right on into the next night, which meant that I must also have missed a day's work, which certainly wasn't going to sit very well with old man Wilnetz. Anyway, having nothing better to do I just tucked the envelope under my arm and walked the streets for a couple of hours until the post office opened. I sent the manuscript off to one of those literary magazines, the *New Orleans Review,* and so sure was I that "The Museum," after all those years, and all those hundreds of rejection slips, was going to be my first published story that I didn't even bother enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope. I just knew it would be accepted.

And it was. Not three weeks later I got a letter saying that my story was scheduled to appear in the Spring issue, and that I could expect to receive my payment in copies sometime in early June. *Payment in copies!* Hell, they could have paid me in turnips for all I cared. I mean, I was a writer! Me— Thomas Carboune . . . Thomas *W.* Carboune . . . at last I was a writer, and would soon have a published story to prove it too. Well, that called for a little celebration. Wine, right? I literally skipped to the refrigerator. No wine. All right, beer then. Who cared? I went to the bathroom and looked at myself in the mirror. I smiled. I frowned. I stuck a dozen different poses, trying to decide which would look best on a dust jacket, because this was only the beginning. Hell, if I could get one story published, I could certainly get another . . . and another. Who knew, maybe even a novel! It sure is surprising how far you can glide on a little shove of confidence. In no time at all I was turning out scores of new stories, revising old ones, and sending them all off to magazines everywhere.

It wasn't long, though, before reality was back at the door. First of all, ever since receiving word of my story's acceptance I had been trying desperately to find that woman again, to whose further outpourings I would gladly have spent hours, even days, listening and panning for whatever other nuggets she might have stashed away. With almost nothing to go on, however—I hadn't even learned her name—my search kept bouncing off one brick wall after another. The only person who thought he recognized the woman from my description was an old Lethean poet called Bud, who comes to the park every morning to feed the pigeons. She might, according to Bud, have been the same foreign woman—Mina Sinae, or something like that—that he used to see quite a bit of in the old days, but whom he hadn't heard from in years.

Failure to find the woman wasn't my only problem though. One by one, all the stories I had been sending out were coming back to me, each adorned with the familiar pink note of regret. Damnit, what was wrong? I mean, who was that woman? And why couldn't I find her? I was beginning to wonder if "The Museum" wasn't maybe a fluke, or worse, since I still hadn't received my now-overdue payment in copies, just another figment of my skittish imagination. But no, it just couldn't have been *that*. Somewhere around here I still had the original draft, as well as the letter of acceptance, which, to dispel the suspicion that I was wandering around in somebody else's dream, I started to hunt for among my papers.

Well, talk about needles in haystacks! For three days I searched this place, going through all my notes and letters and manuscripts, only in the end to find neither the letter, nor the story. What the hell was going on anyway? I mean, there weren't two me's, were there?—the one who had written and published "The Museum," and the other, whose whole life had been nothing but one long string of failure and rejection. My mind was starting to play tricks on me. I wrote to the *New Orleans Review* and requested the promised copies, but received no reply. That was in mid-August. Two weeks later, I wrote again. Still no answer. I even tried calling, but was never able to get through. It was then nearly six months since I, or my illusive wraith, had met the woman in the park and written "The Museum."

What I did next, I admit, was a frantic and foolish thing, and just about what you'd expect of someone on the verge of paranoia. In the early morning hours of September 5th, in a tired, confused, depressed and slightly hung over state of mind, I decided on the spur of the moment to hitchhike up to Montreal to see for myself that damned museum. If only I could make contact with reality, I figured, maybe I'd still be able to pull back from the brink. Oh, it was a madcap scheme all right—after all, how did I know that the woman herself hadn't made up all that about the museum?—but what the hell, what did I have to lose, except my sanity, which was teetering on a tightrope anyway. So, around 3 a.m., less than five minutes after having decided to do so, I took off for Montreal.

The trip itself was one for the books. Not ten minutes out of the city I was nailed, while standing on the roadside, with a beer can from a passing car. A half hour later I got my first ride. It was with an itinerant preacher who, as I discovered from his attempted detour into the Adirondacks, was also something of a pervert. When I finally managed to slip out on him I had to walk some three miles back to the highway. Of my next three rides, two got flat tires, and outside Keeseville I was picked up by the police and taken in for questioning.

I finally arrived though, and when I did, not knowing what I was looking for, or whether what I was looking for even existed, I just started wandering around the city at random: Bonsecours Market, Château de Ramezay, St. James Cathedral, lunch at a fruit vendor's, Notre Dame, Place Ville-Marie. For hours I walked, across to Sherbrooke Street, past the Irish university, and on, up and around the grounds of the Seminaire de S. Sulpice. But no museum.

The smart thing, of course, would have been to turn around right then and head on back to good old Gotham or to at least have gotten hold of a map and asked where the museums were. But what museum would I have asked for? No, if there was a museum, sooner or later I'd find it on my own, and if there wasn't, well, I would at least have been spared the embarrassment of making a spectacle of myself.

With the day slipping quickly by though, I had more to worry about than just the saving of face, such as where I was going to spend the night, and what, with less than five dollars in my pocket, I was going to do for money. Ragged and roadweary, then, and wondering how I was ever going to get out of this one, I came to the top of a steep narrow street, turned the corner, and there, standing directly across the street, *exactly as I had described it in my story,* was the museum.

If the English language has, anywhere, words to convey the kind of shock that stopped and staggered me at seeing loom up like that, the fabulous brick-and-mortar twin of my imagination, I have certainly never come across them. At first I was simply stunned, unable to comprehend what I was seeing. It was as if with that last step I had crossed some invisible line and walked onto the set of a Disney movie.

When the initial shock passed and I could feel the blood returning to my head, I continued a few yards

to a dilapidated bench beneath a scraggly sycamore, both of which I also recognized from their having been in "The Museum." I remember thinking as I leaned back and closed my eyes that this wasn't really happening, that I wasn't really being snatched up into a story that I had written myself. But I was. Regardless of whether I kept my eyes open or shut, I kept seeing the same thing—the taunting vision of the museum, perched up there on its rocky knoll not fifty yards away. The entire property was cordoned off by a squat fieldstone wall, blackened with age and stained in places with rust from the wrought iron fence on top of it. The sprawling building itself, having over the years been expanded with numerous additions, was a misshapen structure with wings of mismatched reddish brick protruding in every direction. A colonnade of high and haughty elms fashioned a thick canopy over the steep stairway that inched from the sidewalk up to the main entrance. On either side of the entrance imposed an enormous statue of a fierce lion. Scores of chipped and broken gargoyles dotted the building's facade, and two trumpeting angels above the entrance, carved in relief and unfurling a scroll inscribed, *IN PRINCIPIO ERAT VERBUM,* along with the stained glass windows and the sweeping gothic arches, betrayed the building's having originally been a church.

Able to withstand for only so long the rack of being strung between fantasy and reality, I finally threw in with the latter and crossed the street to the museum. I approached the stairs warily, just as I had had myself do in "The Museum." I stopped and looked around to see if anyone was watching, but except for the policeman down the block who was occupied with a beggar, the street was deserted. I turned and started up the stairs.

While the going was at first easy enough, I nevertheless soon got the feeling I was walking up a down-escalator. For twenty minutes or more I kept climbing and climbing. Eventually my feet came to be so heavy and cumbersome that I had to rest after every step. And the stairs, which had at first been smooth and clear, were now pitted and potholed and strewn with chunks of broken concrete, and so unevenly spaced that more than once I went sprawling. By the time I reached the first of the three landings I felt I had been climbing for hours. The dank air was saturated with the odor of humus, and the denseness of the ceiling of leaves caused the entire tunnel to be cast in a kind of permanent twilight. Utterly exhausted, I leaned against the rusty handrailing and turned to see how far along I had come, but a fog had settled in around the lower stairs, totally obscuring the street and sidewalk.

It was at this very point in "The Museum" that I had had myself thrown into a quandary over whether to continue on or, coming to my senses, turn and flee back down the stairs, which was precisely my present dilemna as well. Slowly, then, I started to sit myself down on the step to consider the alternatives when I was suddenly thrust back to my feet by a thunderous roar. I spun around and saw come gushing out of the museum, a wildly churning river. It was headed straight for me. I tried to move, but couldn't. My shoes had somehow become fastened to the step. The terrifying noise shook and rumbled the ground beneath me. I was just about to scream out in desperation when I noticed that the wall of water, for all its raging fury, was coursing down the stairs at the same frozen rate that I had ascended them, and, by the time it reached my landing, was no longer a torrent at all, but merely a thin wash. Eventually it disappeared altogether, leaving as its only remnant, my soaked shoes. Trying to brush the rust from my clothes, but only managing to spread it around, I resumed my climb, the going much easier now than what it had been.

In practically no time at all, almost as if I had been whisked there, I found myself standing on the topmost step, basking in a warm and brilliant sun. It was a luxurious moment but it didn't last long, for suddenly there came charging out of the museum, a herd of yelling, whooping school children, playing tag and calling to each other in strange chucking sounds. One of the youngsters, violently flinging open the door, smashed it against the statue of the lion, sending in all directions a shower of splintered glass. The group's chaperone, a smiling but bewildered-looking woman in her early twenties, emerged from the building and nimbly picked her way through the field of broken glass. She was wearing a crisp but slightly modified sailorsuit: the blue skirt had been lengthened to reach her ankles, and the white, high-collared blouse was slit to allow her pale breasts to protrude and swing freely. To each tawny nipple was tied a lace ribbon—one blue, the other pink—and around her neck she had a gold chain from which dangled an enormous medallion bearing a portrait of Rudolph Valentino, unusual in that it showed him grinning broadly. She paused on the landing and smiled at me. "Mr Roget will see you now," she said. I thanked her and asked if she'd enjoyed the museum.

"I'm hardly the type," she answered, brushing the thick falls of burnt umber hair back from her eyes. "Besides, we still have this war to worry about, you know. According to the latest government studies, nine out of every ten people still suffer, whch isn't a very comforting thought."

I nodded and somewhat self-consciously pointed down to my waterlogged shoes. She smiled and seemed about to make some reply when one of the children, a pale thin boy wearing a stiffly starched Lone Ranger

outfit, black mask and all, came bounding back up the stairs and dragging behind him, a battered old radio. The boy reminded me of myself, and could have been, although with the mask it was hard to tell, me in my younger days. He approached the woman and motioned for her to bend down and whispered something in her ear, staring all the while at my shoes. "Yes, so I've noticed," she said, dismissing the boy and taking from her purse, a pair of four-buckle galoshes, which she handed to me. I tried to refuse, but she insisted that I take and put them on over my soaked shoes, which I did.

"There, now isn't that better?" she asked primly. "It never hurts to come prepared, you know." Again I nodded. "I do think, though," she went on, "that you really better be getting along. You know how Mr. Roget hates to be kept waiting." Then, in what I took to be a signal to the children, she held aloft the Valentino medallion, around which now glowed a neon nimbus. "We have to be going ourselves," she said, "it's getting late."

"Oh, really, what time is it?" I asked, but because of the ruckus of the children who were now all darting and clamoring around her, she didn't hear. When all were present and accounted for she raised the hemn of her skirt and descended the stairs. From the sidewalk, which was clearly visible now, she turned and called back to me. "I'm sorry," she said through cupped hands, "but you know the rules as well as I do. We can't always have the things we want." How true, I thought as I turned and entered the museum—how true.

Inside, the place was so dark that I had to stand for the longest time waiting for my eyes to adjust. It was as if I had suddenly plunged beneath an ocean of smells and sounds, the sources of which were all invisible. Through an atmosphere tinged with burning leaves there swarmed pungent traces of tar and turpentine, and other odors which I couldn't identify, while currents of familiar but disjointed sounds kept drifting by. Somewhere, someone was whistling softly and tuning a guitar. Elsewhere, dogs barked, guns crackled, doors opened and closed. "Well, that about does it," someone said, snapping shut what sounded like a thick book. From above and behind me I heard the sound of rushing footsteps, rustling dresses and anxious but whispered voices:

". . . . proudly presents the Grand Guignol . . ." one announced;

". . . any minute now . . ." said another;

". . . once more now, push . . ."

". . . ies and gentlemen, here's . . ."

When I looked around—my eyes having grown accustomed to the dark—to see who was being so ceremoniously announced, the sounds ceased. I was standing in the center of a vast rotunda, the skyward-sweeping walls of which soared to such heights that I felt like an ant at the bottom of a vat. But even more astonishing than the place's size was its state of utter devastation. Great gouges were everywhere dug into the mildewed, mud-spattered walls. The once-beautiful green-marble floor was in ruins, and all around me were mounds of smoldering garbage and debris. I called out, but was answered only by my echo. At the sound of my voice a brown oily rat shot out from behind one of the garbage heaps and scurried down into a slimy green burrow.

I then spotted in a distant alcove off to the right, a man digging what looked like a trench, and sending great billowing clouds of sunstreaked dust up towards an open skylight. Curious as to what he was doing, I wandered over and noticed, as I approached, that on the wall behind him there was a portrait of a smiling toothless priest who held in his left hand a smoking revolver, and in his right, a bleeding photograph of himself. The air was thick with dust and it burned my eyes and made me sneeze. Startled, the man dropped his shovel and spun around. It was the Lone Ranger, and while he was dressed in a schoolboy's uniform and not wearing his mask, I knew right away it was he from the pale outline around his puffy eyes.

"Excuse me, Kemo Saby," I ventured, "but could you tell me . . ."

Before I could finish he was bending down and hauling out of the trench an old-time microphone which he set directly in front of himself. Clearing his throat and squinting in my direction he stepped up to the mike. "What in tarnation're you doing, sneaking up on me like that, Roget?" he demanded.

"I'm sorry, but I'm, not . . ." I started to say, but was cut short by a trumpet sounding the Cavalry Charge, which was followed by the rousing strains of *Le Prelude* and finally overridden by the thunder of a hundred galloping horses. I looked around but I saw nothing.

"Aw, goddamnit," the Lone Ranger muttered, "if those sonsofbitches haven't gone and screwed it up again. You know, you just can't depend on those sound effects people for anything." He yanked a sheaf of papers from his pocket and fumbled through it until he found what he wanted. "Goddamnit, Harry," he boomed into the microphone, "that Cavalry Charge doesn't come until *after* the word from our sponsor. Just once I wish you guys'd try following the goddamn script."

"Sorry," a voice came back over the speakers.

"All right, take it from the top," the Lone Ranger commanded, stuffing the papers back into his pocket. Again he cleared his throat and said, "What in tarnation're you doing, sneaking up on me like that, Roget?"

"But I'm not . . ."

"Let me have those field glasses, will you?" he said, turning towards the trench. A brown hand emerged and passed up to the Lone Ranger a pair of pink opera glasses. "Say, what is this?" he demanded, staring at me through the binoculars, "you're not Roget. Where's Roget? What've you hombres done with him?"

"If you'll just give me a chance, I think I can . . ."

"Reach, Mister!" he ordered, shoving a stubby finger into my ribs. Raising my hands I tried once more to explain, but failed.

"That's right, and keep 'em up where I can see 'em. I've got a hunch the sheriff's going to be mighty interested in hearing what you've got to say for yourself, especially when he finds out that you're the one who's been impersonating Roget. Now, march! and no funny business either. Remember, I've got . . ."

"Oh, for chrissakes, Beemer," a reproachful voice bawled from the shadows, "now what's the problem?"

Turning around, I saw step out from behind a pillar, a boney, shriveled up man pushing an empty wheelchair. He was wearing a black business suit, and a black necktie over a shirt of rusted chainmail, and I felt I should have known who he was, but couldn't quite place him. Strung across his chest were rows of neatly aranged medals of various sizes, shapes and colors, and on his head he had a white-fur baseball cap, trimmed in gold piping.

"Oh, so it's you," he said, walking slowly around me and craning his neck up and down as if assessing my stance and build. "We'd just about given up on you, you know. Thought you'd gotten lost or something."

"All right, Beemer," he said to the Lone Ranger, "the show's over. You can get back to work now." Obediently tossing the binoculars and microphone back into the trench, the Lone Ranger picked up his shovel and started scooping the dirt back into the cavity.

"Well, are you coming?" the man said to me, having strapped himself into his wheelchair and gotten turned around.

"Wait a minute," I said, "what about Tonto?"

"Who?"

"Tonto—he's down there in that ditch and the Lone Ranger's starting to cover him up. He'll be buried alive."

"Impossible," the man laughed. "There's nobody in that ditch because it's off-limits, and there's no Tonto in this episode either, because Tonto's taken the day off to study for his bar exam."

"But I saw him," I protested, "I saw him hand the Lone Ranger a pair of binoculars."

"A pair of what?"

"Binoculars, a pair of pink binoculars, and the Lone Ranger took them and looked at me through them."

"Say, you really do have an imagination, don't you?" he said "And where are these binoculars now? back in the trench?

"Look, even you must be able to see how ridiculous this is getting. I mean, here we are talking about some silly pair of binoculars, when what we're supposed to be doing is getting you through your past. All right, all right, so it's your past, and it's your story, too, and you can do with it whatever you want, even ruin it for all I care. But the fact is, there's still two-thirds of a plot to get through, and having us standing around and talking about pink binoculars is sure as hell not going to get us through it. Like I said, it's your story, and if you want to ruin it, that's your business, but you'll have to do it without me, because I'm leaving."

"Hey, wait," I called, glancing back at the Lone Ranger, who was still shoveling, and then running to catch up with the man who was already moving in his wheelchair down the narrow corridor to the right, "wait, I think there's been some mistake. You see, there was this woman . . ."

"There always is, isn't there?" he snickered as we went hurtling along the winding maze of corridors and passageways, he in his wheelchair and I trotting along side. "There's really nothing to worry about though. Everything's been taken care of—your tour of the museum, the reception in your honor, the whole works. Oh, I suppose it's possible we could hit a snag or two along the way, what with this war on and all, but my guess is that things'll go pretty smoothly from here on out."

The twisting turning corridors were everywhere strewn with refuse and debris. Everything was in shambles, and more than once I had to jump out of the way to avoid stumbling into the numerous pits and trenches. Through great gaping holes in the walls I caught, as we whisked by, occasional glimpses of people working at desks, scrubbing floors, and selling souvenirs and the like.

It was through one such hole that my guide finally steered his wheelchair. "Over there," he said, pointing to a mammoth horseshoe-shaped desk. Like the rotunda this room was also enormous. Off in the distance to the left, a company of marines were practicing landing maneuvers in a plastic wading pool. On the desk itself, which was as large as a stage, there was a single red button, and next to it a tattered coffee-stained sign:

HINKY DINKY
PARLEY VOO
CHEER UP FACE
THE WAR IS THROUGH.

BURMA SHAVE

Mounted on the wall over the three closed doors behind the desk was a replica of DaVinci's *Last Supper*, in which, instead of the traditional company, there sat around a table at the Stork Club, the 1937 World Champion New York Yankees.

"Well, here we are," the man declared, lurching out of his wheelchair, "but you're really going to have to hurry if you want to finish your tour in time for the reception."

"I know this might sound like a dumb question," I said to him, "but you're not by any chance Mr. Roget, are you?"

At first, dumfounded, he stared at me, but then seeing that I was earnest, he nearly crippled himself with laughter. "God, that is *rich*," he gasped. "Listen, for years now, I've been trying to see Roget myself, but every time I've gotten even close, he's given me the slip. He is one smooth operator, believe me, and if you ever happen to get hold of him, there'll sure be a place for you in the history books.

"Still, you've got to give the man credit, you know. He sure knows his war. I mean, how many people do you know who can get a war going, and *keep* it going?"

"Well, I don't . . ."

"See what I mean? Damn few, right? Listen, it wasn't twenty-four hours after Roget'd taken over here that we had just one beaut of a war on our hands, and it's been going on ever since, too. Hell, any idiot can get a war started, nothing to it. A little insult here, a rock or two there, and bingo! you've got yourself a war. But to keep that war going, now that's something else. That takes more than just talent, it takes genius, which just so happens to be Roget's long suit. All right, so he's a loner, so what? So's God.

"Hey, but look, here we are standing around and gabbing again, and you with a tour to make." He strode to the desk and began pounding on the red button. "Clerk! Clerk!" he roared, "will you please get your duff out here. We've got . . ."

The clerk had absolutely no chance to respond, for suddenly the air was ripped with the sound of shrill whistles and wailing sirens. With one convulsive explosion after another the building shook and the windows rattled. "Get down!" the man yelled as he shoved me to the sawdust floor and flung himself on top of me. "Those lousy bastards," he hissed, stroking my hair and pushing himself against me. His medals dug into my chest and his breath, which reeked of kerosene, was making me gag. "They'll pay for this, the devils," he whispered as his body stiffened. Then, just as suddenly, all was quiet, and the man, half-panting, half-sighing, rolled off me.

Finally, clambering to his feet and motioning for me to do likewise, he crossed the room and disappeared behind the statue of *Nike*. Soon he was back, wearing now, instead of his black business suit, a suit of armor, on the breastplate of which was emblazoned the image of Ferdinand Demara. "Any more delays like that," he said, raising his beaver, "and there won't be any reception. You just wait here while I go see what's keeping the clerk."

After he had lumbered away through the middle door behind the desk, the room became disturbingly quiet. Turning towards the hole in the wall through which we had entered the room, I observed that it was now sealed up and freshly painted. I was about to wander over for a closer inspection when the door was flung open and the man reappeared. "By God, if war ain't hell," he was saying, shaking his head and laughing, "just plain hell."

"You can say that again," chimed in the corpulent woman following close behind him. She was wearing a mauve tutu and dancing slippers, and her cascading rolls of flesh shook and glistened as she tried keeping in step. They stopped and embraced, then the man, trotting around to where I was standing, winked at me and flopped back into his wheelchair and sped away.

"My, isn't he something else, though," the woman signed as she came toddling towards me but remaining behind the desk. "Say, but I'll bet you're anxious to get started on your tour, aren't you?" she grinned, revealing a set of masterly scrimshawed teeth. She took a ring of keys from a desk drawer and motioned for me to come around behind the desk and follow her.

"You'll find your change of clothes right in there," she said, unlocking the door on the left.

"Change of clothes?"

"Of course! you weren't going to tour the museum looking like that, were you?" she laughed.

"I see what you mean," I said, noticing the rust stains and flecks of sawdust with which I was covered. When I entered the room I found, to my surprise, that the clothes were identical to the ones I had on: khaki trousers, BVD's, a faded denim shirt, socks, sneakers and galoshes.

Changing as quickly as I could, I returned, but discovered upon opening the door that the room had been transformed into a theater, and that I was now on stage. My entrance was certainly a lively one, if nothing else. Upon seeing me startle the woman who was bent over and peering through the keyhole, the audience broke immediately into laughter. With some difficulty the woman straightened herself and led me to the apron of the stage where she started leering at me and making all sorts of obscene gestures, which only drove the audience into further hysterics.

"Well, Sweetie," she simpered when the commotion subsided, "one little kiss for the Gipper, now, and you'll

be off on your tour." She engulfed me in her massive arms and hugged and kissed me hard on the lips. Then, releasing me, she curtsied and handed me a map of the museum which, to my astonishment, was sketched on the reverse side of my birth certificate.

"Hey, where'd this come from?" I asked.

"Oh, where there's a will, there's a way,"she winked. The audience went absolutely wild. People were now in the aisles and standing on their seats and flinging programs into the air. The orchestra, which consisted of an accordian, a French horn and a snare drum, broke into "Aba Daba Honeymoon," as the curtain came sailing down.

"Well, we sure knocked 'em dead tonight, didn't we?" she said as we stood behind the curtain listening to the thunderous applause.

"You mean it's already night?" I asked.

"Of course it's night," she replied in a somewhat superior tone, "we haven't had a matinee in years, not since before the war."

"Oh, I see."

"Oh ho, so now you see, do you? Well, to see or not to see—*that* is the Quest, Chum. Everything else, believe me, even this curtain call we've got to take now, is nothing but so many detours." And with that, up went the curtain onto a theater that was nearly as empty as the stage. Except for the musicians, who were already packing away their instruments and music, the place was deserted. Seeming not to have noticed, though, the woman began bowing and blowing kisses and going through a series of quick entrechats. She motioned for me to do likewise.

"But there's nobody there," I protested.

"Bow!" she commanded through a clenched grin.

I bowed and, a moment later, the curtain came careening down. "I don't get it," I said,"why were we bowing to an empty theater?"

"Well, if you don't know *that*," she replied indignantly, "then maybe you'd better go back to drama school and learn the basics. Good actors *make* good audiences. Haven't you ever heard that before?"

'Well, sure, but . . ."

"No butts about it, baby," she said, patting me on the rump, "except maybe this one, which had better get itself in gear if it's ever going to make that tour. You've got the map?" I held up the paper. "Good, then follow me." I trailed her into the wings and along a musty, cluttered passageway to a spiral stairway that led up to a catwalk.

"Well, up you go," she said. "When you get to the top, turn right, then keep going until you come to the first door on the left. Knock three times, then enter. From there, if you follow the map you'll have no trouble finding your way to the ballroom, which is where the reception will take place. Any questions!" I shook my head. "Okay, you're off, then," she said, giving me one last bruising hug.

Following her instructions, I soon came to the door and knocking, entered what appeared to be yet another corridor, although this one, while also extremely long, was, to my relief, straight and brightly lit. The rough concrete walls were coated with a white enamel so glossy that I was able, as I walked along,to see in them my own wavy reflection. The floors and the ceiling were likewise of the same glossy finish. The air was cool, even chilly, and a brisk breeze was blowing directly into my face. Since there was only one way to go—straight ahead—, it wasn't until I had been walking down that unbroken alabaster tunnel for some time that it occurred to me to check the map, which, when I did, I discovered to be hopelessly smudged and illegible.

For a long time, a very long time, I continued to walk. And walk. The wind, which had risen considerably, was now sharp and bitter. My fingers, at first prickling with pain, became stiff, then numb, as also, I suppose, would have had my feet had I not been wearing galoshes. I sensed myself moving slower and slower. Somewhere along the way, the walls and the floor and the ceiling had all gone from being coated with white paint to being crusted and caked with ice. The farther I went, the thicker became the ice, and the narrower the passageway. The only sounds were the whistling of the wind and the crunching of my feet. On and on I trudged, taking one excruciating step after another. Eventually, practically blind and senseless, I had, in order to continue squeezing through the ever-diminishing gap, I had to move, first, hunched up, then stooped over, and finally hunkered down on my haunches, waddling and groping along the slippery ice. Then . . . nothing: no movement, no motion, no inertia. I had come to the end. The last sound I would ever hear was going to be the roaring of my own blood.

But then, at that moment, with my senses virtually impounded, and with my life as weightless as a baby's breath, I heard from somewhere the unmistakable voice of the woman from the park, singing what sounded like "See Again the Stars." With one last desperate shove I thrust myself forward and there, on my left, around a little bend, was an opening just wide enough to squeeze through.

The room into which I emerged was the grandest, most splendid ballroom I had ever seen, dazzling beyond belief. Everywhere, there was light, and everything—the brilliant mirrored walls, the glimmering gold and crystal chandeliers, the opaquely gleaming marble floor—everything was drenched in a lovely and lambent light. So

lustrous and so radiant were the surroundings that my eyes were pinched into a painful squint.

"My God, where've you been keeping yourself?" Instantly I recognized the voice from behind me as that of my former guide, the man with the wheelchair.

"I wish I . . ." I started to reply but stopped when, upon turning around, I saw that his words hadn't been directed to me at all, but to one of the tuxedoed waiters with whom he was carrying on a serious conversation. Moving over in their direction, I stood next to my former guide, who was now attired in a bright yellow toga, and waited for several minutes to get his attention. When he finished with the waiter, however, he turned to someone else, so I left and began roaming around the room. The place was crowded with people, many of whom I recognized. Standing around in small casual groups, they were all seemingly hypnotized by their own conversations.

Over in the center of the room, standing directly beneath the great chandelier, was the Lone Ranger, talking with the woman I had met on the steps out front. They, as everyone else, were drinking wine from crystal goblets off which kept glancing flashes of sparkling light. I waved and called to them, but so intent were they in their talk they neither heard nor saw me. Standing a little distance from them was the fat woman from the theater, talking with the toothless priest whose portrait I had seen in the rotunda. Gathered in the far corner around the bar were all the marines, decked out in their dress blues. I went drifting from one group to another and kept trying to insert myself into the conversations, or to at least be noticed, but although in every conversation I kept hearing my name mentioned, it was as if I wasn't there. In what connection I was being discussed, I couldn't tell, so clipped were the conversations that I caught.

In my circuit of the room I finally came to an ornately carved oak door, upon which was mounted a tarnished plate with my name on it: Thomas W. Carboune. I pushed on the door but it wouldn't budge. Shoving against it with all my weight, then, I managed to force open a gap just wide enough to slip through before the door snapped shut.

"My God, where've you been keeping yourself?"

'No . . . no, it couldn't be. It just couldn't.

But it was. The room into which I had escaped was identical to the one I had just left. Everything—the marble floors, the mirrored walls, the chandeliers—everything, down to the smallest detail, was the same. And the people, all of them, standing in the same places and striking the same poses, were the very ones I had just left behind. I felt myself being overcome by a strange giddiness. It was as if, having entered a theater, I saw appear on the screen a picture of myself entering a theater and seeing appear on the screen a picture of myself entering . . .

I whirled around and lunged at the door to get back into the other room, but the door had become welded to its frame. "It's me," I shouted, pounding with my fists, "it's me, let me in," but no one answered.

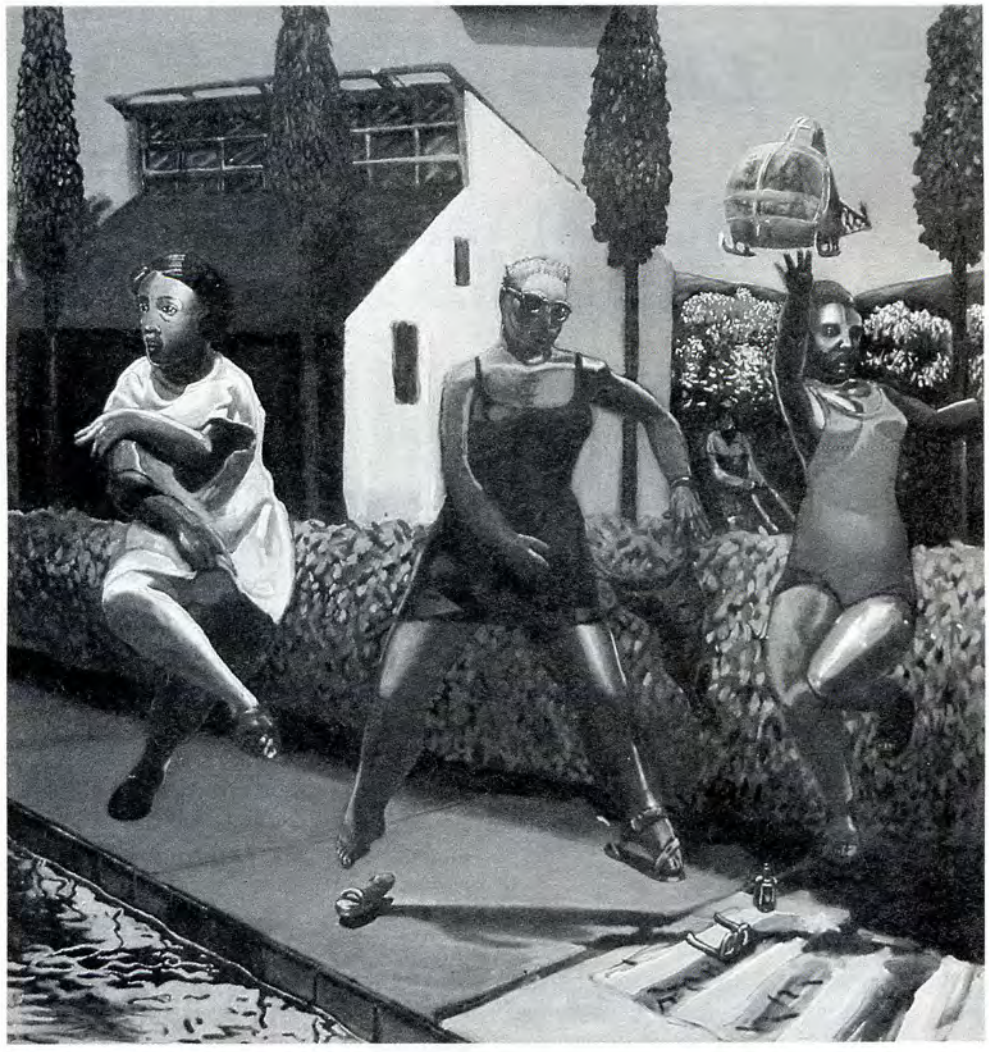
I turned back and looked out over the room I was in. My God, I thought, was there *no* escape? Somehow I had to find another door and get the hell out of there. Frantically I started racing around, looking for a break in the mirrored walls, but the whole room was like a great carousel revolving in the direction counter to my own. Everywhere I looked I kept seeing my haggard reflection in the mirrors, and hearing my name ricochet through the otherwise unintelligible conversations.

Finally, after what seemed hours of such frenzied flight, I came to another door, identical to the last one. Expecting it also to resist opening, I charged and flung myself against it. So easily did it swing open, though, that I went hurtling down a flight of steps and out into the night, crashing into a garbage can. A startled cat screeched and shot off into the dark. Half-running, half-crawling, I stumbled along the alley, desperate to put as much distance as possible between myself and the museum. Tripping over a tire and skidding to the pavement, I lay there for several minutes, panting and gulping for air. Finally, sitting up, I tore off my galoshes and flung them away. Weak and exhausted, I got up and started running again. It was just dawn when I made it to the highway and, in an utter daze, stuck out my thumb and headed back to New York.

And that's it, Mia,—that's all there is. How I got back here, I'm still not sure, although it wasn't long before I was into the same old routine of working at the bookstore, roaming the streets and cranking out stories, or at least trying to.

But as bizarre as the whole thing was, I probably still wouldn't be writing to tell you about it if it weren't for one thing more. I don't know what to call it exactly—maybe a kind of *déjà vu*—but the fact is that ever since I've been back, which is about six months now, I've been haunted by the knowledge that it's still not over. It's as if I've somehow become my own ghost, sentenced, literally, to reliving my past. Everything I do, I've done before; everyplace I go, I've already been there. Every word I write—including these—and every word I say, I've written and said them all before. And tomorrow, which is the anniversary of my having met that woman, I'll have come full circle, and'll be meeting her again. And then what, huh? Is it just going to start all over again? God, I don't know. I feel like a character who's been trapped in a story from which there's no escape, and in which there's nothing to do but keep going round and round and round. And because I'm afraid, Mia, afraid that I might somehow be right, I just wanted someone to know, that's all.

Tom



Robert Yarber

"Apraxic Women," 40" x 44", acrylic.

Edilberto Coutinho

OUR MAN WITH THE UMBRELLA

Give this back to him and tell him, I said, that I went to Ceylon, do you understand?

And I handed the trash over to Maria or rather, the literary work of Narciso Lightfoot, which consisted of four-hundred and eighty-three carefully typed pages.

What is it, sir?

Listen, Maria, I'm out of town. Tell the man with the umbrella that I went to China, to Japan . . .Your choice. Better yet, I'm dead.

Oh, my God. Heaven forbid. I don't want to see that in the newspaper, sir.

She was crazy about obituaries. Did somebody I know die, Maria, I could ask her everyday. Look here, she would break the news to me. This gentleman seems very important. Almost half a page. Did you know him, sir?

Let me see.

After looking over the notice:

Maria, get your dead people out of here and let me work, okay? I don't want to see anyone now.

*

Narciso Lightfoot, *poète engagé*. Forty degrees Celsius, in the heat of Rio de Janeiro he was wearing a heavy grey suit and carrying an umbrella. The weather report on the radio that day said it hadn't rained in the city in the last two months. And there was no sign it would rain in the near future.

He handed me his card embossed in gold lettering and I saw immediately he was a very sick man. The psycho-physiologists say that extreme sadness is a degeneration of the personality, a disease of physical origin, unless it is brought on by an ill wind. At the time I was re-reading some of my beloved Portuguese classics. I found this gem about sadness in a book called *Arcas Encoiradas,* by Aquilino Ribiero. Narciso Lightfoot was so sad he looked really sick. Leaving my office, he went in the wrong direction.

*

When I called him Darkfoot for the first time, Maria look surprised.

The thing is, Maria, this fellow doesn't light things up. He doesn't clarify anything. Our man with the umbrella is all darkness. He's always sad the way he seems to be waiting for rain and thunder. Don't you see? Darkfoot suits him better.

You're really impossible, you know, she said, taking the empty coffee pot away. Don't you think you're drinking too much coffee?

And smoking too much? Now let me work, okay? Bring me some more coffee in half an hour.

*

I definitely didn't want to see Darkfoot again. Please give me your honest opinion, he asked me when he gave me his poems to read. Even before I looked at them, I explained that it's very difficult to publish a book of poetry by an unknown author. Unless, I said, you could finance the publication or rent the publisher's trademark. Do you see what I mean? Some publishers in this country do that sort of thing. Do you want their names?

He looked even sadder.

Another possibility, I said, would be if you won a prize in one of the many literary contests that are being sponsored today. Maybe then there'll be some interest in your work.

This didn't seem to cheer him up, either.

If that were the case, I went on, you could probably get a contract to have your book published with the help of some government agency; if the book doesn't offend public morals. Of course, you could easily find a publisher if you were one of the great Brazilian poets today. That's the way it is, Mr. Lightfoot. Names like Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Cabral de Mello Neto have no problems finding a publisher.

There's only room for those?

And maybe a few others, I would say. It's hard being a poet, Mr. Lightfoot.

But I'm a poète engagé, Darkfoot said. My poetry has a message. Please read me.

I told him he could leave the poems with me.

Then I told him that the life of a literary critic is hard too. I was on my way to the newspaper office, excused myself, and made him go out.

*

Reading Narciso's bad poetry was not a total waste of time because it led me to write down some impressions that, in any case, I can use sometime in a bookreview or perhaps an essay. It made me think of Gide. Something Gide said about good intentions not necessarily leading to the production is a work of art. That's it, Mr. Narciso Lightfoot. The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

And I thought of telling Darkfoot that one doesn't contribute to a better life by writing poetry with good intentions but rather by writing good poetry. Who said that? (I've no pretensions to saying anything new.) Oh yes, it would be good to mention what Mao Tse-Tung wrote to show that a bad piece of revolutionary writing is worse for the Cause than a good piece of Capitalistic writing. Finally, Narciso, the only important thing is the level of achievement, isn't it?

And since the level of Narciso Lightfoot's poetry wasn't very high, it could only be called sectarian with all the opprobrium the term implies. Mr. Lightfoot . . .I started to jot down a note. Any subject can lead to a good poem. In your case, however . . .(I stopped there).

On top of everything, he was such a sad person, seeming to be affected by all the ill winds of fortune which the splendid Aquilino Ribeiro speaks of. Maybe I should tell Narciso something nice to cheer him up. But at the same time I had to try to make him give up his literary pretensions. Writing just wasn't for him. But then, I thought defensively, if I get involved with Darkfoot, he'll never leave me alone, and my nerves won't be able to take his sadness, his umbrella, his heavy grey suit, the bad literature. It's too much altogether, isn't it?

So I made up my mind. I would just return his work and avoid him like the plague.

Maria, I said, give this back and tell Darkfoot that I went to Ceylon or that I died.

Bringing a fresh pot of coffee, as I had asked her to, Maria handed me the open newspaper:

Look here, sir.

In a prominent position, I could see the funeral notice for Narciso Lightfoot. It was raining.

John Paul Minarik

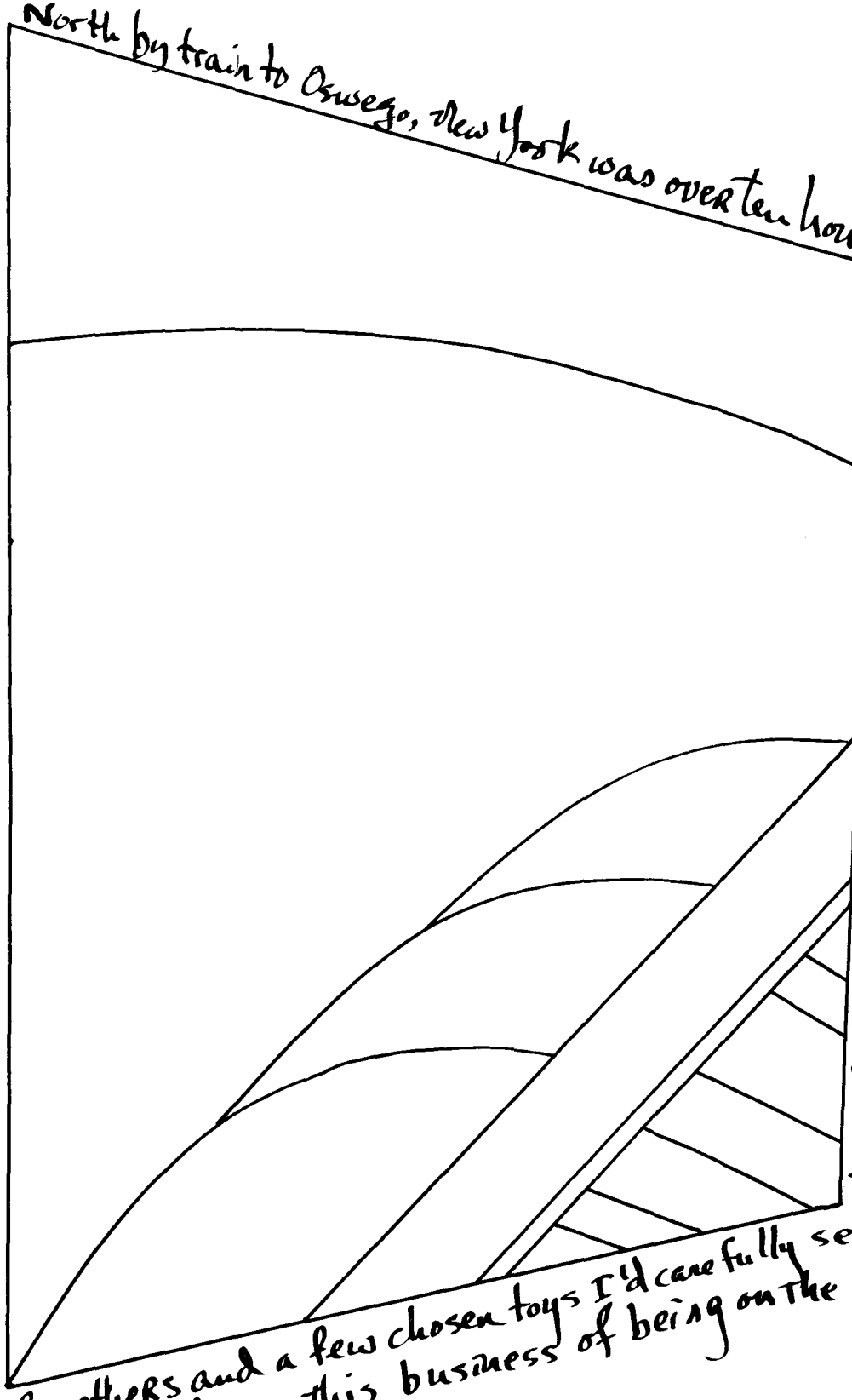
A LETTER FROM HOME

dear son
have you received the papers back
you sent to dad
the only comment he made was
they did not seem to apply, too much
to your case
and he doesn't believe in
the things lawyers come up with
they just take money.

i was glad to hear you are enjoying your radio.

dad bought a new car
it is a 77 chevrolet monte carlo
silver with white buckskin landau back
and firethrown interior, 205 engine
which was what he wanted,
we ordered it six weeks ago and picked it up today
it seemed like forever, waiting
the front seats are separate
he got cruise control, air conditioning
am/fm radio, positraction, radial tires
i know you are interested in cars
so i thought i would tell you
perhaps we will bring it down sometime
when we visit you at the prison.

North by train to Oswego, New York was over ten hours rattling slowly through winter snow. My Mom and Dad and my sister and I went for the first time on adventuresome Travel to spend Christmas with our great aunt and uncle Someplace new we didn't know.



I had my own bags one with clothes and one little one I packed. Myself with the presents for others and a few chosen toys I'd carefully selected for their utility in this business of being on the road.

Tom Dworetzky

A Conversation with Michel Butor at his home "Aux Antipodes" in Nice by Lee Fahnestock.

DOING OTHER THINGS

INTRODUCTION

The old port of Nice, with its rust red Mediterranean façades and its boats tied tern-to along the stone quai, seems more than one hill and a few blocks away from the Promenades des Anglais. On a road that climbs above the port, I find myself in front of a collection of mail boxes. One of them, reassuringly, is marked with "Michel Butor" and the name of the house "Aux Antipodes." This is at the far extreme, it seems to say, from Paris, where more than thirty of his volumes have been published in the past two decades —fiction, poetry, criticism, and newer forms that cheerfully defy classification. Almost as far as from Geneva, where he has just given an exam to his students at the University.

From the hillside of houses, the right one appears, and Butor himelf comes to answer the buzzer at the gate. Of medium height, hair falling over the collar of his checked shirt, he wears a sleeveless zippered jumpsuit that must be of his own design. Politely hoping that it has not been too difficult to find the place, he leads the way up to the side of the white stucco house and directly into his study, which is beside the door.

The room shows both a spare working simplicity and the playfulness that comes out in some of his writing. There are paper mobiles, a row of paper mâché balls that spell out "Aux Antipodes." In front of the bay window that looks across the port, a low shelf holds a pair of humanoids, bright red, bright blue, one marked "moi" and the other "toi." Shelves behind the desk are filled with art books, literature, neat stacks of papers.

The author moves about setting the study for our talk, muttering half to himself by way of explanation. He finds a more stable chair to replace the bentwood rocker, lifts the player arm on a turntable. The clean Baroque sound that has been filling the house breaks off. In phrases that you might use with an intelligent child, he invites the black dog to leave off his inspection of the interviewer and join one of the daughters in another part of the house, "Tu serais trés gentil de partir . . ."

When he has moved the electric typewriter to the far side of the wide desk, he clasps his hands on the clear surface, ready to answer the questions. There is a patience and polite attention in the tilt of his head. And in a light voice, he replies with a careful but conversational manner. There is something of the professor in it, the unconcious cadences of a person trained in the French classics. But he breaks into laughter at the recollection of his own discomforts.

L F

NOR: In writing about Faulkner and his readers, you once said that anyone who is unaware of his own origins cannot reach a true self-knowledge. So, could you begin by saying something about your origins?

BUTOR: In order to know yourself, you have to know your origins, your sources. But obviously you can never manage to know them all. You bring them to light partially and progressively. Which means, incidentally, that one can never know oneself completely.

So what are my origins? Well, actually they are both very clear and somewhat obscure. I come from a French family of the middle-bourgeoisie, let's say. I was born in a suburb of Lille, in the North of France. But it is somewhat by chance that I was born there. My father worked in the

administration of railroads. He was sent to that part of the country, and I just happened to be born there. But I went to Paris at the age of three, which makes me an altogether typical Parisian.

As for my ancestry, one side of my father's family came from the South of France, where he was born. The other was from around Paris. My mother's family come mostly from Champagne, in the easterly part of France. It happens—and this was quite important in my childhood—one of my grandmothers was English. So I am not pure French . . .I have come by a bit of England on the side. Let's say that I am a crossing of regions.

NOR: In the fifties you began your travels and your work as a teacher. That was also the period when you wrote your four novels. Obviously geography plays a very important role for you. Did you have to leave Paris in order to be able to write about it?

BUTOR: Certainly. At any rate, I needed to take a little distance on Paris . . . to leave my family for awhile. Because, if you like, I'm presbyopic—I see better from far away. I always need to draw back. There is almost always a shift, a gap between my books and my trips. For instance, when I wrote *L'Emploi du Temps,* which takes place in England, it was not in England that I wrote it.

NOR: And yet you feel what surrounds you very strongly?

BUTOR: Yes, I feel it very strongly. My novels certainly don't spring from characters. They start from places, certainly. All right, the city of Paris, Northern England—those are absolutely fundamental experiences. And, then, they take off from all sorts of reading and from reflections on the reading.

NOR: At the time of writing the four novels, were you conscious of following a kind of progression of problems, of themes? I'm thinking particularly of the problems of place and of time.

BUTOR: Each one was a different experience. Naturally each one was an adventure. But all the same, loosely speaking, they came about in much the same way. That is, at the outset there is a sort of feeling, particularly a feeling of the place.

NOR: About the five sequences of writing in *L'Emploi du Temps,* each one treating the time of the novel differently, do you see any resemblance there to the work of Faulkner?

BUTOR: Faulkner has been very important for me, and particularly for those four novels. Certainly. What has had the greatest importance is the work of Faulkner as a whole, as a "human comedy," the relationship of the books to each other. That is something which has fascinated me. As for temporal parallels, certainly the book of Faulkner's that had the most effect on me was *Absalom, Absalom!*

The first book of Faulkner's that I read—I remember very well. I was just beginning my study of philosophy at the Sorbonne, when a friend gave it to me—it was *The Sound and the Fury.* It is a book that impresses me enorly, and particularly because of the musical composition—the four parts with a different style and a different voice. The work of Faulkner has certainly been very important for me. It is not the only one, even in dealing with those particular problems. But it had a decisive influence, that's certain.

NOR: Does the map of Bleston in *L'Emploi du temps,* bear any relationship to the layout of the house in Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie?*

BUTOR: No. For the map in *L'Emploi du temps,* the model was certainly the map of Yoknapatawpha County in Faulkner. Actually, when Robbe-Grillet first published *La Jalousie* there was no floor plan; it was well after the publication of *L'Emploi du Temps* that the plan was added. And besides, floor plans are very frequent in English-style detective novels, so that one can understand better. And that pleases me very much.

NOR: Because that book is partly a parody of a detective novel?

BUTOR: Yes.

NOR: And yet for you there is also a reflexive element, a consciousness of the act of writing—something that isn't present in Faulkner.

BUTOR: Yes, I am much more of a theoretician, and certainly more aware of the act of writing.

NOR: In the past you have said that the novel is the literary form through which the writer can best force reality to reveal itself. But at the same time, both in the thoughts of the characters and in the mode of the writing, is there always a search for other viable forms?

BUTOR: I think that I would be a bit more supple today. The novel is a very effective form, it's true, for forcing reality to reveal itself, but it isn't the only one. For instance, some texts that I have written since then, that really can't be called novels any longer, are for me in certain respects even more effective.

NOR: You have also said that an era expresses itself in its literary forms. Then what would be the form for this era?

BUTOR: Well, we have come back to what we were saying earlier: there needs to be a certain distance. So it is very difficult to know what is most important today, and to know it clearly.

NOR: It was in the effort of representing the United States that you had to give up the novel as a form?

BUTOR: It is true, that is exactly how it happened. It was the test that the United States put me to that made me

really move on the the discovery of other things—the novel was no longer enough.

NOR: And the book, which you called *Mobile,* is dedicated to Jackson Pollock. But isn't there also something of Alexander Calder in it.

BUTOR: Of course.

NOR: The effect of the typography in that book is immediately noticable—the different voices represented by different type. Is there some Dos Passos in that?

BUTOR: Yes. The typography of *Mobile* is in itself a tribute to American literature. Because in American literature there is an awareness of the physical presence of the book, the visual aspects of the book, a very significant awareness. You mentioned Dos Passos, but it exists as well for the poets— for Ezra Pound, for Cummings and people like that.

NOR: You have said that the repetition of place names derives from the nostalgia of Europeans who had come to America?

BUTOR: I used that in a musical way, to give rhythm to the pages—as much for the ear as for the eye. Those names of cities that keep coming back play a major role; they organize the page and animate it. The page truly becomes . . .like a drawing.

There are many things in *Mobile* that were very difficult to understand at the time but which aren't at all difficult any longer. Because some of those slogans—things that were only seen at that time in the United States— well, they have overrun Europe.

NOR: If the new forms that you use—in *Mobile,* for instance—are realistic, as you have said, aren't they nevertheless closer to poetry than prose?

BUTOR: There is something very poetic in those books, certainly. But with prose within it. Basically that is very classic. It is impure poetry. But impure poetry can be as strong as pure poetry, even more so. But those prose passages, those prosaic elements within a poem, they are something that one finds, too, in Ezra Pound, in all the poets around him, either of the same period—I think of William Carlos Williams—or even younger or at least later ones, like Charles Olsen. There is a use of prose within poetry. It is something altogether American.

NOR: You have said that the forms of literature must be changed in order to change those of society. How might this be done?

BUTOR: Literature isn't something innocent, independent. Literature is a wheel, if you like, in the works of society. Our society cannot function without a certain type of literature. And this for all sorts of reasons. The first is that a society knows itself for a large part through its literature. We represent things to ourselves. For instance, France knows the United States through literature. I am taking the word "literature" in the broadest possible sense, that is the say the newspapers, television, etc., and also the great masterpieces. The great majority of Frenchmen know the United States through what is said in *France Soir* or through the television newcasts.

And clearly, decisions, that will be made, political decisions, for instance, will depend on that knowledge, that's absolutely certain. There are things that *cannot* be done because there would immediately be a reaction of public opinion. So, then, every transformation that is brought to this means of information, or more exactly this medium of information, is absolutely decisive. And, if you like, there is a certain progress that is impossible to accomplish so long as this medium of information has not been changed. Because one can see that there are areas of this medium where things go badly . . .that is, where everything begins to be a lie. And so as long as that is not fixed up, there is a sort of "black hole" there . . .there is something that cannot be improved. You can have a lot of good ideas, very generous, etc. but you will still butt up against something in this area or that, until the moment that you find a way to say things differently. And from then on, all sorts of problems disappear, fade away. But usually this doesn't happen without resistance.

So all that is very important . . .it is a question of perception. We perceive things through literature. Oh, we percieve things also through nature. And the great writers, the great artists, are the people who transform that element through which we see all the rest.

NOR: In your reply to *Tel Quel* in 1962, you stated that your ideas had gone beyond the novel to a form in which a multiplicity of voices are woven together in a text. Have your concepts changed since then, or does that represent what you believe now?

BUTOR: Yes, that about corresponds with what I think now.

NOR: And the novel that you were in the process of writing very slowly at the time, are you still working on it?

BUTOR: No. As I was leaving for the United States, I had a projected novel that was a novel by letters. But it was never done. It will never be done. I took off in other directions, and that's the way it is . . .I am doing other things.

Michel Butor

Digs

Tongue of the prophet laid out in the butcher's stall, slashed to shreds on its cruciform hook, stamped and branded, nailed wide to the public eye, scarecrow for the apprentice gravediggers playing skittles in the boneyard. It is pulsing still; the flies that revere it seek the honey for dipping their feet in order to assuage their taste-buds, but especially the children's tears that are its particular delight. A thread of heavy liquor trickles down the belly of the town that turns over whining. The birthing will come soon: a new generation of problems.

At full tilt the sierras, the mesas, file by. Tapers on the headlands. Gallows here and there. The coyotes hold their howling assizes. Diamond prospectors, gather your strength; you will need it to make your way through the forks and the banks. Faster, faster! Bridges collapse for he who hesitates, the monuments of nature disintegrate, the sky folds up like a closing book, the horizon crumbles on great corrupted ashes where faintly stirs a few remains of cities too hastily laid down. The only salvation lies in panic. Listen to the mare of evening who calls the retreat for her brood of wavering shadows. Faster, at the peak of a gallop that your adolescence deemed impossible, at last a swallow, a caress, a tinkling, the most precious of stones.

Gardens of candelabra and urns, corded trees, shrubs of reeds, the smoke signals pass from riverbend to cliff. Circles of vultures, approaches of cougars. The cavaliers have disappeared into their cavern. Flute or lyre, a summons that oozes. Masques matured in your sleep, now shake from your danced declarations our subterranean homes. The wind is backing. A few pebbles roll. All of our afflicted sick feel an instance of ease. A track takes off from here. Program of the coming years. Landscape of centuries. Millenia of sighs.

Warrior carrying in one hand his war cry, in the other his buckler where the severed head is seeping, watcher at the temple of sword sheaths, both feet shod in castiron soles, held fast to the magnetic base. Pliancy of these ramparts of leather and enamel, crenelations of nails and teeth. At every loophole a halberd gleams. Across the vacant moats the synod of hernias draws out its gossip. Closing her coffer with a shrug of the shoulders the young marchioness stretches out among the casques and masks, loosening her ribbons of humid blades. The sentry readjusts his visor.

translated by Lee Fahnestock

Larry Rubin

BIORHYTHM: ONE PART OF THE CYCLE

Down in the dungeon
Dark among graves
Deeper than dreams
I heard the key turn in the lock
And knew my hand had turned it
Poetry and roses were gone
Candles had sputtered
Caves were all sealed
Me and the rats of my memory
Gnawing each other
Ghosts bobbing for breath from the graves
Whispering poems that could never be written
Oxygen going fast
With only my claws for a tool
I started to dig
Burrowed to dampness promising moisture
Burrowed right under those graves
Rattled the bones in my progress
Furious for air
Bored my way through the dense humus
Dissolving the leaves and the dirt
Broke through to a tunnel past midnight
Groped past the layers of coffins
Lining the walls in my flight
Dropped my ID but kept running
Towards a patter like drumbeats
Louder than footfalls in autumn
Knowing the sound of the rain
Knowing the glimmer of endings
And what it takes to begin
Broke through the roof of the morning
Roaring with roses in rain
Images spun to the shimmering surface
And I crossed the horizon of light

Wolfgang Hildesheimer

A LARGER PURCHASE

One evening at the local tavern I was sitting in front of (more strictly speaking: behind) a glass of beer when a rather common-faced man sat next to me and asked me with a subdued-confidential voice whether I wanted to buy a locomotive. Now I admit it's rather easy to sell me something, because it's hard for me to say no, but with a larger purchase of this kind some precaution seemed in order. Although I know little about locomotives I inquired about the model, year, and piston size in order to give this guy the impression that he was dealing here with an expert who didn't intend to buy the cat in the bag. Whether I got this impression across to him I don't know; in any case he promptly gave me some information and showed me pictures which gave the front, rear and side view of the thing. It looked good, this locomotive, and I ordered it, after we had agreed on the price beforehand. For it had already been used, and although it's common knowledge locomotives depreciate only very slowly, I wasn't willing to pay list price.

The locomotive was delivered the same night. Maybe I should have gathered from this all too short a term of delivery that something disreputable was inherent in this deal, but innocent as I was, the idea never occurred to me. I couldn't take the locomotive with me into the house; the doors just wouldn't allow it. Besides the house would have probably collapsed under the weight, and so it had to be brought in the garage, which is the appropriate place for vehicles. Naturally its length only let it go about half way in, but the height was sufficient; for once before in this garage I had stored my observation balloon, but it had busted.

Soon after this purchase my cousin visited me. He is a person, who, unfavorable to every risky venture and display of emotion,

lets only bare facts matter. Nothing astonishes him, he knows everything, before you tell him, knows it better and can explain everything. In short, an unbearable person. We greeted one another, and to bridge over the embarrassing pause which followed, I began: "These splendid fall fragrances. . ." — "Withering potato stalks," he replied, and basically he was right. For now I let the whole subject go, and poured me some cognac he had brought along. It tasted like soap, and I expressed this feeling. He said that as I could see from the label the cognac took prizes at the World Fair in Lüttich and Barcelona, even got the gold medal in St. Louis, and therefore was good. After we had silently drunk several cognacs he decided to spend the night and went to put his car in the garage. Several minutes later he came back and said with a faint, mildly trembling voice that a giant express locomotive stood in my garage. "I know," I said calmly and sipped from my cognac. "I just bought it."

To his timid question whether I drive it often I said no, not often, only recently at night, since I had driven a neighboring farmer's wife, who expected a joyous event, to the hospital in town. I heard she gave birth to twins that same night. Of course the fact that she had twins had nothing to do with taking a locomotive trip at night. By the way all this was a lie, but in such situations I can't resist the temptation to embellish the truth. I don't know whether he believed it. He took note of it without a word, and it was apparent that he no longer felt comfortable around me. He became quite monosyllabic, drank another glass of cognac and said good-bye. I never saw him again.

When shortly thereafter the announcement appeared in the newspapers that a locomotive from the French railway system turned up missing (the papers said it had disappeared one night from the face of the earth—more strictly speaking: from the switch-yard), it naturally became clear that I had become the victim of a sordid transaction. Therefore, when I saw the salesman a short time later at the tavern, I met him with a reserved coolness. At this meeting he wanted to sell me a crane, but I didn't really want to do business with him any more, and besides, what am I supposed to do with a crane?

Translated by Ken Fontenot

S. J. Makielski

THE BOTTICELLI SMILE

At sixty-two (well, actually sixty-two and seven months) a man has won what?

Time

For one thing.

If you think back to, say, Carl Dellos, cavalry-moustached, one time professor of art when Tobias Carruthers was still only associate professor, both the same age twenty years ago, and Carl that year more or less dramatically dead on the tennis court (an unhealthy, no a fatal sport that)

Time long pointless for Carl and that fellow Rubin come and gone quickly and the others

Given that then time amounts to quite a victory.

Professor Tobias Carruthers sat in possession of his office, the same office he had possessed for twelve years and would, no doubt, retire from in three more years

A parody of the academic stereotype: twenty-three books on a half empty shelf (two of those books, now a trifle faded, carried on their spines J. Tobias Carruthers, an early conceit that J, now shed like so much else). A payne's grey filing cabinet, its internal organs the manila folders of advisees long advised and gone someplace. His desk steel and also grey, no longer disordered with papers or stacks of unread memoranda (these too shed, although in truth no one sent him memoranda anymore), a clean hard plane of reflected dim light.

Only the three prints on the off-white wall introduced madness into this room: color and curved line, shape and static movement beyond the reach of machine and even nature: the human hand at work.

". . . if you have a minute, Toby." Matthew B. Franklin, chairman of the fine arts department, who lacked the sensitivity to feel a man's hatred for nicknames.

Professor Carruthers contemplated this person. (A new habit this, discovered by accident when this person became chairman, a discovery that people or at least this person cannot tolerate being contemplated, being seen without the opaque wash of words between eyes and person)

Thirty-seven, fit, compact, well-nigh burnt sienna of the sun, author of five books, fifteen (perhaps more by now) scholarly papers, consultant to three museums, popular (indeed popular) among students for his brilliantly witty course "Art Beyond Art"

" . . . some didn't get covered." Matthew B. Franklin poised to sit, showing his pink gums in happy complement to the grey furniture.

The chairman surely has the perogative to assume the unspoken invitation. He sat.

Professor Carruthers grieved that contemplation had lost its effectiveness.

This person's routine was approaching the status of a tradition in all of two years: formal meeting of the entire department (all seven of them, five of them now the bright young men brought in by this bright young person to revitalize a tarnished old department whose sole remaining spot of unshinable greyness was guess who? none other than Professor Tobias Carruthers entrenched in tenure, in a distaste for seeking the pastel pastures other places might offer his declining years, in sheer bulk: size and will)

But to continue the routine: the little agenda sheets passed out to each faculty member (why an agenda? Dellos never prepared one, nor did Rubin, nor did what's his name, why this person?)

The answer to that is the answer to what is meant by Art Beyond Art cost efficiency productivity ratios and the New Man.

The agenda always carefully covered, the pipes smoked, each pipe matching the assumed personality: one for turtle neck sweat stains in the armpits; another for navajo blouse and turquoise necklace; another for . . .

". . .Mary Ellen Vander?"

That gentle soul and artless hand.

". . .your advisee, I think." (What Matthew B. Franklin meant to say was: your only advisee, the sole remaining advisee among students maze-bright self-informed and desperate for success, thus the only advisee to launch herself backwards into life, moving against time's arrow toward the grey and white feathers of academic failure).

Professor Carruthers conceded this much with a nod.

Matthew B. Franklin produced his own personal agenda. "We discussed her record along with the others, didn't we? Respectable enough over-all average, I suppose, but it's all made up in electives, Sociology, Speech, and so forth. In the Department, now, well. In Color and Image, for example, she has a C and Gerard tells me that was a gift. In Freehand, a D. Well. You know as well as I do."

Indeed.

This young woman, the anomalous advisee of the anomalous advisor. She was

Clean scrubbed among lanky unwashed hair both male and female.

Skirted in a world of leotards, jeans, shorts

Properly brassiered among bobbling breasts and not too coy nipples.

A young woman who surely belonged in what? Dental Hygiene, Nursing, Business Administration even, perhaps, God save us Engineering but instead

Alone and quiet, seemingly friendless, unlike the others (who articulated, ventilated, verbalized, vocalized without end) she stood before her easel in the studio late afternoon upon late afternoon and carefully applied expensive oils to expensive canvas.

And produced the utterly pedestrian.

They had gentle conversations together, advisor (this man known and feared for his brutal exams in Art History, his cruel critiques in studio) and advisee (without eye or hand, only heart, a courage that sixty-two and a half years knew was pointless, helpless hope against the coiling muscles of the world as it is)

He saying: a nice touch there, a nice touch. The color is bland, though, don't you think?

The blue eyes brightening: the little blonde head nodding. The smile of gratitude . . .or something: Oh, of course. I should've seen that.

And eagerly to the palette, to the tubes of color controlled in metal, waiting to be freed by a hand to explode before the eye. Eagerly to do it all wrong. Again.

". . .of course the primary responsibility is, well, yours. I mean, you are the one that has the best grasp of her output and so forth. And naturally we will, well, consider carefully any input you choose to make insofar as an ultimate decision is concerned."

Whatever that may be. Whatever it can be.

". . .sooner rather than later, don't you think? They are, well, deep into their semester projects. I took the liberty of glancing at work in progress, and well, as you no doubt perceive, Mary Ellen's, well . . ."

Professor Carruthers tried contemplation again. But that flawless administrative judgemental machine remained unhampered.

". . .seriously, Toby, maybe you should advise her, in a kindly way of course, that she transfer to, oh say, Sociology or History, somewhere she can be a productive person you know."

The last advisee. The last advice.

". . . her own good, you know."

Think on it, and the compact lean machine was gone.

Carruthers wondered, supposed, that once this person himself must have stood alone in some clear lit studio, besieged by the fear of blank whiteness, armed only with man-made colors, the walls of the fortress of oneself in ruins all around, nothing but color and his own hand between him and that rectangular emptiness. Indeed. But so what. His printed pages (like those, be honest, of J. Tobias Carruthers) concealed and finally buried color. (Or perhaps not quite like Carruthers. Not quite).

Seniority was discreetly marked by proximity of office to the student studio, so that Professor Carruthers need

walk only thirty-nine paces, past the men's room, to the studio.

Four paintings hung on the grey corridor walls in those thirty-nine steps. Two by Carl Dellos, water colors, the matting under the glass browning now, browning for years. Two by J. Tobias Carruthers. Oils, yet something more or something less. Even then this hand had been pudgy, this body gross, yet the delicate lines, complex colors could never have come from a hand and body like that. But did. Somehow.

The oils, unglassed, had darkened a little. One hung next to Carl's seascape. Poor taste. One opposite the men's room door. Appropriate no doubt. Bladder empty, a man stepped through that door, hands still moist and smelling of green soap to see

What?

Someplace there were others. Ten portraits commissioned back then. Eight, or nine? landscapes sold. But in attics or closets now. (A strange consciousness stood between hand and canvas: unseen and unseeing, yet aware, even these on the wall the eye passes over daily, twice daily or more, unseeing yet knowing).

Three quarters into the semester and late in the afternoon, the light pale in the tall room, only four students stood before their all important projects.

Mary Ellen was one of those of course.

Some student in bitterness or the affectionate pride of the oppressed recruit had once managed to climb by means unknown to the top of the twenty-foot walls and carefully letter over the central window the words, "Carruthers is a jealous God."

Professor Carruthers cocked his head to see if the words were still there. But the studio had been repainted when? Three years ago. Or four. A generation of students ago.

He assumed his critic's stance. Hands in pockets, chin slightly forward and up.

Fourteen canvasses on fourteen easels, undraped as was the custom.

One tradition. Another was the department's use of the Beaux Arts grading system: Three checkmarks: excellent. Two checks. One. An X: failure.

He marched past. A quick flick of his head. Here a Mondrian without a sense of line or balance. Here someone who swallowed Kandinsky without color. Here Pop Art without humor.

X. X. X.

Except

Decisions were made by jury, the whole department as a jury. Turtle-neck salvages navajo blouse's Mondrian that turtle-neck's Pop Art might survive, while Matthew B. Franklin smilingly presides over the log-rolling. Graduation by compromise. Production of the New Man by committee.

He intended his march to be a fast show of force, god inspecting his world to be sure it still spun, however faultily.

He stopped, stunned.

The madness gripped. Again? he wondered. After so long?

It was (he knew) a trick of light, the deception of chiaroscuro in minature but

The blonde head was turned toward him, smiling

Expecting

Marc Brasz

"Springtime in New York," 72" x 94", acrylic.

On Holography

Much of my creative work for the past six years has come from extending language and/or literary ideas through alternative materials or media. In 1972, I began to work with numbers, in 1974 with radically unusual forms for books, in 1975 with both audiotape and videotape, in 1976 with film, in 1977 with photography, and then in 1978 with holography. With each new medium, I have attempted to bring previous concerns into a new terrain, initially to discover what might result, but finally to produce consequential works that exploit the possibilities indigenous to every new medium. In my artistic activity, I am less interested in expressing a particular vision or exploiting a single "look" than in the exploration of new media, creating works that doubtlessly reflect previous visions.

I had followed holography for a decade without developing any ideas for working with it until I saw a circular (360°), moving, "integral white light" hologram. Then, it occurred to me to use one of my favorite artistic materials, English language, to construct syntactically circular, grammatically seamless statements. This linguistic form appeared before, in the "Manifestoes" that open my first collection of visual poems, *Visual Language* (1970), and has since been reprinted as a poster; but holography offers the form of circular syntax certain visual advantages unavailable in print. Whereas much of the language of "Manifestoes" must be read at angles that some of us find uncomfortable—upside down or sideways—the circular statements of the hologram could be entirely horizontal; whereas "Manifestoes" is best read from a location perpendicular to it, the hologram lacks fixed perspective and fixed point-of-view; thus it is equally legible from every side of its stationary base. Since the words of my earlier work dealt with my theories of visual poetry, it seemed appropriate that my initial hologram should contain statements about holography itself and have, like much of my work, an explicit title, *On Holography*. In their original typed-out forms, the statements looked like this:

I) holos = complete; gram = message; representation in depth = hologram =
II) the hologram creates a world of incorporeal activity that exists only within
III) the illusion not only of depth but of equal focus to all distances are characteristics particular to holography which creates
IV) capturing on photo-sensitive material the amplitude, the wave-length and most important, the phases of light reflected off an object a hologram reconstructs a three-dimensional image by

In the hologram, the ends of these lines are attached to each other, making the statements visually circular and linguistically seamless. As these statements have different lengths, they inevitably vary in circumference. As the largest one is at the bottom and the shortest on the top, the four sets of statements take a pyramidal form.

Rather than having the statements turn in unison, as a stationary pyramid, I wanted each line to revolve at a different speed. Given the nature of the circular hologram, they had to move in ratios of 1:2:3:4, with the longest and lowest statement being the base. Thus, if the longest statement runs once around the entire circumference of the cylinder, the second statement is repeated twice around the cylinder and the third statement three times around and the fourth statement four times. Therefore, during the time it takes the cylinder to complete its cycle, the bottom statement can be read once in its entirety, the second statement twice, the third statement thrice and the fourth statement four times.

However, since the circles made by these statements have different circumferences, their words appear to move before one's eyes at roughly the same speed. That is, at the same time that the bottom line traverses its entire thirty words, the second line moves at 19 X 2 words, and the third line 12 X 3 words and the top line 4 X 4 words. Only when the viewer sights the top-line "holos" vertically, with words in other lines, each time "holos" passes before his eyes, does he or she realize that it relates successively to different words in other lines.

At first, I thought that this unanticipated result sabotaged the initital desire for the appearance of different linear speeds. However, I later realized that, had the speeds *not* been different, the movement of the top-line's words would have been very slow—boringly slow—while that of the bottom line would have been intolerably fast. In any case, *On Holography* was indubitably holographic in that its effects could exist only within a hologram.

This work was initially exhibited in a group show, "As We See It," at the Museum of Holography, 1978-79, where it differed from most, if not all of the other holograms shown there in a particular crucial quality. Whereas most holograms have ideas, or image structures, that are instantly perceptible, much like most photographs, my own posed problems that require time for the viewer to resolve. Initially, he or she sees strings of words which must be read, for their English meanings, if any of the work's other visual, verbal, and visual-verbal effects are to be perceived. (In this respect, *On Holography* is closer to a poem than to a painting.) This perpetual complexity is in most respects a virtue, especially if the work is to reside

by itself in someone's collection; however, in a group show, in implicit competition with works by other artists, it seemed a handicap.

It belatedly occurred to me that the presentation of *On Holography* would be enhanced by the introduction of an audio tape of five voices reading the same words on individually continuous, aurally seamless audiotape loops, so that the spectator hears in five-voice unison the same words he sees in five-line unison. These voices were mixed down into a single stereo cassette which went through a speaker located in the hologram's cylinder base, which both focused and amplified the sound. In a more extravagant circumstance, these voices might emerge from four different speakers that would surround the cylinder.

One adventure with a new medium inevitably suggests, to me at least, another proposal. *Palindromes*, as it shall be called, will be a cylindrical sea of words that are left right mirrors, such as WOW, MOM, or TOT, so that if they are suspended in circular holographic space, they will look alike from both front and back. These words would be individually placed at all possible angles in constellations that would revolve in a circular (360°) hologram. However, rather than having a single constellation of words, revolving in unison, I would again prefer that several constellations be created, each moving at a different speed (as in *On Holography*). With larger words in the slowest constellations, and shorter words in the fastest ones, individual words would thus be visually intersecting with each other throughout the viewing experience. For one thing this work would probably make a stronger showing in group shows.

The cameraperson for *On Holography* was Neal Lubetzky; it was produced by the Cabin Creed Center for Work and Environmental Studies, New York, Hart Perry, holographic project director. Both the work and this statement are copyright ©1978 by

RICHARD KOSTELANETZ.

Sound Poetry

rainbow chug bandit bomb

Of all the arts we practice, poetry seems the least susceptible to technological innovation. One reason poetry remains indifferent to our industrial ingenuity is that the common and inexhaustible material from which it is fabricated—language—cannot be improved through mechanical manipulation. Nonetheless, a new poetry which is highly dependent upon evolving technology has developed in this century. It is unlike what has preceded it in that it bears little relationship to the written word and that it disrupts the traditional serial presentation of poetry.

Under the names of *verbosonie, poesie sonore* and sound poetry, this international movement has attempted to create an oral poetry that is not simply the reading aloud of written texts. To the extent to which the poets of this movement have produced works that cannot be effectively transferred to the page, they have succeeded in establishing a new poetry. As with so much else in contemporary art, the origins of sound poetry can be found in the Dada movement. The readings of abstract, nonsensical poems by Kurt Schwitters and Raoul Hausmann are the most obvious antecedents. Of course, the written works of Tzara, Artaud, and Joyce also helped prepare poets for the opportunities that the availability of the tape recorder in the early 1950's and the development of the electronic modulator about 1955 were to make possible.

Using overlays, repetitions and various kinds of distortions, the sound poet is able to create effects that are more complex than those achieved in the serial presentation of language. However, the most striking feature of the new poetry is not the sounds but the silences. An auditory landscape is created by voices without mouths against which words are hung as they have previously been displayed on paper. The silence of the audiospace is both a framing device and a rhythmic element just as the whiteness of the paper frames the poem and indicates the pauses between words. Words seem to come out of this silence like lights out of a dark sky.

The unexpected juxtapositions of language, the extended caesuras, and the distortions that characterize text-sound compositions create aural objects that are as abstract as many modern sculptures. This aspect is perhaps the most interesting. The poets are not creating nonsense, though the work is often playful. (As Johan Huizinga points out in *Homo Ludens*, all poetry is a "play-function.") They are instead trying to make something that has not existed before rather than recapitulating what we already have.

The attempt to relieve words of their meaning and thereby create an abstract poetry is a major concern of those sound poets whose work has been collected in a new recording produced by 1750 Arch Records entitled *10+2:12 American Text Sound Pieces.** It is an excellent introduction to the genre.

Producer Charles Amirkhanian has included two of his own compositions, and they are among the best on the album. "Just" consists of the words *rainbow, chug, bandit,* and *bomb* repeated in patterns of contrapuntal rhythms. Part of the tension of the piece is its flirtation with meaning as the words assemble like a sentence

*Available from 1750 Arch Records, 1750 Arch Street, Berkeley, California 94709.

but fail to convey any rational sense. "Heavy Aspirations" is a lecture by the composer Nicholas Slonimsky on Amirkhanian's work which has been reconstituted through repetitions and splices.

Not surprisingly, "62 Mesostics Re Merce Cunningham" by John Cage and "Speech Songs" by Charles Dodge are as much musical compositions as they are poetic. Their concern is not with words but with voice. The full force of modern technology is brought to bear on their compositions, and they are able to describe their work only in technological terms. Listen to Charles Dodge discussing "Speech Songs." "These pieces were realized on the DDP224 computer at the Bell Telephone Laboratories in Murray Hill, New Jersey, using a speech synthesis system created by Joseph Olive. The computer speech analysis/synthesis technique involves recording a voice speaking the passage to be synthesized, digitizing (through an analog-to-digital converter) the speech, mathematically analyzing the speech to determine its frequency content with time, and synthesizing the voice (speaking the same passage) from the results of the analysis." I doubt that this is what Baudelaire had in mind when he said that poetry is numbers.

As you might guess, there are some very tedious pieces in the collection. Liam O'Gallagher's "Border Dissolve in Audiospace" is a thirteen minute recording of telephone conversations with information operators in the capitals of all states and provinces on the Canada–USA border in an attempt to determine the telephone numbers of local zoos. Clark Coolidge's "Preface," while less boring than John Cage's *"Variations IV* (kindly described as "unbridled sonic anarchy") upon which it is based, is a selection from an hour-long reconstruction of an announcer's brief introduction to the Everest recording of Cage's composition.

Despite these and other failures, the record has some very interesting moments and the questions these moments raise about the relationship between language, poetry, and music are worth considering. Wallace Stevens tells us that poetry must resist the intelligence almost successfully. As poetry grows more resistant, its surrender to understanding (if not to meaning) becomes more fascinating.

JOHN BIGUENET

Sights and Sounds of Things to Come: Film in the Eighties

There are several developments that we may see in film of the 1980's. Film is the artform most dependent on technology, which any discussion of what is going to happen in the future must mention briefly. For the critics and researchers, available materials will continue with the proliferation of films in the convenient sixteen millimeter format and the transference of films onto video cassettes. Increased resources will make it possible for the serious film student to approach the understanding of his literary counterpart.

Second, a great deal more attention will be paid to sound. Noise reduction systems, already installed in the larger and more prestigious theatres here and abroad, will become both cheaper and more effective, and this will enable films such as Scorsese's *The Last Waltz*, first shown at Cannes in 1978, to make the sort of impact the director intended. The French have already finished modernizing their chief Cannes theatres; the new festival complex approved for construction will be even more contemporary.

Third, the technology involved in making films will become substantially cheaper. This tendency has already had a marked effect on national films. Beginning in 1962, the French Film Critics Association began to select and screen its own preferences among films from all over the world; and the Critics Week at Cannes has consequently become *the* showcase for the independent and unknown filmmakers of Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Critics Week was made possible by the advent of relatively low cost film production techniques. Currently the tendency is for younger filmmakers to attempt to emulate directors like Miguel Littin and Bertolucci, men who started out as sixteen mm. independents and used critical acclaim to bankroll them into bigger and more conventional films. The results of this movement are mixed. Is *1900* a better film than *The Conformist*? Probably not, and for every director who, like Littin, became better as he became bigger, there is another director who perhaps should have stayed small. The corollary to reduced production costs will be a tendency for people to remain at their level of competence.

The global tendency to become more Westernized in cinema is going to continue. As the middle class grows in the West and in developing countries, there will continue to be increasing appetites for derivative films. By *derivative* I mean films whose production values will imitate Western emphases on spectacle and entertainment. The situation is most obvious in Cuba, Hungary, and the Soviet Union. In each case these countries entered films at Cannes in 1978 that were frankly commercial in the Western sense. Lotianou's *A Hunting Accident*, despite its Chekhovian literary antecedents and gypsy exoticism, is a perfect imitation of North American tragic dramas, a sort of *Saturday Night Fever* featuring dachas instead of discos. At the commercial level, imitation has always been prevalent. What is new, disturbing, and likely to be with us for a long time, is the tendency for a significant portion of national

cinema around the world to emulate an all too shoddy and only vacuously entertaining Hollywood product.

What is developing globally is partly a conceptual innovation. The cinema of most developing countries had been, since sound, North American, until a healthy infusion of European values occurred in the 1960's. As the 1970's drew to a close, there was a growing recognition that this was, to use economic parlance, nothing more than import substitution. As several young South American directors have expressed it, this has meant merely a substitution of a French for an Anglo-American culutral imperialism.

The cinema of developing countries is apt to get more national, less accessible to the uninitiated outsider, and consequently less universal, as the 1980's progress. In recent years, Cannes, more than even Berlin or Karlovy Vary, has been the place to observe these shifts. Even though there has been a steady stream of "traditional" third world cinema, with its emphasis on the exotically rural, there are now more films of a regional or national cast. At Cannes in 1978 these films were in the slight majority: Geraldo Sarno's *Colonel Delmiro Gouveia* in *Un Certain Regard*, Littin's *Recurso del Metodo* in the competition, Solanas's *The Sons of Martin Fierro* and Carlos Diegues's *Chuvas de Verao* in the Directors Fortnight. All of these films were evidences of a distinctively national approach to the problems of the directors' culture.

When we turn to the more developed nations, we will see a few realignments in the next decade. On the basis of only a few years of post-Franco production, it seems extremely likely that Spanish cinema will become preeminent in Spanish language film: already in 1978 some of the most imaginative films shown in European festivals were Spanish. Rivalling Spain will probably be a new Italian cinema in which the influence (or decline) of Antonioni, Fellini, et al. will prove to be vastly overrated. Despite the presence in the competition section at Cannes of Ferreri's *Ciao Maschio*, the striking films were from lesser known directors: Olmi's *The Clog Tree*, which won the Palm, Perleni's *Grand Hotel of the Palms*, and di Carlo's *Per Queste Notte*. With talent like this, Italy can safely do without its establishment filmmakers. Although there will be an increasing number of interesting films made in the German and Scandinavian speaking countries, it is doubtful that the French-Italian film producing axis will be significantly disturbed. It will simply tilt somewhat towards the Mediterranean.

All of these factors will result in the continuing growth of world cinema. This growth will in general be both qualitative and quantitative, and there is some evidence to suggest that this quality will emerge even in the United States and in countries where cinema has been beaten into submission by their governments. At the press conference opening the 1978 film festival in Karlovy Vary, a government spokesman mentioned the urgent need to raise the ideological standard of Czech film. Taken negatively, this might mean that the Czech and Slovak film studios will turn out even more dreary sagas of agricultural collectivization and silly romantic comedies. But some evidence suggests that even the current government is mildly embarrassed about its films: Frantisek Vlacil's award winning *Hot Summer Shadows* was entirely too derivative of Western commercial filmmaking, but it was considerably better as a film than its immediate predecessors. Such encouraging signs will not, of course, stop the frequently hysterical debate on the decline of the cinema. As the president of the French Film Critics Association observed, this debate has been going on since the end of the Second World War, and it will doubtless continue into the next decade. But cinema will continue to flourish anyway, and in surprising places and ways.

JOHN MOSIER

Mostly Ortegan Thoughts on Modern and After

Nada moderno y muy siglo viente
[Not at all modern, but very twentieth century]
—Jose Ortega y Gasset, 1916.

Ortega believed that the modern age ended with the nineteenth century. Therefore, to speak of our century as "Post-Modern" would be almost as unjust as to call it, say, "Neo-Modern": we could be accused of placing it in a kind of umbilical relationship to a more generative, parent epoch—and one which was extraordinarily energetic!

Ortega would seem to suggest that, in all those activities in which recent generations have been true to their missions, have been "authentic," and in which men and women have tried to live at the height of their times, our century could be referred to, quite simply, as "Contemporary."

But words hang on in truth or falsehood, and we still use the word "modern" without examining its meaning. "Modern" insinuates that "our" present time, "our" civilization surpasses all previous ones and "posits implicitly an unchanging future already here." (Harold Raley, 1971.) What is truly Contemporary and how would we recognize it?

*

"The father of modern painting (as Cézanne is often called) was not a modernist. He stands as solidly within nature as any painter in the tradition and as no painter has stood since him, while the essence of

modernism lies in its break with nature." (William Barrett, 1978.)

Barrett is using here the words "modern" and "modernist" in our everyday sense to mean art (or anything) "new," that has appeared since 1900 or the 1880's, at the earliest. Ortega, born in 1883, believed that the Modern Age rose out of the deepening crisis of the Renaissance and was given its first formulation and direction by Bacon, Descartes and Galileo in the early years of the seventeenth century. It came full circle, he thought, with Husserl and phenomenology at the beginning of our century—a three-hundred-year project of still unpredictably benign or demonic potential.

What does Barrett mean when he states that "the essence of modernism lies in its break with nature?" When could such a break have occurred?

Also, what could philosopher Karsten Harries have meant when he said that "Cezanne is still before us?"

*

"Each metaphor," states Ortega (1971, post.), "is the discovery of a law of the universe."

Ortega's three "ways of thinking" (1947) and his Three Great Metaphors (1916), the latter pertaining to the third "way of thinking" and each one presupposing a different, usually unspoken, conception of consciousness:

I. The Visionary or Magic way of thinking, characteristic of Neo-lithic peoples of (Amerindian, African, Australian, etc.) the world over now vanishing because of the encroachments of the "modern world."

II. The Emotive-Imagist or Mythological way of thinking of more complex, expansionist societies (Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Greek, Christian, Mayan, etc.).

III. The Perceptive-Conceptual or "philosophical" way of thinking arising in the ancient Greek world, with the decline of Olympian religion—our Western heritage through three philosophical ages to the present.

Hence, the Three Great Metaphors: The one of the Ancient world, leaping across the Christian "Age of Faith" to the early Renaissance; the Modern, from about 1500 to about 1900; and the Contemporary—

1. "The Wax and the Seal." the seal leaving its delicate impression on the wax. Consciousness as impression: the mind is made for the world, for receiving the true imprint of things in the world and Nature. Mind and thing, subject and object exist and survive independently. Their collision is called realism, or impressionism. Truth is what the Greeks called *aletheia*: an uncovering, dis-covery, dis-closure, un-hiddenness.

The vital program that follows upon this: man must know the world on his own, name it, describe it, and render it properly in truth and beauty. Man must endeavor to know himself in the world. The subject is a thing among things in the great embrace of ongoing, divine Nature. All reality is grounded in Nature.

2. Finding this construct of reality to be more and more inadequate, the Renaissance mind and psyche sought another prospectus. Descartes cleared the space for the next metaphor: "The Container and its Contents"—the mind and its immaculate treasures, *ideas*, its favorite jewels being of a rare, mathematical transparency. Hence, idealism (or idea-ism).

The only things about which there can be certainty of existence are those things that exist in thought. Things, as it were, die as realities in the world and are reborn as thoughts in a subject's head. Thought = "pure presence, pure appearance, a pure seeming-to me." (Ortega, 1971, post.). Hence, also, subjectivism.

Consciousness, now, is a very special, almost godlike "consciousness of," an absolute creator—consciousness. Truth, now, is "truth-*á la*-truth-in-thinking" (Ortega, 1947) a conception of truth quite unlike any that human beings had ever before considered or had sought to live by: "Modern" truth. Harries (1974) says that it is a conception of truth as "clear and distinct" perception. Ironically, it, like other elements in Descartes's idealism, owes something to Scriptural and Medieval concepts, specifically to the notion of a creator-consciousness, wherein only God, as Creator, can know his creations through and through. Therefore, He needs or recognizes "neither transcendence nor metaphor— nor would man if he were truly godlike. The (modern) refusal of metaphor (which implies lack—it speaks of "what remains absent") is inseparably connected with the project of pride, the dream of immediated vision, a vision that is not marred by lack, that does not refer to something beyond itself that would fulfill it." (Harries, 1978.) It—and much modern art and poetry—pridefully "windows" upon nothing beyond itself. Leibniz (1646-1716) called the self "a little god."

Such an idealist-subjectivist god-man is inevitably some kind of absolutist-purist-egotist-hermit, existing in perfect but ever more frightening loneliness in relation to things, humanity, and the Universe, and his thinking and his art tend toward contexualism—key critical terms for contextualism in the arts being: "*autonomous* (self-governing), *autotelic* (having its own end and purpose), and *heterocosmic* (a unique world)." (Len Aricchia, 1968.)

Contextualism in the arts began to appear in the speculative aesthetics of Poe and Baudelaire. It

passed through the marvelous sensibilities of Mallarmé and Valery and reached a culmination—and, finally, an impasse?—in twentieth-century abstractionism, non-objectivism, Duchampian irony and in conceptualism. "De Nada en la Vida y de Nada in La Muerte" ("About Nothing in Life and in Death") reads the title of a geometric shaped canvas by Frank Stella of the early 1960's.

The modernist mandate: obtain power, dominion, wealth, security through science—technology, the supreme achievement of modernism. As with the second Great Metaphor (the Modern) in its relationship to the first (the Ancient), so Ortega's third Metaphor "explains" and, in so doing, supersedes the second. In going beyond the second, it goes beyond the limitations of both ancient realism and modern idealism—it tucks them away inside itself.

3. "The Matched Gods"—like Castor and Pollux, of old Mediterranean mythology, who are born, live and die as one. No longer, then, are subject and object the same thing (as in realism) and no longer is consciousness a relationship of container to its contents (as in idealism). Now, once again, the subject—the "I"—and the object face each other in the world (as in ancient realism), but they are, at once, irreducible *and* inseparable, like the "matched gods." Ortega's originative insight affirms the *coexistence* of subject and object. Consciousness is eliminated or subsumed in a co-living a co-belonging. Life, not thought, is the fundamental or root reality. It is certainly not the only reality or the "highest" one could imagine, but it is the reality in which all other realities are grounded. "I *with* things; I *with* the world. I am I plus my circumstances." A kind of field theory, admitting of horizons across which things come and go.

The vital task: man has a "mission of clarity in the world—to shed light upon things; to make everything, anything, the center of the Universe; to reabsorb the circumstance."

"Cézanne is still before us," says Karsten Harries. This goes against all the critical attempts to claim Cézanne as "our" modern father figure, to make him into some sort of visual arts grammarian, as a prophet of "flatness," "surface," and "space," three of our talisman words.

That Cézanne did explore the space of the world uniquely, by means of modified Impressionist color, is true, but, into this space he wove a mountain, *his* favorite mountain since boyhood (Mount Ste. Victoire) and his favorite quarry (at Bibemus) and his long familiar still life things and apples and sitters and his own face. His preoccupation with nearness and distance, surface and depth realities, the total circumstantiality of form and space and of himself in his circumstance—these and other reasons place Cézanne beyond reductionist modernism.

Life is the matrix: "My life is not mine, but I belong to it. This is the broad, immense reality of my coexistence with things." (Ortega).

CALVIN HARLAN

A Secretary to the Spirits, by Ishmael Reed with illustrations by Betye Saar, NOK Publishers, 1978, 42 pp., $3.95.

The following minutes were
logged by this Secretary to
the Spirits during the last five
years which have occasionally been
like a devil woman on a heart

The title poem of Ishmael Reed's new book *A Secretary to the Spirits* is spoken by a worker whose job is sometimes a pain in the "heart." Webster defines a secretary literally as "one entrusted with secrets" or "one who keeps records, handles correspondence." Using his hoodoo esthetic, Reed transforms the European notion of Muses into African Spirits from whom he takes dictation. The secrets Reed has picked up in his correspondence with his Spirits allow him to continue to write his magical spells in this first collection of poetry since *Chattanooga* (New York: Random House, 1973).

Here Reed documents once more a multicultural view of the world —his task for at least a decade. From his first novel, *The Free-Lance Pallbearers* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), through the essays in *Shrovetide in Old New Orleans* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), Reed has been saying that his mixed-media language drawns from the blood and mythology of forms that are American, African, and European.

In the poem "Pocodonia," Reed creates a character whose name sounds like a hybrid of Pocahontas (the Indian heroine or traitor, depending on your point of view, who became an instant celebrity in England after saving the life of John Smith) and Caledonia, the Hard-headed Colored Woman in the song. Reed plays the defiantly bitter, heartbroken male, standing on the streetcorner singing the blues, whose structure the poem borrows:

You dragged me into your love pond
Pocadonia, your snapping turtle got the
best of me
You dragged me into your love pond
Pocadonia, your snapping turtle got
the best of me
It was raining down on Hang-over morning
my head was in a sag
I looked over at your pillow
A crease was where you used to be.

In "Poem Delivered Before Assembly of Colored People Held at Glide Memorial Church, Oct. 4, 1973 and Called to Protest Recent Events in the Sovereign Republic of Chile" (Whew!), Reed speaks of his comradeship with South American poet Pablo Neruda:

It is impossible for me to believe that
Cancer could waste him
He was filled with barrel-chested poetry
From stocky head to feet and
Had no need for mortal organs
The cancer wasn't inside of Pablo Neruda
Cancer won't go near poetry
The cancer was inside ITT

In this poem Reed returns to the subject of his "Hexorcism of Noxon D Awful," and though the poem's structure, like its title, is awkward, he convincingly murdermouths the "cancer" that could murder a poet like Neruda, or like Ishmael Reed. Reed's closure is a warning, or a threat:

Next time you kill a poet
You'd better read his poems first
Or they will rise up and surround you
Like 1945 fire
cannons a few miles from
Berlin
And History will find no trace of
Your ashes in the bunker of your hell

Satire, Reed's chosen weapon, began as magical incantations believed to have power to destroy enemies, or to scare away evil spirits. Hoodoo—that syncretism of African, European, and other religions, which Reed has been formalizing into an esthetic doctrine— also provides practical methods for dispatching antagonists. Energetic vituperation has been a Reed trademark throughout his writing, and the murdermouthing continues in this collection, particularly in "Poem Delivered . . .," "Vamp," "Sixth Street Corporate War," "The Reactionary Poet," "Foolology," and "Rough Trade Slumlord Totem." Indeed some of these poems resemble voodoo curses. One of the fiercest is "Rough Trade Slumlord Totem," which demonstrates, through description as well as example, "how you put your enemy/atop a totem where the scavengers/get at him."

May seagulls litter your
Punch-and-Judy corked eyes
May the eagle mistake your
snout for a mouse and sink
its claw into it.
May the paint used on your
head be slum lord paint bound
to peel in a short time

The enemies or evil spirits that Reed curses include the "vampire" who "convinces the peasants that/I am their devil," the high class "rats" who live "in 100,000 dollar/rat's nests on the Alameda/and drive to work in a Mercedes," and the "revolutionary" who would require everyone to "wear the same/Funny caps/And the same funny jackets," who would make "Love and kisses/A crime against the state."

Richard Nixon is another evil spirit that Reed attacks. Some of the most virulent poems seem to have been inspired, however, by individuals on Reed's personal enemies list, and occasionally his rancor causes a poem to veer out of artistic control. When Reed's animadversion causes him to lose his comic and artistic perspective, these poems threaten to become pure invective.

Only the benefit of Reed's brilliant comic sense (which seems to be spread a little more thinly in this book than in previous works) keeps these satirical poems from slipping into sheer colorful insult. But when Reed tempers his volatile satire with his comic genius for the craft (and craftiness) of wordplay, the effects can be complex as well as devastating. Richard Nixon is called "President Waterbugger" in "Poem Delivered . . ." That multileveled pun, with utter economy of language, manages to suggest both the "bugging" activities associated with the Watergate break-in and a disagreeable insect. And the name is also a marvelous sound-alike for What-a-Burger.

It would not be fair to suggest that Reed, through some peculiarity of personality, simply enjoys badmouthing people. "Sather Tower Mystery" gives us an idea of what Reed is up against, what we also are up against: "Seems there was this Professor," Reed explains, who appears to support all of the proper liberal, humanitarian causes, but who would kill to protect "these plaster of paris busts/of deceased Europeans . . .

These books, leather bound/'copyright 1789'/All of these things, precious to me." What we are up against is a group of people who would kill (they've done it before, certainly) in order to protect their culture from "the infidels."

Reed is aware of the negative image he projects. He's even proud of it, the way one can be proud of being a "bad nigger." He consistently defines himself negatively, as what he is not—what he refuses to be. He calls himself "The Reactionary Poet."

> If you are a revolutionary
> Then I must be a reactionary
> For if you stand for the future
> I have no choice but to
> Be with the past

Reed seems to make a similar statement in "The Return of Julian the Apostate to Rome," which could be paraphrased: From what I've seen of Christianity, I'd rather be a pagan. Reed writes as if he were crowded on all sides by people who would snatch away his freedom if he let up one inch. With these poems he appears to be headed toward some spiritual island.

He selects as his heroes independent, solitary men. One is the sky diver who "spread out on the field like/Scrambled eggs" because "You can't always count/On things opening up for you." Another hero is Billy Eckstine. Reed addresses him in "Soul Propietorship": ". . . now I/ understand why you went solo."

Reed's particular sense of artistic and personal freedom results in his backing off, trailing curses and muttering threats, into the isolation he believes is freedom. In his second novel *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), Reed has his cowboy hero Loop Garou argue for artistic freedom: "What's your beef with me Bo Shmo, what if I write circuses? No one says a novel has to be one thing. It can be anything it wants to be, a vaudeville show, the six o'clock news, the mumblings of wild men saddled by demons." That novel ended with a joyful noise as: "Everyone arm in arm started bopping towards the gleaming Cities in the distance." No one says a poem has to be one thing, either, but in *A Secretary to the Spirits* Reed seems so intent on using his hoodoo to protect himself from freedom snatchers of all hues that the result is fewer "circuses" and more "mumblings" of a wild man. Still, Reed gives every indication that he knows exactly what he's doing. In the poem "Sputin" he tells where it's at through the voice of Rasputin:

> Soon, my fellow peasants will
> See me in the Gazette
> Taking tea with the royal family
>
> They'll say
> That crazy bum?

Reviewed by Ahmos Zu-Bolton and Harryette Mullen

Sunset at Blandings, by P. G. Wodehouse, Simon and Schuster, 1978, 216 pp., $8.95.

Never read, as I did, the present volume or anything else by P.G. Wodehouse while flying from New York to New Orleans, or anywhere else, for that matter. Chuckles are permissible on a plane, but hardly the ineluctable guffaws.

I opened P.G.'s posthumous work with reverence, hope, and fear. Reverence should be obvious, as hope should be, to anyone who has ever read anything. Fear, in this case, lurked in the realization that even P.G. could not be expected to produce a masterpiece at the age of ninety-three-plus. Happily, I was wrong.

P.G. had just been knighted, on New Year's Day, 1975. The literate world applauded. Then, six weeks later, on St. Valentine's Day, came the sad intelligence, flashed on English-speaking news media, that "The Master" had died. The date was of only wry comfort. If he had to die, what better day than that of St. Valentine?

Is it hyperbole to call him "The Master," any more than for Queen Elizabeth to dub him "Sir Pelham"? That other supreme verbal craftsman, Evelyn Waugh, judged otherwise. What else, he asked, can one call one "who can produce on average three uniquely brilliant and entirely original similes to each page?" Nor was Waugh the only knowing writer to find Wodehouse perhaps the greatest stylist in the language. For sheer verbal legerdemain (what Coleridge calls "logodaedaly") who else?

No one, I suppose, will proclaim *Sunset at Blandings* Wodehouse's supreme masterpiece, even if it has to be his ultimate one. His editor, Richard Usborne, who professes to be one of those who "know the Wodehouse canon almost by heart," finds that "of the two hundred, say, verbal felicities here, twenty or so would have been removed from the final draft, discarded as not freshly minted." Among these (which I was unoffended by, being merely a devotee, not a full-time specialist) were such jewels as "drained the bitter cup only to find a dead mouse at the bottom" and "had he not been seated he would undoubtedly have drawn himself up to his full height." One is delighted that the Master's pruning knife had not excised these and others.

Of the seventy-nine novels, Usborne awards top honors to *Joy in the Morning,* the work on which P.G. had labored longest, especially during his long internment in Germany during the War. It represented three or four years of intermittent and always fresh work. In *Sunset* we have only sixteen out of the projected twenty-two chapters. But thanks to Usborne's care, we are permitted to peep over the Master's shoulders and see his sketches, corrections, hints, and the like. Had he only six months more, what a work would have emerged: with the exciting possibility of Bertie Wooster, Jeeves and Stiffy Byng turning up to solve the plot and link the two worlds of Wodehousian whimsy! *Sunset* might indeed have been more aptly titled. (The title *Sunset* was, of course, never Wodehouse's idea. He had jotted down fifteen other possibilities like *Call to the Rescue, All's Well at Blandings, Leave it to Galahad,* even *Women Are Peculiar.* But *Sunset* is now, alas, the mot juste, as Jeeves might have announced.)

The plot is familiar but fresh: lovely Victoria is kidnapped by her relatives and immured at Blandings Castle to save her from the fate of marrying an impecunious painter; Galahad comes to the rescue, smuggling her lover into the Castle under the disguise of Mr. Smith, a painter commissioned to do a portrait of Lord Emsworth's prize pig, "The Empress of Blandings." And so forth.

Some time was dedicated to the imposter's pseudonym. The episode is somewhat typical:

> "And now think of a name." "For me?" "It would hardly be within the sphere of practical politics to use your own, considering that my sister Florence writhes like an electric eel at the very sound of it. David Lloyd-George? Good, but still not quite what we want. Messmore Breamworthy?" "Could there be a name like that?" "It is the name of one of Freddie's co-workers at Donaldson's Dog Joy, Long Island City, U.S.A. But I don't really like it. Too ornate, and the same objection holds in the case of Aubry Trefusis, Alexander Stong-in-th'-Arm and Augustus Cave-Brown-Cave. We need something simple, easily remembered. Wibberley-Smith? I like the Smith. We'll settle on that. Bless my soul, said Gally with fervor . . ."

Sunset is, in fact, a trove of vintage, or very nearly vintage, Wodehouse and need hardly be recommended further.

Reviewed by C.J. McNaspy

New York Theatre Annual 1977-78, Vol. 2, edited by Catharine Hughes, Gale Research Company, 183 pp., $20.00.

There have been theatre annuals before, all of them providing some minimal record of the New York season. The merit of this second volume of the annual edited by Catharine Hughes is its completeness. Not only are we given a record of new plays On, Off, and Off-Off Broadway, but of continuing plays as well. All the New York Theatre Awards for the season are given, and there is an index of plays and of individuals and organizations.

The record of new plays includes Cast and Credits, a brief synopsis, five or six excerpts of representative reviews, the opening and closing dates of the run, and at least one photo (three for musicals). For continuing plays, the only difference is that the review excerpts are omitted and the cast list gives the names of the actors but not the roles.

The layout is clear and uncrowded, the photos nice and sharp. A very useful reference book for any professional or educational theatre organization.

Reviewed by Ernest Ferlita, S.J.

Max Perkins, Editor of Genius, by A. Scott Berg, Thomas Congdon Books, E. P. Dutton, 1978, New York, $15.00.

"Vanities of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity," begins the chapter in Ecclesiastes from which Hemingway took the epigraph to *The Sun Also Rises*. Max Perkins, the great editor who discovered Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Wolfe, was wholly devoid of vanity. He was like the first officer to General Grant, whose job it was "to keep Grant sober; edit his important papers and put them in final form; apply tact and persistence in order to make critical points; and often restore the general's self-confidence."

His genius was what Vance Bourjaily succinctly called "an infallible sense of structure." The effusions of Wolfe or the early Fitzgerald could not succeed without Perkin's critical instinct. The first draft of *This Side of Paradise* had to go through three revisions, each instigated and outlined by Perkins, before it could achieve aesthetic balance and grace. Perkins precipitated crucial changes in *The Great Gatsby*. He thought Gatsby too vague and undefined in the first draft. Gatsby remained mysterious, of course, but Fitzgerald sharpened his traits to the precarious degree that pitched him finally and forever into the place of a memorable character. Fitzgerald later became removed from Perkins, in the nine years it took to write *Tender is the Night*. It is probably safe to say that everything would have gone better for *Tender is the Night* if Fitzgerald had submitted the manuscript to Perkins from the first stages, as he had done with his earlier novels. As for Thomas Wolfe, his dependence on Perkins's editing was go gigantic that it is quite scandalous and makes the most horrendous story in this biography.

The basic gist of Perkins's personal life, all that this biography leaves us with in the end, is that he was a stoic about his mariage. Though of course he never broadcast the problem, it was known to those around him, probably because his wife was a rather flamboyant person, so unlike Perkins. They had five daughters, and the marriage, however bad, was steady, consistent with his persevering constancy and self-denial. He had one outlet, a platonic correspondence with a woman he idolized in Virginia. It illustrates a kind of pathetic grandeur in his character, yearnings and illusions that he was too mild and stable to indulge, except in the most delicate way. He would claim to lack the violent capacities of his authors, whether for hedonism, elation, anguish, The poetic temperament was not really his, nor its ethic. It was only carved into his fine, wistful face, his gallant mildness. I would say that he was probably as Faulkner once described: "He was what they mean in the South when they use the word 'gentle.' "

Only in his last years did he acquire a reputation for eccentricity. By this time he was overcome by his life of toil and, I think, the accumulated tragedies of his authors. He seemed remote and increasing deafness added to his solitude. Occasionally he became reminiscent and expansive at odd times. Sitting in his office with an author who was trying to discuss a manuscript, Perkins would get up and go over to the window to look down on New York, then start talking about Vermont, in a kind of melancholy reflection. He took to drinking. He would have about five drinks a day, double martinis. The vainest thing he ever appeared to have said was when one of his daughters asked him if he wasn't drinking too much and he replied, "Churchill drinks too much. All great men drink too much," no doubt thinking also of his authors, such as Fitzgerald and Ring Lardner. He took to re-reading *War and Peace*, his favorite book, and to drawing little pictures of Napoleon, his hero.

While such men as these had the greatest affection of his heart, he continued to maintain for himself an undaunted campaign of modesty and self-effacement. When Malcolm Cowley wrote a "Profile" of him in the *New Yorker*, against his protests, it was a tribute to an illustrious man unknown to anyone outside of the publishing business. Perkins read the article and said mildly, no doubt with a certain deadpan expression, "I wouldn't mind being like that fellow."

On his deathbed, his wife read from his favorite lines of Shakespeare:,

Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney sweepers, come to dust.

As with Fitzgerald, the greatest golden boy, he had seen the course of things and how they pass. Sorrow came to all of Perkins authors, in one way or another.

Reviewed by Nancy Lemann

Black Film As Genre, by Thomas Cripps, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978, 184 pp., $12.50.

In an earlier book, *Slow Fade to Black* (Oxford University Press, 1977) Cripps offered a survey of black performers in American film, which, despite some confusing passages and chapter headings, was well-done and worthwhile. In *Black Film As Genre,* he moved from considering films in general, in which blacks appear, to films which can be considered "black," i.e., films in which blacks are not only involved, but which speak to black audiences, and that "emerge from self-conscious intentions, whether artistic or political, to illuminate the Afro-American experience."

In the 184 pages Cripps packs a rationale for the definition and the genre, a brief history of black film, analyses of six representative films, comments on the influence of television on black film, problems of criticism and scholarship, and a filmography. Quite an order for so few pages, but concisely written, carefully researched, and a book I recommend highly to those interested in film history/esthetics, or the relation of a mass medium to the society in which it arises, or both.

For example, some of the themes of black films are not unique to blacks—consider, in particular, the idealized rural life versus the dangers and dissolution of the city. This theme may be treated as lightly as in *The Beverly Hillbillies,* in which the simple, pure country folk maintain their identity and overcome urban temptations (a concept straight from the old "Toby" shows in travelling theatre). However, the strain of shifting from one total environment to another is also a serious matter, as immigrants have found for centuries. And, within the city, the struggle between staying with one's own group, or moving into another, offers still more difficult choices. This complex of social issues arose in the small Yiddish film industry in America. But add to all these

problems the additional one of being a member of distinctly different racial stock, ex-slaves and their descendents, patronized when not abused, with poor educational and employment chances, and then try to get some backing to make a serious film about the black experience in America, and you have problems similar to starting a Jewish film industry in Soviet Russia today. The wonder is that anyone managed—but they sometimes did.

That, and the contents of the films, is what the book is about. *Birth of A Nation* is not a black film, but neither is *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (a 1959 story about survivors of a radiation war), despite Belafonte's attempts to have his character make some significant statement. Neither is *Brownskin Buckaroo,* for, although the cast and some of the crew were black, it is just a copy of the Saturday matinee Westerns done by Buck Jones, et al. However, a black company's version of *Ten Nights in A Bar Room* was sufficiently modified to qualify easily, much as Japanese versions of *The Lower Depths* and *Macbeth* were modified for the audience to which they spoke.

It's a complicated matter, and deserving of more study than a spurt of interest based on sympathy for the currently fashionable minority, soon to be replaced by the next. A good place to start that study is with both of Cripp's books. So, for the memory of Oscar Micheaux wheeling and wheedling to be able to make films like *Body and Soul,* for the urban struggle themes of *Scar of Shame,* for comic actor Spencer William's efforts as serious actor—and writer, and director—on *The Blood of Jesus* and *Brother Martin,* and for the many whose films are lost, read this book, if you have any interest in film as a meaningful part of society.

Reviewed by Frank Oglesbee

Sanatorium Under The Sign Of The Hourglass, by Bruno Schulz, tr. by Celina Wieniewska, Walker & Co., 1978, 178 pp. $8.95.

Following the publication of *Sklepy Cynemonowe* [The Street of Crocodiles] in English in 1963 Bruno Schulz, long since dead at the hands of the Nazis, finally reached the wider audience he desired and richly deserved in his own lifetime. His small body of work has been addressed from time to time in his native Polish, but even now with the publication in English of his only remaining literary work, Schulz is still known as a kind of gleam in the eye of Kafka or Proust. After reading *Sanatorium Pod Klepsydra* [Sanatorium Under The Sign Of The Hourglass], it seems unfortunate that Bruno Schulz is an author whose work cannot be spoken of without comparison to his many contemporaries of age and place who, by virtue of a larger volume of work, have received more detailed and synthetic observation.

How does one read and comprehend a forty-year-old 'new' book? We may be confused by the disparity between the book's crisp jacket, its newly-printed feel and smell and the tingling of your scalp as you read pages broken from the cold casting of an ancient secret code.

Bruno Schulz lived out his life in rural Drohobycz. He taught handicrafts and drawing there to support his endeavors in literature and art. *Sanitorium* includes many of his own illustrations, some of them reproduced by Schulz in an unusual manner from spoiled photographic plates. It should be clear that Schulz, who died in 1942, lived firmly in the twentieth century, yet his obsessions with his family life, with the ghosts and restless reincarnations of a demanding and guilty past, show that he gave his talent in retribution for the futility of those prior generations. Schulz stood astride two worlds. Tied to one, he was thus tainted and unfit for the other. He created a hybrid space for himself, a space peopled from the past and modulated by the fated future. Like the artist Franz Marc before him, he filled a tiny niche with an enormous vision benignly unconcerned with the limitations of phenomenal reality.

The most telling illustration of this comes from the first story of the *Sanatorium* collection, entitled "The Book." Here the young Schulz recounts his search for the archetypal book of his childhood, an icon that memory proves to be a quite ordinary pulp journal which nevertheless has revelatory powers. The narrator comments: "Ordinary books are like meteors. Each of them has only one moment, a moment when it soars screaming like a phoenix, all its pages aflame. For that single moment we love them ever after, although they soon turn to ashes. With bitter resignation we sometimes wander late at night through the extinct pages that tell their stone dead messages like wooden rosary beads."

Of the remaining twelve stories in *Sanatorium,* two stand out rough edged and delicately scented like the memory of fresh oranges in winter. "Spring" is a story of forty short parts which detail young Joseph's involvement with the girl image Bianca and his rival Rudolph's stamp album. The stamp album iconography of unknown worlds takes advantage of the indolence and fertile emptiness of Joseph's spring fever to overpower his reality with its own drama of colored light and political intrigue.

Joseph and his conjure of the girl Bianca become actors in an epic of stamp album drama; times, places, and roles fold in and out of the brightly engraved compartments only to be cancelled by a distraction or by some tragic thinning of the mirage. In each of its forty 'days,' "Spring" sharply and cooly refracts everydayness and events. At the end, Joseph wants to expiate himself for attempting to discover the divine intentions of the Spring. He wishes to cancel his obscure violence towards his own fantasies of love and betrayal by a fantastic suicide, but he is saved from his self-imposed fate by a demand that he account for his earlier, "obsolete" dreams. Thus the reality of an ordinary, passing season is erased and fixed rather as one that "Burst upon the world as the ultimate, all-embracing Spring."

The young Joseph finds a validation for art and fantasy in "Spring"; he discovers a kind of redemption for his world and a hint of transcendance over the drudgeries of life in the stunted world of Drohobycz. Nevertheless, in the story "Sanatorium Under The Sign Of The Hourglass," an older Joseph succumbs to the isolation and pitiful despair of his thwarted artist's life by traveling through dream and metaphor to the world of his father. Joseph's father has died to the real world and now resides in a world of sleepwalkers, in a sanatorium where the doctor has "put back the clock," and everyone is "always late by a certain interval of time . . .a matter of simple relativity."

The narrator Joseph has traveled far through an endless gray, dusky landscape on a nearly empty train to try one last time to reach his father on his father's terms. The father is a merchant who lives only to sell phantom cloth in a store full of ghosts. Joseph finally must desert his father's world to grapple with his own phantom fears with the despair of an artist in a world of uniforms and watchdogs.

Joseph repels himself from the sanatorium of extended time and returns to the train, the vehicle of passage between worlds, the symbol of artistic thought and expression where he remains permanently in motion, homeless, a pseudo-railwayman and minstrel who stands "in the corridor outside a second-class compartment and sing(s)" and for whom "people throw coins into . . .a black railwayman's hat."

Schulz thus dooms himself to the life of the artist in a world where art must inhabit railway compartments, "enormous as rooms, full of rubbish and straw." Yet in the gray light, nearly buried, a passenger on such a train will find two small but brilliant texts translated with grace by Celina Wieniewska that leave one not dazzled by the flash of a meteor but "peculiarly dizzy, filled with a mixture of longing and excitement."

Reviewed by Dennis Trombatore

My Disappearance In Providence and Other Stories, by Alfred Andersch, tr. by Ralph Manheim, Doubleday, 1978, 231 pp. $7.95.

I just opened Andersch's collection to the first story and I got to thinking about how German writers have been received in America over the past few generations. First Hermann Hesse came to mind. In 1946 he won the Nobel Prize and the *Saturday Review* was stunned enough to ask, "Who is Hermann Hesse?" Except for a brief Hesse Renaissance in the sixties among youth in America—the counterculture looking for a prophet in the midst of a war in Southeast Asia they were helpless to stop—Hesse was never well received in America. The reason, I propose, is that he was a neo-Romantic in a time of Realism. Americans have always had difficulty in accepting German Romanticism. One searched in vain for the mention of a mere machine in Hesse, even in the heyday of the Industrial Age. Then, too, I think of Franz Kafka who has fared well here, partly because of the expressionistic, dreamlike world he created, partly because of seeds in his writing of twentieth-century alienation and guilt. Up to the end of the Second War, perhaps Thomas Mann with his lucid prose and novels of intellect and ideas was the most well received German author. In 1960 Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* arrived via Ralph Manheim's translation and was instantly acclaimed as the best novel anywhere in a generation. Then in 1972 Heinrich Böll won the Nobel Prize and immediately, in translation, we got a compassionate look at the rubble and turmoil of a post-World War Germany in search of itself.

So where does Alfred Andersch fit into the scheme of German authors who can enjoy themselves in translation here? To put it quite simply, Andersch writes awfully well, "absolutely fine and straight," as Hemingway would have put it.

I can think of four reasons why Andersch succeeds as well as he does: first, the accessibility of his prose; second, his ability to tell a story; third, his candid treatment of sex which is fashionable these days (Andersch is subtle about it, too); and fourth, his reliance upon the local rather than the universal. I'll treat the first and fourth points briefly. (And to these four I'd add: a remarkable range of subjects from both past and present. Andersch is as comfortable telling a story about two German brothers avoiding the Second World War as he is talking about recent student riots in Berlin or the daughter of a Swiss doctor going to a finishing school in England (and never having seen a hippie).

In the late fifties a young German author named Siegfried Lenz became popular in his own country. In 1968 I translated Lenz from the German in a class at Tulane and it became immediately apparent why he was so successful: his style was remarkably similar to Hemingway's. Let me put you in possession of two rhetorical terms which you may or may not have encountered: parataxis and hypotaxis. Parataxis, in short, is the style of writing where relative clauses are avoided. It is the language of lyricism. Ex: I came, I saw, I conquered. The use of the biblical technique of the coordinating conjunction "and" does not make language any less paratectical; thus, Hemingway can put those "and's" to use and still retain his paratactical lyricism. For many centuries, even up to the early part of this century, much of German prose relied on hypotaxis, that is, the use of relative clauses and subordinating conjunctions. Sentences would go on forever, by means of a few "since's," "which's," and "who's." The result when translated was long-windedness. But that was fashionable for a long time in German prose.

Andersch uses a mixture of hypotaxis and parataxis with heavy emphasis on the latter. His sentences are lucid, unpretentious, and occasionally lyrical, as in, "A dry twilight; light rectangles on the walls, where pictures had been removed." I have not compared the original to the English text, but I'd say that if he's remained faithful to his reputation, Manheim does great justice to the German.

With respect to being local as opposed to universal, Andersch talks about real places: real cities, real streets, and real events. In the "Windward Islands," for example, the year is 1933 and the setting is in Munich. The protagonist, Franz Kein, is an unemployed eighteen-year-old and former Young Communist and political prisoner at Dachau (as was Andersch himself), who is now making money by being a tour guide for an English nobleman. Andersch relives those years, walking the streets with his characters. At one point the two pass Preysing Palace near Perusastrasse and deliberately avoid passing a memorial to the Hitler putsch of 1923, where they would either have to give a Hitler salute or risk being arrested by two SS men. Andersch's forte is his ability to evoke brilliant characterization, mood, and atmosphere along with the social realities of the era. Life goes on despite the rise of the Nazis, and this is what makes the story so chilling, so gripping, and so terrifying.

I'd like to stop here and simply point out two prose genres in German literature which Andersch is heir to and with which many students of English and American literature are unfamiliar: the "Kurzgeschichte" and the "Novelle." Both are untranslatable simply because they are beasties peculiar to the study of German literature. Both follow unique lines of development. The "Kurzgeschichte" is a twentieth-century phenomenon, perhaps even post-World War II, while the "Novelle" has its origins with Boccaccio's *Decameron* and may be relegated to its most impressive flowering in the nineteenth century. It is difficult to define the "Kurzgeschichte." Such attempts have kept Germanists occupied for years. To be sure, it is not constructed along the same lines as the short story á la Hawthorne and Melville, and to call it a mere anecdote because of its typically brief length would be to do it injustice. Suffice it to say that Andersch masters the "Kurzgeschichte" (which occupy the greatest portion of the collection) as well as the sole "Novelle," *The Cherries of Freedom,* a rather long piece which I'd like to end the review by talking about.

I remember Hemingway's protagonist deserting in *A Farewell to Arms.* And Céline's Bardamu deserted in *Journey to the End of the Night.* It seemed the thing for the antihero to do.

Andersch's tale, *The Cherries of Freedom,* is about desertion, but it is more than that. It is a complex piece composed of a narrative about his youth; his political involvements; a touching story of his father; scenes of his term as a political prisoner in Dachau; trenchant personal philosophies of art, God, and freedom; and remarkable lyrical journeys into the Italian landscape where he served. Andersch is the sensitive artist and photographer who from his earliest years was alienated from the Nazi regime through his induction into the Communist Youth organization. Thus, at one point, he justifies his desertion: "I couldn't love my army comrades because I loved my party comrades who had been killed by those for whom my fellow soldiers were fighting." Andersch's central theme is that even fleeting moments of freedom are rarely attained in one's lifetime. And he concludes that "art and man's struggle against fate are accomplished in acts of absolute, irresponsible freedom, of surrender to God and nothingness."

Andersch deserves at least one reading. I hope you're lucky enough to discover him.

Reviewed by Ken Fontenot

The Force So Much Closer Home: Henry Adams and the Adams Family, by Earl N. Harbert, New York University Press, 1977, 205 pp., $15.00..

Professor Harbert's book is an important contribution to the study of Henry Adams. As he emphasizes, it is a specialized work, one of the several that in the past eight years have taken the place of the general

studies of previous years. And yet so central and so continuously important to Adams's work is Harbert's subject that his book also comes close to being a general study.

Mont St. Michel and Chartres, The Life of George Cabot Lodge, and the late essays are not discussed, but the other important works are. *The History of the United States During the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison* and *The Education of Henry Adams,* which most critics consider Adams' most important works, has each a fifty-page chapter devoted to it. Professor Harbert's subject is the influence upon the works of Henry Adams of the Adams family tradition in politics, religion, philosophy, education, science, and literature. He shows how this fourth generation Adams continued, rejected, or modified the ideas and didactic techniques of the family tradition. To do this in a work of only two hundred and five pages of text, Professor Harbert had necessarily to schematize and condense a great deal. The result is a work that impresses as being thoroughly researched in published *and* unpublished materials, closely reasoned, and well-written. Henry Adams would, I think, have been pleased with it. Its author has much to say that is new. This is a book that any Henry Adams scholar or doctoral student will have to read and absorb thoroughly.

I myself would have appreciated a longer work, one that would have enabled Professor Harbert to explain and illustrate his ideas more fully. Because of the book's extreme compression, I often found it difficult to follow, despite the clarity of its over-all organization and the lucidity of its individual sentences. I suspect others who, like myself, were once close to the published works of Adams, at least, but have lost that closeness, will have similar problems. Even after two readings, I find I don't carry away a very full or coherent sense of what I have read.

I was most impressed with the chapter on the *History,* perhaps partly because I understood it better than that on the *Education.* It is original and profound and does a remarkably effective job of showing how the old family way of looking at the issues of this period of American history both appeared in Adams's work and gave way to his new ideas. Without in any way discrediting the work, it also subtly and convincingly demonstrates the limitations of Adams's avowed intention of simply stating the facts in their sequence. The treatment of Henry Adams's presentation of the principal characters of the period is also well done, with one major exception: Harbert seriously underestimates Adams's emphasis on the weaknesses in Jefferson's statesmanship and character.

In writing about the novels, Professor Harbert uses family background effectively to substantiate his personal readings. Yet it is in connection with the novel *Esther* that he makes his most serious error in critical judgment. He underestimates the novel and misunderstands it, to an extent, because he does not recognize that its immediate focus of interest is not philosophical but psychological, or, better, the philosophical-personal issues conflicting in Esther's mind and feelings.

Nevertheless, for those interested in Adams and who know his work well, this is, and will continue to be, an essential book.

Reviewed by Melvin E. Lyon

On Mountains. Thinking About Terrain. John Jerome, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 6978, $8.95.

Are you ready? What has a top speed of about 225 mph, the capacity to level small villages, and the nickname *Staublawine?* If you guessed a 1940 German dive bomber you are wrong; the correct answer is an airborne avalanche. Try this one: which has a thicker icecap, Greenland or Antartica? Well, it's Greenland by two miles to one, depressing the island to minus 6500 feet. And did you know that in Tibet there is a plateau a *thousand* miles wide that is higher than any continental American peak? Neither did I, until I read John Jerome's *On Mountains,* a veritable compendium of such information (the subtitle, which appears only on the dustjacket, is misleading: Jerome thinks exclusively about *mountainous* terrain) and neither the best nor the worst on the long shelf of mountain literature.

Since *On Mountains* does contain ample food for thought on a subject of interest to me, I was puzzled as to why it was taking me so long to finish the book. In some ways I should be Jerome's ideal audience: a fellow mountain-freak, with kindred attitudes and tastes in reading. He talks about some of my favorite places, authors, ideas. Then why, I wondered, was I finding excuses to put it down, and retuning to it as to a chore? The problem turned out to be the style, a curious compound of pop journalism and curt technical writing. Jerome has a weakness for the multi-sentence parenthesis, presumably to avoid the dreaded footnote, and for the sentence fragment.

> I can hope for no more from this book than that in some way it may help you to experience a similar pleasure. Old things seen with new eyes. Mountains being just about the oldest scenery we recognize as such. (p. xix)

Graceless and unnecessary. Admittedly Jerome is moving in fast stylistic company: over the years mountains have elicited some of our most eloquent prose and poetry. But anyone who writes a mountain book must expect to be judged by the going standards, and one cannot help noticing that many of the quotations—especially those from Jerome Wyckoff, Guy Murchie, Wallace Stegner and, of course, John Muir—rise like peaks from the peneplain of Jerome's own style. His worst response to the implicit challenge is a lamentable breeziness:

> So we have the Alps, which turn out to be more or less misnamed—named for the meadows rather than for the peaks which so obviously distinguish them—and, let's see, what else? (p.13)

Actually Jerome is seldom this bad, or bad in this way, more often he is at the other extreme. Much of Book One, "Mountain-Making," is a geology textbook, or rather a distillation of several textbooks, which is probably another source of my difficulties. The author moves so rapidly through complex scientific material—the lithosphere and asthenosphere, isostatic balance, epeirogenic movement, catastrophism, uniformitarianism and diastrophism, for example—that one may wish for a full, true geology text as a breather. Nor do his attempts to alleviate the heaviness of, say, plate theory, with a remark such as "Continental bumper cars, push-'em and dodge-'em among land masses" (p. 58) really help matters. Then comes a passage from Murchie or Stegner and you remember that geology for the layman does not *have* to read this way.

The reader who bears with Jerome will, however, learn a good deal about the structures, climates, flora, fauna and "uses" of mountains. Chapter One gives a quick history of attitudes towards them, drawing heavily on Marjorie Hope Nicolson's classic *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (which could well have been supplemented by C. C. Gillispie's *Genesis and Geology*). Jerome next defines "mountain" and locates the world's major ranges, then guides us up his favorite backyard peak, Mt. Kinsman. I enjoyed this chapter more than any other in the book, though I question its placement in the section on "Mountain'Making." The five, mainly geographical, chapters that follow are slow going but rich in information on subjects such as seismology, hydrology, glaciology and continental drift. Again and again one is struck by how well geological writing lends itself to metaphor: the "pressure to *deform,*" the "*unrelieved* plains," etc. It was good to hear that Canada and Scandinavia are still rebounding from the weight of the ice caps that formerly depressed them (p. 63) and that Jerome is sanguine about their future resilience.

> Hudson's Bay has risen 1175 feet. . .another thousand feet should empty it. All of Canada is in fact rising and should eventually tip Lake Michigan sufficiently to dump its contents into the Mississippi River. (p. 63)

Reminds me of what Mark Twain said about geology yielding such rich returns in speculation for such a trifling investment of fact.

Book Two, "Going There," is a mixed bag: climbers, climate, skiers, snow, avalanches. Skiers? Personally I loved the climbing anecdotes, but winced at the idea of a chapter on "Mountain Playgrounds" from the former editor of *Skiing* magazine, and was gratified to learn that Jerome has developed a healthily ambiguous attitude towards the sport—he calls it a love-hate relationship—which causes him to wonder aloud whether the chapter belongs in here at all. I would say that it justifies its inclusion by evoking some of his best writing, the prose of direct observation; the subject engages him in a way the scientific material does not:

> Watch a skier standing in line to ride the lift up the mountain. He will *play* with his skis and the snow. He'll slide the skis back and forth, set his edges and release them, toy with every little hummock and dip in the lift line's path, spank tips and then tails on the snow, pull his skis together to make little vertical ridges, patterns on the snow. He can't leave it alone. Like a child in a sandbox, using his skis instead of pail and shovel, patting and smoothing the comformable, sensual snow, continuing to milk a kind of mindless, infinitesimally small pleasure out of this miniaturized verson of what he wants to be doing up on the slope. Making his body and his skis *do* things. Patting the snow as idly as one pets a cat. Sensual pleasure. (p. 160)

The high points of the book arise from Jerome's own experiences.

Book Three, "The Mountain Life," discusses the plants, animals, people and spirit of the high places. Jerome's factual assertions are generally, but not always, reliable; most readers will probably pull up short here and there. It is patently untrue, for example, that "All trees arrange their leaves to get maximum exposure to the sun" (p. 204), though it may be so in mountain country: in deserts one commonly finds the opposite (e.g. the paloverde tree, which sheds its leaves "in the dry" to minimize evaporation). Such lapses are rare, however; the book's strength (though not its delight) is its wealth of collected knowledge, and readers who enjoy it will probably do so at this level.

In much soberer terms Jerome does deal with "the connection between the mountain world and matters of the spirit" (p. 251), speculating on why we feel wonder, delight and terror when we are up there. One of his answers is that depth perception is intoxicating; another is that "mountains are always so new" (p. 258), flatlands old and worn out. That surprised me: my sense has usually been the reverse, probably because upthrusts show the earth's age so graphically. They are the "bare bones of the land"—one of Jerome's chapter titles—and to me skeletons look older than fleshed bodies. Primitive (and not so primitive) people have often seen in mountains the aboriginal handiwork of God, if not the Very Hand Itself, either way a natural altar. It is human civilization that is older and better established in the lowlands, newer and more tenuous as you ascend: my guess is that the isolation, the desertedness, contributes heavily to our sense of rejuvenation. Geologically, of course, Jerome is correct, but he is talking here about our subjective, spiritual responses to mountains, and how many of us are guided by geological facts in that realm? "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help": the psalmist was wise enough to analyse no further. Because it's there? Yes, damn it—the phrase has a certain desperate profundity—but also because they've always been there. Not *always*, I hear Jerome protesting: they are dynamic, reminding us of change, renewal. We freaks, you see, cannot even agree on what the lure is. Perhaps the lesson is that we make our own mountains after all.

Reviewed by Richard Bevis

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Without staff, an Editor merely crawls. With the Editor on sabbatical this issue, however, the staff marched steadily on. Thanks to Dannette and Ameta and especially to John Biguenet for being there in front. And special gratitude to Leisa without whose steadiness, ideas, energy, and management none of us would stand.

DG