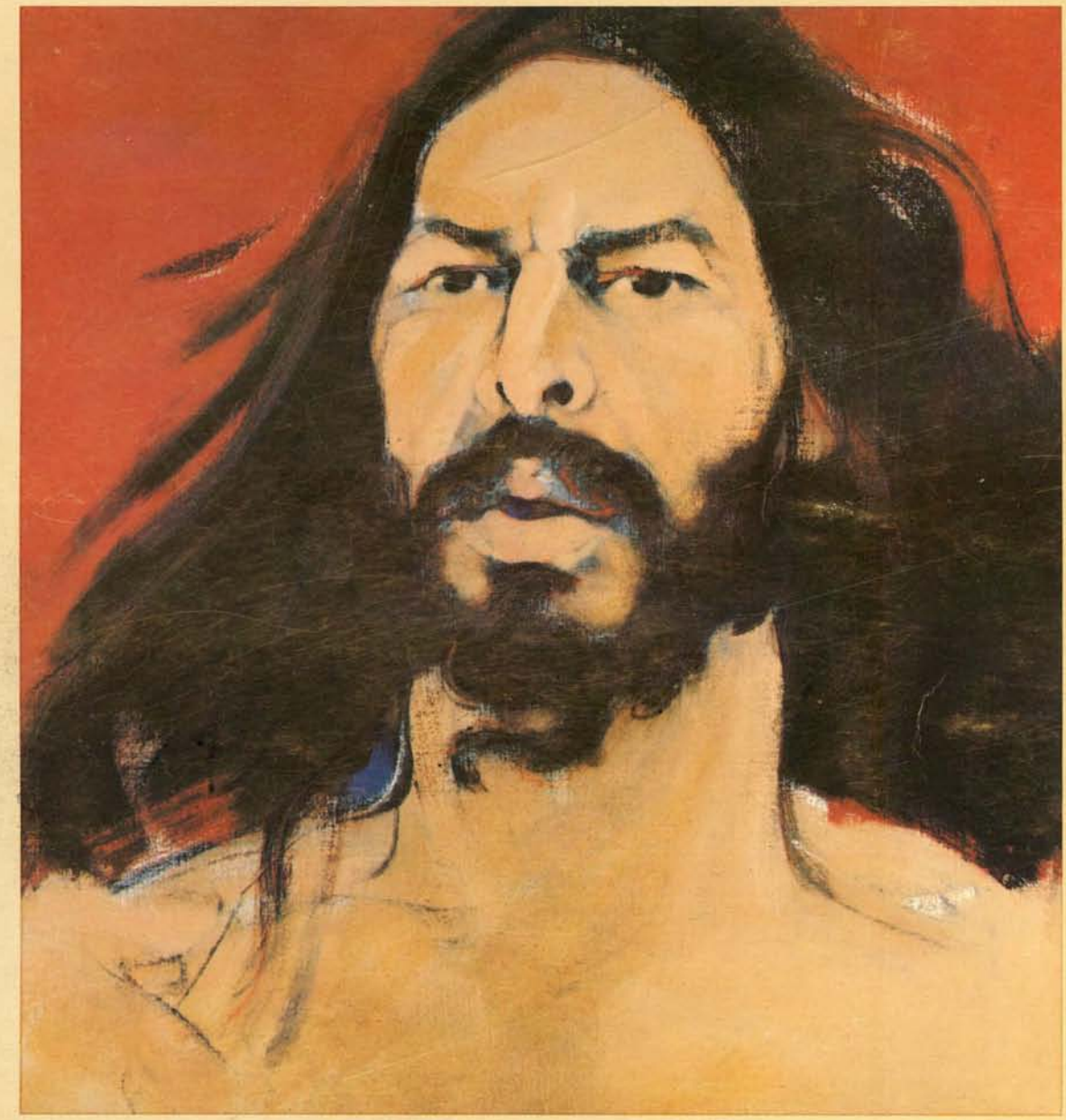
VOLUME 6 NUMBER 1 / $1.50

NEW ORLEANS REVIEW



LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

Inside:

Amiri Baraka
Miller Williams
Alain Robbe-Grillet
Dalt Wonk
George Dureau
Mao Tse-tung
J. Michael Yates
Richard Kostelanetz
Tennessee Williams

A Journal of Literature & Culture

Published by Loyola University of the South, New Orleans

The New Orleans Review is published three times yearly by Loyola University New Orleans (70118).

Subscription rates: $1.50 per copy; $6.00/4 issues; $10.00/8 issues; $14.00/12 issues.

Manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. All care will be taken to prevent loss of manuscripts, but no responsibility can be assumed for unsolicited material.

Loyola University is an equal educational opportunity/ affirmative action employer.

Manufactured in the United States of America.

US ISSN 0028-6400

COVER: from a painting by George Dureau titled "Self Portrait on Red." Oil on canvas, 22 x 20 inches. The painting is in the collection of Donald Marshall.

Volume 6 Number 1

NEW ORLEANS REVIEW

NON-FICTION

John Mosier	The NEW New Brasilian Film	3
Alain Robbe-Grillet	Order and Disorder in Contemporary Fiction	16
Susan Snowden Palmer	An Interview with Tennessee in Georgia	28
Benjamin Lee Wren, S.J.	A God-like Hand	53
Richard Kostelanetz	absurd the american novel	77

FICTION

James Grimsley	House on the Edge	13
Dalt Wonk	Snapshots	33
Miller Williams	The Year Ward West Took away the Raccoon and Mr. Hanson's Garage Burned Down	61
Jay R. White	Comforted and Betrayed	67
Jerred Metz	Two Aggadah	72

PORTFOLIO

George Dureau	Drawings and Works-in-Progress	41

POETRY

Gary Young	My Wife	8
Amiri Baraka	A Poem for Deep Thinkers	9
	Das Kapital	10
	Revolutionary Love	11
Roo Borson	Path	15
J. Michael Yates	from The Elsewhen Homilies	20
Rainer Malkowski	(untitled)	25
	Beautiful Rare Willow	25
Karin Kiwus	Splitting	26
	Trapdoors	27
F. D. Reeve	(untitled)	31
John Stone	The Parable of the Instruments	38
Margherita Faulkner	Suppositions	39
Peter Wild	Forest Ranger	40
Mao Tse-tung	The Pass	50
Li Yü	Memory of a Parting	51
Nalan Hsingte	Sennin by the River	57
Jack Butler	Concerto for Wall-Eyed Weary Women	58
Peter Steele	An Australian Villanelle	66
John Creighton	On Criticizing a Farmer for His Lack of Imagination	68
Jim Parins	John Coons Pursued and Taken	69
James J. McAuley	from Requiem	70
Anne McKay	from when swans were blue	74
Eugenio Montale	Dear Life I Do Not Ask of You	76
	Happiness at Heart	76

Book Reviews 79

6º Festival do Cinema Brasileiro de Gramado

Above: Paulo Urlaya (left) as Belchoir Mendes de Moraes, and Emmanuel Cavalcanti (right) as his faithful servant, in Ajuricaba. *Photos by John Mosier.*

John Mosier

THE NEW NEW BRASILIAN FILM

"We are making the best films in the world, and they know nothing."
Julio Bressane

CINEMA NOVO: THE MYTH AND THE REALITY

For most people, Brasilian film began in the 1960's, when Anselmo Duarte's *O Pagador do Promessas (The Keeper of the Promises)* won a prize at Cannes and Glauber Rocha's *Barravento* won a prize at Karlovy Vary. The year was 1962. In 1964 Rocha's *Deus e Diablo na Terra do Sol (God and the Devil in the Land of the Sun)* astounded European critics at Cannes, Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *Vidas Secas (Barren Lives)* received a prize from the Catholic Office of Motion Pictures at Cannes, and Rui Guerra's *Os Fuzis (The Guns)* won a Golden Bear in Berlin. Immediately European and North American attention began to focus on Glauber Rocha, and on what was called Cinema Novo. When Rocha departed for the United States at the end of the decade, the majority of these same critics promptly dropped the curtain on Cinema Novo and on Brasilian film in general: it had been, they felt, essentially the work of a few people associated with Rocha, none of whom were working, or allowed to work, in Brasilian film any longer.

This is a tidy story, but hardly accurate. For one thing, those men are still at work. Glauber Rocha is currently working on a feature film in Brasil. His latest film, a "documentary" on the funeral of the Brasilian painter Di Cavalcanti, was partially financed by Embrafilme, the Brasilian film umbrella organization. It was shown at the recent festival of Brasilian film in Gramado in a special sidebar along with the best of the other short films done under the Embrafilme aegis. Rui Guerra's work was featured at the festival of Brasilian film in Brasilia in 1977, and he is currently working in his native Mozambique. Walter Lima Jr. is editing a film he recently completed, and Caca Diegues's *Xica da Silva* was a critical and commercial success in 1976 when it nailed down the top awards at the festival in Brasilia. Other, perhaps less well known, members of the group are equally well employed.

But in addition, the vital work of these men is not the reason for arguing that Brasilian film has continued to flourish. The film makers to watch today are not Rocha or Guerra, Lima or Senna, but newer directors: Hector Babenco, Reginaldo Faria, Oswaldo Caldeira, Carlos Prates Correia. Their work is virtually unknown to Europeans and North Americans, as is the work of Sylvio Back and Miguel Borges, two excellent directors who are coming into prominence as spokesmen for Brasilian film makers. For the person nurtured on the inaccurate version of Cinema Novo created abroad, the work of these men may come as a considerable shock. It is in fact a logical outgrowth of the efforts of the original Cinema Novo group.

The term Cinema Novo is a partially misleading shorthand for a slightly longer Portugese expression that means, simply, the New Brasilian Cinema. New with respect to what? Brasilians began seeing and making films over eighty years ago. The New Brasilian Cinema was going to differ from the cinema of the first

sixty-odd years in that it would be primarily a political cinema, a cinema whose subjects would be the social and political problems of Brasil and Brasilians, whose aesthetics and point of view would be distinctively Brasilian, and—importantly—whose audience would be Brasilian, an aim that should not be underestimated.

The international triumphs of Cinema Novo were therefore both ironic and misleading. The films succeeded abroad but not at home. Cinema Novo came to be appreciated not as a political cinema of Brasil, but as political cinema. For Europeans and for North Americans, Cinema Novo emerged not as a penetrating analysis of Brasilian problems—many of which were caused by North Americans and Europeans in the first place—but as sweeping indictments of Brasil itself. The cutting edge of Cinema Novo was labeled as one long revolutionary sword, congenial to the European left, which promptly began to translate it into the terms of its own political systems. No matter that the bulk of the Cinema Novo films were far from being openly revolutionary, didactic, or even overtly political; no matter that Rocha, the most revolutionary of the group, openly rejected the sort of analysis to which his films were subjected. The label stuck. It became film history, then film myth.

It was glued on all the more firmly by a general international impression that what was really interesting about Brasilian film was its exotic nature and "originality." Werner Herzog, now the most well known of the "New German Cinema" directors, summed up the attitude of the Brasilian filmmakers. "Brasilian craziness," he called it, and was so intrigued by it that he made an openly imitative film, *Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes*. Certain Cinema Novo films deserved the label, but Brasilian film could scarcely be defined as an aggregate of aesthetic theories, cinematic techniques, or artistic commitments. The unity and achievement of Cinema Novo that were celebrated, imitated, and then mourned abroad were illusions based on misunderstandings of what was actually going on in Brasil.

To understand the true achievement of Brasilian film we must understand that its aims were not only ideological and aesthetic, but practical as well. By necessity the New Brasilian film aimed as much at attracting a national audience as it did at producing a uniquely Brasilian film.

In Brasil there is only one important question: will Brasil be an autonomous national state, or will Brasilians exist as dependents of major international powers (either political or economic ones)? This, the underlying issue of Cinema Novo, is still operable today, although it was most openly espoused during the 1960's. Cinema Novo's success in dealing with this issue aesthetically was why Europeans and North Americans celebrated it even though they misunderstood it in their own way. Its very real failure was that the Cinema Novo films of the 1960's failed to attract national audiences.

In content, the major films focused not on the personal struggles of individuals, but on the general struggles of society in which the individuals were enmeshed. In every case the individuals involved were struggling for personal freedom, the freedom to live as they wanted to live. What was constantly threatening them was a countervailing force, sometimes open, sometimes shadowy, which has as its major aim the desire to keep the individual dependent, enslaved. The peasant protagonist of *Pagador do Promessas* has only one dominant interest: to fulfill the vow he made to carry a gigantic cross to Salvador Bahia. All of the other people in the film unconsciously or consciously conspire to thwart his desire to maintain his peasant freedom. The peasants of Rocha's *Deus e Diablo* have an even more basic need: the desire to find arable land and farm it.

Filmmakers are in an ideal position to see how the theoretical problem of autonomy, whether it is national, regional, social, or personal, operates in their lives. If one believes that the problem of autonomy versus dependency is real, then one begins to see how it permeates their concerns.

Although film is art, it is always business. Brasil, like the majority of the nations of the Third World, is swamped with the filmic junk of the United States (and to a lesser extent, of Japan and Italy). The filmmaking artist will make very few films if all of the national theatres are booked to show foreign films. This is precisely the case in many countries, and it is absolutely crucial to an understanding of Brasilian film. An American audience would have difficulty conceiving of how drastic the situation was: in 1939 the Brasilian government demanded, and legislated, that all theatres exhibit Brasilian films *at least seven days during the year.* (On this one point the artist and the state had common interests.) By 1952, this number had increased to fifty-two days per year. Since 1964, limitations on foreign exhibition have increased dramatically: in 1971, eighty-four; in 1975, one hundred and twelve; and by 1977, one hundred and thirty-three days of national exhibition each year.

The most dramatic increase occurred during the last fifteen years, the period during which Cinema Novo began to gain its reputation abroad. But unfortunately, the more celebrated of the Cinema Novo films were scarcely the sort to establish the ascendancy of Brasilian film in the national market, even in a government sheltered and subsidized situation. The original Cinema Novo group was—or quickly became—aware of this fact, and by the end of the 1960's had initiated what in retrospect looks like a well-coordinated campaign to conquer internal markets. A new Brasilian form, the notorious *pornochanchada,* emerged in the late 60's. At first glance it seems an aesthetic step backwards; in reality it may be the economic base that makes serious Brasilian film possible.

Chanchadas, or slapstick comedies featuring what one critic has called a "malicious" sense of humor, sprang up in the

1950's. As a general category, the fims were broadly comic. The advent of television annihilated the genre. In the 1960's it was resurrected and given a healthy overlay of sexual innuendo, thus the term *pornochanchada*. In addition to being funny, vulgar, and commercial, the *pornochanchadas* began to serve as the essential vehicle for attracting audiences into the theatres. Increasingly the films became vehicles for first class directors. Caca Diegues's *Xica da Silva,* for instance, is nothing more than a *pornochanchada* given an elaborate historical setting. Although the film is loosely based on the attempts of Xica, a negress living in Minas Gerais in the eighteenth century, to win additional rights for her fellow slaves (and her struggles against the Portugese imperialists), the film emphasizes the sexual aspects of her campaign, and it does so in ways that are so comic they are totally inappropriate to a serious film. *Xica da Silva* is a tremendously funny and entertaining film with an underlying fable of considerable seriousness. But the fable makes use of the same sorts of things that the run of the mill *pornochanchada* does: satires of Portugese immigrants, malicious attacks on machismo, and a willingness to concentrate on the seamier side of Brasilian life. *Xica da Silva* legitimized all of these topics. It was successful (both critically and financially), and it probably will serve as a landmark in the industry: before Diegues made the film, *pornochanchada* was restricted both in the sorts of films involved, their reputation, and their impact. The adaptation of the form into a colorful historical setting, one that was essentially true, began to broaden the possibilities. Predictably, there have been similar films, and there will be more. With some fortunate planning, mutated and modified *pornochanchadas* may well form a vigorous financial base of Brasilian film in its home market; ironically, the form may also be the one real way that the ambitions of the Cinema Novo group are realized. The original films of the movement may very well fade; the New Brasilian Cinema of the 1970's has long since passed them by, and Diegues was probably wise to turn his talents to *pornochanchadas*.

The relationships between the aesthetic and the practical, the government and the filmmakers, and the national and intertional reactions in Brasilian film are complex and not easily separated into neat categories. But these observations are necessary if one is to understand the underlying unity of Brasilian film on its own terms, as well as to understand why Brasilian film is important. It is important because Brasil, alone of all the countries of the Third World, has succeeded in establishing a model of national film development where box office success, international and national prestige, and vertical integration of the industry, are all able to co-exist with one another.

There is one director whose work not only establishes the foundations for Cinema Novo, but goes a long way towards explaining the work of the newer Brasilian directors.

TRANSITIONS AND ORIGINS: NELSON PEREIRA DOS SANTOS

In realtiy there is nothing particularly "crazy" or exotic about Cinema Novo. Its origins lie in Italian Neorealism, and the seminal film of the movement is Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *Rio Quarenta Graus,* made in 1955. His *Vidas Secas* was one of the first Brasilian films of the 1960's to achieve international recognition. In 1974 and again in 1977 his films won substantial prizes at national film festivals in Brasil. Nelson Pereira dos Santos is thus the original figure of Cinema Novo, one of its most famous representatives, and its most enduring member. Even a superficial discussion of his work establishes the basic directions of the contemporary New Brasilian Cinema.

Rio Quarenta Graus is a film about life among the poorer people of Rio, now popularly called *marginalizadas,* during the summer when the temperature often reaches forty degrees centigrade (thus the title of the film). For the wealthy, who live in high rise apartments along the famous beaches, the weather is tolerable. The Atlantic off of Rio has the wildly improbable temperature of twenty-eight degrees centigrade, and is, in fact, cold enough to support a few bedraggled penguins who wander in from points further south. The residential sections from Leme to Leblon are thus naturally air conditioned. Or one may leave Rio and go the Petropolis, or even up to Tijuca, and escape the heat entirely. But the poor have no such option. The temperature is an incitement to madness.

Scarcely anyone has seen *Rio Quarenta Graus* or the succeeding films in which Pereira dos Santos did a film biography of Rio de Janeiro and its inhabitants. These films relied on typically Neorealist camera techniques and the use of urban settings. The films were "neorealistic" also in their emphasis on life among the poorer people of the cities. Whether they are truly original—or successful—is arguable. But less than ten years after *Rio Quarenta Graus, Vidas Secas* was an enormous critical success. Based on the famous novel of the same title by the Brasilian Graciliano Ramos, the film gives equal emphasis to the alien barrenness of the *sertao* and to the poor peasants who try to make a living from it. Like the characters in De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves,* the Brasilian characters emerge from and disappear into their environment, the chief difference being that for the Italian this environment is urban society, the crowd, while for the Brasilian it is the landscape itself. But although *Vidas Secas*—like the majority of the other original Cinema Novo films—is about rural life, neither contemporary Brasilian film nor the more recent films of Nelson Pereira dos Santos are rural. The creation of a distinctively Brasilian film has been one steady movement away from the countryside and into the cities, away from the depressing failures of the

marginalizadas towards a celebration of their successes.

While the other directors moved out in all sorts of different cinematic directions, Pereira dos Santos attempted to develop his own unique style, one distinctively Brasilian. His two most recent films have established a distinctive fusion of magic and murder, socio-economic struggle and folkmyth, that is celebrated internationally in Cinema Novo. But where foreign critics have celebrated these fusions in Rocha and Guerra, they have rejected them in Pereira dos Santos. The reason is that in his films the murder is not simply ritualistic drama; the magic is not ritual theatre. *O Amuleto do Ogum (The Amulet of Ogum)* is a thinly disguised fable about a young boy whose mother resorts to *Candomble* in order to ensure that the son will be invulnerable to knives and bullets. This young man begins to work for the gangsters, and then revolts against them, leading a sort of civil war between the *marginalizadas* and the gangsters who prey on them.

The film can be seen as an allegory, or it can be seen as a celebration of the beliefs of the people in magic, since the hero's struggle is resolved through magic. But the point is that in *O Amuleto* the film's frame of reference is one of belief in the powers of *Candomble*. This is a difficult and entertaining film, one that demands much of non-Brasilian audiences: it demands not merely an understanding of Brasilian culture but an acceptance of it. For those who feel that *Macumba* (the generic term for magic) is a sham, the film is largely a fantasy, and probably a failure. But few Brasilians, regardless of education, class, or age, take *Macumba* lightly. More than any other Brasilian film made *O Amuleto* was a symbol of the determination of Brasilian filmmakers to make their own sort of distinctively national film and damn the consequences. Not surprisingly, it received a poor reception at Cannes, where, quite simply, almost no one had the slightest idea what was going on in the film at all. Those who thought they did were incensed: the film has no political consciousness at all, since it relies on magic as a resolution to the popular struggle for freedom.

From 1973 on, then, the best Brasilian films began to move away from any sort of international consciousness. Oversimplifying tremendously, one might say that in the 1950's the most important Brasilian films were celebrations of Brasilian culture in North American cinematic terms; in the 1960's the best films were celebrations in European cinematic terms; but by the 1970's the films began to function strictly on Brasilian terms. Sometimes foreign and national terms would coincide, as in Leon Hirzman's *Sao Bernardo*. But with *O Amuleto,* Brasilian film began to turn inwards, to address national audiences and cultural norms primarily.

Pereira dos Santos's latest film, *Tenda dos Milagres (Tent of Miracles)* is scarcely a retreat in the face of incomprehension. If anything, his apocryphal Pedro Archanju, the Bahian black who fought for racial justice and the right of *Candomble* at the beginning of this century, is even more indigenous to Brasil than the protagonist of *O Amuleto* was. *Tenda dos Milagres* is a framed tale, a film within a film, one that, as we watch, changes so much that the main role is played by two different actors. It may very well be the best film he has done since *Vidas Secas,* as some Brasilian critics have suggested, and it establishes him firmly as one of the world's major directors. In his sloppiness, intellectual complexity, and whimsy, and in his reliance on folk materials, Nelson Pereira dos Santos is the shaggy beast of Brasilian Cinema. But we need to understand his reliance on neorealism, his ability to craft popular and critical successes, and, most importantly, his distinctive nationalistic art before we can comprehend the contemporary directors as more than simply the latest wave of the New Brasilian Film.

THE CONTEMPORARY DIRECTORS

Tenda dos Milagres was undoubtedly the best Brasilian film premiered during 1977. At the festival of Brasilian film held in Gramado in early 1978, however, an equally impressive slate of films was shown, only one of which had any affinity with the traditional concepts of Cinema Novo held abroad. This was Oswaldo Caldeira's *Ajuricaba,* filmed on location in the Amazon. Ajuricaba is the legendary Indian hero who organized rebellions against the Europeans in the eighteenth century. He was hunted down and captured by a celebrated "killer of Indians," Belchior Mendes de Moraes, only to disappear in mysterious circumstances. Legend has it that he escaped and will constantly be reborn to aid in the struggles of Brasilians (Amazonians) for freedom. In Caldeira's stunningly photographed treatment of the legend, Ajuricaba has already been captured, and the long trek back reveals not his personality (he never says a word the entire film), but the torments of Belchior Mendes. As a study of mythic history and the psychology of obsession, Caldeira's film is as strong a statement as anything by Rocha or Guerra (or as Herzog's *Aguirre*). But it differs from their films in two crucial areas of superiority.

First, Caldeira's film is much softer, almost an elegy on the theme, one that relies intensively on photographs and on music to establish the impact of the work rather than on rhetorical statements by the actors. Second, Caldeira balances off past and present, person and person. There is no doubt about it: Ajuricaba lives and is constantly being recaptured and destroyed. The story concentrates on the eighteenth century, but it ends in the present. But not only does Ajuricaba continue to exist in the present as a mixed breed worker, his original trackers are also there as well. The cycle is endless. One of the reasons that Caldeira can resort to this treatment is that he takes great pains to balance the dynamics of his characters. In addition to the conflict between Belchoir Mendes de Moraes and Ajuricaba, there is the rivalry between Belchior, the last of the Portugese *conquistadores,* and Pedro, also an accomplished "Indian

killer," but also a suave new gentleman of the enlightenment. Both sought the hand of the fair Elisa, who gravitated from one to the other. In a finely ironic touch, however, the governor bestows her hand on a leading merchant while Belchoir and Pedro are slogging through the jungle.

Caldeira's characters are all obsessed with their own personal lunatic visions of the world in the fashion of the most famous Cinema Novo films, but Caldeira balances them nicely one against the other, and he balances the film itself against the expectations of the viewer.

Ajuricaba, although a brilliant film, and one that is the closest to the Cinema Novo traditions as they are popularly imagined, is also the one farthest from the judgements and interests of other Brasilian filmmakers and critics. For both of these groups the best film was Reginaldo Faria's *Barra Pesada*. The title is virtually untranslatable. *Barra* is the word used to denote neighborhoods in parts of Rio, as in *Barra Tijuca*. But *pesada* means heavy, weighed down with. This is a neighborhood where people are weighed down. Faria's film is about a young *marginalizada* who lives in squalor in Rio, takes early to a life of petty crime, and ends up horribly butchered by a joint task force of drug runners and police. The film scarcely bothers to attack the social circumstances of these people; it simply describes their lives, filming them on location, as it were. Quero, the protagonist, is driven to murder and other crimes because he desperately needs a gun so that he can defend himself against the older thugs who brutalize him. They wait until he steals some money, then take it away from him. But above the older thugs are still more powerful ones. This is a film where the big fish are constantly being eaten by still bigger fish. The two biggest fish are the head drug racketeer, played by Milton Moraes, and the police commissioner, played by Ivan Candido. *Barra Pesada* is the sort of film that people in North America were always saying couldn't be made in modern Brasil: it shows police corruption and brutality, never swerves from its portrayal of the most wretched sides of the poorer areas of Rio, and is totally unsympathetic in its portraits of all involved. Quero's only good streak is his surprisingly chivalrous feelings towards women: he saves a young prostitute who is being manhandled by a client, and the two fall in love. They enjoy a briefly idyllic relationship, one that comes to a quick and nasty end.

Barra Pesada is scarcely an anomaly in Brasilian film this year. The most significant film, although one not quite as good as *Barra Pesada,* was *Lucio Flavio.* Lucio Flavio was a petty murderer and bank robber in Brasil during the 1960's. His claim to fame is simple: when he was finally caught, a press conference was held, and in it he revealed—denounced—the presence of the Death Squad, the secret police within the police that was using the same methods as were the worst gangsters. It is somewhat difficult to talk about *Barra Pesada* without mentioning Lucio Flavio, and vice versa, because of the inter-relationships between the personnel: Reginaldo Faria plays Lucio Flavio: Ivan Candido plays the police commissioner in both films. But *Lucio Flavio* was directed by Hector Babenco. Babenco is a young director whose first feature film, *Rei da Noite (King of the Night),* revealed him to be a director to watch in the future. He kept no one waiting.

The real Lucio Flavio was assassinated "in mysterious circumstances" while serving out his term in jail in Rio on January 29, 1975. Further prosecutions and investigative discoveries relative to the death squad were announced in Brasilian newspapers the week before the film premiered. The real Lucio Flavio was not, as Babenco pointed out, a *marginalizada,* but a member of the middle class. He appears to have been, in addition, something of a thoughtful human being. There is extant at least one fragment of a poem attributed to him: "There exist two species of man:/The persecuted and the persecutor./The persecuted wants to go where he wills,/The persecutor does not rest so that he may/go always behind him." Babenco was well aware of this aspect of Lucio Flavio, but he chose to ignore it. Lucio, as directed by Babenco and played by Faria, emerges as a character more along the lines of Louis Malle's Lucien Lacombe: capable, with strong emotional ties, but with no compunctions about killing. From the start of the film we are made aware of the fact that Lucio is, after all, a bank-robber who has no qualms about killing in cold blood. The particular impact of the film, then, lies both in its dispassionate portrayal of the central character and the extent to which the film can be seen as a popular film about police and criminals.

But *Lucio Flavio, o Passageiro da Agonia,* for all of its importance as a compelling and courageous statement about Brasilian society, is a surprisingly fast paced and even dramatic film. Or, in other words, *Lucio Flavio* is a perfect fusion of the original aims of Cinema Novo: politics and popularity, searching social criticism and audience acceptability. The initial and subsequent reactions of audiences to the film are proof in plenty. Babenco's film not only locked the audiences into a breathless sort of silence from the very beginning, but it had them identifying with the action so strongly that there were collective gasps at the appropriate points in the film.

Exactly where Brasilian film will go from here is an intriguing question. It is tempting to speak of a "new" Cinema Novo, one that will really achieve the aims of the original filmmakers. But the truth is probably both simpler and more intangible: Brasilian film from the 1960's on has grown in such diverse ways that one can no more speak of a unified movement within it than one can speak of such as existing in France or the United States. Nearly a quarter of a century ago Bela Balázs argued that we had, in film, an unparalleled opportunity to study the development of an entire new art form. It is wonderfully ironic that we are now coming to realize not only that he was right, but that the art form is expanding faster than it can be studied. Nowhere is this more true than in Brasil.

Gary Young

MY WIFE

My wife saves
the pieces of every
bowl she has
dropped. Sharp
points of Blue
Calico and Stratford
clutter her drawers.
She has a set
of china in
a thousand pieces.
I believe she
thinks that some-
how, if she loves
them enough, all
their ragged edges
will straighten
themselves out,
and the slivers
of plates and cups
will find their
other halves. Sometimes
I think of the meals
she might serve
on her set of
broken china: fruit
that shrinks back
to blossom, meat
that gets up
and runs away.
Standing in the kitchen,
surrounded by cups,
saucers, cutlery and
recipes, I realize how many
pieces of things my
wife saves, and uses,
and holds together.

Amiri Baraka

A POEM FOR DEEP THINKERS

Skymen coming down out the clouds land
and then walking into society try to find out
whats happening—"Whats happening", they be saying
look at it, where they been, dabbling in mist, appearing &
disappearing, now there's a real world breathing-inhaling exhaling
concrete & sand, and they want to know what's happening. What's happening
is life itself "onward & upward", the spirals of fireconflict clash
of opposing forces, the dialogue of yes and no, showed itself in stabbed children
in the hallways of schools, old men strangling bankguards, a hard puertorican inmate's tears
exchanging goodbyes in the prison doorway, armies sweeping wave after wave to contest
the ancient rule of the minority. What draws them down, their blood entangled with humans,
their memories, perhaps, of the earth, and what they thought it could be. But blinded by
sun, and their own images of things, rather than things as they actually are, they wobble,
they stumble, sometimes, and people they be cheering alot, cause they think the skymen
dancing, "Yeh . . . Yeh . . . get on it . . . .", people grinning and feeling good cause the skymen
dancing, and the skymen stumbling, till they get the sun out they eyes, and integrate the
inhead movie show, with the material reality that exists with and without them. There are
tragedies tho, a buncha skies bought the loopdieloop program from the elegant babble of
the ancient minorities. Which is where they loopdieloop in the sky right on just loopdieloop
in fantastic meaningless curlicues which delight the thin gallery owners who wave at them
on their way to getting stabbed in the front seats of their silver alfa romeo's by lumpen
they have gotten passionate with. And the loopdieloopers go on, sometimes spelling out
complex primitive slogans and shooting symbolic smoke out their gills in honor of something
dead. And then they'll make daring dives right down toward the earth and skag cocaine money
whiteout and crunch iced into the statue graveyard where Ralph Ellison sits biting his banjo
strings retightening his instrument for the millionth time before playing the star spangled
banjo. Or else loopdieloop loopdieloop up higher and higher and thinner and thinner and finer
refiner, sugarladdies in the last days of the locust, sucking they greek lolliepops.
Such intellectuals as we is baby, we need to deal in the real world, and be be in the real
world. We need to use, to use, all the all the skills all the spills and thrills that we
conjure, that we construct, that we lay out and put together, to create life as beautiful
as we thought it could be, as we dreamed it could be, as we desired it to be, as we knew it
could be, before we took off, before we split for the sky side, not to settle for endless
meaningless circles of celebration of this madness, this madness, not to settle for this
madness this madness madness, these yoyos yoyos of the ancient minorities. Its all for real,
everthings for real, be for real, song of the skytribe walking the earth, faint smiles to
open roars of joy, meet you on the battlefield they say, they be humming, hop, then stride,
faint smile to roars of open joy, hey my man, what's happening, meet you on the battlefield
they say, meet you on the battlefield they say, what i guess needs to be discussed here tonight
is what side yall gon be on

DAS KAPITAL

Strangling women in the suburban bush
they bodies laid around rotting while martinis are drunk
the commuters looking for their new yorkers feel a draft
& can get even drunker watching the teevee later on the Ford
replay. There will be streams of them coming, getting off
near where the girls got killed. Two of them strangled by
the maniac.
There are maniacs hidden everywhere cant you see? By the dozens
and double dozens, maniacs by the carload (tho they *are*
a minority). But they terrorize us uniformly, all over the place
we look at the walls of our houses, the garbage cans parked full
strewn around our defaulting cities, and we cd get scared. A rat
eases past us on his way to a banquet, can you hear the cheers raised
through the walls, full of rat humor. Blasts of fire, some woman's son will stumble
and die with a pool of blood around his head. But it wont be the maniac. These old houses
crumble, the unemployed stumble by us straining, ashy fingered, harassed. The air is cold
winter heaps above us consolidating itself in degrees. We need a aspirin or something, and
pull our jackets close. The baldhead man on the television set goes on in a wooden way
his unappetizing ignorance can not be stood, or understood. The people turn the channel
looking for Good Times and get a negro with a pulldown hat. Flashes of maniac shadows before
bed, before you pull down the shade you can see the leaves being blown down the street
too dark now to see the writing on them, the dates, and amounts we owe. The streets too
will soon be empty, after the church goers go on home having been saved again from the
Maniac . . . except a closeup of the chief mystic's face rolling down to his hands will send
shivers through you, looking for traces of the maniacs life. Even there among the mythophrenics.

What can you do? It's time finally to go to bed. The shadows close around and the room is still.
Most of us know there's a maniac loose. Our lives a jumble of frustrations and unfilled
capacities. The dead girls, the rats noise, the flashing somber lights, the dead voice on
television, was that blood and hair beneath the preacher's fingernails? A few other clues

we mull them over as we go to sleep, the skeletons of dollarbills, traces of dead used up
labor, lead away from the death scene until we remember a quiet fit that everywhere
is the death scene. Tomorrow you got to hit it sighs through us like the wind, we got to
hit it, like an old song at radio city, working for the yanqui dollarrrr, when we were
children, and then we used to think it was not the wind, but the maniac scratching against
our windows. Who is the maniac, and why everywhere at the same time . . .

REVOLUTIONARY LOVE

Black Revolutionary Woman
In love w/ Revolution
Your man better be a revolution
for you to love him
Black Revolutionary woman
the care of the world
is yours, in your hands is
entrusted all the new beauty
created here on earth
Black revolutionary woman
were you my companion I'd
call you Amina, Afrikan faith
and inspiration, were
you my comrade in struggle, I'd still
call you lady, great lady
Bibi, Black Revolutionary Woman
were you my woman, and even in the pit
of raging struggle, we need what we love,
we need what we desire to create, were you
my woman, I'd call you companion, comrade,
sister, black lady, Afrikan faith, I'd call you
house, Black Revolutionary woman
I'd call you wife.

George Bacso

James Grimsley

HOUSE ON THE EDGE

In the dream, alone in a room, I lie under blankets that seem heavy and protective, though they are only wool. The bed is narrow, and sags in the middle. I lie with my torso half-turned, uncomfortable, wanting to move—but I have stopped still. I listen.

I can feel the whole house around me, rising a hundred floors above and descending a hundred below, so that I share in equal parts the house's emptiness and weight. I hope I am alone here. Maybe he has not come tonight, maybe the halls are only full of crying wind, maybe that is what I hear. If I could go to the door I know what I would see. A wide corridor runs down one way and turns, and runs down the other way and turns, so that the door to my room is in the middle, the only door here. The corridor sags with heavy darkness. Night lights line the walls, but the bulbs burned out long ago; never replaced, since rats have chewed so many wires in pieces we have no more electricity. Maybe it's rats I hear running in the halls now, their feet making noise on the floor, whispering noise that only seems like a voice.

No. Now the voice comes again, undeniable. "Daniel," the voice calls sharp and clear, "Daniel, let me in." The voice has teeth that rake my spine. I grow rigid, cannot even breathe, cannot hear his breathing; but he is there, all the same.

I can't lie in this position any more, I have to move. But if I do the mattress will creak. I go slowly, ease against the wall, cool to my skin; but when I try to move my legs the mattress springs shriek, and I close my eyes. He whispers "Daniel, Daniel." He rattles the doorknob. I hold still, and breathe, quietly. He leans close to the door, and runs his hands along it. His palms make sucking noises against the wood. I watch the door, certain I have locked it. Here one always locks one's door at night.

There are parts of the dream that are only hinted. I am something other than human here. Though I never leave my room, I can actually see outside it, as if I contain two sorts of vision—the first specific, applying only to the room; the other general, like the movie camera that sweeps over city skyscrapers to isolate one bare window. I can feel the air dropping away from my window, even though the windows here don't open: it is as if I hang in the air and see, beyond, gray shapes that can only be mountains, a smooth gray sky, gray clouds and mists. But this building is too enormous to see all at once, a wall of rock, absorbing all sunlight. Bleak snow covers the roof. In the dream, it is always night. During the day though, what do I do? Do I ever leave the room? Do I walk the empty halls, do I go into other rooms, turn over dusty magazines, finger the fringes of some lamp not touched in maybe a hundred years? No. No, these are wrong. During the day I run. The house is vast, is on the edge of something. I long to get out, I search, I try for exits but find only corridors, endless stairways, rows of bare windows that won't open. I long for the fresh air from outside.

In the dream, I can never stay in the same room for long. He always finds me. Sometimes I rest whole nights, never having to wake; but always waiting, always on the edge, knowing he roams the halls, listening, smelling under the doors, knowing one night soon he'll be at my door again, calling my name. Tonight he has found me again, tonight he calls over and over "Daniel;" rattling the doors, "Daniel;" running his nails along the wood, "Daniel, Daniel;" pressing his lips against the crack in the door, so his words are distorted. I close my eyes, pretend not to hear. Once I try to call out, but no sound will come; none can pass the deep weight in my chest that is part of his magic.

From WINTER BIRDS, a novel

I only make low animal noises, soft moanings and other aching rushes of air.

He starts to pick the lock. He doesn't tell me what he is doing, but I can hear. A thin metal wire goes in, clicking against the tumblers. Click, click, click, he pushes, shoves, fingers the lock with the wire. Now his breath comes ragged. The first time he ever tried to pick a lock in a room where I slept, I was dreaming the dream: the halls teemed with invisible men and women, none of whom could see one another, all fleeing from the same man. I woke to the sound of scratching, and thought the door was swinging open. I tried to scream, arching upward with the urge to make sound. But still no sound would come.

Even if I make noise, nothing will change. No one is here. The house is all waste. Some disaster has happened, some war perhaps, and all the lower floors are ruin. I know that below a certain point none of the doors open any more. The house is a desert of rooms, and even I, who know it best, don't know how wide it is. Though I heard once, when people still lived here, that the halls all run in a wide circle, that there really is only a single hall, running upward in a spiral so vast that one can feel neither the curve nor the grade. Maybe I believe that tonight. Sometimes I feel the emptiness emanating like a poisonous gas from the rooms. Or sometimes I can feel the wind get in through a hole somewhere, and look for it, but never find it. Somewhere above is a gash in the outer wall a hundred yards wide. I saw it years ago. If I could get back there now I would jump out of it, but I might wander here for years and never find it. The house shifts its shape at night, the house is shaped like wind. I still would rather live than die, at least during the day. At least then he leaves me alone.

Though maybe some day he won't. Maybe when I open my room to go out he'll still be there one morning. Maybe that will put an end to all this running. But I can't hope for that. If dying is what I want, I ought to kill myself—cut open my arm on some broken vase and watch the life spill away—not wait for him to do it. He'll be gone this morning, same as any other. Unless he gets in tonight. Then it won't matter any more. A long time ago some people here told me about him, back when the building first began to empty. Faces would stop me in the hall and voices would say gravely that Something walks at night in the emptying upper floors, Something not human. First a woman was found with her neck open. Then it got worse. Two or three died every night, and people began buying elaborate locks for their doors. Those are the rooms I look for now, the rooms where frightened people lived, where whole lines of locks bar each exit, as many as a dozen to a door. Up at the top there are lots of rooms like those, and if I had stayed on the highest floors, I don't think he would ever have reached me. Even the walker can't pick a dozen locks all at once.

I don't know who he is, I've never seen his face. Sometimes I think he looks like my father, though that is only my imagination. Once I saw his feet, one night when,brave, I peeped under the door to see if he was real. He smelled how close I was, and rattled the door like thunder. I thought it would break in. His feet were bare, white as snow, and the toenails were ragged, gray. I don't know where he comes from, or what he does during the day. I don't know where he learned my name. Tonight I only know one thing, really. I've made a mistake, coming to this room. It's too far down, only one lock bars the door, and I hear the wire whispering to it. After a long time the first tumbler falls, a soft, rolling noise. I lie flat, the blankets now so heavy I can't breathe. "Daniel," he says low, "Hello Daniel; Hello Daniel."

The second tumbler falls faster. He chuckles. I can hear him sniffing. He pushes the door against its frame and laughs again. "Are you scared, Danny? Would I hurt the pretty Dan? Would I cut his pretty throat? Would I?"

I shake my head, my throat still closed. This is a dream. The third tumbler falls and I become frantic, my heart almost bursts out of my ribs; I lie flat on the bed, heavy, unmoving, the blankets in a ring around my neck, I swim under heavy water; and when the fourth tumbler goes I do scream, my throat begrudging me those aching hoarse screams that sleeping people scream; the door begins to open and I see him at last.

Here I wake. Sometimes my roommate has heard me, and comes to the door. "Are you all right?" he asks.

"I don't know," I say out of sleep; and then, more conscious of myself, "Yes, I'm all right."

He nods. For him it is enough that I answer. Watching him, sharing nothing, I wonder why I cannot move. My roommate closes the door.

But there are times yet worse, times like tonight, when the dream door swinging open is my own, when the empty house I wake into is this one. I can see him at the door, his blue eyes glowing—this is not a dream any more, but I can still see him, can even hear his breath, heavy and forced. For a long time he looks at me. But at the end he only smiles, derisive. Something is not finished between us. He turns away, as if to say you are no good to me dead. I hold still against the pillow, listening to the house. If I hear a noise, I'm afraid of the noise; if I hear nothing, I'm afraid of the nothing. I tell myself it is only night fear, it will pass with morning. I tell myself I am all right. Sometimes I lie still a long time after waking, before I even dare to turn on a light. Then I find paper, and write a letter to a friend, write Bible verses, write this dream even, until the sun rises and I can search the house safely, to make certain no one is there.

Roo Borson

PATH

Between sealed mouths of flowers:
a path. The path makes nothing two.

Too long the moon with nothing else to do.

Moonlight. One.
And crowd by crowd disposed of.
Clothed in yourself,
walking.
A pale flag.

The rags of hands.
This place they swallow sunlight whole.

ORDER AND DISORDER IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION

Alain Robbe-Grillet

These two terms or themes, order and disorder, are at the very heart of my work and also of the misunderstanding that has existed between myself and academic criticism and to a degree between myself and my readers.

When I am making a film or working on a novel, I have the feeling that what I'm creating is an ordered system—that is, I am inventing an order, a design, an architecture. I work slowly, precisely, and patiently, never with the feeling that I'm leaving anything to chance. And once my object— film or novel— is finished, I feel that its structures will be convincing enough that the order I have invented will be evident to the reader.

When *Jealousy,* my third novel, came out I had been working on it for three years and I told myself once I'd finished that this time everyone would recognize the soundness of my approach. I even imagined that now that I'd burst forth into the light I might be in line for some sort of recognition—the Prix Femina or even the Nobel. It was quite a disappointment (I was still young at the time) to see that just the opposite was happening: the critics, faced with this beautifully ordered system, reacted immediately and violently against it, as if they had been confronted with absolute disorder. Their consensus was more or less that the book was impossible to approach. One of them even thought that he'd gotten a defective copy whose pages had been hopelessly shuffled and put together that way.

The other "New Novelists" and indeed many modern writers have this experience every day. You think of yourself as a creator of order and people see nothing but disorder in your work.

This contradiction between what one writes and the reception it gets is not surprising, however. Definitions of order are many and contradictory. For academic critics, "order" means the *established* order. They refuse to recognize an order system unless it already exists and is set down in the manuals.

In general, the type of novel that served as the model in France around the time the "New Novel" appeared was based on the principle of *causality.* In the traditional French novel, a series of scenes which are the consequences of one another are placed in chronological order according to what is known as "causal concatenation." For example, a scene 'A' is followed by a scene 'B' which is the consequence of 'A.' Then a scene 'C' which is the result of 'A plus B' and so on, each scene contributing to the ultimate conclusion of the book, which is in turn the result or consequence of all the preceding scenes.

Now if you take *Jealousy,* it's evident that the order system established there is different. My work does not involve arranging scenes in a causal order, but according to a new one that I'll try to characterize briefly. (Remember that what I'm saying here about my work is the result of my critical reflection after the fact. I can look at my own work critically just as I can that of my contemporaries or ancestors, but I do so from a

"People read a 'New Novel' and say, 'Yes, this is very nice but why do you go to all this trouble to be weird and bizarre, rather than writing in the natural way like Françoise Sagan?'"

critical point of view which I did not necessarily hold while writing.) In *Jealousy,* then, scene 'A' is followed not by a scene 'B,' 'B' being a consequence of 'A,' but by a scene 'A¹' which is a *variant* of 'A.' That is, the "different" scenes are really always the same scene whose parameters have changed and in which certain signs have been altered or have moved about so that the whole of the novel is what a linguist, using "metaphor" in a broad sense, has called a series of metaphors arranged in metonymic order. Thus we no longer have an order of causes and effects, but rather a sort of paradigmatic series of elements which in a "normal" novel could be substituted one for another but could not be arranged in a narrative order. Thus it's not surprising that this order is not one that critics recognize.

What amazes me about critical reaction to the so-called disorder of modern literature is that not only will it not admit the possibility of another order, but that it has no other notion of order, as if order were a matter of rules to be followed or of a code one must respect. My feeling, on the other hand, is that the job of the artist has always been to depart from the order prevalent in the society in which he writes—that is, to intervene in a climate of prescribed order and, instead of reinforcing that order by conforming to it, to break with it.

An example frequently given is one that Umberto Eco provides in a very interesting essay called "The Open Work." [1] He uses the image of the tonal system in Western music of which Johann Sebastian Bach is known as the founder. This system, as you know, is a strict hierarchical arrangement of the relationships among eight notes. Thus in a given key, certain harmonies are possible while certain others are not. In a piece written in the key of C major, all chords will belong to that key. What is remarkable about this system, compared with the modal system which preceded it, is that it began to *evolve* whereas the modal system had remained unchanged for two thousand years. It is this hierarchical arrangement of notes on scales, absent in the modal system, that seems to have made evolution possible. The modal system did not invite departure from an established order; the tonal system, because of the hierarchical relationships between the notes—tonic, dominant, subdominant, and so on—did.

Thus, around the time of Beethoven appeared a new element—dissonance—the sudden appearance of a chord not belonging to the fundamental key. Dissonance produces pleasure by creating a feeling of suspense and expectation in the listener and then satisfying that feeling when the music returns to the original key.

Dissonance became the rule rather than the exception after Beethoven, so that when Wagner appeared, he found a different climate, one in which dissonance was part of the accepted order. Bach's original order had been expanded by a series of departures that little by little became generalized and constituted a new order. Wagner, then, had to produce new departures of his own, and he did so by creating works in which each chord from beginning to end can belong to a different key, so that the listener never returns to the tranquility and security of the fundamental key. The experience of pleasure is different in *Tristan und Isolde* than in Beethoven's Third Symphony. The listener, comfortably seated in his armchair, hears a dissonance in the very first notes of a work, and as if there were no possibility of resolution, is carried from dissonance to dissonance until the end of the opera when he is still denied resolution.

A logical consequence was the appearance of Schoenberg, who, in order to destroy the possibility of any chord's being related to any key, introduced the so-called twelve-tone system in which the hierarchy of notes effectively disappeared. The very basis of organization in music had produced its own destruction through clandestine modification.

This evolution of tonal music is to be seen in the evolutions of painting, of literature, and so on, though it is less evident elsewhere because the rules in music are clearer.

[1] "Opera Aperta," 1972

Even though literary systems are much more complex, I find this same evolution there. That is to say that when a writer appears on the literary landscape of his time, his function is not to respect the existing order of society but to run up against it, to introduce dissonant elements, to depart from the code.

Even in the mid-nineteenth century with Flaubert, one finds in *Madame Bovary* elements that represent departures from the Balzacian system that served as the standard of the time. Flaubert's friends were quick to point these out to him. On the second page of the original *Madame Bovary,* the famous description of Charles Bovary's cap appeared to them disjointed and, above all, far too long as if it were a rough sketch. As we know, this description of the cap Charles is wearing on the day he arrives at school at the age of seven serves to introduce and characterize the man who will be the husband of Emma in the novel. Flaubert was a creative genius who had an unfortunate tendency to listen to his friends even when he shouldn't have listened. His friends became academic critics, that is, ideological watchdogs of the system, and they convinced him to shorten what was originally a twenty-page description of a boy's cap to the one or two pages of today's version. This is a shame, but Flaubert felt compelled to do it. He wrote in his journal or in a letter, I'm not sure which, "Well, they tell me my description of the cap is too long, that it has no bearing on my subject, no place in the chain of causality, so I'm going to . . ." and so forth.

It's interesting to consider how the nineteenth-century artists could be so little conscious of their revolutionary role. Flaubert, a great revolutionary writer, never stopped trying to justify himself within the system, rather than affirming that he was there to struggle against it. When the critic Sainte-Beuve called him to task for inaccurately describing in *Salammbo* some historical figure of the period of the Carthaginian Wars, Flaubert answered with documentation, referring him to specific sources.

For us, reading *Madame Bovary,* the notion of historical accuracy is irrelevant. For us it is eclipsed by something else, namely Flaubert's creative genius, which is after all nothing but a series of departures from the established system of his day.

Every writer is in that position; he is confronted with an established way of doing things and everyone is beating him over the head with it, saying "This is how it's done." His friends, the critics, all of society are there to teach him order. A society voices its ideology; it speaks through a whole series of mechanisms for reproducing its values: "mass media"—newspapers, television, advertising—and universities. All these organisms exist to make us hear society's voice so that we too will reproduce its values. An aritst struggles to do just the opposite.

At this point academic criticism comes up with arguments based on the idea of a "natural" order. Music critics said for a long time that the tonal system of Bach's time was "natural," meaning that the hierarchical relationship of the notes was inherent in the internal structure of the human ear and that if the C major chord is evocative to us, it's because the chord is already inscribed within us.

The bad faith of this argument is obvious since if it were true, then that chord would exist in all music all over the world, but it does not. It was only natural in a given musical system in a given society at a given moment in history. The Chord is part of an ideology, one that, like every ideology, tries to pass itself off as natural.

Every society attempts to present the order on which it is founded as natural. You hear, "It's natural that . . . ." Children are told what is natural, but all that is being taught in the name of this nature is the code on which society is based. The child must respect it for fear that he endanger society.

So in the case of fiction, we assume that to tell is natural. But why do we so assume? Because all societies have produced narratives—mythology, religion, epic, novels—but even if to tell is natural, no one way of doing it can be; for if it were, that one way would be universal. If there is a Nature, there is only one, and thus only one narrative form would be natural.

Now in Western Europe and in France, in particular, one form of narrative was instituted as natural, but by a specific political, social, and moral society. It's not by chance that the Balzacian novel took over just as the bourgeoisie was coming to power. That narrative order was a product of the social order. It was simply naturalized. It took on the mask of Nature.

People read a "New Novel" and say, "Yes, this is very nice but why do you go to all this trouble to be weird and bizarre, rather than simply writing in the natural way like Françoise Sagan. . . ." But it's a lie; it is not more natural to write that way. Society has made the naturalness of that kind of fiction. It is every bit as artificial as any other.

The order systems I have set up in my work are equally artificial. I don't lay claim to any more reality than anyone else. The difference is that my work has stopped pretending to be real.

In my early critical essays, such as *Toward a New Novel,* I still thought that progress in literature happened when each generation came to a better understanding of Man and his function. Every literary system has claimed to be reforming an old and outdated system and proposed to invent other conceptual methods and other formal structures to take into account the changes the world has undergone. This is what I thought as recently as ten or twelve years ago.

But what the New Novel is really about, as I have come to see it (not so much in my earlier novels but especially in the more recent ones—*Project for a Revolution in New York,* for example) is that there is no more truth inherent in my way of writing than in any other and that my task is to proclaim this very artificiality of fiction. What I mean is that what is

"What is important in modern fiction is that it challenges the very notion of truth."

important in mo dern fiction is not the degree of truth to which it pretends, but the fact that it challenges the very notion of truth, that is, the very notion of order.

And if this is at all evident now, it is because I have not been the only one to evolve in this way. The other "New Novelists" have followed an analogous path. Into the sixties, literature still thought that it represented the world, that the world was out there and that literature could reproduce it somewhat the way science used to think that the reason for equations, for example, was to reproduce the movement of matter. Nowadays men of science tend to think that an equation cannot be true or false, but only functional or non-functional, applicable or not applicable to a specific human project. Man on the moon is a human undertaking that an earlier system of figuring concluded to be impossible but that a new one can clear the way for. (Needless to say no system ever represents itself as such.)

Abandoning the ideology of representation of the world in fiction is an important step because it is here that the problem of the reader becomes serious. Who is the reader? He is someone who has been conditioned by an ideology and who seeks the "shock of recognition" in what he reads. And he is often someone who looks for truth.

When I go to a university to talk about my work and am before people who have read or seen it, I notice a certain hunger to know the facts, to learn the key to the mystery. People who have seen *Last Year at Marienbad* take the opportunity to ask the author whether or not the man and woman in the film really had met the year before in Marienbad. This is a question I'm not in a position to answer.

Someone who sees the film is faced with an objett whose function is contained entirely within itself—and if it presents puzzles, the author cannot be expected to solve them from without. Outside the work of art, there is nothing. The work of art is a world of its own having its own structure and its own truth; there is no truth *about* this work of art that can exist outside it.

And what is often even more complicated about the order systems contemporary fiction introduces is that they are systems in motion. I have been talking about the ways in which one breaks with the established order, seeing it as a fixed horizon against which any departure is clearly defined. But this horizon is often undiscernable. Departures from it are so many that the reader or viewer is continually being placed not in a fixed landscape we then leave and reenter, but in a landscape of change. Change becomes the very point of the work.

Today we have reached a point in evolution where a work of art is constantly creating order systems that succeed one another without ever imposing truth. That is, there is not one order system we leave behind at the beginning and can still define at the end of a work. Rather there are in the course of a given work of art order systems that establish themselves only to be followed by systems of departure from those order systems, then in turn by new systems of order, and so on in a kind of continual supplanting of the notion of truth. What we have is a work continually at liberty and unconfined by any "truth," even such truth as the work may establish within its own boundaries. Such a work of art not only ceases claiming to be more true or more natural than earlier works, it also makes of its artificiality and the flexibility of its artifice the basis of its movement.

The act of reading has become more difficult. Modern fiction demands from the reader a participation that is akin to creation. The spectator or reader is no longer someone to whom we present a ready made order. He is rather someone who, with each reading of a novel and each viewing of a film, must organize orders and at the same time perceive breaks with the very orders he himself is introducing. This movement which creates order within the apparent disorder of a work of fiction *is* the act of reading.

When I teach literature, I begin the study of a text by reading it aloud. I take a text of my own or one like *Passacaglia* by Robert Pinget (whom I admire greatly) and begin by reading a page aloud so that the text itself is the basis of its apprenticeship—the text, with its own music, its own density, without references or footnotes as it were. Then with the students I begin to study the order systems to be found in the text. What takes place as we proceed is an enriching of the text; a new structure is always appearing, only to give way to another. At the end of the session I reread the text aloud; and what happens, after this creative structuring of reading, is that we are left with something still opaque, something that seems to have escaped or survived our inquiries. And though the pleasure of the second reading has been heightened by the discipline, by our discovery of structural systems, the text remains open, as if it could contain endless structural systems. This is the stage Umberto Eco refers to: openness has become the very purpose of the text.

Translated by Joseph LaCour

J. Michael Yates

from THE ELSEWHEN HOMILIES

OF SEQUENTIAL THINGS

The wait here on the platform is very pleasant in the dusk. The platform places me slightly above things. Quite pleasant. Sometimes even an almost imperceptible elevation above the usual becomes sufficiency. All of my days to come approach me down the track, each joined to the other with couplings of dark. I go by them expecting the chain to stop for me but it does not. Farther on, farther on, perhaps. When I shield my eyes and squint, I feel I can almost see the last of them, but the bright violet sunset wishes to conceal something from me. Possibly, just at the moment when the sun uncouples from the world, I shall see. There's no locomotive ; my days keep moving by no power known to me. Dust-merled dogs race beside them, foaming, mouths opening and closing, too breathless to bay : an elder phase outraged at one younger. The days have shamefully tacky sides—in need of paint : I should prefer brilliant self-cleaning titanium white. The wheels shriek for oil ; the tracks, instead of coruscating toward some memorable destiny at the horizon, are striated with rust and catch almost no sun whatsoever. But I don't believe the days require wheels, really, nor tracks for that matter. My feet don't serve me as well as once they did and the platform offers nothing on which to be seated. As more and more of them pass, they grow even less attractive—like mobile cages on which years of circus-notices have been posted atop one another, then allowed to weather away. Now and then one day elongates in passage. This has an accordion effect upon the others. On the other hand, occasionally fifteen or twenty—I estimate—stream by so swiftly that I cannot count them. And some . . . some are strangely battered as if great warfare has been waged inside them. A few are so damaged that one, two, or all their walls are missing. They cause a

great irreducible woe to well up in me. These cannot be the days of a gentleman. I find myself embarrassed, but there seems to be nothing to do. Improvement of the parts of passage is not in my hands. Slowly, understanding of the poet's line comes to me : "There are good days and bad days. And no cure. Ever." There is no comfort in the knowledge. I should think that once in a while a day of beauty would approach, if only for contrast. It's very embarrassing. I must note that not all the days roll along fast to the tracks. Against all the postulates of gravity, one will rise higher than its fellows. While this, for no clear reason, does not levitate the day directly ahead, often the one just behind is above the track (and upside down) as well. And there comes usually, twisting and turning through the air, one after that which is half-destroyed, walls and frame warped almost beyond imagining. I haven't the leave to enter my train of days. Mine is to remain outside here observing. As a gentleman, I can't say the situation altogether displeases me, given the uncomely and entirely tasteless appearance of these precincts in motion. Truth be known, I'm smiling ; in an instant or so the sun will be in proper conjunction with the platform and I shall know the end for a certainty. A privileged opportunity. Ah . . . the line has come to a halt. It could be that the point I've been seeking has arrived. Possibly it will reverse . . . no . . . again forward . . . and faster. It occurs to me that days acquire more velocity by night. And I seem to have missed my opportunity to see. But then there's always tomorrow, eh ?, always tomorrow. Time to time in the darkness I experience the sensation that the platform is lurching into motion. That would engage my interest, I'm certain of it, but, by my triangulations, the platform occupies the same locus each day.

CONVERSING WITH VOLCANOES

To speak to a volcano is to become hot luminous blood of earth, a wound, a fountain hemorrhaging over land, water, and men in motion. Beware always of oxygen and of cooling. Your tongues will harden in your mouth. After a time, not even a plume of steam will be visible above you. Snow will fill your mysteries and you will be mistaken for a mountain or worse. When the painter reaches the ninety-ninth of his one hundred views of you, you are in great danger. The vulcanologists are gathering at your flanks. Inhale deep beneath you and explode. Emerge elsewhere as an island, a fumarole, or a geyser by which time cannot be told.

ON BREATHING AT GREAT DEPTHS

Know this : all parts of the body breathe. When you place your finger in the candle flame, listen closely ; all the mouths in your fingerprints will scream like drowning men before the fire cauterizes them to silence. If you withdraw the finger before it is too late, the voices will regenerate. If not, fireweed will grow in their places. When descending to great depths, take care your mask is screwed on securely. Equalize the pressure upon every molecule of your exterior against all that is not you. Bear in mind that the crystal of your watch is not crystal and inhale and exhale with regularity and caution. Should the pressure change and panic flash through your bones, your mind will inhale your body like a vixen eating her pups at a startling noise. Beginning at the extremities, your body will die too slowly.

That you will die in any case will not console you as you go about like a woman with a dead foetus inside. Your thoughts will call but your finger-tips will never answer. Matters will continue according to their process, and, after a time, you will not notice you have become only thought calling unto thought.

ON THE PROBLEM OF NARCISSUS

Keep your temperatures constant. Should the coefficients of expansion and contraction vary widely between the emulsion and base of your film, reticulation will result. A very undesirable end for portrait work especially. The effect will be much like the image of a face in a shattered mirror, or in an aging mirror whose reflective backing has begun to peel away.—Sono Nis, Photographer

Disregard those lies. They were confected by demented men who hallucinate demented gods. Look about you. If there were gods, what could they be but lunatic ? Go boldly to the dim mirror inside you. Nothing ? Therein the great beauty. Spend your time, your only unrenewable resource, gazing—may the river god drown, the nymph be raped as usual, and Tiresias die of breast cancer. While you live you will never reach the nothing, nor see the light and live to say what you saw. Narcissus was so beautiful that he had nothing to do with himself ; a single perfection can level an entire range of high mountains. Rumour has it that an employment came to him at last : to mourn the death of a twin sister. He sat by the spring of nothing and attempted to recall her features by gazing at his own. Narcissus did not die because he fell so

in love with his own visage that he overbalanced, fell in, and was drowned. Quite simply, he grew older and less pleasant to look upon, living there by the spring. Very shortly, he could no longer bear to associate his dead twin with his own shrivelling face. He moved to a desert where neither water nor obsidian mirrors were to be found. It is possible he died of thirst. The man called Narcissus could not have possibly died in the spring. Even as he sat at the rim, he was changing. Time flooded through him like a swift subterranean river. Had he fallen, the Narcissus who fell would not have been the same Narcissus by the time his fingertips touched the water. Bear in mind that the spring, too, was changing : its waters flowing ever on and the constantly rearranging patterns of flotsam on its surface. Nor were spring and man changing at the same rate. As for the curse of a short life if ever he looked on his own features, close your ears to the gods who strum sweetly and whisper of long life—gag them all, what they offer is not a promise but a threat.

THE NATURE OF ART I

Nothing means. Most explicitly. Art means nothing but never quite reaches that summit. A dim light stutters in the distance, a wound in the always inabsolute dark. An oncoming train ? The signalman at the river ? Campfire of rail-riders ? House on fire far, far away ? The first glimmer of doom. Perhaps the last mirror in the regressus ad infinitum which ceases at the front and back doors of time. Understand : There is no voice in the wilderness, only wilderness, and, possibly, your whispers to the moss beneath the ferns. Your breath which momentarily fogs the permanent window-pane.

Rainer Malkowski

I grind my watch into the sand.
I shall not try to remember the tree
under which I shed my clothes.
And when I swim out
I hear nothing but the wind.
Unremittingly
it roots through the branches in search of its name.

BEAUTIFUL RARE WILLOW

Sometimes, after an October storm,
when the air is still and swept clean,
I walk about in the garden and count
the severed branches.
Only the willow is the same.
I admire it for a long while:
not always does it look that beautiful
when flexibility survives.

translated by Almut McAuley

Karin Kiwus

SPLITTING

One breezy morning in June
I rode through the countryside at a gallop
on a horse that had
a short-shorn mane
of open razors

The horse balked at the brook
I fell forward
and was cut in two

Two of me arrived
at the opposite bank

Thanks to the friendly weather
the gashed surfaces
dried quickly

Two red skins
veined in distinct patterns
began to form
and so I became
autonomous
left and right

As everyone has two sides
I suddenly had
two times two
With one side
smooth and beautiful
leaning against a marble wall in the South
I kept my scar concealed
With the other side
pursuing my various intrigues
in the capitals of the world
I could not always avoid
showing my ugly side
which received constantly new
and deeper wounds

In autumn we have
a rendezvous by that brook

Perhaps
we'll go into the water
tie a wreath of flowers around the head
and bind ourselves
tightly together again

TRAPDOORS

We are never
for these surprises
prepared when we
one serene afternoon
arrive for a visit in the castle
in a festive mood and joyfully
greet our illustrious hosts
and then
suddenly
in a flight of thought through the halls
past the barriers of light
we open one door after the other and
find ourselves looking
from the salon on the sun-side
straight into the dungeon
at dimly existing
half-faded bodies
which touched by our
hot terror
move open
their eyes and horribly still
and beautiful
return our glances.

translated by Almut McAuley

AN INTERVIEW WITH TENNESSEE IN GEORGIA

by Susan Snowden Palmer

Tennessee Williams was in Atlanta for the rehearsal of his play "Tiger Tail," which premiered at the Alliance Theatre in January. Clad in a well-tailored charcoal suit, white shirt and tie, he was calm and self-effacing as he talked: about writing, about film and theatre, a little about Donald Windham, a little about Vivien Leigh—and the Atlanta critics talked about him.

"Tiger Tail" is a rewrite of Williams's 1956 screenplay "Baby Doll," which was based on two early short plays, "27 Wagons Full of Cotton" and "The Long Stay Cut Short, or the Unsatisfactory Supper." According to Williams, the play contains a great deal of original writing; however, he has not changed the time period.

"Tiger Tail" is not Williams's first rewrite of a previous work; he has revised many pieces throughout his career. But this practice has often met with criticism and, of late, accusations that he is no longer capable of original writing.

How does he feel about this?

"I don't think you can be concerned with that criticism. If you're dissatisfied with a piece of work and it still interests you, why *not* rewrite it and try to improve it?

"'The Eccentricities of a Nightingale' was a rewrite of 'Summer and Smoke.' I wrote 'Eccentricities' for London—they were going to do 'Summer and Smoke' and I never liked it. Except Miss Alma. She was one of my favorite characters. And there were some scenes that were lyrical. But I thought there was too much melodrama in it—the shooting of the old doctor and all that sort of thing. The rather peripheral element of Rosa Gonzalez. So I decided to eliminate that and do it much more purely.

"'Summer and Smoke' was too diagrammatic—with the human anatomy chart on one side of the stage and the rectory on the other. 'Eccentricities' escapes that.

"I was very pleased with the television version of 'Summer and Smoke,' though, with Blythe Danner and Frank Langella; it was beautiful."

Have his rewrites always satisfied him?

"Yes. At least they've been closer to what I wanted."

But later he revealed that in one case this didn't apply.

"I rewrote 'Out Cry' from 1967, when it was first produced in England, to '76. Later, I took out the original version and it was much better than any of the others. Should've left it alone," he laughed.

Williams laughs often and it is sometimes a surprise, for it comes at the most serious times.

Is there any play he's completely happy with other than "Streetcar?"

"Didn't say I was completely happy with any of them."

Williams has not been content with the adaptation of his plays to film either.

"In the film version of 'The Glass Menagerie' there is a happy ending; Laura has a second gentleman caller. It makes the play rather pointless. But I was lucky to get off with that. One man involved with the film was suggesting that Laura have an orthopedic operation."

Williams has said that if he were starting out today as a dramatist he would be very attracted to film because of the screen's fluidity. But in the 50's, when there was no way to avoid censorship, he considered writing for films an "odious" task. Only two works were not affected by it.

"The only films I've been truly pleased with were 'The Roman

Photos by Deb Jackson

Spring of Mrs. Stone'—that wasn't changed at all by censorship— and 'A Streetcar Named Desire.' 'Streetcar' was almost unchanged by censorship. They did indicate at the end that Stella was going to abandon her relationship with Stanley. But of course she wasn't; that was the ironical point to the ending."

Censorship in films has diminished, but Williams is still more interested in writing plays.

"I'm more accustomed to writing plays," he says.

He is not, however, staying abreast of theater trends in this country today.

"I haven't seen 'For Colored Girls,' " he confesses. "Don't know anything about it. I went to see 'Bubbling Brown Sugar' and left at the intermission."

Does he attend theater in New York frequently?

"I don't go to New York any more than I have to. I stay in Key West most of the time. I think it's more important to write really than to see plays.

"I did go for the opening of 'Vieux Carre.' But I was working on 'Tiger Tail' at the time and really didn't pay as much attention to 'Vieux Carre' as I should have. I've re-written a great deal of it ["Vieux Carré"], though, and it's going to be done in England."

Are London audiences receptive to his work?

"Yes, much more so than in New York. There's more regard for plays as I know plays in London than there is now in New York."

In *Memoirs* Williams said of American audiences ". . . there is much about them that strikes me as obdurately resistant to my kind of theater these days. They seem to be conditioned to a kind of theater which is quite different from the kind I wish to practice." But he may get another chance to gain the approval of New York theater goers if "Tiger Tail" goes there from Atlanta. He believes that it will.

"It will be very strange if it doesn't, because there are only three serious plays in New York now. Two of them are closing soon— 'The Gin Game' and 'The Shadow Box.' Then there's the Neil Simon play, 'Chapter Two.' That of course will run. But aside from that, there's nothing, except musicals. . . ."

Is he still shy about public appearances after all these years?

"In school I couldn't even recite; I had to be judged on written work only. This is just a facade; all I can offer is a facade. I talk, yes; but I'm not good at inventing lies. I tell the truth."

Is that why he has not made appearances on TV talk shows?

"I've never seen anything more *disgusting* than Norman Mailer and Gore Vidal *fighting* on a talk show. It's so *revolting*. If that's what writing is about, *forget* it. Granted, all writers are vulnerable, and their egos are inflated. And it's painful when they're injured. But they shouldn't engage in on-camera fights like cats in a back alley."

Has he ever engaged in a fight with another writer?

"I threatened to sue Capote, yes." he chuckles, "when he wrote the most scurrilous thing in *Answered Prayers*. He wrote a chapter called 'Unspoiled Monsters,' and *I* was one of the unspoiled monsters."

Williams was also angry with old friend, Donald Windham, for publishing personal letters *(Tennessee Williams' Letters to Donald Windham,* 1977). But the fire has died from his fury; as he speaks of being deceived by his friend, there is not a trace of resentment. The two shared an apartment in New York years

ago and in 1946 collaborated on a play called "You Touched Me!"

"Windham is a fine writer; but he's never received proper recognition, and he took it out on me. That's all.

"He obtained the copyrights to the letters without my knowing it.

"I was very startled to be invited to a dinner at his apartment— this was in 1976—after not seeing the man since '63. What happened that night, I do not know. I do know that I consumed a lot of wine at the dinner.

"Windham surprised me by saying that he's kept the letters all these years. But I said, 'My God, how beautiful.' I didn't want to appear distrustful. He said, 'We need you to sign this little release for a private publication to be printed in Rome, Italy.' He said that only 250 or 530 copies would be distributed discreetly among a few select book sellers. So I signed it without knowing what it was.

"Some time later, they (Windham's agents) approached me at a restaurant where I was having lunch with my sister; how they knew I was there I do not know. They rushed in and said, 'We've drawn these papers up just a little bit differently, but basically they're the same as those you signed before.'

"I couldn't divert my attention from my sister,who is a mental invalid, so I quickly signed the papers to get rid of them. They promised me I'd see proofs of the letters, but I never got them. I never got to read them before they were published."

In general though, Williams has been friends with most fellow practitioners of his craft, especially those from the South. And as he speaks of the Old South and these friends now gone, he seems melancholy.

"The Southern school is more or less faded out. Flannery O'Connor is dead; Carson McCullers is dead; Faulkner's dead; and well—such as I am—here I am. Most of the interest is in Northern writers now; the Southern writers are being put sort of to the side. The people who are being most praised are people like Saul Bellow, John Updike, Philip Roth—they're all Northerners. Now we have a Northern school. The novel of sensibility is not valued very much now."

Williams claims he "keeps in touch with the New South and finds there are just as many 'Blanches' around as there used to be."

Has there been a definitive "Blanche?"

"Who can say? I had a terrible fight with Uta Hagen on that subject, though I didn't mean to have a fight with her. We were at a party together, and she said, 'Who was better as Blanche—me or Jessica Tandy?' And I said, 'Well, dear, your acting was fabulous; you're one of the fieriest, most wonderful actresses I know. But let's face it, Jessica Tandy is more physically delicate.' She was furious; she's quite a large woman. Later I wrote her a long letter of apology, expressing myself more delicately," says Williams, chuckling at the memory.

Is there a definitive "Maggie" in his mind?

"Yes. It is unquestionably Elizabeth Ashley. I'm really sure about that."

And Vivien Leigh was always one of his favorites.

"I felt rather close to her. She had a life-long combat with lunacy, you know. I think her best performance was in 'The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone.' "

When did he first begin writing?

"As a child. I was stricken at age eight with diphtheria and was bedridden for a year. During that time I spent many hours reading and inventing solitary games. This made me an introvert, and I think introverts are more inclined to be writers."

Did his parents encourage him to write?

"My mother bought me a typewriter. But my father didn't take any stock in it until I began making money out of it," he recalled, grinning.

What does the family think of his success?

"Well, I think they are pleased. But once my mother came to a play of mine that I particularly liked called 'In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel' (1969), and it shocked her. The next morning she called me into her room and said, 'Son, you *must* find another occupation.' And I said, 'Can you suggest anything?' But she couldn't," he added with a smile.

"Strangely enough, that play is one of my favorites; yet it convinced *Life* magazine that I was finished as a writer. They announced that I was finished and paid to have the announcement published in *The New York Times*. But I persist in thinking it's a very good play."

Has he become indifferent to what the critics have to say about his work now?

"No, I wouldn't say that; they determine the life or death of the play—of a particular production of a play."

If that is so, Atlanta critics issued a verdict of "life" for "Tiger Tail" when it premiered in January.

". . . a superbly crafted, expertly performed stage work that should have a longer life span than its run at Alliance," said *Atlanta Journal* critic Barbara Thomas. "Williams' characters toss about emotions like a basketball—humor, violence, pity and steaming sexuality . . . sexual sparks fly; the first act didn't just end, it crinkled up and burned at the edges."

Atlanta Constitution critic Helen Smith was more reserved in her appraisal, however.

"It is too early to assess where on the scale Williams' 'Tiger Tail' will settle when weighed with his other work.

". . . is it a great play, like 'A Streetcar Named Desire' or 'The Glass Menagerie?' Probably not, but I am not sure."

Regardless of the reaction that "Tiger Tail" gets elsewhere, Williams will not abandon his profession. In his *Memoirs* he leaves no doubt about that.

"I have made a covenant with myself to continue to write, since I have no choice, it is so deeply rooted as a way of existence and a form of flight."

F. D. Reeve

Flies swarm on the living
as well as the dead,
licking the sweat from the temple,
the hot beads
of rain that lip from the eye.
I hear your breathing,
desolate stone, as dry
as Mount Lugnaquillia
whose heavy night wind
batters the bracken.
Cuchulain, maker of hills,
is gone; and Deidre.
Your body of love, removed
to another time:
The flies from the wet dung rise
in a remorseless hiss
through the failing light to embrace us
as we climb.

Raymond Bialopiotrowicz

Dalt Wonk

SNAPSHOTS

The Paper Galleon

When the car pulled up, Mrs. Waggoner came off the porch with an almost military jauntiness. And in fact, her life, since she left the hospital last week, had fragmented and become strange as war-time.

She wore a broad-brimmed straw hat over her taut gray hair. She had a spotted yellow lily pinned to her blouse. She wore slacks and brand new blue sneakers.

"You look great, mom, " said Elaine, with a bit too much enthusiasm.

Mrs. Waggoner frowned, then regained herself.

"Thank you, dear," she said. She leaned into the car window. "Well, Jason," she said, "can you stand a whole afternoon with your old grandmother?"

The boy in the front seat was looking past her intently.

"What are those bikes?" he said.

There were two bicycles on the driveway beside the neat rambling Victorian house. One was a stubby scrambler, all chrome and glitter, with high U-shaped handlebars and a towering backrest of cushioned nauga-hide. His dream bike. The other was a white girl's ten-speed.

"Which one do you want?" said his grandmother.

"It's not my birthday," said Jason. He said it resentfully and looked down at the floor and didn't stir.

"Jason!" said his mother. She reached over and tugged on his sleeve.

"Thank you, granma," he mumbled.

"Do you remember what we talked about?" his mother hissed.

Mrs. Waggoner crossed to his side of the car and opened the door.

"I'll tell you what I would like to do," she said. "I would like to take a bicycle ride up to the park and have a picnic.Would you like to come with me?"

"Yes," he said and got out of the car. Still looking down and nodding his head as though listening to an inner dialogue, he walked through the woven light and shade to where the bikes leaned and gleamed.

"If he gets smart, you put him in a cab and send him right home," said Elaine—then her face wrinkled with solicitude. "Are you sure it's wise for you to . . . ."

"God has granted me a reprieve," said Mrs. Waggoner, "I intend to make the most of it. I'll phone you later."

Reprieve, Mrs. Waggoner well knew, was not accurate. God had only granted her a stay. The tumor in her brain was inoperable and terminal. But since she had decided to stop treatment, a deceptive glow of health bloomed in her wan cheeks, and the pain and nausea and dizziness had fallen away. Through the hurricane of her demise, she had wandered into a calm eye. And she was determined to go out into the world for one last look before the final onslaught.

She walked up to the boy, who stood lightly kicking the back tire of the scrambler with his toe.

"That's your will to me, isn't it?" he said.

"Now whoever has been troubling you with talk of wills," said Mrs. Waggoner.

"It is," said the boy, bitterly.

"It is nothing of the kind," said Mrs. Waggoner. "It is your birthday present. I give birthday presents whenever I darn well feel like. And if it's too big for you to handle, I'll arrange for the man to take it back."

She kicked up the stand of the ten-speed, jumped nimbly on and pedaled down into the street. In a moment, he coasted past her, through the tunneling oaks toward the beckoning green of the park.

The park was five blocks away. In the first block, they pumped slowly side by side. In the second, they made long lazy "S's." In the third, Jason did tricks. His favorites were: skidding to a stop sideways and jumping the curb. In the fourth, his grandmother amazed him by gliding by, with both hands raised like a circus performer accepting applause.

Mrs. Waggoner smiled, but she felt the exertion. Beneath her enjoyment—the delight of being with him again after this past year of illness when she saw him so rarely— there was a deep need to get through to him in some way. She knew he had been left back in school, was said to be a discipline problem. At home, his mischief had become at times almost cruel.

It was a Tuesday and the park was empty. They visited the sea lions. They watched a muscular black man do fancy dives in the swimming pool. They talked with dirty-faced twin boys who were flying a large bright kite in the shape of a dragon. They pedaled over to the concession and got a picnic of hot dogs and cokes and corn chips. Then they walked the bikes—looking for a good spot. They settled on a ruinous old pier on the pond behind the bandshell.

They sat with the cardboard box of food between them—dangling their feet over the still brown water. Two Negro women sunned on the bank across the way, with fishing poles laid at their sides and red floats motionless in the water. One wore a white dress and sat on a newspaper. The other wore bright green bermuda shorts and a coolie hat. She sat on a metal keg. Both were inordinately fat.

Jason and his grandmother Waggoner ate and watched the women, immobile above their reflected selves.

"Aren't you gonna ask me about school, gran," said Jason suddenly.

"What about it?" said his grandmother. She licked a trickle of relish off her thumb. The boy gave a long, world-weary sigh and threw a corn chip into the water.

"I did some bad things," he said.

"Like what?" said his grandmother.

"Didn't my mother tell you?" He shot a suspicious glance up at her, then turned back to the pond and dropped another chip.

She was seized by a desire to hold him to her. To comfort him. But she waited. He swung a foot rhythmically over the pier edge, so it rubbed against hers.

"We've got the same sneakers on, " he said—then: "Gran, is it a sin to lie?"

"You know about the little boy who called wolf," said his grandmother.

"Oh that one, " said Jason in disgust, "I hate that one." He folded his arms across his chest and lowered his face in a pout—but leaned subtly over so his body just touched hers. She put her arm over his shoulder.

"I hate that one too," she said.

"Then why did you say it?" He was leaning openly against her now, the side of his head against her breast.

"Because I don't want you to lie to me, I guess," she answered.

He seemed to ponder this a long while in silence.

"Gran," he said, at last, "do you like Charles?"

Charles was his new father. The third in a series. Mrs. Waggoner had only met Charles a few times. She didn't like him particularly. She hadn't liked the others.

"Do you know how to make a paper galleon?" asked his grandmother, releasing him suddenly and getting to her feet.

He had never heard of one. He followed her off the pier to the mossy shoreline, where she carefully folded the flattened hot dog wrapper into a geometric little trough. A triangular fold rose in the center above the sides. That, she explained, was the sail. She clipped a bobby pin to the keel for ballast.

"Who should we put on board?" she asked.

"Just you and me, Gran," said the boy.

"What if I'm too old to go," asked his grandmother. She stepped out to a flat, red stone and bent down to launch the galleon. It listed perilously, but stayed afloat.

"You mean if you have to go back into the hospital again," he said.

"What then?" asked his grandmother.

He didn't answer. Once again he crossed his arms over his chest and pouted. Then with one adroit kick, scuttled the paper galleon under a sheet of water. The Negro woman in the bermudas let out a yelp of laughter.

"I'm afraid I'll get lonesome, Granma," he said.

She knelt down to his level—one knee squishing into a soft depression of black mud—and put her hands on his shoulders. Tears streamed in muddy tracks down his cheeks.

"Jason," she said in a firm, positive tone, "You must try and . . . ." As though someone had thrown a switch inside her, she stopped. The boy felt himself swept almost brutally against her breast. Her necklace rattled on his shoulder and her perfume and warmth smothered him. He couldn't breathe.

"So will I," she mumbled, "so will I."

As suddenly as she had grabbed him, she let him go.

"Let's try the rides," she said, and took him with a playful tug by the hand.

A Nice-Lookin' Girl

Birdie's Foodstuff stayed open until ten in the summertime. There were more people on the street and Miss Birdie wasn't so scared of getting robbed.

The mood of the place after supper could get festive—if Miss Birdie was in a good mood and giving credit, or there was someone around, an old neighbor visiting or a working man with money to spend. Then they'd all be drinking beer, or even passing a brownbag-wrapped bottle. But if not, it could be as dreary and stagnant as the afternoons.

On this night, Miss Birdie was not only not giving credit, but had retired behind the doorway curtain into her apartment, taking the desk fan with her.

They could hear her TV and knew she was flopped in her armchair where she could watch the show, the door, and the cash register all at once.

The only other sounds were night sounds: passing cars and the dying blare of car radios, footsteps, or a sudden outburst from the bar on the next corner. For minutes at a time, someone would have the bar door propped open and the jukebox would carry down the street—an oppressive reminder that other people elsewhere were drinking.

Muriel began to hum to herself. It was a broken wandering tune like one might hum to lull a crying baby.

Muriel sat rocking slowly back and forth on an up-ended Coke crate. She was an old Negro woman who had scraped by on this earth in poverty an indeterminate number of years. On her bare feet, she wore tattered red five-and-ten cent store mules. Her dress was short-sleeved and threadbare. In one spot over her stomach, a large safety pin did the work of two missing buttons. She had four visible teeth in her mouth. These were large, slanting and yellowed. Her hair was greased back like a skull cap.

When she wasn't talking, she would slip off into a sad languorous thoughtfulness. And she would begin to hum.

Beside Muriel, in the clear space by the counter and front door, sat Ida and Mush.

They were also Negro—of similar age and background. Mush was a squat strong-looking man with some sort of back ailment that kept him from working. He always wore the same gray cap on his head—tight as a pill bottle lid. Ida was skin and bones, like a stick figure, and as animated and loud as Muriel was inward and pensive. She also wore mules and had her hair greased back—which seemed to be the style on that particular street corner.

They had been sitting there several hours since suppertime. Not much was said. A few conversations began and unravelled. Mush found an old beer he had secreted last week in the ice cream freezer and nursed it slowly as it grew tepid.

It seemed Ida had just mentioned tonight was the one-month anniversary of her mother's death and she still had not heard from her sister, Baby Caroline, when that very person showed in the doorway light and peeked into the store.

"Speak of the devil, he cross your path," muttered Ida, and folded her arms over her thin chest and stared stone face across the room at the meat cooler.

Baby Caroline clamored into the store. She was large, fat, had a thin purplish knife scar across one cheek. She wore an orange Afro wig, and mid-thigh length wet-look skirt. She carried a large black shoulder bag.

"How y'all doin'," she said, and flashed a quick gold smile, full of impudence at her gaunt-faced sister.

Mush nodded and his mouth moved, but nothing came out.

"Hi, darlin'," said Muriel.

"What you all drinkin'?" asked Caroline, and when nobody answered: "Come on, now, we all gonna have a drink with Baby Caroline."

"I get it," said Mush and disappeared down the canned goods aisle toward the cold room.

A tense grudging silence hung in the room. Mush could be heard shifting beer in the cold room. Miss Birdie's TV went off and she scraped around in her apartment. Muriel folded her hands in her lap and started humming.

"Well now, one thing don't change, it's Miss Birdie's," said Caroline. "Mmm-mmm," she added in desultory emphasis, glancing around the store. Then, in a new tone, that sounded like a different person speaking, urgent and ashamed:

"I been tryin' to reach you, Ida."

Muriel looked up. But Ida stared at the streaked glass cooler and the unhealthy gray slabs of meat.

"Don't think to get over on me, girl," she said. "I been nowhere you couldn't find me."

"Mama said anything about me? She axe for me before she die?" The urgent voice spoke again.

"Mama said nothing. She just die, like that. Not makin' no sense and not axing no questions. She just look around and see who's there by her when she dying. And then she die," said Ida.

The silence hung tense again. Then Caroline laughed.

"You people slidin'," she said; the brass was back in her voice. "Used to could count on a bottle of G.I.N. around here any day of the week."

"Used to could," murmured Muriel, "that's right."

Mush cursed suddenly, then slammed the cold room door and came up the aisle to the counter. He pulled the beers off the plastic binder and handed them around. Ida's he put on the floor beside her feet.

Down the street a car squealed around the corner, and someone must have held the bar door open, for a falsetto voice wailed in the night over a splintering descent of guitars. The door shut.

"They be waitin' on you down at that bar room, " said Ida.

"I don't go there no more," said Caroline, "It be half a year I don't go there, you know that."

"Well, they be waitin' on you where you *do* go," Ida said and got up and walked past her sister and out the door. In a minute, she was gone, even her shuffling steps indistinguishable in the night street.

Caroline stood leaning with one hand on the counter, as though she had just been struck a heavy dull blow. Twice she laughed. Short hollow barks of laughter followed by silence. Then she remembered her beer. She opened it and drank.

"She axe for you, darlin'," said Muriel, softly, looking down at her folded hands. "Sure she did. I was there. She say, where's my baby Caroline. She say that. She sure did. And we tole her you be comin' as fast as you could. And she say, I know it. I know my baby's comin'. That's what she say, darlin', when we tole her."

Caroline rubbed her eyes hard with the back of her fat jeweled hand and snorted gruffly up her nose—as though defying human grief to lay claim to her deliberate bestiality.

Then she threw her shoulder bag onto the counter and dug in it. She pulled out a compact and checked her make-up in the lid mirror. Then she took some folded bills from a change purse and flattened them under the half-empty beer can.

"Y'all be good," she called over her shoulder, stepping from the lighted doorway into the street. In a moment, the clatter of her boots was equally swallowed by the isolating night.

Mush drank glumly, then went up to the counter. He lifted the beer can and surveyed the money and replaced the can. He made a breathy sound, quizzical and distraught.

"She some changed," he muttered.

Muriel rocked on her Coke crate and hummed the same broken tune.

"She was such a nice-lookin' girl," Muriel marveled softly, "mouth full of gold . . . nice-lookin'."

The Rain Moving

When Cousin Queenie woke up, she couldn't remember where she was. She always slept naked and often announced that fact in social settings. She also often slept alone. That she didn't announce—except toward the end of an evening, when she got drunk and a little loose. She had been known to embarrass more than one young man at the bleary tail-end of a party.

Sometimes when she slept with a man, it was worse. Then she vacillated between roles: crudely sexual, sophisticate, tender. It could become a strain. She was more relaxed alone, curling down by herself with a nightcap of scotch and a Gothic novel. She was forty-six years old.

Cousin Queenie remembered where she was: in the old house, for the last time. It was moving day.

She swung out of the dark carved four-poster and walked to the closet.

Outside, it rained, and the splatter and light filled the high-ceilinged room with a rain-mood of calm loneliness. She found herself staring in the closet mirror.

Her short, fat body hung in tired bundles of flesh and hair over her spindly legs. She had seen pictures of tribal women who looked as she did. They were wives and mothers. Often they'd have a babe suckling at their breasts. Perhaps it was for the tribal women, shaped as she was, that she collected primitive art and wore primitive jewelry. The superiority of primitive cultures was a point she could become vehement on.

Her round face, devoid of all but the most rudimentary smudges of leftover make-up, searched her with a forlornness that she found vaguely repellant.

She turned to avoid "the claw." The claw was her shrunken left arm—a deformity of birth. It hovered on that side of her body with the timorous devotion of a small half-wild beast of the jungle, tamed for a pet.

She reached for her kimono, then glanced at the night table clock and saw it was late. She started dressing instead. The movers should have been there already. The rain must have held them up.

She walked out to the living room. It was strange enough being back in the old house—she had spent most of the two years since her father died, traveling or in New York—but being back for the very last time, in the pale rain-light, with the blinds and drapes rolled in the corner and the paintings stacked and the books and objects in cardboard boxes, stripped of their familiarity like a demolished landmark, bewildered her.

While the coffee brewed, she poured herself a scotch. The doorbell rang. Through the etched glass oval, she recognized Brian.

Brian was a tall, strong Negro of about sixty with a bald head and gray side-whiskers. He wore bi-focal glasses with thick tortoise shell frames.

Brian had moved children out of the old house and back in through three generations of marriage and divorce. He knew the family's ups and downs and each piece of furniture and where it was and where it belonged. He spoke of the furniture as though the family had it from him on permanent loan.

He stood on the porch in a yellow slicker, holding a closed, dripping, plastic umbrella. Water sloshed from the broken drain-pipe and large beads dropped and shattered at intervals off the roof.

"Some weather," he said, "can't move in this downpour."

"Maybe it will let up," said Queenie.

"I want to have a look at that spinet," he said. "I don't believe I ever moved that. I believe that's been in the old house since way back before I started with y'all."

He shook the umbrella and leaned it against the porch rail. They walked down the corridor into the parlor.

They discussed the spinet at length, or rather Brian outlined the problems and solutions to the safe moving of it. He also assessed its age and value and pointed out that the stool was of a different period and clashed.

They fell silent. Over the cypress mantle, a portrait of Queenie's deceased father in his judge's robes brooded on the dispersion of his bequeathed heirlooms.

Brian seemed to feel it was his responsibility to take the dead man's part.

"Kind of sad to see it all up in the warehouse," Brian said, "but maybe someday when you come back down . . . ."

"I don't intend to come back down," said Queenie, "I'm going to arrange to have it all sold."

"Well, but suppose someday you decide to . . ." get married was what he would have said, but he trailed off unsure.

"I am a grown-up woman. I have a full life," said Queenie. She felt her tone go shrill and defeated as when she tried, even to his dying day, to stand up to her father. "I don't want to be encumbered by all this generations-old, sanctified, glorified family junk," she said. "I don't want the memories. I don't want to be freighted with the memories."

Brian pursed his lips thoughtfully and looked away. The room was hushed, isolated by the falling rain. With a quiet, clipped bitterness, Queenie defied the old Negro moving man.

"It's not pleasant for me," she said, "I've got a full, valid life in New York. I know you find all these family reminiscences terribly pleasant. But it's not pleasant for me."

She took an aluminum cigarette holder—the kind with a built-in tar filter—out of her pocket and put it in her stunted hand. Then she took a short, thin "pure tobacco" cigar and put it in the filter. Brian lit the cigar for her. She smoked rapaciously.

Brian glanced at her furtively. He was thinking of the rumor that she had appeared bare-breasted on a theater stage up there in New York somewhere.

As a child, he was thinking, she would never admit she liked anything you gave her. She'd say something hurtful. Only later, by chance, you might find out she'd saved it, saved them all, in some secret place for years.

"Well, everybody got to do what makes them happy," he said.

"Not everybody is meant to be happy," she answered.

An awkwardness came between them. Because of his pity, perhaps, or her rebuff.

"Well, I guess . . .," he said, rising. They went silently to the front door.

"If the weather breaks, we'll do it today. If not, tomorrow," he said, nodding. He opened the umbrella over the stairs and stepped out into the rain.

Cousin Queenie watched him splash out to his car and drive off. She sat on the porch swing. The chain creaked under her weight. The rain washed in desolate torrents.

Once when she was a little girl, she remembered, her father had taken her to the levee by the park. A cloud rumbled and flashed on the far bank across the river. It was dark and low and tied to the land by loose tangled unravelings of itself.

"That's rain," her father said, "it's coming this way."

She said, "No, the rain comes down."

He laughed and called her "smart" and said, "It's the rain moving. We'll wait and see," he said.

The cloud dragged itself toward them, crossing the river, churning it, and pelted them with rain.

She remembered crying. Because she felt he had taken something away from her. Because she wanted the rain the old way, when it just fell suddenly of itself out of the heavens.

John Stone

THE PARABLE OF THE INSTRUMENTS

And one man they took
off to the side and said to him
you are a welder and put
in his hands an acetylene torch
which he afterward took
everywhere with him aflame
spurting blue fire and hissing
and he became in his own time
an expert

Another in the crowd
they sidled up to and said
this is a gun which makes you
of course and everlastingly
a soldier and his trigger finger
itched from that day backward

But the man with his tongue
loose congenitally at both ends
needed no other instruments
He spoke out of both sides
of his mouth He threw
his voice over there and over
there and it came back to him
like a boomerang

They offered me on the quietus
a calendar/date book combination
a lock to pick
a pair of telephone-pole-climbing
boots
test tubes
a vacuum cleaner
the chance to be first in the parade
a white horse to ride
a black horse

I said no thanks

but that man over there I said
throwing those words around
do you think he could spare
maybe
a brand-new preposition or an adverb?

They said they'd ask him

I haven't heard a thing since January

Margherita Faulkner

SUPPOSITIONS

If I had a creature's mouth
if I could lose this fluent speech
if I could change the chain of being
keep intelligence and reason without
the strain of saying, then I could read
the eyes of dogs, decipher rain and
jargon of the jays. In my mouth I'd carry
things that cannot walk, hold them gently
in the softness of my jaws.

Peter Wild

FOREST RANGER

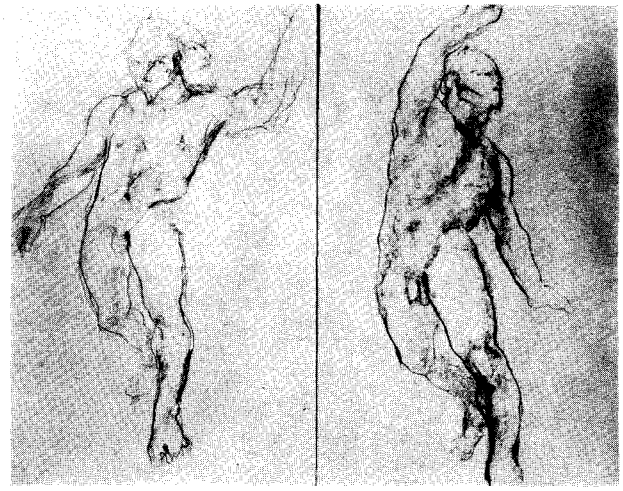
Slumped in his wagon going down the range
collecting from hilltop to bulbous hilltop
heavy walkers shrunken to rows of marlinespikes,
a dead Harley-Davidson rusted on the edges,
shot full of sugar, the raw hide of a bear
with its head on, still flying, he tosses
behind into the splintered oak bed of the wagon.
in front he's forgotten the name of his horse,
plastic bag half full of air, clear
wrinkled sausage, but remembers once
in Denver, in full view of the blue slabs of mountains,
squinting on his anniversary in an eloquent restaurant
at a note on the menu about the scallops curled
twenty-four hours ago on the sandy bottom of the Pacific Ocean,
erect, breathing their own kind of air, that
ascend now, distended macrocytes
over the peaks, steel virgins shining complete
in their knowledge around him. giving thanks
that he's sent his own daughter to college
with a trunkful of sweaters, gallops toward home
clutching the mad money of his guts,
kicking in the door of a strange house
he calls his own, ties the surprised
frau only in fear of her life to
        a chair, makes her lean forward,
lick up the dimes and parsley
                he pours out on the table.

Portfolio

GEORGE DUREAU

George Dureau first became known for his oil paintings which were exhibited widely in New Orleans during the 1960's, but since 1970 he has turned more and more to drawing. The charcoal sketches and charcoal and oils that are reproduced here represent some of his most recent concerns with the human torso and his continued interest in allegorical figures.

The Company of Gentlemen, 1978, charcoal and oil on canvas, 76 x 47 inches

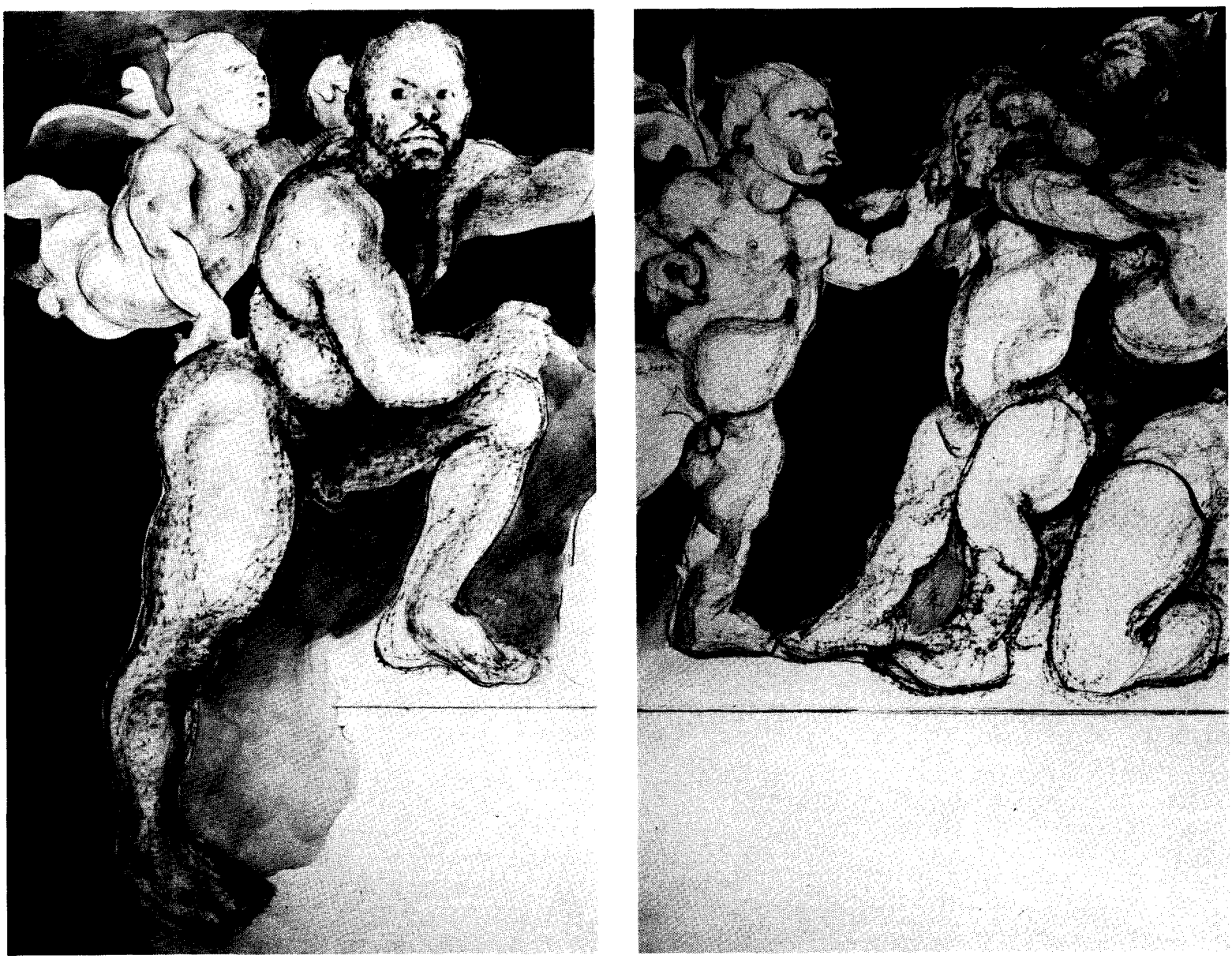


Two Risen Figures, 1977,
drawings, 23 x 14 inches
Ernie, 1972, charcoal,
29 x 23 inches

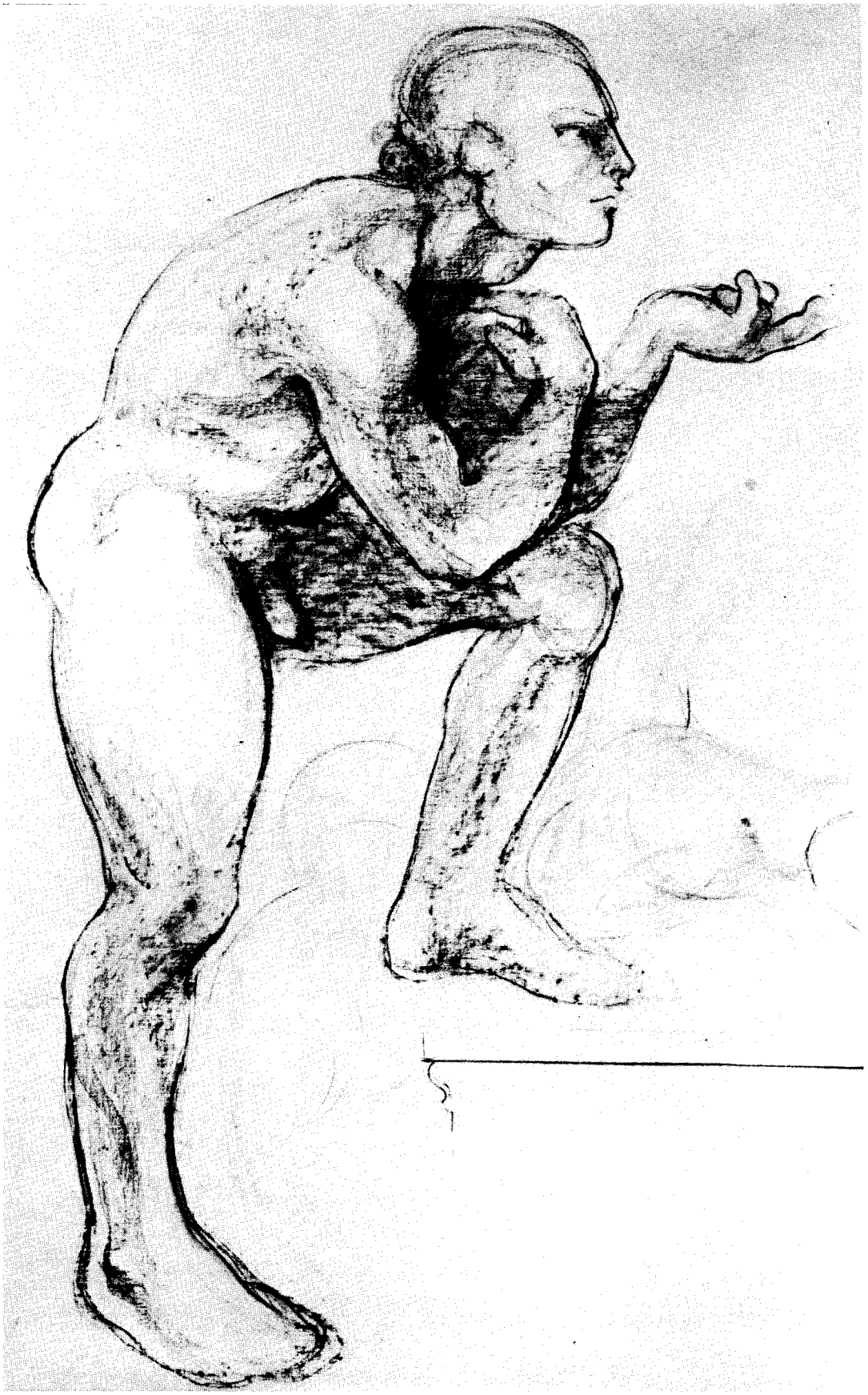
Freddy, 1976, charcoal, 40 x 30 inches

The China Bull, 1977, charcoal, 40 x 30 inches

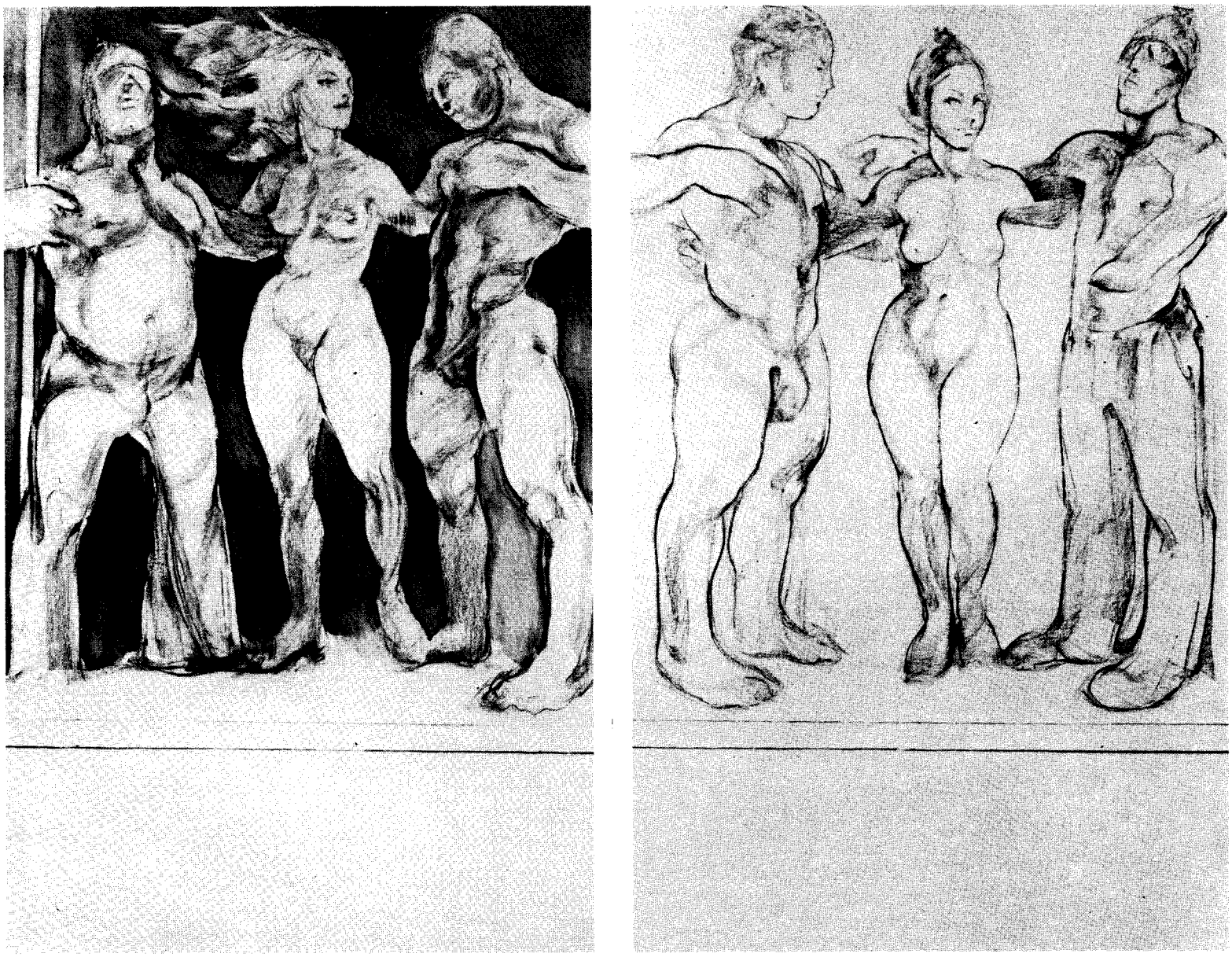
Little Zephyr, 1977, charcoal, 29 x 23 inches
Short Sonny with Sword, 1977, charcoal, 30 x 40 inches



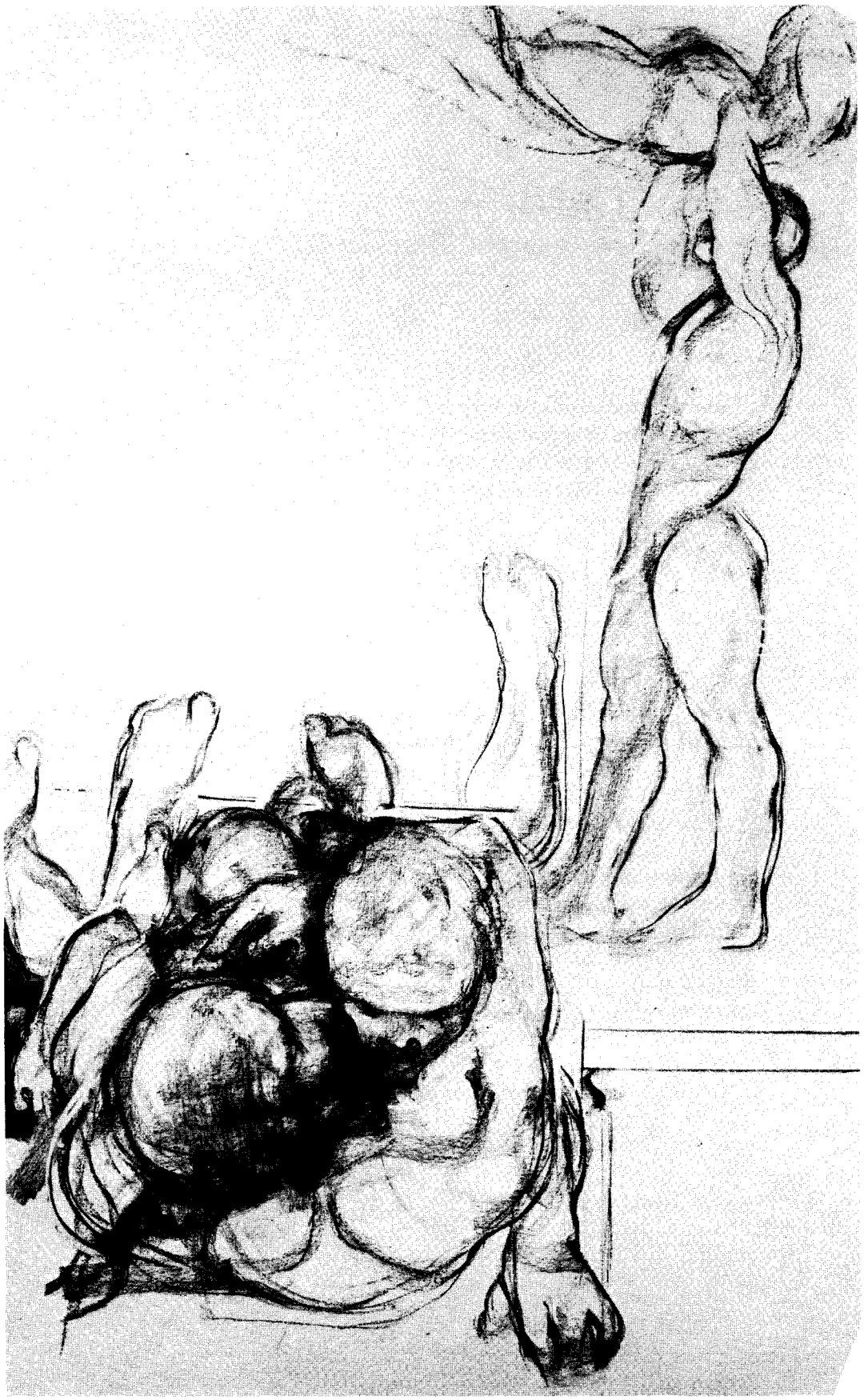
Panels 1 and 2 from The Arena Series, 1977, charcoal and oil on canvas, 76 x 47 inches



Oedipus at the Sphinx, 1978, charcoal and oil on canvas, 76 x 47 inches



Three panels (unfinished) from The Beach and Swept Away, 1978, charcoal and oil on canvas, 76 x 47 inches



Mao Tse-tung

THE PASS

West wind, strong,
Strong as wine drunk at farewell,
Sacrificial fire in a temple;
I see you rolled like Death near the south gate,
Your breath, spilled somewhere between,
Coagulates to only one weight—
That strength now lines itself on water,
Plucks the roots of water one by one
Until the quadrants of terror, upended,
Block all thoroughfare.

Strung endless,
The sky, migratory in the morning,
Is a frosted moon, its voice clattering
Under the hooves of horses,
A muffled trumpet
Traps mouth next to mouth.

Stronghold of heros,
The faded road like cold drawn iron: unlocks.
From here, from this heeled moment
I will overtake you
When the distant hill hovers an ocean,
When the evening, startled, crumbles to blood.

translated by Paul Ching Lee

Li Yü

MEMORY OF A PARTING

Since that time,
The time we were last together,
That time now passes
Into the remainder of spring

Where everything, where eye
Brushes the corner of sadness,
Breaks within.

Scattered below the steps
A whirl of petals, like snow,
Covers this singular unshakable shoulder.

Letters—the few that reached me—
Show only the flight of a certain voice,
Its movement calling nowhere.

The far road
From which other dreams return
Leads farther, farther
As the grass grows with each step,
Each step marks the departing spring.

translated by Paul Ching Lee

NOTES ON THE TRANSLATION

Both poets translated here are in the category of "emperor poet," though the fate of Li Yü (A.D. 936–978) was decidedly different than Mao's.

Li's works have been widely translated. They are often divided into two periods (sometimes too conveniently by critics), the latter containing unanimously proclaimed masterpieces. "Memory of a Parting" ("Ch-ing T'ing Le") belongs to this second period. It was written while he was imprisoned, and, as a result, like most of the poems produced in that period, it gathered a phenomenal amount of psychic force otherwise missing in his earlier works.

As far as Mao is concerned, this bit of background is essential. In post-1917 China, the poetical form took to the vernacular. It was a necessary purge of the language, along with the socio-political revolt of that time. What the Chinese poets did in the early twenties was comparable to, say, transforming English poetry from the pre-Elizabethan period to its present genre, but in a time span of less than fifty years. What is puzzling, then, is that Mao insists on writing in the classical form which implies that he is a "traditionalist" or that he feels the vernacular form is not good enough for him. I think the latter point is closer to the truth. If one examines the new form closely, it is quite clear that despite all the innovative soul prowling that went into it, the form has not reached a maturity that can match the economy of syntax and the great bare bone beauty of the classical form.

"The Pass" ("I Ch'in O") was written during the Long March. All the italics in the translated form are intended for the character *lieh*, which describes the west wind so that the wind, the fire, the water, etc., are all in one way or another associated with the character whether through allusion, parable, or spatial reference to the ideo-grammic aspects of that character. Similar treatment has been given to other characters in both Mao's and Li's poems, but the treatment was by far the most extensive with this particular character.—PCL

Raymond Bialopiotrowicz

Benjamin Lee Wren, S.J.

A GOD-LIKE HAND

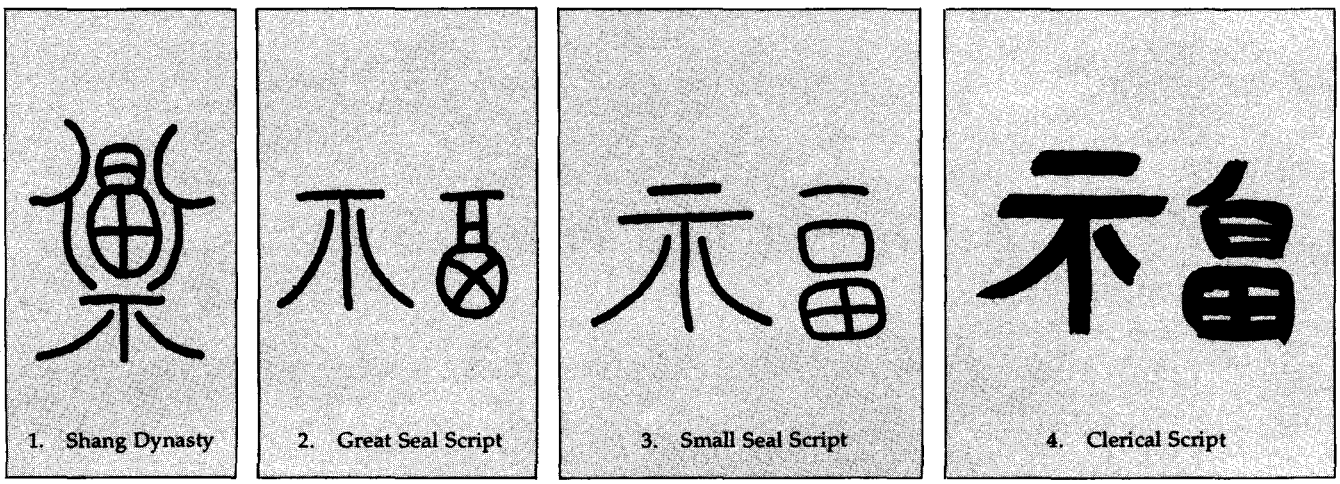
Editor's Note: Although the East and the West have been meeting each other for well over two thousand years, there was a unique encounter at Yale University, April 8–10, 1977: the first symposium on Chinese calligraphy ever held in the West. Among the chief participants were Shen C. Y. Fu, Willibald Veit, Thomas Lawton, Wen C. Fong, Luthar Ledderose and Yoshiaki Shimizu. The following article is a brief summary of some of the major topics and questions explored at this remarkable meeting in New Haven on the subject of Chinese calligraphy.

The Chinese have always placed calligraphy at the top of their scale of artistic forms and models, far above painting which they regard as a secondary and derivative form. It is difficult for most Westerners to grasp this fact and its significance. The English word calligraphy comes from the Greek *kalligraphia* and means "penmanship" or "the art of fine handwriting." To possess a "good hand" in the West has long been considered (at least until the general deterioration of handwriting in recent times) a notable personal achievement and in some periods and places a mark of professional class or social standing; but calligraphy in the West has always been one of the secondary, decorative arts. Only in the classic periods of manuscript embellishment and illumination (the Book of Kells is the primary surviving example) did Western calligraphy approach the primary aesthetic importance which Chinese calligraphy has held for thousands of years. Its exalted position is suggested by the Chinese term most equivalent to the Western word calligraphy: shu-fa. "Shu fa" does not mean "fine handwriting" or "beautiful penmanship," but rather "a model," "a technique," or "the law or rule of the brush."

This fundamental difference raises several basic questions. At what moment does such an ostensibly utilitarian endeavor as writing become the dominant art form in one of the world's oldest great civilizations? When and how does mere performance emerge into real creative expression? What are the major stages in the evolution of this remarkable calligraphic tradition? The paragraphs that follow are an effort to deal in a superficial way with some of these issues.

There is an abstract quality in Chinese calligraphy. This is not the "abstract impressionism" of a Kandinsky or Pollock, but an abstraction within the confines of written words in a living natural language. For over three thousand years Chinese calligraphers have perfected the canon of their art. Throughout this period each aspirant calligrapher has had first to digest and master the prevailing traditional values and make them his own. Only then could he hope to transcend the tradition and modify it with his own stylistic achievement. "If you learn from the best, you can only be mediocre; if you learn from the mediocre, you will only be the worst." This old Chinese saying underscores the danger faced by the aspirant calligrapher. The essence of the tradition of great Chinese calligraphy is *not* copying, and Wen C. Fong estimated that seventy-five percent of all Chinese calligraphers failed to rise above mere craft and performance. The goal of transcendence was more often missed than attained.

The first precondition for transcendence was years of training in the fundamentals of calligraphy and this began with the brush. The calligraphic brush is a very special instrument. This brush, bi, is made of animal hair and must be formed into a fine point with just the right degree of pliability and bounce so it will be acutely responsive to the heart, spirit, and hand of the artist. The apprentice calligrapher must spend several years simply learning how to make and master his brush, and additional months must be devoted to learning how to load it with a special ink made from pine soot and water. As John Hay points out, once the brush has been created and mastered, "There is no more sensitive instrument for recording every psychological and muscular pulse of the artist. Transmitted from his body,



1. Shang Dynasty 2. Great Seal Script 3. Small Seal Script 4. Clerical Script

through his shoulders, arm, hand, and fingers, the entirety of his aesthetic consciousness flows out in an acutely physical experience and takes form in the line, structure, and balance of each character and the shape of the whole passage."[1] Tremendous discipline, then, is the prerequisite for the tremendous freedom of true transcendence.

The oldest extant Chinese script (actually a "protoscript" since very little is known about it) is perhaps six thousand years old and is found on clay vessels, engraved animal bones, and tortoise shells. This protoscript, however, shows individual characters already possessing a well-defined sense of design and probably an aesthetic dimension. The recapturable history of Chinese calligraphy begins some 2700 years after this protoscript period with the Shang Dynasty (1766–1122 B.C.). During the Shang Dynasty, bronze casting was developed to a remarkable technical level and vessels were cast in bronze for use in both secular and religious ceremonies. There are also some characters from this period engraved in stone. The script surviving from the Shang period possesses a high degree of dignity and balance. The character for "happiness" from this period is shown in figure 1.

The next development is known as the Great Seal Script and is best exemplified by the "Stone Drum Inscriptions," some two hundred characters found on large stone cylinders discovered in the Pao-Ch'i district of Shensi. Figure 2 shows the character for "happiness" in the Great Seal Script.

The warring states of the Eastern Chou district produced variations of the Great Seal Script, but these were eventually regularized by the Chin Dynasty (221–227 B.C.). Li Szu, the prime minister at the beginning of this dynasty, added new characters and standardized the script which became known as the Small Seal Script. As a consequence of this reform, "Learning could be more disseminated . . . . All the irregularities of the an- cient writing were dropped, and each character was made to 'occupy' an imaginary square."[2] The Small Seal Script was used in ritual ceremonies and for petitions to the imperial throne until about 100 A.D., but its primary use during the Han (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) was for making official and personal seals known as chops. Chops were made out of bronze, silver, gold, quartz, and jade and very frequently were impressed in clay instead of being stamped on paper. Since the Small Seal Script (fig. 3) could achieve symmetry and long flowing lines within a tightly circumscribed area, it was ideal for the limited surface of the chop which ranged from the size of a dime to a half-dollar. Another form of the Small Seal Script—the "Iron Brush" technique—was used when the seal was carved directly into bronze.

About the time the Small Seal Script was receiving official approval, a certain Ch'eng Miao was imprisoned for ten years under the first Emperor of Chin and during his confinement Ch'eng Miao produced over three thousand characters in a new style which came to be known as Li Shu or clerical script (fig. 4). This script was faster and easier to write and was almost a type of shorthand when compared to the Seal Script.

Clerical script reached its apex in the Eastern Han (25–220 A.D.) and then evolved very rapidly into early K'ai shu or standard script. About this time the brush came into its own as the primary tool of Chinese calligraphy. Up to the Three Kingdoms (220–265 A.D.) many early calligraphers had used the inflexible knife to carve into bronze or stone. The flexible brush offered the calligrapher a greater range and freedom of expression and its ascendency led to the primacy of calligraphy among the fine arts in Chinese civilization.

Standard script combined the most advanced brush techniques with the logical developments of the clerical style. A more legible and swifter script was obtained by stressing the diagonal and hook strokes. As Shen C.Y. Fu observes, "Standard script entailed extra movements, pauses, and changes in the brush direction, as well as variations in pressure and speed. Some technical innovations were derived from running and

cursive scripts which link, or tend to link, succeeding strokes; a tall rectangular structure was the outcome of the downward movement of the characters in the column."[3] Figure 5 shows the standard script for "happiness."

The Six Dynasties (265–581 A.D.) was a major turning point in the history of Chinese calligraphy. The long evolutionary period was now over and a much longer modern period now began which has lasted from the Sui Dynasty (581–618 A.D.) down to present times. But this does not mean that calligraphy has become static or frozen. Quite the contrary. For instance, during the three hundred years of the T'ang Dynasty (618–906 A.D.), the standard script changed radically from thin and cursive figures to fat and dynamic strokes, characteristics which reflect some of the main features of T'ang sculpture.

There were also other developments. The Eastern Han (25–220 A.D.), which saw the clerical style develop to its fullest, also produced the Hsing-shu, or running style (fig. 6). The running style combines the legibility of standard script with the freedom of the cursive form, and calligraphy is now viewed as a mirror of the human personality.

During the hurly-burly of the Sung (960–1278 A.D.) the development towards a more personal, even idiosyncratic style increased. Calligraphy becomes more "democratic," less "aristocratic," to use the two vaguely appropriate Western terms. As Shen C. Y. Fu states, "The notion of calligraphy as the 'heart-print' (hsin-yin) was a basis for the literate art theory which was to dominate the practice of calligraphy *and* painting in subsequent dynasties."[4] Because the running hand allowed more artistic freedom and vivacious rhythm, it usurped the old position of Kai-shu as the popular style for daily use, as well as achieving recognition as one of the most artistic styles.

Through the centuries there has been a definite trend for Chinese characters to evolve towards simpler forms which can be more easily and quickly written. Ts'ao-chu, or cursive script, not only met this need quite early in the history of Chinese calligraphy but it also afforded the master calligrapher a form in which he could express his individuality. "Each new generation was able to capture the spirit and energy of its age through the cursive medium, regardless of the rise and fall of the other scripts, a tribute to its efficacy and longevity as a script type."[5] Historically, the cursive style rose along with the clerical style during the Chin (221–207 B.C.) and Early Han (206 B.C.–8 A.D.) periods.

The early draft cursive, Chang ts'ao, abbreviated and linked several strokes into one continuous flow. Soon this linkage was occuring not only with one character but between two or more characters in a descending vertical column. This became known as Chin ts'ao or "modern cursive" in the Wei Dynasty (220–265 A.D.).

Certain Taoistic masters used the cursive form to take down messages while in a trance. Spontaneity as a sign of the mystical, imbued with heavenly perfection, soon began to be accepted in secular writing as well.

During the reign of Emperor Hsuan-tsung (712–756 A.D.) the T'ang was at its height and literature and the arts flourished. It was in this atmosphere that the k'uang-ts'ao or "wild" or "mad" cursive style was introduced (fig. 7). There are more connections between the strokes and characters than in earlier cursive styles.

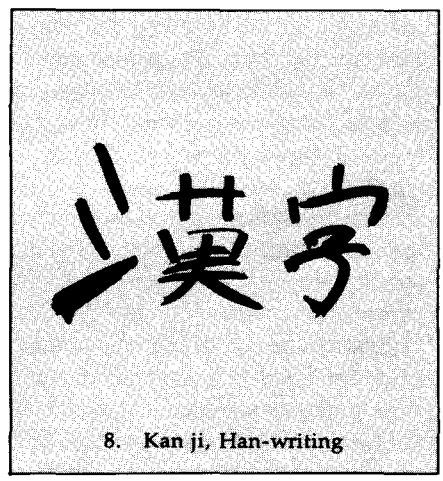
Mi Fu (1051–1107 A.D.) of the Sung was a fine practitioner of the cursive style. Mi Fu had not only been influenced by Ch'an (Zen), also his ancestors had come from Central Asia and as Moslems were acquainted with the Arabic script. Mi Fu stated that he did not rest his wrist on the table and this gave him greater freedom: "Others have one brush, I have four sides."

The characters of cursive style are extreme, exaggerated, written with great speed, and usually in a state of exhilaration. While this style is admired for its physical beauty, the ordinary person can't read it, for only the beautiful is being communicated. "Freest and most eccentric of all writing styles, 'wild'

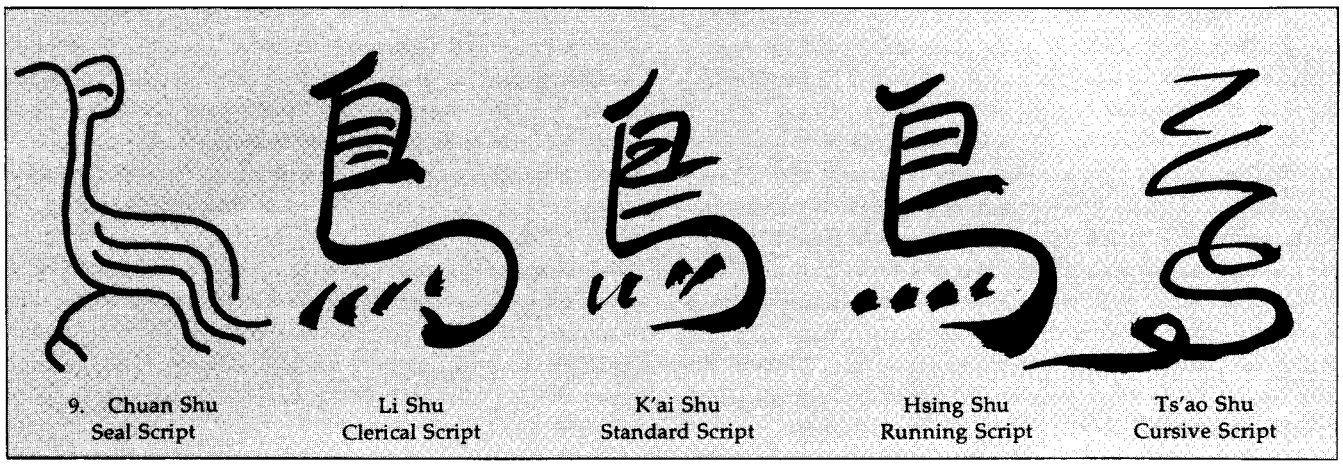
5. Standard Script

6. Running Script

7. Cursive Style



8. Kan ji, Han-writing



9. Chuan Shu Seal Script | Li Shu Clerical Script | K'ai Shu Standard Script | Hsing Shu Running Script | Ts'ao Shu Cursive Script

cursive was developed for purely artistic reasons and represented the extreme of calligraphic self-expression."[6]

Until around the fourth century, the Japanese did not have a written language. Initially, the Chinese characters, Kanji, "writing of the Han," were used purely for phones or sound value. In the next few centuries the structure, sound and meaning of various Kanji began to disintegrate and change.

In 806 A.D. the Japanese monk Kukai (Kobo Daishi, 774–835 A.D.) returned to Japan from a sojourn in China and articulated in three extant letters to his friends Saicho his ideas on calligraphy. Kukai is usually given the honor of having established the kana script of the Japanese (fig. 8). This script of five vowels and consonant-vowels gave the Japanese greater freedom in writing their polysyllabic language in contrast to the monosyllabic Chinese. For example, mountain is yama and may be written either 山 or や ま .

During the Heian Period (794–1185 A.D.) Japanese women were deliberately separated from Chinese learning and calligraphy, so they readily took to the kana, script. By the mid-tenth century, the Japanese cursive style was well established and became the means of setting down the famous diaries of the Heian court and Japan's greatest novel, *Genji Monogatori* by Lady Murasaki Shikibu. The Japanese have paid the Chinese a threefold compliment, for only they have taken and kept the Chinese script and at the same time developed the cursive style far beyond the land of its origin, and only they come near to matching the Chinese love, honor, and esteem for calligraphy.

To recapitulate this progress of the character in Chinese calligraphy, figure 9 shows the character for "bird" written in the five dominant scripts.

Admittedly, such a brief treatment cannot do justice to a subject as sophisticated and complex as Chinese calligraphy, but it is important to observe that calligraphy continues to be China's great love even today and its aesthetic principles are nourished from childhood to death. "The majority of Chinese people—like the majority of any other nation—understand almost nothing of art and literature, yet all of them can gaze at a piece of calligraphy with pleasure simply for its familiar shapes and composition."[7] Historically, the temptation for old Chinese has been to return to the practice of Buddhism and Taoism, but the politically harmless way was to seek aesthetic shelter in the practice of calligraphy. A complete treatment of the subject of Chinese calligraphy would have to consider the religious dimensions of this art. There is nothing really comparable in the West, where the typewriter and the printed page (such as this one) have increasingly come to dominate our perceptive and expressive world. Whereas the aged mandarin could know that "When the heart is upright the brush is too," the mechanical language forms in the West operate too often, perhaps inevitably, in a domain where "the heart does not know the hand and the hand does not know the heart."

At the Yale Symposium George Kubler contrasted Mayan calligraphy with Chinese, and during his lecture Kubler showed a slide of an incised bone spatula found in the Mayan Temple of the Jaguar (c. 733 A.D.). The image on the spatula was that of a beautiful hand holding a brush and Kubler remarked that this was a "God-like hand." But of all the great world civilizations, China has given the greatest constant esteem and reverence to the "God-like hand" of the calligrapher, from whose fingers have come one of the world's greatest bodies of art.

NOTES

1. John Hay, *Masterpieces of Chinese Art* (Greenwich, Conn., New York Graphic Society, 1974), p. 11.
2. Chiang Yee, *Chinese Calligraphy* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 46.
3. Shen C. Y. Fu, *Traces of the Brush* (Yale University Art Gallery, 1977), p. XI.
4. Ibid., p. 127.
5. Ibid., p. 81.
6. Ibid., p. 81.
7. Chaing Yee, Op. Cit., p. 17.

Nalan Hsingte

SENNIN BY THE RIVER

Here in the north
I remember talks
by the jade-blue window
Autumn winds
send the black crows home.
A small sail
anchors at the far horizon
Beside the single lamp
I doze
Think, dream—
and the moon goes down.

I'd like to go home
and going home's not possible
My fate not benevolent
like the swallows'.
The spring clouds and the spring rivers
are wrapped in rose-colored mists.
In the painted boats
the girls are beautiful as the moon.
In fine rain
the willow flowers fall.

translated by Lenore Mayhew
and William McNaughton

Jack Butler

CONCERTO FOR WALL-EYED WEARY WOMEN

"Moreso the wall-eyed weary woman,
She said I said in her dream,"
She said
When I asked her "What?"
After she said
"I have another line for you
To go with the one you said in my dream,"
Saying not merely the one she had
To go with the one I said
In her dream
But also the one
I said in her dream.

And then she said,
After I read her
" *'Moreso the wall-eyed weary woman,*
She said I said in her dream,'
She said
When I asked her 'What?'
After she said
'I have another line for you
To go with the one you said in my dream,'
Saying not merely the one she had
To go with the one I said
In her dream
But also the one
I said in her dream,"
"Then you could say, 'And I repeat—' "

. . . And I thought she meant I could say,
"And I repeat,
    ' "*Moreso the wall-eyed weary woman,*
    She said I said in her dream,"
    She said
    When I asked her "What?"
    After she said
    "I have another line for you
    To go with the one you said in my dream,"
    Saying not merely the one she had
    To go with the one I said
    In her dream
    But also the one
    I said in her dream,' "
So I did.

But she only meant me to say
    "*Moreso the wall-eyed weary woman,*
    She said I said in her dream,"
Which would've been a whole lot shorter,
Not that the woman,
There in her shack, hanging a cracked
Dishpan
On a flat-head nail,
Would've given a good goddamn,
Seeing as how she wasn't the woman
In her dream,
Since that was my wife,
But was only an imaginary
Wall-eyed weary woman who wouldn't go away
After I found out
The woman in the dream was my wife,
Which I only found out after reading her
    "Not that the woman,
    There in her shack, hanging a cracked
    Dishpan
    On a flat-head nail,
    Would've given a good goddamn."

Raymond Bialopiotrowicz

Miller Williams

THE YEAR WARD WEST TOOK AWAY THE RACCOON AND MR. HANSON'S GARAGE BURNED DOWN

Even though he did masturbate, Kelvin Fletcher went with his grandfather to church every Sunday somewhere in the four county region around Booneville. He would hear his grandfather preach in the morning at one church and then in the evening at some other on the way home. If there wasn't dinner-on-the-ground, they would be invited to someone's home for fried chicken and dumplings, which was one of the good things about being a Methodist.

While they were moving along the highway, bad pavement and gravel, broken blacktop and gravel again, Kelvin would look through the hole in the floorboard where a screw had fallen out. He could see the road zooming underneath and always imagined he was on a flying carpet. Sitting beside him, his grandfather would tell about how it was when he was a boy.

There were stories about buggies and gunfights, and heavier snows and colder winters than Kelvin had known, and then Kelvin's great-grandfather, who fought in the Civil War and was captured by the North and escaped out of the prison and went west to be a mule-skinner on the railroads. And how Kelvin's grandfather himself went for a while in 1896 to Arizona and saw a man get killed in front of a saloon by a preacher that wore guns.

Then Kelvin was holding onto his seat in a stage rumbling across the wooden bridges of Virginia, the thin driver's face nothing but open mouth and eyes, his long arm popping the snake whip over the heads of the eight horses, brindle and black and bay. Then the stage turned into a gun wagon bouncing along the gullied roads of Arkansas to reinforce the outnumbered ranks of Captain Cordell at Pea Ridge. Then the gun wagon was a buckboard, flying across the flatlands of Arizona, Indians and Johnny Ringo and Pancho Villa close behind, shooting silver bullets. Then with a lurch the buckboard was a Dodge again, stopping for a pink-uddered cow standing broadside in the gravel. Kelvin's grandfather blew the horn, a long raw note like a rusty trumpet, and the old heifer lumbered across the ruts, braced her front legs against the soft earth, and bottom high in the air, slid down into the ditch beside the road, disappeared, and popped up again on the far side. Kelvin was on his knees, watching her out of the back window as she grew smaller. *Little Boy Blue come blow your horn, the sheep are in the meadow and the cow is in the grass. There's a soldier in the grass with a bullet up his ass, pull it out Uncle Sam pull it out.*

Kelvin turned to see if his grandfather had heard him, if he had spoken out loud. His grandfather was right. It was not easy to be saved. Because when you are saved you know about being lost, but when you were lost you never thought about it. About going to hell. About how everybody has to line up in front of God and when it comes your turn he points to heaven or down where hell is and if you were lost the devil grabs hold of you.

"Will God go on forgiving you if you go on doing bad

things?" Kelvin asked his grandfather one night as they were driving home from a late service in the next county.

"Over and over, Kelvin. Seventy times seven."

Kelvin calculated this to be 490. He figured he had probably sinned that much already. But if he just counted from the day when he was saved then he still had some to go.

"What happens when you use it all up?"

"That's a heapa sin, Kelvin."

"But what would happen if you did?"

"Well then I guess you'd just sin yourself into the hot place."

Kelvin multiplied in his head again to be sure he hadn't made a mistake. It was 490.

In church he was safe. Kelvin never thought to pray for anything, but he listened to what his grandfather in the oaken pulpit prayed out of the boiling well of his mouth, the well of life.

It was only going home, after dark, lying in the backseat when his grandfather thought he was asleep, only then that he felt the guilt his heart held. He prayed God to forgive him for what God knew he did at night in bed and almost always in the bathtub, not to punish him anymore with the wet bed, the slick sticking pajamas, to forgive him for the bad words he said at school. And although he did not tell God, he had made up his mind, traveling these roads with his grandfather, listening to the hymns and watching his grandfather in the pulpits with the Bible in his hand, he had made up his mind to be a preacher.

"Cars a long time ago used to go 'Ah-ooogah'," he said when the cow had taken its tail with it into the corn.

"Kind of, " his grandfather said, "but you got to suck when you say it, if you aim to sound like a T-model." His grandfather tightened his chest muscles and drew the red dust of the road through his mouth, open so the cheeks caved in, down through the voice box that Kelvin knew was full of iron bells and bailing wire, and made a rusty cogwheel kind of "uh-oo- gah" and at that moment Kelvin was as proud of his grandfather as he had ever been. Then Kelvin tried it and it was pretty good. He laughed.

His grandfather took one hand from the wheel, which he didn't do very often, and put his arm around Kelvin. "The Lord loves you, Boy," he said, "and so do I."

"I love you, too," Kelvin said, "And I love the Lord," he added when he was back home in his bed and the room was dark. But he would not say directly, so the Lord would listen, "Lord, I love you I love you, Lord." He wanted to, but he couldn't. Because the Lord would hear for sure if he was spoken to, and he would know it was a damn lie. From the dirt between his toes to the light brown of his coarse hair, with trembling and bad dreams, in all his secret thoughts from Sunday to Sunday, Kelvin was afraid of God.

Then he was eleven and he had thought about it some more. He thought he was not going to be a preacher after all. He had thought about God and the truth and himself, how it was he kept doing things you go to hell for and wet the bed at night which proved that God knew and would not want him. His grandfather knew about the bed, what everybody called the accidents, but he didn't know why.

Anyway Sunday got to be different for Kelvin, different from other days, so he couldn't be a preacher now if he wanted to be. For his grandfather, all days were the same, all days were Sunday in his blue serge suit and the way he would say God Bless You to anyone without being embarrassed. When his grandfather said God Bless You to the man at the filling station, Kelvin was embarrassed and knew he couldn't be a preacher.

He wished all days would be Sunday for him, too, but he thought about Saturday which was where he stayed most of the time, the moving picture show and the vacant lot and the railroad track and the place under the loading platform at the cotton compress, where it was cool and you could smell cottonseed oil and the dirt and the spiderwebs where Walter Thomas smoked cigarettes.

The immense unpainted platform, the floor for Negroes clumping over Kelvin's head, was the roof for Kelvin and Walter and O.D. who talked about girls and Joe Bob who sometimes had to work on Saturdays. O.D. had seen a girl naked and saw where babies came out and told Walter and Joe Bob and Kelvin. Walter and Joe Bob believed it and Joe Bob said he knew it already but Kelvin didn't say anything. He listened and picked his nose while the Negroes kept clumping on the ceiling, rolling cotton bales around on great carts. When the shadows of the men flicked through the wide spaces between the boards of the platform, a fine powder of dirt would fall on Kelvin's head.

It was after such a Saturday and such a Sunday that Kelvin ate his oatmeal and got his books together and went to school on a bright November Monday morning. A wind was twisting the red leaves loose from the oak trees along Pickett Street. Kelvin walked in the gutter and plowed his feet through the leaves; like a splay-footed snowplow he piled the leaves up ahead of him until there were too many to keep together and they spilled over and around his feet. He jumped over the pile he had made and started another one. He could look back and see a row of leafhills, three or four in a block for that many blocks, before he turned the corner to head down Forrest Avenue, the rutted dirt road that led to the Woodrow Wilson School and the fifth grade classroom with George Washington unfinished on the wall and Miss Thackleberry, high, thin and suspicious, behind her desk.

It was a brown desk, heavy and old, and the names of students Kelvin guessed were a hundred years dead were cut into the front of it. The veneer had been ripped away in crooked strips and there were deep holes drilled in the top and long cuts the kind you might make if you were walking by the desk fast with a pocket knife at noon and there wasn't anybody else in the room. This morning when Miss Thackleberry was writing a note

to Walter Thomas' father to get Walter a whipping for playing hookey two times her pencil tore through the paper where the wood was gone. The lead snapped.

The students looked at her, their faces silent. She looked up and across the tops of their heads toward the back of the room. She never frowned. Her face was stretched tight around her bones.

"Let me have another sheet of paper," she said. Her long finger pointed at Walter's tablet then fell to her desk and started tapping. Walter didn't move and when she said it again she pinched the words off with lips so thin they almost were not lips. If God had been a woman, Kelvin thought, he would be Miss Thackleberry. She wadded the torn sheet, working with both her hands, ten squeezing worms, and dropped it into the grey metal bucket beside her desk. She finished the second note as the bell rang for morning recess, folded it neatly and gave it to Walter. He put it carefully into the chest pocket of his overalls and hurried to catch Kelvin and O.D., who were running for the best climbing tree on the schoolground. When the bell rang again, and they were coming down, hanging from the low limbs and dropping to the hard earth, Walter said he was going swimming.

"Now?" Kelvin said. "Your daddy's gonna kill you plain out. You already got that note."

"That don't make no difference," Walter said. "My daddy gets aholter me, it ain't gonna matter anyway. Whippin can't get no harder than it's already set to be."

"It's cold to go swimming," O.D. told him.

"Well for you, maybe," Walter said. "Not for me. Ain't never too cold for me," and he was gone, across the dirt road and over a fence into a field of soybeans and over a low rise, waving with both hands high in the air so that Kelvin and O.D. saw him go down behind the rise that way, his head and arms and then his hands and then nothing.

Kelvin turned and moved toward the school house, his eyes on the smoke coming out of the brick chimney, his hands stiff-armed into his pockets. The fingers of his right hand made a fist around eight cateye marbles. His left hand rolled from finger to finger the cold sureness of his favorite steelie. In a way he was glad Walter had gone, because Walter always shot well, and during the month since school had begun Kelvin had lost some of his best marbles to him.

In the pencil groove of his desk Kelvin lined up the eight marbles, except the steelie, then let them roll one by one down the slant of the desk and off the edge into the palm of his hand. Miss Thackleberry lifted her eyes from the papers on her desk and stared into all the faces at once. Kelvin froze, relaxed, looked back at her, decided that was the wrong thing to do, and looked away. She dropped her eyes and went on grading papers.

Kelvin lined up the marbles again, this time with the steelie in the middle, and rolled them slightly, slowly back and forth in the scarred trench. Then Ward West coming back from the pencil sharpener bumped the desk on purpose. Kelvin knew he was in trouble and that there was no way out. He knew the marbles would roll from the desk and run all over the floor. With one arm along the right side of the desk and another along the bottom, he tried to stop them.

The steelie rolling down the left side sounded like Pearl Harbor. He knew it would hit the floor like a cannonball if he didn't stop it. And then he knew as he shifted his arms to block the path of the steelie that: one) all of the marbles were going to get loose; two) Miss Thackleberry was staring at him standing up behind her desk hating him because he was not Suzie Long on the font row or Big Butt Berkle who always got to erase the board; three) all the other pupils were looking at him glad because they were not him except; four) Ward West was staring at a book on his desk hearing the marbles roll and hit the floor and roll again. A girl giggled. Two girls giggled. Kelvin stopped trying to do anything about the marbles and sat still and put his hands in his lap.Then he realized there was a marble in his right hand. He wanted to get rid of it so bad he almost dropped it. He decided he was going to kill Ward West. He would make Suzie Long take all her clothes off and go the church and then he would push Ward West into a bottomless pit. No he would make them both go to church naked. He would turn them into Catholics and make them go to confession naked. He would turn Suzie Long into a naked nun.

Miss Thackleberry was standing beside his desk.

"Well?" she said. She had said Well to Kelvin more times than there were marbles in the world. "Well?"

"Yes ma'm?"

"Well?"

"Yes ma'm?"

"Don't you yes ma'm me."

"No ma'm."

"You watch your tongue, young man!"

Now was the time to stop answering, but it didn't matter. She was lifting him by a fistful of hair to pull him, head bowed and torn with pain, to the front of the room. Then she straightened to all of her height, her neck stretched like a turkey's when it stops and takes air in the middle of the barnyard. She let go of his hair and looked down at him. Her brownspotted bony hand swung out over the class and pointed down at the floor.

"Pick them up," she said without moving her lipless mouth.

She waited for all of Kelvin's twelve years while he hunted for the marbles. O.D. found two for him and when he handed them to him made a grotesque and sympathetic face. Kelvin handed six cateye marbles to Miss Thackleberry.

"The steelie," she said, her open hand waiting in front of his face. It was funny to hear her say steelie. Kelvin wondered

what she was like when she was a girl. He unwrapped his other hand from the big ball bearing and put it on her desk.

She sat down and put all the marbles in a drawer. Then she scooted back her chair with an awful noise and curled her fingers around the bumps of her knees. She looked Kelvin in the eyes, looked down into the kneehole of her desk and looked back into Kelvin's eyes.

"Well?"

Kelvin turned away from the class toward the blackboard. His feet floated into one another and his arms were full of water.

"Well?"

He took a short breath and let it out and got down into the kneehole in front of Miss Thackleberry's shoes. It was even smaller than he remembered from before when he had thrown a spitball and hit George Washington in the left eye where it stuck. He drew his legs up and hugged them, closed his eyes and laid his head on the knobs of his knees. When Miss Thackleberry scooted her chair back into place to close the walls of his cell the sound scraped his skull. He shivered. When he opened his eyes Miss Thackleberry's knees were almost touching his forehead. They were moving slowly left and right. He watched them as they swayed, then jiggled and bounced a little and parted and came together again. Kelvin wanted to tell her he could see her pants, her ugly pants long all the way to her knees and yellow. Suzie Long's pants were panties he was sure as he tried to think about them and did not even smell bad.

Then he closed his eyes again, tried not to breathe and told himself that he was going to win, that he would not ask Miss Thackleberry to let him out. He would stay until the bell rang. He would go to sleep. He rested his forehead back on his knees and wished he had gone swimming with Walter.

He couldn't go to sleep because the smell was worse with his eyes closed. He held his breath as long as he could. Finally he said what he knew he would have to say and what Ward West was waiting for him to say. "Miss Thackleberry," he said, "please let me out."

She scooted the chair back and he crawled from the dark cave of the whale's stinking belly and stood up, sniffling. She took him by the arms and squeezed until the blood stopped.

"You aren't going to play with your marbles any more?"

"No ma'm."

"Very well," she said, looking at him out of the cateyes in her head, but she didn't let go of him, and then the bell rang.

"Plee-hees let me out-out! Plee-hees let me out-out!" Ward West jeered and pointed and bumped into Kelvin as he ran past on his way home. He knocked Kelvin across the sidewalk and into Dr. Layton's yard the pupils were warned not to step on.

Kelvin decided that when he got home he would tell his grandfather about love, how on that day when his grandfather had said "Smile at the boy, Kelvin, let him know you want to be his friend. Beat him with love, Son,"Kelvin had gone to school sure of the invincibility of his partnership with God and his grandfather, sure that today Ward West would not knock him down after school. He would tell his grandfather how on that day he had turned every five or ten minutes to smile at Ward West who sat always in the back of the room, and how after school Ward West had beat him up for making faces at him.

"I tell you one thing," O.D. said the next day. "You sure got a lot of courage. I'm not gonna go making faces at Ward West."

"You sure are brave or something," Suzie Long said, then ran away.

"You're crazy, you know that?" Ward West said.

"What happened, Boy?" his grandfather asked him.

"Nothing," Kelvin said.

Today he would tell him. He had made up his mind. He was not going to be a preacher.

It took Kelvin a long time to finish his paper route.

There was a fire in the garage behind old man Hanson's house. Both of the firetrucks came but Walter's father who was a fireman didn't. Kelvin figured he was probably whipping Walter. Mr. Hanson's Model-T that was on cinder blocks burned up, the car that last Halloween Kelvin and Walter and Joe. Bob and O.D. had honked the horn on and run. They hid in a vacant lot and pretended Mr. Hanson was Pretty Boy Floyd and they were G-Men. Then they saw a light come on in Mr. Hanson's hideout and they ran through all the backyards in the block until Walter ran into a clothesline and had to go home.

There was a revival meeting in a tent by the cotton gin. The preacher was louder even than Kelvin's grandfather and took quick breaths every six or seven words and said *uh* all the time and the Lord saiduh, I am the wayuh . . . Kelvin stopped his bicycle and listened, and watching and listening he believed what he heard and wished it was him in the pulpit under the tent calling God down.

It was almost dark when he finished the route. He hurried past the three-story stone house near the school, pumping his bicycle down the middle of the street, because Walter had told him that the woman who lived there was half-colored and half-white and O.D. had said it was so. Kelvin's heart jumped whenever he thought that she might subscribe to the paper and he would have to go collect for it. He saw her in his mind, black on one side and white on the other, one eye blue, one dark. Kelvin wondered what she sounded like when she talked, like a colored woman or like a white woman and where she got all her money.

In Dr. Layton's yard, where no one was supposed to go, Kelvin saw O.D. standing in the grass with five or six other kids and a whole lot of grownups. He propped his bike against a light-pole.

"You know what happened?" O.D. said.

He shook his head. "I been on my paper route."

"Walter got drowned."

"He what?"

"He got drowned."

"He didn't neither."

"He did, too. He got drowned this afternoon. That's where he is, right in there in Dr. Layton's office and so is all his whole family. His mother went and let out a big scream a while ago you could hear all over town."

"But I was just talking to him just today at school," Kelvin said.

"He was such a good boy," some woman said, and Kelvin knew that if they said Walter was a good boy then O.D. was telling the truth and Walter was dead. He went over and stood by his bicycle and thought about Walter breathing water and wondered if he was afraid, if he thought at the last second that he would never see his mother again.

Kelvin was afraid of water. He was glad that Methodists get sprinkled and not immersed except out in the country where his grandfather went. He knew if he was a Baptist he would have to go to hell.

Walter's family didn't come out of Dr. Layton's house, and pretty soon Kelvin's father found him and took him home to supper. He didn't have to eat anything and he went to bed early. He was afraid he would dream about Walter dead but he didn't.

At the funeral at the Presbyterian Church everybody walked by the coffin and looked in. Kelvin stopped when he got to the coffin and stared at Walter's eyelids to see if they moved so he could tell everybody and they would wake Walter up. He wanted to touch him but he was afraid to.

The woman behind nudged him and he went on with his father and mother and grandfather back to the pew.

The preacher said that God only wanted Walter in heaven.

The choir sang Asleep In Jesus and a man sang Nothing Between Me and My Savior. There were thousands of flowers and at first it smelled sweet like Easter Morning. Then they smelled sweet like vomit and the church was hot. The choir sang Asleep In Jesus again. Walter's mother cried and Kelvin thought how God only took Walter away because he wanted him, and he thought of Ward West who took away the racoon Kelvin had brought to school and always took whatever else he wanted.

He looked toward the casket again. A man he didn't know was putting the lid down.

He sat on the front steps when they got home, and went to bed without his supper again.

He closed his eyes and saw Jesus coming toward him. The swaddling clothes hung like rags. He could smell the Frankincense and Myrrh. Jesus moved his lips but there wasn't any sound. Kelvin got out of bed and went downstairs and told his grandfather he was not ever going to be a preacher. He went back to bed and lay awake a long time and didn't play with himself. In the morning he felt quickly to see and he saw that he had not wet the bed.

Peter Steele

NEW ORLEANS
(An Australian Villanelle)

The plane came in too late for Mardi Gras,
The bayous were in Lent as down we fell:
It may be time to make as well as mar.

I look at Lee and Jackson—near, but far
From bleachers, Superdome, elation's shell.
The plane came in too late for Mardi Gras.

The Mississippi lurches, bar to bar,
The ghosts of Huck and Faulkner ply, and tell
It may be time to make as well as mar.

Out on the levees, children skate, and scar
The puckered dirt where zoo and tidewash swell;
The plane came in too late for Mardi Gras.

Pungent, equivocal, the streets with car on car
Desiring filigree and finding slums can tell
It may be time to make as well as mar.

Tonight, the jazz. I'm waiting for a star
Heavy with promise, lucid as a bell.
The plane came in too late for Mardi Gras,
It may be time to make as well as mar.

Jay R. White

COMFORTED AND BETRAYED

Be comforted by your betrayer. Let the betrayer into your house is my advice. Who will more lovingly touch you? Who guard more dutifully your treasure? There are no foundations in time. You have no past. You and I are alive only. Take a number and have a seat. Death is busy at the moment. We live just outside haunts like a mother calling: come home. Come home, before it gets too dark. Come in from playing Kick the Can and Peter's Under the Porch. Come away from that blank goodnight that lies one step in lunatic time beyond your childish ken, the wren-bone pen of innocence and desire. Come home.

The dream begins:

Be comforted by your betrayer. That slick-haired mongrel bitch with woman's head who sat on the front porch in the softness of summer—who brought the evening with her, wants you. Who is she but the comforter? Who but she that cooed through the latched screen, fawning: let me in, won't you? with black needle teeth and saliva she could not stem. The child alone in the house. The child watching and not answering the thing at the door from the security of the house: let me in, Pretty. I won't disembowel you. I won't suck the jelly eyes nor eat the tender tongue. Honey. Let me in, can't you? But the child refused and the bitch jumped and screamed, then glided back to sit on the porch again with longing looks at the child. When darkness fell all that remained were the eyes. Burning.

The eyes are gone. Extinguished. A breeze wakes in the dogwood on the lawn and rustles the dead leaves captured by the belvedere. It is quiet in the corners of the room. The child wonders calmly why he has been left alone and there is no fear in him yet, no clutch, no wrench of terror yet; perhaps a foreboding only, and mild. What became of the crooning and the eyes? Be comforted, the kitchen screen is not latched.

There she is. Muzzle and paw at the screen. Such precious work. Getting in.

And now the child's face, a Renoir in the window of the door he slammed, watches her silent explosion and the teeth tearing at the steaming body and, at last, watches it discontort and breathe beneath a rising, disinterested moon. He turns away from the door and the words fall on his mind like crystals:

I shall get in there, you know.

Then, way in the night, the moon has set but left its light in the branches of the trees and under the eaves. A sleepy sparrow argues roosting rights in the dogwood on the lawn. Way off a fox tells something. A beetle stops to listen in the dead leaves caught by the belvedere. The child, because he has not dreamed, wakes and smells his own sweet breath on the pillow slip. Softly he sighs and remembers, the memory drawing his ancient eyes to the window sill, and there, fondly, the bitch sits watching. Her eyes snap, she lowers the paw, smiling once again that smile that is not and, making an almost inaudible noise in her throat, she steps down into the darkness by the bureau.

Sometime after the death of my parents I returned to that small town in Alabama and visited the ancient frame house where I was born. I was motoring through on my way to a new duty station in Florida, glad of the opportunity to see the place where I began. I had directions from an old gentleman at the gas station who admired my uniform and said he remembered my father for a decent man. I found the house a couple of miles out of town on the road to Tuscaloosa. It was set back somewhat and surrounded by a few acres of grown-over farm land. It was a two-

story house with a wide veranda all around and tall, elegant, busted windows gaping at a weedy drive. There was a covered well with rusted pulley, a couple of dispirited outbuildings—off to one side, in shame and neglect, a broken summer house. The woods grew up behind, closing off what may once have been a view of the river, and a greenbriar thicket had taken the belvedere as completely as might some desperate parasite. I sat in my car. Somewhere in the wood or the thicket a hidden thrush called the same four notes repeatedly, stopping each time to collect a hollowness. After a while I got out and stepped around the car to give the house a better look at me. I felt somewhat suspect, a stranger whose obligation it was to reassure his host that he means no mischief nor disrespect. The house was empty deserted. The door was open.

The front room was huge and blank. The walls and ceiling had once been done in beautiful white and gold patterned paper which now was watermarked and dingy. How many families had followed my own through that ramshackle place and called it home? Now it was derelict, useless except as a toilet for the random varmit and a target for the stones of small boys. Still, I didn't feel it was dead, not disengaged. It had seen too much of life and was remembered by too many to be dead. It existed, if for no other reason, because the old gent at the gas station knew where it was. But I was not comforted by any thought that I might be welcome. This was not a homecoming. I was, in fact, more than a little anxious to be away now that I had seen the place.

It was getting on toward late evening, the light beginning to fail; I did not want to go without visiting the nursery which owned the first three years of my life. I'd know it if I saw it. I tried first one room and then another, but none seemed just right to me. In the river wing I found it. I smelled the dogwood then and felt the breath of the room around me in the twilight. An awe crept over me for all I had forgotten. I felt like an imposter, alone altogether in the vastness of my life. I stood, staring at the warped floor beneath my feet, remembering, not blinking, and then my eyes were drawn again to the window. She was there of course, my mother, framed at the sill against the fading light, bemused. She had on the nightgown she wore to her burying, and, when she was sure I had found her face, her eyes widened and she leaned in slightly opening her mouth and went, Shhhh! at me through her needle-black teeth.

John Creighton

ON CRITICIZING A FARMER FOR HIS LACK OF IMAGINATION

Eye after eye, I plant in cold earth.
I cover them up, and I scrutinize the dirt
Until the ground begins to crumble
And crack,—and two leaves on a stem
Beat the grasp of gravity.
I cultivate the plant, until it blossoms;
And when the vines die, I dig the roots.
I know, and do not need to imagine,
How God's green eye
Opens up
A potato.

Jim Parins

JOHN COONS PURSUED AND TAKEN

Pursued, John Coons stags the woods
Antlering aside needling branches of pines,
Leaping brush and fallen logs,
Dancing his high hinded white tailed
Slashing flight deeper into thickening dark.
Ignoring hunchback birds with fat feathery bellies
Glaring from reaches down,

He strides
Until wading marish on statue legs
And rasping air in swollen lungs,
He stumbles, slumps, and falls

Brokenly, collapsed.
Then in the dense and the thick
A pulsing flattening against ground,
Pressed throbs under leaves' spray,
Coons waits, an awful moveless.
The baying swells, like weeping open wounds,
Deepens, throaty, lusty, thirsty.
And the cringe chokes on his tongue,
Stifles cries, wombs himself

But for the eyes:
Ransack for refuge in the blackgreen forest
When the triumphant hounds crash in,
Racking and harrying teeth and tongues.

James J. McAuley

from REQUIEM

IV I sifted the coarse yellow sand
Through the hollow of my fist.
My heels dug inches in sand.
I bit on a reed from the dune
Where our loving had left its mark.
I tasted its salt; I made
Coarse music with it, rasping
The corncrake's misleading call.

The girl with me held wide
Her towel to show me her dark
Nipples, her silky dark pubis,
And covered herself again quickly.
Her laughter and my cry
Of shame and delight were flung
Like seed on the calm bay.

Oh survivors, who among you
Will grieve with me for those voices
Dying away in the whispering
Of small waves, the piping of birds?

VI The rocks here, if they sang,
Would chant, *Affirm, affirm!*
They pile down from the cliff,
A great choir petrified
In the act of singing the canticle's
Sublime chord: *Amen!*

From the clifftop, a summer forest
Spreads out a green infinity
To meet the infinite blue
Of the sky that commands, *Affirm!*

But the cell that set my hand
To trembling while I wrote
Lets go, and dies. I wait
For the shadow of the cliff
To darken the spilled rocks.

Then, having for this scene
Invented the dying sun,
I kneel in the wild grass
With nothing to deny.

Jerred Metz

TWO AGGADAH*

THE WARNING

By chance a potter was rummaging in a dark and rarely used corner of his workshop for some sticks with which to incise some fresh pots. He discovered a chunk of clay there that his apprentice had taken from the vat for his own use and profit. Usually the potter left the shop in his apprentice's care during the late afternoon and let him close the shop in the evening. (It must have been during such a time that the boy took the clay.) But on this day the potter stayed at the shop until the apprentice left for the night. Then he took the clay from its hiding place and broke it into three pieces. From one he made the figure of a potter working intently at the wheel. Then he made a smaller figure, a young man looking stealthily over his own shoulder toward the potter while dipping his hands into a vat where the clay was worked and stored. From the third piece he made the smaller details, the vat and wheel as well as a platform for everything to stand on. All this took only a few hours. He set the whole tableau in a place where the apprentice could not fail to see it.

When the apprentice arrived the next morning to open the shop he saw the figures and since the clay had not yet hardened, by mixing it with water he was able to work it back to the consistency needed to make the pots. He added this clay to the clay already in the vat. At just the time he finished, the potter arrived, and they began the day's work.

* A type of story or tale usually told as a moral exemplum of how to go about achieving a particular, righteous end. Earliest examples are found in the non-legal parts of the Talmud, esp. the Midrash.

HOW THE POOR WIDOW GOT MONEY FROM HER LANDLORD

A poor widow had no money to pay her rent or buy food. She knew if she went to her landlord with a sad face and wringing her hands he would know without a word being spoken that she had no money to give him. In his anger and because rent *is* rent and fair he would have her put out into the street. She also knew if he did *not* notice her tattered clothing and the sadness pleading on her face and hands he would soon learn from talking to her that his rent money was not in her pockets.

He would ask, "How are your children?"

"They go about in rags, half-starved, sickly, and poorly behaved."

If he would ask, "How are your fields?" and she would say, "It would have been better to have saved the seed to sell after harvest rather than labor for the little the land will bring, less produce than the seed that went to make it," he would know to send her off the land as quickly as he could.

If he would ask, "How are the sheep you graze on the land I rent you?" and she would answer, "Better to sell them now before they become even thinner, " he would know to begin looking for another tenant that very day.

If he would then turn to the matter at hand and ask what she had come for and what she wanted and she told him she needed another quarter of the year to gather the rent monies and she also needed a loan to help her through this hard time he would certainly refuse.

Instead of doing these things, the woman put on the least ragged of her clothes, carefully combed and washed, and bent a few nails and some wire into rings. She tied a string with a pierced stone hanging from it around her neck. She walked to his house with a bright step and a friendly face.

"How are you today, landlord?" she asked.

"And how are your children?" he replied.

"Like all children. Full of play and mischief, and staying out in the woods and fields when I call them to dinner."

"And how are those fields?"

"You shall taste the fruit of them soon enough," she said.

"The sheep, how do they do?"

"The fleeces so thick I can't feel the flesh beneath them. The ewes are all swollen. Lambing can't be far off."

"And what can I do for you?"

"I'm on my way to the market. Is there anything I can get you? Could you give me ten dollars in the meantime?"

And of course the landlord gave her the money, knowing his investment was secure.

Anne McKay

from **when swans were blue**

and if i cannot bless
those eyes
so lost in glass

then i will trust
thy wrist
that soft and tender place . . .

●

. . . but you dont know all of me
you havent yet remembered
me

●

he laid me on his plate
and ate of me

it was gorgeous
he was greedy . . .

where would i lie
if i could lie

how would i shine
if i could shine

i would lie
in the shine
of his eye
there i would lie
shining

●

i love a fiddler
and oh i love to dance

but you cant dance
with the fiddler

Eugenio Montale

HAPPINESS AT HEART

Happiness at heart, we walk
in fear at edge of blade,
you seem a flickering beam
taut, crackling ice to feet;
let him loving you best not touch you.

If you reach souls overwhelmed
by grief, and you appease them, your dawn
is sweet and precarious as nests on treetops.
But nothing redeems the tears of a child
when his balloon is lost amid the houses.

DEAR LIFE I DO NOT ASK OF YOU

Dear Life, I do not ask of you, perfect
features, flattering faces, or possessions.
In your unquiet rounds, honey and absinthe
taste almost the same.

The heart that scorns every beat
rarely suffers a shock.
The way a gunshot sounds
in the silence of the wood.

translated by D. M. Pettinella

RICHARD KOSTELANETZ

absurd the american novel: we come think absurd as peculiarly postsecond war and absurd mean embody very literary series absurd nonsensical ridiculous suggest ultimate the meaninglessness human ionescos chairs the model convention a lecturer addresses nonexistent in indecipherable this the surface the message supposed represent final of ninety year couple meaningless becomes symbol a void a term literature think used precisely possible does apply all works deal human in plays fiction sartre camus contrary surface realistic sense causality conventional character is with writer reader absurdity course credible truly literature not meaninglessness its moments accepts condition presents as theme literature an preposterous embodies stylized of reality than accurate of in it treat of significance as quality contemporary belief final or underlying of history embodies both small and entire both subject and form most body absurd is french particularly beckett eugene fiction absurd are later but in in nineteensixties find large of fiction novels stories james donald kenneth particularly novels want discuss closer catch22 joseph thomas v the factor john writer deal metaphysical create microcosm experience has symbolic stand larger issues european english writers create single image ionescos hired addressing nonexistent in last comment pim bag possessions mud existence waiting godot men for godot obviously not the absurdist contrast strategies overstatement than single scene although american treat areas human they exploiting areas symbolic for larger hellers which the focus the novels activities some soldiers the world pynchons has faintly plots portraying group american other search woman name with letter a conducted background european in twentieth and the factor in late and eighteenth tells adventures ebenezer england colonial with to smiths pocahontas the seventeenth and suit breadth interests these huge hellers pynchons to pages the factor 800 500 to page surface life of novelists more continuity incongruity meaning for portrays world which relation intention result discrepancy defines law catch22 books symbol in following between hellers character

Raymond Bialopiotrowicz

REVIEWS

Nabokov: His Life in Part, by Andrew Field, Viking Press, 284 pp., $15.00.

Like some elusive hawkmoth or blue, Vladimir Nabokov implacably resisted capture by critics who sought to net, mount, examine and classify the writer and the man. In his Montreux-Palace suite Nabokov guarded his personal privacy and remained almost inaccessible to the public. Although in recent years he consented to numerous interviews, his verbal games and his distaste for spontaneity—typed questions submitted, recomposed, typed answers dictated, revised, returned—denied interviewers a candid picture. Among the few who enjoyed a close association with Nabokov over the last decade is Andrew Field, critic, translator, academic, and now author of *Nabokov: His Life in Part.* Published just a few weeks before Nabokov's death, Field's book will undoubtedly "cast the first shadow" over future biographies of the author. This is unfortunate. Over the years Field retraced the steps of the peripatetic exile over half the globe, gathering facts, anecdotes, family trees, and miscellanea. But the result of his research is disappointing; his book is uneven and marred by stylistic affectation. As a biographer, Field lacks a sense of decorum as well as a clarity of purpose, and his book does not bring the "real life" of Vladimir Nabokov into clear focus.

One wonders, in fact, whether Nabokov is Field's main focus. His title, a coy allusion to his critical study, *Nabokov: His Life in Art,* is the first bad omen. And so prominent is the biographer's voice, so conspicuous is the first person pronoun, that one suspects the real subject of this book is Andrew Field. The opening chapter covers the Montreux period of Nabokov's life with quasi-conversations between Field and his sanguine hosts (asides from Nabokov and his wife appear affectedly in boldface). It is full of smug little flourishes and digressions which deflect attention from the subject to the biographer ("I am reasonably adept at playing Russian when I want to"; "I wrote a letter assuring Nabokov of my friendship. He liked the letter. I was expected for Sunday lunch as usual."). While this kind of thing is irritating to a person trying to read a "biography," it is frankly hilarious in short swatches, and fans of *Pale Fire* may find it good sport. Field's gratuitous translations from English to Russian call to mind the earnest pedant Kinbote. And with true Kinbotian solemnity Field proclaims: "There are, I must confess at the outset, ways (and I am not thinking now of his many virtues and attributes) in which I am too much like Vladimir Nabokov to judge him." Field does not enumerate these similarities— and the biography leaves the reader in the dark—but to paraphrase Kinbote, for better or worse, it is the biographer who has the last word.

The self-consciousness of the first chapter disappears (I think intentionally) as Field goes on to describe Nabokov's ancestry, boyhood, and youth. In a lucid, entertaining account, Field traces the political activities of the Nabokovs from the court of Ivan the Terrible to the evening of the political rally in Berlin where Nabokov's father perished by bullets meant for a rival. The reader sees the branches of the Nabokov family tree twist and turn with the vicissitudes of Russian politics down to their flowering in the vigorously apolitical exiled novelist. Field's sketches of grandfather D. N. Nabokov, Minister of Justice under two tsars, and of Nabokov père, member of the First Duma, political pamphleteer, and prisoner, are especially vivid. Equally interesting is the account of Nabokov's days at the Tenischev School under the tutelage of the "passionate dilettante" Vladimir Gippius. Field argues persuasively that this eccentric teacher of literature exerted an important influence on Nabokov, whose famous literary malice can be traced back to Gippius's classroom. Memorable experiences outside the classroom include Nabokov's loathing of the school bully, whom he later immortalized as the cretinous tyrant "Toad" in *Bend Sinister,* and his hatred of the obligatory annual field trip. Nabokov recalled a group excursion to Finland as a "horrible trip, horrible trip. Horrible. I remember it as the first time in my more or less conscious life when I spent one day without a bath."

Field is at his best when he recounts anecdotes. The numerous vignettes throughout the book add some dimension to an otherwise flat portrait of the artist. The amusingly incongruous picture of Nabokov as a farmhand, picking asparagus and sweet peas in southern France; Nabokov's visit to a lung specialist to find out, for a fee, how to kill his heroine in *King, Queen, Knave;* Nabokov writing his first English novel on a suitcase placed across a bidet in his French flat; Nabokov playing chess with World Champion Alekhine (and losing honorably) in a Berlin cafe —such details give Nabokov a palpable reality and afford the reader some views of the private man behind his screen. But the gaps between these anecdotes are packed with uneven and often tedious prose. When the writing is not simply dull, it is mannered and abrasive —a poor imitation, and at times an unintentional, embarrassingly heavy-handed parody, of Nabokov's inimitable and gracefully parodic style. A second-class conjuror, Field turns the jewelled Nabokovian pun to paste and panders his cheap substitutes on every page. (It is no excuse that so many, too many, of Nabokov's critics have done this and still do.) To read in Field's biography Nabokov's comments on a critic with a similar problem is delightful:." He adopted a strange method of writing an article on this or that author in the style of that author. That produced a stylistically pretentious effect." Just so.

Field admits that his book "does not come with the recommendation of Vladimir Nabokov," who spoke of this first biography as "an unsuccessful assault upon the *radiant, glacial, and final truth* of *Speak, Memory.*" Even with this caveat, it is disappointing to see how little *Nabokov: His Life in Part* adds to that lyrical autobiography. For all its radiance, *Speak, Memory* is incomplete, concluding as it does with Nabokov's departure for America in 1940, and Field's biography is primarily a dovetailing of that book. The last thirty-seven years, Nabokov's major creative period, occupy only fifty pages—roughly one-sixth —of the biography. There is almost no information about when and how the major works were written. Apparently hampered by Nabokov's habit of destroying early drafts and by a scarcity of personal letters, Field

marshalls the facts available to him without great discrimination or taste. On one occasion, for example, Nabokov appears, violently ill in the men's room; on another, he is vomiting blood. It is difficult to justify scenes like these in a serious biography, especially when one recalls Fyodor's parodic biography in *The Gift*. There, Nabokov used unpleasant physical details to poke fun at Chernyshevsky and his comic theories of life and art; here, similar details make Field appear a clown. Inoffensive, but certainly not new, is the account of Nabokov's teaching days at Cornell. That map of Dublin, made famous by the countless reminiscences of Nabokov's students, crops up again, along with the precise classification of Kafka's beetle (NOT a cockroach!) and the floor plan of the Samsa flat. But the bulk of this short chapter is devoted to Nabokov's relationship with Edmund Wilson. Their dispute in the *New York Review of Books* over Nabokov's *Eugene Onegin* is literary history, and Field passes over it quickly. He spends much time with Nabokov's friendship with Wilson, however, and using Wilson as a kind of reflector, displays Nabokov in a social context.

This effort to recreate the social and intellectual climate in which Nabokov developed is certainly commendable, but it is also the main reason for the book's lack of proportion. Field's interest in the Russian emigré experience leads him to dwell too long on Nabokov's years in Berlin and Paris. This section of his book is exhaustively researched and, for the most part, effective in showing Nabokov's literary connections. At times, however, Field indulges his interest in emigré literature too freely, and Nabokov recedes into the background as his biographer pursues tangents about other writers. When this occurs, biography gives way to cultural history and the book loses coherence.

Perhaps in self-defense, Field remarks early on, "It will be surmised that I have had difficult moments as I worked on this book." By the end it is clear how drastic an understatement that is. But the unusual difficulty of Field's task partially excuses the flaws in his book. Nabokov, to the end an illusionist, a verbal escape artist, a master of playful deceit, must have been an exasperating subject for a biographer seeking to discover the "reality" of his life. Nabokov himself demonstrated in his fictional biographies the many obstacles facing a biographer, and emphasized that the reality of another cannot be known. "You can get nearer and nearer, so to speak, to realtiy," said Nabokov, "but you never get near enough because reality is an infinite succession of steps, levels of perception, false bottoms, and hence unquenchable, unattainable. You can know more and more about one thing but you can never know everything about one thing: it's hopeless."

Reviewed by Melanie Cummins

Often in Different Landscapes, by Leon Stokesbury, University of Texas Press, 69 pp., $8.95 hardcover, $3.95 paper.

Leon Stokesbury's book is the first in the University of Texas Press Poetry Series. It is an auspicious entrance. The press has not stinted on production and this care is evident. In general, university presses give a lot better shake to books of poetry than do the New York houses. A brief look at New York production quality (of books of poetry) will verify this, and when one narrows the grid to first books of poetry, Stokesbury can feel assured and gratified. Considering, too, the fact that university presses generally keep a poet's work in print for a considerable time, the poets are far and away served better by them. There will always be some prestige in the New York houses, but this diminishes a bit as the poets come to see how often they are there to give "class" to the annual list and to take a fall for the Internal Revenue Service.

I have heard Stokesbury read many of the poems from *Often in Different Landscapes* and he reads them well. I recommend him to audiences roundabout the poetry circuit. Something that impresses one straightaway about the poems is that you know the poet has an ear.

The exploitation and control of sound are hallmarks of his art and the technical range is remarkable. "Looking for It," in which he plays with internal rhyme, is a case in point.

> He could sense it deep,
> running through the October
> leaf snows that were starting
> to drift down. Colors of blood
> were the maple leaves.

The modulation of deep-leaf-leaves is the sort of sound-play one can expect with Stokesbury, from the "deep" rhyming with the pivot "leaf," then "leaf" and "leaves" as alliterative liquids. A preponderance of sibilants in the poem seems appropriate to the tone and theme. As the man in the poem moves closer to the center of being through snow and leaf, sea and beach, the sounds shift from the strident "skitting," "stars," "sky," to "studied," on to the quieter "sifting," "senseless surgery," all of which is called for as one approaches that silence at the world's center, or to use a line from Howard Nemerov, the "stillness in moving things." ("The Gold Rush" exhibits a similar handling of internal rhyme and as deft a handling of sibilants.)

Another *tour de force* is "At My Great Aunt's." It is a sonnet, whose slant-rhymes are one of the most interesting features, (four-mirror, sit-faint, etc.). The sestet is particularly beautiful.

> And after we have left, my aunt will sit
> And watch the sunset strike her chandelier
> That throws a hundred rainbows on the wall.
> Those rainbows then will fade, and then grow faint,
> And finally each run down into a blur,
> Then out of sight somewhere, beyond recall.

The tone and elegance remind me somewhat of Donald Justice's work and this is high praise indeed.

I can't resist quoting in full one of the best poems in the book, entitled simply "Poem."

> In this print of Dürer's hanging on the wall
> The knight and horse are old but very strong;
> The lines run down his face, his body clothed
> Completely in thick armor that he loves.
> His friend, a dog, runs gladly at his heel,
> And they'll crush skulls before the day is gone.
> Behind him, loom monsters and monstrosities
> That he's absorbed, or beaten, either way.
>
> And Death arrives. His face sits on his sleeve,
> An hourglass in his hand. The knight—
> Is not afraid. No doubt he knows his way.
> And there, see, on a hill, the furthest thing
> Away, already passed, but visible, stand
> The towers of a town where peace might be.

Technical felicities aside, the intelligence and vision of the poem recommend the poet strongly.

Stokesbury's vision is often like that of Kafka's "Hunger Artist" who never could find any suitable food to eat in this world. He writes in "Little Keats' Soliloquy,"

> but I can't go through
> life this way, always outside

watching the baker
plopping pastries into
sacks for other kids.

Or, in another poem, "The Graduate Assistant Tells about His Visit": "There/really isn't too much here/for the price you have to pay." From his vantage point as alien hunger artist, Stokesbury sees the world as grotesque, apocalyptic, and even macabre. He writes in one poem, "Let my many gargoyle faces come whirling," and come whirling they do. In the title poem he tells us "And neither do I understand/where these recurring images come from, strange/images, often in different landscapes." In another poem his shoes become "two dark mouths." The poems "Beef," "The Lamar Tech Football Team Has Won Its Game," "Clever Hans," and "The Man Who Distributes the Fever Blister Ointment" offer us the American Grotesque as if Grant Wood and Breughel had collaborated.

One of the most striking views of the apocalypse is found in "Why I Find Myself Immersed in Few Traditions."

But let me tell you,
when our caryatids start crumbling,
and when we wait in our western airports
longing for tickets to non-existent lands,
our luggage heavy with a few big books,
then, buddy, it makes it pretty damned hard
to lean on the past, when you see all this as just
the final end of a lot of peristalsis.

The terror of the end is reiterated in "California" ("Let us go to the boats and launch out;/I think it would be best to run") and in the poem "Written in the Fall." Finally, there is a mysterious stranger in "The True Meaning of Life Revealed" who is worthy of Twain and Flannery O'Connor. The reader feels when finishing these poems that the foreboding is legitimate. This is not gratuitous trickery. It is the anxiety of the hunger artist. We would be selfish to wish that Stokesbury be forced to wait unduly long for the waiter to bring him something he finds suitable to his palate (though this hunger is the source of his art). Meanwhile, however, we can marvel at the sound of the crystal as it is struck, the design of the silver, and the haunting dignity of the diner seated at his table.

Reviewed by William Mills

The Civil War: A Narrative: III, by Shelby Foote, Random House, 1106 pp., $20.00.

Our national myth-and-purgatory has unfortunately been more a source of boredom during the past thirty years than a source of wonder, awe, or wisdom. And this is not unnatural when one considers that the overwhelming majority of the titles published about the years between Buena Vista and Appomattox fall into two equally banal categories.

The first includes those books, some of merely antiquarian interests but almost all springing from some parochial or eccentric viewpoint, which focus on a particular battle or general. They are "if only" books. If only a copy of Lee's orders during his invasion of Maryland had not been used by an aide to wrap cigars, found by two private Union soldiers (one hopes they got the cigars) and read by McClellan, who then came up on Lee at Antietam and defeated him. If only Pickett's command could have staggered as far as the Mississippi regiment did on the third day of Gettysburg. If only General Foghorn P. Cleghorn had been in command during the battle for Dead Dog, Alabama . . . and so on.

The second category is ineffably more boring. These books are the touched-up dissertations which examine, for instance, the role of the Persistent Whigs in Alabama during 1864. The additions to this category seem more and more strained with each passing season in academe, as more and more postage-stamp bits of ground are seen through stronger and stronger microscopes. One turns almost with relief to the sword-and-bosom historical novels that the Civil War has called forth in an inverse ratio to the number of swords and bosoms actually displayed.

There had really been only two great syntheses of the war before Foote's three volumes, and both came under fire from a discipline which is coming to think of multi-volume histories as quaintly Victorian and somehow not professional. J. H. Plumb recognized the shift in viewpoint a few years ago, in his *The Death of the Past:*" . . . at the turn of the century narrative history entered upon a sharp decline and is no longer practiced on the grand scale by professional historians." This remark was made in the context of a discussion of Frederick Jackson Turner's brilliant, incisive essays forwarding the "frontier thesis" in American history, and Plumb made the remark only after reading Hofstader's essays on Turner.

Allan Nevins wrote the first great synthesis. He wrote gracefully and incisively, but the strategy he chose for his examination of the whole Middle Period took him out of the running for the job of Compleat Civil War Historian. His remarks show why: "No writer treating the Civil War as a detached unit could fail to give emphasis to the Southern and Northern story. This history, however, has been planned to cover a much longer period and its emphasis falls on what is permanent in the life of the nation. . . . My regret over the abbreviation of the Confederate story is diminished by the fact that Southern historians have provided several admirable records . . . my regret that tactical military operations are crowded out of a work devoted primarily to political, administrative, economic and social history is diminished by . . . a long list of books. . . ." In other words, he writes from the dressing room of the champion.

Bruce Catton's is the second great synthesis. His captivating multivolume history of the Army of the Potomac is one of the most enduring literary monuments any command shall ever receive, and with this series under our belts, many of us were ready for his multi-volume history of the Civil War (done with the research assistance of E. B. Long) to be the answer to our prayers. The first volume, covering the first months, will probably stand for many years, but the following volumes are maddening. He gives the campaigns outside Virginia a lick and a promise and then turns with almost palpable relief to the big doings in front of Richmond. If the Civil War was our Illiad, Catton focused only on Achilles.

But with Shelby Foote's third volume, the culminating volume of a history that has taken him twenty years to write, we are home at last. Finally: a history of *the war itself,* both sides and all theaters, and a narrative of the problems of Lincoln and Davis that may never be superseded. One wonders who will have the temerity to try without finding a warehouse of unpublished records. Maybe two warehouses. Much more than either of the others, Foote's series is also the story of the common men and women of both sides, who were swept into a holocaust by the forces of history and by their own inept leaders. His vision is as valid for the Thirty Years' War or the English Revolution as it is for our own Civil War. In a war between brothers, there are no noncombatants and no winners. Foote also understands that once a war is launched it escapes the control of the president and the general staff and sometimes even of the field officers and assumes its own vicious contradictory life. But Foote's main contribution is one he didn't

hesitate to name in his bibliographical note at the end of the third volume. It is worth quoting:

> I wanted . . . to restore a balance I found lacking in nearly all the histories composed within a hundred years of Sumter. In all too many of these works, long and short, foreign and domestic, the notion prevails that the war was fought in Virginia, while elsewhere, in an admittedly large but also empty region known as the West, a sort of running skirmish wobbled back and forth, presumably as a way for its participants, faceless men without familiar names, to pass the time while the issue was settled in the East. . . . Donelson, with its introduction of Grant and Forrest onto the national scene, may have had more to do with the outcome than [Vicksburg or Gettysburg] for all of their great panoply, numbers and documentation.

Professional historians will object that because he hasn't examined the period's newspapers or the dozens of manuscript collections, Foote has only built a work pyramided on the works that have gone before, including those of Catton and Nevins. He acknowledges his debt to these last two (as Nevins included Foote in *his* bibliography), but this synthesis puts forth new interpretations which are woven into our only complete narrative of all the fighting with the fine hand of a novelist. It is quite evident to Foote, for example, that the North whipped the South into a bloody mess with one hand behind its back, and that the Southern common people lost the will to fight before, not after, Gettysburg.

The petulance of men like Lawrence Keitt of South Carolina who said when Sumter was fired on that he felt like he'd been "let out of school" came out on the battlefield between Confederate general officers as readily as it had between Northern and Southern Congressmen. The Battle of Atlanta was the only thing that stopped a duel between two Southern generals; Governor Joe Brown of Georgia threatened to secede from the Confederacy, perhaps thinking that one could not have too much of a good thing; and the old Whigs-turned-Rebels wailed and moaned that conscription and the suspension of *habeas corpus* were things they had hoped to leave behind them. One is forced to conclude, with Foote, that the South just wasn't ready for self-government.

Nor is Foote afraid to puncture a few inflated reputations. Lee, whose concept of a battle plan would horrify most ROTC students, could not control Jackson (or, later, Stewart). Jackson was ordered by Lee to make an attack on the Union right during Hooker's attack on Richmond from the Peninsula, but Jackson was weary and Jackson lay down to take a nap and that was that. Lee was deferential to his subordinates, but apparently wasn't bright enough to realize that they could not relay his trust because of their own shortage of brains. By 1865, he realized how things were and kicked Pickett out of the army for attending a fish fry while his division was being butchered, but by then it was a little too late.

My own favorite chapters in the book are those only a novelist could write because only a novelist has an eye for the telling detail, the succinct statement. Foote has captured the humor and humiliation, slaughter and honor, senselessness and genius of the war. A short interchange quoted in the book is as follows:

> Confederate, shouting across the lines: "Why don't you come over to our side? We're fighting for honor and you're fighting for money."
>
> *Union soldier:* "Well, I reckon each of us is fighting for what we need the most."

Pericles told the Athenians, in a long setpiece of oratory some of us have suffered through, that happiness was the state man aspired to, and that freedom was the basis of happiness and freedom was impossible without courage. Foote quotes the bloodstained diary of a dead Federal found at Cold Harbor: "June 2. Cold Harbor. I died today."

There are things in this monumental work we may not be happy with. No grand work done on a grand scale is without its "amiable little faults," but this is both the last and the best word on the glory and shame and bleeding of a war that had threatened to elude us as Lee had eluded all of Lincoln's commanders—except the last.

Reviewed by John Carr

The Biography of Alice B. Toklas, by Linda Simon, Doubleday, 324 pp., $10.00.

Seeing a new book about Alice B. Toklas brought to mind all those charming anecdotes and all those interesting people. It wasn't until I started to read the book that I realized that the author must write in the shadow of Gertrude Stein's prose and that all the stories are, in fact, already told. You do get a fuller, more truthful view of Alice from *The Biography of Alice B. Toklas* by Linda Simon, but I must admit that in this case I prefer the charming stories to the truth. For example, in describing Alice's youth in San Francisco in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas,* Gertrude Stein gives us a little portrait of Alice in her own voice. "I myself have had no liking for violence and have always enjoyed the pleasures of needlework and gardening. I am fond of paintings, furniture, tapestry, houses and flowers and even vegetables and fruit-trees. I like a view but I like to sit with my back turned to it." Linda Simon's forty-four pages on Alice's childhood contain interesting comments on the beginnings of Alice's lesbianism and provide a fuller account of Alice's life in San Francisco, but she doesn't come up with a portrait as perceptive as Gertrude Stein's. In Alice's own words, "Gertrude so often wrote of her work, her friends and herself with intimacy and precision that one hesitates to add to the choice she considered appropriate to tell."

In my opinion, the most interesting point in *The Biography of Alice B. Toklas* is that Miss Toklas not only approved the vague popular impression of herself but went to great lengths to see that this image was not broadened or deepened. The reason for this reticence seems to be partly her need for privacy and partly because she would not stand for anyone to contradict anything that Gertrude had written. "After nearly forty years of creating and publicizing the legend of Gertrude Stein, Alice would not permit a negative word or a prying eye." After Gertrude's death many writers approached Alice for help with critical works on Stein. With much trepidation and after ended friendships and hurt feelings, Alice agreed to help John Malcolm Brinnin with *The Third Rose,* a book about Gertrude. "Finally he agreed that the subject of Leo would be avoided. And most important to her [Alice], he agreed to minimize her own appearance in the book. After all, she told him, the country-side at Bilignin had been a stronger influence than she had ever been." Alice also worked with Max White on a book called *What Is Remembered.* It was about Alice's and Gertrude's life together. It turned out that they couldn't work together so Alice continued the book on her own. "Alice's version of her life, he [White] came to realize, was nothing but a store of well wrought anecdotes."

Alice B. Toklas, according to Ms. Simon, was a strong-willed, intelligent, opinionated woman who was very much in control. Her role in the famous salon on the rue de Fleurus was not what it appeared to be.

Although she seemed to be relegated to the kitchen where she entertained the wives while Gertrude talked to the geniuses, her influence was surprisingly great. In reality she was Cerberus at the gates of the apartments in the rue de Fleurus and the rue Christine. Those who remained in the good graces of Gertrude Stein and by necessity the approval of Alice. "Most guests never realized they were being scrutinized and mercilessly evaluated. Alice never did and never would cease in her analysis of Gertrude's friends, sorting in her mind the acceptable from the discardable. She could forget but not forgive, she had admitted. And rarely did she forget." One famous example of Alice's powers was her campaign against Hemingway. Gertrude loved Hemingway and encouraged his writing. He made Gertrude and Alice godmothers to his child. But Alice sensed that Hemingway was romantically attracted to Gertrude. Although Gertrude admitted a weakness for Hemingway, in the end Alice won. Hemingway decided that he thought that lesbianism was disgusting, and Gertrude responded with a very cutting description of him in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*.

Besides this fuller view of Alice's role in Gertrude Stein's life, *The Biography of Alice B. Toklas* gives us information about the books that Alice wrote after Gertrude's death. The most well known of these is *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook*. She also wrote another cookbook called *The Aromas and Flavors of Past and Present* and a book about the writers she knew called *They Who Came to Paris to Write*. Alice wrote two articles; the first described "50 Years of French Fashion" and the second, "The Rue Dauphine Refuses the Revolution," discussed DeGaulle and the Algerian War. Her autobiography, *What Is Remembered,* turned out to be mostly about Gertrude Stein and ended with Stein's death.

Despite some interesting facts about Miss Toklas, *The Biography of Alice B. Toklas* is, on the whole, neither intellectually stimulating nor particularly amusing. Ms. Simon spends far too many pages telling us about people, times, and incidents whose stories have already been told by Gertrude Stein. Old information about artists, Alice's and Gertrude's work during the war, their car, and their trips to the United States is simply repeated without its original charm.

Linda Simon does include some very interesting asides that make the book worth a look. There are over twenty pictures of Alice, Gertrude, their friends, and their families. A few of them show us a surprisingly glamorous side of Alice. There is an extensive bibliography and a fascinating appendix which clarifies many of Gertrudes Stein's verbal puzzles.

The author of *The Biography of Alice B. Toklas* makes good use of several quotes from Henry James to illustrate her ideas about Alice. One from *The Portrait of a Lady* is especially appropriate. ". . . she only had a general idea that people were right when they treated her as if she were rather superior. Whether or no she were superior, people were right in admiring her if they thought her so; for it seemed to her often that her mind moved more quickly than theirs, and this encouraged an impatience that might easily be confounded with superiority."

Reviewed by Marsha Biguenet

The American Police State, by David Wise, Random House, 437 pp., $12.95.

In at least one trivial sense Richard M. Nixon is the American equivalent of Adolf Hitler: both are the subjects of a vast and ever-growing literature interpreting and re-interpreting their times, their policies, and their personalities.

One of the recent additions to this literature is David Wise's *The American Police State*. Wise concludes, on the basis of a progression of events and revelations—Vietnam and its secret history (as exposed in the Pentagon Papers), purloined FBI documents, Watergate and the various media and congressional investigations which it spawned—that we have witnessed over the years the creation in America of "a government that seeks to intimidate and suppress political opposition by means of police, especially a secret national police organization." He believes this police state to be uniquely American because it has "managed to grow and operate within, or at least along side, the democratic system" even though it violates the protections of the laws and the Constitution (including many guarantees of the Bill of Rights).

To document his thesis, Wise presents a series of case studies of individual citizens whose rights were violated by illegal investigations. These constitute the bulk of his book. He begins with the wiretapping of officials and newspaper reporters to discover leaks about key elements of Dr. Kissinger's foreign policy. He makes a fairly strong case that Kissinger knew of and approved these taps, despite his equivocal and misleading public statements about his innocence. Wise discusses the White House's use of private cops to spy on political enemies (the frequent tailing of Senator Edward Kennedy being the most infamous example), and then moves on to the use of burglaries by the White House agents as well as by the FBI. He shows how they were an integral part of electronic snooping, since very often the planting of an electronic bug (as opposed to a wiretap) required a surreptitious entry. Relying on the Church and Pike Committee investigations, he examines how the CIA's spying, dirty tricks, assassination plots, and *coups d'états,* all originally meant to be used overseas, suddenly came home. He also attempts to detail the role of the CIA in Watergate, and shows that the CIA assisted in Nixon's cover-up from the outset; and he stresses that at least one motive for this cooperation was the desire to hide its own assistance to the White House Plumbers. Wise also investigates the FBI, which was operating a mini-police state well before the CIA and the Executive Office got into the business. He characterizes J. Edgar Hoover as a "blackmailer" and outlines Hoover's willingness to wiretap for LBJ at the 1964 Democratic Convention, the surveillance and harassment of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the attempts to infiltrate and disrupt various radical groups deemed by Mr. Hoover to be "subversive." (Wise does not discuss, because it was not then known, Mr. Hoover's investigation of the women's movement.) The IRS abuses of power—from selective audits of Nixon's political enemies to spying into the sex and drinking habits of Americans—are also recounted. A chapter ominously entitled "1984" is simply a case study of a Defense Department consultant, Dr. William R. Van Cleave, who was ordered by Nixon to undergo a polygraph test to discover if he was responsible for leaks about the SALT negotiations. Undoubtedly the intent was to intimidate Van Cleave, and on this count Nixon was successful; however, the test yielded no positive results, and one cannot escape the conclusion that here (as in other instances) the American police state resembles the one-reelers of Mack Sennett more than the pages of George Orwell.

As a former White House correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune* and the author of two previous books dealing with government chicanery *(The Politics of Lying* and *The Invisible Government)*, Wise should be a master of the art of writing fairly straightforward, reportorial accounts of these events, with details culled mostly from previously published sources, especially government documents. But he has supplemented the present study with "two hundred interviews conducted . . . from 1974 to 1976." Wherever possible, Wise tried to interview "primary sources involved in the events," and he claims that much of the material published here has never been published before. This may be so, but whether it had to be published at all, particularly

in such detail, is a separate question entirely—for nearly all of Wise's chapters are laden (if not leaden) with minute details of undercover operations (e.g., what the file folders looked like, how they were delivered) and elaborate footnotes that are caricatures of academic style.

Even ignoring the footnotes, the text is frequently cluttered. The opening chapter details all fourteen of the Kissinger-instituted wiretaps, giving the reader endless tidbits and chit-chat about the personal lives of the individuals involved (their schooling, family background, etc.). At one point, the chapter on the political police traces the pathetic attempts of Anthony Ulasewicz (the ex-New York cop hired by the White House) to set up a "pad" in New York in which he might seduce secretaries who might eventually be blackmailed into providing information damaging to Nixon's political enemies. As in other instances, these escapades are amusing and illuminate the element of sheer buffoonery that often accompanied the White House's undercover activities, but they are quite inessential.

There are two exceptions to the preceeding criticisms—the aforementioned case study of Dr. William R. Van Cleave, and the lengthy but fascinating chapter on the travails of Leslie Bacon, a young woman held for questioning in connection with the 1971 bombing of the U.S. Capitol. Much of the chapter is an extended interview with Bacon (now settled and raising a child) in which she narrates in unique detail her Kafkaesque experience of grand jury appearances, indictments, and general harassment while in custody. Both Bacon and Wise see her experience as typical of the Nixon Administration's efforts to use the Justice Department, federal prosecutors, grand juries, and groundless indictments to harass the radicals by forcing them into endless legal appearances, procedures, and fees.

In her way, Ms. Bacon proves to be quite eloquent. Especially moving is the very last paragraph, a peculiar echo—coming from a radically different generation—of Justice Brandeis's famous Olmstead dissent in which Brandeis stated that governmental law-breaking breeds contempt for all law. Ms. Bacon, who now cares only about "freedom, composting my garbage, and feeding my baby," concludes:

> I'm not going to hold up the Constitution and say this is the greatest thing that ever happened in the history of the world, but they were violating the Constitution in doing the things they did to me. They were breaking their own rules. I mean, I don't know what the system would be like if it worked.

The deep questions raised by Wise's description of the American police state are fascinating. May individual rights be violated when upholding them would threaten national security? What is national security? How do we stem the growth of presidential power coupled with technological advances and the growth of corporations whose interests and resources rival many world governments (our own included)? How do we bridle bureaucracies run amok (CIA and FBI most notably) because of a near criminal lack of oversight? Is it possible in present-day America to reconcile the guarantees of the Bill of Rights and due process of law with the pragmatic, success-oriented American mentality (of which Nixon and his aides were a crude example)? What is the nature of a political mind that can tolerate and even encourage sometimes bitter and radical dissent? All are implicit, and occasionally touched upon, in Wise's discussions, but they are treated too glibly.

In his final chapter, Wise does try to state what is most important—that a government must not break the law to enforce the law. He also tries to show how such abuses can be avoided in the future. He suggests: greater watchfulness by Congress (including a joint committee to oversee intelligence activities), greater control of the bureaucracy by the administration in power, and new laws to replace the dangerously vague ones currently governing the FBI and CIA.

But here, too, as with the interviews and the retellings of events, the solutions are familiar ones. In some instances, they are facile ones: could yet another congressional committee to oversee the intelligence bureaucracies somehow perform what so many previous ones failed—quite consciously in many cases—to do?

To begin to comprehend the Nixon years as more than the most obvious oozing to date of a cancer that has been festering for decades, one must be willing not only to describe and catalogue endless petty details—as Wise has done—but to ask more incisive, more outrageous questions. It is necessary to understand how drastically our politics have changed, how much of a facade carried on for the media they have become. It is necessary to realize that there are countless invisible governments within the governmental and corporate bureaucracies, pursuing countless schemes that have as much to do with economics as with quieting political dissenters. And it is necessary to develop a theoretical—indeed epistemological—starting point that will enable one to separate the trivial from that which is crucial and which truly endangers our liberties. Others—I. F. Stone, Jonathan Schell, J. Anthony Lukas, Howard Kohn, and even (maybe especially) Norman Mailer—have recently done so quite brilliantly. If one has started with David Wise, and has stayed with him long enough to become genuinely concerned about privacy, freedom, and related issues, one must in the end turn to these others as well. For innumerable reporters have already told us *what* happened. The time has come to discover *why*.

Reviewed by Philip A. Dynia

Henry Roth: The Man and His Work, by Bonnie Lyons, Cooper Square Publishers, 182 pp., $7.50.

Though greeted by friendly reviews and having sold well when it appeared in 1934, Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* was almost forgotten until 1964 when the paperback edition appeared. By now, critics and readers realize it is one of the most outstanding novels ever written by an American. As a novel about childhood, it deserves comparison with fiction by Twain, Dickens, and Dostoyevsky.

Bonnie Lyons's book about Roth (the first book-length study of him) is divided into four sections. The first section describes the background of the novel in terms of its sources in Roth's life, the initial reviews of the novel, and Roth's own response to his belated success. The second and principle part of the study is devoted to a close reading of the motifs and language of the novel. Part three deals with literary influences on Roth and raises the problem of *Call It Sleep* as a "Jewish novel." The final part of the study discusses Roth's other and shorter fiction. An appendix consists of an interview with Roth done in 1972.

Both the interview and the first part of the book detail for us once again the source of the novel in Roth's life and in his imagination. More interesting than the literal origins of the novel is the way Roth modified that reality for the purposes of the fiction. And once again we are left to ponder Roth's artistic decline and near silence after the achievement of *Call It Sleep* (a prophetic title).

The close readings of the novel are insightful when they deal with Roth's layers of language (English, Yiddish, Hebrew, Polish), and particularly so when they deal with the relationship between the language and the consciousness of the central character, the child David Schearl. Ms. Lyons is adept at pointing out the relationship between the novel's use of an objective narrative and the subjective impressions of the boy.

Lyons shows how the two elements are neatly juxtaposed, almost to the point of fusion at times, adding to the effect that the book is completely written from within the consciousness of the child while it's actually written in the third person.

Less persuasive are Ms. Lyons's efforts to impose stages of classical mystical experience on the experience of the child in the novel. Indeed, the fondness that she and other critics have for the last chapters of the book indicate a failure to recognize that it is the least artistically convincing part of the book. In the climactic chapters toward the end, Roth shows signs of overreaching, straining toward "the proletarian novel," which forces him to move beyond the consciousness of the child. For the first time, in these chapters, Roth over-writes. Such writing as "Nothingness beatified reached out its hands" does not make us feel that Roth is at his peak in those chapters which are so uncritically celebrated.

Ms. Lyons is correctly cautious when approaching the question of *Call It Sleep* as a "Jewish novel," though she finally succumbs to calling it a Jewish novel in terms of David Schearl's "mystical quest." Certainly the novel comes out of a Jewish experience and milieu (though it is by no means restricted to the world of immigrant Jewry). And certainly Roth has written an English greatly influenced by Yiddish, unmatched by any writer before or since *Call It Sleep*. (Only Bernard Malamud compares with him in this regard.) But it's best to approach this question of the Jewish novel through our sense of the text rather than through external categories of Jewish mysticism. A comparison of the novel with *Sons and Lovers* would be more illuminating than attributing to it Jewish mysticism.

The interview with Roth is illuminating in what it tells us about the genesis of *Call It Sleep*. And Roth tells us how one work can influence another when he observes that what he gained from reading *Ulysses* "was this awed realization that you didn't have to go anywhere at all except around the corner to flesh out a literary work of art—given some kind of vision, of course." Roth is also appropriately tough-minded about the condition of his main character at the end of the novel—where the character achieves a momentary transcendence, but only momentary, and at a great price.

What comes through in Roth's interviews and recent pieces is his inability to face the contradictions roaring within him and to write out of that condition. The danger now is that he will succumb to too many interviews discussing his writing and his state of mind.

At the end of Roth's brief parable "The Dun Dakotas" (the finest thing he has written since *Call It Sleep*), an Indian chief allows a party of white men to pass through his territory after he has beaten them in a poker game. Whether that party is about to enter a new land of active experience or a land of peace and silence is not clear.

Reviewed by Richard J. Fein

Escape from Evil, by Ernest Becker, Free Press, 188 pp., $9.95.

Ernest Becker's final book enlarges upon the theme of his 1974 Pulitizer Prize-winning *The Denial of Death*. The posthumous *Escape from Evil* is a dying man's magnum opus, published against his will, but edited into an articulate statement by Becker's widow. Inveighing against the persistent Enlightenment view that a perfectable mankind is corrupted by an unjust society, Becker insists that evil has its source in man himself, notably in his fear of death and subsequent attempt to deny mortality by imposing suffering on others.

In tone and argument, the dying author's philosophical statement could have been made by Marcus Aurelius eighteen centuries ago. It is essentially a Roman tragic statement, bereft of heroism, suffused with pessimism. Since life is hopeless, man does best to accept his fate and deal civilly with his fellows. Instead, man is a dreamer. Fearing death, he denies it, creating immortality for himself by enslaving and sacrificing others.

What distinguishes Becker's book from a stoic's tract is the ease with which he calls upon social scientists and theoreticians to give weight to his indictment of man's mischievous search for eternal life. Freud, Marx, Rank, Rousseau, A. M. Hocart, and Norman O. Brown, to name just a few, visit Becker's colloquium on the human condition and make their remarks.

He begins by having us contemplate each person standing on the summit of the carcasses of all the animals that have died to keep him alive:

> The horizon of the gourmet, or even the average person, would be taken up with hundreds of chickens, flocks of lambs and sheep, a small herd of steers, sties full of pigs, and rivers of fish. The din alone would be deafening. To paraphrase Elias, each organism raises its head over a field of corpses, smiles into the sun, and declares life good.

This picture is bound to upset the typical twentieth century urban reader, but only because he is so far removed from nature. An agrarian society sees life and death, growth and decay, in their proper ecological setting, not in slaughterhouse and supermarket terms. Of course, nature feeds on itself, but we are altogether more sentimental about animals than about our fellowmen. Picture alternatively each person standing on the summit of all the fruit and vegetables that have "died" to keep him alive. The picture changes from outrageous to simply silly.

Evil, however, according to Becker, begins not within man's belly but because of his intellectual hungers:

> Man transcends death not only by continuing to feed his appetites, but especially by finding a meaning for his life, some kind of larger scheme into which he fits . . . . In seeking to avoid evil, man is responsible for bringing more evil into the world than organisms ever do merely by exercising their digestive tracts. It is man's ingenuity, rather than his animal nature, that has given his fellow creatures such a bitter earthly fate.

Quoting Otto Rank, to whose memory this book is dedicated, Becker maintains that history can be understood as a succession of ideologies that are consolations for death. In his synthesis of cultural anthropology, he presents a fascinating display of primitive ritual and argues strongly that primitive man was as logical in his magic as we are in our technology.

Becker explains sacrifice as the ritual manipulation of victims and identification with their spirits. If primitive man could not create or sustain life, he could manipulate it and he could destroy it, feeding upon the victim and augmenting his own life with the life he had taken.

Becker is ever synthetic, associative, and enthusiastic. This is an extraordinary book of ideas, but it utterly avoids two matters that cry for something more than dismissal: a theological explanation of evil and the question of the meaning of life.

He concludes that evil is not so much an expression of man's viciousness as of his fright in the face of limitation and his rationalization of that anxiety into ideology. He suggests that the panic may be tamed by Marxism's ability to cast out the gods in favor of a collective seeking of earthly needs and by the success of psychoanalysis in convincing people to scale down their dreams.

Ernest Becker died, at age 49, of cancer.

Reviewed by David Yount

American Journal: The Events of 1976, by Elizabeth Drew, Random House, 535 pp., $12.95.

Ever since Henry Adams placed Ms. Madeleine Lee, the heroine of *Democracy: An American Novel* (1880), at the very center of American politics, in Washington, D.C., readers have been aware of the special reportorial opportunities represented by a keen feminine intelligence deeply engaged with questions of political power. In her own distinctive way, using television as well as the pages of *The Atlantic, The New Yorker,* and her two books, Elizabeth Drew has proved herself a worthy successor to Madeleine Lee. First in *Washington Journal: The Events of 1973–1974* (Random House, 1974), and now in her *American Journal,* Ms. Drew has shaped the most dramatic political events of the 1970's—Watergate and the election of Jimmy Carter—into artistic chronicles of our times. *American Journal* raises political journalism to the status of serious literature even though it does not satisfy every demand of an art form.

For one thing, the re-creation of an election campaign is an act of memory and sometimes makes the writer guilty of encouraging a false and misleading sense of suspense. When events have already reached a well-known conclusion, can we sincerely care about the "Henry Jackson," "Ronald Reagan," "John Connally," or even the "Gerald Ford" of 1976 as we read our newspapers in 1978? Time has played its hand, and the resulting ironies have turned suspenseful expectation into poignant epitaphs. To learn that Hubert Humphrey "will announce his decision tomorrow" has now become a pathetic introduction to the historical truth of his career: "He's wanted to be President his whole life, and this is his last chance." So it was, and such are the dangers of writing about politics in the present tense.

Of these dangers, Elizabeth Drew is certainly aware. She realizes that she is working somewhere between television's insistence on "colorful" panorama and a firmly historical point of view that comes only with the passage of sufficient time. In a perceptive aside from the story of an election, she tells us:

> When histories of this year are written, there will undoubtedly be a temptation to see more of a pattern in events than there has been. Even contemporary accounts often tend to find more meaning in events than is there—to overconclude. That is happening in the case of this year's elections. . . .

Finding a meaning in events is the business of both journalism and history; and, as Watergate proved to most of us, we have the greatest possible need to call upon our political observers for sufficient information and interpretation so that we may protect ourselves from criminal misuse and human outrage. *Washington Journal* told the story of our national failure to know enough in 1973–74; *American Journal* is written with the authorial conviction that we can do better as a nation by learning enough to choose our leaders with care and understanding.

Not every reader will welcome Ms. Drew's optimism, of course. Yet even a confirmed skeptic must admit that her view is based on more than fifteen years of experience in Washington and in politics. It began, as I recall, with a stint as a researcher-writer for *Congressional Quarterly,* one of the most authoritative witnesses to the political scene. And as this book shows, Ms. Drew has retained the skills of the investigator while sharpening her own insights on the whetstones of intuition and experience. She cuts through the fog of campaign verbiage to tell us that Californian Jerry Brown "maintains a three-bedroom house in Laurel Canyon, in Los Angeles . . . wears expensive-looking, conservative suits (usually gray pin stripe), initialled shirts, and ties from Giorgio, a plush Beverly Hills shop, and he has enjoyed dinner parties at Malibu, but by the simple expedient of turning down Reagan's mansion he has got across the idea that he is 'ascetic.'" So much for what she sees in the man; but what of the meaning? "Asceticism is an old trick, which has been employed by some masterly moral and political leaders. Socrates. Ghandi. What would happen if Ralph Nader moved out of his rooming house and into a house in Georgetown?"

As we read, we grow to trust Ms. Drew's portraits and her subtle judgments, perhaps too much. Even though we learn only a little about who and what she is as a person, it is impossible not to nod approval when she tells us again what we have long believed: ". . . if I have learned anything this year, it is that politics has little to do with logic." Unfortunately, most of what Ms. Drew has "learned" is hidden in brief asides and kept off-stage, out of the way of the star players, who finally emerge as so many pasteboard figures, antiseptically free of all the dirt, the lusts, the attractions and repulsions, which together might make them more human for us. In the past, we have been satisfied with such incomplete, billboard likenesses, smiling or looking stern, claiming to be an exterior only. Yet the dusty pasteboard portrait of Richard Nixon lingers in the memory and leads us to ask for some fuller accounting of the humanity (or lack of it) underneath the smiles and behind the rhetoric of politics.

Surely it would be unfair to ask Elizabeth Drew to limn her principals as a novelist of manners would. Still, this reader wonders if she could not be encouraged to tell us what she knew—as a woman as much as a political reporter—when Cornelia Wallace "went out for a walk" and left Ms. Drew to care for an invalid husband. Human truths may be the most significant kind of political reporting, and a journal that employs the seasonal cycle of a year of political experience should not retreat from the portrayal of nature in other forms as well.

American Journal, even in its incompleteness, still displays the unity and coherent strength of serious art. The skillful editing of William Shawn—certainly an unelected genius of a rare kind—has contributed much, and the book itself is attractive in many ways. In her text, Ms. Drew uses the secondary theme of the danger in "nuclear proliferation" as a dramatic counterpoint to her election story. Often she uses it with good effect, but her conclusive "no one knows how to call the whole thing off" appears to be curiously out of phase with the campaign, and the impact of her warning is reduced. Obviously, she cares about everything that seems to her important in politics, but if we ask much—perhaps too much—from her books, it is because she has given us such promising evidence of what serious political writing might achieve.

Reviewed by Earl N. Harbert

Flight to Canada, by Ishmael Reed, Random House, 179 pp., $6.95.

According to the theologian Nathan A. Scott, "there is no longer any robust common faith to orient the imaginative faculties of men with respect to the ultimate mysteries of existence." How do modern writers face the desolate frontier that appears if they accept this statement? What do they do when they realize with Christopher Lasch that the happy hooker has replaced Horatio Alger as the prototype of success, and that even Alger provided an unhealthy model? There is the option of writing as if fundamental, binding beliefs prevailed. But such a solution is false, and the world deals harshly with writers who traffic in tin-plated hopes. On the other hand, modern writers who try to mirror the spiritual desert are just as vulnerable. They too are likely to be greeted with howls of excoriation. We have lost the language of communion, the words of community. The wisest modern writers offer neither hope nor a mirror. If they are novelists, they write a fiction of negation, punctuating their messages with thoughtful silence. Or they write science fiction, engage in fabulation, give reports from the

uncharted regions of the mind. The ultimate mysteries of existence lie within the black holes of space or within the psyche. Such writers as Gabriel García Márquez, Amos Tutuola, Samuel Delaney, and Ishmael Reed cannot restore common faith, but they do make books that reorient us to ultimate mysteries.

Reed is a master of reorientation by means of comic satire, a neo-hoodoo detective who uses his psychic powers to reveal the hidden sources of contemporary disorder. And if one laughs too heartily at the zany wit, popular culture jokes, and high jinks in his double-edged comedies, one misses the seriousness of his work. Yes, Reed's novels are very funny. They are also experimental and difficult. Referring to his third novel *Mumbo Jumbo*, one critic wrote: "Reed's books are such puzzling jumbles, they don't make sense to most people. After the complex mixtures are sorted out, there isn't much of value in the books." Yet, what I find most valuable in Reed's work has to do with sorting things out. If we don't habitually sort things out in our daily lives, he forces us to sort out complex cultural and historical ideas in order to comprehend his fiction.The puzzling jumbles consist of his use of real history and persons in the fiction, the metaphysics of detective fiction, black folklore, myth, voodoo (as cultural reality, not superstition), trivia, and techniques of electronic media. The more one knows about the traditions from which Reed is working, the more meaningful his achievement becomes.

Reed's experiments are rooted in the tradition of writing that derives from the inner life of black folk. Richard Wright gave the tradition a most intriguing name: The Forms of Things Unknown. Wright referred to the tendency in black literature to draw substance again and again from the springs of folk utterance, folk beliefs, and music. Reed has shown that he has studied and respects The Forms of Things Unknown, explicitly in his introduction to *19 Necromancers From Now: An Anthology of Original American Writing for the 1970s* and implicitly in his "Neo-Hoodoo Manifesto" (first published in the *Los Angeles Free Press*, September 18–24, 1970).

In the introduction to *19 Necromancers*, Reed insisted that new black writing rejects other people's literary machinery and mythology in favor of what is authentically black. Such authenticity is found by a "return to what some writers would call 'dark heathenism' to find original tall tales, and yarns with the kind of originality that some modern writers use as found poetry—the enigmatic street rhymes of some of Ellison's minor characters, or the dozens." In Reed's language, this authenticity is designated "neo-hoodooism."

Hoodoo embodies the psychic and spiritual powers of black folk; and by immersing his writing in it, Reed seeks to explore the hidden recesses of black creativity. He proclaimed in "Neo-Hoodoo Manifesto" a program for black art that would incorporate the features of black music and dance, constant innovation, and improvisation. The artist would return to the mysteries of "a Forgotten Faith." The great strength of black folk tradition is its uncanny ability to adopt and make new whatever it encounters.

It is no surprise that his fiction has more in common with television than with what is usually called black writing. Like television, Reed's fiction opens us to new ways of *sensing* the world. Marshall McLuhan has been telling us for a long time that electronic media do not permit cognition. They permit recognition. Reed's is a fiction of recognition. It prepares us for a new epistemology.

Reed's first novel, *The Free-Lance Pallbearers*, is an acid satire, an attack on assumptions about social organization and the value of pragmatism. His second, *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down*, shows the futility of modern communications systems and undermines our idea of history as causal process. *Mumbo Jumbo* is a critique of the Harlem Renaissance and of the notion that any set of events can be accidental. His fourth novel, *The Last Days of Louisiana Red*, complete the cycle of conversion by turning against even the minimal certitudes of the preceding books.

These novels are informed by the destructive intention that gives vitality to the tradition of satire. By distortion of man's images of self and his institutions, the satirist attempts to inspire improvement in human affairs. Reed not only distorts the images, but distorts the very source from which the images come: the mind.

As he faces the desolate frontier, he sees that man will cope effectively with the spatio-temporal dimensions of his present only by recognition of pattern and by decoding the myths that sustain the pattern. His fiction invites us to creative rejection of the "normal" base of epistemology, and to a combination of common sense analysis with arcane methods of knowing, like hoodoo or ESP. In a sense, his fiction is theoretical in both content and praxis. So much of his fiction has reference to history and contemporary events that demands verification from without; it demands recognition of the absurdity of slavish attachment to programmed ways of knowing the world.

Although Reed is as comic as ever in his fifth novel, *Flight to Canada* signals that his search for freedom has taken him into new territory. The prototype for this novel is the slave narrative. Raven Quickskill escapes from the Arthur Swille plantation in Virginia and manages to reach Canada by way of Emancipation City. Quickskill is a poet, and the sale of his poem "Flight to Canada" to the *Beulahland Review* helps him in his flight to the promised freedom of the North. By the end of the story, Quickskill discovers that Canada promises nothing more than the illusion of freedom. He returns South to the Swille plantation, which is now the property of Uncle Robin, to write a book about Uncle Robin, a superb trickster.

Just as Alex Haley's *Roots* is a major saga of personal and group identity, *Flight to Canada* is a novel about Ishmael Reed's and America's suffering the effects of cultural slavery. Historical slavery in the United States is only a metaphor that represents how deeply enslaved we are to things and ideas. As we laugh at the antics of Raven, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mammy Barracuda, Abraham Lincoln, Arthur Swille, Princess Quaw Quaw Tralaralara, and other "characters," we realize that *Dysathesia Aethipica* is something more than an ethnic disease, and that Uncle Robin is very correct in claiming that "Canada, like freedom, is a state of mind."

For Ishmael Reed, *Flight to Canada* was a necessary return to roots, a retreat to discover where Reed—alias Raven Quickskill—is at the moment. For readers, *Flight to Canada* is the experience of the desolate frontier, of sensing the mystery a little more clearly.

Reviewed by Jerry W. Ward

Drumvoices: The Mission of Afro-American Poetry, by Eugene B. Redmond, Anchor/Doubleday, 480 pp., $3.95.

Eugene B. Redmond is a distinguished poet and teacher. He has published four books of poems: *Sentry of the Four Golden Pillars* (1970), *River of Bones and Flesh and Blood* (1971), *Songs from an Afro/Phone* (1972), and *In a Time of Rain & Desire* (1973); and he has edited Henry Dumas's posthumous fiction and poetry: *Play Ebony, Play Ivory* (1974), *Ark of Bones and Other Stories* (1974), and *Jonah & the Green Stone* (1976). In *Drumvoices*, Redmond uses his experience as a poet and a teacher of literature to compile an innovative critical history of black poetry from its folk origins to the 1970s. No matter how well informed the critic, the job of explaining the history of poetry is formidable, requiring sensitivity to the creation of poems at a particular time, the influence of non-literary forces, and the complex reasons

we have for wanting to know and use data about literature at present. Fortunately, Redmond has that sensitivity. He knows the magnitude of his task as well as its inherent limitations. In the hands of a less skilled writer, *Drumvoices* would have been merely an ambitious but superficial overview. Redmond poses significant questions, raises doubts about the ideological matrices in which black poetry has been evaluated, and tries to dismantle the star-system that precludes any honest, comprehensive discussion of poetry. Thus, *Drumvoices* is a substantial contribution to the much needed assessment of literature in the history of black Americans.

Redmond's special contribution is neither a series of penetrating insights about the history of the poetry nor a sustained evaluation of the ongoing creativity behind the poetry. What permits us to call *Drumvoices* an innovative critical history is his singular vision, his impositon of that vision as organizing principle. His thesis is that

> God's trombones have historically blared through or soothed the harsh and stark realities of the Afro-American experience; and that the sources (records) of these blarings and soothsayings, locked in cultural safe-deposit boxes of drums and the intricate acoustics of the folk, remain accessible to anyone desiring to tap them.

The real object of Redmond's study is the reciprocal impact of poetry and consciousness. He understands that *history* implies continuity and wholeness while *criticism* is by nature discontinuous and fragmented. To help resolve this dialectic, Redmond opts to subordinate his criticism in order to emphasize the unfolding of black poetry with all its contradictions and paradoxes, achievements and failures. Naturally, Redmond's method will seem most difficult to readers who expect a concise narrative about black poetry, because *Drumvoices* is the kind of critical history that forces one to think about issues rather than answers.

For future scholars of Afro-American poetry, *Drumvoices* will be an indispensable reference tool. One finds here the names of poets and books and magazines that are rarely mentioned in discussions that pretend to be rigorous and scholarly. As a guide for gaining access to the substance and richness of black poetry, *Drumvoices* is valuable and necessary.

Reviewed by Jerry W. Ward

The Snow Poems, by A. R. Ammons, W. W. Norton, 292 pp., $12.50.

In "Your Full-Service Mover, Madam," A. R. Ammons announces that since "we have failed to find/the single, the first . . ./unyielding reality," a metaphysical origin that continues to assert its certainty as a presence, we must attempt to locate a "necessary recalcitrance" in language itself. More specifically, (and here this testingly philosophic poem, like the others in *The Snow Poems*, absorbs and modifies the thinking of such contemporaries as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida) we may choose between two *negative* functions of discourse. In the first case we may find recalcitrance in the "unyieldingness to explanation, that/is, finding centers of operations/where, as with juggling, nothing is." The mode of "explanation" is temporary, serving to defer an "opacity" bound to return, for "explanation changes just itself,/an arrived-at nothing." How so?—"think of the medium, the medium's/malleability, explanation works in,/wordy nothingness." The second mode of discourse is the "work of art" which

> establishes an empty-centered space,
> spiral stabile, wordless where words
> may not go,
> a recalcitrance of a kind explanation
> can only sharpen itself against

For the work of art the paradox is that the "spiral stabile," or metal sculpture of frozen motion, is itself the "empty-centered space"—an absence, a nothing. In either case, "explanation" or "art," we are faced with a profound sense of absence that is at the heart of any notion of presence. Perhaps, as Derrida suggests, it is this fundamental absence that acts as a catalyst for the writer; it suggests a gap, a chasm that must be filled. As a result, instead of some primordial origin as the subject of this poetry, we find continual re-beginnings, what Ammons everywhere calls the process of "flow," of "flux," the *motion* of meaning.

And so even when we seem to confront a presence, we confront a presence constituted by the silence in language, a presence that Foucault says is "hollowed by absence." It is a "presence not regular but hastening" ("Light Falls"). Here is a paragraph from "Snow"—

> then there is the presence in
> the head, a figure that never
> speaks, immortal, apparently,
> who, even in one's death, has
> nothing to do with what is
> taking place and will not credit
> its reality, too bemused for
> assent or concern

A presence that glances toward what is absent, unconcerned, a discourse defined by its failures to bring to light its center of meaning? What are we to make of the author of such a situation? Who *is* this author? He is, claims Ammons in reversing the "explanations" of his earlier work, characterized not by the Emersonian central self, but by the discourse of the "other"—what some structuralists call the absent self. The poet Ammons goes so far as to leave

> the central self unattended,
> unworn while the untouchable
> other, far and away calls forth
> the bark, the slaver, the slobber,
> scenting: to pull up stakes!
>
> "The Heiroglyphic Gathered"

There is no direction here, only movement elsewhere. The recalcitrant center is ironically being forever decentered. As Ammons says in "The Prescriptive Stalls"—"I stand for/whatever will not come round/or be whole/or made out or reduced." He is the poet who stands *in* or *for* the missing, incomplete "other" that defines him, and which in turn can only be defined negatively in language. Thus he can be described by the play of surfaces that is his language, the "histories of redispositions" ("I Look Up Guff") that fail to encompass or center him. Indeed, *The Snow Poems* is structured as a diary of occasional observations, fragments of philosophic ideas, meteorological readings, that provide not specific meanings, but rather possible rhetorical strategies, levels of discourse, with which to trace the self's decenterings. Writing becomes in the words of Roland Barthes, an "intransitive activity"—or as Ammons phrases it, "I write this to be writing" ("The Snow Is Fine"). It is this activity itself, not some hermeneutical meaning but a means of establishing possible rhetorical strategies for a self, that becomes important as the poetic that guides Ammons's art. And it is this activity which comprises "the happiness of lingo" ("Rage Spells More"), the play of language that so characterizes this wide-ranging book.

Given these conditions it is not surprising to find that "the motion of the language/system corresponds to/the motion of the world system" ("You Can't Get It Right"). Everywhere the poet confronts a world that aspires towards the condition of language: "things/keep nudging me/to sidle with/them into/words" ("I'm Unwilling"). It is a world, like the poet's intransitive language, of pure telling:

> the wind's many
> motions, inscribe,
> a telling not of one
> thing to another, pen
> to paper, chalk to slate,
> skyscraper to groundbase,
> microinscription to fossil
> but undivided telling.
>
> "Nature As Waterfalls"

Or, where meaning might occur, it is "written/as on a tablet underwater" ("It's So Dry"), separate, other, characterized by its distance and its absence.

The Snow Poems is founded on two basic rhetorical strategies, the "arc" and the "weave" which attempt this coalescence of word and world. "The arc/of/the loops, the cradle/of sway" ("The Arc") is a parabolic discourse whose surface images or concepts are equidistant from a central "meaning" that always remains hidden. Rhetorically, this technique is revealed in Ammons's characteristic minimizing of subordination, and in his emphasis on co-ordinate constructions; one has only to remember the colons that link sections of *Sphere*, for example, and which appear in most of the poems in this volume. The poet attempts "the formation of gene arcs, contours,/sweeps, saliences, and spirals" ("8:45 AM— Doorbell Rings:Wife"). His arc suggests an open field of possibilities, a temporary and never fully circled enclosure:

> rhythm is the spreading out
> of sense so that the curvatures
> of intonation, gestures of
> emphasis, clusters of
> relationship can find dispositon.
>
> "The Temperature Rose"

The "weave" is also an open-ended process, and is opposed to the "net," a finished product:

> rising roar, crash
> muffling, sucking
> against the house
> and this
> with the sky gray gray as
> before as usual
> well but even so it's good
> weather for February
>
> great weather's
> destruction, though:
> the blue dry high
> radiant inanation
> shrinks brooks to crisp
> routes
> burns grass
> upholds dust
>
> weave is what it is:
> no matter the wisdom,
> perception: the truth,
> yes, but only because
> attendance to truth
> enlarges complexity:
> but is one wave of the
> weave balanced by an
> equal & opposite: that
> is important: is
> everything stressed but
> in its proper place:
> is consideration
> observed in the
> dispositions: not an
> ailing net but
> adequate weave
>
> "Tell What Will Not Tell"

The column on the right is a supplement to the left. Each text leads to the other. This binary technique, the weave, an extension of the use of the colon, is the foundation for a number of the poems, and it provides a process through which levels of discourse, as well as world and word, "interpenetrate."

But this interpenetration does not describe a continuity. The "curvature of definition," after all, like the tips of elm branches, ends in a "configuration of nothingness" ("8:45 AM—"). In fact, the radical shifts and breaks *within* poems are often as dramatic as those *between* poems (which are distinguished only by first line titles). In "The Temperature Fell" Ammons says that "systems . . ./do not melt and flow/directly/one to the other but/turn/on single glints of/perception,/the exception." His is a poetics of sudden gaps, chasms that are the source of discontinuous flux: "perception, flat, impersonal, out-of-context/perception disfamiliars, erupts motion."

Perhaps what is most challenging to us in this provocative and excellent volume of poems is Ammons's very perception of the impersonal discourse that has come to characterize our society, and here, even, our poetry:

> words dash in
> taking trial positions,
> sort and re-sort themselves
> into provisional clusters
>
> "The World Cries Out"

We may be approaching a state where "equanil" (a word yoking perhaps the notions of equalizing as a leveling and the nil, and which is repeated several times in *The Snow Poems)* may "replace the/trance and spells of religion, philosophy" ("The Hieroglyphic Gathered"), and other human modes of thought. It is a state where our words "will say nothing further," where all will be "an illustration of, allegory of, nothing." In such a state, Michel Foucault has recently hypothesized, man declines as a privileged object of study among the elements of the universe. This is the radical absence that *The Snow Poems* explores; the most radical decentering imaginable, but one which contains within it the possibility for the most elementary recentering, re-beginning:

> so that we can achieve the podium of
> inhumanity, the clearing, wherefrom
> we can look back and away to the
> astonishing thing, man's rise and demise,
> and then what, the crazy universe here,
> here, here for thousands, even millions
> of years, going on with purposes, if
> any, not ours: room
> enough for every correction of view,
> where perspective is never sold out, utero,
> utero, the
> commencement before the commencement.
>
> "Hard Lard"

Reviewed by Richard Jackson

George Orwell and the Origins of 1984, by William Steinhoff. University of Michigan Press, 288 pp., $12.50.

William Steinhoff proposes to demonstrate that *1984* is a "work which expresses, almost epitomizes, a lifetime's ideas, attitudes, events and reading." To his credit the influence of others on *1984* is covered early, allowing most of the study to concentrate on the principle origin of *1984*, Orwell himself. Too many commentators leave the false impression, whether intended or not, that Orwell's novel could not

have existed without forerunners like Zamiatin's *We* and Jack London's *The Iron Heel*. Steinhoff avoids that mistake and still manages to treat the question of literary sources fully. In fact, he suggests more of them than anyone else has, but the effect we would expect is undercut. Instead of *1984* being projected as totally dependent on the works of others, it emerges as basically independent of them all; the sheer bulk of possible sources testifies against the claims of any one source.

After dealing with the affinitive literature, Steinhoff searches Orwell's relationship with the temper of England during the thirties and early forties for more of the novel's roots. Orwell frequently found himself at odds with other left wingers on the crucial issues: he recognized the true nature of Stalinism, the dangers of adopting a pacifistic stance toward fascism, and the incompetence of the Press—especially in its coverage of the Spanish Civil War. Steinhoff easily links much of this to *1984*, but some of it he does not. For example, almost twenty pages are devoted to a chapter on Orwell's attitudes toward pacifism which (as Steinhoff admits) has nothing to do with the novel. Other sections can be only cursorily connected. This is not to criticize the quality of the material, but only to advise the reader that in picking up Steinhoff's uniformly excellent book, he will encounter more than a discussion of Orwell's last novel.

In the third part of the book the author considers the similarities between *1984* and Orwell's early novels, stories that Steinhoff views "as imaginative concepts which find their fullest expression in Orwell's last work." As one would expect, the parallels are legion, despite the disparity of subject matter between the early work and *1984*. Dorothy Hare in *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935) is forced to teach children the accepted version of history as opposed to the truth. Gordon Comstock in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936) has a knack for writing good advertising copy quickly, just as Winston Smith is adept at expressing the official version of history in Newspeak. Steinhoff brings these and a host of other similarities to our attention. Some are fairly obvious, like the two examples above, but others are much more subtle, and these justify the space devoted to this phase of the study.

Additional chapters in this part of the book ferret out the background material for some of the familiar characteristics that we identify with *1984*. One chapter deals with the gloomy, wintry atmosphere, another with the concepts of Doublethink and Newspeak, the next with the disappearance of objective reality, the tendency of totalitarian states to destroy concrete examples of a happier existence, and the last with the nature of power as exemplified by O'Brien who torments Winston, and the Inner Party. All of this is convincingly grounded in Orwell's early experiences and observations. When the correlations brought to our attention are not treated exhaustively, they often remain important for their suggestiveness—as with Steinhoff's mentioning a possible connection with the Roman Catholic Mass when O'Brien and Winston seal their pact with a glass of wine.

In the book's fourth and last part, much shorter than the others, Steinhoff gives us his judgment of *1984*. Unavoidably, he goes over old ground in the process: he considers the novel a warning instead of a prophecy (as most do) and attacks Isaac Deutscher's position (as others have) that Orwell wrote *1984* to fill a demand for ideological weapons against Communism. Many critics feel that Orwell's predominantly pessimistic outlook on man's chances for progress developed as a result of either his experiences in Spain or his discovery of the Stalin purges. Steinhoff disagrees. Throughout his study he offers considerable evidence to support the contention that Orwell's development was not unduly influenced by any one event. The line of progression he describes is straight: "Neither the 1938 purges, nor the war and its aftermath, nor his illness in the last years changed the characteristic tone of his thinking."

The selected bibliography contains a fourteen-page list of secondary material, quite interesting for many of the inclusions, a few of which could be described as tertiary material (Aldington's *Death of a Hero?*). Every important item is included, however, while much of the trivial is left out. Here and throughout his study, Steinhoff demonstrates good critical sense. Anyone interested in the genesis of *1984* should certainly turn to him.

Reviewed by David W. Richards

Norman Thomas: The Last Idealist, by W. A. Swanberg, Scribner's, 528 pp., 82 illustrations, $14.95.

My sole face to face encounter with Norman Thomas was in the mid-1950s, when I was a student host to the great American socialist, who was then seventy years of age and traveling on a lecture tour that took him to Knox College in Illinois. I had read Thomas in high school, during a brief flirtation with socialism, and was amazed that this six-times-defeated presidential candidate should appear so uncontroversial in that age of Nixon vs. Alger Hiss, the blacklist, and Joe McCarthy.

He had already made his final run for the White House in 1948, and already been consoled as usual by his Party that is was better to be right than to be president; to this he replied that it was even better to be both. To the end, Norman Thomas exerted influence as a loser greater than any of his liberal contemporaries with the exception of Franklin Roosevelt, who was a four-term winner. The socialist lived twenty-three years beyond FDR, long enough to have fought every liberal battle from turn of the century unionism to America's involvement in Vietnam.

I remember him as his photos depict him, a 19th century tintype of a man, in repose exuding character like some prairie puritan. Stern stuff he was made of, and American to the core. But he smiled well and often. The socialist was also the Princetonian, a familiar Old Tiger at reunions, the outsider who was also an insider when he cared to be. He had delivered papers to Warren Harding in Marion, Ohio, as a boy. That was as close as he got to the White House. He had lost, but his ideas—many, many of them—had convinced others, who had won with them. In his later years he was honored as a humanitarian. Swanberg's full-length biography of Norman Thomas is perhaps too careful and too "official" to be definitive, but it has already been honored with the National Book Award. Here are the socialist's youth in Ohio, his undergraduate days at Princeton, his early adulthood as a slum clergyman in New York, and his tempestuous struggle to keep socialism American. The inner struggles of the Socialists and the disaffections of comrades make for the best reading in the long book.

It is an old-fashioned biography, and welcome in that respect, because the facts are here. The psychoanalysis, the sociology, the questioning of motives, will come later, as the Last Idealist (as Swanberg refers to Thomas) becomes the prey of gadflies. Swanberg does not overly explain; he states. There is plenty in Thomas's life of eighty- four active years just to recount. In his defense of the rights of Japanese-Americans during World War II, in his increasingly successful fight for civil rights, and in his final struggle against the loss of American innocence in Vietnam, Thomas was not only a talker but a doer, and what he did takes a long book to tell.

This is a friendly biography in the sense that it accepts the nobility of Thomas's motives and the rightness of what he accomplished for the poor and oppressed. Thomas never became a Socialist president of the United States, so he cannot be blamed for compromises he might be expected to have made, had he achieved power. The closest Norman Thomas came to office was when he became a member of aschool board. His greatest accomplishments were made by men and women

not of his party who nevertheless had been led to expand their political liberalism because he was always expanding the acceptable ground to the Left.

To charactertize Thomas as "the last idealist" strikes this reviewer as off-base. To be sure, the perennial candidate did not make his mark through the exercise of power; his influence was through the power of his ideas. But he was ever the activist, never the closet (or ivory tower) intellectual. He got his hands dirty, sometimes literally, as when he was among the first to fight for migrant workers' rights to organize, long before the fieldhands became the darlings of the liberal establishment.

A case could be made for considering Thomas the first of a line of activist idealists whose influence is exerted beyond the confines of partisan politics and office-seeking. Ralph Nader comes to mind, and John Gardner—men whose ambitions are not personal but range across the whole of American society. As political party labels count less and less in the pursuit of power, the power of ideals counts for more. Thomas can conceivably be viewed in the vanguard of a generation of parapolitical leaders—men and women who use the political process to pursue practical ideals but who choose not to seek office.

Who knows? Had Norman Thomas been born half a century later he might have been both right and president, or simply not bothered to run.

Reviewed by David Yount

Modern Japanese Haiku: An Anthology, ed. and tr. by Makoto Ueda, University of Toronto Press, 265 pp., $12.50 (paper $4.50).

"Someone should go to the immense trouble of harvesting the . . . years between then [1920] and now, but speaking personally, and therefore somewhat violently, I feel that very little would be lost if all the haiku of modern times was totally forgotten." This comment, by R. H. Blyth in the Preface to his two-volume *History of Haiku* (1963), is his devastating opinion of the merit of contemporary Japanese haiku. Fortunately, for the English reader, one scholar heard only the first half of this oath: *Modern Japanese Haiku: An Anthology,* edited and translated by Makoto Ueda, is an immense and provocative harvest of new haiku.

Ueda opens with an excellent introduction , a store house of information and analysis invaluable in understanding the diverse poetry that follows—and also in appreciating some of Professor Blyth's impatience. After a brief overview of haiku from Basho to its least spectacular moments, prior to Shiki's Reformation, there is an explanation of its transformations from *haikai* to *hokku* to *haiku*. The strength of these pages, and the discussion that follows, is Professor Ueda's clarity; his ability to describe each moment in the drama and to link it logically to the next. Following this initial sketch of the milieu of decline, between efforts of Issa and Shiki, he presents each significant change and by-way that has affected twentieth century haiku in Japan; he deftly synthesizes the ebb and flow of this complex period—aesthetic thought and practice, represented by individual *haijin,* are traced chronologically to the present.

The editor introduces twenty modern haiku poets with brief biographies and gives us twenty examples of the work of each. He tells us that "the writers have been selected to exemplify the various trends that have dominated Japanese haiku in the last hundred years, but the individual haiku have been selected for literary merit; more than anything else this is intended to be a book of poetry."

Another strong element in this anthology is its orthographic format, in which each poem is presented in its variant forms for comparison. The major portion of the page carries Professor Ueda's English version of two haiku, while, at the bottom, in much smaller type, the original works appear in three different guises: traditional Japanese *kanji* characters, Romanized Japanese and a literal translation into English. This layout is useful for those interested in language and cross-cultural communication. Also included, as an appendix to the collection, is a list of Japanese particles most frequently used in writing haiku.

The poetry is superior, and reason enough for the book, but its diversity also brings one back again and again to the theme of change expressed in the introductory notes. The continuing debate in Japanese haiku, and one that is almost a universal characteristic on the genre, focuses on the nature of change; must haiku adapt itself to be able to reflect a dynamic culture clearly?

After reading this book one comes away with a feeling of pleasure and reassurance; the battles will rage, but quality haiku will continue to be written.

Reviewed by Ross Figgins

Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses, by David Lodge, Secker and Warburg Press, 234 pp., $5.95.

> "High, high above the North Pole, on the first day of 1969, two professors of English Literature approached each other at a combined velocity of 1200 miles per hour."

So begins David Lodge's very amusing novel, *Changing Places.* The two professors of English literature concerned are Philip Swallow from Rummidge University, England, and Morris Zapp of the State University of Euphoria, U.S.A., and they are about to change places for six months as part of a teacher exchange agreement between the two universities. David Lodge teaches English at the University of Birmingham and was a Visiting Professor at the University of California. Birmingham is a city commonly referred to as Brum, and the State University of Euphoria is situated near an imaginary city of Esseph on the West Coast and so the satire is only faintly disguised.

> Early in the novel, Lodge forecasts:
> "it would not be surprising . . . if two men changing places for six months exert a reciprocal influence on each other's experience in certain respects, notwithstanding all the differences that exist between the two environments."

The novel is made up of a series of comically juxtaposed scenes taking place in each country as we trace the steps of the two professors during the period of the exchange. On arrival, both are received coolly, if not indifferently, by colleagues who prefer to hide themselves away in their offices like burrowing rabbits. Simultaneously, both become involved with student unrest on the two campuses and also come into contact with the beginnings of the Women's Liberation Movement. They meet each other's wives, who have been left behind for different reasons, and eventually find themselves in the other's bed. In the last chapter, some attempt is made to solve this game of mixed doubles when they all meet in New York, but we are left to guess the outcome. It seems that the two characters change places in more ways than one.

From the beginning, we are made aware of the differences between the two universities and their respective settings. Rummidge is depicted as "a large, graceless industrial city sprawled over the English Midlands at the intersection of three motorways, twenty-six railway lines, and half-a-dozen stagnant canals, " whereas Euphoria is "situated between Northern and Southern California, with its mountains, lakes, and rivers, its redwood forests, its blonde beaches, and its incomparable Bay."

Each university is a reflection of its country's attitude towards higher education. In England, the American, Zapp, begins to detect the "narrow band of privilege running through the general drabness and privation of life. If the British university teacher had nothing else, he had . . . the use of a john that was off-limits to students." In contrast, his counterpart in America "is well primed . . . to enter a profession as steeped in the spirit of free enterprise as Wall Street, in which each scholar-teacher makes an individual contract with his employer, and is free to sell his services to the highest bidder."

But the novel is far from being a dry exposé of the two university systems. Such comments are thrown in along the way, but the reader becomes more concerned with how the two characters get on when they are suddenly thrust into alien territory for a short period of time. Moreover, so many of the events that befall them are related in a comic and ironic fashion. For example, Philip Swallow, now revelling in the freedom of California, is enjoying the favors of Zapp's wife but has not yet plucked up enough courage to write and tell his own wife. Invited to talk on a phone-in radio show, Swallow becomes involved in a discussion on sexual morality and glibly pronounces: "there's more honesty, less hypocrisy about these matters than there used to be, and I think that must be a good thing." Suddenly he is interrupted by a telephone call from his wife in England who wants him to return immediately to save her from having an affair. Quickly forgetting his earlier remarks to the radio audience who is still listening and who is now suddenly enthralled, he cries out hysterically, "I'm having one already. But I don't want to tell the whole world about it." Shortly afterwards, this scene is mirrored beautifully in England. While Zapp is teaching a seminar with his students on, of all things, Jane Austen's moral awareness, he too is interrupted by a telephone call. Again it is Hillary Swallow on the other end of the line—and she makes it quite clear that she is now prepared to let him share her bed.

Part of the novel's interest also lies in the experiments in narrative technique. Though the conventional third person point of view is used throughout most of the book, several times the author employs a different technique. In one chapter, a series of letters between the two professors and their respective wives makes the reader acutely conscious of what can and cannot be included in letters and how easily misunderstandings may develop. In another, clashes between students and the university authorities on the two campuses are reported to us by two channels of communication—cool, low-profile press releases from the university information office and the sensational treatment of the local daily papers. The final chapter is written in the form of a film script and we soon realize its limitations, for we are not allowed to explore what the characters are thinking at this time. But at least a film script does solve the age-old problem of how to bring a novel to an end. What happens is that the camera stops, freezing all the characters at that point, and we simply read "THE END." Significantly, the two professors have just been discussing a quote from *Northanger Abbey* where Jane Austen confesses to being unable to hide the approach of an ending because of "the tell-tale compression of the pages."

References to Jane Austen and other literary figures abound in the novel. It is, after all, a story about two professors of English literature and David Lodge himself teaches and writes literary criticism. Yet it would be wrong to view *Changing Places* as being simply "academic" in style and content and, therefore, only appealing to teachers of English literature or to even more obscure an animal, teachers of English literature who have been involved in an exchange program. In fact, Lodge touches on only a few actual teaching situations. Within the prescribed limits of a novel primarily set on two university campuses, Lodge creates a much broader base. He is a highly observant writer and deftly portrays different aspects of life on both sides of the Atlantic. He examines each situation critically and, above all, with a sense of comic detachment.

Reviewed by David C. Olive

THREE CANADIAN POETS

Esox Nobilior, Non Esox Lucius, by J. Michael Yates, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 60 pp., $5.00. **The Water Book**, by Ann J. West, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 44 pp., $3.00. **Jacob Singing**, by Robert Bringhurst, The Kanchenjunga Press, 10 pp., $10.00.

Izaak Walton tells us that "angling is somewhat like poetry." J. Michael Yates has attempted to find the limits of that comparison in his ninth volume of poems, *Esox Nobilior, Non Esox Lucius*. The title means *Great Pike, Not Common Pike*. (The Latin phrasing is probably a reference to Pliny, whose use of *esox* was the first mention in literature of the large fish.) The choice is apt; the titles of the fifty-four poems in the book are simply variant spellings of *maskinonge*, another name for pike.

Unlike much piscatory literature, *Esox Nobilior* is neither a pastoral nor a manual. But it is about fish.

> For one eye of the nocturnal dragonfly; mind calls body from water.Thickly. With scant certainty. Slowly absolute water recalls.
>
> Fish belong never to themselves. Neither do they to other fish, nor to any probable One.
>
> I have travelled an indigo distance to elude what the fugue of syllabic bubbles becomes.
>
> Fish were not what they are, never are they what they seem. If location is one vague requisite, all this has been exactity of dream.
>
> Above, air sharpens like a skinning knife. So many fewer eyelids than eyes.
>
> "muscalunge"

And it is about water.

> Among these shallows, very small changes of depth become huge changes of surface.
>
> "mickinonger"

And it is even about fish in water.

> The safety sometimes in depth, the safety sometimes in speed, the speed sometimes in depth, the depth sometimes in speed, the safety in confusing these beneath a weather from which there is no shelter: the line senses the dimmest vibration from almost any distance, from all but a single direction.
>
> "moskalonge"

Yet the Esox Nobilior is not the subject of this book, or if it is, its relation to the author must alter our understanding of the perceived and the perceiver.

At least since Courbet in painting and Baudelaire in poetry, the question of subject has been the primary issue in art. Baudelaire's own essay "The Painter of Modern Life" discussed the role of the representational in modern art. The rise of abstraction, as discussed in the essays of Kandinsky and Malevich, introduced the second term of the dialectic. In Yates work, we find lines that tend to the abstract rather than the referential. It is no easy task to relieve a word of the baggage of meaning that it trundles about with. The best one can hope for is a temporary aphasia in the reader when the word is encountered in an unexpected context. But we are talking here simply about the technique of abstraction, at which Yates is quite dextrous. The more important question is the relation of the subject to the artist in abstraction. The interest is not in what the subject looks like but in how the subject acts upon the artist. In this sense, *Esox Nobilior* is unquestionably an abstract work. While it is true that the representational in the visual arts and in literature depend somewhat upon the effect on the artist, the product of this encounter is always a recapitulation of the world. In abstraction, the product is the creation of a new object.

One must think of the poems in *Esox Nobilior, Non Esox Lucius* as objects. They are not messages. Although there are teasing passages that work in traditional patterns, much of the book is abstract.

> To home on the life of ellipsone, to hone musication of my well-unknown is to slander an imperfect stranger.
>
> Every name is a harbour in deep hyphen.
>
> Last afternoon will rear a wrong weather for onyx foxes accused of jade against the rains.
>
> "masque alonge"

What is this difficult and frequently brilliant book about? We meet the same pike in fifty-four encounters, under fifty-four different names. Or, perhaps, we meet fifty-four pike, as Wallace Stevens suggests in "Metaphors of a Magnifico." Yates concludes this "dialogue with disjunct frames" with a possible answer:

> Mirroric I of water gazing polar into the sinking I of sunken space: in the eye of blue cougar circles the sunning mistake.
>
> "mackilinge"

Yates has given us, to paraphrase Ezra Pound, bait for factitious trout.

If the poet's task is simply to find something new to say about the sea, then Ann J. West is certainly a poet. But what Ms. West has to say about the sea in her first collection of poems, *The Water Book*, is not to be found in quotable lines. By avoiding the traditional techniques of narration in telling us the tale of a woman and the sea, the poet draws us through indirection toward insights about ocean and the idea of ocean.

> In the sip
> and the swallow
> No one drowns
> but no one floats.
> All and only answers,
> Toll gurges of will:
> A dull intidal rust.
> Know that the taps in a bathtub always wait to flood.
>
> "Tides"

Rather than recounting her story through chronology, anecdote, and characterization, West considers the vocabulary of water. By examining the names we give water, she is able to tell us about both the sea and the humans who live on its shore. One such human is the "Scrub Woman."

> She bends to the shore-edge,
> Bandanaed and old,
> Waiting for every patch of sea
> to slip beneath her brush.
> She works well.
> I have seen the trailings of her labour:
> the endless ripple from her scrubbing;
> bubbles coating every plane.
> Maybe tomorrow
> there will be no new water
> under her hand.

As always, the most important lessons are finally about people. And whether we are told of the undertow of time or the master clock of water, the lesson is always the same.

> You cannot live here.
> But,
> you can die
> behind the madness of a venetian blind
> or
> drown
> beside the spruce
> tethered in a boom.
>
> A small insanity dies.
>
> The pressures
> fossilize only perfect specimens.
>
> "This and the Dying"

The force of Ms. West's poems derives from the pressure she applies to language. Unexpected and jarring verbs slow her short lines; unusual nouns create images that stir the intellect as well as the senses. There are moments of unsure writing when the strain of creating a fresh idiom surfaces. But there's also poetry that is, at moments, nearly as marvelous as water.

Each time I come upon a new book by Robert Bringhurst, I grow more convinced of the depth of his talent and find myself with less and less to say about it.

Jacob Singing, his newest work, is based on the forty-eighth chapter of Genesis in which the dying Jacob gives his first blessing to his grandson Ephraim, the younger brother of Manasseh. Their father, Joseph, protests but Jacob explains that he knows what he is doing.

The poem is simple. The exuberant craftsmanship of earlier works is quieted; the learning that resonated in each image of other poems is taken for granted. We hear the single, powerful voice of old Jacob singing his tale.

> What I am I have stolen.
> I have climbed the mountain with nothing in my hand
> except the mountain. I have spoken to the god
> with nothing in my hand except my other hand.
> One against the other, the smith against the wizard,
> I have watched them. I have watched them
> wrestle one another to the ground.
> I have watched my body carry my head around
> like a lamp, looking for light among the broken stones.
>
> (p. 5)

Jacob tells us of reversals and of contradictions. Mostly he speaks of experience.

> I have seen the crow carry the moon
> against the mountain.
> I have seen the sky crawl under a stone. . . .
>
> I have seen the light drop
> like a wagon-sprag in the crisp stubble.
> I have seen the moon's wheels
> bounce through the frozen ruts
> and chirp against the pebbles.
>
> (p. 7)

And in image after image that pound like fists at the door of the imagination, he blesses Ephraim.

> But this one, my grandson, the young one,
> this one will steal the eye and the tooth
> of the mountain, this one will ride with his dogs
> through the galleries of vision, this one will move
> among the rain-worn shapes of men
> with faces in his hands and the fingers writhing.
> This one will slide his spade through the sea
> and come away carrying wheat and linen.
> This one, the young one, will steal
> the sun and the moon,
> the eye and the tooth of the mountain.
>
> (p. 9)

Jacob Singing is a simple, well-made poem of quiet intellectual and imaginative force. There is not much to say when Jacob tells us that

> I have set my ear against the stone
> and heard it twirling.
> I have set my teeth against the stone
> and someone said they heard it singing.
>
> (p. 10)

There is not much to say except, "Yes, I heard it singing."

Reviewed by John Biguenet

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

George Bacso is a photographer and frequent visitor to New Orleans.

Amiri Baraka's many volumes of poetry, fiction, drama, and essays include *The Dead Lecturer, The System of Dante's Hell,* and *Raise Race Rays Raze.*

Raymond Bialopiotrowicz has published photographs in a number of journals, including the *Chicago Review, Kansas Quarterly,* and *Matrix.* He has also published articles in *Commonweal* and *America,* among others.

John Biguenet, a former Poet-in-Residence at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, has published work widely in journals such as *Mundus Artium, The Village Voice, Contemporary Literature in Translation,* and *NOR.* His book, *Foreign Fictions,* was published by Random House this spring.

Marsha Biguenet's translations have appeared recently in *Black & White* and the *Barataria Review.* The first one-woman show of her paintings was held this past year in New Orleans.

Roo Borson's work has appeared in Canadian and American literary journals. She is currently a graduate student in the Creative Writing Department at the University of British Columbia.

Jack Butler lives in Arkansas. His poetry has appeared recently in *The New Yorker.*

John Carr, hopeful mystery writer and editor of *Kite Flying and Other Irrational Acts* (L. S. U. Press), lives and works in New Orleans.

John Creighton, a substitute schoolteacher and free-lance writer in Pennsylvania, is presently completing the first draft of "Midnight Awakening: The Maryland Background of Harriet Tubman," based on research in archives and courthouses.

Melanie Cummins is a Ph.D. candidate at Tulane University working on a dissertation on Nabokov.

George Dureau is a well-known New Orleans artist whose works have been exhibited widely. He has twice been distinguished by the Louisiana State Arts Council.

Philip A. Dynia is an assistant professor at Loyola University. He is writing an interpretive history of political commitment in film.

Margherita Faulkner teaches English and piano in Indiana.

Richard Fein, professor of English and Coordinator of the Jewish Studies Program at the State University College in New York, has published a book on Robert Lowell through Twayne Press.

Ross Figgins is co-author of *American Haiku,* published by Raindrop Press. He is a professor of Communications Arts at California State Polytechnic University.

James Grimsley lives and writes in North Carolina.

Earl Harbert's recent books are *The Force So Much Closer Home* (New York University Press, 1977) and *Henry Adams: A Reference Guide* (G. K. Hall & Co., 1978). Mr. Harbert is a professor of English at Tulane University.

Richard Jackson's essays, reviews, and poems have been widely published in journals such as *American Book News* and *Poetry Northwest*. An assistant professor at the University of Tennessee, Mr. Jackson edits *The Poetry Miscellany*.

Karin Kiwus is a contemporary West German poet who writes reviews for *Die Zeit*.

Richard Kostelanetz has published numerous books including *The End of Intelligent Writing*. His experiments in poetry and criticism have appeared widely.

Joseph LaCour studied French at Tulane University and has published fiction in a number of journals.

Paul Ching Lee is studying civil engineering at the University of Waterloo in Canada.

Rainer Malkowski is a contemporary West German poet, Berlin born. The poems here are from his book *Was Fuerein Morgen*.

Lenore Mayhew is the co-author with William McNaughton of two books of translation from the Chinese, *As Though Dreaming: the "Tz'u of Pure Jade"* by Li Ch'ing-chao and *A Gold Orchid: the Love Poems of Tzu Yeh*. She is a prolific translator who has received grants from the Asian Literature Program of the Asia Society and has team-taught seminars in translation as a craft.

Almut McAuley, born in Poland and educated in East and West Germany, North Wales, Switzerland, Arkansas, and Washington, has translated numerous works into German, including James Whitehead's "Joiner." She received the "Dudley Fitts Award for Translation" in 1975/76.

James J. McAuley, an Irish poet, has been published in several anthologies, including the *Penguin Book of Irish Verse*. He directs the Creative Writing Program at Eastern Washington State College.

Anne McKay lives in West Vancouver, British Columbia. She has had poems published in *Halycon* and has read her work over BBC and CBC radio.

William McNaughton prepared the first videotape and programmed texts to be used in the U.S. for a Chinese language course. Mr. McNaughton has translated from Chinese, Japanese, and modern Greek, authored eight books on Asia, and published in *PMLA, Texas Quarterly,* and *L'Herne,* among many others.

Jerred Metz, poetry editor for *Webster Review,* has previously published three chapbooks and his latest collection of poems, *Angels in the House,* is forthcoming from Heron Press.

William Mills teaches at L.S.U. His books include *Watch for the Fox* (poetry), *I Know a Place* (fiction), and a critical study, *The Stillness in Moving Things: The World of Howard Nemerov*.

Eugenio Montale, one of the greatest Italian poets of the century, won the Nobel Prize in 1975.

John Mosier is assistant director of the Film Buffs Institute at Loyola University, where he teaches English. He has written several articles on film for Latin American periodicals. This past January he attended the Brasilian Film Festival in Gramado.

David C. Olive teaches at Manchester Polytechnic in England. Last year, he was an exchange professor in the English Department at Loyola University.

Susan Snowden Palmer, who is currently pursuing a journalism degree at Georgia State University, is a full-time employee at WSB-TV and a freelance writer.

Jim Parins teaches at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. A native of Wisconsin, he continues to support the Green Bay Packers.

D. M. Pettinella is a multilingual translator whose work has appeared in many magazines here and abroad, including *Fiera Letteraria,* the *Southern Review,* and the *NOR*.

F. D. Reeve is a novelist and poet living in Connecticut who is presently editing the selected essays of Witter Bynner.

David W. Richards has been published in the *Explicator, People and Places,* and *The Huron Review*. He is a hospital administrator and part-time instructor in Pittsburgh.

Alain Robbe-Grillet, the French agronomist and novelist, is best known for *Last Year at Marienbad,* a film he scripted. In his fiction and essays, he has argued for "un nouveau roman."

Nalan Hsingte/ *Nara Singde* (1655–1685) was a poet, scholar, and member of the Manchu Plain Yellow Banner. He passed the imperial examinations with a high rank in 1676 and was appointed an officer in the Palace bodyguard by the

K'and-hsi Emperor. Nalan Hsingte (the Chinese form of the name) has become the historians' favorite example in regard to sinicization of China's foreign conquerors.

Peter Steele, now on sabbatical at Oxford University, is a professor of English at the University of Melbourne in Australia.

John Stone is a cardiologist in Atlanta. His poems have appeared in various publications, including the *New York Quarterly* and the Borestone Mountain anthologies. *The Smell of Matches* is his first book of poems.

Mao Tse-tung led the long struggle that made China a communist nation in 1949. In addition to his poetry, he wrote widely on guerrilla warfare and peasant participation in the communist revolution. He died in 1976.

Jerry W. Ward, associate professor of English at Tougaloo College, is co-editor of Callaloo.

Jay R. White teaches at the University of Texas in El Paso.

Peter Wild teaches creative writing at the University of Arizona. Doubleday is publishing his seventh collection of poems, *The Cloning*.

Miller Williams, winner of the Prix de Rome for 1976, is widely recognized for his translation of Latin American poetry, especially the work of Nicanor Parra, as well as for his own verse. His volumes include *Halfway from Hoxie, A Circle of Stone,* and *Why God Permits Evil.*

Dalt Wonk is a free lance journalist who has written and directed plays in New York City, London, and New Orleans. He is presently working on an historical play to be produced in January at the New Orleans Contemporary Arts Center.

Ben Wren teaches Zen, Japanese and Chinese History, and World Civilization at Loyola University. Ikebana, tai chi ch'uan, folk dancing, zazen, and liturgy combine to form a jambalaya that is served in his classes and that stretches not only across the Atlantic to Africa and Europe, but westward across the Pacific.

J. Michael Yates, the Canadian poet, dramatist, and fictioneer, has published over twenty books including, most recently, *Esox Nobilior* and *Fazes in Elsewhen*. He is Director of Special Projects for the University of British Columbia Press.

Gary Young prints, edits, and publishes the Greenhouse Review Press Chapbook Series in Santa Cruz. Hour House Press will publish his first book, *Hands,* in September 1978.

David Yount is currently Director of Institutional Relations for the Association of American Colleges in Washington.

Li Yü (A.D. 936–978) was the last ruler of the Southern T'ang.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Thanks to John Joerg for reading the fiction manuscripts, to John Biguenet for editorial advice and the materials from the now dormant *Black and White,* and especially to Marcus Smith, our former Editor, for the initial work on this issue. To Shael Herman, who will no longer be an Associate Editor after this issue, we also extend our appreciation for advice and support. And without Susan Lindsay, there would be no *New Orleans Review.*

ANNOUNCEMENT. The NOR is now considering manuscripts for the next three issues: Volume 6, Number 2, an international issue with emphasis on translations; Volume 6, Number 3, focusing on experimental writing; and Volume 6, Number 4, writing in the South.