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Four Views on Norman Mailer

Norman Mailer
is one of those rare figures
in American life and letters—
he loves to leap barriers
of thought and speech,
to draw into his maelstrom
every passing current,
to enter any open arena
like a stag chasing bears.

You meet Mailer and you become
more thoughtful or
more cantankerous
about such contemporary topics as
war and peace
Women's Lib.
space, sports,
movie-making
pollution, politics, pot.
Mailer has a little something
for everyone.

With pleasure, the NOR presents
“Four Views on Norman Mailer”—
one, of course, is Mailer's own.

Norman Mailer and the Battle of the Sexes— Urban Style

by George H. Douglas

In the past ten years or so, whether he has fashioned the role for himself or not, Norman Mailer has become one of our most accomplished essayists. Perhaps the word essayist does not seem to be quite the right word, since it brings to mind a series of genteel literary men—the wistful humorist perhaps—but hardly the frenetic and self-torturing style that we have come to expect from Mailer in his best prose writings. Yet what shall we call him? Mailer the novelist has petered out. He has involved himself recently in journalism, and perhaps now that he “covers” political conventions and championship boxing matches we might feel compelled to classify him as a journalist. But Mailer’s writing is not the standardized kind of public communication we associate with the mass media; it is too personal, too inner-directed, too idiosyncratic. No, Mailer is an essayist. Indeed one of our best. *The Presidential Papers*, and some of the shorter pieces in *Advertisements for Myself*, such as “The White Negro,” and “The Man Who Studied Yoga,” are among the finest literary achievements of our time, and amply compensate for Mailer’s inability to turn out a worthy successor to *The Naked and the Dead*.

Mailer’s recent book, *The Prisoner of Sex*, confirms our suspicion of where his talent really lies. It is by no means as good a book as *Advertisements for Myself*, at least not consistently. Indeed, for long stretches it is atrociously written and incoherent. But with it we get a very sharp idea of the heart of Mailer’s genius, and come to see that Mailer is our most perfect prophet of urban life, and his writing, with all of its mad dashes in search of nothing, somehow a finely crafted reflection of the urban experience. In fact, in reading over Mailer’s works of the past ten years or so, we can understand the lunatic—but still somehow judicious—logic of his race for Mayor of New York. Whether Mailer would have been a good mayor no one can say, of course, and opinions on the subject would greatly differ; but it is hard to think, offhand, of any person whose imagination beats in more perfect harmony with the pulse of our blighted urban centers, and can seemingly encompass the whole of life therein with one sweeping, discordant motion of thought.

It would probably be both accurate and fair enough to say that Mailer’s prose style has become a kaleidoscopic rendering of present-day city life. It is full of fits and starts, spurts of energy and breakdowns; it falls like bright confetti from some high building; it becomes overloaded like a rush-hour subway,

causing its passengers to push their way up some foul smelling tube to safety; it dresses in tails only to be trapped in an elevator. Still, it is a kind of writing to which we are irresistibly drawn, although we can’t quite say why, just as we are drawn by the city itself without quite knowing the reason, and are indeed a city people with a city outlook. On the whole, Mailer’s prose seems to be, like the city itself, “ungovernable,” the product of collapsed reasonability, although it is still full of delights and attractions, and possibly even constitutive of a valid personal style. Mailer has no grip on his writing—his powers of exposition and rational discourse are at an almost complete standstill (and we can fully appreciate why Mailer’s book caused an uproar at *Harper’s*, and why the running of it in its entirety in a single issue resulted in Willie Morris’s swift departure from the editor’s chair)—yet he continues to write, continues to be a writer in a culture and social atmosphere that either converts or dilutes its writers. He still retains a powerful and tender sensibility, and some kind of center of focus no matter how nerve-shattered and nerve-shattering these may seem to be.

Mailer has been occupying himself recently, and as frantically as ever, with the Women’s Liberation Movement. With *The Prisoner of Sex* he has devoted an entire book to the topic. What he says in detail about this movement is, as I have suggested, hard to ferret out, and requires real effort on the part of the reader—effort which has both rewards and long moments of frustration and desperation. Much of the book is a mere neurotic exercise, much of it a superficial reworking of Mailer’s favorite hang-ups; a great deal of the material is irrelevant if not worthless, helping out the main themes not in the slightest. Nevertheless, one gets the feeling that Mailer has got the ladies of Women’s Lib in his sights, even if what he actually shoots out at them will have no more political effect than so much buck-shot showered along the horizon.

There is in Mailer’s fiction, and in this recent work, something remotely resembling a conventional thesis on the subject of the status of women. Perhaps we should at least begin with this, since it is what has brought on the fire of Kate Millet and Germaine Greer. Mailer is said by these ladies to be an arch-protagonist in the war between the sexes, ever anxious to conquer the female and hold her in thrall, always fearful lest women gain dominance over the male, if not indeed society at large. To Kate Millet, Mailer views all human relations in terms

of combat, and so, a *fortiori*, the relations between the sexes. Mailer has "considerable insights into the practice of sexuality as a 'power game,'" she says, but these "never seem to effect his vivid personal enthusiasm for the fight. . . . At times he is gallant enough to render homage to the enemy as a worthy opponent, a good swinging bitch," but what is important about this play-acting in Millet's eyes is that "in arming his opponent, Mailer has of course no intention of losing the war. He just likes a fight and is concerned with keeping up its interest and assuring the paying seats that the male struggle to retain hegemony will have the spice of adventure about it."¹

There is nothing radically misleading in this charge, and Mailer might well admit the truth of it. He has cultivated and nourished the charge for years, wandering from television studio to television studio, making provocative statements of the sort: "Women should be kept in cages," or "The fact of the matter is that the prime responsibility of a woman is to be on earth long enough to find the best mate possible for herself, and conceive children who will improve the species," or "Most men who understand women at all feel hostility toward them. At their worst, women are low sloppy beasts."

Yes, there can be no doubt why Mailer has drawn the fire of the Women's Liberation Movement. But is it all for the play, the repartee, all for the amusement of the television talk show audience, or is there something else? The question that is not so easily answered is why Mailer the serious writer is interested in (shall we say troubled by) the ladies of the Women's Liberation Movement. We can understand clearly enough why they are interested in going after him. But why is he interested in them? Why does he seek to draw them into his ken, why does he bother to devote himself so extensively to their thought and doings which he pretends to hold in such low esteem? Why does he seek to encounter them on television or at Town Hall? It must be something more than the joy of the fight. But what?

Well, of course it is true that Mailer finds himself opposed on strongly philosophical grounds to much of the ideology of the Women's Liberation Movement. He professes to have found a number of their ideas repellent, for example, the "assumption that the sexual force of a man was a luck of his birth, rather than his final moral product."² It is precisely antithetical to everything Mailer believes that masculinity is merely a product of a man's birth, or the conventions of society. The evidence, in his opinion, all points another way; he sees our society as being one in which masculinity has to be sought, struggled after, and everywhere he looks he finds men giving up the struggle, becoming domesticated or destroyed by "home life on the assembly line," or lapsing into homosexuality (for Mailer, incidentally, "what freezes the homosexual in his homosexuality is not the fear of women so much as the fear of the masculine world with which he must war if he wishes to keep the woman"³).

No, for Mailer—Mailer the existentialist—masculinity is not something given, but something won, and, one supposes, something that must be won over and over again. It never solidifies into an essence, but must be repeatedly fought for. The struggle is unrelenting, and the victor always entitled to his victory. No one is born a man, and when a man conquers a woman, or when he conquers his fears of his own masculinity as every male has to do, the spoils should be his.

Of course the women of Women's Lib look on all this as so much wind, so much male vanity and egoistic posturing, but their theoretical views of Mailer's psychology are not really what is important, and these alone would hardly be apt to draw Mailer into their arena. There is really something more fundamental than just a difference in philosophical attitudes—the fighting radical subjectivist-solipsist on the one hand, the genteel but tough-minded reforming ladies in mod dress on the other—and one feels if this is all there were to the matter Mailer would hardly be popping out of his corner itching for a fight. Behind it all must be something deeper. But what? What is at the bottom of Mailer's hostility?

I assume it to be something in the life style of the lady reformers rather than the detail of their public ideology. For it is hardly in character for Mailer to be hung up for very long on anybody's ideology, on a network of stale syllogisms and propositions. The arguments of Women's Lib, although occasionally capable of incurring his wrath, are secondary. What is primary is the nature of the animal he is dealing with. It's a fundamental disagreement about human being itself that stands behind Mailer's hostility.

This does not mean that Mailer has reduced the ladies of Women's Lib to type, that they are platitudinized as raced-up hussies, Amazons, masculinized bitches, or any of the other near-at-hand slogans, although Mailer himself likes to take up slogans of this kind when it suits his purpose to do so. But his case against the ladies really stems from something deeper. What is basically at issue, apparently, is not that the ladies are fighters, not that their political/economic stance is unjust, or dangerous, or dishonest, but that they themselves are dishonest, unjust and dangerous. They are so because they are unimaginative, lifeless, sapless—and what, after all, is behind dishonesty but this. They are dishonest because they hide behind standardized views, commercial end-products, which are put up in packaged form and forced upon society as such.

The ladies of the Women's Liberation Movement are what might be called, for want of a better term (my term, not Mailer's), dry goods philosophers. They want everything reduced to a standard length, to the safe quantity. The will is foreclosed from human interaction, and society must conform to a rule book of human relations. Every item in the domain of human relations must be measured out, like a bolt of cloth in a dry goods store. For \$2.98 you get just so much cloth and not one jot more. Of course Mailer is concerned with some angles of the movement that trouble all men, such as "who will do the dishes?" under the new regime, but it is not the simple fact of having to do the dishes that bothers him. He quotes from a recent feminist tract called "Marriage Agreement" the following list of details:

10. Cleaning: Husband does all the house-cleaning, in exchange for wife's extra child care (3:00 to 6:30 daily) and sick care.
11. Laundry: Wife does most home laundry. Husband does all dry cleaning delivery and pick-up. Wife strips beds, husband remakes them.

But, says Mailer, no man would be willing to put up with this kind of arrangement. A sane and self-respecting man "would not be married to such a woman. If he were obliged to pick a roommate he would pick a man." (PS, 227-228)

Not because of the work involved, or even so much because of the affront to male dignity, or because of the reversal of roles

(although these things admittedly hurt), but because of the fierce unimaginativeness, the bloodlessness of it all. Mailer wants viable human relations, push and pull, give and take, hit and miss, a breathing spot or two, and not the sterility of the lawyer's document or labor union contract. The relationship between the sexes—if the new women have their way—is to be just that, a labor union contract, not a warm-blooded human relationship.

The Women's Liberation Movement is, I think Mailer might agree, a perfect expression of our urban life, and to this he has both a natural enmity, and (as an artist who is drawn to the place because that is where our battles are being fought) a fascination. The trouble with the city—and indeed all America, because in our society the national mentality is spun out of city mentality—is that to survive, every cell of it must be rigorously operated, regularized. But in the process the cells cannot breathe, everything must operate strictly automatically, everything must be predictable, regular. But all sanity, all regularity must have its limits. As a city dweller Mailer can doubtless understand how two people might shove their way ahead in line, or how they could rush for the same subway seat, but he has no tolerance at all for the kind of life where a stopwatch is taken out and used to determine how long a given person may sit in the seat, or a ruler to determine how much room he is to take up. Such systems run people into the ground, and when compounded endlessly stop off all vitality, obliterate the meaning of life.

Mailer, for all his own urban metabolism, for all his desire to stick close to the city streets (where, incidentally, he was not born) and to the sources of the mass media, is curiously almost a frontier American, an apologist for spiritual *Lebensraum*—like a hard-drinking inhabitant of a wild border town where one can always get away from it all when one has had too much, and where one can breathe clean air and feel a free man. What is it that oppresses one in the city? What is it that staggers us in the complexity of the welfare state? It is that everything is rigid; there is no place for emotion to express itself; no place for the imagination. The city seethes but does not erupt, it bubbles but does not boil. From such a cauldren nothing good can come.

Look at the very kind of language Mailer uses when describing his adversaries in *Women's Lib*. Of Kate Millet:

She believed in the liberal use of technology for any solution to human pain. So she loathed the forging of the soul in the rigors of paradox, and would never ask an intelligent woman to raise her own child, no, rather she spoke of the "collective professionalization (and consequent improvement) of the care of the young." She had all the technological power of the century in her veins, she was the point of advance for those intellectual forces vastly larger than herself which might look to the liberation of women as the first weapon in the ongoing incarceration of the romantic idea of men—the prose of future prisons was in her tongue, for she saw the differences between men and women as nonessential—excesses of motion to be conditioned out. So the power of the argument would be the greatest for those who wished to live in the modest middles of the poisoned city. She was a way of life for the young singles, a species of city-technique. (PS, 224)

Mailer makes a great deal of sport of Millet's book as a work of scholarship. Her mind is like a flatiron, he says. "By any literary perspective, the land of Millet is a barren and mediocre

terrain, its flora reminiscent of a Ph.D. tract, its roads a narrow argument, and its horizons low." Here as everywhere Mailer is the master of the studied insult, but consider the imagery of the language in which these insults are tricked out. Always the imagery of urban blight, of the parched, undernourished quality of city life. Here again a description of the "style" of Millet. The food, he says, is

a can of ideological lard, a grit and granite of thesis-factories. . . aggregates of concept-jargon on every ridge, stacks of such clauses fed to the sky with smoke, and musical instruments full of the spirit of nonviolence. . . the sound of flaws and blats. Bile and bubbles of intellectual flatulence coursed in the river, and the bloody ground steamed with the limbs of every amputated quote. (PS, 95)

How fair this is to Millet is a complex question (Mailer is rarely fair, but this need not hide us from his truths), and if Mailer really thinks that *Sexual Politics* is an example of a barren Ph.D. thesis, one suspects that he hasn't had much acquaintance with the beast. But the imagery is always telling and gets to the heart of the matter. Millet's mind, he says, is "totalitarian to the core," and like all such minds goes over to hysterical abuse "whenever they are forced to build their mind on anything more than a single premise." The city-totalitarian starves because everything is reduced to simple mechanisms on which no soul can be nourished: systems of welfare payments, collective bargaining, minutely haggled-over fringe benefits. But a diet without paradox, without irony is productive of a life both bleak and mirthless. Here is the kind of language that recurs over and over again when Mailer is referring to Millet's style and ideology: "The style is suggestive of a night school lawyer who sips Metrecal to keep his figure, and thereby is so full of isolated proteins, factory vitamins, reconstituted cyclamates, and artificial flavors that one has to pore over the passage like a business contract." (PS, 57-58)

Always the imagery of the starving city—the city, where the lights may go out without warning, but where it doesn't do any good to blow one's stack, where one may bargain for the conditions of one's employment but the results are never satisfactory because one is always left with a feeling of personal unfulfillment—in short, starvation. One's spirit is never involved except vicariously; human relations are collective and impersonal. But, for Mailer, the only valid form of existence is one in which the full self can be brought into play, in which one spins out the forms of one's existence.

The Women's Liberation Movement is just the reverse of this in its prevailing mood and philosophy. One holds oneself back and delivers only what is on the program, only what is in the contract. Thus the only thing alive in the whole movement is the black and white manifesto, the words printed on the paper. But on a diet of printed words people can't subsist.

Again, it must be repeated that this is not exactly to say that the program, the ideology of the Women's Liberation Movement is wrong or unjust—it is no more unjust than a session of collective bargaining or a bill of sale. It is that life must go beyond these things. It hardly seems necessary to say that the average fair-minded American will see in most of the program of the Women's Liberation Movement a completely judicious moral and political stance. Indeed the program calls out for approval to every right thinking citizen. One shares the righteous indignation of every college-bred lady who comes down

to Madison Avenue with her Wellesley degree, hoping to nudge herself into the “creative” life only to find that she must be assigned to typewriting duties, while her boss gets to take in a three-hour “working” lunch in the nearby posh bar, and otherwise takes full advantage of the city’s opulence. For it is manifestly obvious to her that she can do anything that the boss can do in this sort of environment—and probably better. And who can doubt her? So it is not the justice involved, or the practical common sense: with these things the ladies of Women’s Lib are overburdened if not reeling.

This is not where Mailer finds the Women’s Lib program wanting. It is not their program that is unhealthy, but they themselves. It is not that their ideology is unjust within a small framework, or that their usefulness as tractarians, publicists, organizers, agitators must be called into question (although Mailer seems to take a certain childish pleasure in shaking platforms with them), but we must fear what they are going to do to us as a people. What happens to human sexual relations under Women’s Lib is that they become stifled, obscured under a complex network of management relations, contracts, wage escalation plans, so that in the end all we have left of sex—is politics. Yes, politics! The very words of Kate Millet herself. Women, she complained, were steered, by means of political manipulations into subservient positions. But what does she want to substitute for this? Why nothing more than another and even more rigorous and unimaginative brand of politics, even more stale than anything we have previously had in the sexual field. And as Mailer has told us in his *Presidential Papers*, politics is nearly always a lie, that is, it only rarely, and with greatest of effort, becomes anything higher than a lie. And so, the Women’s Liberation Movement, like most political movements, is an artifice which covers up one’s more primitive feelings and desires, sweeps them under the rug, offering to the world in their stead a dried out fabrication of thought.

Mailer wants women to come out from their corner swinging when the bell rings; he wants to know just where he stands; he wants to know what kind of beast he has to fight. His women opponents, on the other hand, will lay their doctrine on the line, but of themselves they’ll offer nothing at all.

Mailer’s critique of the Women’s Liberation Movement is a little bit like Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity. Just as Nietzsche thought that Christianity—Christian ethics in particular—was a castle of deceptions and evasions, a system of values perpetrated by the weak upon the strong so as to keep the latter in check and keep them from exercising a free-wheeling will and imagination, so Mailer looks on the Women’s Liberation Program as something calculated to standardize human relations and convert it into a safe and lifeless technology. It is the existentialist’s ideal of authenticity at issue here. The trouble with these women—and they are not alone, but merely illustrate a long-standing pattern in our society as a whole—is that they prefer human relations at second-hand, carried out according to regulations and arrangements over which they have little individual control. They don’t really want to engage in direct human confrontation, but to fall back on a contrived political system or body of doctrine that will carry on human relations for them. Mailer obviously likes to see people jump out into the fray bringing their whole selves into the action, although he perceives quite clearly that we live in an age, and in a society, in which this kind of involvement becomes more and more difficult, and accordingly more and more rare.

NOTES

1. Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics*, New York: Doubleday, 1969, p. 326.
2. Norman Mailer, *The Prisoner of Sex*, Boston: Brown & Co., 1971, p. 45. Other references indicated in text as *PS* with page number.
3. Norman Mailer, *The Presidential Papers*, New York: Putnam, 1963, p. 278.

WRITING

The Devil came to me
up through the page I was writing.
I thought
of the world zipping by
in a rear-view mirror.
He had the look of a man dropping
and the hypnotic voice
of a steel bar struck with a rod.
He put a lock on each of my words
(making them hand like dead birds in the air
till I wept.)
My world slid apart like polished stones.
On its straight tree,
the cool harmony plum
froze hard as rock.

—Donald Moyer

St. Norman of New York

The Historian
as Servant to the Lord

by Robert B. Cochran

I. Comprehensive Vision

God's destiny in flesh
and blood with ours.
—*Advertisements for Myself*

Norman Mailer is not your everyday historian. Richard Hofstadter, discussing American anti-intellectualism, fails to mention his own attitudes toward the telephone. William A. Williams, writing *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, leaves his readers unenlightened concerning his own feelings about the use of marijuana or LSD by his children. But Mailer, in *Armies of the Night*, entertains both topics—on the same page. In his treatment of history, Mailer the historian is of central importance. We must make his acquaintance.

Mailer is, of course, eager to help us. He has made available an “autobiographical narrative,” bluntly titled *Advertisements for Myself*. And he prefaces another collection of essays, *Cannibals and Christians*, with general commentary on the ill health of the nation and the world. A plague, he suspects, is loose in the universe, a cancer clogs the natural and spiritual conduits of the earth. Mailer imagines himself a physician. His essays are exploratory surgeries—searches after the secret of the contemporary malaise. But at the end, the physician came to suspect that surgery was not the indicated procedure.

There are times when I think it is a meaningless endeavor—that the only way to hunt these intimations is in the pages of a novel.

An interviewer asked Mailer what he had attempted to communicate in *The Deer Park*, a novel. Answer: “Everything I knew about life at the age of thirty-two.” *Armies of the Night*, a historical work, has two subtitles—“History as a Novel” and “The Novel as History.”

. . . the writings are parts of a continuing and more or less comprehensive vision of existence into which everything must fit. . . the unspoken urge is to find secret relations between professional football and ladies fashion and bring them alive as partners to the vision.

This approach is applied to even the most isolated event. Mailer attends a championship fight. Sonny Liston is matched against Floyd Patterson. Simple enough—but listen to Mailer.

Liston-in-the-ring was not just Sonny Liston; much more he was the nucleus of that force at Comiskey Park (and indeed from everywhere in the world from which such desire could reach) which wished him to win. . . . Just so, Patterson-in-the-ring was not Floyd Patterson sparring in his gym, but was instead a vehicle of all the will and all the particular love which truly wished him to win.

The conception is medieval, Manichean. Every event affects the character of the world. The Liston-Patterson fight is a skirmish in a metaphysical war. God and the Devil are involved, affected by the outcome. The fight, and every event, no matter how secular or private, has transcendental reverberations. God, in this view, represents an imperilled vision. Omnipotence gone, God struggles with the Devil for allegiance. Mailer is explicit:

God had created man in order that man might fulfill God's vision, but his vision of the future was war with other visions. . . . God was, for instance, at war with the Devil. Certainly the Devil had a most detailed vision of existence very much opposed to his own.

Men are agents of gods and devils. The linkage is traditional, but the positions are reversed. God is in the hands of men. Mailer turns the tables on the Puritan universe. All power belongs to men—their every act re-echoes through the firmament. God waits upon man—human history will decide His fate. The Devil, of course, is in similar straits. His future, no less than the Lord's, depends on the actions of men.

History thus assumes central importance for Mailer. Men are connecting links, bridges between the heavens and the natural world. We are the trustees of visions. Eternal conflicts rage on the terrain of ephemeral lives.

Mailer goes on to describe a vision opposed to God's.

Life may now be intolerable to some other conception of Being—I would not know what to call it but a plague. . . . The intent of such a plague is to deaden the soul of all of us, invite it to surrender.

Mailer is further persuaded that powerful factions in America have welcomed the plague. The Devil, if he sponsors this vision, has been winning in our time. Mailer echoes Nietzsche—God's vision is threatened with extinction.

Responsibility for this state of affairs rests with men. They have lacked courage to live, to support the cause of life in the world. The mysteries at life's core have terrified men, and to escape their dread they have accepted the comforts of the Devil. They have consented to die a little in order not to live so much.

Mailer's historical work is filled with assessments of the price we have paid—as individuals and as a nation—for our cowardice. The picture is unattractive:

... we are close to dead. There are faces and bodies like gorged maggots. . . a host of chemical machines who swallow the products of chemical factories. . . and breathe out their chemical wastes into a polluted air.

We gave our freedom away a long time ago. We gave it away in the revolutions we did not make, all the acts of courage we found a way to avoid. . . . We divorced ourselves from the materials of the earth. . . we looked to new materials. . . complex derivatives of urine which we call plastic. . . . If the God who sent us out demanded our courage, what would be of most interest to the other but our cowardice?

Mailer's concern is personal. Each event, he remembers, affects the world. Reverberations move in every direction. If a man is a coward, he undermines the bravery of other men, makes courage more difficult for all. If a nation is cowardly, it makes bravery less possible for its citizens. If God is dying, men will not find it easy to live.

Thus Mailer senses that his own fiber has been corrupted by the compromises of the time. He is quick to shoulder his responsibility. The range of his guilt is striking—he sees himself a party to the guilt surrounding Patterson's defeat at the hands of Liston, and implicated by his "lack of moral witness" in the death of Robert Kennedy. In the case of Patterson, Mailer found himself culpable because he had not prepared himself to offer "psychic support" to his fighter. After Robert Kennedy's assassination, he came to suspect that his lack of "witness"

... had contributed (in the vast architectonics of the cathedral of history) to one less pylon of mooring for Senator Kennedy in his lonely ascent of those vaulted walls.

A general truth emerges. "The efforts of brave men depended in part on the protection of other men who saw themselves as at least provisionally brave."

Such incidents illustrate the eschatological orientation of Mailer's world. Human life is defined by a series of choices, each carrying a metaphysical burden. The history of men records these choices and their effects, and we may expect Mailer's treatment of history to involve a casting of events against a transcendental backdrop. He will attempt to identify the ultimate loyalties of forces at work in our world. Who speaks for the Lord, he will ask. And who for the Prince of Darkness?

II. Beginnings

That was left for me, to return the rootless disordered mind of our Twentieth Century to the kiss *sub cauda* and the *Weltanschauung* of the Medieval witch.
—*The Presidential Papers*

In 1952, Mailer contributed a piece to a *Partisan Review* symposium on "America and the Intellectuals." He was not much taken with symposiums and manifestos in 1952. His interest was genius.

... a genius is needed. If and when he arrives may I speculate that he will be more concerned with "silence, exile, and cunning," than a strapping participation in the vigors of American life. It is worth something to remind ourselves that the great artists—certainly the moderns—are almost always in opposition to their society. . . .

Mailer was ambitious—"Before I was seventeen I had formed the desire to be a major writer." He was a novelist, wary of being lured into activities which might dissipate the energies his art required.

One year later, when Irving Howe asked him to do some articles for *Dissent* magazine, Mailer still felt a "reluctance to try such work." But other impulses prevailed: "The Meaning of Western Defense" appeared in 1953, followed by "David Riesman Reconsidered" in 1954. In the essay on Riesman, Mailer compared the artist with the sociologist:

I think it can be said that any ambitious sociological work is created artistically and presents a *Weltanschauung* which is more comparable to the kind of world a novelist makes than to the structure of a scientist.

The gulf between the artist and the world had narrowed. No sacrifice of artistry was involved, but the dangers of contamination were no longer emphasized. Mailer seemed to say not that the artist must become a sociologist, but that the sociologist must be something of an artist.

Other essays followed. In 1956, Mailer began writing columns for *The Village Voice*. His ambitions had shifted their focus, if not their scale.

I had seen the column as the first lick of fire in a new American consciousness. . . I would lose nothing less if the column failed than my rediscovered desire, so implacable, to be a hero of my time.

The time was not ready. The column ran for less than six months. Critics were hostile—and Mailer still suspected that the demands of such work were incompatible with the needs of the creative artist. "The simple act of getting out a weekly column," he wrote, "destroyed resources which might better have been used for. . . work on a new novel."

In 1957, Mailer resurfaced with "The White Negro," an essay he regards as one of his best. It is difficult, flawed by the usual Mailer vices—excessive verbiage, unflagging portentousness. But it is a striking piece, rich in insight, and daring in its fidelity to implication.

"The White Negro" explores the appearance of what was then a new phenomenon on the national scene: "the American existentialist—the hipster." The hipster stood in opposition to the main currents of American society—embodied in his polar antithesis, the square. The hipster, said Mailer, was the offspring of coalesced marginal elements.

In such places as Greenwich Village, a *ménage-à-trois* was completed—the bohemian and the juvenile delinquent came face-to-face with the Negro, and the hipster was a fact in American life.

The environment which sustained this phenomenon was the familiar Mailer world—a Manichean battlefield. But the hipster was at home in such a world. He knew its nature better than the square. He knew that God was at war with the Devil, that forces hostile to life were at large in the universe. He knew that “life was war, nothing but war,” and that death might triumph quietly, in the form of a plague. The hipster, it seems, knew the world as Mailer knew it. And the hipster’s stance resembles Mailer’s ethics of personal responsibility—“The heart of Hip is its emphasis upon courage at the moment of crisis.”

...the hipster. . . knows that if our collective condition is to live with instant death. . . or with a slow death by conformity with every creative and rebellious instinct stifled. . . then the only life giving answer is to accept the terms of death, to live with death as immediate danger.

In *The Presidential Papers*, Mailer articulated this view more succinctly. “The logic in searching for extreme situations,” he writes, “is that one burns out the filament of old dull habit and turns the conscious mind back upon its natural subservience to the instinct.” The destruction of habit is rejuvenative. Mailer’s hipster, then, is at bottom a man of faith, a primitive in the exact sense of that word. He seeks closer communion with life’s mysteries. Mailer’s language is deliberately religious:

...to be with it is to have grace, is to be closer to the secrets of that inner unconscious life which will nourish you if you can hear it, for you are then nearer to that God which every hipster believes is located in the senses of his body. . .

Thus Mailer’s sociology does its work. The hipster and the square are examined, their metaphysical allegiances subjected to scrutiny—and Mailer decides that the hipster lives and serves God. The square is the Devil’s agent. The Manichean universe is more fully characterized. God, life, and the natural world are ranged together on one side. Lucifer, death, and technoscientific civilization are aligned in opposition. “The White Negro” extends this division into the realm of psychology. It identifies the enlisted men—the hipster is God’s infantryman, the square is Satan’s GI.

III. Applications

...some of the old WASPS are troubled in their Christian heart. . . their sense of crisis opens and they know like me that America has come to a point from which she will never return.
—*The Idol and the Octopus*

Mailer makes frequent use of “The White Negro” in later essays. He often classifies public figures as hipsters or squares. President Kennedy, for example, was a hipster.

Kennedy’s most characteristic quality is the remote and private air of a man who has traversed some lonely terrain of experience, of loss and gain, of nearness to death, which leaves him isolated from the mass of others.

Eisenhower, on the other hand, was a square.

Eisenhower could stand as a hero only for that large number of Americans who were most proud of their lack of imagination. . . Eisenhower embodied half the needs of the nation, the needs of the timid, the petrified, the sanctimonious, and the sluggish.

Mailer offers his most detailed characterization of the hipster in his treatment of Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway, in Mailer’s eye, was one of God’s generals, a hero, even a mentor. His death, with the air of defeat surrounding it, was a major victory for the Devil. Mailer pondered the circumstances of Hemingway’s end, and considered the possibility of a death more appropriate for a hipster. He wondered if Hemingway was not perhaps living with “death as immediate danger.” Maybe, Mailer thought, he had often flirted with death by testing the steadiness of his finger. Perhaps he had many times moved the trigger of his shotgun to the critical point.

Perhaps he was trying the deed a first time, perhaps he had tried just such a reconnaissance one hundred times before, and felt the touch of health return ninety times, ninety respectable times when he had dared to press the trigger far into the zone where the shot could go.

Mailer treats Kennedy’s decision to undergo spinal fusion surgery in much the same way. It is, he suggests, “the wisdom of a man who senses death within him and gambles that he can cure it by risking his life.” Similar therapy is recommended for cancer.

In 20 years the doctors may discover that it is not only the removal of the tumor which saves the patient but the entry of the knife. Cancer thrives on indecision and is arrested by any spirit of lightning present in an act.

Cancer is for Mailer the distinctively modern disease, the faceless countenance of the plague. In a time of rampant cowardice, a malaise which “thrives on indecision” finds congenial ground. It is a “slow death,” associated with the Devil and the square.

It becomes clear from such passages that Mailer is not content with description. He covets the mantle of the seer. In this transition, he reveals the finally religious nature of his task. He has come to save the soul of the nation. His writing, as Bach’s music, is dedicated to the service of the Lord.

At this point, Mailer bids farewell to the ambitions so dominant in 1952. He would not be a literary artist of the highest rank. “Silence, exile, and cunning,” the Joycean imperatives, were not given to him. In *Cannibals and Christians* Mailer reveals his dilemma in a remark about Hemingway and Faulkner. They were, for him, America’s greatest writers—and their greatness was based on their detachment.

...they saw that as the first condition for trying to be great—that one must not try to save. Not souls, and not the nation.

In the same work, Mailer refers to Joyce’s axioms again—only to reject their applicability. He was “too gregarious”—he would “try to save.”

His programs are unorthodox, but appropriate to the Weltanschauung directing their formulation. Mailer proposes a hipster’s version of the Peace Corps:

Start an Adventurer's Corps. . . . Even the soul of a lout has anguish—it is the dull urgent apathy that there is something in his heart which is too large to be a bum and yet he does not know if he is of sufficient stature to claim he is a man. So give him the Adventurer's Corps where he can go to the Everglades and fight alligators with a knife or sit on the side of the swamp and watch, where he can learn to fly a glider or spit tobacco in the hangar.

Mailer organizes his understanding of Presidential elections along similar lines. In 1960, for example, Kennedy was the hipster, and Nixon, unnatural son of Ike, was the square. The election was a moment of national crisis, an event where America would choose life and mystery in the person of Kennedy, or opt for the deadening predictability of Nixon.

Mailer urged votes for Kennedy. He wanted the nation to fight with the alligators, but feared it would choose the safety of the bank.

The political differences would be minor, but what would be not at all minor was the power of each man to radiate his appeal into some fundamental depths of the American character. One would have an inkling at last if the desire of America was for drama or stability, for adventure or monotony.

IV. History

There is finally no way
one can try to apprehend
complex reality without
a "fiction."
—*Advertisements for Myself*

Armies of the Night is introduced by two subtitles: "History as a Novel" and "The Novel as History." This was noted earlier, in connection with the preface to *Cannibals and Christians*, where Mailer wondered if the novel might not be the sole vehicle capable of containing the mystery of American experience. *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, a novel, was published the year before *Armies of the Night*. The association was not new.

Armies of the Night also bore the weight of Mailer's most characteristic vice—it was too long. Again there was emphasis on individual responsibility for the welfare of the world, and there was further evidence of Mailer's enormous capacity for guilt.

Yet something was different. *Armies of the Night* was a better piece of work. New ingredients were at work in Mailer's recipe—and his new book, no matter the traditional elements, had flavors of its own.

There was no cut in the ration of ego. No pseudonyms masked his face—Mailer was "your protagonist" from the start. He anticipated the dangers of this policy—"to inspire questions about the competence of the historian. Or, indeed, his honorable motive"—and gave reasons for his choice.

The March on the Pentagon was "an ambiguous event." As such, its history required an eyewitness whose participation was itself marginal. If the event was a mixture of heroism and absurdity, then the focus of its history should be a subjective analogue. Such a figure would be advantaged in the attempt to "recapture the . . . event and its monumental disproportions." Mailer, thought Mailer, was just the man for the job.

. . . if the event took place in one of the crazy mansions. . . of history, it is fitting that any ambiguous comic hero of such history. . . should be an egotist of the most startling misproportions, outrageously and even unhappily self-assertive, yet in command of a detachment classic in severity.

But here, buried in the expected, is the new element. Mailer sees himself as "comic hero." He is alive to the ludicrous in himself. The nearly unrelieved pomposity of *Advertisements for Myself* has yielded, for the most part, to a less irritating "need of studying every last lineament of the fine, the noble, the frantic, and the foolish in others and in himself."

Mailer's metaphysic is affected by the change. More explicitly than before, *Armies of the Night* envisions the individual spirit as a Manichean battleground writ small. But now it is clear that hipster and square are ideal types. Each man is something of both, and when he is strong enough he struggles to enlarge God's territory. He tries to be more hip, to accept more life. In *Armies of the Night*, Mailer explores the role of these private struggles in contemporary American history.

The book was widely hailed. But its success was too often attributed to a coincidental juxtaposition of objective event and subjective experience. This is faint praise: unwarranted emphasis is given to coincidence. In fact, the nature of the event is of secondary importance. The quality of the "subjective experience" is primary. This is what's new in *Armies of the Night*. Mailer gives voice to the square in himself. His experience is more honestly communicated. We see the reactions of his devils as well as his angels. Briefly, this means that Mailer has become a more representative figure, a heterogeneous mixture of radical and conservative, hipster and square. It may be that Mailer acquired new range by surrendering his vision of himself as America's leading hipster.

New elements noticed, the book is best approached in the tested manner. The March is yet another metaphysical skirmish. Opposed are the usual factions. On one side, symbol of modernity, mass society, and security, is the Pentagon, "true and high church of the military-industrial complex." On the other, raiding technocracy's capital, are the forces of mystery and magic, weirdest of armies. The demonstrators, said Mailer, were "assembled from all the intersections between history and the comic books." Their confrontation was an event like the election of 1960—a moment of truth for those who were there, a time when many were forced to new intimacy with themselves.

Mailer's own loyalties are clear. The Pentagon is a manifestation of the plague, one of its most hideous buboes:

Pentagon, blind five-sided eye of a subtle oppression which
had come to America out of the very air of the century.

He was not entirely pleased with the standard-bearers of the Lord. He distrusted their LSD, and resented their cocky dismissal of anyone over thirty. But they brought life to the mausoleum of American politics, and Mailer thanked them with his allegiance.

. . . politics had again become mysterious, had begun to partake of Mystery; . . . The new generation believed in technology more than any before it, but the generation also believed in LSD, in witches, in tribal knowledge, in orgy, and revolution. . . belief was reserved for the revelatory mystery of the happening where you did not know what was going to happen next; that was what was good about it.

Both factions at the March, though representative of ultimate forces, are at the same time peculiarly American entities. They are divided along lines of the American psyche, which has been schizophrenic, says Mailer, since World War I.

Since the First World War Americans have been leading a double life. . .there has been the history of politics which is concrete, factual, practical and unbelievably dull. . .and there is a subterranean river of untapped, ferocious, lonely and romantic desires, that concentration of ecstasy and violence which is the dream life of the nation.

Our schizophrenia is the result of divided loyalties. The nation and her citizens serve two irreconcilable masters.

Any man or woman who was devoutly Christian and worked for the American Corporation, had been caught in an unseen vise whose pressure could split their mind from their soul. For the center of the corporation was a detestation of mystery, a worship of technology. . .Every day the average American drove himself further into schizophrenia.

The March on the Pentagon was significant because it brought these two regions of the American psyche into direct confrontation. Established order was confronted by subterranean myth. Forces of mystery invaded the innermost shrines of the antimysterious power.

Mailer repeatedly underlines this "quintessentially American" character of the March. It continually reminds him of the Civil War (what else is schizophrenia?), and he finally understands it as one "rite of passage" in the continuing series which has given character to the nation. Mailer names some pivotal moments—Valley Forge, Gettysburg, the Alamo, Normandy—and then accords membership among the heroes of these to the ragtag army that endured through the night at the Pentagon:

. . .the engagement at the Pentagon was a pale rite of passage next to these, and yet it was probably a true one, for it came to the spoiled children of a dead, de-animalized middle class. . .a rite of passage for these tender drug-vitiated jargon-mired children, they endured through a night, a black dark night which begun in joy, near foundered in terror, and dragged on through empty apathetic hours while glints of light came to each alone.

This national "rite of passage" was of course compounded of the private bravery of "provisionally brave" participants. The individual "rite of passage" is for Mailer a contest of voices—a struggle against the voices of devils, an attempt to hear the voices of gods. The March on the Pentagon included untold thousands of such rites. Some were positive—Mailer's language is again deliberately eschatological—and "some part of the man has been born again." Others were negative—where men listened to the voices of devils, and learned "to give up the best things they were born with."

The March brought thousands of men and women face to face with the things they feared most. "Each side," Mailer wrote, "is coming face to face with its own conception of the devil!"

. . .this confrontation has not been without terror on each side. The demonstrators. . .are prepared for any conceivable brutality here. On their side, the troops have listened for years to small-town legends about the venality, criminality,

filth, corruption, perversion, addiction, and unbridled appetites of that mysterious group of city Americans referred to first as hipsters, then beatniks, then hippies.

Everything considered, it was a happy event, a harbinger of life to come. The country was not yet entirely in the hands of Satan. The March was a time for coming into the open, for showing hands. Each side learned more about the other, and the nation learned more about itself.

V. Miami & Chicago

. . .the war had finally begun,
and this was therefore a great
and solemn moment.
—*Miami and the Siege of Chicago*

Miami and the Siege of Chicago has much in common with *Armies of the Night*. It explores American schizophrenia as manifested in the Chicago confrontations, just as the earlier work had examined it in Washington. Mailer's loyalties are again with the demonstrators—he addresses them—he had done the same in Washington—and is nearly arrested again in support of their cause. For the most part, *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* retains the balanced vision which set *Armies of the Night* apart from Mailer's earlier work. There are momentary lapses, when Mailer forgets the ridiculous in himself and gives rein to megalomania. Such moments exist in *Armies of the Night* too—Mailer's imaginary fistfight with a Nazi at the Pentagon stands out among them. Mailer and the Nazi are brought together after both have been arrested. Their animosities surface—insults are exchanged, a brawl is possible. Mailer will never assault the Nazi. His reasons are strategic—he is a counterpuncher. But if—imagine now the author at his desk, manuscript before him. Suddenly he moves, lashing the keys with devastating combination—left to the quote mark, right to the comma, chop to the space bar. The action is furious—and now the fantasy is on the page. "If the Nazi jumped him one blond youth was very likely to get massacred." The comic hero—Mailer in pinstripe suit, generous girth at the middle, a "banker gone ape"—would have been more appropriate.

But moments like this, order of the day in *Advertisements for Myself*, are rare now. In *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*, compassionate characterization is more typical. His fine portrait of "the muted tragedy of the Wasp," drawn at a GOP dinner in Miami, provides an example.

On and on, they came through the door, the clean, the well-bred, . . .they were looking for a leader to bring America back to them, their lost America, Jesusland.

. . .He did not detest these people, he did not feel so superior as to pity them, it was rather he felt a sad sorrowful respect. In their immaculate cleanliness. . .in the heavy sturdy moves so many demonstrated of bodies in life's harness, there was the muted tragedy of the Wasp—they were not on earth to enjoy or even perhaps to love so very much, they were here to serve, and. . .so much of America did not wish them to serve any longer, and so many of them doubted themselves, doubted that the force of their faith could illumine their path in these new modern horror-head times.

Is there hint in this of a crisis come upon these orderly legions of the grave? Some inkling of a future touched with mystery in store for them? Was it possible that soon there

would be no more insular refuges, no more churches, clubs, committees, or other playpens for dedicated squares? Was even the Wasp soon to become more Hip, against every impulse of his will, and at what incalculable cost to his whole galaxy of protective dogma?

In support of such interpolations, regard Mailer's assessment of the effect of years on Richard Nixon, Tricky Dick of old, and hero to the Wasp.

Nixon had finally acquired some of the dignity of the old athlete and the old con. . .there was an attentiveness in his eyes which gave offer of some knowledge of the abyss. . .

Later, Mailer gave more succinct appraisal. "Richard Nixon's mind had entered the torture chambers of the modern consciousness." If their leader had voyaged into the twentieth century, who could say his followers would be spared?

Mailer, then, thought that a "rite of passage" might be in store for the Wasps and their champion. It would come in the guise of power:

. . .the Wasp had to come to power in order that he grow up, in order that he take the old primitive root of his life-giving philosophy. . .off the high attic shelf. . .and plant it in the smashed glass and burned brick of the twentieth century's junkyard. . .

Such prospects baffled Mailer. The historian found his tools inadequate—he was unable to sense the ultimate loyalties of these chastened Wasps. "For the first time he had not been able to come away with an intimation of what was in a politician's heart." He left for Chicago undecided. Things would get worse.

Mailer's reports from Chicago set the tone for the book. The writing is subdued, uninspired, as though the dizzying round of assassinations, campus troubles, and ghetto riots had convinced him that the nation had at last entered the terminal phase of her internecine war, had sustained wounds too serious for repair. *Armies of the Night* has touches of this mood, a sense of approaching cataclysm mixed with the hope for some hero who will yet act decisively enough to avert the disaster. In Chicago the time for the doctor is past. It is time to call the coroner.

The years of sabotage were ahead—a fearful perspective; they would be giving engineering students tests in loyalty before they were done; the FBI would come to question whoever took a mail order course in radio. It was possible that one was at the edge of that watershed year from which the country might never function well again.

Chicago, of course, was a major battlefield in the war Mailer is always covering. It was crucial because it was public. Events took place on center stage—for the Democratic party watching from hotel windows, and for the world on television. It was as though "each side had said, 'Here we will have our battle. Here we will win.' "

The devils were especially confident. This was America; Chicago, home cave of Daley's blue-helmeted host. Safe ground for devils. Mailer imagines an address by their leader:

There are more millions behind us than behind them, more millions who wish to weed out, poison, gas, and obliterate every flower whose power they do not comprehend than

heroes for their side who will view our brute determination and still be ready to resist. There are more cowards alive than the brave. Otherwise we would not be where we are, said the Prince of Greed.

This fine mist of doom, the stink of corruption in power, pervades *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*. There are bright spots of relief—Mailer was impressed by the resourcefulness of the demonstrators, he was touched by their wondrous confidence. On Thursday night, he watched while sympathetic delegates and workers in the Hilton blinked their lights in support of the demonstrators.

So two audiences regarded each other, like ships signaling across a gulf of water in the night, and delegates came down from the hotel; a mood of beauty was in the air, there present through all the dirty bandaged kids, the sour vomit odor of the Mace, the sighing and whining of the army trucks . . . yes, there was the breath of this incredible crusade where fear was in every breath you took, and so breath was tender, it came into the lungs as a manifest of value, as a gift . . .

But pessimism is the dominant tone, and after the convention, while Agnew accused Humphrey of being soft on communism, Mailer was not solaced by the prospect of the coming election. He would not vote, "unless it was for Eldridge Cleaver."

VI. Conclusion

. . . listen asshole America,
D.J. your disc jockey is
telling you, where you going
when you sleep?
—*Why Are We in Vietnam?*

"I want to know how power works," Mailer once said to James Baldwin, "how it really works, in detail." This helps explain his interest in politics. But that is not all—Mailer's primary concern would seem to be with power in its largest sense, as energy, as vitality. *Why Are We in Vietnam?* occupies itself with the marvels of magnetism and electricity:

. . . know this, you a part of the dream field . . . you swinging on the inside of the deep mystery which is whatever is electricity, and who is magnetism? For they the in and out, the potential and actual, the about to be and the becoming of something—we cannot call it love, the lust of Satan, can that be? Magnetism potential and electricity the actual of the Prince himself?

Mailer is no less curious about other mysterious powers:

. . . why, dear God, as fruits and grains begin to rot, does some distillate of this art of the earth now in decomposition have the power to inflame consciousness and give us purchase on visions of Heaven and Hell?

And in *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* he reprints a rock guitarist's remark which captured his eye:

You take this electrical power out of the wall and you send it through a guitar and you bend it and shape it and make it into something, like songs for people and that power is a wonderful thing.

Mailer's attraction to these mysteries is at the source of his artistry. As artist, he is concerned with the secret wellsprings of life's energies. He works to emphasize their importance, guards them from pollution, lives with their danger. The artist, for Mailer, is "the last liberator in the land." It is his duty "to be as disturbing, as adventurous, as penetrating, as . . . energy and courage make possible."

Mailer worked hard to fill the shoes of this conception—and much of his mission was a thankless task. He labored in the Lord's service in a time and in a nation fearful of His ways. He sometimes felt that he had come too soon. He had been ready for revolution in the fifties.

. . . he had lived for a dozen empty hopeless years after the second world war with the bitterness, rage, and potential militancy of a real revolutionary . . . but no revolution had arisen in the years when he was ready.

Then, in the sixties, when revolution was in the air, when forces of mystery began to reassert their power, it was too late. Mailer knew the "gun in the hills" was not for him.

. . . he would be too old by then, and too incompetent, yes, too incompetent said the new modesty, and too showboat, too lacking in essential judgment.

Thus, at the turn of the decade, things stood for Mailer, one-time Joyce and interim hipster. He was successful—a "semi-distinguished and semi-notorious author." He was wealthy, and *Life* was paying him well for his impressions of the moon landing. But sacrifices had been made. He had started out to be a "major writer," but things had not turned out that way. Things had been lost. There is a passage in *Armies of the Night* which gives some intimation of the disappointments trailing in the wake of Mailer's years. He writes of his friendship with Robert Lowell, and one senses that Mailer sees in the other man some eminence wanted for his own, some grace

longed for in vain. Lowell, he thought, was poet, lofty breed apart, unscathed by common ills. Mailer, in the privacy of his longing, speaks bitterly to his friend:

You, Lowell, beloved poet of many . . . What do you know about getting fat against your will, and turning into a clown of an *arriviste* baron when you would rather be an eagle . . .

"When you would rather be an eagle"—rather be poet that is, one who soars on wings of words above the common class of men.

But Mailer was no poet, no eagle aloft on words; not even a master of prose if truth is to be told. And the reason is elementary: the word is not primary in his work, the word is not magic. Yeats had made the option clear—"the intellect of man is forced to choose perfection of the life or of the work." And Mailer had long since made his choice, made it in the terms he gave to Faulkner and Hemingway—"they saw that . . . one must not try to save"—made it against them and against their choice.

Mailer's choice was for life. Life, and the mystery of its powers, has been the secret core of his allegiance, the touchstone of his work. Thus words are not primary. Words are not jewels, ends in themselves, but bullets in the war of life. Mailer has been at last a man for living—doggedly, impetuously, beligerently alive; sworn to life's cause, to "every last lineament of the fine, the noble, the frantic, and the foolish." It is for this that he deserves praise; for this we owe him honor. Though no poet, Mailer is matter for a poet's art, a finally poetic spirit best celebrated by a poet's song:

See how these names are feted by the waving grass
And by the streamers of white cloud
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
The names of those who in their lives fought for life,
Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre.
—Stephen Spender, "The Truly Great"

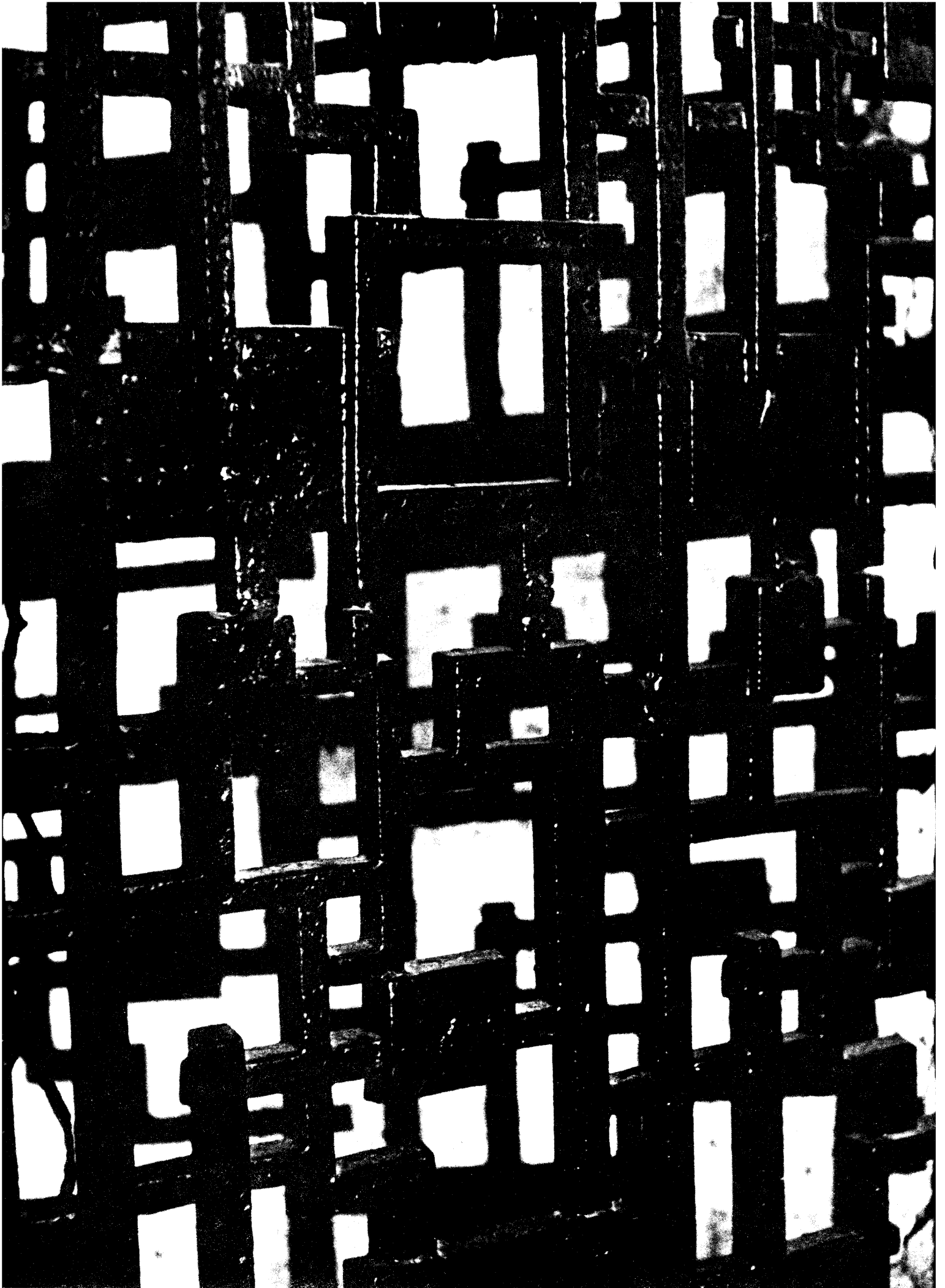
DRINKING WITH A SPOT WELDER

At the end of the bar
The television signs off.
There we are, under the test pattern
Of some unknown indian
With call letters across his chest.

The talk shrinks until what we say
Could be fine print on
Beer labels.
A field of hops on a pin head.

Suddenly, he makes his point,
Jabbing with the forefinger
A weld in his palm.

—Thomas Johnson



Mailer Is the Message

by Jeffrey Gillenkirk

The Great New American Novelist-Journalist-Director is dead. Unfortunate—for the world of letters anxiously waited for their pouting, pugilistic darling to deliver on his *Advertisements for Myself*. The delivery never came. Death came slowly and painfully, sapping out the young, bubbling juices of creativity, forcing him to eschew art and rivet his attention to a rapidly decaying vision. Authorities find it difficult to determine the exact time of death, but all agree to a time prior to the filming of *Maidstone*. In the public interest an autopsy should be performed.

The late 1940's blessed America with two new forceful presences—television and Norman Mailer. In the light of Mailer's alleged demise it is not presumptuous to link these facts, for television's ubiquitous glare thrust The Writer's public stance into America's living room. With *The Naked and the Dead* he became America's bright new star, mass media merchandise to be packaged and sold. At this time he recognized the phenomenon and very aptly expressed it in McLuhanesque fashion: "... no, I was a node in a new electronic landscape of celebrity, personality, and status."¹ He was The Writer, a public image which supplanted all prior personal existence, a ticket to America's center stage. The artistic sensibility decayed; the capacity to capture the dynamics of human passions and predicaments exhibited in the fictional world of *The Naked and the Dead* wilted under the onslaught of The Writer's expanding ego:

There was a time when Pirandello could tease a comedy of pain out of six characters in search of an author, but that is only a whiff of purgatory next to the yaws of conscience one learns to feel when he sets his mirror face to face and begins to jiggle his Self for a style which will have some relation to him. (AM, 16)¹

Several significant self-revelations spin off from this confession, indirect admissions to a paralysis of artistic sensibility. From a major work of fiction The Writer sinks to the self-destructive practice of self-analysis, but not the deep, introspective analysis of the unconscious self. Mailer portrays an image here as a man struggling to be a writer rather than a writer struggling to create an artistic reality. Tormented by "yaws of conscience," the self-persecuted man examines only himself, not the stimuli around him. Even Hamlet, the archetypal man of neurotic procrastination, saw the universal nature

of art when urging the Players "... to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" (Act III, ii). Rather than standing to one side of the mirror to catch the images and patterns of life, Mailer clouds the view with his own visage. All of existence relates to this self; he searches not for a style which most aptly expresses the subject but for one "which will have some relation to him." The bulky stance of the writer overshadows the nuances of life's forms. The reader finds it as painful to read *Advertisements for Myself* as it was for Mailer to write it. The circus hall of mirrors teems with curious scrutinizers struggling with the one-dimensional image of Mailer to answer why such a promising writer stands immobile. An ability to explore and experience existence, masterfully to create a fictional reality, appears supplanted by a compulsion to explore the self; not the deep recesses of the unconscious, but a flat, incomplete reflection in the mirror of the national media.

The Writer regresses from provocative existential questions to a sophomoric identity crisis. Had he attempted to explore the regions beyond the mirror Mailer may have salvaged psychic scraps which would deepen his vision. The implusive character of modern media should have, according to Marshall McLuhan, played "the disk or film of Western man backward, into the heart of tribal darkness, or into what Joseph Conrad called 'the Africa within.'"² Mailer reflects not the "Africa within" but the America without, a surface image which is no longer the exception of higher consciousness but the rule of one-dimensionality.

Mailer would be tolerable had he ceased his irritating self-consciousness with *Advertisements for Myself*. First of all, the integrity of such a book is questionable. These are the shavings, the gleaned stalks off the kernel of the self, the personal housework before The Writer loses the self in an artistic vision. The book stands as an interesting chapter in the sociology of literary success,³ but that is all. Regardless, Mailer published the book, and certainly with cathartic intentions. Apparently Mailer grew little from these self-induced vomitings, for his six characters never find their author. In *The Armies of the Night* and *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* Mailer takes on both roles, the Author and the Characters. No matter what pretensions he may make concerning the significance of this style, the psychological implications vastly outweigh them.

The image of himself—his public pose—looms over the historical events so completely that it clouds the significance of the facts. The Reporter becomes a fictional hero in a real-life movement of social forces; a misfit mirror image of the man who placed him there. The profile of the leading character offers nothing new; the same character stalks the pages of all his works:

Still, Mailer had a complex mind of sorts. We will remember that Mailer had a complex mind of sorts.⁴

The following statement proves even more appropriate for its similarity to the contents of *Advertisements for Myself*:

Mailer had the most developed sense of image; if not, he would have been a figure of deficiency, for people had been regarding him by his public image since he was twenty-five years old. . . . During the day, while he was helpless, newspapermen and other assorted braves of the media and the literary world would carve ugly pictures on the living tomb of his legend. Of necessity, part of Mailer's remaining funds of sensitivity went right into the war of supporting his image and working for it. (AN, 16)

For those who doubt it, this misplaced piece states unequivocally that Mailer sees the world in no larger context than himself. Each successive work emerges as another advertisement for himself. Each work demands that the reader look at Mailer, not the content, and judge it in relation to him. The neurotic self supplants the subject.

A prime characteristic of good literature and journalism which separates them from the pathetic, self-indulgent writing of amateurs is authorial distance. The distance from author to material differs from writer to writer, and the question is a quantitative one rather than qualitative. That is to say, whether a writer delves to the inner reaches of a subconscious Self or out into the objective world or beyond to a mystical vision is no matter for argument. The actual form which authorial distance takes makes no difference; the actual existence of this distance does. In literature the author establishes a distance between himself and his creative reality which allows the reader to squeeze in and empathize, sympathize, soar to experience a vision, or whatever a particular piece demands. The reader's concern lies not in the author's personality or in *how* the author creates, but in the beauty and efficacy of the actual creation. The writer who continually serves up himself in his work offers the reader an unappetizing, unvaried menu.

In the conception of the "new journalism" the journalist discards the impossible task of total objectivity to advance a documented point of view. The journalist subjectively draws significance from the facts, but the emphasis should lie on the substantive facts and human dynamics rather than the conjectures drawn from them. The journalist does not create the facts; he sees and structures them as only his individual psyche can, but with the facts and features as the crystal core. The journalist objectifies the facts (i.e. puts them outside of himself) within a subjective framework to allow the reader an unimpaired vision of the significant event. The reader desires to experience the event, not the journalist.

Ostensibly, Mailer has ignored these principles of writing since the writing of *Advertisements for Myself*. His stance as Norman Mailer, The Writer, permeates all of his work, focusing attention on the character of the author at the expense of

the beauty or truth of the creation. Because Mailer's peculiar problem stems from the ego battering capacity of the national media, he may feel justified in resolving it in the public eye. This frame of mind produces dull reading however, for he takes the audience on a pseudo-solipsistic journey through a painfully self-conscious psyche—a very limited and unfulfilling experience. Mailer's search "for a style which will have some relation to him" found only himself. Mailer's style is himself; a twisted, bombastic, uni-sensical mess which follows "the thorns and ellipses of my knotted mind." (AM, 17) The only authorial distance Mailer has created in his aborted literary career is the insurmountable gap between his youthful ambition to "settle for nothing less than making a revolution in the consciousness of our time" (AM, 15) and its accomplishment.

That Norman Mailer is pretentious has become a cliché in the literary world, but if one examines the nature of clichés this inimical one retains substance. A cliché is an overused truth, a handy aphorism at the tip of every polemical tongue. The fact of its overuse, however, does not detract from its nature of truth or felicity. Mailer himself has become a cliché, an overworked truth of literary success which repeatedly presents itself in the same form in numerous public displays. The cliché of pretentiousness grows from that expanse between what he says he writes and what he actually does write, between the advertisement and the product. The expanse stretches to its greatest proportions with *Maidstone*, Mailer's unintentionally ironic attack of his credibility as an artist. The film and its fervent promotion by the director says more about Mailer's condition than any work since *Advertisements for Myself*.

A promotional piece entitled "A Course in Filmmaking" preceded the commercial release of *Maidstone*, appearing in the *New American Review* in Autumn, 1971. In characteristic style the author, Mailer, speaks of the director, Mailer, with reverent awe. Perhaps fearing the unmitigated wrath of reviewers, he reviews his film beforehand, hoping to plant subliminal self-constructed significances in the critics' minds. He is the product and the promoter, but unfortunately he directs the advertising for American art's answer to the hula hoop—himself. Unable to convince himself of his writing abilities, he turned to "the unique experience to convince himself that he was a pioneer"⁵ in film theory and practice. Hinting at his own pretentiousness in this matter, Mailer states:

Still it is something to skip at a leap over thirty years of movie-making apprenticeship he has not served, to propose that, all ignorance and limitations granted, he has found a novel technique, and is on the consequence ready to issue claim that his way of putting a film together, cut by cut, is important, and conceivably closer to the nature of film than the work of other, more talented directors. (M, 141-142)

A very powerful statement indeed, though equivocal in parts, and one which evokes images of the bully who must prove himself one more time. Bullies prove themselves at the expense of others; the exploited other in this case is the movie-goer.

Maidstone is a movie about making a movie, but not really. It is a movie about Norman Mailer *trying* to make a movie, another monotonous chapter in a portrait of the artist as an aesthetic paralytic. Granted, Mailer employs a novel technique in filming without a script, in relying on improvisation,

in allowing various factions of the fictional struggle to work autonomously to create the mystery. It is an attack upon reality, an unrehearsed ontological plunge designed to capture a newly created reality. However, Norman Mailer emerges as the only created reality in *Maidstone*.

As the four-star general of this attack upon reality Mailer plays a controversial, bizarre film director who is purportedly a candidate for President of the United States (sound familiar?). The director, Norman T. Kingsley, attempts to shoot a film among the distracting hulabaloo of political raps, interviews, endorsements, and threats of assassination. To enhance the drama Mailer grants the diabolical assassins an autonomy in developing their plot against Kingsley, thus adding a bogus touch of cinema vérité to the mystery. Filming within the film commences with Norman T. Kingsley playing the lead role in his film about sex (what aspect of sex it is is no where near comprehensible) and the paranoia of a director-presidential candidate. The improvisational nature of the acting and the ominous assassination plot supposedly contribute a complexity of reality becoming film, or vice versa, but Mailer sabotages reality from the very beginning. Analysis of the structural outline reveals this: Norman Mailer directs a film in which he plays the lead as a director who directs a film in which he plays the lead as himself. Whereas a Godard, or Fellini, or Antonioni will explore reality and explode the confines of the film medium with multiple levels of sound, dialogue, and image, Mailer explores reality by multiplying himself three times. This bullyish, clumsy attack upon reality leaves the viewer with such searing existential questions as, "Is that Norman Mailer or Norman T. Kingsley? Is Mailer acting as Kingsley within the film or is Kingsley acting in the film within the film? Is that couple making love on the set, in the film, or in the film within the film?" The purported complexity of levels of reality assume the status of distorting mirrors for Mailer's overbearing self-consciousness.

The ultimate artistic insult occurs when the director, Norman Mailer, gathers the cast within the film to explain the nature of his attack upon reality. In an artistic sense nothing of merit may be said about such a boorish authorial intrusion. It means either a) Mailer fails so dismally in cinematically exploring levels of reality that in desperation he resorts to a verbal explanation; b) Mailer places no trust in allowing an ignorant audience to decipher his bogus mystery; and/or c) Mailer must appear in person as the omnipotent auteur to complete his cycle of roles in the film. It is significant that in his explanation of multi-faceted reality he does not employ a poetic metaphor but plays the role of reality himself: "The way anything happens is that we have five realities at any given moment which then swing around to there, you see, or like this, do you follow? (He swings around like a heavy skier doing little turning jumps)." (M, 117) This feeble demonstration of reality is the closest the director comes to realizing his abstractions.

Maidstone fails, unfortunately, and I say unfortunately because Mailer's theory of film underlying this movie is novel and potentially provocative. By creating an atmosphere, building an emotional framework for drama and then relying upon a talented cast to improvise, to jump at the shock of existential stimuli, Mailer held the reins to a significant cinematic happening. The reality of improvisation could become its own reality, a reality of cinematic art, a psychological reality of behavior, a double-edged reality of actor and person, etc. The

possibilities are limitless, the prospects titillating, the realization of them in *Maidstone* unmistakably absent. What happened between this innovative theory and its application? Mailer's multi-faceted hand mirror, the inability to extract all but his essential self from his public work: "Even if he would be in the middle of the film, would play in it as he had in the two others, would in fact play the leading role of the director (indeed find another actor on earth to even believe in such a role!), that did not mean the film would proceed as he had planned." (M, 158) Mailer strived to create an antithesis of Hollywood filmed theater, a film free from a story line, bourgeois sentimentality, and all-star attraction. He, however, was the star and he starred on as many structural levels he could invent. For this presumption he offers a condescending apology: speaking of the editing task he says, "He had been left with the most embarrassing work of all, an ego trip; for he had been the hardest-working actor in the film, and so the film was his, it was all too unhappily his, and all too much of him, since that was the part which unfortunately worked the best." (M, 117) Yes, Norman was on an ego trip, a trip which lasted from the selection of himself as star to the conclusion of the editing. We see him boxing, bantering, bickering and bullying; seducing, singing and swooning. He laments the failure of the other actors to produce quality segments of drama, a failure which required "ego trip" editing. The other actors never had a chance. Only Mailer knew where to take it. The phantasies, the preoccupations, the psychological realities were all Mailer's, all manifestations of a man obsessed with his own image. He seems to have found the perfect medium, film allowing him to magnify the surface image which dominates his vision. Experiencing a dearth of provocative cinematic images, Mailer forces the viewer to stare at long close-ups of his calculated expressions, perhaps hoping the viewer will extract from the frozen psyche a semblance of significance. No, it cannot and should not be done. A perceptive viewer will experience only an intense frustration, an artistic anger at having watched a self-conscious, self-centered, esoteric vision of Norman Mailer's public self which barely makes minute sense with the director's inept intrusion at the end. *Maidstone* is a shattered one-dimensional vision, a mirror within a mirror for a mirror-image man. This viewer joins the stifled, enraged actor Rip Torn to "salute the champ of shit," (M, 131) to bid adieu to a man who has advertised a product for thirteen years but has never delivered. Mailer leaves room for only one in his mirror.

NOTES

1. Norman Mailer, *Advertisements for Myself* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons; 1959), p. 92. Future references will be indicated in the text as AM with page number.
2. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (New York: Signet Books; 1964), p. 108.
3. For a brilliant discussion of Mailer's political co-option see Christopher Lasch's *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963* (New York: Vintage Books; 1967), p. 335.
4. Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night* (New York: Signet Books; 1968), p. 15 and p. 193. Other references indicated in the text as AN with page number.
5. Norman Mailer *Maidstone* (New York: Signet Books; 1971), p. 141. Other references indicated in the text as M with page number.

ROCKAWAY BEACH

Thousands and thousands of days
Spilled out
Under the sun.
They thicken the waves,
An emulsion of dust.
The beach will not stay,
Ground shells
The sea once forgot,
And thin,
You could put your foot through,
Flimsy, like the floor of an attic
Not yet stiffened for life.
Only the sea is real,
Its huge foaming hands
That hold you
Or slap you
Or float you and hold you
So long
You are almost asleep
And see
The beach wrinkle like skin
On a cocoa or soup,
Some wind skims
It off, the whole world
Is seamless as water,
You think it's a dream,
You think you can leave,
O yes, you go in,
The waves' flat palm
Propelling your heels,
Your toes find
The clams and the sand
And the shells,
The castles of sand,
The red pails,
But when you come clear
Of the water
Snaking in silver
The seaweed is holding your foot
Like a hand.

—Susan Fromberg Schaeffer

YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND

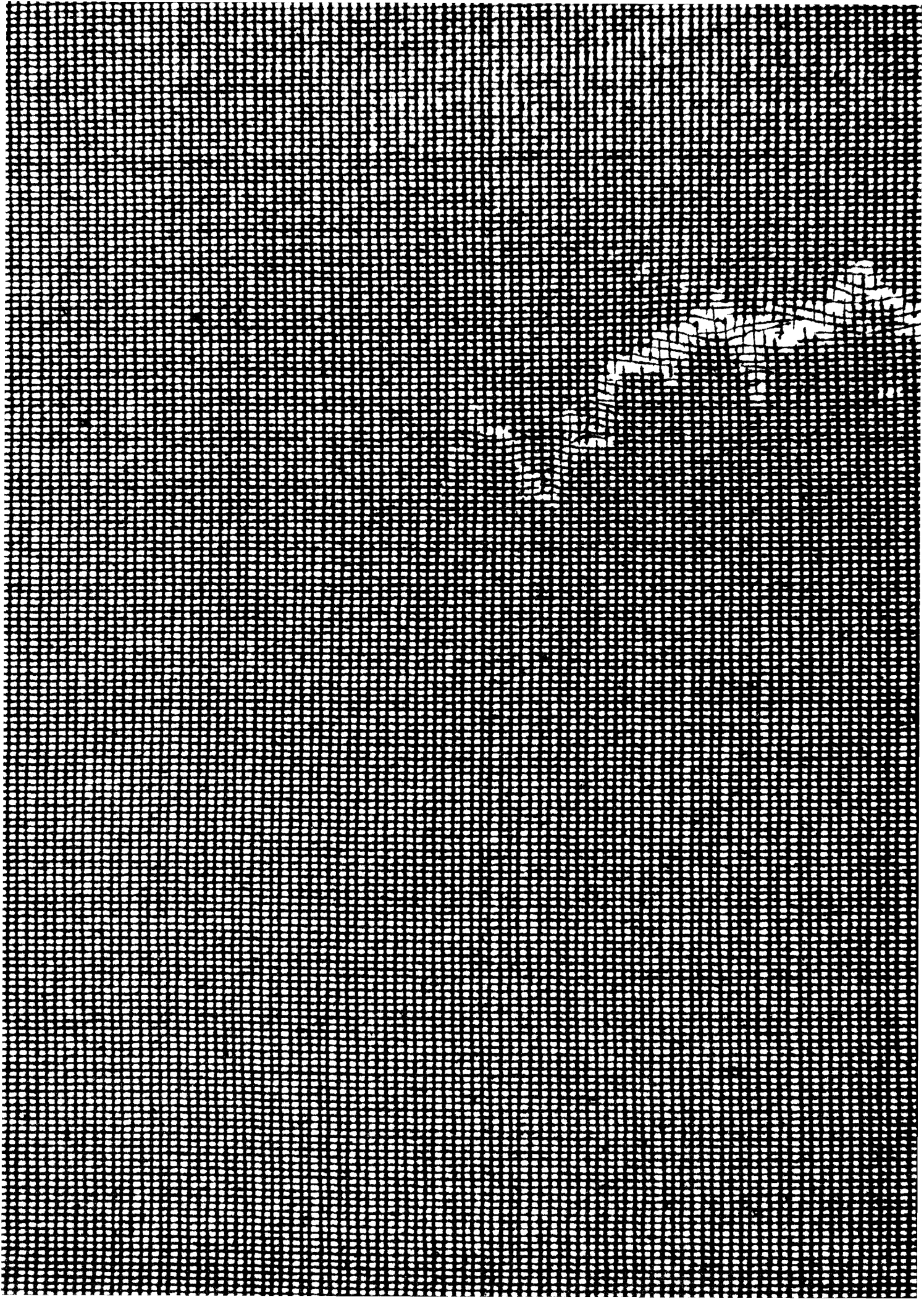
I only meant
I wanted to be
beautiful
I meant
I wanted those years
cancelled

The lines around the eyes
cancelled
the small breasts the
careful voice the careful
eyes
cancelled

I meant
I wanted to forget
the lies
the controlled dialogue
the realistic pretense
(or pretense of realism)

Wanted to
unleash the animal
the wild sweet
lusty animal grown
weak and thin
the starved beast craving
meat as once it had taken
meat
wild exultant
trustingly

—Lucy Reed



Mailer on Mailer: An Interview

This interview was conducted by Matthew Grace and Steve Roday.

NOR: Mr. Mailer, how do you feel about your own books—*The Naked and the Dead*, for instance?

MAILER: I really don't know how I feel. Someone might come along tomorrow and write some extraordinary critical piece about *The Naked and the Dead* which would show it filled with all sorts of symbolic Promethean types that I've not been quite aware of before, and I might then decide that I really was aware of them. I've gotten to the point where I think of my books the way a mother thinks of her children—this one was a hard birth, that one came in two hours.

NOR: When was the last time you read *The Naked and the Dead*?

MAILER: I'm guessing, but I think it's probably five years since I poked my nose in it, and it must be maybe twenty years since I've read a couple hundred pages of it. I don't think I've ever read it all since it was published, but then I read it so many times while I was writing it.

NOR: What are your feelings about *Of a Fire on the Moon*?

MAILER: I don't really know what I think of it yet, because I'm still close to how much work it was; it was a hard job. I was paid a great deal of money for that book, but it was something like pushing a Cadillac.

NOR: Does that help you to do things, if you're paid a lot of money?

MAILER: That made it better. It would have been a harder book to write if I'd been paid less. I'm sort of a frank and shameless professional. I enjoy my work more if I get paid well for it. It makes it somehow sexier. It's awful to put it that way, but it's as simple as that. You take yourself just a little more seriously, and that's a great help when you're writing. Because the hardest thing I've found in writing is to take yourself with enough importance so that you dare finally to start defining some piece of that existence out there. There's an extraordinary arrogance in the act of writing.

NOR: Do you feel a crisis after you finish each book, and is it equivalent to the one you felt after *The Naked and the Dead*? Are you still worried about what you're going to do next?

MAILER: No, no, not at all any more, it's the other way now. Now, I'm about three, four, five books behind myself. There are two or three books I feel I shall never write. And there are two or three books I feel I should write.

NOR: Do you consider the last couple of books of non-fiction that you wrote to be a different kind of effort than the novels; in other words, do they demand different things of you?

MAILER: Oh yeah, sure.

NOR: And is it easier to write non-fiction?

MAILER: Yeah, much easier. It's easier for one reason—your story is given you, which is incredible. That's a boon and you write two or three times as fast. You know what the ending is and that means that a part of you just relaxes altogether, a part of you that would otherwise be eating up half your effort. Because when you're writing a novel, you have all of experience before you; it's exactly like playing a chess game. I mean you have five continuations, or eighteen, it depends how your mind works. But however many continuations you have, there's a psychic exhaustion working on a novel that just doesn't exist in journalism and so by now I know that I can do journalism about two or three times as quickly.

NOR: How did you feel after you finished *Why Are We in Vietnam*?

MAILER: Well, let's go back to the metaphor of motherhood. That was the easiest child I ever had. It was a gift. When you're a writer who does a lot of writing, when you try to keep up your level, the key thing in writing every day is that you go there every day, and you've got to go through some peculiar sort of hour or two, each day, where you get yourself in shape to do that writing. I mean your personal life can be in good shape or in bad shape, but you've got to face yourself each morning, which every man has to do one way or another, but the difference is that you do it alone, do it day after day after day. There's a need to go through that, and get through that. It's really a form of self-analysis—but I don't want to dignify it that way. I don't want to calumniate it that way, either. It's more a matter of just brooding and drifting, and getting into what's bothering you, or just unwinding a little, being alone for a while, or just cussing at yourself for a while, or really looking into everything in yourself that's really weak

and second rate.

NOR: I'm especially interested in your use of the Faulkner materials in *Why Are We in Vietnam?* Was that something that occurred to you from a recent rereading or was the wilderness theme something that you had been aware of for some time, and that you wanted to incorporate?

MAILER: Well, I am very interested in this too, because I have never read *The Bear*. I've got enormous holes in my reading, and Faulkner's one of them. I've read about three of his books and that's all. And when *Why Are We in Vietnam?* came out, practically every review mentioned *The Bear*.

NOR: There's so much there and you literally hadn't read it?

MAILER: No, I literally hadn't. Well, I saw an incredible poem of Galway Kinnell's about hunting a bear. It's a great poem. I don't remember the name of it now. It's about a guy who tracks a bear for three or four days, and kills it, guts it, and sleeps inside it. It's an incredible poem. It's one of the best poems I've read in years.

NOR: I want to go back to professionalism just for a minute. Do you read in the middle of your writing, or do you just write?

MAILER: No, I put in long hours when I'm working. Generally I don't do much else. I go up to Provincetown, and I'll get over to the place where I work at about ten or eleven in the morning. I usually try to talk as little as I can before I go over, and then I'll get going anywhere from twelve to two o'clock—it takes me a long time to get started. Then I'll work until eight or nine o'clock at night. I'll do that day after day. Sometimes, if there's no great rush, I'll just take off a day in the middle of the week, so I'll work four days out of seven and use the other three days for catching up and reworking the stuff and going over what I've written and all that. Or if there's a deadline, I'll just work every day.

NOR: Do you do much in the way of preliminaries, like notebooks?

MAILER: No, not anymore. No, that's not true, I have a lot of notes. I do have index cards. They generally collect—if I'm doing some reading for something, I'll collect that way, or if I'm covering a story—just journalism—I'll come back with notebooks full of stuff. You're absolutely right.

NOR: What about your reading? What kind of reading do you do?

MAILER: I'm an abominable reader—for the last three or four years I've been either making movies or writing and I have not been reading. One of the things I'm looking forward to is to have an orgy of reading in the next year. I think I'm going to get six months to myself. I just want to read.

NOR: What sort of reading do you want to do?

MAILER: History, a great deal. Thomas Carlyle's *French Revolution* or Mommsen's *History of Rome*.

NOR: What about your films?

MAILER: They're hard to see.

NOR: Do you think you're being overlooked, not being taken seriously?

MAILER: I know I'm not being taken seriously. The first movie I don't think has to be taken seriously.

NOR: The Wild Night?

MAILER: Yeah, I fell in love with it, because I was discovering that there's an aesthetic experience called filmmaking.

NOR: You are finished with drama now, and you've decided that film is more compatible?

MAILER: It's more compatible for me. There's something about the theater that I find. . . let's say we're not ideally suited to each other. Working on the same line day after day, over and over with an actor, nearly drives me out of my skull. I've made one discovery about acting. If you take people who have never acted before and you have the wit to think of a situation which is right for them, and you throw them together, you get extraordinary results, particularly if they've never acted before. It's as if everybody alive has got sort of a marvelous actor in him for this or that occasion, and if you're there to shape it as it goes along, you can end up with something that tells a rather extraordinary story, and tells it better than you could do it in other ways. I'll give you an example. I once tried to talk Orson Welles into making a movie about Churchill in this way. I wanted to get Welles and a really good group of English actors together, and sit around for a few days or whatever, and decide pretty much which episode of Churchill's life they wanted to do, and then we'd all get the same source material. And we'd read it, and then start improvising scenes—let's say it was Churchill the night before Dunkirk, and they would all start giving their sense of the part they would play, and I'd be there, sort of shaping it, steering it. I suppose I'd play the equivalent of a man who would be the leader of an encounter group, and we would have a very good cameraman, a very good soundman, and we'd light it in such a way it would move freely and then we'd make scenes out of it, and shoot it for a couple of days. My thesis is that you'd get a better movie that way than you would if I sat down and wrote a script about Churchill, using everything I knew, and then brought the actors into it, and spent so many million dollars, so many weeks or months making it. And the reason it would be better is that I would have just one idea of Churchill, and if you got these ten really intelligent British actors together, you'd have an enormous number of ideas. And the collection of ideas is going to be a richer aesthetic experience than a one-man blueprint which is always fulfilled imperfectly. You make a movie that way, and then the second art comes in which is three-fourths the fun: cutting it. In other words you've been given a language, a vocabulary to work with; you then start putting it together your way, and you end up making it yours anyway. Whereas if you have a free movie, it reads as if you wrote it.

NOR: That resolved the problem of your having control both over the novel and over the movie? You can in a sense maintain your close control by editing.

MAILER: Yeah, I get it back there. I know how hard it is to have control over a novel where every word is yours; you still don't really control it. I mean you're at the mercy of things like some friend dropping by unexpectedly, and you get drunk, and something that was really coming along naturally to its completion is ruined. As you get older, you learn how to avoid that. . . . But that kind of

control you don't ever have. When you write a script, you must hope that the director will see it your way, that the actors will see it the director's way, and that the producer will be cooperative, through all this lunacy. This is of course the first absurdity of that game. And so once you know that you're going to have no control, then you don't wish to write a script. Why write a script that's not going to come out?

NOR: You don't really have control over events such as the Pentagon march or the moon shot.

MAILER: That's journalism. No, in other words, in accepting a job at the Pentagon, I didn't take it on as a subject at all.

NOR: But if the real subject of the Pentagon and the moon shot is you, in a way. . .

MAILER: It's different, I don't think of the moonshot as something you wish for. In *The Armies of the Night*, what happened was I didn't go there to cover it as a journalist. The feeling I had when it was over was: What a good short story I've got. And then, of course, it got longer as they often do. But that wasn't really a piece of journalism, as much as, say, *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* or the Paterson-Liston fight.

NOR: What you write is your point of view?

MAILER: Sure, I want it that way.

NOR: It's not frustrating?

MAILER: No, I want it that way. What I write is more important than myself. I think Hemingway got into trouble because he never got that clear in his head. You know finally he had to be as important as the work. Well, he was trying the hardest thing you can do, he was making an enormous demand on himself; he could never have a character in his books who was braver than he was. Well, that's an extraordinary demand to make upon oneself. It's a beautiful demand. I think there's a beautiful rigor in forcing oneself to submit to such a code. But I'm sure it does cut down the amount of work you can do. It seems to me legitimate to write about a man who's braver than you, if only you recognize him as braver than you as you're writing about him, and if you can conceive of yourself as being that brave under wholly different circumstances. Well, I would like to feel I could write about a heavyweight champion of the world, and put him in a novel, and enter his mind without necessarily being the best fifty year old fighter-writer around.

NOR: What about that picture on the dust jacket of *Why Are We in Vietnam?*—was that just a put-on by the PR men?

MAILER: That was my idea. I just wanted to enrage a few critics. Those were the days before *The Armies of the Night*, and I was still someone out of favor, and so it was this sort of thing that would make them say, "Oh, there's Norman Mailer making a fool of himself. Won't he ever stop?"

NOR: In some sort of Hemingway way, you've been out trying to get yourself elected as mayor of New York. I mean, you respond to the public as a human being, as opposed to an artist. You ran for mayor of New York.

MAILER: I ran as my duty, but I wasn't taking myself seriously. That was the guiltiest move I ever made in my life. I've said this several times in print. It's funny but it's

also true. I was so guilty a man at the time, I thought that God was going to punish me, and I was going to win! You know, all through that bedlam (there was rather a rollicking comedy that could be written about it) Breslin and me would look gloomily at each other whenever a piece of good news would come in (laughs). Breslin would say hoarsely, "We're in trouble."

NOR: Do you want to say anything about grass?

MAILER: I don't know if I can say anything beyond what I said years ago, which is that you get a great deal from pot, and you pay a great deal for it. And I think that it's pretty much like being a serious gambler, if you're serious about pot. There are some guys who literally make a living gambling, and there are some guys who make a way of life out of pot, and do better smoking pot than they would do without it. But I think that they're rare guys, something like three in ten, or one guy in ten. I mean I think it's like trying to make a living out of gambling, and it's very hard—you're working all kinds of percentages. We're subtle machines, and I think you're working at your own biological machine to a degree, when you smoke pot, because I don't believe you ever get something for nothing in life, and I think that pot is, let's say, the finest medicine of them all, to wit, it's a poison which kills a little bit, and killing of course releases energies which wouldn't otherwise be released, which I think all medicines do ultimately. The thing about pot that I like is that it's a nice clean medicine, and it's an illegal medicine which takes some of the stigma off of it. But it is a medicine.

NOR: From the gambling aspect, what is the price that you pay for it?

MAILER: Well, literally the price I think you pay for it is that you destroy very many personal projects by staying on pot. One's always tapping one's unconscious with it. I think that over a period of time it keeps you from doing any deep sustained work and I don't know too many heads who can live on it. So that's a large price. But then there are guys who never would have been doing any deep sustained work, and who end up having a life that's just sort of better lubricated because of pot.

NOR: What about sex and pot?

MAILER: You know I've just finished writing a piece for Harper's, fifty-five thousand words, called *The Prisoner of Sex*. Towards the end of the piece, I'm talking about how one wishes to give meaning to sex, rather than having sex as something which is absurd, because it is meaningless. You find that you have to give more and more meaning to it, until of course it goes right to the root of all existence, and you become a prisoner of sex, I mean a prisoner thinking about sex or something. I think the great danger of pot and sex is that people who smoke pot, and have a lot of sex with it, get to that point where they really have a deep fear that they're never going to get anything remotely as good without pot. Of course, it doesn't take the form of a fear, but rather something like, "Ah, come on, baby, let's turn on tonight, stop walking the dog, turn on"—that's a hang-up with pot.

NOR: Are there any writers that you'd like to talk to?

MAILER: No.

NOR: Do you find that it's ever been any help discussing your work with another writer?

is more difficult to discover than a simple fact. When I wrote it, I just wrote the line, and then thought about it for years afterward. After you write, you spend years saying: I know it's true; now why is it true? I think a big problem we have today is precisely that of knowing anything at all. Writing about the moonshot was marvelous in its demand. I knew what it was just to take on a major theme, because the indeterminacy of the intellectual quest was staggering. On the one hand, I'm going to see things that other people are not going to see. On the other hand, very basic stuff would take me just years to learn. For instance, if one of them passes another and says: "Have a cigar," and sticks it in his pocket, they have a meaning between them that I might not know for two years. I wouldn't know if it was two guys making a gesture of friendship or a putdown; even if I was there, I'd have to check it out, two or three times, to see other people doing things like it. I mean culturally speaking, I have no connection with the event. And then, of course, NASA is perfectly smooth and in a pleasant way closes off the possibility of really getting near the astronauts. You can interview them once a week for ten or fifteen minutes. So unless you spend a year there and get invited to their homes, you don't get to know them well. I had a little luck. I had a few connections and I spent a couple of nights in astronauts' homes. They're interesting people, not dull people; not interestingly by our lights, but they are interesting and they're not all of a piece. So that to begin with. And then there are the extraordinary technological difficulties. I think the most successful part of this moon book for me is the part called "The Psychology of Machines." Because I think I got into something that no one has written about and I think is absolutely true. It's the unspoken drama of technology. If these guys are working with certainties, why is there that incredible anxiety always that surrounds these ventures, and anyone who's ever been around these ventures? You'll find that there's a clamminess that just drenches the adventure, as if everything is bathed in a sort of dew. Three-quarters of the people you shake hands with at NASA have got clammy hands. It's not because they're bad people . . .

NOR: *It was probably the air-conditioning.*

MAILER: Partly the air-conditioning, but there's a kind of air-conditioning in the very essence of every interchange. There's an extraordinary kind of refined anxiety that sits over the entire place, and sensuously speaking it's a particularly painful anxiety because of the heat out there. That dull, near-desert grassland in which it's situated is part of it. And then on top of that to have these air-conditioned buildings, and this air-conditioned anxiety sets up a feeling of enormous unhealthiness. It's as if everybody you meet is perfectly pleasant, well-integrated, hard-working; they function well in a great many ways; they're decent people, they're extraordinarily civilized people of course, and so you get this feeling that civilization is finally living beneath the dome, that the great plastic dome has been put over our head, and that the air-conditioning broke down today, outside.

NOR: *This sounds very much like the vision you conjured up in The Armies of the Night, with the liberal engineer. It was almost an apocalyptic experience, with a whimper.*

MAILER: Well here, what adds to it, of course, is that these aren't liberal engineers; finally, these are conservative engineers. They are corporate engineers who really work in corporation, so that, along with everything else, they have an incredible sense of mission. This isn't just a bunch of liberals who are trying to engineer a society that will work. These people also believe in God, and they believe in Him very powerfully; and they believe in America, and they believe that this is the most extraordinary thing that has been done for America. And you go there, not knowing if it is the most extraordinary thing that America has ever done, because it might be, or whether it's the seat of everything evil in America, the avatar of historical evil. So you've got this incredible metaphysical-transcendental question at the center of it, but none of the steps by which you can approach or view the transcendental are negotiable. So, aesthetically, it's one of the toughest bores that I ever went near. It's like trying to write a great novel. I have a kind of fond respect for it, saying: "My God, at least I was able to write that book without collapsing into a ball of suet."

NOR: *Will there be any novels, any subjects that present a kind of challenge, too, like this kind of thing?*

MAILER: Will there be any novels? I think there will. I think writing a novel is the hardest thing of all. I suppose what I've been saying is that up to now this book which began as a piece of journalism, probably stayed a book of journalism at one level, but I think it was somewhat more ambitious than that. What upset me is that it was as difficult to write as a novel, even though much was given. So you can gather from that, that writing a long serious novel is probably one of the most difficult intellectual ventures conceivable today. One reason I haven't been reading novels for years now is that I've lost the belief that one can write a novel that's really interesting, short of some extraordinary personal pilgrimage. I just haven't found that many good writers around. I mean, there are any number with enormous talent, but I have a feeling that not many of them around have been going through those particular years to forge a novel.

NOR: *But there have been no great themes discovered in America recently.*

MAILER: Again, in this terribly longwinded way, what I'm stumbling toward saying is that I think there may be some sort of preparatory work being done in these years. A lot of writers are turning to journalism now where certain areas are going to get roughed out. It may be that we have to have this work done; somebody's got to make an excavation here, somebody's got to do one there, and there, so the novelists who come in later can say: Well, at least I don't have to worry about that any longer. I can see what the problem is here, I can see what the problem is there, so now I feel sure about this thing here that I'm going to do.

NOR: *A lot of times, though, writers have abandoned traditional narrative for a fashionable kind of paradox. If there is any hope of progress through a community effort, can perfection be achieved through this pilgrimage or this massive act of cognition that's required for a serious novel? I don't think that today's narrative techniques are going to produce a Dostoevski novel or The Naked and the Dead. New novelists aren't writing in a way that lends*

itself to the discovery of big novels or big human concerns.

MAILER: I know. But two things could have happened: One is that given our blessed dialectics, these guys could make a complete about-face and become obsessed with narrative. Sometimes you just have to work all your detestation of narrative out first in order to get interested in narrative. Or people can come along who have been through all this, and will get bored with narrative, just because of the obvious disadvantages of narrative, the phoniness of narrative; I mean the narrative poem is no longer relevant, so they got interested in the opposite of it. Well, that could happen again, it could happen in five or ten years. I believe narrative exists, but I believe it exists as a discrete phenomenon—in other words narrative stops and starts. We all live with narrative every moment of our lives, but we're always cutting it off and picking it up again, and when we pick it up again, it isn't a continua-

tion. It's over here a bit, because it's almost impossible to move without some hypothesis, and hypothesis is narrative, if you just stop and think about it. But of course what happens is that the hypothesis runs into evidence which confutes it, so that narrative stops and then it picks up again. One characterizes our days as opposed to Victorian days. Today narrative is like jangled wires that are all turned in other directions. Nonetheless, I think there are extraordinary overall narratives going on in these years. It's just that now the phenomena are so complex, and the problems of being certain of what you know are so enormous that everyone is now concerned with working out little details, and always being sure of this, or being amused at the possibility of working out little details. But that doesn't mean that we're not going to take some sort of extraordinary step, and that we're not going to get a collective . . . well, some kind of new code, some collective power where intellection may reappear.

CANDLEMAS

Even the most addicted to
a mandrake potion may refuse
or gag upon a surfeit of it.
By incantation I could make
an unlaid spirit levitate
to effect quick copulation of
desire and disinterest.
But weary of such sorcery,
I would prefer for once to leave
that incubus unsummoned and
deny our demon sport tonight.
Be sure the true adept may tire
eventually and choose to sleep
with cloying charms abandoned and
all tedious spells unspoken and
what was enthrallment broken like
possession or your promises.

—Nina Sandrich

FOUR MOVEMENTS from “The Snow Goose”
for Chappy

erratic line,
wobbling,
stretching as a rubber band
that holds us against the sky
we look toward,
snow geese,
snow white,
plump, snow breasted,
soft hooing garble:
echoes of what the moon would speak
if the moon could.

and the small arc
that went to dunkirk,
returning with 49 men
off those beaches:
7 loads times 7,
all mystic as the soul,
the plump breast that always
beats passage through.

snow goose.
girl who grew,
wisp of hair at her temples
blowing in the marsh wind,
growing whiter with loss,
with the coming of each goose.

into the sea
snow falls unnoticed.
the picture it makes
stays,
a reverse of boiling.
Watch the white move,
falling into god's eye,
washed by night
into black,
dissolving into tears
which we cannot cry.

—John Judson



Tristan and the Bandages

by Janice Warnke

All that afternoon she lay on her bed, the toes of her shoes pointing at the ceiling. She did not cry. Most of the time she was wholly without feeling of any sort, and her mind was as numbed as her senses. Only once did a kind of thought occur, darting out from some briefly lighted subterranean. It was this, that in other cultures women sometimes scream, or strike their heads against walls. And three times out of the nothingness, the dead sea of herself, memory and desire rose suddenly to overwhelm her, like a great wave in which she floundered, struggling for breath; it was at these moments that she knew she was still alive.

There was a tap at the door. "Come in," she said, but did not move.

"Mr. Trentlyon—he asked if you'd be coming down soon. I told him you were resting."

"I must have gone to sleep. Yes, in a few minutes."

"Would you want me to help you with anything?"

"No, thank you."

When the door closed she got up and, averting her eyes from the large mirror, slipped quickly out of the wrinkled grey wool dress and hurried into the bathroom. There, to be sure, a white face wavered back at her from above the sink, but she scrubbed it with soap and pressed it with a steaming cloth, lifted handfuls of icy water to cheeks and brow until she looked less deathly. A little tinted cream, powder, a few strokes at the eyebrows, lipstick, brush, comb, a black dress from the closet, and she was ready for the descent.

For some months now he had preferred them to take their cocktails in what he called the music room. As she walked towards it she could hear the belabored, metallic strains of something that was perhaps by Scarlatti. He had taken up the cembalo on his forty-seventh birthday—indeed the instrument was his present to himself—and in the year that had since passed had managed to learn to play it, badly, annoyingly to anyone who cared for music, but well enough to have earned him the increased awe of numerous admirers.

"Here you are," he said, lifting his hands high above the keyboard and holding them so for an instant before getting to his feet.

"Here I am."

He turned abruptly to the cocktail mixings. He liked sometimes to give orders for the evening menu; he had done so for this night. Moving the bottles about, measuring with crystal

and silver, he said what he always did on such occasions. "I think just one drink before dinner. There's some very good wine coming later," whirling the ice sharply against the pitcher. He glanced at her. "I thought you said you were going to the hairdresser this afternoon."

"I did, say that."

"But evidently—" he squinted—"you changed your mind."

"I was tired. I spent the afternoon resting."

"So Anya said. There was something rather pressing I wanted to ask you about, but I was afraid I might disturb you."

"What is it?" she asked, a tone as indifferent as the gesture with which she accepted the glass he held out.

"What is it?" he repeated, pausing then as though to give the words great importance. But she merely leaned back in the chair and waited. He suddenly smiled, his neatly clipped moustache fluttering across his face. "Ah yes indeed, what is it? Somehow, my dear, you often seem so disinterested that I forget myself what I want to say. Mother would like us to come to a dinner she's giving for some visiting diplomat or other, a small affair, I gather, which is why she needs to know. I hesitated to accept without asking you."

"Yes, certainly we accept."

"Without checking your calendar first? Without even knowing the date? How do you know we're free to accept?"

"Because," she said, seeming for the first time to be present, "I think you'll want to go and that if we already have something on I'll have to change it."

He was amused. "Good. Then we'll let her know at once. I'll put the call through for you."

"No, please. I don't feel like talking to your mother, to anyone, just now."

"Are you ill?"

"Ill? Perhaps. I don't know."

"Whatever's wrong, you're extremely vague. I think it would be nicer if you talked to Mother yourself. Perhaps you'll call her in the morning."

"Of course I will. But if it's so pressing, why not call her now? Say I'm not feeling well. It's true enough."

"Never mind. Tomorrow will do."

She sipped at the drink, and the numbness began to leave her, little by little. She would have to be on guard not only against whatever he might say but also against feeling, and against what she now recognized as a deep urge to be truthful.

And yet, she also wished to spare him, if he would let her, for there was no longer any reason not to. Only, it was so difficult to know what he knew. Nothing, she told herself; nothing. The old manner, the controlled surface she had first learned in childhood and then perfected in marriage, this would carry her through the evening, and perhaps through how many endless evenings to come.

He had been talking about some meeting, and about how afterwards he had stopped in at Vane's to look at maps and found a sixteenth century map of the British Isles in perfect condition. He held it before her; she peered, trying to admire. "It's very nice."

"It's better than that. But notice how large Ireland is; it's not in proportion to the rest. Amusing. The mapmaker was probably an Irishman."

Soon it would be framed and added to those that already hung on the walls of his study. A rich and cultivated man, he had many interests, some more curious than the collecting of expensive old maps or than approximating music on a cembalo. Recently he had become interested in the history of what he called the romantic passion and devoted a certain amount of spare time to abstract, theoretical considerations of this subject. He had acquired a small library of the documents of love, volumes of treatises, psychological, cultural, historical, and more perplexing texts as well: those of the mystics and of the poets. He had even hired a young instructor from Columbia to come in once a week and help with the Old French *Tristan* and its Celtic connections; like others who explore love, even in theory, he felt the unique importance of the *Tristan* legend.

He suddenly said, "I thought we might make a trip this spring. I thought perhaps a change of scene. You might want to go on ahead and make a longer stay, and I could join you. I've thought you've been a little bored lately, and nervous. Anywhere you want of course, anywhere in the world."

She was taken by surprise. *Anywhere in the world?* She felt a burning around her eyes and saw that he was staring at her intently. Perhaps after all he did know and was being kind. Certainly his expression was gentler. "It's very thoughtful of you, very. If you'd like us to go some place, fine. But I'm not really bored; there's no need to worry about that."

"Isn't there? Perhaps my word was ill-chosen. I'm so often bored myself. But isn't there something that would please you?"

She could not answer. He said, "It would seem not," and came and sat on the arm of her chair. For just an instant she felt she might lean against him, let herself weep, trust him, believe that no gesture of his pride would in the next instant wipe out whatever of compassion he seemed to be offering. "Ginna, I want to do what you want, what will make you happy. Do you understand?"

"I hope I do. I understand at least how very kind you're being."

"Thank you," he said sharply and got up. "We'll discuss it later. Shall we go in to dinner?"

For a few seconds she remained where she was, looking up at him, but he avoided her eyes.

In the dining room, on a sideboard, were food and wine, ingeniously arranged in a series of warmers and chillers so that they might dine and talk in perfect privacy. All of this had been Miles' invention. He himself would serve them, would even remove the plates of the various courses to the sideboard and would ring for Anya only when they were finished. As soon as

Miles nodded approval, as he now did. Anya would leave them. She dreaded being alone with Miles in the atmosphere of contrived intimacy which always characterized these special dinners.

"I picked up several new recordings the other day," he said, comfortably between bites. "We'll play them after dinner."

"What are they?"

"A new group doing Vivaldi. Some Wagner excerpts."

"I'm not much in the mood for Wagner. I'm really not even much in the mood for listening to music."

"You'll like these. Splendid. This English girl—Scottish or Irish actually, to judge by her name—atrocious German diction, but otherwise very impressive."

She knew what the evening would be like. He was a man of rituals, a man who was helpless without them, a lover of ceremony, even if without meaning. How strange people are, she thought; here she was sitting before a plate of food seemingly as though nothing had happened, going through her paces like a favorite pet that dares not be restive beneath its master's hand. And there sat her husband as though presiding at a festival when there was nothing indeed for either one of them to celebrate. She would have to endure endless talk across this table; he would explore her, himself, the past, attempting to seduce her again with his complexity. Talk, food, wine, music—these were only intermediaries; through them he would reach out in the only way he could. Later, stimulated and freed just enough by all this, he would want to go to bed with her.

"But you've eaten so little," he said, removing the plate. "That's one thing I've never been able to train you to, the appreciation of good food."

"You know that when I'm tired I never eat much."

"I know you have an indifferent palate."

"Not always. But why should it matter so much to you?"

"Oh, only the natural desire that we should share everything."

"But we have never done that."

"But you see, I never give up hope."

She was beginning to feel imperturbable, safely beyond him, almost adrift in her own world of pain and longing. It was impossible that this evening should turn out to be like all the others.

He poured more wine. "It's curious how in any given period there are so many fashions, even fashions in death."

"In death?" she heard herself say. "I'd never thought of it."

"Haden't you? But consider. There was the great nineteenth century fashion of dying young of consumption. And after this last war the fashion of diplomats killing themselves. God knows why. One would hardly suspect them of suffering from tender consciences."

He paused to taste the wine, then pour more, evidently still absorbed in what he had just said. She felt no real alarm. He liked to try her with his ideas, and this was the sort of topic he especially liked; it enabled him to impose large neat patterns on the surface of things, even, it appeared, on the surface of human suffering. She waited for him to go on.

"Lately there's been this fashion of accidents, particularly those in the arts; actors, writers, painters—they almost seem to be having a competition."

A great wave suddenly beat up in her. She felt afraid he would know, but at the same time longed to abandon herself

utterly to it.

"Cars, planes, cracking their skulls or breaking their necks in preposterous ways, that sort of thing, as though it's the only form of grandeur they've got left."

"Grandeur?"

"Yes, grandeur. The idea seems to startle you." He ate slowly, but without any finicky mannerisms. "Why's that?"

"Oh. . . . Only because I think it isn't so."

"It was reading about Davitt today that put all this in my mind, I suppose," he added. For an instant she felt joy and release at the sound of the name; for an instant nothing else mattered. She would use it too, speak aloud in the presence of another the name she had repeated silently a thousand times these last days: "Davitt," she said.

"Several of the magazines that came today carried tributes to him. Have you looked at any of them?"

She said, "No, I haven't. Not yet. I read the newspapers when it happened, last week," and only then realized that Miles' avoidance of the subject since his return to New York had been as deliberate surely as her own. But she no longer cared what Miles knew or did not know. She felt how little power he had over her. To talk of Davitt at all, even of his death, filled her not just with grief but with a joyous throb of desire, or perhaps with some deeper passion that was composed of both. If at this moment she were to die it would be of a consumption of love. She could imagine Miles staring down at her saying, *what nonsense, people don't die of love; come now, come; this is childish, not at all becoming behavior; breathe, get up, do you hear.*

"Odd job for a poet, off covering a rebel war for a magazine, today at any rate, cut off from everything most of them. They compared him to Sidney, I noticed. Rather far fetched. Probably a poet has to earn his living some way or other; journalism's as good as the next, or as bad. Still, to make the front page in America it took the violent end, the dramatic death. . . ."

She leaned forward, furious, interrupting, "It was an absurd death."

"Absurd? That's another word that kept cropping up today. A pointless comment, if I may say so. All deaths are absurd if it comes to it."

"Oh no they're not. Most deaths are too meaningless to be absurd, utterly meaningless, not only death by accident. But I'll tell you what they meant when they called *his* death absurd, whether they knew it or not; it was their dry, frightened, clever way of saying that it was a death with a meaning, a meaningful death. That it mattered. That the loss mattered, is important, full of meaning."

She sat back with her heart pounding and her mouth stiff. "What an unusual sort of definition," he said. "You put everything so passionately." He got up for another bottle and filled their glasses. "You're drinking very little. I think I had all but one glass of the first bottle. You don't like it?"

"It's excellent." She regretted her outburst. If, as seemed possible from his manner, he had not spoken with a purpose, she could blame only herself for what might follow.

"It's as though when you get hold of an idea, or a sort of idea, it immediately becomes an emotion; spontaneous combustion; at least when you're not on guard. I never do that. I wonder why you married me."

Again he had surprised her. "Is it worth discussing?"

"I'm often curious."

"Many reasons, Miles."

"I suppose I was more interesting than most of the men your own age."

She smiled. "Indeed yes. Many things about you fascinated, pleased me."

"Shall I tell you what attracted me to you?"

"If you want to."

"It wasn't only your beauty and youth, although they were awfully appealing. It was your brightness too, your capacity for listening to me with real understanding and perception. But shall I be very truthful with you? Over the years there's been a change. Sometimes I feel as though you've absorbed my ideas or discarded them, at any rate gone off in some obscure direction of your own."

"Do you mind that?"

"Yes. It makes me uneasy. I *know* far more than you, and yet. . . . Never mind, this is a nonsensical sort of confession, not my style really."

"No, not at all nonsensical," she said. She was enormously relieved. It was only this that had disturbed him about her outburst, nothing more. For some time she had sensed that as her awe for his accomplishments and great experience of the world had diminished to mere respect, as she had come even to wonder if he was left with very much of value, he had found her less charming and grown less certain of himself with her. "You were more pleased with me when I was younger, weren't you?"

"More pleased? I suppose I was."

"What is it you think you've lost?"

"That's simple. Power over you. Pleasing, benevolent power."

"Meaningless, I should think," she said dully.

"Not entirely. But it's true I've lost it. You've got away from me. When?"

"Long ago. But don't you think that if we were to put this more simply we'd find we're only talking about something that happens to nearly every one at some point in marriage?"

"Perhaps. I think it more likely that I never did have you really."

For a moment she looked at him, especially at the moustache that had remained as the symbol of his service with the British during the war, a service he had freely chosen and performed with valor, concentrating on him but no longer able greatly to feel his reality, his own point of existence. The only image she could get of him was one she knew he would prize the least: Miles in battle, champion of some clear cause, freed by it into the simplicity of action, Miles the good warrior, born in a country without a warrior class, a century without a code. "Did I have you?" she asked quietly.

But now she had said what was unforgiveable. She saw that in the sudden, haughty lift of his head. There were always strange limits to what she could say to him, though there did not appear to be any to what he could say to her. And none of it mattered, none of it, what either of them said to the other. She was bound to that table as to a drifting ship and they would talk an eternity across it, she and this steersman who kept sailing them into mysteries that were beyond his powers to control. She closed her eyes and when she opened them saw that he was no longer angry. Yet she could not feel pity for him. She wanted to say to him, simply: Can't you see that I'm dying of love, that you're torturing me, can't you take pity on

me so that I in my turn may take pity on you? It was a great struggle not to say this. How obscene that they should go on analyzing emotions, or what passed for them, dissecting themselves, their *relationship*, now of all times.

"You knew him I believe."

There was no point in pretending she didn't understand. "Davitt. Yes, I knew him."

"I thought I remembered your talking about him when I first met you. It was after the war, wasn't it, in Berlin?"

"Yes, in Berlin."

"Where you both went to pick up the rubble. What a romantic girl you must have been. You still were for that matter when I met you. So full of ideals."

"Ideals? That makes me sound rather silly. It seemed to me reasonable to go to Germany. I was finished with college, I was doing nothing at all with my life that mattered, I had a Quaker friend who was going. And I was melancholy. Picking up rubble was as good for my spirit as it was for my body."

"But that's exactly what I meant. I don't find these things ridiculous, just romantic. And that's where you knew Davitt?"

"Yes, but he was there for different reasons."

"Oh?"

"Yes." How strong was the desire to talk about him. "By the time we got to know each other he was working for the International Refugee Committee. He'd been there for the first time the year before, doing some pieces for a magazine, a kind of journal really—he'd been to the camps too. He'd really gone to Berlin to hate, he told me. Then he found he couldn't. It was something else all along. I'm sure, something about always being drawn to places where people were living with tragedy."

"I've read the Brandenburg poems—where he could make forms out of his own sense of complicity might be nearer the mark."

"His sense of what?"

"As you say, people living with tragedy. Hence the air crash in Algeria?"

"The air crash in Algeria," she repeated.

"Odd that a fellow like that should have known how to pilot a plane at all."

"He didn't. He wasn't flying it," she said angrily. "It was an old friend, someone in the foreign service."

"Oh really? You read the obituary notices more carefully than I do."

She said nothing. He lighted one of his long Havanas. "Did you like him?" he asked.

"I liked him very much."

"And did he like you? But how could he not?"

"I suppose he did. But our lives had been so different, he'd always been on his own so much, and then he was older. When you're young four or five years makes such a difference."

"Or even more than that." He smiled ironically. "And now he's dead at the age of, what was it, something in the late thirties?"

"He was thirty-eight."

"You'd seen him recently, hadn't you?"

"You know I had. I told you I met him at the Steiner's when he first came to America two years ago. You were away."

"And when he was here this Fall? I think I read that he was in New York for several months. I'm certain I read that he was here until quite recently. I can't remember whether you saw

him or not, whether or not you told me you saw him. Of course, I was away so much; you might have forgotten to."

"Nor can I remember, whether or not I told you." She intended now to match him stroke for stroke. "But I did see him."

"Naturally; such old friends."

"Yes, old friends, and with friends in common. It would have been strange had we not met."

He blew the smoke in a high, slow stream. "Did you find him changed?"

"Changed? No."

"All that fame hadn't changed him?"

"Fame? What fame? Few people would even have known his name."

"Oh he had fame where it mattered to him, I imagine, though no doubt he'd have had more had he lived. So, you didn't find him changed. And he you, also unchanged?"

"It never occurred to me to ask."

"Nor to him to say, evidently. But you must have got an impression."

"I believe he found me . . . a little changed."

"I'm surprised you didn't fall in love with him, back in Berlin. Your first chance, wasn't it, to meet people from a different background. That's always been so important to you. I remember your mother saying that you were a little rebellious in those days. Besides, you always had a romantic yearning to be poor, didn't you?"

"To be poor? No. That wasn't what I had a yearning for, Miles. Anyway, Davitt wasn't a poor man."

"No? Well, he had no money, I believe. What was it the papers said? Offspring of an itinerant Scottish piano player . . ."

"Very well, Irish. And his mother?"

"Just a middle-class Frenchwoman."

"I thought she was Jewish."

"Well yes, a middle-class Frenchwoman with some Jewish blood. Her mother was from Vienna, a Jew, or half-Jew; I don't remember. Are you really so interested in his lineage? I'm not."

"No, I suppose I'm not. I'm just generally curious always about what it is that leads to the aberration of art."

"Different things, I imagine." She knew he would trade all his money, his name, his social position for just such an "aberration," or even for some more modest but real single talent. It was indeed what his life lacked.

For the present he seemed to have abandoned the subject. She said, "If I'd known you were so interested in him I'd have arranged for you to meet."

"But I wasn't so interested in *him*." He paused, added in a different tone, "The early death of anyone who's been foolish enough to pit himself against posterity interests me, though."

Did he think of even art as conquest? She herself had no idea of what art might be, beyond the pleasure, the deepened sense of life which it gave her. But everything about Davitt suggested that it had nothing to do with conquest.

"Besides, you knew him. I was curious about what you thought of him."

Suddenly the ambiguity of their exchanges had become intolerable. With Miles it was always difficult to be certain of intention, yet surely they had come to it, his endless questions and ploys, his cold, persistent return to the same subject; if it went on like this everything would be degraded. She said, "Is

that what you were curious about?"

But it was as though he hadn't heard her; putting down his cigar, getting up, he said, "I'm afraid I've been being insensitive." Was it possible that it had all been only a new and provocative way of making contact with her? He was always devising ways of doing this, construing intense emotional situations where none existed, all complexity and surface. Or had he truly wanted from her confession and at the last moment backed away? She no longer cared which it might be.

"After all," he went on in the same even tones, "you did know him. You're bound to feel his death at least a little. More wine?"

She covered her glass with her hand, swiftly, violently, while he, circling near with the bottle, paused, then moved away. Cutting through the pain in her and through those ever dilating echoes of passion was, for the first time, a clear hatred of Miles. It now seemed to her an obligation of the most pressing sort to tell this man what it was she was feeling, what those rising tides of anguish and desire were like. But he would never understand. It was better to leave him untouched, among the books that told him nothing, among the memories of his brave soldiering, with his wines and cembalo and maps, with all the meaningless paraphernalia of his life. Yet there was something she too could hardly understand in all that had been happening to her these last moments, something that caused her passion to rise and mount with new intensity whenever Miles spoke of her lover's death. She sensed, fearfully, that Miles was without any question her adversary, and that she must hold fast against him.

When she was with Davitt, in the dark emotions of the night, in the swoonings of love, she sometimes felt there was something she must tell him. Morning confused her, and the sun creaking across the sky made her uncertain. When night came and brought them together and they sank again into their love-making there was always a moment when, again, she would try to speak. But the sound of strange groans, sighs, whimperings, and plaintive breaths—the unique and terrible hum of love—filled her ears, speech fled, she forgot all, and gave herself with obliterating rapture to his embraces. On those days when they could not arrange a meeting, in spite of the lies and stratagems to which they were reduced, she knew she could not bear life without him. Yet she also suffered doubts and was ashamed at her duplicity with Miles, whom she had grown to fear. Once she was so afraid that she resolved that she and Davitt must part, but when she went to tell him and the door opened she felt that even the time it took for her to step through the door was an unendurable separation; with groans and heavings they had fallen upon each other and afterwards could not remember how they had got across his apartment and into his room and bed. Later that night she put fear behind her and agreed that she must leave Miles; exhausted, nearly asleep as they were, a deepened tenderness stirred in them, flickered across the inches that separated them, drew them together in a long slow ardor. . . .

A hand was laid at her waist; she started, and Miles withdrew it. Doors opened and closed. They were again in the music room, where other rituals were to be performed. As he moved to the record player she saw that he was just a little drunk. This too played its part on such an evening. He would continue now to sip away at his wine, keeping himself to the same careful degree of intoxication.

She picked up a newspaper, but when he said, "No; please

listen," laid it aside. It was the Vivaldi. She did not really listen, but she could not ignore it, as she could Miles' interspersed comments on tempi, counterpoint, and the role of Venice. The music was there, pleasant, reassuring even, a familiar surrounding in which she was happy to exist. She recognized it for what it was, a celebration, modest enough but real, a joy beneath it all, beneath even winter. Her whole being kept time faintly to it, and a calmness grew in her. She knew what it was, that lifting into life, that dark and welcome mystery wherein the world quickened and died; died but was not lost, or was lost only as the year is, always quickening again in the silent dark.

But the music stopped—suddenly, abruptly, it seemed to her—and the silence was nothing but silence. It was absolute; it was shocking. She watched the record spin a few more empty revolutions. She watched Miles remove it, carefully holding it by the edges. "Now for the *Liebestod*."

"No," she said.

"But this is a remarkable voice; you'll like it."

She hung on. "It's just that I'm so little in the mood for Wagner."

"It's only the one side." Now again there was music in the room, though of a very different kind, and again he was settled across from her, watching. She fought to close him off, and the music too; there was coercion in these sounds and in her husband's gaze; she fled from both, perplexed, uncertain.

"I've come back to Wagner lately, to the music of passion," he said, breaking through with the music. She knew that he wanted to talk, that he had no more desire to listen to the music than she did. Or perhaps he wanted to use it for breaking through to what eluded him. Still, she relaxed a little, sighed; the music, she found, listening at last, wasn't the enemy; it could not touch what she felt. Wood and glue and plastic, wires and springs and a flat circling disc, a mechanical contrivance, an imitation of the music of passion, like the very notes of the score the absurd musicians labored over. She did not fear it. If there was danger it was in the silent burning reality of herself, or in her husband. She tried to pay attention to him as he leaned forward confidently.

"Back to Wagner, and to many other expressions of the romantic temperament, much as when I was a young man, before you knew me. At heart I was a romantic then, though no doubt you find it hard to believe."

"But no, not at all. You joined the R.A.F."

"Really? Now, however, I understand it so much better. I used to think the mooning, the erotic atmosphere, was all about love. I remember having a glimpse of the truth during the war. It passed, and I forgot it. The real interest behind the romantic passion isn't love, it's death. The far greater mystery of course, but a risky, a morbid sort of interest to suffer from; it should be rooted out. The other, love, that's a mask, a delusion. Why Tristan tore off the bandages, for instance. Have you ever thought about it?"

An exultation flowed suddenly through her, as though she had been there, seen it herself, felt what it was like, that ripping away. A great weakness followed.

"Well, have you?"

She tried to concentrate on the singing woman in the machine. She said, "You're right about her voice."

But she had not deflected him. He said, "Tristan and the bandages. Some of the things I've been reading lately explain it rather well."

"Explain it? Why? Why do they bother? I think it is exactly

what it is."

"You're always so independent in your views. It would be interesting to get your reactions to some of these pieces." His face had tightened, his eyes gone flat. "It was death they were after, those ubiquitous lovers. It seems perfectly clear to me. Annihilation, oblivion, union with the dark." He paused, and went on in the more familiar wry tone, "Fortunately such things don't happen in life; only in art and old legends. . . . Now in life? *Une question de peau* perhaps. An uncomplicated, rational, Latin view. But does it quite answer? Or the ultimate neurosis? There's something to that, though it's shallow. . . . so that finally one sees how destructive, how anti-social this romantic notion of love has always been. . . . and in our romance-obsessed culture. . . . as surely no sane man could wish..." On and on he talked of love, like some preachy little professor, while she burned with it, clinging weakly to the chair, one of her arms thrown back, her head curved forward over her breast; a wounded white sea bird.

The record had finished playing without either of them having noticed. "All that I-am-Tristan sung by her, I-am-Isolde sung by him, all that too. Impossible. The romantic passion is all very well in art and legends, where it belongs. In life such emotion would be. . . ." he hesitated, said sharply, "disgusting and adolescent."

The wounded bird gave a flutter. With raised head, she said, "Perhaps it only frightens you." There was no need to spare him. If his cruelty was meant to wrest the truth from her it would succeed.

"Oh the idea of it, no. You mustn't think that. Not at all. Perhaps people who are capable of it, if they are, do frighten me a little. It was always in you, Ginna, this. . . . this unsprung flame you didn't even know was there. After the first years I thought, because of it, thought that I would lose you, somehow, some time. I feared *this*, yes, and I tried to hold you, to entangle you in my life, to keep you safe, to hold you in every possible way. But you, you were always furiously giving, giving. Such people, I knew, were also capable of a furious taking. Only of course I also told myself that these things don't really happen, except in theatre pieces."

"It isn't frightening," she said softly, as though she meant to soothe him, and saw him come striding across the room to her, his face contorted, felt him leaning over her, and heard him say in an astonishing rough whisper, "No? Then what is it like? Tell me, if you're such an authority. What is it? What is it?"

She flung herself back from him, shaken, raised her hands to push him away, but the undisguised horror of her expression did not keep him from repeating the question one time more. One of his cold hands was thrust in her lap, its coldness pressing through her dress. A terrible pity for him mixed with the horror. It was then he straightened up. "I meant," she said, slowly, deliberately, "that the fact that such emotion exists isn't frightening. Nor that I might be capable of it."

Her heart began to plunge, to quiver and plunge and quiver. He had simply turned his back on her and gone to the machine, where he was turning the record with the same precise gestures as before. Could she say to him that her love for Davitt was not an act of memory but a continued presence from which she could never *want* to be freed, that what she feared most was being free of it, that even now, when he was dead, she could feel it all just as it had been, though in blinding grief? Could she say this to Miles, whose face had now changed back

to the familiar one, as cold and aloof as ever? His cruelty and his yearning seemed to her equally improbable. Yet what he had vainly sought to discover was the world he dared not enter for himself. She knew this. He had sought also to bring her back from it, at any cost, in any condition, broken apart if need be, so that day might succeed day as before. She could not imagine this happening. And perhaps too it had been a little theatre piece, to use his term, carefully devised to lead to the bedroom and the postures of love, perhaps even to his trying on of another's spirit. A chill ran through her at what she half-guessed.

His voice came across the music. "In any case, in real life there's a common enough word for Tristan and Isolde."

"The word?"

"Adulterers."

She repeated it, "Adulterers."

"Strange, the force of such primitive concepts even now, even among the enlightened and the tolerant."

"What is that music, Miles? The Immolation?"

"Yes. What's usually on the other side of the *Lichestod*."

"Then let us listen." She was exhausted, helpless, unable to move. If only he would not go on speaking, if only he would leave her alone for a few minutes until she could find the strength to get to her feet and leave him. Brünnhilde's lament for Siegfried came from the mechanical box. Dimly she thought how different a hero it was she mourned—but how mourned, what gestures were there for a woman like herself, what stern but womanly sweetness, what unburdening? What could she be to his death when she must bide in silence what she had been to his life? A numbness was creeping upon her, her senses were failing. Time flowed over her, not minutes but a wind from nowhere, a passing in an empty terrane, flowed over and beyond, the great waves of music, a heavy and disturbing buzz in her ears, yet at the same time something was gathering. She could no longer see Miles very clearly, it was a mist that seemed to have gathered, a dark enshrouding darker mist, a black ocean into which she would fall, and fall forever. And as she felt the waves seized her, wave after wave, engulfed and ensnared her, bore her up and bore her down and down and up, carried her into the darkness, suffering, suffering the darkness, swept her at last into the flame in the darkness, quaking and rent by the fiery burden and forever given over, *Siegfried, Siegfried* the voice in the machine was crying, in anguished tenderness, in enraptured greeting and last farewell. And then the dying falls, the sublime and dying fall; gone, too late, gone. It was over. Nothing remained. She was alone.

But when she saw her husband go once more to the machine, that cry still rang in her, that final cry, and when his back was to her she found herself, leapt wildly to her feet, her arms raised for a fierce exalted instant above her head, her jaws wide open in the silent cry of another name.

Having seen, he slowly turned. "And you say it isn't frightening."

At first she seemed not to have heard. Then she looked at him. "I hadn't known you were a cruel man."

"Did you really think I knew nothing?"

She moved toward the door but he caught her lightly by the wrists and held her. He was very pale and spoke rapidly. "Yes, I've been cruel. I ask you to forgive me. I deliberately played on my knowledge of you, cruelly, yes, unforgivably. I wounded you. I wounded you more than I meant to."

"Never mind," she said, tugging slightly in his grip. "It doesn't matter."

"But don't you see? I knew you'd never tell me unless I forced you to. And how could I help you if you didn't?"

"Help me? You?"

"Don't you see? *I had to know.*"

"Know what?" They were in the silence. She looked at him with horror. "Know *what*?" His lips trembled and he dropped her wrists.

Blinking, he said as rapidly as before, "I didn't want to lose you. I had to do something to keep you. Surely you can understand that, surely."

"It doesn't matter."

"Forgive me."

"Of course, of course. I wish you could forgive me. I'm very tired. Goodnight."

But when she was nearly to the door, he said, "Wait."

"Yes?"

"You really believe in this. . .this disrupting passion, even now?"

"Yes."

"Isolde, Isolde," he muttered through sneering lips. He recovered and said quickly, "I thought I had only to be patient. I thought today, until I saw your face when I said his name, that this accident had saved me, and saved you too. You were going to leave me, weren't you? Before he was killed. You were actually going to leave me."

"Yes. I was. I was planning to tell you—some time this week. I was waiting till you got back. Isn't that the kind of irony

you like? Well, I was. He would have been back in France by now, waiting for me to telephone. You see, he wanted, he preferred me to go with him when he left here two weeks ago. I wish I had. He wouldn't have gone to Algeria just then if I'd been with him. We'd have gone straight to Normandy. But my training, my background, my. . .sense of your pride, the respect I'd had for you—all of this was too strong. It made me think I couldn't just. . .run, and leave you a note, and maybe have you hear first from someone else. A man like you. . .a public sort of humiliation. . .I didn't think you'd deserved that too from me. I didn't want you to have to suffer that. This notion seems to me so unbearably trivial now, you've no idea. We agreed that I should tell you. I would ask for a separation, wait a little, then join him; within a month, I'd promised. Or he'd have come back for me. It all seems so incredibly false now, those distinctions we made, or tried to, this disastrous orderly code we tried to observe. Because—as you've said—we were adulterers in any case.

"I didn't want to lose you."

"Lose, don't speak of losing!"

"Are you still going to leave?"

She nodded, a slow yes.

The touches of violence that had marked his face vanished. His tall body sagged. Almost indolently, he said, "Don't do that, Ginna, don't. My dear. Don't. It will pass. Let me help you. You'll forget. Eventually life will go on, believe me. Everything will be the way it was before."

A gasp, a vague glance past him. "That's what I'm afraid of, that's what I couldn't bear." And she was gone.

i crippled myself and
tore down diamond mountains
that protected the valley.
where can cobwebs
go to
when the sun isn't shining
strong enough and
children are building tangled railroads.
crazy of you
to think about what's
to be when
you can only buy
a ticket
to the past and
no where else matters.
and through the vacant
hotels you can smell
yesterday's weather.

—heidi lemmerhirt

POLITICIAN

Hurrying my way from bean-feed
To bean-feed, I am, perhaps,
More conscious than you suppose
Of my flaws. I have less love
Each year for faces that tear me
From contempt. They strip the skills
I need to be the people, and act
On their behalf. Only the foolish
Say: If it weren't for us, nothing
Would move. Yet I have more cause
To rejoice and nothing more to regret
Than those who never hate. Take
That dam.— I see what the poets see:
It dismisses too easily the needs
Of nature. They dismiss too easily
The needs of man. Those that were
Bullied into churches by the snarl
Of water see its broad hands of steel
Play with the passions of a river,
And believe. I give them dynamos
In place of lilies, a faith to match
Their lives, not masses for the dead.
Illusion on illusion, I outbid priest
And poet for my people understand
Sleep as an end. Your sleepless nights
Are scorned by them. Your monuments
In the fire of time bend
And crack far more often than mine.
A cost of sixty million!—Ten
Centuries will pass and my cathedral
Stand. Blocks of concrete, larger
Than a man, blend into a mile-high
Slab that consecrates the land.
Spun by smile and handshake, tentacles
Of power stretch to every barn
And kitchen of my world. This
District in its pride runs guided tours,
Fifteen times a day, mentioning
My name in the brochures. That year
I won by twenty thousand. I will be
Repaying votes and favors till I die . . .

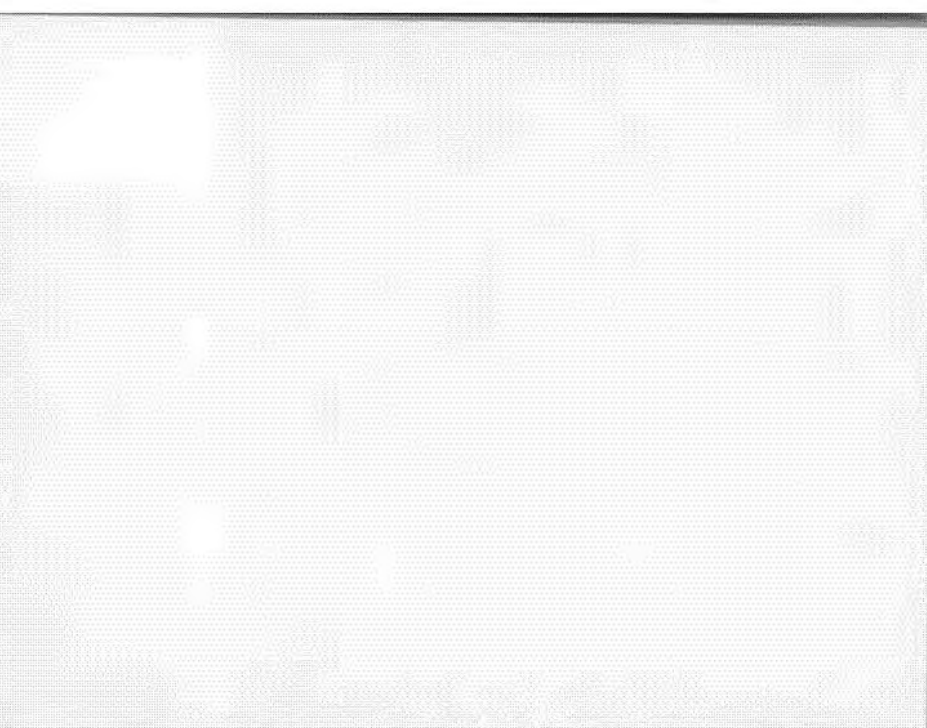
— James Doyle

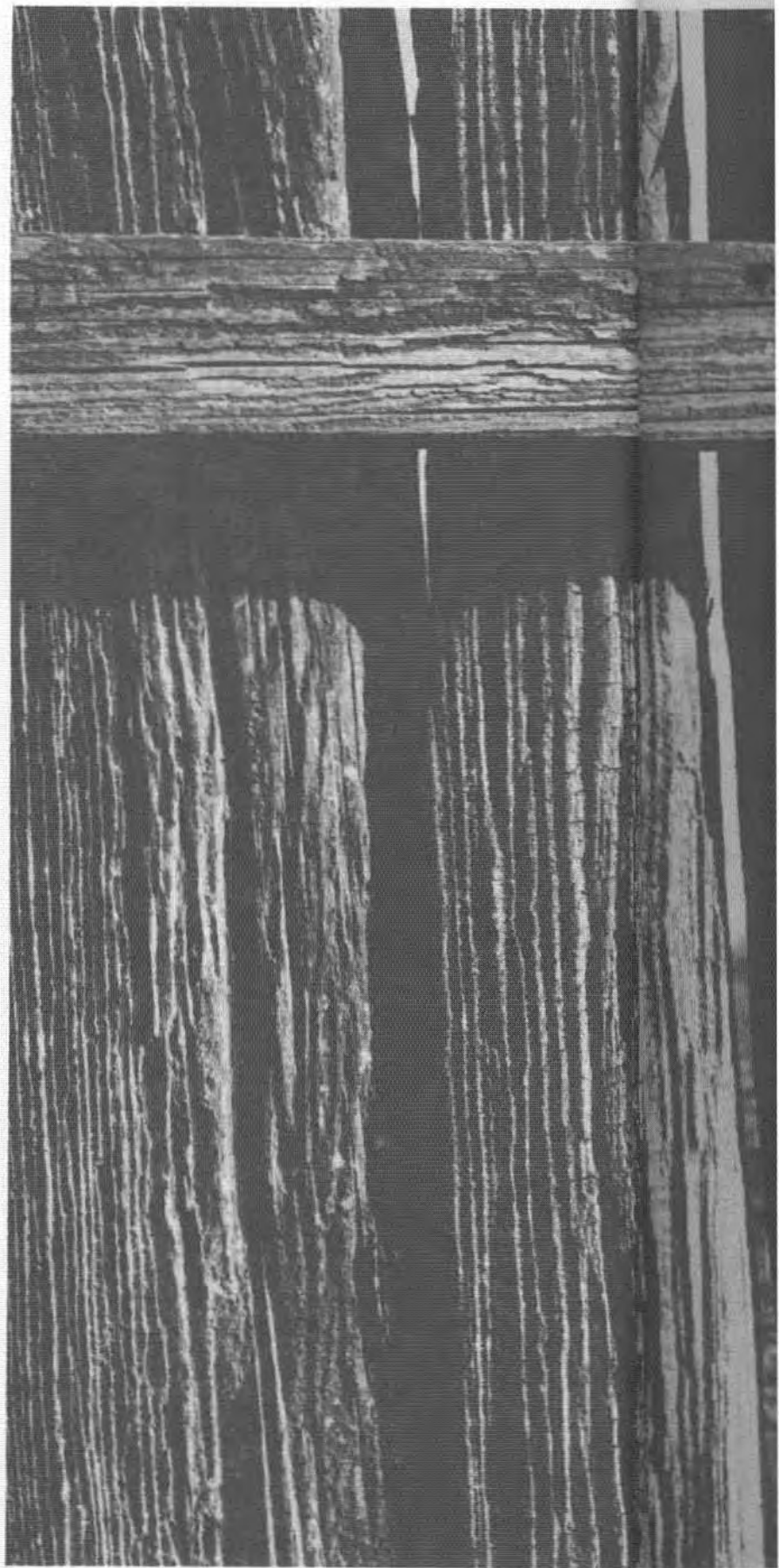
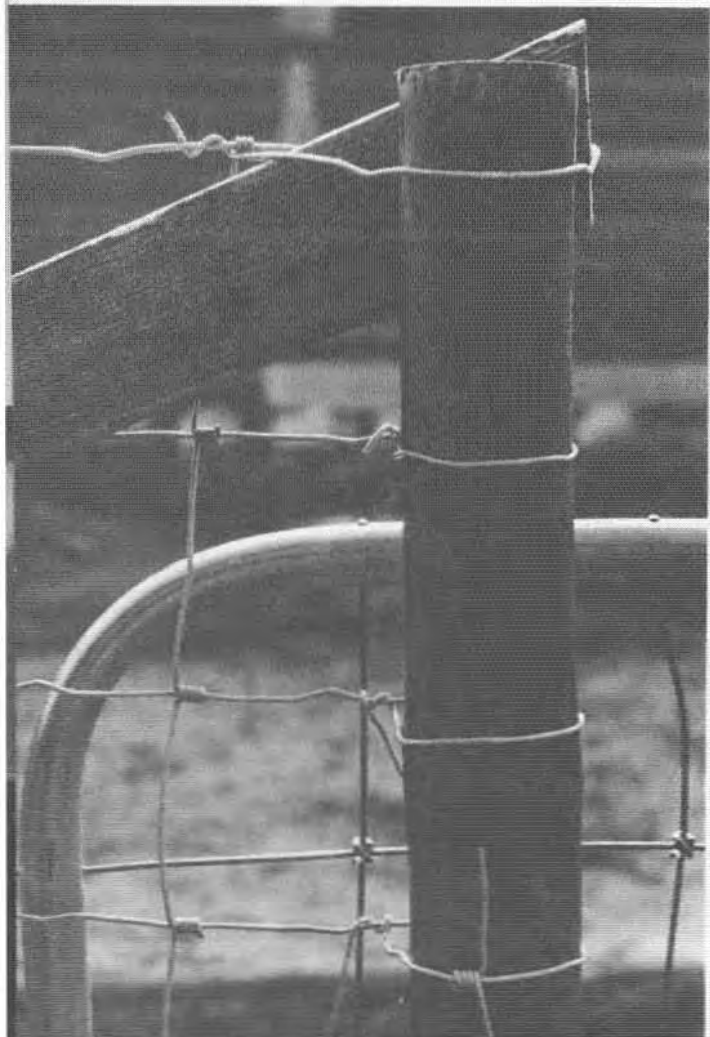
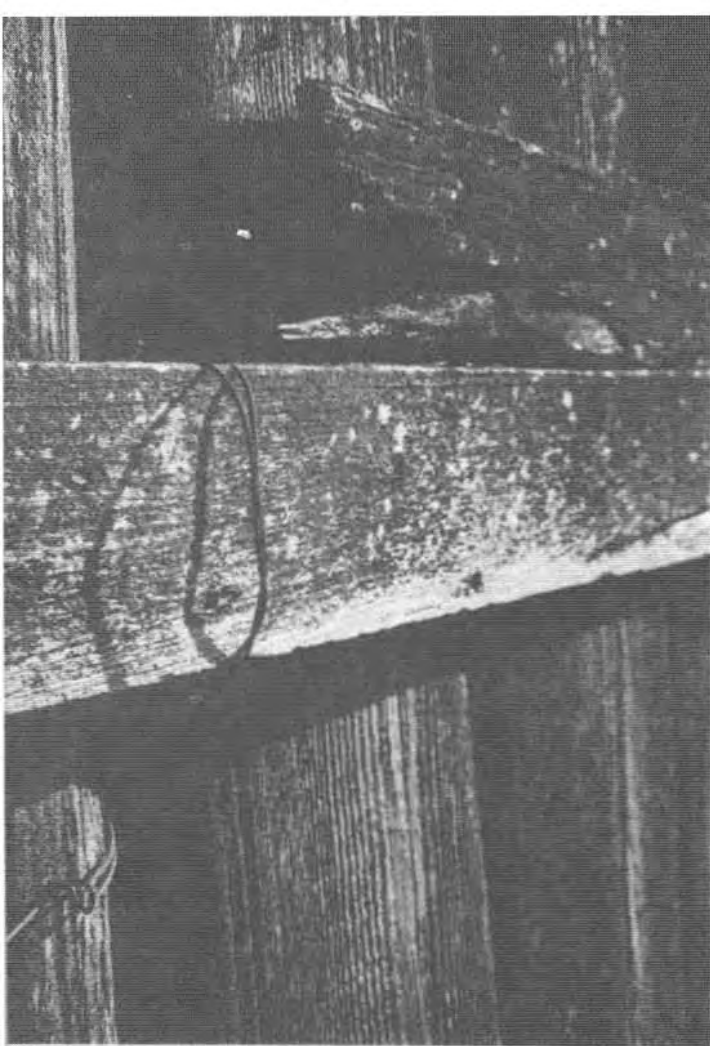


PORTFOLIO

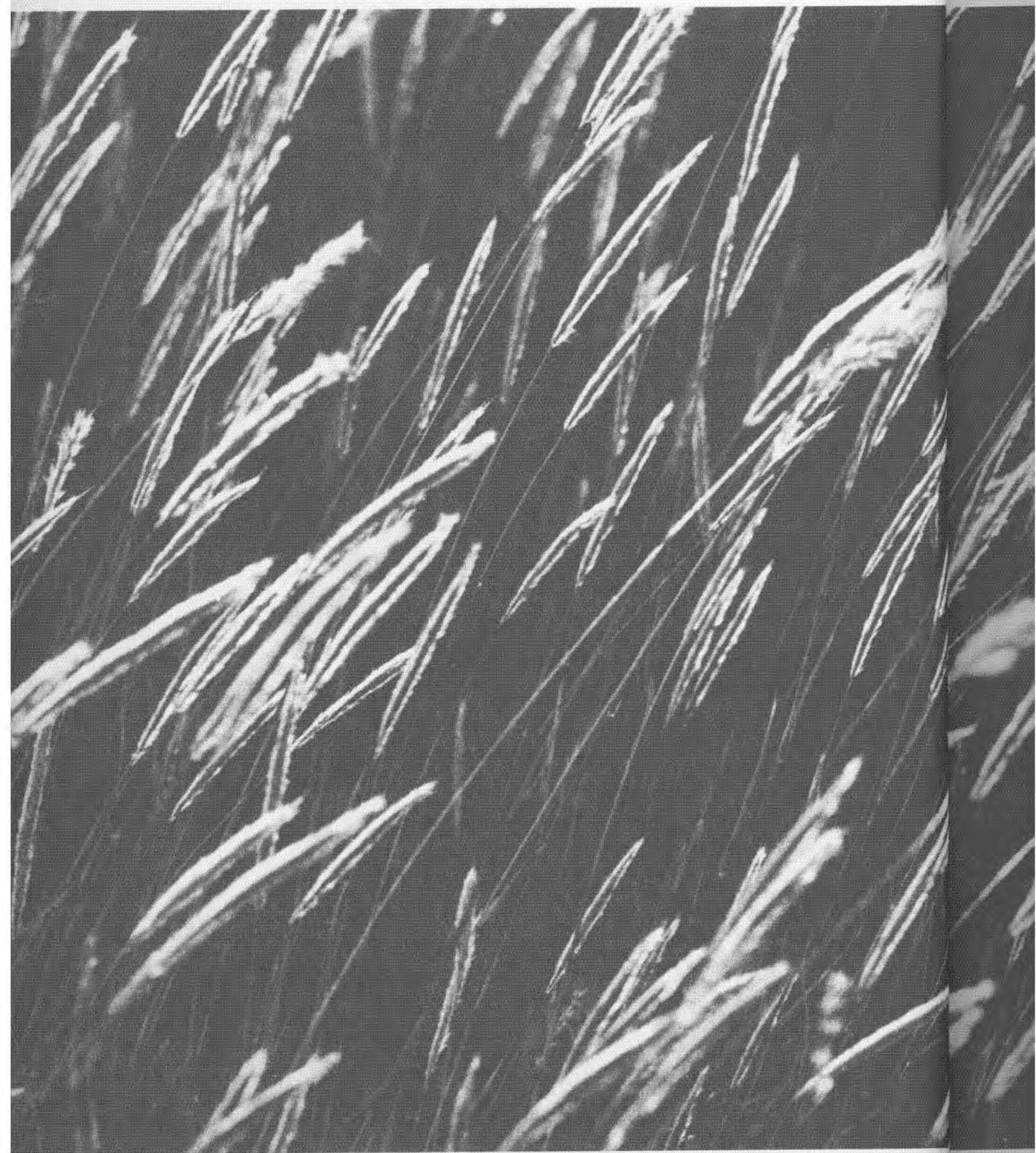
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design by
nguyen-le-minh

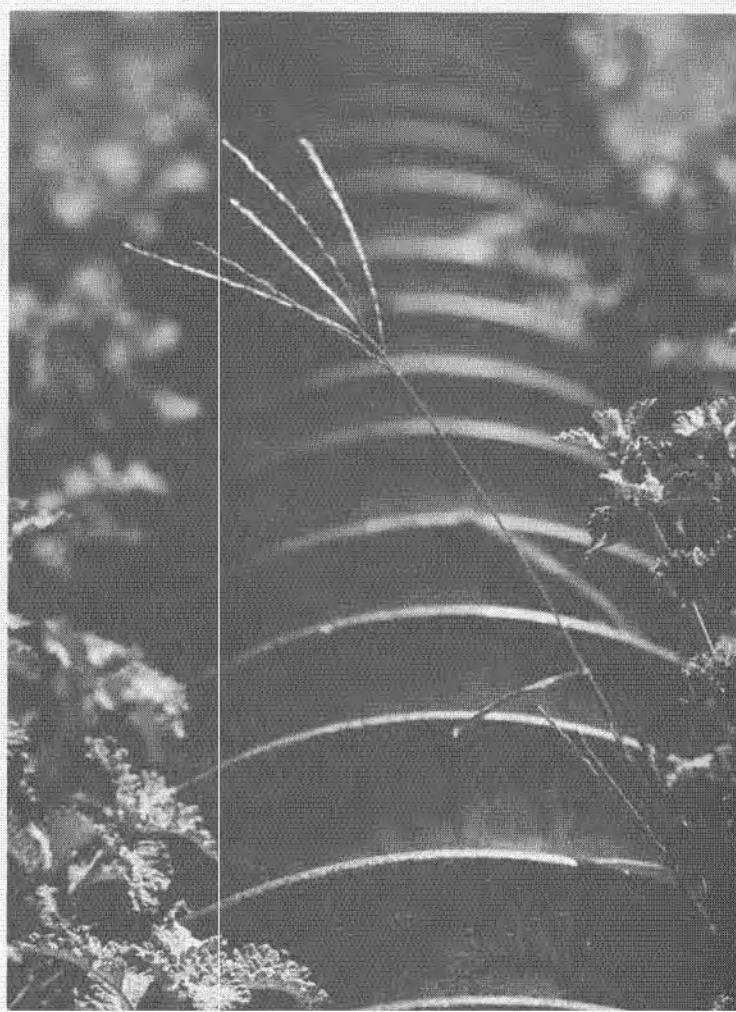












Brandt's Ostpolitik

Thoughts on Linkage Theory

by Conrad Raabe

The events surrounding the recent ratification of the treaties between the German Federal Republic (West Germany) and the USSR and Poland offer an interesting example of the complex nature of international politics, especially when set in the context of domestic politics. An analysis of these events shows how the domestic and international political arenas interact with each other to produce a foreign policy.

An awareness that domestic and international political variables interact is not new. In a primitive fashion Karl Marx, and later Lenin, using economics as the independent variable, postulated a causal relationship between the form of domestic politics and the type of foreign policy practiced by a nation-state. Since then, however, Marxism has been substantially revised, and so have the linkage theories about foreign policy. The number of variables in the domestic arena has become very large, and when articulated with variables from the international arena, form a substantial matrix of interacting variables. In this essay, however, I will concentrate only on such linkages as they emerge in the ratification process of Germany's new *Ostpolitik*.

Berlin as a Political Datum

From 1900 to the present, Germany's Eastern and Western borders have been the subject of constant political controversy. As *Land der Mitte*, Germany has been forced, Janus-like, to face both East and West. The artificial division of Germany at the end of World War II separated the East-looking face from the West-looking face—an adumbration of the Cold War.

A similar but special fate awaited Germany's capitol city, Berlin. Although it lies some 110 miles within the East zone, Berlin was subjected to a special division by the Allies. This peculiar situation has sustained West Germany's interest in the East, and has provided a focal point for relations between the US and USSR. At the height of the Cold War, the temperature of US-Soviet relations could be measured by changes in the Berlin situation. Khrushchev was reputed to have said, in his own earthy way, that whenever he wished to give the West a pain he would kick it in Berlin. Even today, the best measure of East-West relations in Central Europe may well be the stance taken by each of the two Germanies and in particular in regard to Berlin.

As a geographical entity Berlin's history can be traced back

some 700 years to a village on a sandy plain known as the Brandenburg Marquē. As a result of its location at the confluence of the Spree River and an incipient canal system, Berlin grew to be a trade center between East and West. It was not, however, until 1871 during the Bismarchian consolidation that Berlin became the capitol of Imperial Germany. German territories would be ruled from here until 1945.

After two World Wars, Berlin remains a reflection of the whole of Germany. Germany is divided; Berlin is divided. Still, while the actual size of both East and West Germany has diminished, Berlin as a whole remains much the same size as it was prior to World War II.

The post-war status of Berlin was determined by the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union during the various London Conferences of 1944. On September 12, 1944 the Allies decided to divide the soon to be conquered Germany into four zones, one for each ally to occupy and a special zone of Berlin. (France was later included in the agreement and given zones from the US and the United Kingdom.) By middle October 1944, the Allies' special control mechanisms for Berlin had been established: the city would be divided into zones of occupation; and Berlin was to be governed by an Allied Kommandatura composed of commandants appointed by their respective Commanders-in-Chief. After the German surrender, May 8, 1945, the Soviet Union had conquered Berlin but the Allied forces had gone beyond the originally agreed halting point for their armies determined in London, 1944. After an exchange between Truman and Stalin, June 14-16, 1945, it was agreed that British and American troops would withdraw from their advanced positions and move into their Berlin sectors. Subsequently, agreements on free access to Berlin were completed among the Commanders, and the Allied Kommandatura began operation July 11, 1945.

The famed Potsdam Conference took place six days later in a Berlin suburb. Here the victorious powers decided what was to be done with Germany and her allies. Differences between the US and the United Kingdom on the one side and the USSR on the other became more manifest. These differences concerned particularly Poland, the rest of Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and German reparations. Eventually, comprehensive agreements were made concerning the post-war treatment of Germany, including disarmament, demilitarization, and the punishment of war criminals. Poland was compensated, for

territory taken by the Russians, with German territory east of the Oder and Neisse Rivers. What had remained of East Prussia was divided between Russia and Poland.

One year after Potsdam Conference had taken place the first and only Greater Berlin election was held on October 20, 1946 under the aegis of the occupying powers. In the Soviet zone the Russians had forced the amalgamation of the Communist Party (KPD) with the then Marxist oriented Social Democratic Party (SPD). The new party was called the Socialist Unity Party (SED). The Berlin electorate, traditionally left wing, overwhelmingly rejected this new party in favor of a coalition led by the remaining portions of the SPD in the Western sectors of the city.

By 1948 tensions between the USSR and the West had increased to the extent that the Greater Berlin Municipal Assembly, elected in 1946 and housed in government buildings in the Soviet sector, was evicted from their meeting place by the Russians. Shortly afterwards the Soviet representative walked out of the Kommandatura and the city was administratively divided between the Russians and the Western Powers, which now included France.

Berlin was one of the places where the West and the USSR confronted each other directly. Consequently as worldwide divisions between the West and the USSR continued to emerge—in the Eastern Mediterranean, Eastern Europe, and the Far East—and as specific greater German problems such as currency control and economic rehabilitation became points of irritation, the Soviet Union used Berlin as a soft spot to demonstrate its displeasure with the West. Such displeasure was dramatically demonstrated by the infamous Berlin Blockade which lasted through the winter of 1948 and was finally lifted by the Russians in the summer of 1949 when the Russians became convinced of the Allies determination to maintain their rights of occupation in Berlin. With the lifting of the blockade, the Russians also promised to restore access between East and West Berlin and between West Berlin and West Germany. Up until the Wall was built in 1961, some five hundred thousand Berliners daily crossed the boundary between the Russian and Allied sectors to work and carry on business.

The Wall was the culmination of events which occurred during the 1950's. In 1952, while there was free access to the various sectors of the city, telephone service was cut. In June, 1953 the East Berlin workers' uprising against the East German government was suppressed by Russian troops and tanks. Opportunities for ambitious young people did not exist in the East as they did in the West. Consequently, an exodus of skilled and professional people from East to West occurred.

Events within the Soviet Union affected the German situation as they did the rest of the world. The death of Stalin, the ensuing power struggle in the USSR, and other problems in Eastern Europe relieved pressures on Berlin until 1958. At this time Nikita Khrushchev, securely in charge in the Kremlin, proposed making Berlin a "free city." He meant by this phrase removing all Allied troops and severing Berlin's ties with the West German Government. Within the next four months Khrushchev further proposed a "separate peace" with the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). Such a move would confirm boundaries between East and West Germany and would violate Allied war time agreements which prohibited separate peace treaties with Germany. These were all moves

designed to enhance Soviet power in Central Europe and remove US influence from that area. The West ignored Khrushchev's ultimatum and the deadline came and went. On August 13, 1961 the Wall was built with the express rationale of keeping "revenge-seeking politicians and agents of West German militarism" out until such time as West Berlin was transformed into a demilitarized neutral free city.

During the time the Wall was being constructed Willy Brandt was Governing Mayor of West Berlin. He had first been elected in 1957 and had risen quickly in the post-war Social Democratic Party. His freedom from Nazi taint coupled with his image of newness and freshness were a definite asset to the then doctrinaire SPD. In 1959, at the Bad Godesberg Conference, Brandt was instrumental in turning the SPD away from the Marxist rhetoric of class conflict and transforming it into a moderate left party capable of competing with the dominant Christian Democratic Union (CDU) for the crucial centrist voters. Not until 1966, however, when the so-called "Grand Coalition" brought the SPD and the CDU together, did Brandt, as Deputy Chancellor and Foreign Minister, have the opportunity to develop his *Ostpolitik*. And even then, he had to deal with an inhibited way of thinking about German foreign policy that had pervaded Bonn for better than sixteen years under CDU rule.

The Context and Content of the Ostpolitik: Some Linkages between Domestic and International Politics

After the war Germany's foreign policy was dominated by staunch hardliners in the ruling CDU. Such forceful men as Konrad Adenauer, Franz Josef Straus and Ludwig Erhard avoided any political entanglements with Eastern Europe and the USSR. A manifestation of this mentality was the Hallstein Doctrine which stated very plainly that any nation which recognized East Germany diplomatically would not be recognized by West Germany. No Eastern European nation, therefore, could be formally recognized by West Germany. The one major exception to the rule was the USSR, which maintained diplomatic relations with both Germanies.

During his tenure as Foreign Minister in the Grand Coalition, Brandt began to reorient Germany's thinking about the nations to the East with which it had traditional ties. Because of major leadership changes in the CDU, Brandt's efforts won tacit approval by some members of the SPD's CDU coalition partner and by Germany's international allies—most notably the United States. Further international approval of Brandt's initiatives was signaled when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970.

In the Grand Coalition, however, Brandt did not have the freedom necessary to fulfill his aspirations for Germany's rapprochement with the East. Constraints came from two sources: in the domestic arena from the SPD's coalition partner the CDU, and in the international arena from the USSR.

In the CDU a leadership conflict arose among the strong personalities who, with the late Konrad Adenauer, had brought Germany back to world prominence from the destruction of World War II. Men such as Franz Josef Straus, the powerful and mercurial leader of the CDU's Bavarian component, the Christian Social Union, disliked the SPD and particularly Willy Brandt. Therefore, in order to work effectively with their SPD coalition partners and maintain some sort of party unity, the

CDU needed a conciliatory man who could not offend the SPD or the various groups within the CDU. The party found such a man in Kurt Kiesinger and chose him to fill the role of party leader and Chancellor of the Grand Coalition. As a compromise choice Kiesinger reflected the attitudes of the leaders who had chosen him. Thus in 1968, when Brandt openly advocated recognition of the *Oder-Neisse* line as the *de facto* Eastern boundary of Germany with Poland, Kiesinger was unable overtly to support such a move because of his powerful and more conservative *conféres*. However, Kiesinger's own feelings about the *Ostpolitik* were indicated when he sanctioned the demise of the Hallstein Doctrine by communicating directly with German Democratic Republic's Premier, Willie Stoph. In spite of the CDU's problems, Brandt cautiously and continuously prepared Germany's opening to the East. Under his direction German approaches were made to Rumania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia to establish diplomatic and trade relations.

Meanwhile in the international arena, the USSR, with the Chinese People's Republic at its back, was becoming anxious about Bonn's new policy toward Eastern Europe. Russia's intense distrust of West Germany inclined the Kremlin to foresee a "revanchist" Germany breaking off bits and pieces of the wall of buffer states on Russia's Western Border.*

It came as little surprise, therefore, that the major public reason given by the Russians for the 1968 Czechoslovakian invasion was that West German influence had grown too strong. Prior to the invasion, the Bonn and Prague governments had announced their plans to establish formal diplomatic relations with each other – a very positive manifestation of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*.

The Czechoslovakian invasion abruptly halted any further initiatives by Bonn to "build bridges to the East." One of the major lessons Brandt learned was to key his *Ostpolitik* to the USSR. His former strategy of working his way around Russia by dealing with its satellites was a failure. Russia made it clear through the Brezhnev Doctrine that any German government interested in the East would have to deal with Moscow. Only after that could it deal bilaterally with Berlin, Poland and possibly the rest of Eastern Europe.

While the Doctrine was being digested and analysed by the West, the legal life of the Grand Coalition came to an end in 1969. New elections gave the CDU a plurality, but not enough seats in the Bundestag (the German lower house) to form a government. SPD leader Brandt and Walter Scheel, his counterpart in the Free Democratic Party (FDP), had begun informal discussions about a new government before the election had taken place. They now formally negotiated the new government's structure. Thus, the "Willy-Walter" Coalition formed the new Federal Government. As the opposition party, the CDU (led now by Rainer Bartzel) was forced to release, for the first time in the Republic's history, its hold on governmental power.

A keystone in the coalition was an agreement between Brandt and Scheel on German initiatives to the East and the necessity for improving Berlin's situation. With a twelve vote majority in the lower house, Chancellor Brandt and his Foreign Minister, Walter Scheel, keeping in mind the Brezhnev Doctrine, began work on the *Ostpolitik*.

In an unprecedented move on March 19, 1970 Brandt met with East German Premier Willie Stoph in Erfurt, East Germany, to discuss relations between the two Germanies. Later

in the same year Brandt travelled to Moscow, some fifteen years after Konrad Adenauer had been there negotiating diplomatic recognition. In Moscow Brandt spoke with Soviet leaders about Germany's intentions toward Eastern Europe and the USSR. From these talks emerged a document which laid the groundwork for the future of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*: The Moscow Treaty, a treaty of friendship between Soviet Government and the Federal Government of Germany. This treaty became a symbol of Germany's acknowledgment of Soviet hegemony in determining the major outlines of the foreign policy of Russia's satellites.

The 180° reversal in Brandt's Eastern strategy—approaching the USSR first, then the various states in the Soviet ambit—has been one of the prime variables in the successfully negotiated agreements and treaties on Berlin, the Polish border, and West Germany's status vis-à-vis Moscow and East Germany. Bonn's concession was to let the USSR order the priority of foreign policy moves by Germany in Eastern Europe.

In the international arena the situation was complicated by the special nature of the Berlin Treaty. Technically any treaty involving Berlin had to be negotiated by the four occupying powers, the US, the USSR, Britain, and France. These quadripartite negotiations had to be within the context of the whole *Ostpolitik*. Thus, the Quadrapartite Berlin Treaty which provided for easier access by West Germans to Berlin, and access by West Berliners to East Berlin and its environs depended on whether the West German Bundestag ratified intact the Moscow and Warsaw treaties. This dependence, dictated by the USSR, now made the *Ostpolitik* the subject of an intense domestic political battle in the Spring of 1972.

The CDU Opposition hoped to end the Government's slim majority for its own political advantage. CDU leaders played up the fact that the SPD-FDP Coalition had made concessions which may not have been necessary to gain the treaties and the Berlin agreements. If indeed the concessions were necessary, the CDU argued that the treaties and agreements may have been diplomatically too costly. If the Opposition could defeat the treaties, a new election would be called before the expiration of the Government's four year term, the first time such an event would have occurred since 1949 when the Bonn Government was instituted. Such an event could have had widespread domestic and international repercussions. However, given the fact that the November 1972 election reinstalled the Brandt-Scheel government, the thinking and strategy of the CDU leaders was evidently faulty.

In the domestic arena, the SPD which had spent some twelve years establishing itself as a legitimate, competitive left-of-center party, would have its legitimacy tarnished by being the first post-war government not to fill out its legal four year term. Given the recent history of German politics, party and governmental legitimacy are very important in the minds of

*Incidentally, the Russian's distrust of Germany is indiscriminate in spite of the fact that a very loyal communist government controls Eastern Germany. Prior to his ousting, East Germany Party Chairman Walter Ulbricht was considered the last of the Stalinists in Eastern Europe. His replacement, Erich Honecker, is apparently slightly less rigid. In spite of this, it is clear that the twenty-two full strength divisions of Soviet troops in East Germany are there not only as troops to defend the East against the West, but also as a reminder to the Germans that a replay of the 1953 German workers' rebellion would be dealt with harshly.

Germans.

Similarly, the CDU's image was hurt in the minds of German voters. The CDU's attacks from the Opposition benches seemed more oriented toward destroying the Brandt-Scheel Government than toward establishing a compromise and working out a German policy toward the East. Unaccustomed to playing the Opposition role the CDU appeared venal rather than constructive. The CDU's image problem was exacerbated further by a muted power struggle within the party among CSU Chief Franz Joseph Straus, one-time Foreign Minister Gerhard Schröder, and CDU leader Bartzel. Interestingly, the struggle focused on the best strategy to undermine the Government's foreign policy position.

The result of these events in the CDU would yield the contrary of what every reputable measure of German public opinion wanted, namely ratification of the treaties. Thus, the CDU appeared too interested in gaining political power for its own sake rather than working for the general good of Germany.

In general there was an undercurrent of fear that the politics in Bonn could revert to a newer version of the irresponsible style of politics under the Weimar Constitution—Germany's only other real attempt at a democratic form of government. This possibility was not likely, but the memories of Weimar lingered in the corners of many Germans' minds.

The Russians also unwittingly put the treaties in jeopardy by their subsequent actions. When it seemed that the treaties might not be ratified, the USSR began heavy-handedly and publicly to threaten the "revanchist politicians" of the Opposition. This tactic had two contradictory effects. The desired effect was to remind Germans of their tenuous position in world politics and of the opportunity which the treaty would give them to improve their image with the Russians and give them some leverage in Eastern Europe. The threat was very simple: ratify the treaties now or forget about *Ostpolitik* for the foreseeable future.

The Russians also implied that things would get a great deal tougher involving access to Berlin. Of course controlling access to Berlin as a political lever was not a new tactic, and on one recent occasion it was used in a positive way. During the ratification process West Germans and West Berliners were permitted relatively unimpeded access to East Berlin over Easter and Pentecost in 1972. Russian and East German border guards made a point of impressing those West Germans travelling through, that when the treaties were ratified, every-day visits would be this easy instead of the usually tedious *kontrol* at the borders involving generally an hour of bureaucratic harassment.

Soviet pressure on the Opposition evoked a reaction among moderate right wing elements in Germany, which reinforced the position of such hardliners as Straus and Schröder who were opposed not only to Brandt's Government, but also to any dramatic rapprochement with the Soviet Union. This sentiment was reflected in an election in one of the largest German states, Baden-Württemberg where the CDU maintained their control over the government despite strenuous SPD efforts to unseat them. Demonstrating another link between international and domestic politics, the treaties had become an issue in the state election because of the structure of the German federal system.

Since the treaties involved some territorial changes, the Basic Law (the Constitution of the Federal Republic) required that the upper house also give its approval before ratification.

The upper house, however, is appointed by the various state governments and acts on their instructions. Therefore, the party which controls the majority of state governments also controls the upper house vote. The difference between an SPD victory and a CDU victory in the upper house was determined by the number of delegates from Baden-Württemberg. If the upper house rejected the treaties, the veto could be overridden by an absolute majority of the lower house. By election time it looked as though the SPD might have at *most one vote* more in the lower house than the number required for an absolute majority!

Between the time the treaties were introduced to the Bundestag in late February and the April Baden-Württemberg elections, inter-party and intra-party debate grew strong and heady. The CDU's internal problems have already been discussed. Within the SPD and FDP, problems also came to light. One deputy, a traditionally loyal SPD member said he would leave the party and vote against the treaties, for reasons of personal conviction because he was the leader of a refugee organization with many members from the once German territories now conceded to Poland by the Warsaw Treaty. In the FDP other more right wing deputies left their party on the grounds that the treaties conceded too much to the Russians for too little in return. These moves were legitimated by the defection of two former cabinet members in Fall, 1970, one-time FDP leader and former Vice-Chancellor Erich Mende and Heinz Starke, one-time Finance Minister. The result was the erosion of the Government's majority in the Bundestag from originally twelve members to six to eventually one. To add to the difficulties of Brandt and Scheel, certain pro-treaty SPD members began to wonder if the treaties were worth all the strain on the parties and the German political system. Were the treaties worth going to the mat and possibly cutting short the SPD's first chance at governing the Federal Republic?

The difficulties in both parties encouraged Brandt and Bartzel to negotiate a solution to the situation. What emerged from the intense half-month negotiations was a compromise—a German version of bipartisan foreign policy. The Opposition forces would permit the treaties to be ratified by abstaining on the vote generally, but permitting those CDU deputies who favored the treaties to vote for them. In return the Opposition would receive Bundestag approval of a ten point resolution "clarifying" the operation of the treaties which would specifically ban any secret protocols. In June, Brandt also indicated that the coalition would call elections in November, a year before the legal expiration of the Government's life, thereby possibly giving Bartzel something with which to placate his own hardline party members. Thus the coalition's governing time was cut short partially because the intense political debate over the passage of these treaties had eroded the majority necessary to govern effectively.

In accordance with the arrangement, the treaties passed both houses. On May 23, 1972 President Gustav Heinemann signed the treaties completing the German ratification process which had in one sense begun two years earlier when the treaties were first negotiated. Eleven days later on June 3, 1972, the Four Power Agreement on Berlin was signed by the US, Britain, France, and the USSR.

The significance of the experience with these treaties is twofold for Germany. First, the process of ratification tested the fiber of the German political system which is still one of the

largest scale social science experiments in history. The success of this experiment depends to a large extent on the willingness of the principal political parties to respect certain boundaries in the competition for governmental power and to place the general welfare above the immediate and specific political gain. A spirit of "loyal opposition" and responsible government has been developed in the British political culture over centuries, but in Germany the practice of competitive constrained politics is less than a quarter of a century old.

In foreign policy the Opposition role is especially crucial. Foreign policy in some sense must be perceived as being representative of the whole nation-state. Public perception of the Opposition's use of foreign policy merely to gain political power in Germany, would impair the legitimacy of the Opposition *qua* incipient Government as well as the legitimacy of the political system which permitted such political chicanery.

Every political-economic obstacle, however, that the German political system can overcome reinforces the capability of the government to absorb difficult challenges such as the existence of an ultra-right wing National Democratic Party (NPD), and the newly constituted German Communist Party (DKP), and the moderation of German economic growth. Systemic legitimacy and competence are two of the most important variables in the maintenance of stable democracies. Without them, the system degenerates into a caricature of democracy—rule by special interests to further their own narrow ends or authoritarian rule. Germany has experienced both in the twentieth century.

Perhaps the most obvious result of the treaties' ratification is the effect on the future of West German foreign policy, particularly toward its Eastern neighbors. Government press officer Rüdiger von Wechmar summarized the hoped-for consequences this way:

Soon after the documents of ratification of the Eastern treaties have been deposited, the Government intends to arrange the exchange of ambassadors with the Polish Government [the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union already have ambassadors in the respective capitals]; enter into an exchange of views with the German Democratic Republic on the future relationship between the two states in Germany; participate in the multilateral preparations for a conference on security and co-operation in Europe; resume the exchange of views with Czechoslovakia on the normalization of relations, and hold talks with the Governments of Hungary and of Bulgaria on the initiation of diplomatic relations.

The "beginning of the beginning" of the *Ostpolitik*, as Brandt referred to the ratification of the treaties and agreements, divides into two parts: the Federal Republic's relations with the whole of Eastern Europe and a special class of relations specifically with the German Democratic Republic. It is apparent that Bonn's relations with Eastern European nations such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria will follow the patterns established by the Warsaw and Moscow treaties. During the summer of 1972, Bonn and Prague announced that meetings would begin shortly which would be aimed at normalizing relations between these two states. In a very real sense, working out these other agreements will be easier than arranging an understanding mutually acceptable to both Germanies about their respective sovereignty.

The probable difficulties between the two Germanies lie in the background of a set now brightly lit by the signing of the final protocol on the Berlin agreements June 3, 1972 and the consequent easing of travel around Berlin. The foremost difficulty is the acceptance by West Germany of East Germany's status as a sovereign nation-state. This would preclude, in the foreseeable future, any unification of the two Germanies. East German Communist Party Chief Eric Honecker has already demanded formal recognition of the GDR as a sovereign nation-state by the Bonn. In a response to Honecker in June 1972, Foreign Minister Walter Scheel said that the furthest Bonn is willing to go is to recognize a *de facto* separate East German state but not a separate East German nation. While on the surface this appears to be so much legal quibbling, given the evident realities of the situation, such quibbles will endanger the intra-German *modus vivendi* the Brandt Government had hoped for, and will definitely be a sticking point when negotiations for the admission of both Germanies to the U.N. comes up later in 1973.

These impending difficulties, however, should not belittle the accomplishments achieved so far by the Brandt regime to restore West Germany's Eastern consciousness. Even Opposition leader Rainer Bartzel conceded that, as regards Berlin, more had been achieved to date than was ever thought possible in the fifties. Whether intra-German relations continue to progress depends to a large extent on the international political constraints and possibilities which will face Brandt's new Government since the November election confirmed domestic support for his *Ostpolitik*. One thing is evident: the opening to the East has been made and, for that reason, Willy Brandt has earned his Nobel Peace Prize.

NOR Presents a Sampling of Contemporary Religious Poetry

If religion did not exist, we should have to invent it. So with religious poetry. We are here trying to invent it. It is our only guarantee of autonomy for images, those of mystics (think John of the Cross), those of poets (think Gerard Hopkins). When poets or mystics let images speak, transfiguration occurs, not reduction, and the allure of transfigured reality becomes intense. And men not only mean, but be.

Francis Sullivan

BALLAD OF A RAGGEDY MONK

Enter the mighty god with a flail;
quiver the heart caught eating the rose.

I saw figure eight bodies and feared;
I saw moons bend the wind,
I saw someone

who sang without song,
and I thought she was roses concealed
in my mouth and I eating,
like Ea the worm, the first cause
of toothache and cure but only when
drummed out by shamans and drunks;

so when both hands at midnight were mating,
I jumped off the face of the clock
as it headed for four
and fresh roses,
slid off the belly of one two and three
shouting the roses so long and goodbye,

I am gone like that toward the wind;

I can sail in a wind in a shell
of dried skin tanned like the hide
of a nut and light without meat;

it's always a kiss in the wind don't you see,
and never a sin or a bite or a taste
of bitters on the rim of the tongue;

and his flail is the hoot of two dancing loons,
my quivering three quarter beats,
and all roses are suns that go down
in west water and out like a flame,

then god is all calmed for the night
and our mouths are put stilled
with no eating;

but cormorants stand in the way
in that wind
to dive for the roses gone buried in water,
to surface in spatters that bulge out my throat
and wake up killed tastes for the morning.

— Francis Sullivan

Francis Sullivan, poetry editor of the NOR, is a Jesuit priest teaching Religion at Loyola. His poems have been published in *Poetry Northwest*, *Hiram Poetry Journal*, and *The Yale Review*.

VIRGIN BIRTH

Do not beget the poem:
With the up-thrusting of intelligence
Into that waiting womb
Where inspiration flows its occult egg,
You cannot make this thing
Your swollen ambition goads you to enforce;
All you will bring
To birth is some vague monster of conceit—
No image of your being,
But rather what your envies warp you to
Beget, for your undoing,
Image of lust's headstrong false witnessing.

As in Zeus' throbbing brain
Athenes sprang, full-armed, untrapped by need
Of mother's nurturing;
Or as from Mary, chaste in flesh and thought,
Unfathered of a man
Christ bodied himself forth in place and time—
Manage somehow, then,
Not to beget, but faithfully conceive
What the sole spirit's plan
Wills to achieve in you, and as he wills.

Be seized of this birth-pang
That witnesses no envious warped want,
And what so issues from
Your flesh, love's self will seal for witnessing.

—John Moffitt

5/14/72 (NOW)

Let there be
Extrication of Astral Energy!
Let there be
Universal Sounds — I am!

inhale music,
holy water,
spring mountains.

exhale placebos,
coffin chants,
loveless deserts.

glory on cocoons
metamorphosizing
Birth!

a snake cannot be ripped out of its skin.
It must be shed.

They claim Butterflies have gone Psychotic.
straight-jackets and sheet-packs can't stunt
"those insane caterpillars."

any trip you want to take leads
to the same place.

Now

ask a snake or a butterfly what time it is.
they'll say
"It's Now O'Clock."
and the People will mock and mar
the wise creatures as Travesties.

inhale
exhale
glory
Now

Surrender to You.

—jane cluthe

TWO VISIONS OF A SNAKE HANDLER

I

An image of Christ in the
Screendoor.
A postcard delivered in lightning.
In the yard, an aura
Rises around the beaks of a few hens.
It is the divine light
Shed throughout the pores
Of the broken communion loaf.

II

The State Supreme Court rules
Against the handling of
Rattlers for evangelical purposes.
Under a nearby rock, venom
Changes into legal ink
And the bodies of snakes
Into fountain pens.

This Puritan ground spread
Like parchment.
What shall be written here?

The hearts of the saved.
Stiff wood.
Center poles for the Great Tent!

— *Thomas Johnson*

Thomas Johnson teaches high school English in Memphis.
The editor of *Stinktree Press*, he has published several poems,
and is presently at work on a first book.

THE PILGRIM ROCKS

These rocks like earless deacons
Nod off in knee-high water.
The saved speak in tongues,
The cries of Babel roll under
And hump out in the wake
Of a small boat
With provisions for One Meal!

These whitecaps that thrash up
On flag-planting mud.
The mantles of Puritan women
Who hurry off
In the middle of the night,

The witch compass spins insanely!
An ingrown hair
At the base of the skull.

— Thomas Johnson

STUDENT'S POEM

O God who made all holy things, please help me
study;
Send not too much blood into my wings
Nor make me heady with too much love for holy
things;
Or I shall sing, not analyze thy natural beauty.

But oh Jesus, there are flowers in my cerebrum:
Roses with thorns,
Morning glories like holy horns,
Millions of day-lilies,
A few voluptuous orchids,
Even a sprig or two of nightshade.
Some pretty maid might like a bright bouquet,
But I have not yet got a pretty maid.
Unless I may array them in some form I shall go mad,
Jesus;
Flowers come out of my head, Jesus,
All over my desk, dear God.

— Robert Sabatier

SONGS OF PRAISE TO DIVINITY

He Comes

Soft blue the flannel lying in heaps by the sewing table
the yellow nightgown down from its body
corn mottled like Indian beads, jumbled,
and their stiff papery leaves to hang them by—
the room is not a room where waiting has been done.
No one gives her life as a passing time.
The things in the room are moved around.
Alone. How can she manage to know,
but it seems she does:

Her lord. Her love.
A window is enough.
Discordant as insects
as black hair on nipples,
you are loved, you, you,
a word known beyond all things,
you come.
A coming.
A breath.
The long muscles in the throat tight,
times a head was back back
by the Coke machine,
the bottle up,
the long throat muscles oh moving
moving fine as a snake,
and you have come

to a ready person.
The thick richness of a god with a past.
The room let to a sky through a window.
Whoever is wanting, he is free
to come in and go, she is glad
for what has been had, she does not regret or wait.
So they come.
You come.
To you her gift:
her surprise.

—Zona Silverstein

Zona Silverstein has published poems in *The Nation*, *Shenandoah*, *Wascana Review*, and *Poetry Miscellany*. A recent graduate of Connecticut College, she is presently traveling and writing in Israel.

Her Surprise

Green sky. Green streaks of water trembling on a lake.
One bird is a quickness appearing,
dark as an anchor too solid on the sky.
A leaf and another leaf, turned up on a tree.
Her love was more sudden than those,
the gladness that he gave her.
The dark running into woods
she learned how to do.
The power in her throat.
Always he was kind.
Always he was loved.
Never could he be had.
Always she was hated.
He lets her be; he is a perfect presence.
She will abide a while
who calls him shyly.
He was always with her.

—Zona Silverstein

He was always with her

In the hills of Torrington by sunset shadows through a
window moving on a pad
in the hills of Litchfield County running up to Berkshires
promises of Green Mountains
a north wind coming south fierce over mountains going gentler
the foot hills
a north wind Spirit of a greater breathing, under stars over
sands a greater
plural promised to Jacob in sons, and the birds
climb the stairway of the sky to God's center
right by Torrington: is it any wonder that you have come?

Come, gentle, the winds are low and down and gone.
Come, gentle. The swollen blood against the bone
this love is joy almost to a pain. Oh, no
light of Hallelujah colors put up in the sky.
I want a plain coming and a softer going
until there is a time she is alone
and the air beside her moves like you.

—Zona Silverstein

LAZARUS

Poets West your destiny
Whispering the incongruence
 of your stutter, telling
 you in arched
 bravado
the lack of dimension
 in any capacity
 of your structure.
You become frayed
 and honest, as I, before
 the God
Which is your challenge
to
Conceive and surpass,
 realize and
scorn—until all
 pitch
 brace
Against the throat's
 harp to
Fall on its tiny face; For the only
 carrot
 is
 change.

—Dominic MacCormac

Dominic MacCormac, an undergraduate at Loyola, New Orleans, is a native of Ireland. His poetry has appeared in *National Anthology of American Poetry*, and previously in the NOR.

NAD CEDR LIBANU

Siwa broda rozwiana nad miastem
Czarna jarmulka nocy strącona z wierzchołka dnia
Wrony skulone z zimna. To Żydzi się modlą
pogrążeni wśród liści w swoich wiecznych snach
Cisza ogromna jak Biblia stoi pośrodku kirkuta
nad dedr Libanu wspanialsza, wonniesjsza niżli nard
Bandaże babiego lata na rdzą poplamionych kikutach
Tlum pochylonych kamieni pędzi do raju wiatr

—Marek Skwarnicki

Marek Skwarnicki is editor of the Polish Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* and monthly *Znak*; he is also a member of *Pax Romana*, the International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs. His fiction, poetry and translations have been widely published here and abroad.

THAN THE CEDARS OF LEBANON

A grey beard waving over the city
Night's black skullcap knocked off the summit of day
Crows huddled up in the cold. They are Jews praying
sunk in the leaves in their eternal dreams
Silence enormous as the Bible stands in the middle of
the graveyard
than the cedars of Lebanon more splendid, more fragrant than balm
Bandages of silver cobwebs on rust-splattered stumps
A crowd of stooped stones driven to paradise by the wind

—tr. Gerald Darring

Gerald Darring is a graduate research assistant at the University of Illinois. He has published articles and reviews on Russian and Polish literature in the *Slavic and East European Journal*, *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, and *Russian Literature Triquarterly*.

ROME: THE TOMB OF IGNATIUS

1.

mark it out: six footsteps. just under
that. deep enough for a child
for a child to hide and if able to stretch
and turn over it would touch the walls.
no more room.
not even air would be comfortable beyond
these limits. and tightly sealed.

2.

see it: a boat
a covered gold boat shaped
to float lightly into the sea riding
high off to the edge of nowhere
if called. or sent.

3.

angels everywhere. pulling the eye
up and around. pointing into corners where
prayer evaporates and silence lingers.
behind marble clouds and silver folds
bronze curving in and out the breath
that comes from holy places everywhere
you look. can you see it.
now. mark it. out.

4.

when the bones have been cleaned they must be
boiled until the last scraps of meat and muscle
collect on top. boil them in lye for the
best results

5.

results are seldom expected. even though
you know that plants need water
and rich dirt for successful growth once
in awhile a seed has been found
to take root in dust airless dust
dust that is sealed away from
light from rain from everything but
memory
(and even sometimes in forgotten
dust)

6.

we were wrong distracted fools
after gold to believe that visions
come in silence
through a busload of belgian
tourists buying postcards avés riding
in a wave of mumbled music timed by
camera shutters and lights locked in
15 minute cycles
the vision in that should
have been a clue

7.
that he would have accepted

everything at once
how clear he knew that
not even bernini himself could contain
an italian determined on devotion

8.
little child
ignatius
who could follow a lame man
who wept more and more as
time slipped him somewhere.
beyond the child
and back again

9.
called. or sent.
the eye cannot be held to silver
lights the perfect draping on an
angels thigh
it is drawn to wonder
if the dust
has any hidden

10.
sustenance

11.
it could
it could

12.
something brought us here

13.
mark it. nowhere. mark it out.
see. somewhere. see it. dust.
gold and bronze. tears. visions.
called it. out.
sustenance.
sent. sent or called. called.
and sent. sent and called. here.
yes here. of course here. he
would know.
he knew. a flame
is always certain.
especially
in darkness. in silence. here.
yes here.
sustenance. in dust.
in tears. in tourists. lights.
and visions. yes. mark it.
everywhere

—luke

Luke, pseudonym of Joseph A. Brown, is a writer in residence of the Jesuit Institute for the Arts. A theology student at St. Louis University, he has published frequently in the United States.

LIKE APOSTLES

His heart was a teetering rock.
We were transfixed below it, he and I.
It fell, so we caught it in thin arms;
we tumbled toward the canyon rim,
a heart locked between us, our eyes
barrels for the deepening roar of each bound.
Awe emptied our lungs;
ornamental shale, pebbles, fruitless dust
scattered safeward like apostles.
Over we went; the noise stopped; but
silence squeezed my skull;
fear became mercury too hot for my scales.
I let go one hand.
Nearly alone he hurled with his heart
and me between thin arms;
he held his tear-away shadow,
his tail of a kite;
he reeled me back. We will hit soon.
We tighten. We have thin arms.

—Francis Sullivan

SEVENTH STATION

With smooth sweep the tall pine
scrapes shocked air, hits hard
ground.

Branchends quiver in scarred soil.

She sez it again I kick 'er teeth in
sez I between punches. My mate
guzzles again, his eyes gone gauze.
Our velvet tongues pack boxer blows.
His head rolls to drain the cup.
The stool teeters, tumbles; he reels,
smashes the spitstained floor.
The cracked mug slices his gums.

Christ, I sez.

—Forrest L. Ingram

Forrest L. Ingram is the editor of the NOR. His poetry has appeared in *Latitudes*, *Mundus Artium*, *Toward Winter*, and the *Mississippi Review*.

A SPIRITUAL FOR THE WAITING ROOM

read us, fortune teller

we are here on time
and famished for the taste of ourselves
famished for sweet traits and wounds to lick
and all the shapes we take
in the fog between our fingers and our faces

we bring you leaves to steep
and hands engraved by the instruments we play
picture and spell the names of those we love
tell us if we will die
and hurry, hurry
before the vision fades

chart us a course of stepping stars
for we are falling fast
falling into an absence larger than we can fear
the people of the constellations have moved away
there's nothing in their space to count on

turn up a tarot card
and promise unexpected news
we see your thinning face, you half-shut eyes
your teeth no longer masked in flesh
and we are frightened by your calmness
promise a secret that you've not revealed
turn up yourself alive again
for a week a month a year

oh we believe you will
we believe

in the aura that you wear, the deadly perfume
you will go bandaged into a new existence
another sun sign, another moon
as you are born so shall we all
be born even to this life
even to feel as much
as is happening right now

—Dolores Stewart

Dolores Stewart, editor-in-chief of *Rust Craft Greeting Cards*, is the author of a soon-to-be-published book *A Great Number Perished in the Catastrophe*; her poems have been widely published in such journals as *Poetry Northwest*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Wormwood Review* and *Pebble*.

SUE THE DEVIL'S MASK

As the drawn, unholstered
horns
On the introverted,
 palate drum, my
 warm blood
 seeks
 the
 shade
 of
 its
 reason, always
 laughing
 at
 the thorn
of your smell,
 knowing
 the
 hide
of my soul
To bristle with
The smile of my God
And the clarity
 of my fist; wearing it
 only
To hold my God
In the cold wind
 of your season. And,
In that practiced barrack
Of your chilled disorder, I
 cringe; But
 in the vision
Of my own riddle,
I am without horns
And
 I
 become
A frail King
Which is your final
 horror.

—Dominic MacCormac

EXHIBIT

Van Gogh unleashed earth's fire.
His hard gold sun lit every field unblinking.
His wheat grew burning tongues; his sky, blue coals;
crows could not touch on his licking ground;
green flames combed the cypress tree.

Be our god of war, Van Gogh.
Paint death so it burns, it rises.
Turn massacred bodies into purple trees,
into branches dancing like knot-armed houris
to seduce a sterile earth.

We are trashed with dead faces.
We live their last wince, breathe their last
breath; our tongues hold bitter memories.
We count our knuckles as whitened fears
on the barrels of making war; a game
of choosing sides in prison cells.

Pin us to your ground.
Plant wheat under each lead soldier.
Let our eyes become coals with staring,
our mouths molten arguing with your sun;
let our shoulders ignite with the grain
that pierces us like fresh bamboo.

Our poets go dark.
They are women who throw away rags.

You be our god.
Destroy the world with blue, with gold,
with fire erupting from the dead.

— Francis Sullivan

The Lemur

by Nathan A. Cervo

"Some day my Prince will come."

Walt Disney movie lyric

"... streams of Atlanteans on their swan-boats
and dragon-boats."

Rosenberg, *Myth of the Twentieth Century*

The sense of having gone into unfamiliar woods, of having entered upon a sylvan odyssey among various mushrooms and the mash-splendor of fallen leaves, of catching sight of other flowers instead of trailing arbutus and columbine, of being very close to a circular pond with a huge serpent lying on the surface, miraculously and gelatinously battenning half on the air, half of the plankton, the sense of having stepped out of the concourse, the net, of those ritual events civilization agreed on taking for a useful life, came to Sylvester as he stood alone in the cool night, a figure heightened by the moon's searchlight. He felt as though, now, he were beginning to admit something to himself, something that was an identity and had been standing for a long while in the rain outside a closed door, rapping Janus-faced.

But even as he, fleetingly, guessed at rather than saw the two facial hemispheres, one infarinated, grinning a red smear, the other nudely sober, like that of a bank clerk, he began to find himself airy and insubstantial, an Ariel on the moonlit street stones; and the moderate thrill of his being surprised once again into the habit of feeling himself an extrapolation of the night and the heavenly lights helped him to fancy that his senses, the tortuous avenues that led to the Minotaur of his soul, were in fact beacons that created refined gold out of chaos wherever they operated. He perceived everything as a self-generated bright wash. From this acme, he sloughed off the rind of ecstasy gradually and naturally. Time resumed its occupation, Sylvester's skin shivered. The cold, corpse-like hand rested lightly on his nape, and the mocking mouth created anew the illusion that he was standing among common things. These are stones beneath your feet, the voice of the mouth said. And those are walls. Those are *saracinesche*, rolling metal shutters, protecting the windows of merchants from harm during the night.

And from that unwelcome reprieve of suddenly putting his clay foot down off the bottom rung of the celestial ladder, Sylvester noticed, as he wound his neck slowly in a tentative, acquisitive arc, the Bridge of the Holy Trinity, the bridge's cement walls, and, over the nearest of them, upon which he now rested himself, placing his hands on the soothing coolness, he looked out at the mat of the glittering water, where moon ran to moon ran to feathery tumult of light and darkness. Icarus lay in the mud down there, in a sea-chamber transported on a moving van from the open waters to the Arno.

The wind from the hills and the taut tenor of the current brought new intricacies of light, webbing about on the surface, then merging and abruptly dissolute; and Sylvester attempted to deliberate on the nature of the fantastic beauty that visited the nave of the domed night air. But, as though in recollecting a difficult point made but not yet fully realized in a debate with an imaginary, yet powerful foe, Sylvester let his attention hold nothing but an in-rushing jetty of flood water, coming in, from two doors, to his mind. He was unable to dwell on the spontaneous beauteous tricks displayed to him; and then, descending once more from that steep temptation that drew him tepidly into surcease, he could not relate the picturesque and yet dynamic show of swirling phenomena to anything other than itself. He was impotent to lift it and, what had become pretty much the same thing, himself out of the present ciliary effulgence. And, for the first time that he was conscious of it, he strove to pull away from the grip that claimed him.

Although he saw the Siren lying back on the river and heard the singing through the ripples, the water stayed the water, forcing itself into shape out of its brilliant teasings and retreats. The water stayed its lesser self, and Sylvester seemed, then, to himself a bit caught, a trifle used, a gull who, without the best intentions himself, was ornately, but subtly, defrauded. And regret, like a trite soreness, emptied upwards towards his keen eyes like a leaden brook, meandering its hurt. Glumly, he took out a Moroccan cigar case, drew out a small Dutch thing, and struck a wax-match, a *cerino*, becoming fascinated, as was his habit, by the tiny flare of the fire-bringer. The springing yellow flame, with a minimum of sulphurous smoke, flickered, hissing in a brief whorl of whiteness. He pursed up his mouth, peered into the noisy heart of the ignited gem. He watched the roseate effloration, the fine, illuminated flesh-tips coming into passive being behind the perfect haloes of his nails, and then, seeking to explore the effects of a different combination of light and shadow, he looked up, his pupils expanding. What he saw was a sort of gargoyle on the Bridge of the Holy Trinity, developing on his vision, growing out of the lurid darkness about one hundred and fifty feet away. It appeared, at first, to his dilating eyes that he had discovered some species of dwarf, adorned in a sloppy mantle of discarded negligee, but, gradually, frozen by its sharp vagueness, its ominous hints of danger, he was able to see clearly, to study from his own perch, the minute figure. On the bridge, an ambiguous human figure sat indolently over one

of the arches. Though it was not very cold, the apparition wore an auburn sweater upon its shoulders, the soft downy sleeves knotted loosely at the throat. The human figure, as easy and motionless as a sea-ghost, wore dark glasses that caught the moonlight and burned with a green dross. Its motions, always without focus, without direction, yet not without a hideous grace, seemed to stagger about and grope in the air. And there was, moreover, like an aura lambent on the phantasm, an air of expectancy. It occurred to Sylvester's rapt mind that somebody had brought the forlorn creature to the bridge out of kindness, to let him feel on his smitten, seemingly blind, face the pleasant breeze sailing up from the water.

As obediently as it had been conjured up, the image on the now distant bridge diminished, humbly inverted, and was lost on that staircase which was Sylvester's meditation, going down to a subterranean sea that, invisible, yet cast its murmurs up. In a trance, moody and discomfited, Sylvester inhaled the white sweet smoke so that it filled the cavern of his mouth. He let it drift out slowly, like Sybil's leaves, watched, as was his wont, its message, the fantasy it trailed along. When he was a younger man, he liked to see in the fume a kind of intimate moral, a sort of vital fable. It represented the better philosophy, the will's Pan-like shattered chain of whimsical events. More recently, he thought he saw in the evanescent entrails of the dying tobacco Orestes, ravaged and torn limb from sacred limb, or Thyestean drool, or Aegisthus emitting into the tepid bath water his life's essence.

This night, resorting to it, the smoke displayed to him something out of Delacroix, but drenched and distended by a horror against morality that made everything white and wretched. Sardanapalus reclined, opulent, proprietary, with no other hope, in front of him, the smoke bringing them out of the gelid recesses of his reveries, candid creatures who, more than castrated, extended their arms to him and demanded that they all die together in contempt of life. And the image of the gargoyle on the bridge festered and budded in the evil miracle of that reverie, lay like an odalisque, regarding him out of doe eyes, accustomed to those physical postures and gestures that made his heart sink, and his soul raise its hand, crying out in the darkness. But now, subsiding as everything did for him, falling like Lot's wife to salty dust in the desert, the shape of his understanding dwindled to separate pieces, became undone, distilled itself to nothingness, quiet and harmless.

Sylvester blinked. He came to. He regarded the world's most aesthetic bridge, the Holy Trinity, and the ornamental faunish creature sitting on it, with a resolute sense that the things had to do. He reasoned that both the bridge and the blighting figure (if, indeed, there was a difference between them) had an equal right to be. Eternity needed its wen. He himself required the individuating encounter with the odious stream of life in order not to be persuaded that he had drowned long ago and was, in short, in a fine pickle. One had to rescue the only truthmaker, one's sensibility, from the primeval shipwreck.

Sylvester straightened his shoulders. Then, acknowledging that Horatius was lucky because he had a bridge to take his stand on and to defend, Sylvester felt a quick premonition of sickness. There pounced on him, like an owl from a tree, an eerie, powerful sentiment of remorse. Longing and panic burdened him. And he found that he had to hold himself, almost gagging, against one of the great wooden studded shopdoors. The vision of a blind kitten struggling weakly in the river before

going under flashed like a miner's lantern inside his skull. He heard beautiful singing, wondrously harmonious voices blending together. Then he was conscious of his own guttural sobbing.

* * *

Ten full, long, golden months ago, a Master at a school for boys in Massachusetts, he had listened to another song, not a chorus but a solitary voice whispering the melody to the cold stars in the August heavens. He decided, after some hesitation, to chuck the routines and to make a pilgrimage to Italy. It was not so much any one God that seemed to invite him as the fallen splendor of a Mosaic which was waiting for him before it could be put together again successfully. He recalled the bleating band on the ship, striking up into, as the boat swung away from the pier, *Bye, Bye, Blackbird!* "No one will ever know or understand me." And he saw, once more, the many-hued threads of drifting paper, snapping away, as the ship powerfully detached itself, amid horn-blowing, from the wharf and moved out to the grey-green surface of the ocean. He remembered his own unreasoning tears. He saw others in tearful partings, and he wept hotly.

Italy taught him one thing at once. He had been sheltered in America, not so much by his natural parents (he never really knew them, he was an orphan before his second birthday) as by his ordinary life in New England itself. It was his fate to have been honed into a junior Brahmin. As a succession of tributes to his powers of learning his academic lessons well, he was given a scroll, a book, and a key. At Harvard, he fell in love with Walter Pater, whose theory of burning with a hard-gem-like flame in order to attain to success in life appeared to him as a partial antidote to the mountain-stepping and cosmic rapports sponsored by the New England Transcendentalists of the previous century who continued to survive in Unitarian circles. Sylvester's only real (Pater being an *ideal* friend) companion at Harvard was a child prodigy who, though not much to look at, played the cello beautifully; but this incipient shaker of the musical world died in a freak accident on the Charles, in his junior year. His fragile, blue-tinted bloated unclothed body was retrieved amid rumors of drugs and hereditary illness. Sylvester himself saw his friend's cello, shattered and splintered as though by a demon, lying on the floor of the erstwhile prodigy's dormitory room the same morning they recovered the body.

Arrived in Genoa, Sylvester entrained at once for Florence, about which he had read so avidly. He desired to see the *David* and to linger in the Pitti Palace, where his favorite masterpiece of painting, Raphael's *La Madonna della seggiola*, was on display. But loneliness hit him like a scythe. He rented a room, after coursing through the telephone directory, at the Pensione Cosy Home. For three bleak months, his only occupation was lying on his back, listening to the street sounds during the day or to the people on the stairs or in other rooms. He acquired the habit of eavesdropping, in full daylight, pressing a drinking glass to the wall and placing his ear upon it. When darkness came, pushing in like grey cotton from the hills of Fiesole, he came out of his room and went down into the air to walk about, to see actual things, as they might be said to exist in remote history or in a museum. From the beginning, Florence was a dead thing for him. He came to develop the notion that solitude brought things close to the state of art. The prostitutes, plying their trade, huddled in little competitive

groups along the chic Via Tornabuoni. As he passed by, they stepped up and down out of doorways for an advertising smoke. He walked through them aimlessly, strayed towards the railroad station. After a few nights, word got around. Only a rare whore accosted him. One night, in the vicinity of the railroad station, he thought he recognized his dead friend the cello player in the person of a counterman who was kept on his toes serving spaghetti and *panini imbottiti*.

He had a fear of his landlady whom he knew, in spite of himself, only by her first name, which was Letizia. Although he took some ironic delight in the fact that her name, in Italian, signified Happiness, Sylvester nevertheless dreaded meeting her in person, and he left hundreds of little notes about the laundry and what he wished for supper. Letizia met him on the stairs frequently. She had a daughter, fifteen years old, capable of pleasing a man simply by brushing his body with her arm when serving at table. Letizia wanted to know whether the *signorino* did not think the young lady attractive. The landlady communicated a great deal, especially when she was not talking. It became obvious that she considered him much too pallid for his own good. "You are like a ghost, like marble, like this sheet." He acknowledged her concern for his health with a vague nod of the head, then continued reading in Ernest Dowson where he had been interrupted.

They are not long, the weeping and the laughter,
Love and desire and hate;
I think they have no portion in us after
We pass the gate.

Then, one day, across the Arno he went, to see the lady of the chair, painted by Raphael, which he so much admired from reproductions in art books. He met a youngish woman, a painter from California, with black lustrous hair and brown human eyes. When she smiled, Sylvester was warmed by her innocence. They, magically, made a date, and he saw her time after time. She, it became evident, wanted nothing from him, just liked him for what he was, saw, perhaps, in him a harmless and awkward fellow who needed a friend. She was Margaret. She drew him out. He discovered, at restaurants, after the wine worked, that he was witty. They agreed to tour together, to visit churches and city halls, to go to Milan and the Brera, to have a conscientious look-see at Venice. He decided to go along with her, to enjoy her innocence, to, now and then, pretend at jeopardizing her chastity. He silently, safely, laid the plans of their relationship. One night, while awaiting the inauguration of their journey, she led him up to Fort Belvedere, from which they could look down over the entirety of Florence. And they looked out over what was visible of the city through a heavy mist. In retrospect, he knew that she invited a kiss, but he pointed out landmarks. Then, together, they went to the seashore, to Viareggio, at carnival. There, surrounded by gigantic pasteboard floats, he hurled confetti at little girls who tightly shut their eyes. He went about, in the approved way, with a rubber hammer, thwacking choice people on the head. From Viareggio they travelled to Venice. They visited an island fabled for its glass. He bought a seahorse from one of those charming Italian boys who assured him, precociously, that the talisman would bring him luck with the lady. On the launch from Torcello, Margaret gave him a large thorn that she had broken off from one of the bushes near the cathedral. "If you come to my room," she smiled, herself like a rose fresh and dripping after a

rain, jabbing at him in mock menace, "I will stick you." Sylvester laughed. She broke the thorn in two pieces and handed it over to him. Assuming a philosophic air, as though brooding on the Lucretian phrase about the "tears of things," Sylvester let it drop, ceremoniously, into the racing waters. He wondered why he did that, instantaneously. What did he mean by it?

That night, knowing what had been contracted with him, he drank some disgusting Scotch. He also purchased cigarettes and smoked two or three of them, to lend him poise. Unaccountably, after she had let him in, he began to behave poorly. He said that her painting, when one came right down to it, was trash. Now, Raphael's woman in the chair! *There* was something really fine! Eventually, she was obliged, poor woman, transformed into a savage, to throw him out bodily. He sagged about, slouching, disgruntled, reacting inertly to her shoves. At length, he was outside in the hall. He went to his room.

Margaret forgave him. He chose to believe that she would have no one but him as her friend. He sought to keep her from others. Day after day, he got in touch. He telephoned. "Hello, will you have supper with me?" He made it a point of strategy to call her from the periphery of those stray parties which fall together among Americans in Europe and their hangers-on, where women who were obviously being pleased were present, so that she might overhear their voices and laughter, to make her jealous; but, always, when he happened to be walking alone with her at night along the Arno, back to the palazzo she lived in, renting the superannuated servant-quarters *al terzo*, he would turn the natural course of their conversation into devious, wayward channels, blaming her silences, inveighing against immorality.

And, back in the Cosy Home, Sylvester would waken with a start, his senses diffuse and pattering about the room, falling sadly, inevitably, into vacuity. He wept, feeling helpless, unable to act with Margaret in a way that required a preliminary brutality; and which, perhaps, was nothing more than brutality throughout. He got up, reaching for support. Half-blindly, when he had calmed down somewhat, he reached out for and opened a paper-backed anthology of poetry. He read these lines from Gerard Manley Hopkins' *For a Picture of St. Dortha*:

I bear a basket lined with grass;
I am so light, I am so fair,
That men must wonder as I pass
And at the basket that I bear,
Where in a newly-drawn green litter
Sweet flowers I carry,—sweets for bitter.

Sylvester groaned. This was Catholic bilge. The truth was far from bucolic. Margaret was a woman, the Eternal Parasite. He meditated on Samson at the mill with slaves, according to Milton's anti-feminist view. The sea that was never the same stormed through his reflection, broke off the jagged edges of the bank, carried him along to the calming recognition that Margaret could not last. A quirk of personality, undetected yet, would come to the surface. She would be annoying to him, would want him to discharge his magnificent energy among household chores and cares, among little children who came to him in the library, snotty and reeking, and for whom, since he was something of a Man of Destiny, a free spirit, he would have no time. He hankered after what was Beyond.

No, it was not for him. Margaret was an illusion. She was the harlot moment, rouged and wily; or, more precisely, the harlot

in the moment. What had he to do with her as a person who made solemn demands, who promised the future, which properly should open up irreversibly into the Eternal, as a repetition? He had no use for biomorphic ultimates! He decided to jettison her, to save the sterling ship of freshness. He was, to put it another way, free, a mind hurtling through time and space as through a void filled with casual joys. So it ended, this feeling between Sylvester and Margaret, wasted away under his care, until she, having gone back to San Diego, having taken work as a telephone operator, married an old beau, a plumber.

* * *

Ten months ago, a still youngish Master at a school for boys in Massachusetts, he had come to Italy. He had been lonely. He had had a kind of amatory affair, and that had come to nothing. Now, walking through the dark streets, Sylvester felt a thin agony blossoming like a tendril within him. He wanted to call out, to say a name. But, instead, his eyes smarted as he re-lit his cigar and squinted through the gust of smoke. Out of the headless, handless reverie, chased by the furies who struck brass cymbals together and jabbered in several tongues, he had walked to the Uffizi. He walked between two lines of sculptured figures representing great artists of Italy, and stepped into the *piazza della Signoria*. On his route, within the *Loggia*, Hercules, caught forever in motionless stone, went about beating a centaur to death with a mighty club, and Romans, in a marble fury of calm repose, thieved away the Sabine women. There, too, somewhat apart from the breathless torsions of the other statuary, stood Cellini's grand Perseus, rigid green arms lithely muscular, thrusting out the severed head of the Medusa. Sylvester sensed that, although breathing, he was not an intruder here. Though he wished to expand on this mood intelligibly, his mind hung together like a dirty spool. Inwardly, it appeared that he was standing on a vast treeless shore, hailing a white ship, cloudy, like foam. He called in a mysterious, undecipherable tongue, and the ship sailed on, away, its white flag unturtled.

The next moment, he seemed to be oaring on the brink of a deep chasm, balanced on its mouth like the sailors in Lucian's *True History*. With a start that coincided with a long thin shadow's looming and undulating across the square in front of him, ebbing and darting with a monotonous pace towards the statue of Neptune, alongside the memorial slab to Savonarola who was burned and hanged there, Sylvester came to himself. The cigar needed re-lighting. The wax hissed around the scorching flame. He retraced his steps, took the short, direct route to Jean's apartment. It was always good for people. Jean, an American woman slightly older than Sylvester, hailed from Grand Rapids, Michigan. They had met, a few days after Margaret's departure for the States from Rome, in the Church of San Lorenzo, in front of the glass-enclosed wood sculpture of the head of St. Lawrence by Donatello.

This *vade mecum* of the petered-out nocturnal spirit, Jean's apartment, was located in a foul smelling *strada*. As usual, the gate keeper having unlatched the huge door, a Pandora's box of assorted humanity greeted the eye and nose. Around they sat, the uninvited, crashing as was Sylvester himself, and the legitimate pretenders to communal bliss. Around, heaped on tables, benches, chairs, ottomans, rugs, on each other, reading

aloud, moony, intricate with ulterior smiles, chatting, sipping, smoking, one of them as green as verdigris, his sweating brow wreathed in torrents of smoke, another supine, totally nude, lying on the kitchen table, with his face twisted to one side and his mouth gushing out an erupted Niagara of vomitus, self-gushing. Jean's guests were, for the nonce, totally and abjectly anonymous. In postures of supreme negligence and attitudes of surfeit, they seemed a batch of madhouse actors and actresses putting on a playlet called *The Lotus Eaters*. And yet, less than actors, they were *roles*, aggregate rehearsals of the unmanned who have walked out on themselves in ennui. Or, in another way, they were foetuses who had broken their bottles and spilled their formaldehyde and were pretending to have sufficient *élan vital* to evolve from ambulant muck to real primates. Sylvester knew them. He knew the heated spoons, the syringes, the "angel dances" in the nude that took place sometimes in bedrooms, sometimes elsewhere, he knew the would-be poets and painters, the pap of dreams without substance.

Up the stairs, on the staircase with the dangling knotted rope hanging from the dark distant recess of the raftered roof, he had come, without desire, a fugitive from a shadow moving over the stones in the piazza. By rote, trembling in the new blaze of an additional statement that was building up in his mind, he climbed up to the merry place, where the pixies danced, and mushrooms of various hues and properties were served all around. He thirsted for wit. An epigram that was not just a yellow jet of spleen spat in the universal eye would have been more than an anomaly at Jean's apartment. Although an unwillingness to sit down with the as yet unborn ghosts of his reverie had set him in motion to seek out this interlude, once inside its gate, he discovered that he had also come to get at the core of it all once and for all. *Dammi la mano* and *Il mare* ("Give me your hand" and "The sea") were concurrently on turntables. He pondered on the correct usage of the feminine article *la* with the seemingly masculine noun *mano*, and on the dual-language pun where the Italian masculine article *il* is used in conjunction with the seemingly English word *mare*. And as an undertow to his speculative linguistics (where did it come from), the phrase *Stella Maris* drifted through his mind like a wicker boat in a reedy lake. Star of the Sea. To whom, to what did the phrase refer?

In the event that all else failed to annihilate his soft dread, wedged beneath the brain, somewhere, like a chipmunk under a rock, he retrieved, from its cache, what Jean and he had agreed to call "Sylvester's aphrodisiac" or "Sylvester's pacifier," depending on the results it brought about. It was a full quart of Scotch, anything less than a full quart being emptied into the toilet bowl after a bout of love-making or babyish repose, as the case might be. With pleasure, Sylvester drew the bottle out from its hole, like a magician. He sat down, and had the satisfaction of knowing that there were some among the pixies who envied him to the point of having stomach cramps or planning to get to know him well enough for a shot.

But, by the general shifting of regardful eyes, he learned that somebody else had matched him at his own game. A tall thin man, baldishly tufting his yellow hairs at the temples into flaxen horns, was seated on a red ottoman located two feet, or thereabouts, from Sylvester's left elbow. On the cheap blue throw-rug, standing pert and pregnant, was a rivaling quart of liquid case. Almost at once, the lank fellow was on his feet. He swept up the bottle and bent to Sylvester's ear. "Come, come," he

urged, cupping his hand so that the edge of his palm rested on Sylvester's lobe. Then, catching Sylvester by the sleeve, he led him off into another room. There, with a wave of his arm, he brushed two or three people out, and, as the tail of the same movement, opened the refrigerator. He drew out an unopened can of apricot juice. Next, he placed a long narrow glass with red and yellow spheres on it in Sylvester's hand, and measured, as a French chef might a dash of salt, a colorless liquid in. "One part, or inch," he said, "to five parts apricot juice." He winked at his companion and lifted his lip away from his teeth. "Just to get the internal machine on the road!" He saluted Sylvester, then tipped the glass as if to drink, but, just short of his mouth, he let the contents cascade down on his pants. He took out his handkerchief and pressed it over the spot, looking at Sylvester humbly. Before the man could go on to make any sort of proposal, Sylvester smiled through wet plaster-of-Paris. He bent his knees and placed his own still nearly full glass on the floor, near the wall, out of harm's way. "Please excuse me," he said, and turned away.

In his absence somebody had taken a few swigs from his bottle. He damned the person. The tall thin man followed. He was still wiping at the spot on his pants with the handkerchief. He went directly up to Sylvester and, tottering, pleaded, "Say, buddy, where's the toilet?" Sylvester, taking him by the elbow, led him towards the desired terminus. He let him do the last few feet himself. Then, after a painful silence, the air was fraught with piecemeal rumbling and gagging. As the tall man did not come out again, Sylvester imagined him kneeling, his exhausted, trembling chin resting on the porcelain rim. And he left him to enforced simian piety, to his thoracic cataclysms.

The other figures in the outer room began to move in relation to Sylvester. One walked over to where he was standing and thumped a small black-and-white paper-back a few times on his tie-pin. He commenced *al largo*. "You prissy sonofabitch! You thought you could keep him in your shithouse. He's got out, all right. *He's got out!* He's not good. No, no. None of your toilet-paper for *his* ass. Body, buddy. Ha! He's holding the golden thread. Flavor, he's got flavor. Purity, too! Go pick your nose and have lunch. *Libero!* Horse-face! *Don't you know? I am talking to you, to YOU, Y-O-U!* Talking . . . hee, hee! a four-letter word: talk, T-A-L-K! Get it? In your shit-house!! Why, man, you no good sonofabitch! you lunk-head, he's Good Ole Body. Put it right here, baby. Ooooh, man, did he put it all right here. Soul. Damn you. That's what I said. *Soul. You believe, don't you? Satori, baby. SA-TO-RI. Fuck you!* Do you know what soul is? Put it right here, baby. In this here leaf-sandwich. Wanna buy a copy? He's GOD!"

Sylvester watched the person with amusement. He was witnessing another phenomenon along the road that leads to the graveyard. This person, with long hair billowing up in a single wave at the shoulders, obviously an illiterate buffoon who should have been wielding a pick under the crust of the civilized earth in a West Virginia coal mine, this ass, this person who had taken chemicals into his body in order to forget that he was a big greasy zero, this person whose brain probably resembled a compost heap pleased Sylvester because he told it just like it was. Indeed, the hapless oaf, mouthing on about God and poetry, struck Sylvester as having been freshly minted by a universe that, scorpion-like, was busy in the process of stinging itself to death. "He's GOD!" the clod reiterated. He sputtered, opened the book and looked at it with no indication

that he understood it to be something other than a mouse or a carrot. He fell into the deep well of drug-induced catatonic schizophrenia.

Sylvester scowled. *Il mare* was on the turntable. He ironically and elaborately excused himself. He saw a young woman with taut tumid pale lips and sullen face. One of the Seven Sisters, he guessed. He approached, requested the pleasure. She said, "Go ahead." He took her in his arms, they went through the paces. His thoughts, more troublesome than ever, mixed with the melody. He moved his feet mechanically, stealing the coldness he imagined death would bring from the sliding thighs under the Granny dress of his partner. He kept a vague acquiescing smile on his face. The young lady from Smith or Mount Holyoke, or perhaps even Hollins (since she spoke in a soft bubbly Southern way to herself all the while they were dancing), began to try to engage his eye so that she might wither him in the sirocco of her indifference. He guessed at her need to blame him for something or another, though he was still this side of thirty. He thought it best to evade her dodo's acrimony altogether. As he wheeled around in certain patterns that only remotely had anything to do with the melody of the disc on the turntable, Sylvester heard the pronunciamento, "He's GOD!" bleated again, and he retorted blandly to the air in front of his mouth, "Most likely, he has no education." Then *Il mare* terminated, and a grooved, revolving voice in the teeming *mélée* sang "Fly, dove, fly" (*Vola, colomba, vola!*), only this time there was no record on the turntable; and, turning to see, Sylvester observed a serious-faced, black-haired young man, whom he knew to be a Canadian, standing by the piano. Fly, dove, fly, and in your whiteness speak to my Beloved. Tell her of my great love. Fly beyond the wood, above the mountains, cross the river, and speak of my love which is, though captive, so great and undying.

More drink and drugs began to circulate. Sylvester suddenly imagined that he was standing in the rain outside a closed door. He raised his hand in a fist, as though to knock. There was a black, threatening figure standing immediately behind him. At a barred window in the building to which the closed door could provide entry, a woman's face was visible. Tears were streaming from her eyes. With an exquisitely tender comportsment, she was reaching one of her arms out through the bars. There was a flower in her hand, now appearing to be a rose, now a lily.

His dancing partner curled her lip and said something about a pig. Sylvester said to the young lady with the prematurely wizened outlook on life, "Thank you." He disengaged his hand and sat down under a painting. He cast a quick, searching look at it. In a torrent of colors, not particularly apt, which at times resembled dead leaves and at others a sodden slush of drooping flowers, hung suspended, tilted upwards as though to receive a tongue depressor in the mouth, a white, ghastly, marble face, hairless, like an egg.

"I call it *Ophelia*," said a slight man. His eyes, behind thick glasses, pale, costive, grey. They seemed lidded with a sluggish film that one, by fishing in the eye proper, might draw off like a tiny caul. Then, pursing his lips, he laughed a dull, throbbing noise. "Oh, excuse me! Allow me. My name is Hammetter. I'm going to take this place from Jean." He did not offer his hand. His eyes did the pertunctory social work. All the time that he was talking, he pitched up into the air on his toes as though he were trying to judge just how much energy it would

require to strike the ceiling with the top of his head by means of jumping, then rocked back on his heels with a lascivious upthrusting of his lower belly and genitals. He seemed, throughout, to be attuned to the room and to its contents, having, it appeared to Sylvester, an extraordinary range of animal curiosity and responsiveness.

Sylvester hated the kind of artistic work typified by the *Ophelia*. Nevertheless, he strove to be courteous to its maker. He studied the canvas. It remained, for all his good will, a sick man's daub. "The face," he said, after a long time.

"Yes!" exclaimed Hammetter. Sylvester had hit the bull's eye out of hand.

Sylvester, feeling his way, went on. "Pardon me. I don't claim to be a critic, but I can say that I like the Spanish painting in the Biennial this year. The intense whites make me, as a layman, react, make my soul salivate in the very heart of a dry desert of *meringue*. They *parch* me, abundantly. Nowhere. But I have the impression of totality. I am sure that you have captured and presented an entity, a divided whole. Further, I am struck by the immediate persuasion that you have combined both effect and cause in one moment, which, in turn, is identical with every other moment in its real importance, or impact. You see each one of all humanity as a microcosm, as a little universe, a surviving ark, *in ovum*. Your painting is a commentary on history, its lie, speciousness, given cogency, focus, and clarity by the name *Ophelia*. Hamlet is historical man; *Ophelia* the Over-Soul. You are deliberately psychotic. You cram without surfeiting. The face is astounding. Clever. *Ophelia*, you call it. And yet, I may be firing astray, it seems so masculine."

Hammetter, blinking at and brushing through the words, said, "Does it?" His face betrayed a disappointed twinge. "Well," he confessed, "it is supposed to be Hamlet." Then, called away, he said, "You must tell me how you guessed, later!"

Glad to be left alone, Sylvester walked over to his original place. He poured a shot, downed it. It occurred to him that ten months ago he hated the very sight of Scotch. Ironically, he decided that nothing had changed much in that respect. He still hated the sight of Scotch, and the taste of Scotch. Nevertheless, he regarded it as a kind of boorish friend who stood by in order to help Sir Galahad get off his white steed and make room for somebody more ordinary at the starting-gate. Collapsing almost comfortably upon and within himself, he began to be more attentive. From another room, music issued from a radio. The Canadian with the earnest face was gone from his earlier post at the piano. A man, with thin, patchy brown hair, played stealthily there. Another figure leaned over a page of music, a flautist. He played in accompaniment. Both the pianist and he were very good, but, even if they had rendered the music atrociously, certainly, certainly, he would smilingly commend, should they, ceasing, demand from him an appraisal. He would, upon such confrontation, stand at ready service, depress the tactful keys of flattery, and win the day. All his predilections, adapted to the moment, had become patent prevarications, essentially; but, at times, the obeissant diplomat, the skilled manipulator of deranged verbal puppets, was not needed.

In a corner, the tall thin man, with the baldishly tufted yellow hair, was standing weakly to one side of a small group of joke tellers. Every now and then, a gust of glee ascended from that part of the room, and the tall thin man, his hand up to his

mouth, smiled wanly. At the kitchen table, a man attired only in bathing trunks was sitting by the nude young person who had been vomiting when Sylvester entered the room. He had a knife and fork. Sprinkling salt on the portions he seemingly intended to eat, he pretended to be licking his lips gluttonously.

Sylvester found himself wondering lamely where Jean was. He had met her Tuesday in the straw market. Was that unusual, that gentle handclasp on the street goodbye? Yet he had demonstrated to her that he was capable of loving her.

"What difference does it make!" somebody squawked.

He had gotten to his feet again. It seemed to him that his own hand clasped Jean's hand.

"Listen. Listen."

He navigated through the gathering tatters of the party, heaping up and clogging about him in pale splotches of golden brown color and white patches, principally. Patiently, he sought out his place. He guessed, all of a sudden, that tears were streaming on his cheeks.

"Listen. Listen."

I shall not marry, shall not pin my
vicious heart to a diaper,
Shall not put out each day's sun in beer.
Half-stiff, before the wife,
From russet bathrobe unclad, steps
Through cycles of the moon,
Lugging me along."

"Here, here, give me that. I want. . . !"

"No, no!"

"Yes, *damn* it!"

Sounds of a scuffle.

"Greater the glory to make pistons
of my legs, to race fiercely,
Without compunction, without a backward glance,
To near the . . ."

"Give it here!"

"No!"

Ah, . . .

"Margaret, are you grieving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leaves, like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Ah! as the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie."

Engaged drowsily, still tasting the salt of his own tears on his lips, Sylvester scowled. With great unwieldy effort, he wrenched himself free from it. He began to speculate, semi-pleased with the glowing warmth that steered its course through him, like an underground bargeman. A good sense, a certain feeling perched throughout him, about to make his unkempt limbs frolic. He was, he was aware, being cajoled; yet, confidently reluctant, he dreamily resisted. It was as though a huge hand were resting idly on his face.

". . . to plunge
Icarus-like into the sea, to
drink like Thor the sea,
The liquid entrails, the lunar tides,
the feather-rough locks."

Taste. Taste. Taste. He was one of those smitten souls who require taste to act as a barrier between the Ideal and the Real. To express these difficult conceptions nicely seemed a lost art. He had read about the Male-Leagues in Nazi Germany. It was possible to love a leader without any moral lapse. The leader symbolized the highest moral ideal of the Volk. In the same way, Sylvester loved his dead friend the cello player. But this pure kind of love, regrettably had not been reciprocated. Likewise, he loved Margaret for the pilgrim soul in her, except that he preferred that, instead of being a mobile pilgrim, she be an imaginative one, confined to a chair, exquisitely lovely and sublime like Raphael's own inspiration for the masterpiece in the Pitti Palace. When he lost both the cello player and Margaret to the triumphant denizens of the zoos both their natures contained, Sylvester came to the verdict that he was in fact something of an angel. He had no right at all to be among men and women. His being on earth was an accident. He never knew his natural parents. Maybe he didn't have any. Along with this conception of himself as a creature apart from the ordinary run-of-the-mill sort of humanity, he saw no reason why he should not shatter and splinter the cage on the physical world that held him back from soaring into the Beyond. But his was not an ostentatiously aggressive kind of personality. In collision with a baffled, albeit definite, sweetness that he felt to be alive within him, Sylvester permitted his thoughts to drive stakes everywhere into the hearts of things and people at large. His making love to Jean, who knew that he was only working out an exercise in theory when he was with her, was like a man's wiping off his boots on the *welcome* in a doormat, not so much to clean the boots as to dirty the spirit typified by the rubber lettering.

"Darling, I want to have it."

There was still the problem of ennoblement to be confronted, of dignity. To be sure, it was one of the few articles of Sylvester's eschatological faith, *nothing matters ultimately*. The clown, the gangster, the saint, all are apparitions, all are extrapolations of a huge self-generating, self-maintaining Cosmic Vegetable, the It. Haloes are no better than molls, greasepaint the same warranty as skin, the Male-League leader every bit as good as Demeter, or Ceres, or the Blessed Virgin Mary. But there is nevertheless a saving quality in that going down, a credo that perception is not only its own but the only reward possible to intelligent creatures, be they men or angels. The process requires *ascesis*, discipline, as Pater said.

"A stone hanging from a cloud,
full of weeping eyes.
A skeleton, played by the desert wind,
like a harp.
He is a quick-change artist.
Protean."

"All together now!"

To be! Fly, dove, fly! and in your whiteness speak to my Beloved. Tell him of my great love. Fly beyond the wood, above the mountains, cross the river, and speak of my love which is, though captive, so great and undying.

"And yet you will weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sorrow's springs are the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for."

Sylvester was standing in a huge green field in Massachusetts. There were large targets, with yellow, blue, red, and black scoring circles, about a hundred feet from where he stood. He was leaning ever so slightly down from the waist. The wind made his yellow hair rise and fall like a field of grain. He was holding a young lad by the wrist and elbow, instructing him on how to draw back the string just so, and how to release the arrow just so. The boy's blue eyes shone with a fresh splendor, and the wind, in passing, played with his straight, clean hair, seeming to delight in him and to bless him.

And then, his head lolling, Sylvester's eyes glittered. Past the palisades of paltry people, beyond. Into a land of enchantment, where the heart evades and creates the important deed, where tall flowers summon dreams; into a territory as free as Being but as true as Death. Where preoccupation with good and evil falls broken, like a serpent's spine, along the roadside. Where the golden grail of each fleeting, floating precious combination of events enchains the rude dwarf that passes for intelligence and enraptures the senses. Where Life, melting from the stone that holds it, greets the brave, solitary wayfarer, takes him by the hand. Where Wotan sits on a vast skull-knobbed throne, his gleaming sword resting on his knees.

From Torcello. A postcard. Dreaming, nodding, rummaging in the inside pocket of his coat, imaginary, he had drawn forth a frowning Byzantine mosaic head of Jesus Christ. Meant for . . . Old time's sake! And Sylvester could hear the clangor of beer can crashing on beer can, a baritone chorus of warriors singing the stuff of sagas. What good? Sentimentality! Evasion. Worship of the red herring. The present. Never mailed. Uninscribed. "My dear Margaret." Tears streaming on the cheeks again. My dear, dear, dear Margaret! "With love." Uninscribed. That's what mattered. No right. No right at all. Too obvious. "With love." The monster's petrifying head afloat, grinning beautifully, fondly, different, underwater. Perseus a green myth in the moonlight. And this. Be damned! A letter postmarked Massachusetts. "In the future, I hope you will be more prudent in matters of professional behavior. You are not a child; don't act like one! You are a man of some maturity and experience." The arrow flew over the green grass.

Of a sudden, he was scraping at the bark of a tree with weak claws. His huge eyes scanned the darkness. There was thunder in the heavens, a cosmic beating of drums, the shaking of spears and swords by the gods. He was vaguely aware that he was an incomplete, imperfect creature, a harmless freak of nature, an arrow designed not to stop at his present and, intrinsically, only shape but to wing on. Like a preliminary sketch or an abandoned experiment, he heard with his leafy ears the sound of footsteps in the jungle, the chaffering of predatory wings. He scratched at the bark, the rain gushing down on the temporary framework of his frail, grotesque body. He was conscious of seeming to smile weirdly and nauseatingly, like an opossum.

Sylvester roused himself. He stood up because he heard music. He had made a few lazy patterns on the floor with his nimble feet, when, out of the floating jelly-like prism, out of the uncuring spittle that covered his eyes, emerging, Hammetter called everybody's attention to the clock. Solemnity descended. Something mutual and implicit controlled all. Streamers were produced, and silently the company defiled towards something hanging from the central extinguished bulb which Sylvester had not noticed. It was a rubber prophylactic

blown up like a large white balloon. With ritual dignity, the members of the party, each in his or her turn, addressed the balloon with instinctively uplifted arms, upraised hands, and affixed a streamer with a small piece of Scotch tape, so that, soon, it appeared a monstrous man-o'-war, clinging to the light bulb. Sparklers were provided, too; and all, even the nude

from the kitchen table (he was by this time wearing red swimming trunks), marched out into the garden.

The cathedral bells were striking midnight. Sylvester stood there, his sparkler casting out gay myriad colors in the night air which quickly bridled and died.

THE SILENCE BETWEEN US

Silence between us
slides shut like glass doors,
heavy and cushioned.
You click the lock. I wait,
shoes in snow growing
weights on either foot
while you sit as still
as a paralyzed patient,
doll's eyes fixed on newsprint.
The only sounds I imagine
are the paper rustlings,
forced air heat snapping on
and ice cubes cracking,
settling down to die
in bourbon shallows.

Otherwise we wait—
the Silence, You, I—
and I, looking in,
shuddering over implications,
wonder if in some small plot
our gravestones will sit
side by side, not facing,
not hearing not thinking.

in the crisp and enraged dusk.

— Thomas A. West, Jr.

THE YOUNG MOTHERS OF PORLEZZA

Four abreast they come, rich in their knee boots
from Rome, wheeling the proud baby buggies.
Brushed and polished like ponies, they wheel
the carriages, red, blue, spoked like fireworks
to the lake front in the shank of the gold
Italian afternoons.

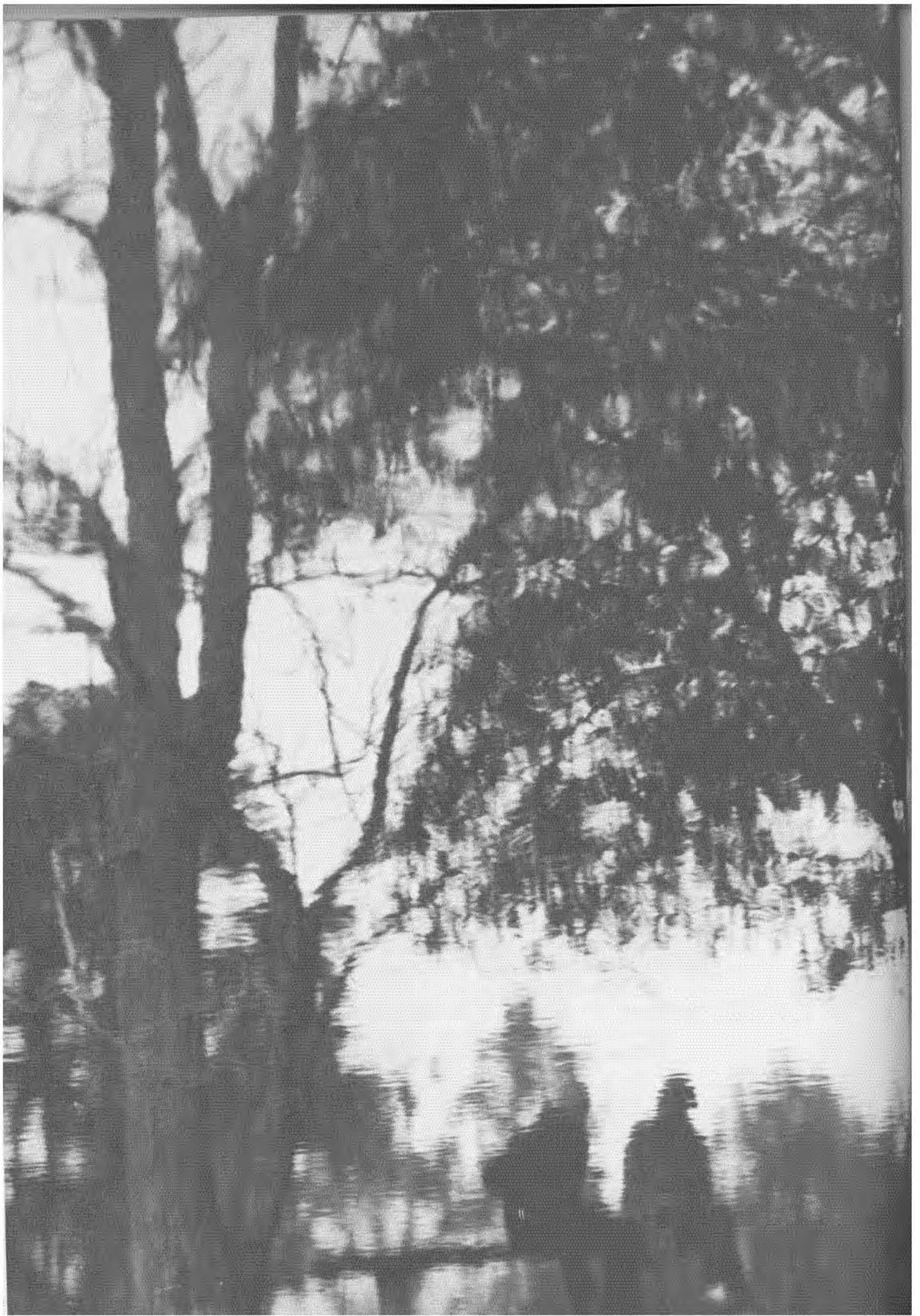
The whole town stops to admire. Old women grown
gray
on the promenade benches lay down their gray knit-
ting.
They turn from the lapping waters that soothe their
dying
to look on newness of life in the baby carriages.
Their vitals writhe with their envy. Yet they do not
say
"My entrails grind at this sight."
They say "ah" and "ah" and "ah."

The old men reject the babies. It is on the breasts,
the thighs, of the young mothers that their impotent
old eyes feast. Over their beer and game boards
they sigh great windy sighs.
It was all so long ago.

In the Super Alcoholic Bar a young father drinks
and broods. How can a man fight a baby, he roars
at the bartender, a *baby*, the hated man-child
that has stolen his girl, that gets the sweet breast
in the night? He howls like the infant he loathes
and dribbles tears in his wine.

The sun slides into the lake.
The girl-mothers take their formation.
The old women pack up their knitting.
The old men think of their stomachs.
The young father snores in his drink.
The babies cry for the nipple.
Round and round go the proud carriage wheels
in the clapping light from the water.
Porlezza goes home to its supper.

— Helen Sorrells



A Two-and-a-half Pound Chicken

by Barbara de la Cuesta

I fumble in my straw bag for the list while Antonio stares at my shirt dress.

"Tres lomos de res, y dos de. . ."

"Three beef and two pork loins," he assures me, assuming the competence and almost professional poise that goes with his English.

I look down and see there are stains of breakfast coffee down the front of me. He gives me a look as if to say: "No matter; you are the Señora who pays three-thousand a month rent for the house Doctór Pantoja can't afford to live in, and when you refill your freezer each month, you write me, your butcher, a check for between three and four-hundred pesos."

"I have the beef in the chiller six days, as you say. It is tender to cut with a knife. . . ." Three dusty children have come behind the counter and are crowded around him. The tallest of them, no higher than his thigh, is holding up a dirty hand full of coins:

"A quarter pound of beef rib, and hurry said our mother."

The infant couldn't even count yet; but he could carry in his head for six blocks his mother's irritating messages—a quarter pound of this, a half-pound of that—always clutching in his fist the exact coins.

Antonio ignores the child as an affront to the perfection of the sentence he has just uttered in the idiom of his blonde client in the stained dress.

Holding up the loin before my eyes, he expertly and quite vainly trims off the gristle. I observe the meat blandly, not touching it, meaning to convey the perfect confidence I have in him. A swarthy woman in tight-fitting mourning is pleased to reach over the counter and imbed her thumb in it however.

"You didn't give me such a good piece ever," she comments, and takes the opportunity to inform him she needs a two-and-a-half pound chicken.

He ignores her.

"My mother said and hurry!" the infant shouts. "And we want, also, three *caramelos*," he adds grandly.

Antonio shuts himself in the freezer, going after my pork loins. I know he wants to savor his "English lady," as he calls me, and regrets the urgent commerce of the hour with the noon closing of the shops imminent.

When he emerges with the pork, the infants crowd still closer, a nursing bitch has entered with her litter, and two more swarthy, fierce-eyed matrons stand with their tiny baskets.

He gives me a look of complicity and decides to attend to the chicken. Wordlessly, he selects one and puts it on the scale: exactly two-and-a-half pounds. The woman comes around the counter and Antonio looks at her legs; they are slim and sinewy, the hips and thighs strain against the tight skirt. "How much?" she asks.

"Twelve," he answers warily.

"You won't give it to me for less."

"It cost me eleven."

"That's a joke. Give me a smaller one."

He says nothing and selects another.

"Why is it so red?" she asks, fingering the cellophane wrapper.

"The freezing does it."

"Haven't you any unfrozen ones?"

"No."

The infant is pulling at his coat.

She fingers the chicken pensively. Her face is as fleshless and worn as the excellent calves. Her only luxury—as for many of the local women her age—is her figure. She fans the exposed tops of her breasts with her flat pocketbook.

"How much is a hen?"

"Four pesos a pound." He looks toward me with yearning.

". . . and hurry said our mother," the infant booms, never varying the memorized rite.

I can see he is regaining his poise composing a new sentence for me: *You would not have to endure this in your country. We are so poor.* He moves toward me, the words forming on his lips; but the two fierce-eyed old women with the baskets move forward.

"The frozen ones have no flavor," whines his present customer. Exasperated, he rounds up some bones off the table and puts them in the urchin's basket, receiving his coins. He once told me he preferred the outright poor, with their precise and unvarying need and their exact change, to these pinching and squeezing women with their five or six pesos left over from their weekly *mercado* and a tentative notion of giving a banquet of *arroz con pollo*. She has five or six pesos, a kind of speculative margin she hopes to multiply—at Antonio's expense, he would say—like the loaves and fishes.

Antonio studies her slatternly, seductive widow's weeds, then looks toward me. I am still here, surveying the coldcuts. I am sorry; we are so poor, say his eyes.

Then he invents a stroke to decide his widow: "All right, I can give you an unfrozen chicken," he says.

"Let me see it," she says warily.

He puts it on the cutting board for her to inspect, while he shoos the bitch with the dangling teats out of the shop. "She has had enough time. Let her take it or leave it," he mutters. Circling the advancing crones, he returns to his first client:

"The liver is nice today." Now, again, he feels competent, protective.

"Fine, give me four pounds."

He rushes to prepare it.

"And three *caramelos!*" the booming voice of the infant. Even the poor have a speculative margin! He has to open the cellophane pack of caramels, costing ten centavos, remove three for the urchins, receiving in payment a coin which has long ceased to have any value. He offers it to me: "Your compatriot, Mrs. Woodhouse—Mrs. Casa de Madera—collects these."

"Oh does she collect them? Are they interesting? I ask.

For the first time today, he can't think of the phrase he needs: "They are collectors' ..." "

"Oh, collectors' items!" I say, engrossed in the coin which would buy three out of a pack of ten caramels, if you met with a patient shopkeeper. "Then she shall not have it. I shall keep it for myself!" I exclaim, popping it into my basket as if making a little joke. He laughs affably, but in confusion. He yearns for opportunities to talk to me, but when they come, it often seems our remarks glance off each other. Now that he has mastered syntax to his satisfaction, I can see he aspires to wrestle with this other thing, this little joke behind my words.

He says, now, the sentence he has prepared: "You must excuse us, we are so poor," and leans over the counter to await my reply. At this moment, he isn't in his butcher shop anymore; he is in a space defined only by our words. My eyes are vague. "Our people are poor," he repeats, making a slow indication with his head toward the woman in black.

"Oh! Yes," I say, my eyes shading to compassion.

But it isn't something saddening he means to convey; it is rather the vast joke that waits on his patience the whole exasperating day that he wishes me to see. "How to say. . . ." he begins and falters.

I wait, an expression on my face appropriate to a contemplation of the world's starving masses.

"Look! That!" He nods again toward the widow, who is just then lifting delicately the wing of the chicken and sniffing under its wingpit.

"Viuda de mierda!" bursts from him. The English language is inadequate. His cliente in the shirtdress is inadequate, to the cosmic affront!

"She . . . she's worn that dress a month! She's worn that dress a month without washing it!"

"Uff!" He spits on the floor.

"Go ahead. Go ahead. Smell it all over. . . ." He speaks now in a voice smothered in rage.

The widow looks at him. Is it a suggestion of a smile on her face? He grins, makes a conciliatory gesture with one hand: "Go ahead, go ahead. . . ."

She sticks one finger into its gut and holds it to her nose.

"Mierda, mierda, mierda!" he screams. His blonde lady looks at him in perplexity. "She, she!" he says to her, "should have such an inspection!" He is about to burst into tears. "She should have such a going over, smelled from head to foot. Por Dios! Puta! If I were to spread her legs and have a sniff . . . Uff! I should faint!"

He bows his head, his eyes squeezed shut, a handful of hair grasped in each hand. Then he lets out a long breath, faces the woman.

She turns to him with an answering grin. "How much?" she asks briskly.

"Six pesos," he whoops in the voice of one who has exhausted himself laughing. She opens the flat pocketbook and hands him all of it, the entire speculative margin.

AS THE RECLUSE SPEAKS OF THE WINTER FAST

Trout loop like hand-stitching
In the headwaters.
What clear thread the
Snows have spun and spooled
On the melt!

His words sure as the tern's egg
Cradled on a breaking wave
And between them

Deep pauses
The longest perhaps

A cache for panther meat.

— Thomas Johnson

DESCENT

A full red candle
round very thick
a bright tough red
and very tall
burns on a table
inward
as though fire
were still
a mystery
and sculpts
with its heat
a flight of stairs
winding
into its belly.
I walk these stairs
at midnight
chanting wives tales
with only the wick
light above. A thick
pool shimmers below
and I tremble.
These are steep stairs
which melt as I walk them
and now I am down
where I cannot see
where a human shouldn't
be the frail air whispers.
I slip into the pool
and feel it quicken
around me. The last
of the stairs falls down.

—Beverlee Hughes

LIME SHERBERT DURING THUNDER

The rules ran out
on wobbly legs
that time we watched
the certified colors
separate
from the artificial
flavoring.
Left with what we were
and wonderfully not caring,
we laughed
funny as sheep but newly
sheared.

Laughed
yet watched how terror too
could dance—
around the rims of every dish
we traced abysses—
and listened
while a back door closed
on heels worn down with greed;
the windows strained. Hands
of almost people (who had heard
us laugh) trying to get in.
Not knowing.

— Mary Enda Hughes

In the Basement

by *Harriet Sirof*

"The police!" she said. "All the worry and all the aggravation you caused me, you could at least have spared me that. My own husband hunted by the police like a common criminal. I only thank God that my dear Mother wasn't alive to see it."

"You didn't have to call them, Annie," he said mildly.

"Didn't have to call. Ha! What did you expect me to do? Go about my business like it's every day my husband goes off to work and doesn't bother to come home for two days? Or maybe I should go dancing in the streets? Not a word from you, not a sign for two whole days. How was I to know you weren't lying dead somewhere? At fifty-nine you think you're so young? Men your age are dropping dead all over the place from heart attacks. Or maybe you had an accident in the car. The way you drive it wouldn't be a wonder. Three tickets you got this year alone."

"Two of them were parking tickets. How could I get into an accident in a parked car?"

"Now he's being funny. I suppose you think the whole thing was funny."

"No," said Morris. He heaved himself out of the chair and stood heavy and hunched like a bear balancing on its hind legs. Annie was always telling him to stand up straight; it was no good for the internal organs to walk all bent over. Today the pull of gravity, which always seemed a bit too much for him, held him in a strong grip. His whole body sagged and his clothes, deprived of their proper support, hung loosely from him. Even his face crumpled downward. He looked like a very old man.

"Where are you going now?" Annie asked. She made the "now" sound as if he were in the habit of wandering off to strange and exotic places without warning.

"I'm going to the kitchen to get myself something to eat."

"You didn't have enough to eat at supper," she accused.

"I had plenty," he answered patiently. "Only now I'm hungry again."

"Sure. After three days without eating you have to make up," but she was talking to his retreating back. She hurried after him. "Wait, Morris. I'll fix you. When you fix yourself you make a mess it takes me a week to clean. Sit down. I'll make you salami and eggs. You like that."

Morris sat obediently at the kitchen table. He rested his chin on his hand and stared down at the flowered plastic tablecloth. The red flowers were supposed to be roses but they looked

more like cabbages. Funny, he had never noticed that before.

Annie prepared his food quickly, her hands moving deftly from long years of practice, her back toward Morris. She talked to him without ever turning around. Annie habitually directed her conversation to the stove or sink or mending basket, and Morris answered, when necessary, from behind the newspaper or over the noise of the television.

They were both more comfortable communicating in that fashion. Face to face confrontations were saved for formal occasions, as when they had guests, or when Annie wanted to stress the importance of Morris' remembering an errand or appointment.

"The neighbors," she moaned. "All I needed was to get into Molly Rappaport's mouth. A hundred and twenty families in this building, and by now she's told a hundred and nineteen that you disappeared without a word and I had to call in the police to look for you. Such a juicy story, how could she keep it to herself? What does she care how she shames me in front of the whole building? Oh, how will I ever hold my head up again?"

With the last question she put the plate down in front of him, covering one of the rose-cabbages. Morris knew better than to tell her that she shouldn't have confided in Mrs. Rappaport in the first place. Annie didn't take well to suggestions of that sort, or to suggestions of any sort. But Annie was Annie, and after thirty-six years of marriage there wasn't any sense in trying to change her.

He ate his eggs in silence. Annie stood by the stove. She had discontinued her monologue; she took trouble with her cooking and never interfered with its appreciation. Besides, she didn't want to give him ulcers by upsetting him while he ate. She waited until he had finished, removed his empty plate, and replaced it with a cup of tea. She made herself a cup from the same teabag and seated herself across the table. Now she felt free to talk. Looking down into her pale tea she asked, "What did you do for two whole days?"

"I told you already."

"Only that you hid out in a basement. That's not telling." She became absorbed in stirring and drinking her tea. When she spoke again her voice had lost its challenging tone. She said hesitantly, "Maybe if you told me what you did down there I could understand."

The unfamiliar hesitant quality touched Morris. He raised

his head and looked curiously at her. Her face was so open and so unsure that he was as embarrassed as if he had blundered into the bathroom and caught her in the middle of some intimate procedure. He looked quickly down again, but he had caught a glimpse, behind the slack skin and tight mouth of the woman Annie had become, of the sweet shy girl she had been.

She had been so pretty and so fragile that the memory made his eyes sting. And he had been so young and so sure, sure that he would be happy the rest of his life taking care of her. Happy the rest of her life! It was lucky the young didn't know what life had in store for them, or they wouldn't bother. But by the time you were old enough to realize that life was not going to be what you were promised, it was too late. It was all over and done with. You could not even cry out that you had been cheated, because there was no one to cry to.

Immediately he chided himself for being a fool and thinking foolish thoughts. Actually he was luckier than most men. He ticked off his blessings to prove the point. He had his health (at nearly sixty that wasn't something to take for granted), a business that kept a roof over his head and food on the table, a good wife, two fine and successful sons, and the most beautiful little granddaughter. What more could he ask?

He lifted his eyes to Annie's face, hoping to find an answer written there, but whatever he had thought he had seen a moment ago was gone. Her face had closed. Moreover, she was beginning to look impatient because she had asked him a question and he had not yet answered her. Somehow they were constantly asking each other questions without receiving answers. Perhaps there were no answers. Or maybe neither of them wanted to give, or even to know, the answers.

In an effort to break the impasse, and also to head off Annie's inevitable query of what was he daydreaming about now, he started to tell her how it had come about. "The accountant was in earlier in the week and couldn't find some old bills he needed. When everyone left early Thursday because of the holiday and I was alone in the place, I figured it was a good time to see if the bills were in the back files in the basement. I knew if I got home too early you'd still be cooking and I would be in the way. So I went down to the basement."

"You locked the place first?"

"Naturally, with all the robberies lately."

"And your hat and coat?" Morris was puzzled by the question and Annie explained that when the police had found the place empty, his hat and coat gone, and everything locked and undisturbed, they had assumed that he had left.

"I took my hat and coat down with me," Morris said.

"Why? They would only get dirty down there. What's the sense in getting a good coat dirty?"

"I don't know. Maybe I thought it would be chilly."

"Was it chilly?"

"No."

"Then why did you take them?"

Morris felt trapped. Why had he ever tried to explain to her? He should have known better. But it was easier to continue with his story than to explain why he was stopping. He went on as if there hadn't been any interruption. "I found the bills right away but I kept going through the files. You know, like when you look up the dictionary because you don't know how to spell a word, but you get interested that a meteoroid is another name for a meteor, and pice is a kind of money, and ragout is a stew, until you forget what word you were looking

for."

"That never happens to me," Annie said flatly.

"I guess not." Morris wondered what it would be like to be a person who never got sidetracked. It must be strange to know exactly where you wanted to go and how to get there, and never to wake up in the middle of the night with the horrible feeling that somewhere you had taken a wrong turn but you couldn't figure out where.

"Well, it happens to me," he said. He wanted to shake her for her obtuseness, shake her until her false teeth popped out of her mouth, but that wouldn't make any difference. Everything would still be the same. So he continued wearily, "Anyway, I wasn't looking for anything in particular, just going through the files like you look through old picture albums to remember what it was like. I came across some letters from Old Man Shulman. I always liked him, but I hadn't given him a thought since the day of his funeral. How quickly people are forgotten! It made me ashamed. I remembered that he died about the time I was dickering to take a partner. All those papers were in the files, too. I couldn't help wondering if I wouldn't have been wise to give a little, and maybe we could have come to terms. But at the time I had in back of my mind that one of the boys was sure to want to come into the business."

"You're sorry your sons became professional men? You should be proud. A dentist and a lawyer."

"I am proud," Morris defended himself. "Did I ever say I wasn't proud? And who paid to put them through all those schools? I just said I thought for a while one of them might want the business. What's so terrible about that?"

"I didn't say terrible." Annie shook her head over the way he got upset at nothing. Then she prompted him as she would have prompted a child who lost his place in the middle of a recitation, "You were looking through the files for the bills."

"No." Didn't she ever listen? "I had already found the bills. I was just looking." She nodded conciliatingly and he was forced to go on, "Then I remembered all the things in that back room. There was stuff in there from the time I first went into business. I hadn't been in there for years, and neither had anyone else. Everything was covered with dust and the window was boarded over, but the bulb hanging from the ceiling was still working. I turned it on and closed the door."

"You took your coat with you?"

"Coat!" Morris exploded. "Don't you think of anything but that damn coat?"

"All right, all right. Forget the coat." After all these years she knew better than to push him when he got mad. She would solve the mystery of the coat some time when he was more reasonable. "Don't get excited, it's bad for the blood pressure. So you went into the back room and started to look through all the old things."

"No, I didn't. I sat down on a packing case."

"You went in to look, but you didn't look?"

Morris nodded.

"But that's crazy!"

"Maybe it's crazy, but that's what I did. I planned to go through the old things. I cleared a place to sit and dusted it off with my handkerchief. I even closed the door so no one would disturb me. The door stuck and I had to force it closed. Then I didn't look."

"You closed the door so nobody would bother you? But

there was nobody to bother. They all went home."

Morris nodded again. "I know there was no one there, but I closed the door to keep them out anyway. Don't you close the bathroom door when nobody's in the house?"

"That's different," Annie said decidedly.

He almost asked how different, but he stopped himself. He knew better than to get into that kind of discussion with Annie. She would outtalk him every time. She had the advantage of a singleminded concern with proving herself right. Morris, who merely wanted her to understand how he felt, was defeated before he started. His only weapon was silence.

He sat in heavy silence until Annie reminded him, "You didn't finish telling the story."

"There is nothing more to tell. I sat on a packing case in the back room. I didn't do anything else. After a while I got up and came home."

"After a while!" her voice rose. "You say it like it was nothing. It was two whole days! Plenty of time for me to eat my heart out with aggravation. Plenty of time for me to call the police and shame myself in front of the neighbors. But you didn't care what you were doing to me. You didn't care that I was making myself sick with worry. You just sat there. And now you sit here like the cat ate up your tongue, like you didn't have to answer for what you did."

Morris sat glued to his chair and stared doggedly into his empty teacup. Annie reached across the table and pulled the cup out from under his eyes. He winced in anticipation of her flinging it at him. Instead she took his cup, and hers as well, to the sink and carefully washed and dried them. Then she boiled a pot of water and took a new teabag out of the canister and made fresh tea in the clean cups. She brought the cups back to the table and sat down again. The routine normality of the chore seemed to have calmed her. She started on a different tack, "In all that time didn't you get hungry?"

"No."

"But you had to go to the bathroom?"

"There was a drain in the floor."

Annie was so shocked that she was momentarily speechless. To use a drain for such a purpose was a transgression of the rules of behavior that, more than anything else Morris had told

her, pointed up how fantastic the whole situation was. She retreated into stirring her tea. The tea was at least real and ordinary.

In an excess of stirring zeal, she slopped some of the liquid onto the table. Now she knew what to do. She got up for a sponge and carefully cleaned up the spill. She wiped the bottom of the saucer so that it would not leave a ring. By the time she rinsed out the sponge and returned to the table, it seemed possible to make sense out of this crazy situation. She asked, "What made you come home?"

Her voice indicated that she was seeking information rather than challenging. How fast her mood changed. It made Morris tired, but he felt conscience-bound to try to explain whenever she tried to understand.

"I didn't decide. I just came." He realized that wasn't much of an explanation so he added, "I guess I got tired of sitting." That didn't make it any clearer but it was the best he could do. As soon as he tried to put what he had done into words, either for Annie or for himself, the meaning eluded him. It only made sense as long as he didn't think about it.

It evidently didn't make any sense at all to Annie. She looked confused. "Why did you do it, Morris?" He wanted to answer her, but he could only shrug helplessly. She tried again, "Were you unhappy?"

He thought about it. Finally he answered, "I don't think so."

She hastened to convince him, "You have a good life. You have everything, a nice home, enough money, your health, and a family who loves you. What more could you want?"

He looked at her kindly, "Nothing more, Annie."

That was a mistake. He had only meant to comfort her, to make up to her for his nameless failures, but instead he had given her a tactical advantage. She was quick to consolidate her advantage, "If you have such a good life then there was no reason for you to go sit in a basement for two days."

She looked triumphant. Indeed she should, for her logic was unanswerable. Now she only had to get him to agree that the whole thing had been complete foolishness and it would all be wiped away. "What was the point of it?" she demanded.

"No point," Morris said. "There was no point at all."

CLOWN

Clown applies himself with brushes
to the spaces of his face
with care
before the mirror of her
eyes
he pencils in
surprise
a
perpetual
pencil
point
in just the right places
so that
when he weeps
the tears
run down the shadows
hidden
from all but the children
from all but the wise

Clown applies his laughter
from the secret place he keeps it
just below the sorrow
of his heart
he stands before the lady
in his polka-dot disguise
and he wears upon his chest
a drum
of convenient size
just loud enough
and strong
to mask
his cries
from all but the children
from all but the wise

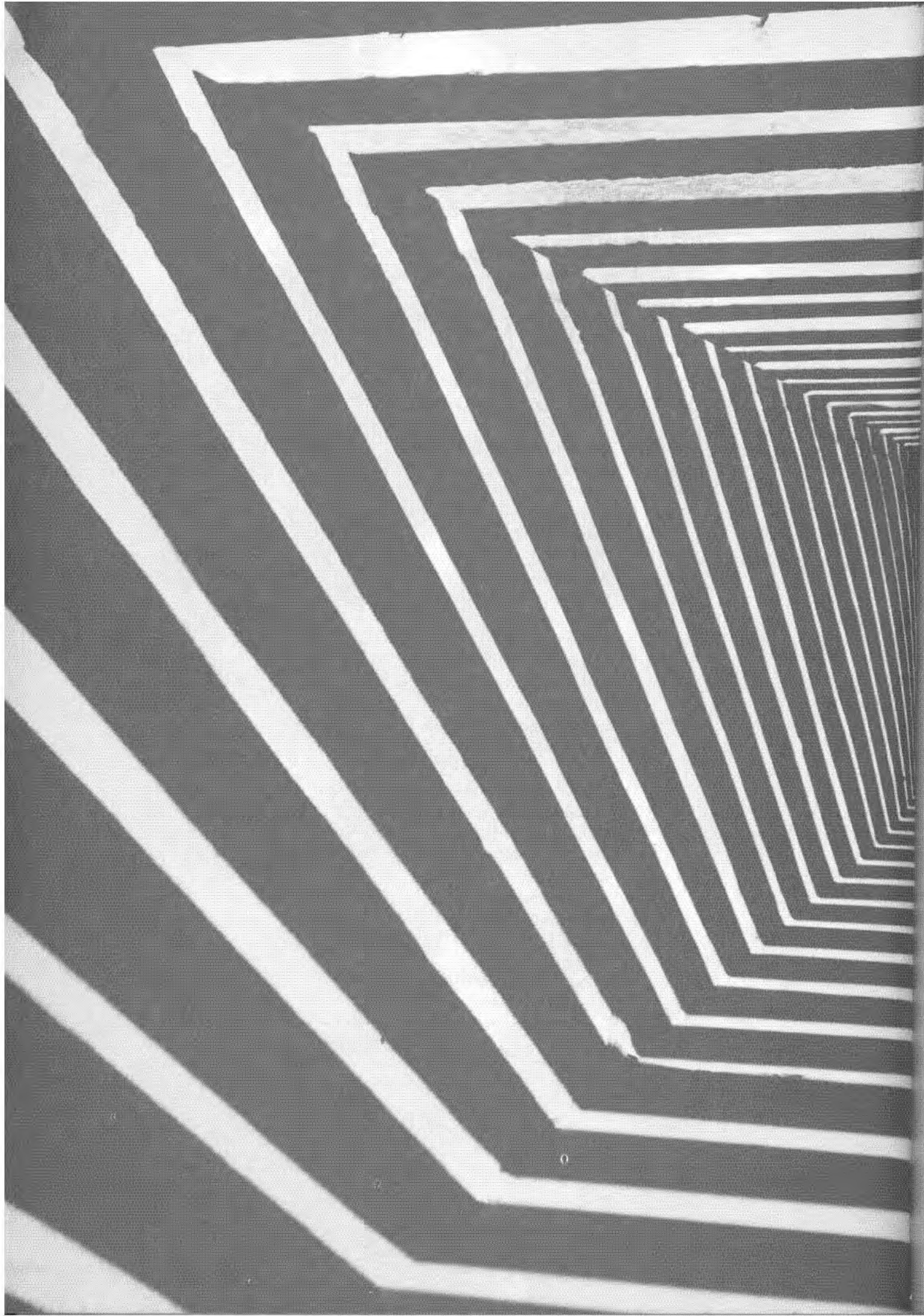
Clown applies his magic
to the air
and to the skies
he dips his brush
in wonder
for her pleasure—

and he keeps the springtime
near
to mask his darkness
and he keeps a songbird round
that never dies
and he dances for the smiles
within her
eyes
and he dances for the children
and he dances for the wise

and underneath the silence
of his mime
he speaks
as poets
speak
in rhyme
and keeps on dancing—
clown applies her laughter
to his eyes
and wears it
shining
and the shine reflects
and hides his pain
from all but the children
from all but the wise

Clown applies himself with brushes
to the space between them
etching prism-light
before the lady,
dips his brush in white
to paint his brow
and stands alone
inside
hidden
from all but the children
from all but the wise

—*Nicole*



Reviews

Books

Toward a New Historicism, by Wesley Morris, Princeton University Press, 265 pp., \$10.00. **Norman Mailer**, by Richard Poirier, The Viking Press, 176 pp., \$2.25. **St. George and the Godfather**, by Norman Mailer, Signet Books, 229 pp., \$1.50.

The 1960's, like the decades prior to the two World Wars, must properly be seen as another eruption of American radicalism. And as the tumult, hopes, outrages, and waste of the 1960's erupt into the deceptively calmer, more restrictive roles of the 1970's, it is natural to wonder what the sixties left behind of permanent value and force within American culture. What, finally, did it all amount to? What elements will outlive the melancholy retreat of those turbulent years?

Without assuming the prophet's role, I sense an essential mood, contemporaries, and in American intellectuals generally, a greater willingness to define ourselves individually and collectively within a framework of historical time. Despite great disagreements about the configuration of this framework or the determining forces within it, there is nevertheless a mood for historical definition in the air. The emergence of such a mood is, perhaps, a small accomplishment since it falls far short of satisfying either the apocalyptic or the heroic expectations of the decade just past. But the will to define, often along with its clear implication of limits, could be a more cultural act when contrasted with the open-ended passions of Marxist literature which characterized our political rhetoric as recently as John Kennedy's Inaugural Address. Each of the three books under consideration here, though having very different subjects and approaches, share this concern for historical definition.

Wesley Morris' subject in *Toward a New Historicism* is the venerable conflict between historical relativism and subjectivism in the experience and understanding of literature. "The [literary] historian tends to see everything in its relatedness and seeks to make artificial differentiations within these relationships. The critic wants to realize, according to his sense of the organic nature of a particular element, to integrate all the facets of a work into a closed unit." Morris approaches this dilemma by examining the historicist assumptions in the work of a number of important scholars, critics, and cultural historians: A. J. R. Gurrington, Granville Hicks, Kenneth Burke, Van Wyck Brooks, John Crowe Ransom, Roy Harvey Pearce and Murray Krieger. This analysis is the bulk of Morris' book and its most important achievement.

Morris' attempt to break new ground as he has ever a historian, less satisfactory. After what he says has been a "long and arduous theoretical speculation," Morris is forced to confess that a "new historicism" must await "investigations of language that go far beyond traditional linguistic analysis into the psychology of literary response and human perception, into epistemology, and perhaps the broad realm of the philosophy of history or cultural evolution." Thus we must continue to speculate even further.

Morris works himself into this rather disappointing position, it seems to me, by failing to follow one of his own precepts. It is, Morris rightly insists, "the role of historical perspective in the interpretation and evaluation of literature" is obligatory, then a "historical perspective" is surely a requirement for a study of the historicism of American critics

and scholars. *Toward a New Historicism* lacks any clear "historical perspective" and thus declines to a rather vaporous conclusion: "I would claim that the historicist's view of literature offers *nothing less* than a corroboration of the freedom of human creativity within the domain of historical meaning. Once again, the sameness with difference, the concrete universal, the redemption of time."

Morris' book will be of interest to specialists in the field of American criticism and aesthetic criticism of critics. But one wishes that he had used his time and impressive intellectual resources to move one step closer to a historicism rooted in history, to say, analyzing the historicism of American literature itself. Perhaps he might have then made a larger and more important contribution to a clarification of America's historic role and purpose. My own suspicion is that a close examination of the primary texts of American civilization would lead Morris away from rather than towards the "aesthetic historicism" which he so much disdains. He does, in his book, and which, it followed by others, can only lead to what Richard Poirier calls "another self-enclosed world which is to give us no more minds."

It is the refusal to schematize which helps to make Poirier's one of the most elegant and stimulating critical minds in America. A great deal of criticism forks, perhaps the bulk of it, passes because it is captured. It does not challenge, much less threaten the structures which it attacks, good or better or worse. Poirier's criticism, the influence of Georg Lukacs and E. H. Carr's Goldhamer is diffused throughout is unfavorable and always disturbing because it is informed by a historicist sense which, if not explicitly spelled out, is nevertheless always at work. Some idea of Poirier's historicism is evident in such nothing less than in these:

"The American England . . . that invents a fabricated golden age for the Anglophile academics who have taken an impressive but empty place on the most readily available of cultural heritages."

"The American literature . . . there is perhaps no other literature more so, because there is so damning of the notion of a country to live up to its dream and expectations."

"The American . . . we are in Vietnam because we are, as we are, and we are not."

When these quotes are read it is that Poirier's study of Norman Mailer (one of Frank Sirmione's "Modern Masters" series) is the product of an intelligence firmly rooted in the historical present and which requires that the function of aesthetic perception is not to trick us even moment. Good or wicked, we live in the twentieth century and must confront its facts if we are to survive. Thus for Poirier, topical reference is a vital part of the critical act; the reader is constantly reminded of his and America's place in historical time. Some will object to Poirier's references because they smack of "ideology." But that label is too often used as an illegitimate attack upon the defining intelligence.

Poirier's book is in three parts. Part One establishes a focus which insists upon the unity of Mailer's public personalities and his writings: "The form of a literary career, regardless of who invents it, be it the writer, critic, or merely the calendar, is no more than one of the fictions derivative from an *oeuvre*." This is a crucial critical step to make in confronting Mailer, who, despite his nearly obsessive concern with "self-advertisement" (like Nixon, Mailer is not above manipulating his press) and his fictional and public "roles," is a remarkably private person. Thus we have a Norman Mailer so fascinated by violence that he spars with professional boxers, publically taunts Sonny Liston, and eventually uses war as a basic aesthetic metaphor—form, for Mailer, is "the record of a war." And on the other hand we have Mailer full of confused sexual and emotional impulses, consciously suppressing "the nice Jewish boy from Brooklyn [who] had the softness of a man early accustomed to mother love." The tension between the conflicting elements has, in Poirier's highly persuasive account, forced Mailer to undertake one of the most interesting and important literary careers in American history.

Part Two is entitled "The Form of History." It defines more clearly than anyone else has done Mailer's "perspective on history": "Long before *Barbary Shore* the future was his theme and in a way it always has been." *Advertisements for Myself* (1959) marks Mailer's shift away from a definition of self in existential time to a point where he was "at last ready to take responsibility in historical time." And thus we find Mailer in the 1960's, in his fiction as well as his "journalism," turning to subjects and situations which will perhaps provide important clues for the future: "The 'historic sense' is in Mailer's case less a deep feeling about a locatable past than a sense of those public occasions or current issues which might in the future constitute an important element of the past."

Part Three deals with Mailer's later work (through *Of a Fire on the Moon* and *A Prisoner of Sex*) and shows how for Mailer the seizure of

historical time is linked to the liberation of the "minority within," the repressed self or selves which each of us carry around inside us. This section contains a brilliant discussion of Mailer's excellent but largely ignored or misunderstood novel, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* and its narrator D.J., who represents an adolescent America expressing in a manic style "the instinctive fury of a mind which feels itself betrayed by a civilization."

Poirier is aware of Mailer's shortcomings: his confused sexual puritanism and his obsession with guilt as a psychic release mechanism; his cultural conservatism (Mailer calls himself a "Left Conservative" and goes sailing with William Buckley!); his elitism which first evokes and then scorns the radicalized masses; the enduring problems with his own identity and his indulgent stylistic lushness. At the same time Poirier ranks Mailer very highly. At present Mailer is "like Melville without *Moby Dick*, George Eliot without *Middlemarch*, Mark Twain without *Huckleberry Finn*." For Poirier, *Why are We in Vietnam?* and *The Armies of the Night*, along with parts of *Advertisements for Myself* and *An American Dream*, "make Mailer easily the equal . . . of Fitzgerald and Hemingway, potentially Faulkner." His detailed discussions of these works are highly persuasive. But surely Poirier errs when he says that Mailer is "the most accomplished ventriloquist of styles now writing in English." John Barth, Vladimir Nabokov, Anthony Burgess and John Fowles are stylistically in Mailer's league.

Poirier concludes by noting the signs of exhaustion that are obvious in Mailer's recent work and which prefigure a crisis in Mailer's career similar to that he faced after *The Deer Park*. This estimate is supported by Mailer's most recent work, *St. George and the Godfather*. In this book we once again have the figure of Aquarius (now "comfortable, middle-aged") observing the Democratic and Republican Conventions of 1972. Aquarius sorts out the various political personalities into nearly hysterical Manichean categories. Thus, at one point he feels "something like love" for Senator McGovern who has just dumped

Perspective

by William Kuhns

Rediscovering the American Cinema, by William D. Rountt and James Leahy, Films Incorporated, 112 pp., \$3.00. **Dictionary of Film Makers**, by Georges Sadoul, tr. and ed. by Peter Morris, University of California Press, 228 pp., \$4.95. **Dictionary of Films**, by Georges Sadoul, tr. and ed. by Peter Morris, University of California Press, 432 pp., \$5.95. **What Is Cinema?**, Volume II, ed. by Hugh Gray, University of California Press, 200 pp., \$2.45. **Negative Space: Manny Farber on the Movies**, by Manny Farber, Praeger Pubs., 228 pp., \$7.95.

A truism: that books and magazines about film are mounting faster than the films (or at least the available films) themselves. An implication: that to some extent, reading about movies has become for many people an alternative to seeing them; and further, that the way many of us think about movies is shaped more decisively by what we read than by what we see.

Not true? Consider the auteur theory then—certainly the most dominant influence on film criticism, history and aesthetics in the last ten years, both in England and America. Originated by Andre Bazin and his disciples at the Paris Cinematheque in the mid-fifties, *auteurism* is a near-political conception of film which lays at the director's hands the responsibility for whatever is most valuable, artistic, or original in a film. Moreover *Politique des auteurs* (the term is Truffaut's) assumes that the *oeuvres* of a single director exist as a whole greater than, and somehow separate from, the sum of its parts. Thus a Robin Wood, in his superb study of Hitchcock, speaks of the "perverse moral world" of the master—a world that seems to take on an existence beyond the specific entanglements of characters in distinct Hitchcock movies. Or an Andrew Sarris can write blithely of Preminger's bland, derivative style with majestic overtones, as in the following passage: "[he] sees all problems and issues as a single-take two-shot, the stylistic expression of the eternal conflict, not between right

and wrong, but between the right-wrong on one side and the right-wrong on the other, a representation of the right-wrong in all of us as our share of the human condition."

You see? Auteurism, for all the good it has done neglected directors like Howard Hawks and Anthony Mann and Preston Sturges, has virtually built into it an uncomfortable tropism toward any director who maintains through his films some degree of stylistic or thematic consistency. This may be helpful as a means of identifying directors, but it can interfere critically with the basic response that a well-read movie addict gives to a film. It is no mere mischance, for example, that in his celebration of auteurism, *The American Cinema*, Andrew Sarris relegates John Huston (a great director who slid a long ways downhill) and Stanley Kubrick (perhaps the most fervently experimental major director alive) to his dumping heap categories of "Less Than Meets the Eye" and "Strained Seriousness": both directors, unquestionably masters, failed to meet certain basic tenets of the auteur theory: Huston didn't maintain the level of his early achievement, and Kubrick gets bored repeating just about anything, thus leaving slender pickings for the inclusive see-how-they're-all-alike auteurist.

But the dangers of auteurism go further, as do the dangers of any single critical theory that tries to embrace a living art. Once you begin to look at films as *the work* of any but the most totally dictatorial directors (such as Hitchcock or Bresson), you begin to miss the delights and nuances of actors, settings, camera movement, and dialogue that don't readily fit into the holistic work or "world" of the director. Moreover, and perhaps even more crippling, auteurists have a frustrating habit of justifying, if not downright liking, bad films. Sarris bends over backwards often to justify rot like Robert Aldrich's flaccid *Kiss Me Deadly* with overblown gusto as "perhaps his most perplexing and revealing work, poised as it is on the controversial boundary line between an unfashionable genre and a transcendent attitude toward the genre's moral implications. *Kiss Me Deadly* is not

Eagleton. McGovern-St. George is painted in tones and postures usually reserved for Washington at Valley Forge or Lincoln on the eve of the Civil War. Vice-President Agnew is converted into the figure of a Latin American dictator without a soul. The Godfather, President Nixon, is "that somber undertaker's assistant" though Mailer acknowledges Nixon's political genius and, in his interview with Henry Kissinger (perhaps the most fascinating and memorable chapter in the book), admits that "if not for the bombing [in Southeast Asia] I might have to think about voting for Nixon." Later, however, he says: "To explain Nixon nothing less than a new theory of personality can now suffice."

Mailer's talent is simply too great to produce a total dud, but this book comes close. It is another "forced march" on Mailer's resources and has great hunks of padding: quotes from Mailer's earlier works, long, dull excerpts from press releases and the newspapers. It is marred by Mailer's fierce partisanship and comes closer than anything else Mailer has done to deserve the label of "tract." At the same time, the mood of exhaustion in *St. George and the Godfather* is curiously apt, for after all it evokes the defeat of spirit that touches many Americans today.

The redeeming sections are, as I mentioned above, the interview with Kissinger, the portrayal of the cynicism and hubris of the McGovern people at the time of the Vice-Presidential nomination, and several sections of stylistic pyrotechnics (such as that dealing with the various name combinations of the slates: McGovern-Ribicoff is out because it would be "reminiscent of ambulance chasers").

St. George and the Godfather adds further evidence to the view that Mailer as artist has completed a second act in his career. Merely having accomplished this refutes Fitzgerald's maxim and sets Mailer off from most of his competitors. But now, if Mailer is to avoid an Act Three full of what he most dreads—imaginative entropy, lifelessness, cancer and artistic death—he must move into that great novel, so long

promised, which will effect a "revolution in the consciousness of our time." This is an extraordinary thing to expect from a man who has already given so much. It is also an extraordinary thing to ask of the novel at a time when its obituaries are again much in vogue.

If Mailer is to do this, it seems to me that he must break through to some part of himself which he has evaded up to now—perhaps the "nice Jewish boy from Brooklyn." Whatever the case, one would like to see Mailer move into a new maturity which finds meaning in history beyond the confines of war and violence. Form may be what survives war, for the self as well as a nation, in historical as well as existential time. But we remain in that dilemma which Robert Lowell has stated as well as anyone:

We are sinking. "Run, rat, run,"
The prophets thunder, and I run upon
My father, Adam. Adam, if our land
Become the desolation of a hand
That shakes the Temple back to clay, how can
War ever change my old into new man?

The answer to Lowell's haunting question, for all of us, is locked in historical time. We had best get on with the awful but unavoidable business of seizing that time.

Reviewed by Marcus Smith

Toward a New Earth: Apocalypse in the American Novel, by John R. May, University of Notre Dame Press, 254 pp., \$8.75.

John May brings to his examination of twelve American novels a thorough grounding in both literature and theology at Emory University. According to Nathan A. Scott, Jr., one of the foremost representatives of theological literary criticism, May's book tackles the issue of the

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only the best Mickey Spillane screen adaptation; it is also a testament to Aldrich's anarchic spirit."

The auteurist viewpoint finds a happy, if oftentimes distressing expression in *Rediscovering the American Cinema*, by William D. Rountt and James Leahy. Technically this isn't an auteurist history so much as a film catalog: Rountt and Leahy work entirely from the library of Films Incorporated, a 16mm distributor which owns a backlog of MGM, Paramount, Fox, RKO and Columbia features. Which is to say they are working with about half of the studio movies since 1920. But where Rountt and Leahy are limited by the available titles of any single director (as they are particularly with Tod Browning, John Huston, Alfred Hitchcock and Joseph von Sternberg), they make up for it with a Sarris-like reach beyond the film into speculative comments on the director. On Hitchcock's embarrassingly trite *To Catch a Thief*, the reach goes far:

This film provides an acknowledged superior example of the later visual style of the director to which the wide-screen has made a subtle but important contribution. Also of significance here is the use of background and landscapes, a crucial and often very knotty problem in Hitchcock's work. The question of emotionlessness, of the director's "coldness" is raised provocatively here.

Notice, the paragraph says virtually nothing about the movie, but ascribes all manner of interest in the movie to Hitchcock himself, so that the whole point of seeing the movie becomes a discussion of Hitchcock's "later visual style," his use of landscapes and terrain (and what precisely do Rountt and Leahy mean by "knotty problem"?) and his "emotionlessness" and "coldness"—in effect, forget the movie, but watch Hitchcock, he's more important.

You could say—and argue very well from this book—that nowhere else can auteurism thrive with such undiminished fervor as in a film catalog, where you're not supposed to single out the good ones from the bad ones anyway. But the curiosity is that very often Rountt and

Leahy hit upon movies that they obviously have liked, and about which they make intelligent comments that relate the film to wider ambits, wider especially than the director's other works. On John Boorman's stark and driving gangster film, *Point Blank*:

The most recent application of the American Expressionist vision have relied heavily upon 'interior' and 'psychological' points-of-view. This roccoco example attempts to transcend its genre. . . Here we may see the literary and perhaps even moral implications of a style of visual expression.

Shorthand, but they are saying something: Point Blank depicts Lee Marvin tearing at a fabric of elevators and penthouses and syndicate bosses who are indistinguishable from the upper managers of IBM or General Motors; the moral conflict becomes expressed, graphically and viscerally, in the bowlclerizing Marvin trying to violate and destroy this new plastic world, and he cannot.

The most disconcerting feature of *Rediscovering the American Cinema* is not that Rountt and Leahy have taken the auteur premise too far (though they have): it is their failure to distinguish between the film and its director, even when a film represents the best work of its director. On Fritz Lang's *Man Hunt*:

The only director regularly compared to Hitchcock whose commercial reputation is as bound up with suspense films is Fritz Lang. Lang's schematic universe builds terror through the cold certainty of the hand of fate. Men are guilty in Lang's vision of the world, but this does not seem to concern him nearly so much as the fact that they are trapped.

A trenchant analysis of *Man Hunt* (possibly the best chase movie ever made, Hitchcock notwithstanding), but a questionable statement about Lang. And this abiding tendency to ascribe the intriguing features of any one film to the director in general plagues the book like a

apocalyptic character of much recent fiction "in a really close and scrupulous and intelligent way." As for the interpretation of literary texts, Scott judges May to be "a careful and cogent critic." Much as I disagree with some of Scott's own methods and findings, I must agree with his judgment of this book.

May sandwiches his perceptive treatment of American novelists from Hawthorne to Vonnegut between an introductory chapter on "Apocalypse and the American Tradition" and a concluding chapter on "Types of Apocalypse in the American Novel."

In the first chapter, he defines apocalypse and describes its traditional components: judgment, catastrophe (either warning signs or the end itself), and renewal. May draws heavily on Mircea Eliade for his understanding of the cyclic notion of time which controlled primitive religions' symbolic language in rituals celebrating the return to chaos from which the world is born anew. He also draws on numerous Judaeo-Christian theologians (e.g. Moltmann, Buber, Charles, Niebuhr) for his understanding of linear time which looks forward to the end-time as a fulfillment and evokes a mood of hope even in the midst of catastrophe. Finally, he discusses, in the context of American literary apocalypse, the antichristian and secular reshaping of traditional apocalyptic symbolism.

May's book conscientiously avoids any wild speculations or vague generalizations not based on solid evidence. The four chapters which comprise the core of his work deal with the evidence of apocalypse in twelve American novels. Only after detailed scrutiny does May propose a typology of American apocalypse which, he hopes, will aid his readers to understand more deeply and interpret more soundly authors who employ apocalyptic symbolism as a decisive structural and thematic motif in their works.

Chapter Two uncovers apocalyptic symbolism in Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*, Melville's *The Confidence-Man*, and Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger*. All three authors, May contends, were

conscious of employing traditional apocalyptic symbolism in their works.

In his discussions of Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, West's *Miss Lonelyhearts*, and O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away*, May argues quite congenitally that apocalyptic concerns had a primary impact on the shaping of story and character development in these works. Further, he makes a good case that O'Connor was directly influenced by the other two books when she was writing her story of young Tarwater.

Another fine chapter treats Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, and Wright's *Native Son*. "The outstanding contributions of recent black authors to American literature," May asserts, "have been dominated by the mood and images of apocalypse." His treatment of these three books proves his point.

May begins Chapter Five by criticizing critics who label such works as Barth's *The End of the Road*, Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, and Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* as black humor. "Humorous apocalypse is another critical label used of the same novels," he says, "yet in a way that often makes it appear as if black humor and humorous apocalypse are the same." May distinguishes. Humorous apocalypse is "imagined catastrophe that nevertheless provokes laughter." The essence of black humor, however, is that life is a joke and the only salvation from its absurdity is laughter.

Despite the humor in these three novels, May sees "the sense of loss of world" as more central to their visions. Barth, he says, shows how existentialism "in the guise of mythotherapy" leads literally to the end of the road. Pynchon presents the whole of modern America as "a circuit set in evil." And Vonnegut in *Cat's Cradle* "treats us to an imaginative view of the outcome of our insane pretensions, both technological and religious, asking us to thumb our noses at the image of ourselves we call progress and God."

After reading May's analyses of the twelve novels, one asks whether the conclusions reached in the last chapter justify all the effort. My first

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virus gone wild, so that no matter how interesting the comments on any film may be, you never know how seriously you can take them—or indeed, how seriously Routt and Leahy took them. Finally, *Rediscovering the American Cinema* is of sadly little help in doing what its title suggests. It can provide something to rub up against on particular films you have seen; somehow you can sense that the authors (particularly Routt, who has done several fine essays elsewhere) are better than this book too often is.

The French initiated the concept of *auteurism*; they likewise became conscious, far earlier than we have, of the foolishness of ascribing everything to the director. In his reference text, *Dictionary of Film Makers*, the noted French critic Georges Sadoul has shown admirable and intelligent and strikingly broad appreciation for the range implicit in the term "film maker." This is a Who's Who not only of directors in the history of world cinema, but of writers, cameramen, composers and scorers, producers—virtually all the talents required for movie-making other than the actors. His unspoken premise is a hearty antidote to the *auteur* mentality: namely that most films are collaborations, and skillful composers like Bernard Hermann and Dmitri Tiomkin or cameramen like James Wong Howe and Arthur Miller deserve attention just like the directors. But what is so refreshing and striking about Sadoul's book is the kind of attention he gives everyone. Note a few of his remarks on Fritz Lang, and how they differ from the above paragraph by Routt and Leahy; beginning with Lang's American films in the mid-thirties. . .

To his earlier obsession with blind destiny was now added the theme of guilt, a depiction of his belief that "the inexorability of the first mistake brings about the last atonement." Though he later exclaimed, "We are all children of Cain," he never set himself up as a believer in the judiciary—particularly in the first two American films, *Fury* and *You Only Live Once*, in which he took the side of the "guilty," the victims of society's errors.

Where Routt and Leahy make audacious jumps from the film to generalizations about the director, Sadoul begins with basic comments about the evolution of a director's art and shows how specific films direct (or reflect) this evolution, using quotations from the director wherever possible. Sadoul writes with a clarity and sureness that give his comments an authority absent in virtually all American *auteur* criticism. His knowledge of the films is so encyclopedic that you feel he is never obligated to justify a weak film because an important director made it; indeed, he often makes comparisons between films that suggest trains of thought inaccessible to the true *auteur*: as when he compares Joseph Losey's *Eve* with Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu*, as equally "intensely poetic and brilliant . . . though less affirmative."

Sadoul's companion book, *Dictionary of Films*, is equally encyclopedic, authoritative and formidable in its erudition: Sadoul can write of films without a trace of doubt that what he says is accurate, and with the sketchiest of plot summaries can suggest some of the visual and moral dimensions of a complex movie. As in the *Dictionary of Film-makers*, Sadoul often quotes the director or scriptwriter in a way that almost always helps to illuminate the film at hand. For Keaton's classic, *The Navigator*, Sadoul manages in a few hundred words to suggest the steps of creative collaboration that developed the film as well as a sense of the enormous comic possibilities of the story. It is a description worth quoting in full because it gives a fine sense of Sadoul's grasp of a film:

Keaton has recalled that their first idea had simply been to have a boy and a girl marooned on a dead ship in the middle of the Atlantic. But it was no use their being poor—how could they be on a transatlantic liner in the first place? Then scriptwriter Jean Havez suggested "I want a rich boy and a rich girl who never have to lift a finger . . . I put these two beautiful spoiled brats—the two most helpless people in the world—adrift on a ship, all alone. A dead ship. No lights, no steam." Keaton: "So we worked it out. I'm Rollo Treadway, a really useless millionaire who can't even shave himself. I've proposed to this girl. She wants no part of me,

reaction was that the typology of apocalypse, while interesting, did not contribute anything world-shaking (excuse the apocalyptic allusion) to critical theory. For a typology is significant only when it can be shown that the terminology it unleashes can be effectively applied as a critical tool for the deeper reading of literary texts.

In the context of the great vagueness which has clouded so many studies of literary apocalypse, however, I am convinced that May's terminology could serve as a saving corrective to sloppy thinking and suggestive though vacuous generalizations. His typology should be consulted by critics who want an intelligent framework in which to discuss the eschatological dimensions of literature. May's topological chart of Traditional (Primitive or Judaeo-Christian), Antichristian, and Secular (Despairing or Humorous) apocalypse should help to provide more clarity in future discussions of this literary type.

The most convincing argument that these terms are significant for the deeper appreciation of some works of literature is the stark fact that, through the window they open onto twelve works, May has delved deeply into the core-meaning of the works themselves and leads his readers into those pulsing hearts. In other words, the terminology and the approach *does* what May says it should do: it illuminates the literary work. One does not have to be an apocalypse buff to appreciate May's book. One must bring to it only an abiding love for the literary imagination of man.

Reviewed by Forrest L. Ingram

Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution, ed. by Rudolf Wittkower and Irma B. Jaffe, Fordham University Press, 139 pp. and 115 illustrations, \$20.00.

Completed one week before Rudolf Wittkower's death, this work represents something of a last will and testament as well as a post-

humous *Festschrift* to the dean of Baroque art historians. As a symposium originally presented to a live audience, which I was privileged to attend, it is written with rather more verve and chattiness than such volumes can normally claim. While the illustrations afford more leisure for study here than they did when ephemerally projected, we are now bereft of the stunning musical examples provided by Denis Stevens and his ensemble. Yet, the contents are so handsomely presented that we are offered a "coffee-table book" and ever so much more.

As one passionately interested in Jesuit involvement in the arts (with several slight articles on the subject both published and projected), I feel particularly grateful to Dr. Jaffe for embarking on such a task. Her position at Fordham University, as she states, inspired her to examine the connection between Baroque art and the Society of Jesus—a topic that had intrigued her ever since a professor of hers had assumed knowledge of "the Jesuit sensibility which dominated the taste of the (Baroque) age." It must have required endless time in securing the collaboration of top experts on each topic treated in this herculean undertaking. The results justify her arduous efforts.

Not that anyone would expect the articles to be of equal interest or sustained insight. Professor Wittkower's opening essay, "Problems of the Theme," will be read with more interest and confidence than, for example Per Bjurström's somewhat casual treatment of "Baroque Theater and the Jesuits." Nor is the slightest mention made of the galaxy of significant Baroque structures built by Jesuits or under the Society's auspices in Latin America—at Tepozotlán, for example, or Quito, or Cuzco, or Bahia. Thus, while authoritative and pioneering, the symposium is in no way even a survey of the question.

A prime service is rendered the non-specialist by the decent interment of myths still lying around, thought long known to specialists as defunct. One is the alleged existence of a "Jesuit Style" in architecture. Wittkower accepts the research done by Joseph Braun, S.J., some

my money or my position. . . . And there we are, neither one knowing the other is on the ship, drifting off to nowhere in the dark." As this suggests, Keaton's comic style is often based directly on social observation. *The Navigator* is full of wonderful gags, especially those involving the sleeping and cooking problems, but its theme stems from Keaton, a little man at the mercy of the machine.

For several years Sadoul's companion books have been standard reference works in France, and their publication in English means that they will certainly become definitive guides here as well. With any reference, one can quibble; arguing, for example, that what has been left out is often more important than what has been included. (Sadoul includes John Ford's sappy, if lovely, *How Green Was My Valley* while neglecting entirely his visual masterpiece *Wagon Master*.) But it is perhaps a proof of Sadoul's brilliance that the reader finds himself less interested in searching out failures than in locating Sadoul's remarks on his favorite films and film makers.

A word on the translation, by Peter Morris. The companion *Dictionaries* read amazingly well for a translation from the French: partly, no doubt, because Morris' translation is, in his own words, "a free one, seeking to capture the spirit of the original rather than always its literal meaning." In updating the books, Morris has often added his own remarks, which are surrounded by brackets: a tribute to Morris that as one reads the entries, the brackets fail to jar the tone or clarity of expression; the added comments and datings fit.

The French critic Andre Bazin "wrote about film," as Truffaut says, "better than anybody else in Europe." Bazin is seminal to the film criticism that followed him in a way incomparable to anyone in this country. The era when Bazin guided discussion among the students at the Paris Cinematheque like a later Socrates has become an almost mythic part of the film lore among movie addicts: the group that surrounded him then has become, to a large extent, the same people responsible for the renaissance of French cinema in the sixties: Francois Truffaut, Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer, Chris Marker. Bazin is one

of those figures who looms high, like his friend Henri Langlois, in the new critical awakening of film. He looms even higher as a critic: he is perhaps one of the best critics ever to grace the cinema.

In Volume II of *What Is Cinema?*, the ongoing translation of Bazin's essays by Hugh Gray, Bazin's maddeningly paradoxical yet trenchantly brilliant manner is even more apparent than in Volume I. Bazin seems to linger always at the edge of metaphysics. In his introductory essay, "An Aesthetic of Reality":

Thus, the most realistic of the arts shares the common lot. It cannot make reality entirely its own because reality must inevitably elude it at some point. Undoubtedly an improved technique, skillfully applied, may narrow the holes of the net, but one is compelled to choose between one kind of reality and another. The sensitiveness resembles the sensitiveness of the retina. The nerve endings that register color and intensity of light are not all the same, the density of one being ordinarily in inverse ratio to that of the other. Animals that have no difficulty in making out the shape of their quarry in the dark are almost color blind.

A skein of paradoxes and metaphors; yet this paragraph brims with an insight that is all but mystical, all but inexpressible. The context of this passage is a discussion of Welles' *Citizen Kane*—particularly his deep-focus as a revolutionary break from the shot-and-cut technique that has dominated film since Griffith. But like so much of Bazin, the passage soars of its own accord, and a metaphor of the capabilities of the retina becomes a statement on the paradox of any cinematic technique necessarily delimiting the reality it can convey.

At the end of his foreword, Truffaut quotes from a letter by Bazin, and perhaps nowhere else is the flavor or fervor of Bazin's critical imagination so visible, so expressive:

"I'm sorry I couldn't see Mizoguchi's films again when you at the Cinematheque. I rate him as highly as you people do and I claim to love him the more because I love Kurosawa

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sixty years ago, as demonstrating "beyond any shadow of doubt that the Jesuits, far from disregarding popular feelings and traditions, generally supported native customs in art and architecture." Granted a centralizing tendency, the Roman directives had to do with functionality and economy, with no mention of style as such.

To be sure, "a certain measure of uniformity" did develop, Wittkower grants, especially since "the Gesù, the mother church of the Order, represented the perfect answer to the Counter Reformation demand for spacious naves in churches which would accommodate very large congregations." But, as any observant Roman visitor notes, other churches with no Jesuit connections follow the same lines. Meantime, among the Society's churches, in Wittkower's words, "the door was left open to practically endless possibilities." I have personally experienced this variety in early Jesuit churches on four continents, from Macao to Dubrovnik.

James S. Ackerman's contribution, "The Gesù in the Light of Contemporary Church Design," seems to me the definitive study of that important church. Amply buttressed by rare illustrations, its thesis is that the Gesù is both a typical work of its pre-Baroque period and "the fountainhead of Baroque architecture," as most handbooks style it. The apparent contradiction lies in the contrast between Vignola's designs and "the exuberant High Baroque stucco, sculpture, veneer, and painting" with which it was later adorned. Ackerman agrees with his friend and mentor Wittkower that there is no Jesuit style as such, but only that "the characteristic Jesuit church should be on a square accessible to the populace, . . . should dispense with side aisles," and generally fit the apostolic needs of the new Order. (One is reminded of the ancient couplet describing Ignatius Loyola as loving "magnas urbes" instead of valleys, mountains or towns, as did Bernard, Benedict and Francis.)

"The First Painted Decorations of the Gesù," chapter three, is Howard Hibbard's essay on that church's elaborate, if basically

unified, iconography. While the execution may leave something to be desired, in concept "the intellectual unity of the iconography" cannot be denied, thanks to Bacciccio's great vault. For, as Hibbard points out, "*The Triumph of the Name of Jesus* is not merely the subject of that glorious fresco but the pervasive iconographical theme of the entire church." Again the abundant plates prove invaluable.

Another essay that I found exceptionally useful was Francis Haskell's "The Role of Patrons: Baroque Style Changes." It is, of course, a common-place among art historians that Bernini was an intimate of the Society of Jesus' eleventh superior general, John Paul Oliva, and that this association led to what Irma Jaffe calls "the incomparable Sant'Andrea al Quirinale." Strangely, details of Oliva's influence on the history of Baroque have been comparatively unstudied. Yet, concludes Haskell, "as a record of sustained patronage Oliva's achievement can be compared only with that of the great popes." At least previously, according to Haskell, "the Jesuits had neither patron nor money"; thus, even though "Michelangelo offered to produce plans without payment," it was not for some time, for example, that money could be obtained from Cardinal Farnese even for the Gesù. Thus, it was really under Oliva that what came to be thought (however erroneously) "the Jesuit style" became even mentionable. In fact, to quote Haskell again, "it is only in the light of his achievement that it makes much sense to discuss 'the Jesuit contribution to Baroque art.'" I hope some day to follow Haskell's hint and study more about Oliva in his role as patron.

Rene Taylor's essay on "Hermeticism and Mystical Architecture in the Society of Jesus" and Per Bjurström's, "Baroque Theater and the Jesuits," strike me as somewhat less useful. There is hardly space to list my objections to the Taylor piece; unless I am mistaken, it seems turgid, confused, even unintentionally "hermetic." Bjurström appears unacquainted with the growing literature on the subject of Jesuit drama, and does not even mention William H. McCabe's seminal

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too, who is the other side of the coin: would we know the day any better if there were no night? To dislike Kurosawa because one loves Mizoguchi is only the first step toward understanding. Unquestionably anyone who prefers Kurosawa must be incurably blind but anyone who loves only Mizoguchi is one-eyed. Throughout the arts there runs a vein of the contemplative and mystical as well as an expressionist vein."

Such a statement amounts to more than an acknowledgement of different tastes requiring some kind of mutual conciliation; Bazin is suggesting (as he infers in the earlier passage quoted) that adequately to appreciate the slow, intimate force of a Mizoguchi you need as well the boisterous vitalism of a Kurosawa. True, Mizoguchi may be the better film director, but for Bazin that is a relatively minor judgment; he was most of all concerned with the range of cinema, with the extent and validity of its expressive techniques, and he saw, in its always paradoxical way, that the achievement in any one direction relied upon the balance of an achievement in some other direction—on the part both of film makers and of their audiences.

You cannot read Bazin quickly; many of his best passages only take on their full richness of meaning once they have seeded the mind. There is this curiously self-propelling quality to many of his remarks that make one suspect that even before he was a critic, Bazin was a teacher. The opening sentence of his essay "Marginal Notes on *Eroticism in the Cinema*" reads: "No one would dream of writing a book on eroticism in the theatre." He goes on to take that thought into his own ruminations, but the careful reader is tempted to set the book down and test the thought on his own; it has that driving, instigatory quality; so that finally, Bazin becomes important to a reader not so much for what he says, as for the reflections he conjures.

This is no sign of a lack of intellectual toughness on Bazin's part; even if it is labyrinthine, the channels of his mind lead in directions that are always rewarding, if sometimes delightfully bizarre. Who has ever written quite so freshly—or pointedly—on eroticism in cinema

as Bazin in the following paragraph?

For those particularly interested in the phenomenology of Hollywood eroticism, I would like to draw attention to a curious shift of emphasis between the publicity for the film and the film itself [*The Outlaw*]. The posters for *The Outlaw* show Jane Russell with lifted skirt and generously low cut dress. In reality it is only her bosom that counts in the film. The fact is that in the past seven or eight years the center of eroticism in the American film has shifted from the thigh to the bosom, but the public is not yet sufficiently aware of this change of frontier to allow the publicity departments to dispense with their traditional sources of stimulation.

Passages such as this suggest an interesting parallel with Marshall McLuhan, particularly in his classic study of popular culture, *The Mechanical Bride*. As theoretical and difficult as Bazin can become, he seems always to maintain a basic fascination with movies as cultural artifacts, and with the complex ways in which movies become the dream-forms of the culture. His essay "Entomology of the Pin-Up Girl" has only the slightest tongue-in-cheek quality about it, much as McLuhan manages to suggest how we have accepted a mechanistic image of ourselves by analyzing a hosiery ad, without so much as cracking a smile. Bazin thus suggests that while movies are to be taken very seriously, it can be dangerous to treat them with too much seriousness.

There is no American equivalent to Bazin, but there is one critic who decidedly comes closer than any others, and for years he has remained virtually unknown. *Negative Space: Manny Farber on the Movies* was published by Praeger in 1971, and should well have created the kind of stir that the two Bazin books have—if only because Farber writes often on a wavelength that is more reminiscent of Bazin than anyone else. By and large, the book has gone neglected, as over the years, has Farber; yet it provides taut evidence that Manny Farber is one of the most acutely perceptive, original, perverse and eccentric

Cambridge dissertation "An Introduction to the Jesuit Theatre." Nor did he have the chance to consult Orlando E. Saa's important dissertation "*El teatro escolar de los jesuitas. La obra dramática de Pedro Pablo de Acevedo (1556-1573)*." Father Saa (who teaches a course in Jesuit drama at Loyola University, New Orleans) pointed out to me a number of errors of fact in the Bjurström essay, beyond those I had independently noted. On the other hand, Bjurström's stress on the use of spectacle and Brother Pozzo's influence on Baroque dramatic décor seems so obvious as to border on the otiose. But such unevenness is hardly surprising in a symposium.

The final chapter, one of the most original, represents a by-product of the Harvard dissertation "A documentary history of the liturgical music at the German College in Rome: 1573-1674" and *Jesuits and Music, I: A Study of the Musicians Connected with the German College in Rome During the Seventeenth Century and of their Activities in Northern Europe*, both by Thomas D. Culley, S.J. The symposium article, "A Center for Baroque Music," while not displacing Father Culley's larger works, makes them accessible in capsule form. More recently his "Music and the Early Jesuits" (in which I corroborated), *Archivum Historicum Societatis* (vol. 40, pp. 213-245), somewhat widens the Baroque perspective in terms of music.

One might cavil at smallish matters in the symposium, such as the confusion between "brother" and "father" in several articles. Pozzo and the Tristano brothers were "brothers," not "fathers." So was Father Giuseppe Valeriani a "brother" for a large part of his creative life as a Jesuit. (Incidentally, in the volume, his name is variously spelled with a final "o" and a final "i".)

But, taken as a whole, the symposium represents a contribution of major consequence, with essays of remarkable originality and sustained quality. Surely every library, art historian, and Jesuit history buff will want to have it.

Reviewed by C. I. McNaspy

The Imagery of John Donne's Sermons, by Winfried Schleiner, Brown University Press, 250 pp., \$7.50. **Donne's Prebend Sermons**, by Janel M. Mueller, Harvard University Press, 361 pp., \$10.00.

Mr. Schleiner takes issue with much of what critics have been saying about Donne's prose style. He finds the notion of the "metaphysical" sermon misleading, he is not attracted to Joan Weber's attempt to relate Donne's style to "the baroque" (*Contrary Music*), and he strongly opposes Milton Allan Rugoff's theory that the unconventional nature of Donne's imagery affords us material for the study of his imagination at its most free (*Donne's Imagery*).

Schleiner's purpose, rather, is to suggest the conventional and orthodox nature of the imagery of the sermons—conventional in the context of Renaissance standards of decorum, orthodox in the context of the entire tradition of religious imagery from the Scriptures to the Seventeenth Century. His case is generally quite convincing. He quotes passages in which Donne obviously states an appreciation for the current standards of decorum; although it must be added that these passages are sometimes apologies for images that Donne clearly sees as indecorous. And Schleiner tends to ignore extreme cases (in one sermon Donne advised his listeners to circumcise the foreskin of their hearts) in favor of the more common. And yet it is clear that decorum is often in Donne's mind, as in his use of "high" or "low" metaphors when his purpose calls for a heightening or lowering of the subject.

Schleiner's second context is the entire tradition of religious imagery, which he divides into "fields." Thus we have *disease* images used for sin, *travel* images to represent life, the sacraments seen as *seals*, the world as a *book*, salvation as a *purchase*, and so on. Schleiner illustrates the traditional appearance of such "fields" in religious writing and convinces one that there is little that is baroque, metaphysical, or

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film critics alive in America. And nobody is Farber's equal when it comes to the Hollywood "B" melodrama. Note:

What is a Don Siegel movie? Mainly it's a raunchy dirty-minded film with a definite feeling of middle-aged, middle-class sordidness. Every cop, prostitute, and housewife is compromised by something; the pimp in *Madigan* is compromised by his connection to the police; the police commissioner keeps company with the society matron when her husband is on a camping trip with her son, and so on. There are elements of the *Brighton Rock* Graham Greene (the suspension between melodrama and farce in *Baby Face Nelson*), Robert Louis Stevenson (the odd feeling for desert grayness and squalor in *Flaming Star*), and Al Capp (cartoon exaggeration in the Daisy Mae, who services Coogan's *Bluff* in a Mojave shack's wooden bathtub). With these elements and the fact that Siegel's a commercial director who's good at his job, the movie works out so that it has something more than push and slime.

Farber has been writing about movies since the forties, publishing in magazines like *Commentary*, *The New Republic*, *The Nation* and *Artforum*. His essays have a quick, acerbic quality and a rush of comment and judgment that come on as fast as shots in a Richard Lester film. Farber rarely describes films except by the inference of his comments about them; when you read Farber on a film you haven't seen, you can be quite sure what the film will be like, and even surer of Farber's impressions. But what is so remarkable about Farber is that no matter how often you have seen a film, he brings to it a fresh acuity; he leads you to think about it in ways you never had before, and ways that, once tested, more than often prove accurate. On the breakdown of time and narration in *Citizen Kane*:

He [Welles] also complicated and immobilized each shot with mismated shock effects that had never been seen

before in Hollywood. For example, the ominous figure of Kane was shown in the dark alongside a clearly lit pseudo-Grecian statue and a vast undone jigsaw puzzle that the cameraman had cleverly shot so that it seemed strewn over a marble floor. The spectator had trouble arranging these disparate items into a convincing visual whole, but his brain was mobilized into all sorts of ruminations about avarice, monomania, and other compulsions. Even the devices for moving the story along were complicating and interrupting: again and again, you went from the first part of a sentence spoken at one time and place to the last part of the same sentence spoken years later; this made one less conscious of time passing than of a director stopping time to play a trick on reality.

Note how many different directions Farber takes within this one passage, without even endangering the central idea: he points out an example of the "mismatching" technique in the Kane/statue-jigsaw puzzle shot; he suggests that the effect of this technique is less to show anything than to create a bombardment of associations and recognitions in the mind of the viewer; and he points out that a similar technique is used in the transitional devices that bridge time—then his last clause, which comes with whiplash suddenness, suggests that the most important effect (and, by inference, Welles' intention) is not the association, but the recognition that behind all of this a director is making a ploy to be noticed.

What Farber ascribes to Welles is true to some extent of Farber. Though one suspects it is not intentional or engineered, Farber has a way of striking at a movie from such odd vantage points that he rouses in the reader (particularly if one has seen the film and, inevitably, disagrees on aspects of it with Farber) a range of reactions, from hostility to a triumphant "He saw it too!"

Like Bazin, Farber can make generalizations that are so awesome and breathtaking you have no way of judging their intrinsic merit, but you suspect they are right—or at least you want them to be right. As such, these ideas tend to ferment: they become part of the inner land-

startlingly original in Donne's choice of fields (but perhaps such qualities can reappear in the choice of images within a field—Schleiner ignores this possibility). One realizes that Rugoff's attempt to relate Donne's images of storms at sea to a specific storm he went through is much less useful than to understand the images, as Schleiner does, in relation to the medieval concept of man as *viator*.

Schleiner's method has limitations in that there are contexts which it slights. While it may be true that "purchase" imagery was traditional, it is also true that such images occur most frequently for Donne in the Lincoln's Inn sermons. Schleiner, of course, is aware of this, but he is less interested in the sort of analysis this fact might point to. Furthermore, much of Donne's rhetoric must be seen in relation to seventeenth century political crises and events. But this a "field" Schleiner totally ignores.

* * *

During the time that Donne was Dean of St. Paul's he was the Prebendary of Chiswick, one of thirty prebends in the Cathedral Chapter. An ancient statute assigned a portion of the psalter to each prebend for daily recital, and Donne, having a special fondness for the Psalms, decided to preach a series of sermons on those assigned to him (the sixty-second through the sixty-sixth). Although separated by the Potter and Simpson edition, which attempts to present the sermons in chronological order, these sermons were seen as a unit by Donne and now exist as such in Janet Mueller's edition, a scholarly edition which offers a fine alternative for those who cannot purchase the entire ten volume Potter-Simpson edition.

Ms. Mueller has not re-edited the sermons but simply reprints them from the Potter-Simpson with a few minor changes. She does, however, provide extensive notes, including a table illustrating Donne's use of the various versions of the Bible available to him, and she has

done original work in the tracing of sources and allusions in the sermons. In addition, she offers a substantial introduction dealing with Donne's biography, the political context of the sermons, Donne's imagery (she praises Schleiner's work), and the dominant theological themes of the sermons. A reviewer in *Renaissance Quarterly* (P.G. Stanwood-Winter, 1971) has criticized Ms. Mueller's introduction for being "too narrowly focused." This is certainly inaccurate. In limited space, she manages to shed light on a number of the important issues involving Donne's sermons.

Reviewed by Bruce Henricksen

Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature, by M. H. Abrams. W. W. Norton & Co., 550 pp., \$10.00.

Natural Supernaturalism, M. H. Abrams' capacious study of Romantic literature and intellectual history, asserts that traditional Christian "concepts, schemes, and values" underlie and help define Romanticism. This stance will unnerve those who trace Romantic roots to eighteenth century German philosophy and English psychology, but whoever has awaited a measured and ample response to the charge by T. S. Eliot that Romantics lack "perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence" will be grateful for Abrams' book. It is rich with the traditional sources of Romantic thought.

For Abrams, Wordsworth's *Prospectus* is the "manifesto" at the center of the Romantic gyre. "My haunt, and the main region of my Song," Wordsworth there declares, is the "Mind of Man." With convincing thoroughness, Abrams demonstrates that this mind synthesizes and re-creates an impressive body of inherited cultural ideas. The drama of these ideas is played out in *The Prelude*. For example, its concept of time is Christian: "finite," "right-angled," "providential," and "symmetrical"; its ambivalent sense of landscape that inspires

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scape against which the flickering images of the movies reflect after the projector has stopped. In one of his better essays, "The Gimp" (about the postwar device of organizing images for their "psychic" reverberations rather than their narrative meaning) Farber says:

If the significance of the New Movie is understood, it may well be that Hollywood will never be able to go home again. Any attempt to resurrect the old flowing naturalistic film that unfolds logically and takes place in "reasonable" space seems doomed to look as old-fashioned as the hoop skirt. For better or worse, we seem stuck with an absurdly controlled, highly mannered, overambitious creation that feeds on everything in modern art and swallows it so that what you see is not actually on the screen but is partly in your own mind, partly on the screen and partly behind it. You have to read these pictures in a completely different way from the one you've been accustomed to. They are no longer literally stories or motion pictures, but a succession of static hieroglyphs in which overtones of meaning have replaced, in interest as well as in intent, the old concern with narrative, character, and action for their own sakes. These films must be seen, not literally, but as X-rays of the pluralistic modern mind.

One of the features about Farber that makes him so trenchant is what may be the most keenly developed visual perspicuity among recent American critics. Farber would have made an excellent art critic; he has honed his eyes the way a good orchestral conductor must hone his ears, and he can discuss a film in ways that have little to do with its obvious theme or story or acting or script, but in ways nonetheless that provide a vivid glimpse of what happens on the screen. On John Boorman's *Point Blank*:

In a sickening way, the human body is used as a material to wrinkle the surface of the screen. Usually the body is in zigzags, being flung, scraped over concrete, half buried under tire wheels, but it is always sort of cramped, unlikely, out of its owner's control.

This passage comes close to the central notion of *Negative Space* (as much as there is any specific central theme to this book, more like a galaxy of them): that space is the most accessible dramatic tool of the film maker, and that "negative space" ("the command of experience which an artist can set resonating within a film") is . . .

a sense of terrain created partly by the audience's imagination and partly by camera-actors-director: in *Alexander Nevsky*: the feeling of endless, glacial landscape formed by glimpses of frozen flatness expanded by the emotional interplay of huge-seeming people. Negative space assumes the director testing himself as an intelligence against what appears on the screen, so that there is a murmur of poetic action enlarging the terrain of the film, giving the scene an extra-objective breadth.

* * *

So, A recommendation to all film fanatics who like to read about movies as well as see them. The prodigious outpouring of movie books, many of them about directors (or somehow trying to be) can be almost threatening—a movie book these days can narrow your insight into a film as much as broaden it. Consult Sadoul. Read Bazin. Read Farber. You don't even need popcorn.

William Kuhns

both terror and love derives from works such as Thomas Burnet's *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*; and its personalized rendering of the Christian mythic "plot" echoes Augustine's *Confessions*, a "Crisis-Autobiography" analogous to *The Prelude*. Wordsworth also treats Miltonic material, though he emphasizes the Apocalypse rather than the Fall, the reunification of object and subject, mind and nature. The Apocalypse, with its revolutionary perception that there will be "new heavens and a new earth," stands as the intellectual and spiritual center of the Romantic vision, but it too is inherited. The "Mind of Man," then, is more precisely the mind of Western Christian man. And the main process of Romantic literature is "the secularization of inherited theological ideas and ways of thinking." After Wordsworth, the process continues in the writings of Carlyle, Proust, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Sylvia Plath, to name a few.

In the light of Abrams' earlier writings, *Natural Supernaturalism* may seem perplexingly insistent upon Romantic traditionalism. In one essay, "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age," Abrams writes, "It seems to me that . . . the romantic period was eminently an age obsessed with the fact of violent and inclusive change, and romantic poetry cannot be understood, historically, without awareness of the degree to which this preoccupation affected its substance and form." But even this essay attributes the Romantic revolutionary impulse as much to the Biblical Apocalyptic tradition as to the events surrounding the American and French Revolutions.

And, after all, the Romantic Apocalyptic vision is without precedent in English. It is a symbol of the final harmony toward which life's organic process can lead. It is attained through a "Circuitous Journey," and it achieves the re-integration of alienated man. It depends upon intuitional psychology and occurs in a "moment"—"a deeply significant experience in which an instant of consciousness . . . suddenly blazes into revelation; the unsustainable moment seems to arrest what is passing, and is often described as the intersection of time with eternity." This "moment" is a "revolution in seeing which will make the object new," a "transforming vision." Herein lies the Romantic revolution.

Northrop Frye said almost a decade ago, "The anti-Romantic movement in criticism . . . is now over and done with." But the charges leveled by Eliot, Hulme, and others that the Romantics were anti-traditional have lingered. Abrams' response is informed and balanced: "The Romantic enterprise was an attempt to sustain the inherited culture against what to many writers seemed the imminence of chaos; and the resolve to give up what one was convinced one had to give up of the dogmatic understructure of Christianity, yet to save what one could save of its experiential relevance and values, may surely be viewed by the disinterested historian as a display of integrity and courage." It is ironic, but not surprising, to discover that Eliot himself is Romantic, as the term has come to be re-defined in this age.

Without question, Abrams' book reinforces his stature as one of the foremost contemporary interpreters of Romanticism. *Natural Supernaturalism* is necessary for any serious student of the Romantics, and invigorating reading for anyone interested in the most significant literary tradition of the past two hundred years.

Reviewed by Richard E. Johnson

The Truth About Arthritis Care, by John J. Calabro, M.D. and John Wykert, David McKay Company, 271 pp., \$6.95.

An informative presentation on the age-old rheumatic diseases is given in *The Truth About Arthritis Care*. The authors describe in a low key, readable, medical scientific format, the present state of man's understanding of the nature and probable causes of these diseases. A skillful blending of typical case histories and published medical research results is used to present the gross and salient characteristics of the rheumatic diseases, thus enabling the reader to assess his own condition and degree of progress under proper medical care.

Following the systematic introduction of the major forms of the rheumatic disorders in the first chapter, single chapters are then dedicated to an in-depth treatment of the most common ones: adult and juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, rheumatism, ankylosing spondylitis, systemic lupus erythematosus and sclero-

derma. Then, for the benefit of the patient-reader, the book features a chapter entitled "How To Judge Your Doctor's Care." Although only a nine-page section, it is quite purposed and designed for the benefit of the patient-reader. The reciprocal of the patient-physician interaction is treated in a subsequent eye-opening chapter labeled "Do You, Patient, Take This Doctor?" Because of these two chapters, the book serves as a valuable working guide for both patients and physicians.

Throughout the book, deep-felt professional attitudes and personal convictions are clearly visible. For example, it is stated that:

"My most memorable patients taught me the most important lessons I was to learn as an arthritis specialist: It is not enough to treat a disease; one must help educate and motivate the human being with the disease."

Whenever possible, emphasis is placed on the latest developments in patient care and treatment. Although suffering patients—and physicians—have anxiously awaited the discovery of a safe, all-purpose, miracle drug for the rheumatic diseases, none has appeared. The failures of the once hailed miracle drug, cortisone, are vividly described in the book. Much to the surprise of no one, the authors strongly caution the reader against the dangers of quackery. According to the authors, the general formula for treating one of mankind's oldest nemeses, i.e., the family of rheumatic diseases, is simply: rest, heat, exercise and medicine. And would you believe that aspirin is the primary drug for pain and discomfort, the trademark of the diseases?

The book is highly recommended for the non-expert and suffering patient. My only very mild criticism concerns the rather abbreviated treatment of the mysterious coexistence of cancer, the number two cause of adult deaths in America, and arthritis. In view of the fact that roughly seventeen million Americans are affected yearly with rheumatic diseases, the book should be greeted by a legion of readers who will find it filled with valuable, usable information and encouragement.

Reviewed by Lee P. Garv, Jr.

The Subject is Woman: Man's World, Woman's Place, by Elizabeth Janeway, William Morrow & Co., 319 pp., \$8.95. **The Female Eunuch**, by Germaine Greer, McGraw-Hill, 349 pp., \$6.95. **Woman in Sexist Society**, ed. by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran, Basic Books, 115 pp., \$12.50.

Man's World, Woman's Place by Elizabeth Janeway is a sober, calm, for the most part well organized and rational, examination of social mythology concerning women and the roles assigned to women. *The Female Eunuch* is a flamboyant, extremely interesting, gut level, for the most part disorganized, exhibition of Germaine Greer's personality and beliefs.

In a televised interview, Elizabeth Janeway stated that she did not begin work on *Man's World, Woman's Place* in an effort to prove any preconceived ideas; rather, in an honest search for information, she set out to question society's preconceived ideas. For example, she looks at the saying, "Woman's place is in the home," a place taken to be "time-honored and ordained by nature, a place isolated from the world of work and from the larger society, concentrated on home management, husband and children." Then she looks into homes of the past and discovers that before 1700, with few exceptions, there were no "homes" in our sense of the word. The home was a "workshop for artisans, apprentices, journeymen and many wives, or a trading center, or both; or it was a minimal shelter for overworked farm labor; or it was a great house which was both a center of economic activity and of general sociability that extended far beyond the family."

In contrast to Janeway's objectivity, Germaine Greer is brazen, delightfully so if you happen to share her feelings, in her subjective approach. For example she comments upon the strong belief that a man should be bigger, older and stronger than his woman: "I cannot claim to be fully emancipated from the dream that some enormous man, say six foot six, heavily shouldered and so forth to match, will crush me to his tweeds, look down into my eyes and leave the taste of heaven or the scorch of his passion on my waiting lips. For three

weeks I was married to him."

Germaine Greer articulates that which we intuit to be true. Elizabeth Janeway examines the bases for our intuitions. Janeway reasons with us. Greer is out to charm us—or to bully us if necessary. A comparison of the portraits (noting props as well as facial expressions) on the back of the book jackets illustrates pictorially the tone of each book.

If *Man's World, Woman's Place* is a cello, deep-throated, stately, powerful, and *The Female Eunuch* is the trumpet, brassy, bold, captivating, then *Woman in Sexist Society* is the whole orchestra. Its merit is that it combines with a fairly comprehensive approach a quality of writing much improved over previous anthologies on the subject. It contains examples of the scholarly, the creative, the propagandistic, the argumentative, the confessional. The subjects include: "the overt purchase of female flesh" (interviews with prostitutes), the image of women (in advertising, in textbooks, in literature), our sexist language, marriage, lesbianism, orgasm, and abortion—the latter presented in the form of a play in which a man who has just unwillingly had an impregnated womb implanted into his body argues with his female surgeon for an abortion. Finally there is a plea for the eradication of the power psychology which pictures feminism as the same, old, power struggle with only the roles of prey and predator reversed.

This broadening of the issue gives rise to a number of questions. Is it possible to eliminate this power psychology, this war mentality, from human relationships? And if it is possible, what might the result be? One answer is that without the traditional, restrictive pattern of dominance-submission, which governs our lives, the potential character of a relationship is as variable as the proverbial many sided nature of woman, two sides of which are beautifully exemplified by Elizabeth Janeway and Germaine Greer.

Reviewed by Jo A. McManis

Breaking Through, Selling Out, Dropping Dead and Other Notes on Filmmaking, by William Bayer, The Macmillan Company, 227 pp., \$5.95.

Since the rise of McLuanism and the release of *Easy Rider*, filmmaking has taken on the aspects of a religion on many college campuses and has become the avocation of nearly every artistic, semi-artistic and pseudo-artistic student who can get his hands on a camera and a few hundred feet of film. William Bayer's caveat should be required reading for all these student filmmakers, particularly those whose ideals exceed their talent, resources, or devotion to the art.

Arranging his book in encyclopaedic format, Bayer covers a range of obvious subjects, such as Actors, Breaking Through, Cinéma Vérité, Directing, Film Festivals, Laboratories, Producers, 16 and 35, Underground, and Youth Oriented Films. More importantly, however, he also discusses aspects of filmmaking which are equally important but rarely brought up in film classes or brooded over by idealistic students, who feel that a camera, a recorder, and the technical ability to operate them are all that is needed to make films. Included in this list are such diverse topics as Agents, Bankability, Competition, Deferrals and Percentages, Exhibitors, Hollywood, Juniors and Heavies, The Moment, Power, Raising Money, and The Zoo.

Bayer's harshest words are for the Film Schools, Film Students, and Student Films. "Despite a great deal of talk about how times have changed, you don't see lots of talent scouts hanging around film-school campuses." "... most campus filmmaking reflects a terrible indulgence of kids who have no business in the film medium." Such sententious remarks on the business (rather than the art) are scattered throughout the book, and Bayer's criticism, tempered with a healthy wit, is not reserved for students or for student films. Perhaps the best category in the book is that reserved for Message Films. Rather than ranting for or against message films, as some in his position might be prone to do, Bayer gives a terse four word quote from Bob Dylan, who has been more abused by message seekers than anyone since the death of James Joyce.

Breaking Through is both humorous and informative and Bayer moves along easily and comfortably, more in a conversational tone than in a dogmatic one. Bayer will have served the art of film well if he helps one talented individual translate his dreams into a good

film. He will have done an even greater service if he discourages the army of ego-trippers who threaten to destroy any semblance of art in cinematography.

Reviewed by James Swinnen

The Days of Martin Luther King, Jr., by Jim Bishop, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 496 pp., \$8.95.

In the winter of 1884, Mary Baker Eddy, the creator of Christian Science, returned to Boston from a lecture tour in Chicago. In her ears rang the cheers and loving cries of hundreds of people who had filled the Chicago hall to hear her message. And, back in Boston, Mrs. Eddy was stirred, profoundly sensing the religious role Providence had somehow destined her to play.

In the fall of 1943, Madame Chiang Kai-shek returned to battle-torn China after a successful tour of the United States, where she had been lovingly greeted as the symbol of fighting endurance for a people hopelessly overrun by the Japanese enemy. Madame Chiang was moved to tears by her memories of America's friendly gestures toward her beloved China.

In December of 1966, Martin Luther King, Jr. stood before assorted world dignitaries in Festival Hall at the University of Norway and was presented the Nobel Peace Prize, the Western world's highest honor, given because "... Dr. King has succeeded in keeping his followers to the principle of nonviolence ... an undaunted champion of peace ... the first person in the Western world to have shown us that a struggle can be waged without violence ... without Dr. King's confirmed effectiveness of this principle, demonstrations and marches could easily have been violent and ended with the spilling of blood ..."

Like Mary Baker Eddy and Madame Chiang Kai-shek, a moment occurred when a strange deep stirring inside Martin Luther King silently reminded him of the role fate had molded him to play. Unlike the two women, Dr. King ironically didn't live long enough to develop that role largely. He was felled by a bullet on April 4, 1968; a bullet placed in him by a man whose life, unlike Dr. King's, had been a bleak series of uninterrupted failures until that very April 4th day. And that's what this book is all about.

Jim Bishop, the author of *The Day Christ Died* and *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*, has a unique literary capacity: a rat-tat-tat reportorial delivery leading up to a shattering climax. This style, along with Bishop's energetic, painstaking devotion to detail, assures him a comfortable position in the biographical section of any lending library's shelf. *The Days of Martin Luther King, Jr.* sharply contrasts the almost-mystical meteoric rise of a martyr and the dreary, defeating descent of a killer. King was destined to eternal heaven; his assassin, James Earl Ray, was destined to eternal hell. They met on earth.

What makes a saint? What makes a sinner? Charged questions. Martin Luther King, Jr. was blessed at birth by a solid background and a brilliantly retentive, eager mind. James Earl Ray sprouted up from the dusts of ignorance, indolence, and indifference. Unkind circumstances brought out of Ray a streak of viciousness he was too impotent to control. And yet ... millions of other men have backgrounds similar to both Dr. King and James Earl Ray. Sometimes the richest background brings out the worst in man (Egypt's King Farouk); sometimes the poorest background brings out the best in a man (Abraham Lincoln).

So, the key to a saint or sinner isn't found necessarily in his background or his brains. Maybe it's found, like a rare shell, along the seashore of chance. Maybe it's found, along that strange seashore, by a strange spirit inside a few of us.

After all, how many of us are either saint or sinner?

Reviewed by Paul Burns

Baby Perpetua and Other Stories, by Millicent Dillon, Viking Press, 147 pp., \$5.95.

Millicent Dillon has a gracefully firm way about a story. *Baby Perpetua* is a witty and refreshing collection of stories, throbbing with a quiet energy that pushes it easily along, strongly outlining each

episode of life.

Mostly, these stories deal with love or an aberration of love. They tell of the lack of love, the loss of love, the search for love, and substitutes for love. Each story unfolds in a slow evolution which is almost imperceptible until the tale is done. Miss Dillon is in no hurry. Her writing is for those who wish to enjoy its experience. These stories are easily read, and just as easily appreciated.

The incidents related are highly entertaining, with only a few slow points, mostly in "Baby Perpetua." This is due more to length, however, than lack of talent. The title story is perhaps the best in the collection. "Induce" represents another high point; though, in a book so filled with excellent writings, it is difficult to pick which are better than others.

It is in the characterizations, however, that these yarns jump to life. Miss Dillon possesses the rare gift of being able to infuse soul into her words, turning description and dialogue into an old acquaintance. Each of her characters has fears and mannerisms, tics and inhibitions that make it much more than the dull sociological and psychological case studies that infect the works of many modern writers. These are not so much descriptions as they are persons. They are memorable characters, human, breathing, always real.

They are also consistently mature; not a maturity of years, but of emotions. Jayko, five times accused of rape and finally convicted, goes through his trial with a tranquil realization of his fate, even as he quietly vows revenge. Where there is an occasional raging, it always subsides into a sense of deliberateness and purposeful tranquility. These characters know no great explosions, strong speeches, or great flashes of personality. Neither are they boring. They are the force that turns good prose into outstanding writing.

Millicent Dillon represents a strong force in contemporary literature. Her work possesses a freshness and strength that are undeniable. The innovative sense, however, is well tempered with maturity and experience. Her talents as a writer are also undeniable and *Baby Perpetua* should earn her a full measure of plaudits.

Reviewed by James Swinnen

Trespass, by Fletcher Knebel, Pocket Books, 310 pp., \$1.25.

Fletcher Knebel has already made his mark as a popular writer. His books, along with those of Arthur Hailey and Jacqueline Suzanne, sell in the millions and become movies almost as soon as they are published. *Trespass* is probably Knebel's best work yet. It will undoubtedly enhance his reputation among late night and spare time readers. *Trespass* does not pretend to be great literature. It is simply a well put together work, stronger on plot than on prose.

The basic line is simple enough. Whites, from the President to a wealthy lawyer, are torn by the threat of Black revolution. A major shortcoming, however, is Knebel's lack of feeling for the Black idiom. One would not recognize any character in the book as Black if he were not identified as such and used occasional epithets like "honky Whites." For the most part his Blacks are readily interchangeable with Whites.

Knebel's yarn is otherwise believable. The events described are probable, thought-provoking, and sometimes frightening. Almost immediately the reader is lured into the plot and drawn through the tense hours of conflict.

Prose is Knebel's major fault. It is overly descriptive, laying florid traps for the reader interested more in action than in descriptions of silver trays and tea tables. It lacks the tightness and direction required of works of lasting importance. It tends to slow down rather than enhance the story, tempting the reader to skip paragraphs, even pages, in order to maintain some smoothness of action.

Generally Knebel is an excellent plotter with an adequate style. *Trespass* will provide good reading for those who are addicted to the popular novel, being a cut above most. It is also enjoyable entertainment for insomniacs and those who have read everything else.

Reviewed by James Swinnen

The Birds and the Beasts were There, by Margaret Millar, Random House, 1967, \$5.95.

Margaret Millar chose an arresting title for her first book about nature study and her publishers gave it a good recommendation by writing, "The joys and adventures of bird watching and animal feeding in Santa Barbara Canyon are warmly recounted by one of America's famous story tellers."

Miss Millar has been quite successful as a science fiction writer, and it seems that she used the same gift of a fertile and often sadly unscientific imagination in this book, supposedly built on her own authentic observation, that served her so well in writing science fiction. When she writes in the first chapter of the book that she nailed a bird feeder to a young eucalyptus tree and that in a short time the feeder was "halfway to Heaven," one realizes that she not only was writing fiction but also that she is wholly ignorant about how trees grow. Almost everybody, except, of course, Miss Millar, knows that trees grow only at the top and in girth, and a bird feeder nailed six feet from the ground would remain only six feet from the ground for the life of the tree. The evidence of such gross ignorance coupled with a bit of fiction rather than observation puts the whole book under suspicion of being, not the result of the observation of birds and beasts and trees, but rather the work of a fertile imagination.

Reviewed by Lydia Mayfield

Dostoevsky, His Life and Work, by Konstantin Mochulsky, tr. by Michael A. Minihan, Princeton University Press, 687 pp., \$3.95.

Michael A. Minihan's translation of Konstantin Mochulsky's biography of Fyodr Dostoevsky is a welcome addition to materials available in English. It helps us to clarify our picture of Dostoevsky the man and the author.

Mochulsky, a Russian-born professor of Russian literature at the Sorbonne University in Paris, France, from 1922 to 1941, underwent a religious "conversion" in the 1930's, and devoted himself to the society of Orthodox Action. His biography of Dostoevsky, written in 1942 and published in 1947, reveals an "interrelationship of themes" in all of Dostoevsky's works.

In the manner of Ivanov, Mochulsky refers to Dostoevsky's works as "novel-tragedies," dramatic (not epic) in form. He considers Dostoevsky one of the greatest religious and philosophical thinkers in the world, as well as one of the greatest artists. This latter is a new, or at best, a minority view of the novelist. Mochulsky's opinion is that Dostoevsky the philosopher was discovered by the symbolists, while Dostoevsky the artist is being discovered by contemporary critics. He maintains that "in studying the writer's poetics, his composition, techniques, and style, we enter an aesthetic world of the great novelist." Says Mochulsky: "Once and for all let us put an end to the legend about Dostoevsky's stylistic carelessness. The innumerable revisions and reworkings to which he subjected his novels more than adequately testify to the seriousness and severity with which he approached artistic creation." This is certainly in contrast to statements made by other Dostoevsky scholars, who maintain that financial pressures always caused Dostoevsky to write hurriedly, and made it impossible for the novelist to perfect his work, as he was always pressed for time and money.

In his contention that Dostoevsky spoke only of his own experiences, and was always drawn to confession in an artistic form, Mochulsky agrees with the views of Sigmund Freud, in the latter's analysis of Dostoevsky's works in relation to his personal life: "The problem of fathers and children, of crime and punishment, of guilt and responsibility met Dostoevsky at the very threshold of his conscious life. This was a physiological and moral trauma in his being; and it was only at the end of his life in *The Brothers Karamazov* that he freed himself of it by transforming it into a creative work of art."

Of particular value to English speaking students of Dostoevsky are the many letters and documents which are translated from the Russian for the first time.

Dostoevsky's capacity for artistic metamorphosis is discussed at length, beginning with the author's relationship with Shidlovsky. According to Mochulsky, Shidlovsky was the prototype for Dostoev-

sky's first "romantic hero" (i.e. Ordynov in "The Landlady") as well as his last (i.e. Dmitri in *The Brothers Karamazov*).

Balzac's influence on Dostoevsky is given a great deal of consideration in Mochulsky's biography. Mochulsky maintains that Dostoevsky learned the technique of the novel from this French author of the *Comédie humaine*. But it was Gogol who caused the "rebirth" of Dostoevsky the novelist: Gogol "awoke Dostoevsky from his romantic dream. He now saw that reality was unreal." Gogol influenced Dostoevsky, but Dostoevsky was his own man. His early works, as Strakhov pointed out, comprise "a bold and resolute correction of Gogol," or, as Mochulsky states, Dostoevsky "reasoned out" Gogol's ideas for himself, and "posits as his purpose the task of 'rethinking' Gogol."

Mochulsky attributes to Dostoevsky possession of a "mystical gift that seemed to accord him a certain foreknowledge of the future," and in this manner he explains many of Dostoevsky's philosophical ideas.

An interesting interpretation of Dostoevsky's characterization is suggested when Mochulsky states:

First the writer had to assimilate his character's intonations; he had to learn to speak for him, to penetrate the rhythm of his sentences and the peculiarities of the language. Only then would the author discern his character's personality. Dostoevsky's heroes are born out of speech; this is the general law in his creative processes.

He adds, that the assimilation of his character's style was carried to the point of possession—Dostoevsky would become the character he was writing about. Mochulsky supports his views with quotes from Dostoevsky's letters to his brother Michael. Mochulsky, like many other Dostoevsky scholars, points out that it was the religious theme which formed the spiritual center of Dostoevsky's work after his years of penal servitude. Dostoevsky "lived through a period of crisis in a Christian culture and experienced it as his personal tragedy." Dostoevsky's works, according to Mochulsky, depict the fate of man whom God abandoned. In an analysis not unlike that of Berdiaev, Mochulsky views "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" as the culmination of Dostoevsky's work: in place of the God-man appears the man-God who stands beyond morality. This path leads to the herd. Both man-godhood and the herd lead to the suppression of man. The only way out is love of Christ.

Finally, Mochulsky shows a definite connection between Dostoevsky's early works and his later masterpieces, through the development of the character of the double, along with his religious theme.

Mochulsky's Russian text is quite complex, yet Professor Minihan captured all the lexical nuances in his translation, and is to be congratulated upon achieving an accurate, clear, and excellent translation.

Reviewed by Rochelle Ross

Fifty Years of Russian Prose from Pasternak to Solzhenitsyn. ed. by Krystyna Pomorska, MIT Press. Vol. 1, 278 pp., \$10.00; Vol. 2, 354 pp., \$10.00.

It is difficult to understand why the editor included certain selections in this book of Russian prose. Pomorska herself admits that the anthology does not present a "faithful" picture of Russian prose after the 1917 Revolution. What, then, is the purpose of the book?

The editor maintains that the unifying element in the volumes is the apparent freedom of expression in the stories: "... all are unified by one particular aspect: they create their own vision by experimenting with verbal material, forcing themselves from outdated conventions, sometimes called realistic." Considering the first part of this statement, I should think that all authors "experiment with verbal material." As for "freeing themselves from outdated conventions, sometimes called realistic," this statement just is not true of several of the authors in question. And indeed, the introduction to Volume 1 refers to Solzhenitsyn's work as a "continuation of the Russian Classical tradition."

"Aerial Tracks" is one of Pasternak's early stories, and his only early story that deals with the Revolution, and even then only as background. The story is certainly not typical of Pasternak's writing.

Marina Tsvetaeva, who had left Russia during the Civil War and returned in the mid-thirties, did not make any important contributions to Russian literature. Yet she is placed side by side with Evgeny Zamyatin, who is one of the most important literary figures in Russia during the early NEP years.

Alexander Tarasov-Rodyonov, a mediocre writer, is placed next to Isaac Babel—one of the best storytellers of the twentieth century. One could go on. Finally, the question is: what motivated the editor to assemble such an incongruous *melée* in two large volumes? Certainly the volumes could not be used as textbooks—they are entirely too disjointed.

Reviewed by Rochelle H. Ross

Kafka and Prague, by Johann Bauer, tr. P. S. Falla, Praeger Publishers, 199 pp. \$14.95.

This tall, handsome travelog through Kafka's mind and city will delight all Kafka enthusiasts. The original German text of Johann Bauer is clearly and precisely Englished by P.S. Falla. Bauer has uncovered some police records which offer additional biographical information on the Czech German-Jew's travels and activities—especially with women—during the years between 1902 and 1924. One Kafkaesque touch ends the chapter on the new documents: the police were still inquiring about Kafka's place of residence as late as ten years after his death.

The photography of Isidor Pollak, tastefully arranged by Jaroslav Schneider, captures in muted silhouettes and hazy black-white revelations the sense of obscure mystery and troubled artistry which the book's title evokes. By turning page after page, one can wander through the castles and cathedrals of Prague, down cobblestone streets, past gates of foreboding wrought-iron designs, and in and out of Kafka's deep-socketed eyes as he grew from childhood to maturity.

Unfortunately, the book offers no new insights into any of Kafka's works. But it does draw the reader and viewer deeper into Kafka's mind, his emotional responses to his daily office work and his nighttime struggles with his art, and his precarious relationships with various women.

Reviewed by Forrest L. Ingram

Faulkner's Revision of "Absalom, Absalom!": A Collation of the Manuscript and the Published Book, by Gerald Langford, University of Texas Press, 362 pp., \$12.50.

Textual criticism, despite the painstaking drudgery it demands, often provides the basis for important insights into disputed works of literature. In the introduction to his meticulous collation of the manuscript and book versions of Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, Gerald Langford points up several important conclusions which can be drawn from a comparison of the two texts.

In the first place, many of Faulkner's revisions indicate that he not only improved the language of his novel, but also restructured the story. "Most notably," Langford says, Faulkner "changed his mind about having it known from the beginning that Charles Bon was Sutpen's part-Negro son, and he developed Quentin Compson into the pivotal figure of the story instead of leaving him, as he was in the first version, merely one of the four narrators who pieced together the Sutpen chronicle."

Secondly, some of the revisions show Faulkner re-living the novel as he re-wrote it. A telling example occurs in Chapter V, during Rosa's account of being blocked by Clytie from going up to Judith on the day of Bon's death. Reworked versions of this passage occur in four stages of revision in the manuscript record. During each successive stage, the passage not only gets longer, but the emotionality of the scene builds dramatically and thematic strains of the novel are developed more richly. (See Langford, pp. 29-31.)

Contrary to the belief of many critics, Faulkner's revisions do not always lead to increased verbiage. Often he drastically cuts passages down to a bare minimum. He even cuts whole pages with one stroke of the pen. And constantly, he is re-structuring, re-living his characters' lives.

Another service the collation provides is that of correcting assumptions about the novel made by various critics. Floyd Watkins, for example, in "What Happens in *Absalom, Absalom!*" (MFS 13, [Spring 1967], 79-87) had argued that Faulkner's narrators, "like most tellers of stories," exaggerate or use round numbers. The errors and inconsistencies in dates and ages, he said, were intentional on Faulkner's part. But when one compares manuscript and book, one sees that Faulkner attempted to regularize those ages and dates, and that he simply overlooked several passages.

As was his practice, Faulkner wrote *Absalom, Absalom!* first in longhand. He made some changes in the manuscript as he went along, and more changes in the typescript, and still more in the galley proofs. Langford supplies only the manuscript and the book versions of those passages.

Langford's book, of course, is only for Faulkner specialists. The complete text of *Absalom, Absalom!* has to be consulted independently of this collation, which slices out of manuscript and book only those passages which were altered from one version to the other.

Faulkner's handwriting, as one can see by examining several manuscript pages which Langford reproduces in his book, could cause a textual critic eyesore and heartburn. As Lanford says, only the context makes it possible to distinguish between *they* and *them*, for both of which Faulkner uses his own shorthand symbol *th*. Further, the letter *c* is used for both *c* and *s*, and *f* is written the same as *g* or *j*; *is* and *was* are represented by the same squiggle, and a final *-ing* comes out as a mere trailing line.

Those are some of the problems textual critics face. They go through herculean labors in order to advance scholarship one or two small steps. *Faulkner's Revisions* does provide a solid service for Faulkner scholars. But it will leave the general public puzzled at the apparent camel they have been served to swallow.

Reviewed by Forrest L. Ingram

One Time, One Place: A Mississippi Album, by Eudora Welty, Random House, 113 pp., \$7.95.

"... next to unassisted and weaponless consciousness, the [camera is the] central instrument of our time . . ."

The speaker is James Agee who, like Eudora Welty, traveled through a Southern state and recorded what he saw—Agee, in words; Welty, in photographs. To Agee, the camera's importance is its similarity to consciousness, which can—if the seer will—discern the immediate world "centrally and simply, without either dissection into science, or digestion into art, but with the whole of consciousness seeking to perceive it as it stands: so that the aspect of a street in sunlight can roar in the heart of itself as a symphony, perhaps as no symphony can: and all of consciousness is shifted from the imagined, the revisive, to the effort to perceive simply the cruel radiance of what is."

Miss Welty's camera captures the "cruel radiance," freezing what has passed in the continuing present. Her photographs record the time of the Depression and the place of Mississippi. However, she offers them, she says, "not as a social document but to part a curtain, that invisible shadow that falls between people, the veil of indifference to each other's presence, each other's wonder, each other's human plight."

She divides her album into four parts: WORKDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY, and PORTRAITS. The photograph opposite the title page is of a black woman, shoulders back, defiant, were it not for the arms hanging loosely at her side, one hand hidden, the other relaxed. In her ragged sweater with all the buttons intact, her pose recalls Faulkner's Nobel prize speech in which he said that "man will not merely endure: he will prevail." Like Faulkner whose prose is filled with instances of frozen motion, Eudora Welty exhibits what many Southerners are aware of—the burden of time as it passes and brings change to places. This awareness manifests itself in efforts to capture, as Miss Welty says, "a moment's glimpse . . . into what never stops moving, never ceases to express for itself something of our common feeling."

The moment these photographs capture for Eudora Welty is "the moment in which people reveal themselves." In her title photograph the woman, not the background which is blurred, is the focus, the

central subject. In her album there are some pictures of houses—for example, the columned ruins of a Southern mansion, now a foundation for vegetation. There are also scenes of towns: the main street of Grenada, Mississippi, the courthouse square in Canton, the heaven-pointing hand of the church spire in Port Gibson. But the people—at work, at rest, at church—dominate the book. Technically, some of the pictures are out of focus; others are overexposed. Admitting the unsophistication of her tool ("a popular Kodak model one step more advanced than the Brownie"), Miss Welty does not herself find merit in the technical quality of her work; the "merit lies entirely in their subject matter."

For me, the merit is in what the photographs recall. Being from North Louisiana, I find an objective reaction to them impossible, for North Louisiana and Mississippi had and have a great deal in common—the bad and the good. Visually there were the traveling sideshows, the unpainted houses, the courthouse squares, and the people—rural people. These pictures touch much that I am. Perhaps that is why she says they are a family album; they touch something in many of us. For besides the particular time and the particular place, the album speaks universally of the human spirit. Look at the young boy with the kite made of newspaper.

Reviewed by Dawson Gaillard

George Bernard Shaw—A Literary Critique, by G. E. Brown, Arco Publishing Co., 156 pp., \$3.95, pap. \$1.95.

George Bernard Shaw was undoubtedly a very fine dramatist and perhaps a very great thinker, but he was extremely fond of hearing himself talk; and much of what he had to say about religion and politics and women's emancipation, along with other hot issues in his day, have in the normal course of history been ironed out. Yet he remains a rousing playwright to read and see, and his famous play *Candida* still speaks importantly to women on how to pick a mate from between a man of practicality who is dependent and a dreamy poet who displays surprising independence of spirit.

G. E. Brown's short literary critique, put out by Arco, says a very great deal in relatively few pages and, especially for the woman or man who wants a cursory exposure to some of the great Irish-English playwright's basic ideas, this book is invaluable. George Bernard Shaw lived to be ninety-four years old and his brilliant mind never lost its keenness; his tongue and pen never lost their bite. It was Shaw who claimed (expanding on the notions of nineteenth-century German philosopher, Nietzsche) that nature is constantly striving to perfect a better, more fully self-realized man, a superman in fact, and until that day comes, woman's work will always be cut out for her . . . for generations to come, in other words, she need never fear idleness or stagnation or lack of purpose.

A somewhat jarring but stimulating idea, girls!

Reviewed by Paul Burns

A Thousand Golden Horns, by Gene Fernet, The Pendell Co., 171 pp., \$7.50.

A Thousand Golden Horns is a musical dip into the nineteen-forties. It recalls Charlie Barnet's *Cherokee*, Duke Ellington's *Take the "A" Train*, Glenn Miller's *Moonlight Serenade*, Erskine Hawkins' *Tuxedo Junction*, Kay Keyser's *Thinkin' of You*.

Music, perhaps more than words or even pictures, captures the elusive, haunting sense of the past. And the peculiar *schmaltz* of the nineteen-forties: the high-camp hair-do's, the low-toned dreams, the genuine and rather simple Lily Tomlin-like reality (which she satirizes so expertly on *Laugh-In*), is perhaps most easily evoked by the era's musical output. The orchestra leaders who had the big bands, and the small ones, were hard-working, colorful, talented people and *A Thousand Golden Horns* gives you pictures and captions briefly illuminating these music men.

Today group-music of a different type has replaced the somewhat autocratic set-ups of the past and unquestionably this reflects today's youthful life-styles, today's much more heterogeneous population. But a look at yesterday is always a good way to place today in a much

more understandable perspective, and the music of the nineteen-forties mirrored those times fully as much as Glen Campbell and Bobby Sherman mirror today's.

So, why not sit down for an hour or so and look at the mirrors in *A Thousand Golden Horns* . . . you'll have fun!

Reviewed by Paul Burns

Cold War in a Country Garden, by Lindsay Gutteridge, G. P. Putman's Sons, 189 pp., \$5.95.

At the age of fifty-nine, Jonathan Swift, an Englishman who had been born in Dublin in 1667, produced the most original, and vicious, satire on humankind that the world had known since the time of the Greek playwright Aristophanes. The book was *Gulliver's Travels*, and like several other blockbuster classics, Swift's is still read with meaning today—by both adults and children.

Lindsay Gutteridge is forty-six, an art director for a leading London advertising agency, and *Cold War in a Country Garden*—the tale of a daring British experiment to miniaturize men to one-quarter of an inch (in order to lick overpopulation and all our ecology problems)—is Gutteridge's first novel. It's articulately amusing, even though there is one great big problem.

Mathew Dilke, our hero, is a composite of Lemuel Gulliver and James Bond—according to the proudly-written blurb on the fly-leaf—and I think therein lies the key to the difficulty. It is clever to create a character who, like Gulliver, must suddenly accommodate himself to a world turned upside-down by a dramatic switch in dimensions. Lemuel Gulliver saw the normal world diminished by the tiny Lilliputians; Mathew Dilke sees the normal world magnified three hundred times by his own scientific dwarfing. This means that tiny ants, caterpillars, and spiders now loom as gigantic enemies; it means that our hero must adjust to a startlingly new world where previous inconsequentials, like dust and waterdrops and pebbles, all at once become formidable friends or odious enemies. The imaginative potential, for drama and comedy, of such a reversal in the geometry of man and his world is immense. But instead of exploring that potential, Lindsay Gutteridge concentrates on the details of simple adventure, and that simply isn't clever.

The flyleaf blurb is correct; in the beginning of *Cold War*, you think Mathew Dilke, in his micro-world, will gain savage insights into the macro-world of normal men that he left and can now view with peculiar perspective. Gulliver did this, but Dilke doesn't . . . probably because he, before long in the novel, switches from a Gulliver-like adventurer to a James Bondian type, and everyone knows that Bond is too interested in things like bed and intrigue to concern himself much with the intricacies of human personality.

Making your protagonist a composite of two men, or two types of men, is probably a dangerous thing to do . . . unless the types complement or contradict each other in some exciting way. Gulliver and James Bond tend to negate each other, leaving the reader to concentrate upon the finely-wrought, witty details—at which British writers are so expert.

Reviewed by Paul Burns

Jelly, by Jack Ansell, Arbor House, 221 pp., \$5.95.

At the end of W. Somerset Maugham's short-story masterpiece, *Sadie Thompson*, (1921), the evangelical middle-aged Reverend Davidson rapes the miserable young trollop he has recently converted. And then, in a paroxysm of shame and guilt, Reverend Davidson runs out and slits his wrists. Aside from the fact that the fifty-paged *Sadie Thompson* is a stylistic pearl—not one iridescent word of it is unnecessary, and not one syllable of it is excess—Maugham's classic short story grapples with one of the universal themes of mankind: spirit versus body.

Jelly, Jack Ansell's latest excursion into the motivations behind the mores of middle-class American Jews (Ansell tried this before in his *The Shermans of Mannerville*), is the tale of a respectable, middle-aged Reform rabbi, in modern New Orleans, whose obsession for a

luscious, over-sexed, late-teens lovely named Jelly, causes him to lose his wife, his still-born child, his self-respect, almost his faith in God. Unlike *Lolita* (Nabokov's wondrously vacuous girlie in the 1960 novel), Jelly seeths with artistic, poetic urges which apparently lie right behind her foul mouth. Her words are a blend of filth and philosophy. She possesses enough projection to obtain a part in a little-theater production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, thereby allowing the author of this book to throw in some biting bromides on man's long suffering nature and his proclivity for political witch-hunts. Jelly births a sweet-boy child who no doubt represents the symbolic bridge between Jews and Gentiles. She has a herculean capacity for drugs and drink.

The downfall of dignified man is the stuff of tragedy and the hero of *Jelly*, Rabbi Jacob Weiss, plunged mighty low; therefore, the book is tragic. It's also artfully conceived, with an impressionistic background of New Orleans and Gulf Coast scenes: the restaurants, the beaches, the bars, the French Creole and Negro flavors. Ansell ingeniously weaves nostalgic past into brutal present by means of fragments from long-gone songs and brush-stroke descriptions of yesterday. The juxtaposition of the dreamy, sensitive main character and the realistic antagonists swirling around him is carried off well.

The theme of this novel ostensibly is the clash between flesh and faith. But midway through *Jelly*, a Conservative rabbi speaks lines to the Reform hero which are the book's backbone. The rabbi says: ". . . Jack, I have felt much but learned little in this life . . . but, this I have learned . . . the search for God is essentially the search for self . . . no matter how much we learn, no matter what the level of our sophistication, we're still all of us sophomores passing as seniors. Nothing more, Jack, nothing more . . . Jacob, boy. . . ."

It's rather difficult to argue with words like that!

Reviewed by Paul Burns

The Verticle Smile, by Richard Condon, The Dial Press, 334 pp., \$6.95.

It is difficult to categorize reactions to Condon's latest book. *The Verticle Smile* is billed as a satire, although the satire lies primarily in the recognition of the prototypes which Condon uses to construct his characters, however oblique his process may have been. A classification of the things satirized would require pages. The main targets are sex, pornography, the Mafia, Women's Lib, computers, government surveillance, and Presidential politics.

Briefly the plot involves an attempt to discourage the sexual adventures of the mother-in-law of "Funky Dunc" Mulligan, the Attorney General's candidate for the Senate from New York, and then for the Presidency afterwards. Mulligan is inept, bland, perverted, insecure, and totally without a mind of his own—which makes him perfect Presidential timber in Condon's not-so-mythic universe. The temptation to identify Mulligan with Richard Nixon is strong. At least the man speaks like Nixon, when he speaks at all. However, the process of identification is not so simple, nor is it accurate. All the reader can say for certain is that at times several of the main characters "feel" like identifiable persons. At other times they do not.

Perhaps the subtlest, and at the same time the most salient of Condon's targets is the modern hack writer, the novelist whose characters perform herculean sexual feats, the novelist who clouds his dialogue with interminable digressions, the novelist who encumbers his tale with tedious description of the chic clothes his heroine wears.

Condon is attempting to encapsule modern America. It is difficult to determine how well he succeeds. The reader keeps waiting for the book to click, for it to fall together, to drag him along on its own power. It never does. Nor does it really end. It merely concludes, with several people who have been done wrong having vengeance wreaked upon them (through an interestingly complex process) but with Duncan Mulligan still running for the Senate and the Presidency, though under a different party banner. Perhaps the reason why *The Verticle Smile* doesn't click is because it is not compact enough. Condon seems to be aiming at too many targets, attempting to hit them all dead center, rather than limiting himself to more easily defined ones. He lacks the sharp satiric bite we find in a writer like Swift because he lacks an easily identifiable main target, which, if hit, has repercussions

on all the minor targets. Condon's book is pleasant light reading, although it is just as well forgotten if one has something better to do.

Reviewed by James Swinnen

Farewell to the South, by Robert Coles, Little, Brown & Co., 400 pp., \$7.95.

The introduction to this tour de force by Robert Coles sets the unorthodox background of a brilliant and sensitive psychiatrist who made his home in the South for more than ten years and thus did not want to be another "Yankee visitor" doing research reports. His approach is one of an observer without moral judgment. The reader soon realizes that Coles does not use a ploy for opportunistic or mercenary reasons. The articles, many dated and republished from previous magazines, taken together are a complete summation of his efforts at understanding the changing life-style of southerners, both black and white.

No matter which race he quotes, his compassionate comments and lack of the usual professional terms are a rarity in such a study. The long pages of personal talk sessions do not lead to generalizations and pigeon-holing of cases. Rather they show a self-discovery by the author. He is not a "hothouse" critic sitting in an ivory tower of pity. There are times when the reader feels the author is too self-denigrating, particularly in the "Observer and the Observed" (p. 364) when he says: "I rather stumbled into the study that has now become my life-work." To be sure it is a life-work, but to make it so, there was a strong spark of dedication to the humanitarian understanding of a region long in the process of turmoil and change (pp. 372 and 373).

The magnificent presentation of the different thought processes of blacks and whites often makes the reader try self-analysis and re-evaluation. There is a startling reality in the simple philosophy sometimes expressed by the most illiterate black. For example, in "The Weather of the Years," a little girl quotes her old grandmother who tried to explain the difference between a child and a baby: "A baby is afraid of everyone—so indulge her. Someday she'll grow up." And again: "You're no longer a child when you catch yourself thinking back."

In each of these essays Dr. Coles is as fascinating as any writer of fiction could be. The key to his great success lies in the role of listener, not moralizer. At the conclusion a sadness prevails to think that not only is this a farewell to the South as a region, but it is also a personal farewell for Dr. Coles from his preoccupation with the southern problem.

This is one of the most erudite books on the changing status of the South. Dr. Coles will win a permanent place in your heart as he did to all those folks, white and black, with whom he and his wife lived for more than a decade. Along with the familiar "What the world needs now is love, sweet love," let us add the world needs more listeners like Dr. Coles.

Reviewed by Agnes Grosse

Poetry

The Book of Folly, by Anne Sexton, Houghton Mifflin, 105 pp., \$5.95. **The Poems of St. John of the Cross**, tr. by Willis Barnstone, New Directions, 124 pp., \$2.45. **Pierre Reverdy, Selected Poems**, tr. by Kenneth Rexroth, New Directions, 78 pp., \$2.25. **Footprints**, by Denise Levertov, New Directions, 58 pp., \$5.00. **Notes of an Alchemist**, by Loren Eiseley, Charles Scribner's Sons, 125 pp., \$6.95. **the Eater**, by Peter Michelson, The Swallow Press, 119 pp., \$6.50. **Of All the Dirty Words**, by Richard Shelton, University of Pittsburgh Press, 82 pp., \$2.95. **Invisibility is the Art of Survival**, by Edwin Brock, New Directions, 88 pp., \$7.50. **Braving the Elements**, by James Merrill, Atheneum, 73 pp., \$5.95. **The Human Season**, by Archibald MacLeish, Houghton Mifflin, 161 pp., \$6.00.

Anne Sexton's *Book of Folly* beats sensuous beats on a kettle drum for all seasons, for all pieces. Chicken bones whitened by the moon

or someone who fades "out of sight/like a last signalman/wagging his lantern/for the train that comes no more."; whatever in the pantry of grapy breasts, bees, spattering blood, sea over prow, old you's of intimate kind, poltergeist kind, Santa kind, the beat of death lurks within each sensuality, the murderer death of psyche, limbs, genes; even great Jesus with his useless penis and climbing dreams is part of the beat that becomes a mouth that eats "all beautiful women."; and death recaptures its proper holes, outhouse, sea, well. Readers with five senses will know every morsel or limb that death strips from human life and love as he or she works through this volume, always a volume moving from surprise to surprise in the enormous variety of homely images or morgue symbols that crowd each poem just above the beat, the omnipresent beat of the drum of death. *Or The Book of Folly* by Anne Sexton is a black arm band on the horn of plenty.

New Directions has issued a charming translation of *The Poems of Saint John of the Cross* by Willis Barnstone, who, as well, wrote a perceptive introduction to the poems. Barnstone makes briefly the point that the most successful poems of John of the Cross are those that can stand alone as purely love poems, and that they are the ones closest to the mystical experience if not directly derivative from it. The greater the ecstasy, the more autonomous and independent the images expressing the ecstasy become. It took Georges Morel's three volumes, *Le Sens de l'Existence selon Jean de la Croix* (Aubier), to make nearly the same point. "Dark Night," "Spiritual Canticle," "O Living Flame of Love!," each poem freshly translated, and soberly if that is possible, support Barnstone's insight about the this-worldly autonomy of mystical poetry. Other poems illustrate the difference between symbol and allegory, between mystical imagery and description of mystical process. This is a fine little volume, Barnstone's edition, a neat aid to those looking to define the autonomy of image in poetry or religion.

In *Pierre Reverdy, Selected Poems*, French originals, English translation by Kenneth Rexroth, one finds poems that fashion a purely natural transcendence, the result of freeing imaged experience from sign function, causal or temporal, which points out as do geometric lines how walls, trees, alleys, and people relate. More like freeing tones from the music as tones, as lasting tones that speak together but not to one another. With Rexroth's commentary arguing for the non-sentimentality of such linguistic occurrence (as would be true, Yvor Winters says, according to Rexroth, of religious mystical poetry). But Rexroth's claim that aesthetic experience is not necessitated while religious ecstasy is, though both grow out of the common moment of image experience, does not explain the freedom required in the mystical experience by both persons in the relationship, god and creature, nor, in certain mystics, the impulse from the very experience to come to form (poetic in this instance, as in John of the Cross) in order that the experience itself be known for what it is by the ecstatic, and be known to the hearers of the ecstatic (the communal gift theory of religious mystical experience); nor does Rexroth's interpretation explain those mysticisms (Simone Weil's) inaugurated and maintained by verbal structures (a piece by George Herbert; "I used to think I was merely reciting it as a beautiful poem, but without my knowing it the recitation had the virtue of a prayer."), as in reading the word in Islam or in Christianity, especially medieval; nor does Rexroth's interpretation have the suaveness Willis Barnstone's does with respect to the transcendence an image alone has in the natural order no matter what the interpersonal relationship may be, the autonomous image. But Rexroth's introduction and his translation of Reverdy provide an intense experience of the French poet, the English translator, and that translator's extraordinary depth of spirituality, natural or otherwise. The note of concrete transcendence has been struck in poetry. An extraordinary experience.

Footprints, by Denise Levertov; poems of quiet, concrete charm; poems that seem to know more in saying less; with a few abstract nods toward war terrors in language that loses its grip on the ground; image vignettes; and with a sure touch, spiritual depths, spiritual in a classic religious sense. Whatever the prestige these poems may or

may not have in the valued file, they breathe the confidence one expects of prestige in poetry, the depth of field, the at-homeness with great human passion and perplexity. In "Forest Altar, September" Levertov contains in minimal images what maximal abstractions have always claimed as their warren, revelations of total source:

I'll look
down into paradise.

Thy moss gardens, the deep
constellations of green, the striate
rock furred with emerald,
inscribed with gold lichen,
with scarlet!

Thy smooth
acorns in roughsurfaced
precise cups!

Thy black
horns of plenty!

A quiet gem of a book; a few hoarse cries; a deposit of feeling simple and deep.

Readers are not ordinarily presented with poetry that is emotionally authentic enough to ward off damaging comparison with the mechanics of poetry stated in manuals or employed in the field. *Notes of an Alchemist* by Loren Eiseley has managed an idiosyncratic security. It is the work of a scientist shaman present to nature with a comprehending eye who writes a wisdom poetry with roots in sacred wonder, *participation mystique*, not in the thin, often bushwhacker cynicism of a Quohelath. The verse forms are frequently arbitrary in *Notes*; frequently poems begin with a revving up prose; at times moral judgments appear, recognitions of god or sacred forces or simple seeming catechetical conclusions. However awkward the mechanics may be, the poetry of this volume succeeds in grasping the deep throb of evolved nature and man in the relic forms the earth yields to pick and shovel or to the mind's arrow. By touching through close examination the traces of creation itself, Eiseley, in this poetry, summons up great questions in the details of their horror and their ecstasy, the death of the least living thing, infinity in the eye of the snow tiger, life and death in molecular, animal, or human strife. The power of the problems, raised from such confrontation with awesome evidence, suffuses the poems with a mood that is noble, gracious, archaic in many ways, which preserves the reader's attention from falling on faulty mechanics as the last impression, or on the risks of dogma or sentimentality. The volume is best left to its own laws, and for that reason tasted deeply.

Peter Michelson would probably review his own book of poems, *the Eater*, as a mixture of smart ass, grab ass, horse's, pig's, ass of all kinds, brought about by a confetti-like vocabulary plentifully thrown at acts of eating, copulating, divorcing, baby beating, Indian cheating, Vietnam destroying, and assorted minor acts; producing a pelting of words with Victorian, Elizabethan, Horatian Classical, Holden Caulfieldy (aged forty) sounds that charm, revolt, bore, turn sentimental before one's very eyes, repeat themselves predictably, unpredictably, and leave the reader of the entire work with the sense that if this poetry ever moves beyond the kid stage the world will hear an angel sing.

For starters, just sample some of the images of Richard Shelton's *Of All the Dirty Words*. From "Suicide":

He stands like an island off the coast
of despair and his lover kneels before him.
She fondles him, circles his waist
with her arms. Slowly her lips rise to his.
He goes down to her singing.

from "The Pilgrims Who Sleep in the Park":

Now we hear young leaves who suddenly begin
to talk to one another as if many delicate women
dressed in silk had just entered a room.

from "Watching the War":

my shadow leans against a table
a little man with his extra hands
in his extra pockets
like a guest without responsibilities
complaining of his treatment.

The entire collection sprouts such images as the desert sprouts rare flowers. The abstract, quite impalpable, values of sadness, fratricide, filial piety, despair, hope, akin to desert sand, find embodiment in Shelton's imagination, an unusual reversal of poetic process, at least in spiritual sorts of poetry. Loneliness seeks form; form lies spread over the desert; even "the other world" seems to be a museum of the desert. The most attractive quality of Richard Shelton's verse is its sublimated sensuality which manifests a quiet, intense awareness of nature and person consciously dying or dead and watching themselves, in either state, in the mirrors of "oh my desert"

loveliest
most silent sanctuary
more fragile than forests
more beautiful than water . . .

yours is the only death I cannot bear.

The imaginative hardware of Edwin Brock's *Invisibility is the Art of Survival* proves to be the most provoking ingredient of this collection of previously published *cum* newly done poems. The trite materials of bland home life often crowd poems that ask boredom's questions, what happened to the heart toward wife, parent, children, lovers, where is it in curtains, at breakfast, in picnics, in family brawls, or deaths of people one should love. For all the five-and-dime ring to this imagery, something real emerges, something magical at times. "In Memory of My Grandmother" supplies a good example. The mad grandmother, in an unintended moment, lights too much of a fire in the hearth. They arrive too late.

Perhaps it was the knowledge that the fire
would be extinguished finished her. And
that nobody in the smoke-filled room had seen
that all the flames had started in her eyes.

In the later poems of the book, nature images control the tone of the poems, more exalted now, and more universal in their appeal, with more intensely expressed and felt emotions, as in "Four Landscapes and a Gull" or "Experience." This poetry is spare and powerful, e.g., "Accident": "it may be/the bang/is a surprise/and he did not/know/ that once you make/a hole/the whole/lonely world/crashes/into it." The household imagery Brock uses closes in on itself too often so that the poet's search for fire is obscured. The nature imagery Brock uses opens out, is every bit as concrete and particular, and supplies him with powerful means of treating the problems that provoke him.

The language of James Merrill's *Braving the Elements* is whipped to thickness every page no matter what the theme, grand or trivial. The volume provides an experience of language primarily; words, almost separately, draw the reader into their own special cream, or past, or maze, or lock step:

That morning's buzzing vacuum be fed

By ash of metropolitan evening's
Smoker inveterate between hot bouts
of gloating over scrollwork,

The piano (three-legged by then like a thing in a riddle)
Fingered itself provocatively. Tones
Jangling whose tuner slept, moon's camphor mist

On the parterre compounding
Chromatic muddles which the limpid trot
Flew to construe. . .

Merrill writes an unusual poetry, but the surface tension of it is so great it stalls the reader, requires a nearly non-profit work load of him or her. The virtuosity of vocabulary, rhyme, imploding image, of craftsmanship, is impressive, overawing in fact, and may merit what the

jacket of the book claims about Merrill that "there is no one writing poetry in English who is better than James Merrill. . . ." I think the poet is trapped by his own virtuosity, as a scholar would be trapped in a column of the OED. His attempt to thicken imaginatively or emotionally every word susceptible of it works against the feeling and the vision of his poetry, both smothered by the brilliance of technical achievement. From "Days of 1971":

. . . and azure Lombardy is given

Back, as the Virgin of Officialdom
Severely draped twists on her throne to peak
at the forbidden crags of kingdom come
Before resuming her deft hunt and peck.

Whoever appreciates powerful formality in poetry, a unique resumption of classical voicing, will prize having *The Human Season* by Archibald MacLeish. The poems put in the volume come from MacLeish's own notion of what collections should provide of an author's work, and from his desire to manifest his poetic attempt "to come to terms with the tragic sense of time and change which afflicted the generation of the two Great Wars, the wars of the fall of the old world." The blending of *dulce et utile* is near perfect as the poems confront silliness and sorrow let loose in MacLeish's generation by political corruption, youth-gnawing war, by loves akin to the substanceless night, or the lasting round of seasons. Wisdom literature can provide deep passion, especially when expressed in gracious, slow moving verse; though the risk is great for the poet of forcing moral judgment on the images and on the reader, something MacLeish does particularly when scorning the gods as though the very flesh and bone he loves had not fashioned the gods he scorns. His verse is perfection itself; archaic, sometimes puffed up; his rhymes, sure rings; his themes respectable as any raised by even the most stridently relevant of today's poets. *The Human Season* is a lasting book. "The Hero" stands out among other poems as the archetype of MacLeish in his classical, Wisdom mood, though Stoicism, somewhat heavily insisted on, provides the dominant wisdom. The perfectly lovely "Poem in Prose" reveals MacLeish in a moment of unrheterical and profound authenticity. "Where the Hayfields Were" displays elements of balladic charm, playfulness, and bell-like fantasy which MacLeish can turn on at almost any moment in any poem.

Danced as she did in enchanted circles,
Curtseyed and danced along the quiet air;
Slightly she danced in the stillness, in the twilight,
Dancing in the meadows where the hayfields were.

A man could quarrel with the wisdom expressed in *The Human Season*; he could raise questions of sentimentality, about the narrow range of metaphor, of image, about the didactic strain. But listen to the verse, listen to the classical nostalgia about life, love; to the genuine moments that preach nothing, that do not mean but be.

Reviewed by Francis Sullivan

Music

Phony Quadraphony

Quadraphonic sound is the newest confusion in the high fidelity field, and as with past innovations in the recording industry, a lot of

misinformation is being given out, a lot of solid information withheld, and a great deal of quackery indulged in.

Quadraphonic sound involves the use of four channels to deliver musical material whereas stereophonic systems deliver on two channels. In both systems, no matter how the live performance is miked and how it is reprocessed for home reproduction, the resulting sound is artificial and definitely not "true to nature" as one of the quadraphonic advertisers boasts. Brilliantly lifelike, yes, but magnificently unnatural.

Where does one put the two extra speaker systems involved in quadraphony? The most widely accepted present practice is to place them behind the listener to achieve "rear ambience": those other sounds heard behind the listener in a concert hall. But does a person really hear these other voices from other parts of the concert room when he is attending live performances? The concept is highly disputable, and, even if one were to buy the assumption, it could then be reasoned that we don't want quadraphony but rather octaphony or, ideally, innumerable-phony in which a speaker system delivers every musical sound perceived by every listener from each listener's position in the concert hall during a live performance. Mad as that suggestion sounds, it is entirely possible that it will be produced, with at least one manufacturer probably claiming that it is God-phony.

One Japanese manufacturer of a quad system advertises: "The effect is like sitting in the middle of the studio where the recording was made. (Stereo gives you breadth of sound. Quadraphonic gives you depth as well.) Imagine being one of the choir singing Handel's 'Messiah.' What he heard, you hear."

Now that's really a weird choir boy who can stand in the middle of the recording studio while he's in the middle of the choir on stage and who also is completely aware of the quality of the sounds he is making as they are perceived by others at the rear of the hall.

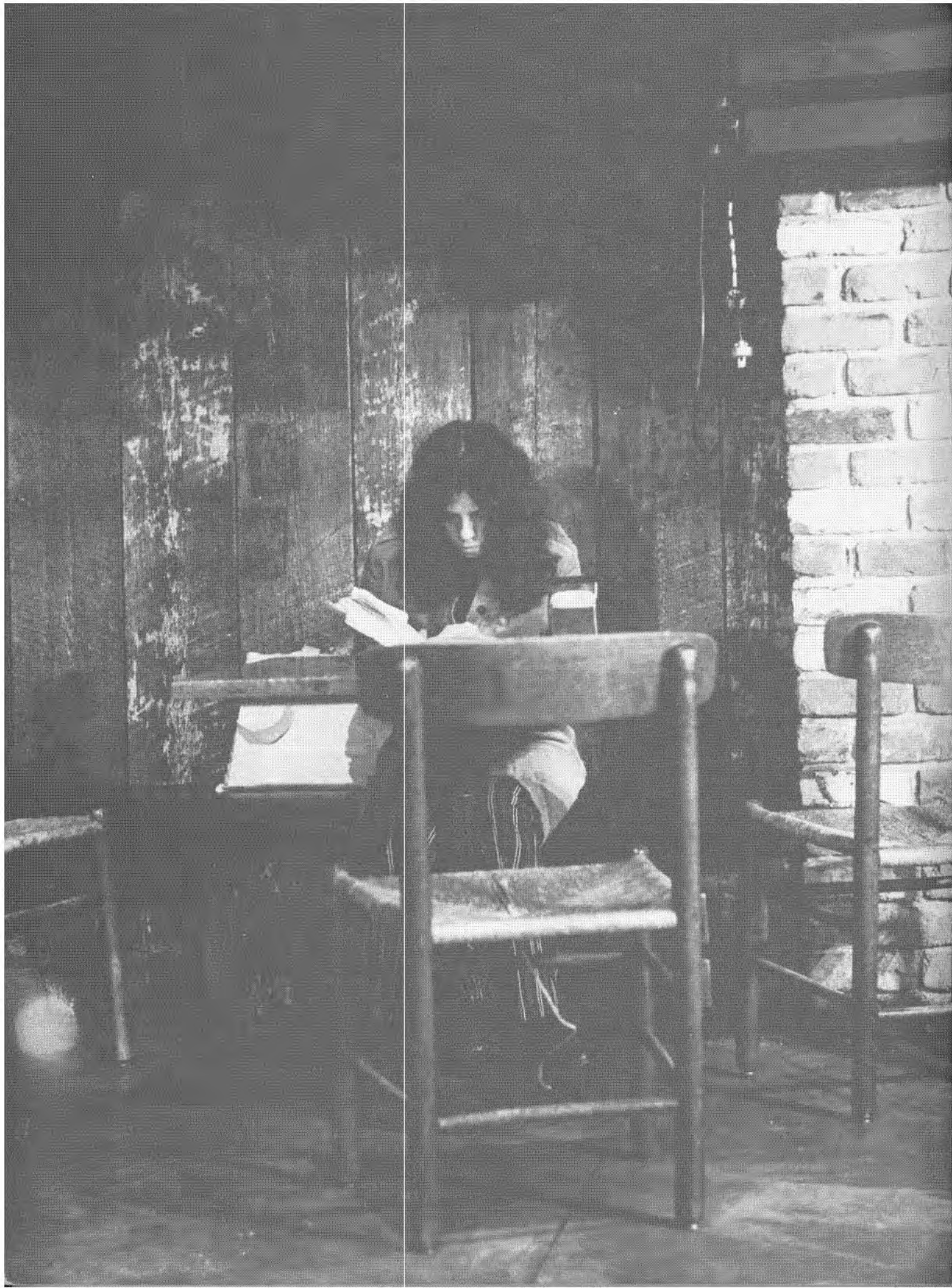
Another distortion in the same ad reads: "If you start buying Quadraphonic records before you buy Quadraphonic sound, don't worry. You can play them on a stereo system. And you'll get the full stereo effect without damaging their Quadraphonic qualities."

This is more advertising hoopla. Space here does not permit going into the technical details of why this promise is essentially a lie. Your quad record will play quite well on your stereo system, but because it is a disc made for quad reproduction, some of its possibilities as a stereo-only disc have been altered and, depending on the engineering gimmickry involved, possibly reduced in brilliance or "presence."

The stereo sound source is located in its traditional position in front of the listener. If to this effect there is combined the "rear ambience" qualities of quadraphonic sound—a two in one form—the result is a compromise. The sound engineer can give preference to one or the other, or else hold both well below their individual optima. As currently produced, stereo recording is suffering. The optimum microphone placement for stereo recording is not identical with placement for quadraphony, but to record and release on disc a stereo and a quad version of classical performances would involve another nightmarish situation for the classical recording industry which is suffering from almost-terminal financial cancer right now.

Quadraphonic sound properly produced is a new sound thrill, and I'm all for it if it is produced with artistic imagination and an artistic sense of responsibility. Quad sound may complement stereo but it cannot supersede it. At this juncture, reliable information from the sound industry—not misleading and immaterial information—is desperately needed.

Don Brady



Notes on Contributors

DON BRADY, an associate professor of Drama at Loyola, has an abiding interest in classical music, and has previously contributed music reviews to the NOR.

PAUL BURNS teaches elementary school in Dayton, Ohio; his book reviews and poetry have been included in *Leatherneck*, *Haiku Highlights*, *Modern Haiku*, and local newspapers.

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ROBERT B. COCHRAN studied at Northwestern University and taught at the University of Southern Mississippi. He is presently a traveling lecturer for the Woodrow Wilson National Humanities Series.

BARBARA DE LA CUESTA worked as a journalist and teacher in South America for eleven years; she now does volunteer work in a federal housing project in Massachusetts. Her articles have appeared in the *Caracas Daily Journal*, *Quarterly Review of Literature*, and the NOR.

GEORGE H. DOUGLAS is an assistant professor of English at the University of Illinois, specializing in American studies. Many journals have published his work, including *American Quarterly*, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, and *The Nation*. He is currently completing a book on American literary criticism.

JAMES DOYLE has served as administrative assistant to the Governor of Wisconsin. He recently resumed teaching poetry and creative writing at the University of Northern Colorado, and has poems appearing and forthcoming in *Four Quarters*, *The Ohio Review*, and *Southern Humanities Review*.

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MATTHEW GRACE is an assistant professor of English at Baruch College in New York; his most recent publications include a book *A Reader's Guide to Fifty European Plays*, and an essay on Norman Mailer which will appear in a volume to be published in 1973, *The Contemporary Novel: Essays in Criticism*.

AGNES GROSSE writes a book review column for the *Deerfield Beach Observer* in Florida, and also serves as book review critic for various publishing firms. She is currently writing a non-fiction book on Georgette Heyer.

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BEVERLEE HUGHES, a co-editor of the poetry journal *Yes*, has contributed poems to numerous small magazines, including *University of Windsor Review*, *Forum*, *Northeast*, and *Latitudes*.

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THOMAS JOHNSON teaches high school English in Memphis. The editor of *Stinktree Press*, he has published several poems, and is presently at work on a first book.

JOHN JUDSON has published poems in over 200 magazines and periodicals, including *North American Review*, *The New York Times*, and *The Nation*; he teaches English at the University of Wisconsin, and is presently editing a series of books *Voyages to the Inland Sea* concerning contemporary Midwest poetry.

WILLIAM KUHNS is an assistant professor in the Department of Communications at Loyola. He has published more than ten books on subjects ranging from *Environmental Man* to *The Electronic Gospel*; his most recent book, a first novel, is entitled *The Reunion*.

HEIDI LEMMERHIRT studied at the University of Wisconsin; her work has appeared in several anthologies, including *The Shore Poetry Anthology*.

LYDIA MAYFIELD is a retired teacher of languages and history who combines free-lance journalism and farming in Halstead, Kansas. She has contributed to the *Christian Herald*, *Together*, *Farmland*, and *Kansas Magazine*.

JO A. MCMANIS, an assistant professor of English at Loyola, has had an article published in the *Southern Review*, and has contributed book reviews and poetry to previous NOR's.

C. J. MCNASPY, former fine-arts editor of *America*, is a widely travelled scholar and author of several books; he is now book review editor for the NOR.

DONALD MOYER has contributed poems to such periodicals as *Rolling Stone*, *Poetry*, *Minnesota Review*, and *Antaeus*; "Writing" was taken from his volume in preparation *The Comic Book of Eden*.

NICOLE (Nicole N. Nicholson) is a legal newspaper typist; her poems have appeared in journals such as *The Smith*, *Anthology of American Poetry II*, and *International Who's Who of Poetry*.

CONRAD RAABE is Chairman of the Department of Political Science at Loyola. He has recently published two articles dealing with Canada's relations with China, one of which appeared in Johns Hopkins' *ACSUS Newsletter*, the other in a collection of essays entitled *Western Nations' with China*, edited by Arthur Shahnke.

LUCY REED, an advertising and public relations manager for a brokerage firm in Missouri, is also a member of the St. Louis Writer's Guild; *New Hampshire Poetry Magazine*, *St. Louis Poetry Center Speaking*, and *Pot Pourri* have published her work.

STEVE RODAY is the present publisher of *University Review*, and previous editor of *New York Poetry*; he has published numerous interviews and articles.

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HARRIET SIROF is a free lance writer living in Brooklyn. Her fiction has appeared in *North American Review*, an anthology entitled *Voices of Brooklyn*, and various children's magazines, including *More* and *Know Your World*. She is currently working on a novel which is nearing completion.

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HELEN SORRELLS has won numerous awards for her poetry; *Prairie Schooner*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Massachusetts Review*, and *The Fiddlehead* are among the magazines in which her work has appeared.

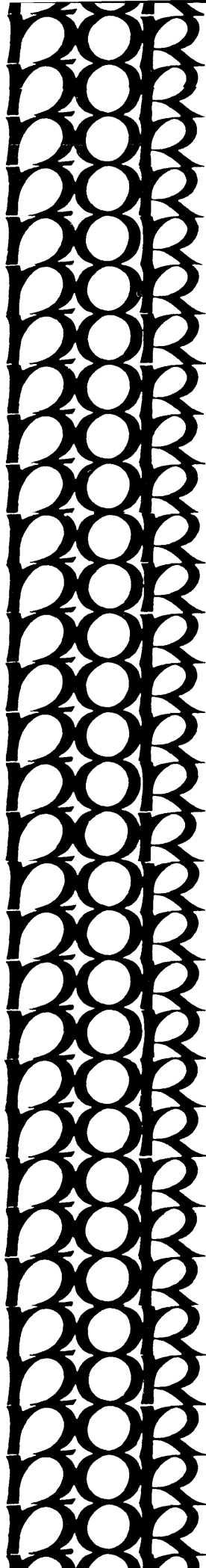
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JANICE WARNKE has taught at Berkeley, Columbia, NYU, and CCNY. Her short stories and essays have appeared in *Yale Review*, *the London Magazine*, and *New Republic*; she has also published two novels, *The Narrow Lyre* (Harper and Row) and *A pursuit of Furies* (Random House).

THOMAS A. WEST, JR. is the author of three novels, including *Island of the Blessed* (to be published soon), a collection of short stories, and a volume of poetry; his work has also appeared in *Transatlantic Review*, *Trace*, and *Four Quarters*.



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