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THE SOUTH IN THE 1970's

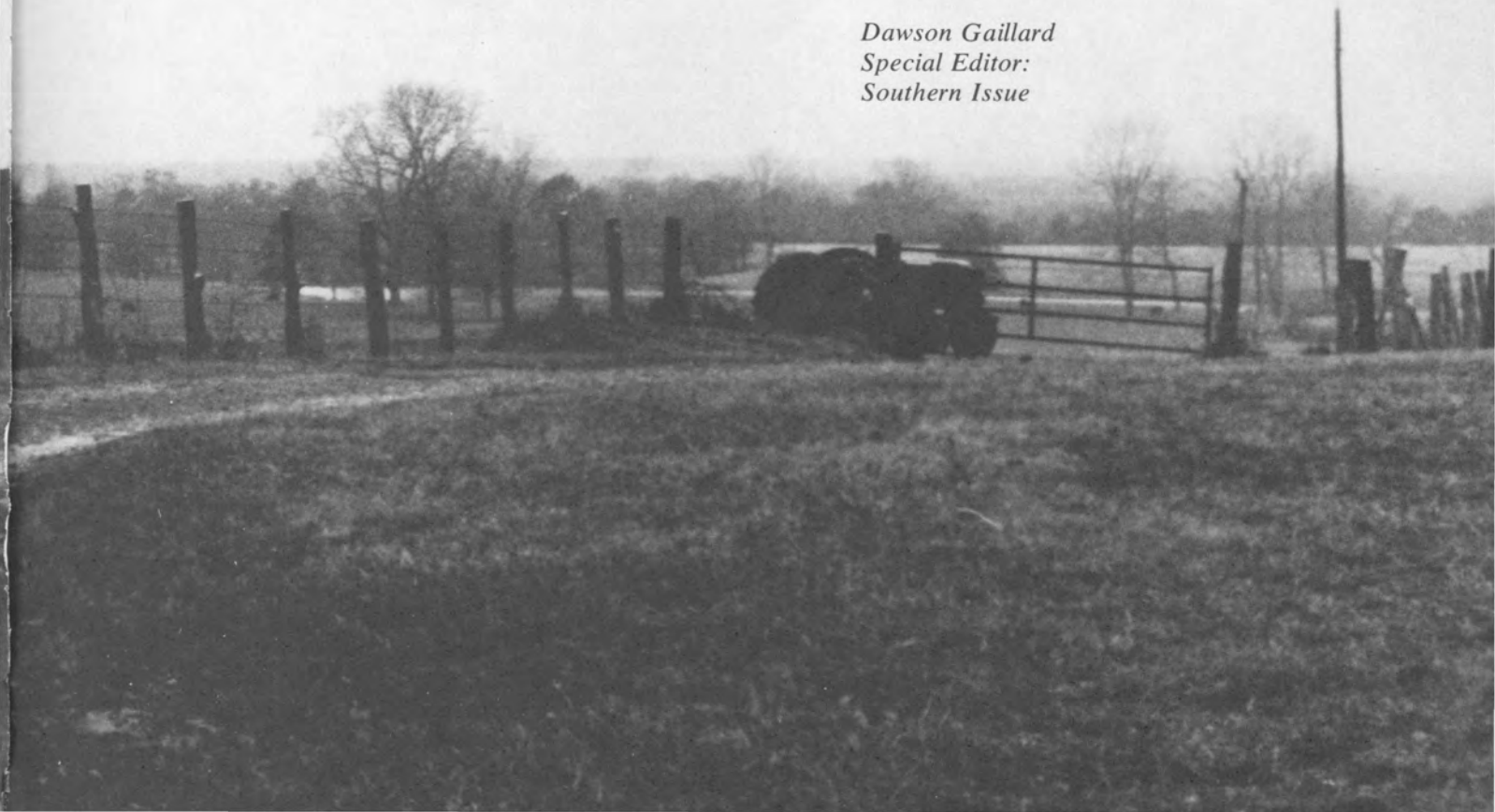
"What is a Southerner?" I was asked in preparing to edit this issue.

"Well, a Southerner is a person who was born in the South and whose imagination was nourished there."

My questioner argued that a non-native could also be a Southerner. Certainly the South is not merely a geographic region, but is also a state of mind. What states of mind may be evidenced by the contents of this special issue, which—incidentally—contains writings by people who were not born in the South.

My grateful thanks to Christina Dalrymple Ogden, without whom I would have limped painfully, and to Betsy Damhorst for her help and to Sr. Carol Reuss, whose advice was invaluable.

*Dawson Gaillard
Special Editor:
Southern Issue*



Not for the “Smart-Set in Omaha”

The *Georgia Review*
and Southern Literature*
by Stephen R. Maloney

INTERVIEWER: You wouldn't advise the life of the academy?
[SHELBY] FOOTE: I would advise against it as strongly as I could.

INTERVIEWER: Some of us have this problem.

(From *Kite-Flying and Other Irrational Acts: Conversations with Twelve Southern Writers*, ed. John Carr [L.S.U. Press, 1972], p. 31).

As Dr. Calvin Brown of the University of Georgia has said, one of the worst metaphors spawned by our age is: “you can't turn back the clock.” But of course we can—that is one of the good things about clocks. On the other hand, it is a risky business talking about Southern literature in the 1970s, trying to predict the shape of things to come. One point does appear certain: much of that literature, Mr. Foote's advice notwithstanding, will come from the colleges and universities. (Writers in the 1970s, like their predecessors, will have to eat, and it is the universities which give us our daily bread.) Moreover, unless the universities decide to put the “humanities out to grass,” as one observer has predicted, much of the Southern literature to come will appear in the university-supported quarterlies, including the *Georgia Review*, the subject of this essay.

The shame and/or glory of Southern literature, depending on the particular critic's view, has always been its tendency to look backward. And I shall make ample use of hindsight. As Walker Percy's *Love in the Ruins* instructs us, we may well prefer to look back rather than forward into some dystopian future. The *Georgia Review* has always been a backward looking journal, and not only in the “Confederate Gray” covers which adorned it for twenty years. “It has become the fashion to deride it: its intellectualism, its traditionalism, its devotion to ‘lost causes’ . . .”¹ Allen Tate, speaking here in 1936 on “The Function of the Critical Quarterly,” was not referring to the *Georgia Review* but to T. S. Eliot's *Criterion*, which Tate calls “the best quarterly of our time.” But his words are applicable to the *Review*, not so much *the best* but the most consistent of the quarterlies in its singleness of purpose. More perhaps than any other journal the *Review* instructs us as to the meaning

of Eliot's remark that “there are no lost causes because there are no gained causes.” The causes which the *Review* has championed, those of regionalism and localism, of classical Christian civilization and the humanities, appear on the verge of becoming fashionable, even “relevant.”

Which might distress the founder of the *Review*, John Donald Wade. One of the remarkable poet-critics from Vanderbilt University, Wade was a contributor to the Agrarian symposium, *I'll Take My Stand*. When he founded the *Review* in 1947, he knew that the critical quarterlies were becoming increasingly “useless” (Tate's word) as the world measures use.² But Wade never cared very much what the world thought useful or relevant. In his second editorial, he announced that he could not see any reason “to publish here anything devised pointedly for the approval of the current smart set in Omaha. Or anywhere else like Omaha,”—he meant New York I believe—“if one may say so.”³ In the first issue Wade announced that the *Review* would contain material of “special concern to Georgians” and that it would attempt to “indicate its persisting faith in countrymen and even in villagers (!) and the way of life these people follow” (1, 4).

Although Wade served as *Review* editor for only five years, he set its tone and pointed its future direction. His influence continues. He believed strongly in the importance of place; he revered the local and regional. Interestingly enough, there is a letter in the third issue to the editor from William Wallace Davidson, brother of Donald and third editor of the *Review*. Davidson strongly endorsed Wade's regional commitments. “Evidently the *Georgia Review* will not think that its first duty is to please the New York critics—whose own provincialism is the only provincialism they do not see fit to condemn” (1, 268). Significantly, these comments of Wade's and Davidson's reiterate a major critical insight of Allen Tate's, one that has served as the philosophical cornerstone of the continuing Agrarian movement. In “The New Provincialism” (1945) Tate set up a contrast between “regionalism” and “world provincialism.”

*For Ed and Sally Krickel

The provincial attitude is limited in time but not in space. When the regional man, in his ignorance, often an intensive and creative ignorance, of the world, extends his own immediate necessities into the world, and assumes that the present moment is unique, he becomes the provincial man. He cuts himself off from the past, and without benefit of the fund of traditional wisdom approaches the simplest problems of life as if nobody had ever heard of them before. A society without arts, said Plato, lives by chance. The provincial man, locked in the present, lives by chance.⁴

In a sense Tate reverses our usual definitions; what he is attacking is the authority of the present, of fashion, of the "smart set." By exposing the philosophical and aesthetic shallowness of the cosmopolites Tate was doing something similar to what Donald Davidson had done earlier in "Why the Modern South Has a Great Literature" (in *Still Rebels, Still Yankees*). Both men are asking, in essence, whether world provincialism has so triumphed that we cannot have a *Southern* (or Northern or Western, for that matter) literature. In founding the *Georgia Review*, Wade's intention, in part, was to prove that we could and would. Perhaps, since the question raised by Tate and Davidson has not been resolved, we should put a question mark after the phrase "Southern Literature in the 1970s."

Although every subsequent editor (John Olin Eidson [1951-1957]; William Wallace Davidson [1957-1968]; James Colvert [1968-1972]; and Edward Krickel [1972-1974]) has reaffirmed Wade's essential commitment to regionalism, there have been changes in the journal over the years. The magazine is no longer as "limited"—if limited it was—as it once was to essays relating to Georgia. Where in the early days its pages were hospitable to essays on subjects such as "The Growing of Small Grains in Georgia" and "Georgia and the PTA," such pieces would nowadays probably (although not certainly) be returned with a polite note. (In fact the restrictions as to subject that Wade announced in the first issue were already being amended somewhat in the second, where he welcomed "any composition that arises from sullen earth and speaks with catholicity . . . wherever it arises from" [I, 139].)⁵ In the early days Wade knew personally most of the contributors; these days the editors are lucky if they know, other than by reputation, 25% of those who write articles, poems, and stories. The poetry and the short stories, although there are fewer of the latter published than of yore, seem better on the whole; today's editors have an embarrassment of riches in the case of poetry—over 3,000 submissions per year, of which perhaps thirty are published. And at our back we hear—more precisely, we detect in the submission box—a sound that would have shocked Wade: assistant professors moaning their unwilling homage to the God of Publish or Perish. The *Review* publishes more literary criticism now than it did under the first three editors. In addition, since the arrival of editor Colvert in 1968 the book-review section has been much expanded.

During the first few years of the *Review's* existence most of the submissions, as well as a majority of the subscribers, were from Georgia; Southern-born, readers were interested especially in matters concerning Georgia and the South. Editors Colvert and Krickel have noted in recent years that the "regional note" of the journal becomes harder to identify with certainty. The tendency to publish the best that has been written and submitted, from no matter where, no matter what its emphasis, becomes stronger and stronger. The University administration, which subsidizes the magazine heavily ("The quarterly must

be subsidized; it either runs on a subsidy or it does not run," says Tate), has, since the days of Dr. Eidson, been asking two things: (1) that the number of subscribers be increased; (2) that the "base be broadened." These requests, if honored, also tend to diminish the regional, that is, Southern, nature of the *Review*. Editors tend to be pulled in two directions: they want to publish the best material they receive (or solicit), and they also wish to retain the features of the journal that make it distinctive. James Colvert, now Head of the English Department at Georgia, wrestles with this question in a *Mississippi Quarterly* article. Professor Colvert decides that "distinctiveness" is perhaps over-rated as a goal. And yet he, perhaps less committed to regionalism than any of the other editors, still theoretically endorses Allen Tate's argument against eclecticism; Colvert says of the best *critical* quarterlies, "They are not mere anthologies of brilliant critical essays, but an unfolding of a whole critical program which holds its audience to a particular post of observation as it unfolds to view a whole field of cultural experience."⁶ However, he is forced to add that such a noble goal is beyond the capacities of the *university* quarterlies.⁷ Their function, in his view, is the humbler one of providing outlets for scholars in the humanities to demonstrate their expertise and communicate their insights.

Some of the difficulties Professor Colvert speaks of are dealt with from a different perspective in William Wallace Davidson's first editorial (Fall 1957), where he gives an overview of the first ten years of the *Georgia Review*. "It has been quoted not only in New York, but in Atlanta, Charleston, and Savannah. It has been read in such widely separate regions as Oregon, the island of Cyprus, Germany, Japan, France, and Thailand. It has published works by Robert Frost, Conrad Aiken, James Branch Cabell, Donald Davidson, Richard Armour, John Wade, William Hazlett Upson, John Hall Wheelock, Jesse Stuart, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Byron Herbert Reece, and other prominent literary figures. It has done this and still remained itself—Georgian, Southern, regional, sectional, traditional, conservative—perhaps to the despair of some furious vendors of 'liberalism'" (XI, 239). Professor Davidson goes on to say that even more than publishing the work of the dominions and powers of the literary world, the *Review* has delighted in the discovery and publication of work by new writers. In this remark he isolates one of the *Review's* differences from other prominent literary magazines: most of the material it publishes is unsolicited; in fact, none of the editors has ever confused the literary journal with a cageful of the literary lions of the moment. One of the difficulties faced by young writers at the present time is the tendency of many of the prestigious journals to solicit much of their material and to return unsolicited manuscripts unread; there are many reasons for this policy ("The name of the game is the game of the name," said one wag), ranging from economics to editorial vanity to nest-feathering. If this policy continues, and intensifies, as well it may, then we will have more "mute inglorious Miltons" than Gray ever dreamed of.

In the two years I served as Acting Assistant Editor we solicited only three essays; I think this was about the right number. On the other hand, almost all of the one hundred fifty or so book reviews published in that time have been by request. We have paid special attention to books on the South, especially Southern literature, and have usually found both the famous and the unknown scholars eager—or at least willing—to review for us.

Although the *Review* has published many distinguished authors in the past—starting with Pulitzer Prize winner Robert P. Tristram Coffin in the first issue—and has won its share of awards for fiction and poetry (Foley selections and Borestone Mountain prizes) its strength has always been in the personal narrative and the critical essay. The coherence of these essays lies in their defense of regionalism, as defined by Tate and Wade. The relationship between the *Review* and contributors has been a reciprocal one; it has been an advocate of an until-recently unfashionable view, regionalism, and writers who shared that perspective often thought of this journal when they had something to say. For example, in the second issue Granville Hicks wrote his “Reflections of a Small-Towner.” Hicks was not a Southerner, and on most issues he and Wade were far apart, but not in their dislike of the urban centers of cosmopolitanism. Raymond Moley, another non-Southerner, and a speech-writer for Franklin Roosevelt, may have seemed another unlikely candidate for the third issue (“A More Perfect Union”), but in his defense of regionalism—“Ultimately, there should be a Constitutional recognition of regionalism” (I, 274)—he was at one with the editor. Similarly, Robert P. Tristram Coffin, who contributed many poems to early issues of the *Review*, in his “A Yankee Looks at the South” chided the region for its segregation policies while admitting that “Maine is as independent, as individualistic, as fond of having its own way, as deeply imbued with the principles of states’ rights and the right of the individual to dissent from the coercions of the group, the government, as the deepest-dyed state of the deepest South” (III, 173). Wade had grasped, perhaps intuitively, the principle that regionalism was not merely a Southern phenomenon.

Coffin’s essay, specifically its criticism of the segregationist ways of the South, brought forth an uncharacteristically impassioned rebuttal from Wade in the next issue. Reconstructed but unrepentant, Wade’s general theme was one that would pervade the *Review* for many years. Wade believed in segregation, albeit without enthusiasm, but he disbelieved in the notion that Southerners should bear a deep burden of guilt, that they were Cains among choirs of Abels. “Forgetting that people beside Southerners have been identified with the same programs, a man may still ask if it is supposed, then, that a failure to turn with every eddy of the Great Surge must be pronounced evil, if it is supposed that to stand guiltless one must applaud every phase of life in Trumania more than any phase of life in, say, 1850” (III, 245).⁸

Reading over old issues of the *Review* one sees that the Southern Tradition was very much “at bay,” as Richard Weaver put it.⁹ Consequently, many of the essays are defensive. The antagonists were seen variously as Northern liberals, scientific technocrats, and (especially after Mr. Davidson became editor), apostles of the “New South,” specifically Ralph McGill—who nevertheless was an occasional contributor to the *Review*. William B. Hesseltine’s Southern revisionist view of “Andersonville,” (III, 103-114) exemplifies the apologetics of those Southerners who saw their region as maligned—in this case by the publication of MacKinlay Kantor’s lurid historical novel.

In fact, the persistence of Southern literature as a distinct and recognizable body of letters probably results in large part from the attempts of non-Southerners to make the region either a pariah or a scapegoat. In recent years there has been a decline in the amount of hostile attention paid to the South; the rest

of the nation presumably had problems enough of its own to worry about. The Abels found their foreheads marked, too.

However, a whole new sub-genre grew up during the days of the Second Reconstruction after World War II, and watching a skilled dialectician such as Donald Davidson dissect the incursions of modernism into Charleston or Calvin Brown demolish a literary critic who defamed his home town of Oxford, Mississippi, is a delight.¹⁰ Davidson’s 1949 essay “Some Day, in Old Charleston” was comically, if typically, misread by Ralph McGill: he saw it as merely an attack on the modern phenomenon of drum majorettes.¹¹ To be sure, in the essay Davidson admits to a strong preference for enjoying the 18th-century atmosphere of the Charleston Library Society or Middleton Garden over watching a parade dominated by scantily attired females. (“The drum major has turned into a follies girl, a bathing beauty, a strip-tease dancer.”) And perhaps to an age where Linda Lovelace is the Girl of the Hour and “streaking” the latest fad, Davidson’s passionate response does seem a little anachronistic. Yet, the central point of his essay is that our age has made an unnecessary, and potentially dangerous, divorce between form and function. In so doing, Davidson says, “the modern regime has performed one of the abstractions typical of its sway” (III, 160).

Although the University of Georgia history professor, F. N. Boney, would disagree with much of Donald Davidson’s social philosophy, his Fall 1971 article, “The Redneck” (XXV, 333-342), is also a protest against abstractionism. This widely discussed article is in the *Georgia Review* tradition of eloquent defenses of the supposedly indefensible, in this case the Southern Redneck. “Most rednecks treasure their family and their friends and retain a sense of integrity—even honor—in an increasingly crass, corrupt age. Many are men of their word at a time when many men’s words mean nothing.” Boney makes a strong case that today’s “redneck” was yesterday’s stalwart “yeoman farmer,” the descendant, perhaps, of a man who rode with Bedford Forrest in Tennessee.¹²

Boney is one of a small group of people who have contributed regularly to the *Review* in recent years. Both by editorial choice and by circumstance, however, there has been nothing like the crowd of “our people” that Norman Podhoretz gathered around him at *Commentary*, as described in *Making It*. Regular contributors have included critics: Calvin Brown and Marion Montgomery (also a poet and novelist) of the University of Georgia; M. E. Bradford and Thomas M. Landess (also a fine poet) of the University of Dallas; poets: Edward Krickel and Warren Leamon of the University of Georgia; Harold McCurdy of the University of North Carolina; Ellen Bryant Voigt of Goddard College; prose writers: Jack Matthews of Ohio University and Mary Clearman of Northern Montana College. Journalist-historian-literature professor John Talmadge of Athens, Georgia, has also appeared frequently. Russell Kirk, historian of conservatism, as well as resident sage of Mecosta, Michigan, has been a long-time contributor. His important essays “What Are American Traditions” and “The American Conservative Character” appeared in the *Georgia Review* (IX, 283-239, and VIII, 249-260). Not all of these people are Southerners, of course, but they all share a greater or lesser commitment to regionalism. In a sense, they constitute the *Georgia Review*’s “group” as Mr. Tate used the term: “By group I do not mean the personal friends of the editor, or persons enlisted in some movement, for a movement is not always a program. By a

group I mean a number of writers who agree that certain fundamental issues exist and who consent, under the direction of the editor, to discuss them with a certain emphasis." (Perhaps authors in Mr. Tate's day were more amenable to editorial direction; in the case of the *Georgia Review* it has been more on the order of "the marriage of true minds.")

Like other journals the *Review* has found that some of the best narrative prose of our time is non-fictional. In 1972 Jack Matthews' "What Are You Doing There? What Are You Doing Here? A View of the Jesse Hill Ford Case," appeared in our pages (XXVI, 121-144). Ford's best novel, *The Liberation of Lord Byron Jones*, was firmly rooted in the West Tennessee (Humboldt) area that its author knew so well; it was an impressive work, damaged greatly however by its ultimate deference to the views of sentimental liberalism. Matthews went to Humboldt after Ford had killed a (Negro) prowler, been tried for murder, and acquitted. One cannot do justice to Matthews' "Jesse Hill Ford Case" in a short summary. But what emerges in essence from the article is the way in which circumstance and place, coupled with the immediacy of personal experience, overwhelm the abstractions of ideology. Matthews' examination of Jesse Hill Ford's response to a situation *in extremis* ultimately becomes a self-examination. When he is criticized by a local businessman for coming in and blowing things up, Matthews admits: "The town *had* been infested with writers, and the South generally had been visited by too many self-righteous Yankees carrying all the sins of the Liberals on their shoulders." Matthews sees in the end that the recognition of place and of region can lead one into the real heart of darkness: the self and its relationship to its surroundings. What Matthews rediscovers is the old truth that Faulkner presented in *The Bear*: regionalism, especially in what Matthews calls "proprietaryship of the land," can issue "in humility and a true covenant with the earth . . . or it can result in hateful arrogance and feudal immorality." Surely, this type of understanding is what Allen Tate meant in the "Ode to the Confederate Dead," when he asked, "What shall we say who have knowledge carried to the heart?"

The example of Jack Matthews shows us that much of the best writing about the South—as strictly distinguished from *Southern* writing—will come from non-Southerners. Matthews in his "Jesse Hill Ford Case" comes to a view roughly similar to Quentin Compson's ("You have to be born there to understand"). But we must remember that some of the staunchest defenders of the South and of the Agrarians are from ostensibly unlikely places. (M. E. Bradford, born in Oklahoma, now teaching in Texas, "a western state" according to Lyndon Johnson, is an example.) Louis Rubin lists John Barth, a native of Maryland, but a long-time resident of Buffalo, New York, in the *Bibliographical Guide to Southern Literature*. Plagued by famous "exits" (Ransom to Ohio, Warren and Brooks to Connecticut), the South may well experience some equally famous "entrances," Yankees carrying not carpetbags but typewriters. In short, the term, "Southern writer" may well lose some of the precision it now has. Perhaps "Southerner" may even acquire metaphoric status, like *Berliner* did in John F. Kennedy's famous "*Ich bin ein Berliner*" speech. The problems multiply: a Western regionalist like Mary Clearman has much more in common with her Southern counterparts than, say, Larry King of Texas, Washington, D.C., and Massachusetts does with Marion Montgomery, long-time resident of Crawford,

Georgia, population 400.

Professor Montgomery, a disciple both of the Agrarians and of T. S. Eliot, has written a goodly portion of the best poems, essays, and stories to appear in the *Georgia Review*; his continued productivity testifies to the vitality of the ideas generated by the Nashville Group. Montgomery's early critical pieces in the *Georgia Review* partake of the defensive tone of much Southern writing during the 1960s. But with the downturn in American society that began with the Kennedy presidency and assassination, Montgomery—along with other agrarians—went on the offensive. His 1969 review ("Richard Weaver Against the Establishment") of *The Southern Tradition at Bay* (XXIII, 433-459) is a turning point. For the warnings of the Agrarians about a deracinated, dehumanized society, dominated by industrialism and at war with nature and itself, had come true. Montgomery says, "Such is the inevitable situation out of the ascendancy of a Gained Cause now decaying about us, a cause whose dominant stance has become that provincialism which, as Allen Tate observed, begins each day as if there were no yesterday." Professor Montgomery's new novel, appropriately titled *Fugitive*,¹³ is one of the strongest and most compelling statements of the Agrarian position. One reviewer has a few reservations about the form of the book but realizes that Montgomery is outlining an idea whose time has come again: "I would point out that Montgomery has caught in his narrative the spirit of the present moment in history, that inevitable pull of gravity that has brought the pendulum swinging back from abstract certitude toward simple submission to what Ransom called 'the world's body.'"¹⁴

Literature in the *Georgia Review* in recent years has begun to reflect artistic responses to the "low, dishonest decade" we have lived through. During this period several events occurred (the Vietnam war, the environmental dilemma, the energy shortage, and the Watergate affair, among them) that called into question certain American myths that had hampered regionalism. These myths include those of American military invincibility ("never lost a war"), of technocracy's ability to solve environmental problems, of urban superiority to country life, of, in short, Progress Through the Implementation of the Bigger and Better. Southerners, who never cultivated these delusions as assiduously as their Northern brethren, have survived the decade with less disillusionment. One can no longer say that Southerners are the only Americans who have known military defeat as well as the larger defeat: the despair of the human soul. When the present becomes unbearable, people wish for a return to the "good old days," hence the current nostalgic mood. But fads are shallow and inconsequential by nature. It may well be that Southern literature—and the larger American literature—will rediscover a sense of place. Regionalism has become fashionable, enough so to warrant the attention of *Publisher's Weekly*, our version of the "glass of fashion," which devoted most of a recent issue to Mid-Western regionalism.¹⁵

I realize that there are many who disagree with my view that we are about to see some surprising conversions to regionalism, and not only in the South. Karl Shapiro denies, for example, that the concept of place is viable: "place has ceased to exist."¹⁶ Willie Morris envisions "a placeless literature."¹⁷ It may be that we shall all inhabit eventually the great ant-heap and that our literature will be like the space-walking astronauts, ghostly and awkward, anchored only by

the slenderest cord. I hope not, and I think not. It may be that the regionalist will have to emulate the spirit of Ransom's Captain Carpenter, one of "God's fools" according to Marion Montgomery: "it is a spirit doomed by the world, but honorable, courageous, capable of ultimate commitment against an overwhelming evil that costs 'not less than everything'" (GR, XX, 160). I see this spirit in some of the recent issues of the *Georgia Review*.

So far I have mentioned many fine writers, several of them non-Southerners. My own view is that the most powerful young talent we have published in 1973 and 1974 is Joan Stone, a superb young poet from Washington state. (One of Mrs. Stone's teachers, the poet Richard Blessing, informs me that Leonie Adams called Joan, "The Poet.") Mrs. Stone's "Birthday Poem" (Winter 1973) reminds me of some of Dylan Thomas' work on this theme:

Today they pulled up the sheet. This is the day I was born
but I forgot the fact that we passed each other;
she having dried to nothing that could keep her here
blew past me in her sleep, and I did not want to keep her,
seeing finally her lightness.

Among talented Southern poets whom the *Review* has published recently are Van K. Brock of Florida State and Catharine Savage Brosman of Tulane University, both mature talents. Good younger writers include Jim Wayne Miller of Kentucky and North Carolina's Kathryn Stripling. The work of both writers, in the academic world but not entirely of it, is rooted both in images of domesticity and of the land. Miller's "An Ordinary Evening in Bowling Green" (GR, Spring 1974) has two of the most engaging lines I've seen. "I come home from a hard day at the Skinner Box./My wife stands mixing me a metaphor." Kathryn Stripling may yet become that great woman poet that Walker Percy and John Carr feel the South has not yet produced.¹⁸ Her irony, like Miller's, often confronts the insistences of the moment, Women's Liberation for example, with homely realities:

All day I hear

the latest talk about the war,
pollution, women's rights, and rising
prices rattle in my head like steam
against a boiler top. The loaves I've
kneaded outrage into with my fists!
The underwear I've scrubbed so hard
the very seams have split!

Of course many poems we see are written on the fashionable topics (race, war, fornication), but the better poets in the South are more nearly emulating John Crowe Ransom rather than Allen Ginsberg.

The best young fiction writers to appear in the *Review* are Mary Clearman; Laurel Speer of Tucson, Arizona; Carol Wilson Lauriault, an Atlanta housewife; and Warren Leamon, a University of Georgia English professor and native of Atlanta. Mrs. Lauriault's first published story, "Who Shall Keep the Keepers Themselves?" exemplifies, perhaps more subtly, a phenomenon also present in the work of Warren Leamon and Marion Montgomery, a rejection of the New South glorification of the city. Mrs. Lauriault's Atlanta in "Keepers" is hot and oppressive, surrealistically so. "In the South alone there had been 97 deaths directly related to the heat wave, and they were

now predicting the death rate to exceed not only national traffic deaths but the Atlanta homicide rate as well" (XXVI, 353). Warren Leamon's story, "Fred," suggests that Miami, which has managed to be both new and decadent, is the Representative City; the protagonist works for a venal used-car dealer and has an affair with a beautiful young thing, Miranda. She is given to Causes and turns absolutely nymphomaniacal when she finds out that Fred is one-eighth Indian. Fred, who eventually returns to Montana to stay, thinks like a latter day, and wiser, Huck Finn at one point: "There was the road, I could strike out again, try New York or Chicago. But they would be like Miami, which was like Atlanta, which was like Oklahoma City. And you couldn't always be going someplace; I mean, you have to get somewhere" (XXVI, 490).¹⁹

We are now many years removed from the first issue of the *Georgia Review*, where John Donald Wade set out to demonstrate the vitality of the simple things: the humanities, the family, the region; in short, the vital connection of the past with the present. I am looking now at the page proofs of the current issue (Spring 1974). William Stephenson, born in Minnesota, now a professor at Texas, writes on James Dickey's latest novel and asks, "Deliverance From What?" "I think Dickey was the victim of his own trap," says Stephenson, "which ultimately is his secret belief that men are free when they are straying and breaking away, not when they are in a living homeland." Leland Krauth, a Coloradan, writes in "Mark Twain and the Gilded Age," that "Domesticity is . . . the heart of *The Gilded Age*. . . . Our reading of the American past in terms of a formative moving frontier, or at least the celebrated Turner version of it with its emphasis on the deracinated, often lawless individual, obscures the fact that the movement west was a series of homesteads, of family establishments." And Delma Eugene Presley, a Georgian teaching at Georgia Southern College, defines the Carson McCullers Problem better than anyone I have seen: "If her early familiarity with the South bred contempt, then her exile's unfamiliarity with it bred something worse than contempt—vacuity." The Spring 1974 issue also contains an excerpt for the new Montgomery novel and seven poems (two of them quoted earlier) by Kathryn Stripling and Jim Wayne Miller. I think if John Donald Wade were to come back from the grave he would recognize the *Georgia Review*, even without the old gray covers. The names would be new, the theses old.

Of course the continued regional commitment of the *Georgia Review* may, given the predispositions of the current editors, be a case of editorial power.²⁰ But I do believe, with Professor Landess, that the pendulum is swinging back—both in the South and elsewhere. Many of our best regionalists are, as my essay suggests, non-Southerners. In the past, Southern regionalists have been a little bit like the Ancient Mariner, accosting passersby and telling their stories. Now we are more likely to be at a lectern, speaking to a respectful, attentive, but still a slightly suspicious audience. I see the persistence of regionalism. The writers I have mentioned in this piece have heard all the arguments for America the Homogeneous. They have rejected them.

NOTES

1. In *Essays of Four Decades* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1968), p. 46. As will be clear in this essay, I owe a great deal to the thought and criticism of Allen Tate.

RHYNCHOPS

Water like clear
 grey light
 pools the wash
of the breakers,
permitting minnows
 a breathing space
before the tide's suction
draws them down the stairwells
leveling
 and steepening
in places where the inshore
current has been hastened
 or slowed by the wind.

The skimmers judge
 the distance between
them and the water's surface
and
 at the same time
the water's thickness
computing
 the angel that will bring
them through the air-currents
 and into
high-winged flight their lower
jaw scooping the two inches
 of liquid constantly thinning
as the waves slide out,
finding easily the vector of all
the resistances
 and sliding powerfully
into it
easily gliding the great orange jaw
jerking only
occasionally against a crab shell
 or a piece of whelk
and swallowing the minnows
precisely and freely.

—P. B. Newman

THE WEIGHING OF DALEVILLE

"If you go to the weighing of waters, you shall perceive little or no difference at all in their poise."

—Pliny

On Catawba Creek, the sycamores
leak from the bank and lean
up like keels, like sleek displacements,
as though airs were seas,
and earth the flimsiest freeboard.

Because: there's poise in space.

Because: under the clay curve
caves, caverns where coves
of air lobe down, dive, hoard
under the water, rippling,
like furred reflections of masts.

This is Daleville.

Plying Catawba Ridge, the steel-
hulled cement plant trawls
limestone gravel out of the deep,
swift, as long foremen ballast
the hills with honey, and sheep.

Press here. The mountains pop.

Sinkholes kill the cows and air
lies to, caulked in limestone stores,
or, Eureka, bobs up, in apples, in
the Grand Banks of ridges, or
on Catawba Creek, the sycamores.

—Annie Dillard

SOVEGNA VOS

because life is a series of circles
within other circles
because our destiny lies in seasons of redemption
be mindful

the land is a twilight jewel
be warned
the Lord God walks in the silence of days
through the center of circles
that completeness
might not bewilder us

—Myra Hambrick

THE LOOT

I have stolen love
from an infant
and stored it in an urn
deep-hidden and trench-safe
in a wood
that grows leaf and bloom
and fruit/
The love waits . . .
maturing through seasons
keeping warm
away from ice
staying cool
away from sun/
It protects itself and grows
waits on guard
for the man-becoming
who may falter on his way
on his way up/

—Electa Wiley

The Hero and the Witness

by David Madden

December 28, 1951

The Polestar is two days out of New York harbor now. We're sailing south along the coast, maybe even parallel with Tennessee. I've decided to keep a journal of my first trip after all.

Nothing has really happened yet, but I have to go back a little and tell what *seems* to be happening.

You can't learn to be a writer by writing freshman themes on "My Summer Vacation." Just reading about life and being tested on paper isn't enough. So I left school before the end of the term. I used to day-dream a lot about going to sea.

All I had to do, I thought, was go to New York and sign on a ship to India. I started hitch-hiking last May. I'd never been out of Tennessee before. New York fascinated and scared the hell out of me. All I had was \$30 and not much sense.

When I found out how complicated and difficult it was to get on a ship, I had a vision of living on the Bowery, sleeping in a room full of bum-laden 50¢ cots, but I kind of liked the idea. At the seafarers' union in Brooklyn, a Mr. Cobb offered me a trip-ticket, the lowest priority you can get. I was all set to go to India. But after a week of sitting around the hall, trying to act as nonchalant, as bored as the old men, as quietly cocky as the young ones, it dawned on me what a wait I would have.

So I got a job as mail clerk for a company that makes baby food. The office was on the top floor of the Empire State building, but after a few days the glamour of that building wore off. One day we all stood at the window and watched through waves of heat the arrival of the new *United States* liner, coming into New York harbor from its maiden voyage.

On Saturdays I'd go down to the battery and watch the ships and ride the Staten Island Ferry. I was waiting for Christmas. One of the old sailors told me nobody likes to ship out at Christmas. Most men go on the beach for a big drunk or a visit with their families.

But a week before Christmas, I got fired. The girls had sweated out the summer without a fan, their thin dresses sticking like Scotch tape to the hot leather seats. Now they were doing overtime without pay. They liked me, so it was easy to organize

them to resist. I organized myself right out of a job. As I left the office, I yelled, "Workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!"

That's what the seamen have done and they have a very fine union. The O'Neill days are just as dead as the Melville days. Nobody can slap you around anymore. The longshoremen are different. Tony Anastasia has them scared shitless. There's not a single Marlon Brando among them. Christmas Eve, they were holding an election. The seafarers' union had offered to represent the longshoremen.

The hiring hall was empty. Everybody was out with placards, walking the streets of Brooklyn, earning priority credits on their shipping cards. I went out, too, in one of the union cars, squashed between two men who looked like wrestlers. We ambled on one side of the street and glared at Anastasia's men on the other. There was snow on the sidewalks and we were freezing in the wind from the ocean. A young mother placidly pushed a baby carriage through the sinister mob.

Finally, what looked like a regiment of men came marching down from the voting place. "Here they come," somebody behind me said. Watching them come, I got mad. I hate to fight. I can't anyway, but thinking about it teed me off. Here we were trying to free them from Anastasia who was taking the food from their babies' mouths and they, all those big, husky brutes, were letting one man no taller than me scare them into fighting their own liberators. Man! I felt like beating the living crap out of every one of them.

But when they got to the corner, their marching feet hissing and stamping like a locomotive on the frozen snow, I turned and found my corner empty, except for me and my cold, red fists. I know I would have stayed there and plowed into all of them and maybe they would have felt how stupid they were, pulverizing a little runt like me, even if the little cop on horseback hadn't ridden up between us with revolver drawn, yelling, "First bastard steps off that curb gets his ass blown to kingdom come!" The regiment did a sharp column left and dispersed.

The next day I read about the bomb Anastasia had hidden in the hall the day before. Somebody found it in the "head." But the day after Christmas, I got this ship. The *S/S Polestar*.

I'm a wiper. I didn't know what I was supposed to do, but I was raring to do it.

The next morning, wearing my new leather jacket, turtle neck sweater and engineer boots, I got on a subway to Brooklyn. It's a horrible, helpless feeling to be on an express to Brooklyn and it turns up in Yonkers. Like when you're going under ether and can't fight the damn stuff. But I wasn't late. I was as nervous as a cat on a—*as a whore in a—*as a leaf trembling in the wind.

It was still dark as I strode over a network of railroad tracks among some warehouses. The snow was deep, falling thick and fast. Brooklyn near the pier looked grim, masses of black and white, blurred by the swarming snow. But the air was almost warm. Suddenly, there was the ship! A great big son-of-a-bitch, tall as the Empire State building. I was surprised and nervous, being there all alone. The steep ladder shook, knocked against the side of the ship, as I climbed, the suitcase so heavy it nearly pushed me back down. At the top stood a dark, hooded shape, covered with snow like a statue.

"That you, Franco?" The strange accent threw me. Maybe I was on the wrong ship.

"No, it's me," I said, facing him.

"Who the hell are you?" He blew breath smoke in my face. "Santa Claus?"

"No, sir, I'm the new wiper, Lucius—"

"Hoping you was that damned Franco."

"Are you the captain, sir?"

"Trying to get wise with me?"

"No sir. What do I—"

He looked around, trying to see through the snow. "Hey, Bill!"

A bearish, heavily-coated shape emerged from the snow. "How's the watch, Dane? Throw that spiked snow ball at Franco yet?"

"Wise guys all over this ship! Hey, take this new wiper to the Chief Engineer."

The thick, faceless figure waved for me to follow him. When we got into the passageway and I saw him in the light, he looked like a comic snow-man. "Merry Christmas," he said sarcastically but laughing. "My name's Bill Boroshov."

"Mine's Lucius Hutchfield." We shook hands. Then he turned and knocked on a cabin door.

"Who is it?" The voice sounded drunken coming through the wooden door.

"Got your new wiper here, Chief."

"Well, tell him to go wipe himself. Franco come aboard yet?"

"Not yet." Silence. Then Bill yelled, "Merry Christmas and a happy Yule, Chief!" snickering into his fist, poking my ribs with his elbow.

"Rot in hell, you Russian smart aleck!"

Bill laughed as he tugged at the iron door. "Come with me, Lucius. Get you settled down."

I followed him through a maze of passageways and steep, narrow staircases. "Doesn't the captain meet you on the dock to sign you on?" That really made him laugh, slapping musical vibrations out of the green enameled iron walls as we walked.

"Well, man, all I can say is, don't spread it around this is your first ship. This crew's just waiting for somebody like you—especially if Franco bitches loud enough to get hisself signed off."

"Who's Franco? I mean, isn't he the dictator of Spain?"

That made him laugh all over again, much louder. Some of the fo'castle doors were open and men looked up from bunks, chairs, and washbowls, casually glancing at us, faintly curious. They looked tired, moody, a little mean, but somewhat meek, not at all like they were waiting for someone like me.

"When I first signed on this junk bucket in San Francisco, I couldn't pass any of those fo'castles without everybody yelling, 'Hey, Bill, how's the boy!' But now, after a two-year trip around the damn world, they're all like rattle-snakes, coiled up with nothing to strike at but their own stinking asses." But he smiled and talked in a jolly voice. I knew I'd have to take a lot of kidding at first.

"Here's your little love nest, Lucius." The iron bulkheads are pale green, the deck, dirty red. In the iron room is a double bunk bolted to the bulkhead, a desk, also bolted, two lockers, a wash basin and a chair. A clothes line slung across the fo'castle in front of the port hole, sagging under a pair of stiff, paint-saturated jeans and a single paint-pocked tee-shirt, and a long red rag.

"That's Franco." With a flourish of his hand, Bill presented the soiled garments. He went over and spoke to them. "Aren't you gonna say hello to your new bunkmate? He speaks only Spanish lingo when he's nervous," he said to me. Then to the garments, "He's gonna take the place of your ol' buddy Mike." Bill laughed so hard he had to sit down, bending over like he had a cramp in his stomach. He's a young husky fellow with a very pleasant face, very black, curly hair. I liked him right away.

"Who's Mike?"

He told me about the wiper I am replacing. Mike was the worst drunkard Bill had ever seen. Used to lay in his bunk all day long, and after the whiskey was gone between ports, he'd drink shaving lotion, and he got so mean even Red Crane, the chief engineer, was afraid to disturb him. And he hated Franco with such intense nausea that he had threatened to slit his throat in his sleep if he ever came into the fo'castle again. So Franco had slept topside on a canvas cot half-way from Israel to New York, until the Atlantic cold was more fierce than Mike's eyes.

"Why does everybody dislike this guy?"

Ignoring my question, he said, "And this Red Crane, your boss, that's another joker you gotta watch. He wasn't just drunk. He was playing with his hobby. Got the largest collection of filthy pictures you ever saw. I mean, nobody's seen 'em but he has this huge scrapbook and he's always pasting little pictures in it. Franco seen 'em but he won't come out like a man and tell you that's what they are. Him and Crane sit in there and look at 'em till they're blue in the face. I don't want to give you the wrong idea, but they're real buddies, if you know what I mean. All Franco talks about when anybody'll listen is mostly hisself, then hisself and "my wi-ife," as he says it, and then hisself and Red Crane, and it's got so the only one listens anymore is Crane. Crane speaks Spanish. It's sickening to listen to 'em."

"What's the matter with Franco, anyway?" I was convinced that everybody, even good ol' Bill here, was prejudiced because Franco's Spanish.

"You'll see. What's really wrong with him it takes a while to see. You gotta observe it, you know what I mean? See, I watch these guys. I like to study 'em, you know? People

are interesting to observe. Take my mother. Russian, you know, from Russia. She's *real* old fashioned as hell, see. Trying to get me to marry this girl in our neighborhood. Full of Russians. I ain't no Russian, and the girl ain't neither. We're goddamn Americans, by God. But the girl has Russian folks too, so it's all arranged. Except I ain't even hardly talked to this broad myself. You know? I mean, people sure are interesting to observe."

That's what I know.

"You said Franco might not come back."

"Yeah. Well, he's trying to negotiate. See, he's always negotiating—every port we hit. He negotiates the hell out of me. Trying to get a visa into the states so 'I can be with my wi-ife.'" It really tickles me the way Bill laughs when he's talking. "She's a damn nurse, a high-class one to hear him talk it. And beautiful? Man, his wi-ife! But he don't show no pictures. Yeah, she's about as beautiful as his back."

"His what?"

"You oughta see his back—well, his face, too. But his back is swarming with huge scars from pimples, you know. It's like looking at the moon through a telescope. And his face is a real walnut. I mean it really is, man. So you better hope he don't negotiate hisself off this ship. I mean, I don't want to scare you but these guys are coiled up inside like rattlesnakes, dying to riddle some poor guy. Can't hardly blame 'em, though. We been on this ship two years. Around the damn world. We been counting on signing off this Christmas. But now we got this cargo of provisions to take to Tal Tal, Chile. Damn earthquake down there. This is what they call a goddamn mercy mission. Somebody's gonna need mercy before we get *that* far. Not a soul in the Union Hall to replace us, see? Have to be off your nut, like Mike, with his stomach full of Aqua Velva." He almost never stopped laughing at that. I tried to laugh, too, because I liked him even though he was scaring the piss out of me. Then he had to go on watch. "Gotta relieve ol' Dane."

After a while, I went up and stood on the fan-tail and looked at the Manhattan skyline. The buildings of Wall Street broke slowly through the dissolving gray of the morning and the thinning snow. Then the snow stopped, and the sun came out. I watched a taxi coming from a long way off toward the pier.

I don't know why, but I was sure Franco would be in it. Two men got out but I correctly identified Franco. I couldn't see the face clearly, but a marked difference in his manner of getting out, standing there, talking, shaking the other man's hand, dressed very dapperly in a brown double-breasted suit, a Homburg hat, spats planted arrogantly in the grimy slush, a yellow kid-gloved hand carrying a shiny leather briefcase, a gold-tipped cane tucked tightly under his arm, assured me that this man would have a back pitted like craters on the moon. If he'd been in a movie though, he would have looked like a foreign, sophisticated counter-spy or an emissary arriving to restore order. The other man got back into the taxi, which took him away.

As I watched him ascend the steep, narrow ladder, his bearing still regal as the ladder shook against the bulkhead, seeing his face now, thin, sharp, pitted, swarthy, with a Vandyke beard, I reminded myself that I had resolved not to give in to the talk nor even allow *him* to aggravate me, to always remember that prejudice and the extreme need of these men

for a scapegoat was behind it all. Because already I vaguely felt something obnoxious about him—the impenetrable serenity of his haughty air.

More curious than nervous, I returned to the fo'castle. A short, thin, naked man stood with his scarred back toward the door. His fancy clothes had vanished. Before I could back out, blushing almost, he turned and we faced each other. He is the skinniest man I have ever seen in the flesh. But the horrible thing was not the acne scars and the shrunken face, the pale, almost lovely blue eyes, the bones showing under his skin, the huge rotten toe-nails, but that tremendous dong, hanging like a bell-clapper, nearly to his bony knees.

He smiled, spoke in perfect English, with only a mild Spanish accent. "Ah, here you are. You had better get ready for work. Red told me to tell you, to take you under my wing and show you the ropes. We sail at noon, you know."

I went in, annoyed by the slight resentment I was feeling, for he seemed amiable enough. But I couldn't speak to such incredible nakedness. He took the jeans from the clothesline. They were stiff as a sheet of tin, but he got into them with loud rasping thrusts of his scissor-like legs. Turning my back to undress, I saw my suitcase on the lower bunk.

"I moved your things. The upper bunk is mine."

"I thought that was Mike's old bunk."

His eyes bulged, his lips tightened. "Do not speak to me of that monster! . . . I can see you are an intelligent young man. Well, I welcome you to this ship." He put out his hand. I shook it. It was like touching the entire nakedness he had now covered with the paint-pocked work duds. The red cloth he wore like a sash. "I have had to live for two years among these vermin. They have absolutely no culture. They are worse than uncouth. A drunken horde of filthy whoremongers. Perhaps you are different. Red Crane is the only gentleman among them. He is an officer—not like these scum with whom I am forced to cohabit. You will like him. You will like me, too. I am very easy to get along with. I come from pure Spanish nobility. Oh, they have their feeble, childish jokes. But my name is Jack Santos. I am an exile from the Franco regime. Someday I may assassinate him myself."

He continued his monolog as I undressed, talking fluently, not in a loud, pompous voice appropriate to his rhetoric but quietly, in a cultured baritone. But it was odd after all Bill had told me to hear him call friendly greetings, in a slight tone of benevolent condescension, to men passing in the hallway. And all the time my own nakedness was unfolding. I quickly, nervously got into my work clothes.

"You can not wear that heavy shirt," he said, pinching the red fabric. I didn't like that at all. "You will roast like a pig."

I put on a tee-shirt and followed him out the door. He locked it. "There are thieves among these men. You have to watch them." Down the passageway, he opened a steel door. Hot air like a wool blanket flew into my face, covered my body. He laughed. Some men laugh like a horse, galloping—he laughed like a fox terrier, trotting. His teeth were perfect and white.

He stepped inside, reached back and took my hand. I shuddered at the first contact. He drew me inside. The door slammed shut. We were on a red steel cat-walk; steep ladders dropped down through three landings into the midst of a huge steel room, swarming with pipes; and at the very bottom were six mammoth turbines. The noise and the heat seemed to pulse

and pound together. My tee-shirt was soaking wet before we reached the lower stage. I wondered if I would be able to take it. Looking at skinny Jack Santos, alias Franco, I felt challenged.

Jack led me to a huge red cage constructed of iron wire diamond shapes. He introduced me to Crane, who was messing around among some nuts and bolts. Crane is tall, stocky, the silent type. Except for his red, crew-cut hair, he reminded me of John Wayne. After all Bill had said, I was surprised to hear him talk so affably, smiling irrelevantly now and then as he yelled my duties above the clamor of the turbines and gave me some advice. Just as I was beginning to suspect Bill of malicious gossip, Red Crane said, "And mostly, don't believe everything you hear on this ship. You have any problems or anybody try to give you a hard time or get you into one of these nasty little arguments between cliques, you come see me. Stick with Jack there—he's had it rough. Okay? Now let's see how you can paint, kid."

I didn't like the "kid" stuff but he seemed to be the kind of guy you can respect and like, even if he is your boss. So I went over and knelt down beside Jack Santos among the large paint cans and brushes. He talked a blue streak close to my ear as we mixed the paint but the noise was so hellish all I could do was nod and smile. I followed him to where some ladders and planks were rigged up among a network of pipes as big around, some of them, as my own body. The men we passed gave me friendly smiles. I was beginning to feel fine, to get the feel of the ship.

But when I looked behind me I saw a trail of red paint like blood all the way across the mammoth engine room, and Red Crane was stalking it towards us. He didn't even look at me. Swiftly, but almost casually, he lashed out with the back of his hand and nearly knocked Jack's head off his shoulders. Jack gave him a quivering but weirdly genuine smile. "Clean it up!" Crane yelled.

Impulsively, I strode over to Crane and looked up at him. I was so mad, nervous and scared, he didn't hear me the first time. I repeated, "You can't slap him around, sir. This is a union ship."

He smiled calmly, said, "Don't believe everything you hear." He walked away, turned, yelled, "Get to painting, kid!"

I got to painting. The salty sweat that drenched me, stung my eyes.

At coffee break, I went up to Jack. He was leaning on the rail, smoking, gazing at Manhattan.

"By God, Jack," I said, shivering in the bright, cold air. "I'll call a special meeting. We won't let that bastard knock you around."

But when he looked at me, I saw a smile fade from his scar of a mouth. "Red Crane is my friend," he said, indignantly, and moved away from me down the rail.

Dane, a big young man with a mane of blond hair and a smooth Nordic face, came to the door of the messhall, looked out. "Hey, Franco!" he yelled to Jack, "Your ship mates want to know if you're too good to have coffee with us. We want to drink to your return to your ol' buddies." He sounded serious, but he just had a lot of control because when Franco didn't answer, he closed the door and I heard a muffled laugh like a jackal.

As I descended into the heat and roar of the engine room, the ship began to move.

I was about to starve when lunch time came, but I went on deck first because we were moving out of the harbor. There was the Statue of Liberty right smack in front of me, as green as the WW I soldier in front on my old high school in Cherokee. I sneered at the Empire State building and hoped the boss of Bambi Baby Foods was watching from his top-story window. I felt free as a dolphin.

Puny Christmas red bells and green streamers decorated with flies hung limply from the ceiling. The messhall was full of men. Bill called to me. Agistone, a southern oiler who had smiled at me in the engine room, was yelling at someone in the galley, who was cursing him from out of view. A young, handsome Mexican with a comical face, black mustache, bushy black eyebrows and oiled, pompadoured black hair, leaned on the serving counter, looking out at the men in the messhall, a cigar between his big, white, grinning teeth. "Hey, Beel, that Franco's new sweetheart?" he yelled, nodding his head toward me as I sat down beside Bill.

"Yeah," Bill laughed, looking across the table at Jack, who was washed and combed now, eating slowly, his head bent over his plate. Then to me he said, "Don't worry about Babe. He's a wet-back from way back but he's a lot of fun, man."

Agistone, a fat fellow with pale skin and large white hands, yelled to Babe, "Hey, you tell that bugaloo son-of-a-bitch of a chief cook I want some decent goddamn food or I'm gonna cut his liver out with a pair of rusty nail clippers!" Babe grinned. As Agistone continued to issue a steady, boisterous deluge of obscene verbal abuse, I imagined the cook hiding behind the range. I didn't dare look around. Then a tremendous clatter shook the floor and I heard a scream of shock as I myself shook.

When I turned, I expected to see my first dead man, even though everyone was laughing quietly and the cook was laughing loud like a banshee. But Agistone, startled, cursing, had jumped to his feet. A large iron pot wobbled against the bulkhead. The cook, a small man of about fifty, his steel-rimmed glasses steamed, was holding to the doorjamb, laughing, pointing at Agistone, who quickly jumped at him, "You bugaloo bastard!" chased him out among the hatches. Jack looked up at me, said quietly, sneering, "Disgusting—just like little children. They make me sick."

Agistone came back in, cursing but smiling with silly glee. I realized it was an old joke. The others were laughing without enthusiasm. "They're real buddies, those two rebels," said Bill, "They go on drunks together in every port. Chief Cook always pulls that on him—sneaks up and drops that pot behind Agistone's chair."

Agistone frowned, seemed to be looking at me as he walked over to the table. But it was to Jack that he spoke. "What are you laughin' at, Franco?" Jack hadn't laughed at all. He didn't even look up. "You think that's funny?"

"Someone better peek up the pot, gentlemen," said Babe, between his horsy, cigar-biting teeth. He grins all the time.

"You heard him, Franco," said Agistone. "Start pickin'."

Without expression, Jack looked up at the man glowering over him.

"Sluefoot" Ryder, the red-faced Swedish bo'sun, had come limping into the messhall. He picked up the pot and laid it like a bomb between Babe's open palms. As he slumped down beside me, he said, "Let's have a little peace and quiet, brothers." Ship's delegate to the union, he calls everybody

brother. Agistone strode cockily back to his table, laughing. "You the new wiper?" Ryder asked me. I nodded, smiling. "Sea sick yet, kid?"

"Not yet. Guess I will be." But I was sort of sick about something.

"Anybody taken you down yet to see the golden rivet?"

"No," I said, suspecting a joke, but trying to show polite interest.

"The Bo'sun's a horny ol' coot," said Bill. "Better steer clear of 'im."

Bill and the Bo'sun laughed and I thought it a good idea to laugh, too.

"Franco's going to sic Red Crane on you, Agistone," said Babe. He's always friendly seeming when he teases anybody, but I didn't know then that it could get on your nerves—he does it all the time. Bill asked Herman, the hairy messman that looks more like an ape than any ape I ever saw, for more chow, but Babe wouldn't give him any until he'd teased him about the marriage Bill's mother had arranged. "Someone told me she was Franco's grandmother, Beel. How about that, man?" Bill pretended to be mad in a moody way.

Then Dane came in, very dirty from working on deck, frowning and brooding about something. But when he saw Jack getting up, his face brightened a little. He said to Jack as they passed, "Hey, Franco, I found Mike last night in an alley in Brooklyn—his guts cut open. He said he'd come back to haunt you all the way to Tal Tal, Chile. Thought I'd better warn you, pal."

Jack glanced at him through his pale blue eyes and walked out of the messhall.

"Hey, Herman!" yelled Dane, staring at the warped blackboard where the menu is scrawled. "Give me some of that slop—what ever the hell it is. Didn't they teach you how to write down in Mexico, Babe?"

"I was the president, man," Babe said, grinning. "No time for learning the finer things in life."

Dane looked up at the decorations, sneering. "When you gonna tear down that junk? Supposed to be funny?"

"You in hell, sweetheart. Christmas every day and twice on Sunday here, man."

Next day everybody was quiet and moody and nothing happened, but yesterday morning when I went up to the messhall at 5 a.m. this is what I saw on the extra blackboard next to the one with the menu: "Use Dr. Franco's special skin lotion for lovelier complexchun."

I watched the men come in, sit down, look up and see it and laugh, quietly. Babe leaned on the counter, grinning, playing with a medal on a chain around his neck. When Bill came in, Babe winked at him. It was Babe's handwriting, but you could read it plainly now.

Then Jack came in, jauntily almost, smiling to himself, rubbing his hands together, looking neat even in his paint-smeared outfit. He sat down across from me and looked up, pretended not to see the "advertisement."

"And what weel Dracula have?" Babe asked Jack, rubbing his hands like Boris Karloff.

Herman aped over and asked Jack for his order. Jack mumbled something.

When Herman laid the plate before him, Jack yelled, "I did not order this garbage. I will not stand for this." He pushed himself to his feet and walked out, his bearing dignified.

Babe said, "The customer ees always right."

As Dane came in from the deck, I saw Jack at the rail, looking out at the rough Atlantic ocean, the legs of his trousers flapping in the wind.

"That Franco shouldn't talk to his elders that way," grunted Herman, reaching for my plate.

I stood on the fan-tail, watching the moiling water, watching the gulls dive at the slop Herman threw overboard, before I had to descend into the inferno to paint the red decks beneath the labyrinthine pipes. But as I stood at the rail, from inside the galley came a prolonged, subsiding clatter. Agistone exploded through the galley door, chased by the lunging little chief cook, who held a meat cleaver over his head, yelling, "You bugaloo bastard, I'll cut you up and use you for tripe, by god!"

It is night now. This morning there was another "advertisement": "Wife for hire. See Franco for de-tail." I think he's asleep now, lying up there naked. A copy of *Black Mask* official detective stories lies like a roof over his groin. His bearded face is as placid as the green bulkhead. Somehow it reminds me in this midnight light of the faces of Jesus on those ten-cent store calendars—except for the pock marks.

January 1, 1952

Hell of a way to face a new year is all I can say. Not just *him* this time, but me, too. Him in the morning at breakfast and me at dinner. I suppose I still like Babe and I think he likes me and didn't mean it the way he does with Franco. Or is there really any malice in any of it? It makes the men laugh. They are uncoiling, relaxing. And Babe likes to make people laugh more than anything. He even teases Bill about that marriage deal.

Every morning, there has been a new "advertisement." This morning it said: "Dear Mama, Please come home. I ain't had a bath in three months. Your illegitimate son, Franco." Franco doesn't even sit down anymore. He just strides into the messhall past the blackboard without looking, draws himself a cup of coffee, and goes out on the fan-tail and stands by himself. He doesn't even speak to me anymore because he sees me with Bill and Babe and we're laughing and he thinks it's about him when really they're kidding me about how I'll act in front of my first whore when we get to Panama. But I don't volunteer to talk to him anyway. The harder I try to fight it, the more I dislike him, and the "advertisements" are witty sometimes but this morning was too much.

I said to Babe as I went out, "You shouldn't throw off on his mother, man."

"What you say?" Squinting his shoulders, he presented his huge open hands to show his innocence. "You think I write those terrible words. I only write the menu, man." The way he said it, I had to laugh.

We're in the Gulf of Mexico now. It doesn't seem any different except it's getting warmer because we're near the canal zone. In the engine room, the heat mixing with the paint fumes and the noise nauseates me. I lean against the bulkhead and slap on the paint and think of the girls there will be in Panama and of the girl there used to be in Cherokee, and I worry about the draft and think of going back to college, and feel homesick. And the fireman or the oiler or Agistone comes by and yells a thought in my ear, and I nod and laugh if

it calls for that, and it's all weird but kind of nice thinking about it after you're out of there and it's night.

Before dinner, at five, we what they call "blow the tubes." Franco and I take turns standing on a paint bucket and pulling these chains. It cleans out the tubes. The steam furnaces would blow up if they weren't cleaned. We're called wipers because we go around and wipe oil from around the nuts on the turbines, but that only takes about 10 minutes.

Usually, Red Crane supervises the blowing of the tubes. Just stands there silently to make sure it's done. But today, Agistone took over for Crane. Franco was naked to the waist, that red sash tied around him, pulling his guts out on the chains, the sweat glistening down his pitted back. Agistone always likes to whisper some tidbit in my ear.

"Ain't he the most putrid sight you ever did see? I can just see him and Red Crane in Crane's cabin, porin' over that big o' book full a dirty pictures."

"Aw, he's married," I said. "To a beauty queen, he says."

"Don't mean nothing. Ol' Red come home one night and found six Brooklyn teenagers in his wife's bedroom, waiting in line." The image made me feel sorry for Red. "Franco told me. He used to try to get friendly with me coming out from Israel. He's probably a damn Jew to boot." I thought of Agistone lynching Negroes, even though he was sort of a nice guy. "You know Dane? Boy, he hates both their guts. Look at those putrid clothes—paint like crap on a chicken coop."

I was glad it was my turn to blow the tubes.

Both Franco and I have to hang our raunchy work clothes on a line in the hot passageway to dry out the sweat. When everybody was passing by on the way to chow, Agistone yelled, "By God, Franco, you better hang them slop rags som'mers else! Damn if I ain't gonna toss 'em overboard if I have to smell 'em an' look at 'em *one more cotton pickin' time!*"

We finished hanging our clothes up and went on to chow. What was on the board this time nearly burned the skin off my neck, I got so mad: "See the Professor's mother for a good piece of poontang." Franco got a charge out of that, because "professor" means *me*.

Out in the passageway was an axe in a red case on the bulkhead. Babe was leaning in his usual way with a big-assed grin on his Mexican face. I screamed almost incoherently, "Babe, you better erase that goddamn blackboard. I'm telling you! or I'll plant this axe right in the top of your skull." He tried that innocent routine while everybody laughed but I kept yelling bloody murder, so finally he came slowly from behind the counter and wiped off the board with his apron. I warned him not to do that ever again and then I replaced the axe and sat down across from Franco who was getting up to go, and I went through the motions of eating like I had everything in control. But Bill whispered to me, "Let me give you a clue, Lucius. Don't ever try that again. That Babe could have sliced you up before you could bat an eye."

Agistone and the chief cook went into their routine, cussing each other for fun, and just when I heard the iron pot crash upon the floor behind Agistone and the cook go into gyrations of laughter as Agistone shrieked with exaggerated surprise, Franco came running in and yelled at Agistone, pointing his finger at him, "I am going to report you! You had no right to do that!" Agistone had thrown his work clothes into the Gulf of Mexico. Babe and Bill laughed and so did everybody else and so did I.

Bill came in just a while ago as I was putting this down. He likes to talk about books and art and different things I'm interested in and he listens to what I say as though I were a professor, which is what he has everybody calling me, and I kind of like it. I was telling him about the economic situation in India when Dane ambled in, wanting Bill to play some poker. But we kept talking and Dane listened with that sullen frown on his brooding face.

"All that book learning—it's a bunch of bull," he said, with utter contempt. "You ever been to India? Well, I have. I've been all over the world, professor."

So we argued a long time, and I discovered that all he knew about India or any other country was where all the bars and the whorehouses are. He got mad when I pointed it out. Yelling at me, he backed out of the fo'castle right into Franco, who was coming in with a satisfied smirk on his face. He pushed Franco slam against the bulkhead and stormed away to the poker game.

"They can not abuse me," Franco said, whimpering. "I have been to see Red about all of you. He is going to force the union delegate to take action. You will see."

January 2, 1952

This morning at breakfast there was another "advertisement," the filthiest of all.

When I came up for coffee at the morning break, there was an announcement on the board: "There will be no more filthy signs on this goddamn board. This is an order. Red Crane, Chief Engineer."

With a big grin, Babe pointed out the sign to each man as he came in. "You see that, man? No more of this funny business now."

January 3, 1952

We are going through the canal tomorrow. The pilot comes aboard tonight. I swam in the bay today while the ship is anchored. All the men watched and laughed, leaning on the railing, asking me how the water was.

Some of us have army cots on the upper deck for sunbathing. Franco was sunning near my cot. He told me there are sharks in the bay. He didn't laugh, but I knew why the others had laughed. Tonight we're going to sleep up on deck because it's too hot below.

January 4, 1952

We went through the locks today. It's magnificent to watch them work. But the main thing that happened today was Dane threw water on Franco's cot. Franco thought I did it. When I came up to the upper deck after dinner, my own cot was dripping with water. I was just about to plow into Franco when Red Crane came up and said that if all we could do was fight, we'd have to go below and work in the engine room. Going through the canal we haven't had to work. The heat is like the breath from a steel furnace.

January 5, 1952

The captain received orders not to stop in Colon, Panama, any longer than it takes to re-fuel. So the men are very angry

and silent except for occasional bitching. It's 11 days to Antofagasta, Chile, which is where we have to go before Tal Tal, the disaster village. Bill says it's going to be much worse than the trip from New York. Not only the men but the ocean, too. Sailing in the Atlantic was smooth for this time of year, so I haven't been seasick yet. We sail at daybreak when the pilot comes aboard again.

January 6, 1952

I couldn't crawl out of my sack, I was so weak. Even Franco lay up there convulsed. During the night, I had to hold on to keep the sea from pitching me onto the floor.

Red Crane came and braced himself in the doorway. In Spanish, he spoke very angrily to Franco. Franco pleaded. Finally, Red pulled him out of the top bunk and let him fall sprawling naked on the deck of the fo'castle, cursing him in English. I knew he wanted me, too, but I didn't care.

Franco was dressing obediently in his good double-breasted, pin-striped suit. He hadn't had to work since Agistone threw his only work clothes overboard just before we entered the canal. Sick as I was, I almost wished I had the strength to go below just to watch him paint in his new suit.

Then Red started in on me and I dared him to lay a finger on me. He laid all ten of them on me at once. That was when I finally threw up—all over his shirt. He was so surprised he just stood there staring at his belly, delicately flicking at it with his nicotined fingers.

Bill was standing outside. He yelled at Red, "Okay, Crane, that's all, man! The damn ship's delegate's going to hear about this." Then he came back again with "Sluefoot," the bo'sun. Bill tried to help me into the bunk but we kept slipping in the stuff on the floor and Franco, standing behind Red, ready for work but dressed for church, laughed quietly.

"Sluefoot" was damned mad at Red. He stalked out, saying, "Bill, round up the men. We're going to have a special union meeting right now." Red told Franco he could go back to bed.

I was too nauseated to go to the meeting. Bill came afterwards with some crackers and soup and told me about it in detail. The men had decided that a report to the union about Crane would be made when we returned to the States. Also the men voted that Franco was an agitator, causing discontent on the ship. Laughing at the way he told it, I got even sicker. Above me, Franco lay moaning, dressed in that suit, pretending not to hear.

Then Agistone came in and told Franco he'd have to go to work. Franco got up, staggered behind him to the engine room.

At about 4 o'clock, the Pacific was still not passive, but I felt less nauseated. Just so I could see Franco working in his suit, I dressed and went below and offered to help blow the tubes. Perched high among the hot pipes, Franco was painting. When he came down to the chains where I stood waiting, carrying his brush and paint bucket, he had paint all over his face, his hands, his hair but not one drop on that suit. Still neatly creased. Sweat stains only here and there.

Agistone was supervising again but Red Crane walked past us and reached up and patted Franco on the shoulder as Franco pulled the chains, standing tip-toe on the empty paint can. Damned if I don't believe tears of gratitude came to his eyes. It made me feel low-down.

After Crane was gone, Agistone went over to Franco and yelled for him to pull harder. Franco pulled and huffed and puffed so hard and fast that when the ship hit a high wave and lurched, he lost his balance and fell flat upon Agistone. My stomach flopped like a beached fish, I doubled over and missed what happened while they were together on the deck but when I looked up Franco was up and brushing off his suit when Agistone hit him. He swung again but Franco ducked. He ducked about twenty times with Agistone swinging wildly and the ship rolling. It was the most interesting thing I ever watched—like modern dance exercises. Then on the last miss, Agistone crashed into the paint cage and fell back like a bull dog in a cartoon—out cold.

The ship's delegate brought the captain down and a lot of us were there when they helped Agistone up the steep, narrow steps. I told them exactly what I'd seen but I couldn't swear who had started it, and I couldn't. The captain said to Franco, "Since you've been on this ship you've caused nothing but trouble. I think a few days in that paint locker would do you good."

There's no brig on this ship and all the fo'castles are occupied, and the sea was still too rough for handcuffing him to the rail. Except for the heat below, the paint cage wasn't so bad. But the whole idea was repulsive even to the guys that were satisfied.

But Dane, Herman, and Babe weren't satisfied. When Herman, the ape, went down with some food for Franco, Franco threw paint and Spanish curses at him. In the night, Dane, Herman, and Babe went down and sang to him, lullabies and jingles about Dr. Franco's special skin lotion, and taunted him about his wife because now the captain has decided to pay Franco off in Antofagasta. That means he won't get back to America with a visa to visit his "wi-ife." But they came back, looking glum and unsatisfied.

January 7, 1952

I got to feeling sorry for Franco and ashamed of myself, so I took him that copy of *Black Mask* detective stories he's been reading all during the voyage. He was sitting quietly on a paint can, wearing only his shorts, dripping sweat. Back in a corner of the huge cage, his suit hung neatly from a pipe near the overhead. But it seemed like he was still wearing it, he looked so dignified and invulnerable.

January 15, 1952

The monotony of the sea, of the painting, the regularity and the routine, the maneuvers of the men in their pathetic efforts to kill time, has been much worse since Panama. Or is it that I am getting used to it and the mystery has worn off? I know all the men now and they're friendly in their surly manner, though they sometimes get nasty when they kid me about my way of talking about things, calling me the professor, sometimes sarcastically. And I know a great deal about the ship and familiarity is breeding boredom. But he's there when I go down every morning. Nearly nude, brown, scarred, bony like a starved turkey, sitting there reading *Black Mask* or staring into space. And even that is no longer unreal seeming, or outrageous or weird or even interesting.

This morning, I came up out of that hot hole dreading the dreariness of the gray sky and the gray sea. I casually looked out and the mountains were so sudden and steep and gigantic that it seemed we were moving in among them. The stark Andes in the land of eternal twilight—looking like the Smokies, only nude. That sight made up for everything. When I went down below, I even tried to tell Franco about it but he, as always, merely looked out of the cage right through me.

He talks to Red, though. Red will come along and offer him a cigarette and they'll smoke together for a while and chat in Spanish and Franco will even laugh and slap his naked legs. Somehow I get the feeling that Agistone, watching, is jealous of Franco. I wouldn't doubt he has a secret respect, liking, admiration for Red. I guess I sort of like Red, too, in a half-assed way. The other day, I even asked him if he would talk to the captain, try to get poor ol' Franco out of that chicken coop. "Don't worry, kid. He likes it. Believe me."

Today, we passed Tal Tal, the disaster town, but we have to go on to Antofagasta first for some infuriatingly stupid reason. We will be there in the morning.

January 17, 1952

I woke up yesterday morning feeling the stillness of the ship. There were harbor noises, but the steel rattle of a locker was what woke me. I rolled over and there was Franco, naked as a jay bird, leaning over the sink, washing his famous face. I wasn't glad he was out until I suddenly remembered he'd been in that cage at all. But odder than that was the way he spoke when he saw me awake in the mirror. "Well, Lucius, my friend! Ah, you see, it is a beautiful morning, and soon we will be ashore and having a fine time." And then he began to whistle. The thing about people is, you never know.

While I dressed, he kept whistling and chattering gaily. In the flood of it, he reminded me that he is a political exile, an aristocrat of good family and breeding, has been a museum curator, a teacher, and an official for an oil company in Arabia. Almost made me sick, listening.

For a second, he got serious enough to offer his friendship. "Let bygones be bygones," he said. What the hell could I do but shake his hand? After all those hours in that sweltering engine room, his hand was cold and clammy. Next thing he did was invite me to join Red and him for dinner. He wouldn't let me refuse politely, so I accepted. Then he sold me some pesos cheap.

"Is the captain letting you stay on the ship?" I asked, finally.

"No," he said curtly, sadly. "But I have many friends here. You will see. I will join my wi-ife in New York. You will see."

I began to feel a chummy, though repulsive, feeling between us, so I tried gently to explain to him why the men have treated him so badly, to point out how he might cease to antagonize them. But he didn't hear a word, went right on talking with egotistical bombast. I began to feel smothered.

Dressed in his suit, debonairly holding his cane and his briefcase in his gloved hands, he rode the launch with me to the dock. We were anchored in the bay. Red was supposed to meet us later.

We rode into Antofagasta in the same taxi. In the post office, where we stopped for him to mail letters to his wife and to some officials, I saw Bill, Dane, and Babe and started talking to them and when I turned, Franco was gone. So I went with

them, hoping Franco wouldn't be mad, because I'd bought some dirty pictures from the cab-driver who kept jazz-talking me with "man," "crazy," and "cool," and I was afraid Franco might report me to the customs.

I thought I'd have to wait until dark before they would take me with them to a bordello. But they started off right away in broad daylight in an old taxi that rattled my guts. Dane knew where to tell the driver to go.

It was in a very grimy section of town with a dirt road, dust all over, and creepy dogs crawling across the street that was cold black shadow on one side and pale sunlight on the other. I imagined all of us getting slugged in bed and missing the last launch at midnight. But I was more scared of the whores. Not that I'd never—well, no use going into that. It's Franco coming in later that matters.

A little old thin woman let us into a roofed-over courtyard. There were balconies and ornate balustrades but the huge room was full of chairs but no girls. I leaned in the wide doorway to the dance hall, my hands in my pockets, and waited. Then another old *senorita* came up to me and pulled me away from the doorjamb and showed me the ragged spot on the wood where my leather jacket had taken off the fresh green paint. That made me start feeling self-conscious about all the engine room paint on my boots. Dane and Babe had ambled off somewhere with drinks the woman had brought, but Bill was kidding me all the time.

I couldn't believe it when I heard it. A loud clattering bounce of aluminum, then one long shriek, partly a woman's, and immediately the banshee laughter and the raucous cursing. I got the room just in time to look over Babe's and Dane's shoulders and see: Agistone, naked and white as a peeled Easter egg, *it* bouncing stiffly, as he chased the chief cook around the bed where a tiny young girl lay bug-eyed, scared out of her naked skin at all of that suddenly going on.

"Man, he timed it just right!" said Babe, admiringly.

Agistone chased the cook all over the house. Whores were on the balconies now, laughing. Then they started lazily down the stairs and I kind of backed away a little.

Just when I was getting set with this one young girl named Mia, and not minding her teasing me about the "pintura" on my boots, that goddamned Franco had to come barging in, debonair as hell. Well, it's a free whorehouse, but it looked just like he was intruding all over the place. The madam knew him right away and they smiled back and forth at each other, talking as though they were on the ballroom floor of an embassy. He was looking for Red, even seeming a little angry about being stood up. Dane tried to make him believe that Red was at another house but failed.

After a while, I couldn't stand it anymore, watching Franco's way of making out with all the girls, and the one around my neck was getting me to where there was only one thing to do, so I picked her up and carried her up the stairs like I was Rhett Butler. What happened in the room was something else. All I can say is, I was a lot scareder than I thought I was.

When I came down again, it was getting dark outside. Through a grimy window, the town looked like it was rolled in a puny, sickening wreath of smoke. The sun was dead red on the mountain crests. For the first time, I felt very deeply the sense of being far from home without a tongue in a strange country.

In the loud, raucous music below, Franco was making an ass of himself on the dance floor. In that damned suit, he was dancing on his knees from one seated whore to another, tee-ing each one off. He went at one girl so frantically she got a little hysterical, and it was not until then that anyone did any more than watch him with contempt.

Babe told him to keep his filthy hands off the women. "You think I want to touch a woman you had your hands all over her?" He was red-eyed drunk and cursed Franco quietly in Spanish.

Bill was upstairs with a huge, lovely woman and Agistone and the cook were pissing drunk together in a corner so they couldn't have even seen Franco. But Dane was stone sober, hardly responding to the women, staring intensely at every move Franco made.

Then Red came dashing in, all dressed up in a blue new suit and a cocky trench-coat, with a few drinks in him and a gay, happy but arrogant air about him. He looked great; I have to admit it.

When Franco, who was on his knees, drunkenly begging the hysterical woman's forgiveness, not meaning a word of it, saw Red Crane, I thought he'd have convulsions of joy. He waddled all the way across that gleaming, waxed floor on his knees, his arms out, yelling, "Red, Red, my friend! my friend!" to where Red stood in the doorway, taking off his gloves. Franco took his hand feverishly and kissed it. I think he was sure we and Red would take it as a drunken, whorehouse joke, but it was obvious he meant it.

Red was annoyed, but he tried to laugh it off.

Then Dane said, quietly, "Kiss him, Red."

Red stepped back abruptly, looking at Dane. "What did you say?"

"Nothing."

Red went over and stood in front of Dane. "I said, 'What did you say?'"

Dane gently laid the whore's hands aside, rose slowly and said, quietly, "I said, 'Why don't you kiss him?'"

The fight started there, instantly, but it stumbled and spilled and fell and rolled and jolted, exploded into the courtyard, out the front door, into and across the street, and even into another house, ending in a dimly lit kitchen with a damp concrete floor, roaches on the wall, a public-type urinal behind a screen. They stood there in that sickly light panting, limp, bleeding, staring at each other.

Franco had disappeared.

When I heard the car out front, then the boots of the police in the concrete hallway, I tried to get to Dane, to get the dirty pictures back that I'd loaned him, but it was the first thing they found when they searched him. I could have said they were mine, but he had them, that's all they cared about. But Dane looked at me as they dragged him and Red away and stuffed them into the tiny police car. Something about the olive wool uniforms, all those shiny brown leather belts and holsters, their high boots and snappy caps scared the living daylight out of me.

As we moved toward the ship in the launch last night, I thought, well, at least I won't see Franco again. Now maybe things will be different. I just hope Dane and Red will be released.

Leaning over the rail, picking my teeth after breakfast this morning, I saw a launch approaching, Franco standing stiff

as a poker, dressed as dapper as on that first day in Brooklyn, holding the shiny briefcase and the gold-tipped cane with professional aplomb. I felt a sense of inevitability. In some way, Franco would always be with us.

He climbed agilely up the drop-ladder and set off with a springy step and jaunty air along the deck to the captain's cabin.

He bought some work clothes from the slop-chest, and we painted that day as we sailed to Tal Tal, the final destination.

They had turned Red loose. He didn't speak to Franco or even slightly look at him, but he spoke amiably to me. "It's a shame about Dane, isn't it?" He really meant it. "Those Chilean tanks are cold and ridden with lice and rats."

In a way, I was glad Dane wasn't on the ship, but I shuddered, thinking of crawling lice.

At dinner, the captain came to the messhall for the first time since I've been aboard and said, "Men, Jack Santos will not be molested again on this ship. I'll handcuff to the rail any man who abuses him."

When the captain left, Babe, leaning on the counter, said, "Okay, men, you hear the captain! No more of this monkey business. From now on Franco—I mean Señor Santos—is the guest of honor on this sheep!" Then he started in kidding me about what the whore told him happened, or didn't happen, when we were in her room. But he didn't have his mind on it. He was watching Franco without a glimmer of humor in his lovely, dark eyes.

I do not speak to Franco and he does not speak to me. He's lying up there naked, looking like he always does when he's asleep. No doubt about it. I loathe the man.

Tomorrow, at dawn, we arrive in Tal Tal with rations for the earthquake survivors.

January 18, 1952

Just as I was dropping off to sleep last night, Franco suddenly started talking to me in the dark. This is what I remember: "I have lived, intentionally, an ambiguous life. I have thrived on lies, on masquerade, on calculated deception. Why? Boredom. Because three years ago, I realized that I had done everything I ever wanted to do, all in one insane rush, one fury of devouring, and that I could no longer become excited or amused or glad about anything. Boredom is worse than hell. . . . But the worst of it is, I am afflicted with a horrible nostalgia! . . . The lies and the less than lies—they all amount to the same ambiguity. You will see. . . . As much as my indifferent to everything will allow, I have tried to protect you. I have been a hero to you and you have been my witness. But now you must create your own life. You must be in control."

January 21, 1952

The night before we reached Tal Tal, I was passing Herman's fo'castle, and I heard Agistone, Babe, and Herman talking. I was jealous of Herman. They never sat with me in my fo'castle. Bent over the drinking fountain outside the door, I could make out only a few details amid the drone of their secret tones, but Franco's name bobbed up like a target.

I walked away quickly, looking for Bill. In the passageway, I met him, he was on night watch, wearing the heavy coat with the hood, and he carried a bunch of chains.

"Bill, you're the only one I can tell. I think Babe and Herman and Agistone are plotting something against Franco. I mean, it doesn't sound too good."

He looked at me. "Man you better come in with us, now," he said, with an ironic, hissing laugh.

I was shocked that good ol' Bill could be in on it, standing there shifting the bunch of chains with a steely rattle, staring at me, grinning like Babe.

"I'm not afraid of you guys," I said, walking fast to keep up with him.

Bill stopped outside Herman's fo'castle. "Man, we could shuffle you like a deck of greasy cards."

"Aw, Bill, you ain't like these other guys. I always thought you had a real feeling for people."

"I feel for Franco. I feel for him in the dark, man. Dane's my friend. Now, you can come with us if you want to make it up to Dane."

I didn't want Dane's friendship. Compared with Franco, Dane amounted to very little, good or bad. Now I was afraid for myself.

"You forgot what the captain said?"

"I been handcuffed to the rail before. Look, if you don't intend to come with us, you'd better go to the dayroom and read your goddamn books, Professor."

I wanted to go, to try to make it not as bad as it would be, but instead I went to our fo'castle to warn Franco. He wasn't there. But his new paint-pocked work clothes were on the line and his towel was off the rack.

I ran down the passageway to the shower. Franco's voice, singing what sounded like a Spanish folk song, came out with floating steam through the open door of the shower room. But when I heard them coming with the chains, I ran back down the passageway and out on deck.

The sky was clear, the air mild and cool. Stars shone against velvet purple. Rough waves thrashed the ship. I stumbled over a loose rope beside one of the hatches.

The wheelhouse windows were dark. I didn't see anyone in there. Panting, cursing, sweating, I ran up the staircase. I hesitated at the captain's door till I saw in my mind what they'd be doing to Franco, and my fist shot out. "Captain, sir!" No sound on the other side. I knocked again.

Then I ran down the passageway to Crane's cabin. The door stood open. Upon a desk lay a huge scrapbook, open under a bright lamp. Impulsively, I stepped into the cabin and glanced at the photographs. The snapshots were of children with toys, of Crane mowing a lawn, of Crane sitting on the grass beside a woman, and one of him holding a string of fish beside a mountain stream. My face burning, I ran back down to the crew section.

Feeling guilty and afraid, I sat in the dayroom. An old seaman was playing Chinese checkers alone. He didn't want me to play with him. Nobody in the dayroom spoke. They were aware of something, but most of them seemed to have no real knowledge of what it could be. I sat against the wall and stared at the rivets in the iron and at the ceiling where paint had cracked and curled.

Franco had let it come to this. But it was not all his. I had crossed Dane myself, yet Franco stood on the spot alone.

When I thought they'd had time to do it, I went back to our fo'castle, guilty and ashamed. Groping along the bulkhead for the light switch, I felt for a brief moment that Franco hadn't

even returned from shore, that the conspiracy was something I had imagined or even hoped against him, and that the light would fall on an empty room.

But I saw him instantly. He'd been watching me in the dark, and our eyes met in the sudden light. Naked, he lay chained to my bunk. Blood dripped from his body upon the floor. I grabbed at my stomach.

But bending over him, I smelled the breath-taking fumes of paint. The idea of blood persisted. They'd gagged him with the sweaty red sash. Lying across his groin was a faded cardboard advertisement in Spanish for Aqua Velva after-shave lotion. His hair was wet, beads of water glistening. In spite of the gory trappings, it didn't look bad until I saw the blankets on the floor. I'd heard of that kind of beating. The blankets had kept him from bleeding as they flailed him with the chains.

I gently pulled the rag from his mouth. He didn't speak or sigh. He didn't look at me again. Even after I'd loosened the chains and thrown them violently into the corner, he still stared at the ceiling.

"I'll get the captain, Jack." I was almost weeping.

"No." It was clear, like a command. I obeyed.

I sat down, but he didn't move, so I got up again and started to go. My foot kicked against a book. It was mine, torn to shreds, and under the bed were all my other books, ruined.

I went up on deck and saw the lights of the little village of Tal Tal, burning weakly. Above the steep, high, desolate Andes, stars shone lucidly. The ship's engines stopped. We were there.

I went up to the upper deck and lay down on one of the cots in the cold and looked up at the stars and thought of home and watched the smoke from the stacks drift across and smudge the stars, and I cried a little, I must admit.

When I awoke yesterday morning, the sun was very bright and sweltering hot. I went to the rail.

Huge black oar boats pocked with white guano were coming toward the ship in a wide formation. I watched them come up alongside the ship and cluster. Dark silent men in old clothes stood in the boats, waiting, looking up against the sun at the deck where the crew was slowly but steadily active unloading the hatches. Then the crates were lowered into the boats. There was no dock on the rocky shore but on the white rocks black figures of women and children stood, waiting, looking out toward the ship. Some houses were still burning amid the general ruin, no flames, just smoke rising into the bright hot air.

I was startled to see Dane, his face black with grime and his shirt stuck to his back with sweat, climb up out of one of the hot hatches. He must have been released soon after the ship sailed from Antofagasta and come by train and boarded in the night.

But when I saw Franco come on deck, I wasn't surprised at all. Not even that he was dressed in that immaculate suit, that shiny briefcase riding at his side in his bony, gloved hand. On his neck, beneath his Homburg, were flecks of red paint, and the only other thing was his stiff walk.

When the men in the boats saw him standing at the drop-ladder, they paused in the lifting and settling of crates and looked up at him. He waved, almost a benevolent gesture, and they began to cheer, "Bravo! Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!" The poor ignorant bastards recognized him as a Spaniard and thought that he must be a Chilean official, the mysterious

authority responsible for the coming of the ship, for the gift of the food and the clothes. They cheered until he had descended, with suppressed difficulty, the shaky ladder into one of the black boats, until he had brushed the dust from the knees of his creased trousers, until the boats all started back, heavily laden, his in the lead. He stood up in the boat and did not look back at the eyes that watched him go.

Last night, we sailed from Tal Tal. We are going to Valparaíso. I heard "Sluefoot" tell someone that the company had contracted another shipment at Valparaíso, destined for India. I heard someone else say that there will be no shore leave at Valparaíso, and that India is a long, long time and a long,

long way to go. All the men know it now and they are very quiet and surly again, like snakes coiled. Bill does not talk to me now except to say, "Pass the sugar, professor." But I remember what he told me when we first met in Brooklyn.

This morning, I was standing on deck at the rail during coffee break and Dane passed me very close without looking at me and a length of greasy chain he was carrying struck my hand and I dropped the cup into the rough waves. I think it was an accident.

The fo'castle seems very empty tonight without Franco, lying up there naked with the *Black Mask* across his groin.

ORION

Hunter, follow perilously the killer's trade
by petty stones and trees that are your fear.
We shape the stars to wield an edgeless blade.

The owl and hawk clutch rodents from their raid
within the grass, make exits quick and clear:
hunters in peril who ply the killer's trade.

Yet we build blinds in forests where we've strayed;
failing, all night, to draw our game too near,
we shape some stars to wield an edgeless blade.

Against a wall, the crumbling bones are laid,
turn white with each sun burning through a year:
hunter, follow perilously your killer's trade.

Or, can you feel your raging mind was made
to loose the dogs, flush the lion till you rear
the stars to wield the edges of their blades?

No. The stones are always right—you are afraid.
And what you hear right now you will always hear:
hunters follow perilously the killer's trade,
yet shape the stars to wield an edgeless blade.

—Keith Moul

FOR A YOUNG NEPHEW, TRAVELING IN SCANDINAVIA

A stripling with some heat
He's made excursions into places where I freeze
Or check my passport till it's out of date;
Helsinki under stars—
He's wintered in the intersections there
And made a map of doors
That open to a massive knock.
His mother, costumed like a girl,
Would crouch behind the door when callers came;
And so I stayed at home,
A tourist in her dying brain,
While he went prancing to the ball
And danced through darkness on the Finnish coast
Emerging with the sun upon his groin
The tilted earth
A girl

—Larry Rubin

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SURVIVORS OF A WINTER STORM

If your car begins to slip
Take the bus
Through the ice
Past the crystal chandeliers
Standing in the yards
Take the bus
Past the lamps in blinded windows
Let lovers plunge behind their doors:
This white network of sliding streets
A corrugated labyrinth
Leading to that spasm in the clouds
Is all the love the sky can hold

All the ice you see is yours

—Larry Rubin

Blood Song

by Jessie Schell

I.

This particular summer every living thing in the Mississippi Delta seems speeded up, seems out of control. Unnatural under the slow sun thickening the air, spreading gummy shadows under trees, but true. Each day growing things take a jump on themselves: grass freshly shaved under yesterday's evening cool, this morning matts and tangles up against itself, pushing; gardenias burn on the bush, bruising each other for room to blossom; weeds terrorize. In backyards all along the street, tomatoes burst their sleek skins and the silk juice dribbles onto leaves. The birds and squirrels are swollen from so much perfume, so much easy nectar. It is a summer when the town seems full of women and those women over-ripe too, either pregnant or dying. Either splitting off another life like a hungry shoot or blistering their blood up deep inside, hurtling towards being used up altogether. And I am one of these.

II.

I spend a lot of time, these summer days, walking. The doctors say walking is good for pregnant women, so I mark off the slow burgeoning days not on a calendar, but in terms of sidewalk blocks, blacktop roads, even department store aisles. And I begin to notice things, covering this same small town geography day after heavier day, I never noticed before. My eyes slide sideways to glistening display windows. I see what is me and yet not possibly me: me thrown back on my heels, my flesh parting the air before me as if I were riding the prow of a ship. Not what I know to be myself, but my self, nevertheless. And I begin to hear: snippets of conversations I never had time to hear before. I am tuned in to my scenery now, plugged like a generator into the world I sail through. And what I want to say is that these sighing voices, these drifting photographs call up in me one overriding image: we are all growing old, older so fast. And we are afraid.

I know this not only from what I overheard in Belk's Department Store today; not merely from what I witnessed cruising past the 100 block of Sycamore Street yesterday. It is that

all these isolated incidents call forth scenes from memory I never knew I owned. So as I pull myself up Lindsey Street for the fifth time this week, I am also seeing people moving like smoke before my eyes, like forward shadows. People dead into earth or fire, people vanished to the world out there somewhere, people who have wakened from the sleep they wrapped themselves in from inside my head. They live again and again behind my eyes and their voices rush against my blood, warning, prophesying. And *older so fast*, they call, and my blood beats, *afraid*.

At the yellow house on Calvert Street, the one whose pink geraniums I have admired this week, the one with fruit rot on its apple trees, a small girl child hunches like a monkey under an oleander bush. She cries and rubs her tearstains into the dust, then streaks her face with her soft fingers. I need not even hesitate, I need not even break stride, for she looks up at me, she is full of anguish, must speak, says, "She's dead," holding up a hairless doll by its foot. The doll has an arrow stuck into its plastic chest and seems not to suffer unduly. Seems dead. And somewhere, I know, behind those rotting apple trees, a little boy crouches triumphant, will soon emerge to strut in circles round the oleander bushes, smelling victory and power. The child anticipates no response from me. I am a fat lady sailing past her yard, my billowing front a motion she can speak to. She simply rubs more dust into her cheeks, and I pause long enough to say "I'm sorry," anyway, because I am. She is already too old for me to say, "She's just broken," even if too young to know that a doll cannot die. Dolls can always die if you know how to make them live. And the hidden boy will circle her with his power when he comes, and trap her in his ease. And the smell of oleanders will linger with her all the years. She is caught already in a tighter web now than she knew, her body's blood rushed into knowing too much, even while her mind sleeps on its moth's sleep. So that one day she will be afraid, smelling that lush pinkness in the summer air, and then, unable to remember, will shrug, finally, turning to him for comfort. Not knowing, ever. Only her blood swimming pain into her arms, so that she takes him to her and will not be satisfied.

Light snapped against the kitchen window and the yellow curtains sucked in and out with heat. Slow sucking, a held breath.

"I want to see," she said. "I want to watch how they do it."

Paula's pressed back curled over the soup pot, coaxing the water to boil. It was like a cauldron, bubbling clear and sticky with flame.

"You don't want to watch," Paula said. "If you knew what you was saying, you wouldn't say it." Paula glanced over her shoulder, the black folds in her neck shining. "Shuck that corn like I told you."

Outside, beyond the tamed back lawn, she could hear their voices crackle and the sudden astonished cries the hens made when their feet came close. She held the ear of corn up to her chin, tickling the sweet silk threads against her neck. Could see the border at the lawn's edge: coxcomb, bachelor buttons, sweetpea vines. Beyond that fragrant line she knew they were preparing. Her daddy and Paula's son, Ham, and Luke. The worst of it was Luke.

"He's only one year more. I should be able to watch too."

Paula made a fanning gesture over the rising steam and turned, wiping sweat from between her breasts. "You don't know what you're saying. Age don't even measure into this at all. What do you care how them chickens die? Stick to what they want you to know, just satisfy yourself. You're never satisfied."

And she wasn't. When Luke went dove hunting in November, she was only allowed to trail along like an extra bird dog, she the one longing to feel the trigger spring against her hand, Luke wishing only for thick crisp book pages turned against warm fingers. All along the dead cornstalk rows, she saw Luke nestle the gun tentatively against his side, listened to her daddy say in a low voice where to aim. Watched Luke shoot and miss three times. Watched her daddy shoot and fling first one, then two, then three birds out of air like little brown balloons. They fell that way, losing air, shrivelling as they came.

"No, you can't," Daddy said, while she stomped her feet in the cold, wet mud. And when she cried, he stamped ahead, dragging Luke behind like a shadow down the narrow track. Luke looking back at her, his face blanched from the cold, reluctant, afraid. When she stopped where she was, rooted in the wet earth like a cornstalk stretching into life and yelled, Luke and her daddy stopped too. Then her daddy snatched the gun from under Luke's arm, striding tall down the row towards her. She remembered the small, red circles of flame in his cheeks and the way his eyes darkened for a long time afterwards.

"You'll only hurt yourself," he said. "The gun will throw you. And what if you hit a bird? What then?"

"What if I do?" And she wiped her runny nose on Luke's outgrown jacket, held her arms out for the sleek barrel, imagining already the comforting weight of steel between her chapped hands.

"Go home, go on home," her daddy said. "I never should have let you come."

She remembered too for a long time Luke's small white face cate-cornered to her daddy's shoulder, blooming silent there. Could read his silence; she, the only one who could.

"You want to know too much too quick," Paula said now. "Can't satisfy you with nothing."

That was all Paula ever said. Like one of the songs she sang herself over the dishes, pressed down over the ironing board: *be sa-tis-fied, satisfied*.

And she wasn't. Even Luke, who never said, wasn't. Ran off into the fields each week and had to be coaxed home to supper. Coaxed like some tentative animal back into its bedding place.

Now with the steam pulsing behind her and the light snapping into her ears, she heard the voices swim beyond the rows of red, blue, violet flowers and she could not wait, would not be lulled by Paula's old, tired song. Before the wiry hand could catch her shirt-tail, before the voice could touch her hearing, she was gone: across the lawn before the screen door slapped, the corn ear clutched in her hand like a key that would open the door into seeing what she had to see. See now, to satisfy.

IV.

The heat whips at my head. I pause for a moment at the corner of Sixth and Ellis, facing the hill where they keep Paula now. It is all going faster than ever today. Jays, two blue flashes, tuck and dart at the back of a dog. The dog leaps from his snooze beneath the maple tree I lean against and dashes against traffic. I can hear the popping sound of voices from the cars stopped at the light. Two women, their words explode out of the metal car. One guns the motor, faster, fast against the pressing heat, then I hear her say—so clearly—"And then he just picked up and left. Vanished. Well, good riddance." And the other, sharp and quick against the light's clicking color, "Who ever knows. Ever," and they fling themselves forward in the glittering rush of chrome.

I listen to everything now, I make a point of hearing. And if I could ditch this leaden weight, could shed this burden of blood inside me, I would race after them, myself speeded up, would run alongside their flashing door and say, "I know, I do, I know now." Instead I breathe slow and deep against the shoving air, forcing the hot breath slowly down as far as it will touch, tasting its color if it had one—orange, or yellow. Then push off, taking the hill in stride, watching one foot outrun the other, watching one leg trying to win. The kudzu is chewing on this hill. Only last week it was a thin layer of green, a mild veil to cover the black dirt scarred beneath from rain. Now it is a jungle heap of hair, twined and curling and deep with dark. The fat leaves slap at each other, like hands scolding. I lean forward, my stomach pressed against the climb, and someone's invisible hands push from behind: hurry, hurry.

Paula is lying at the top, inside the Willow Rest Home. She lies in a narrow bed at the end of a long ward. It is dark and quiet inside, and yet when I pass the obedient rows of bodies stretched flat against the heat, the ceiling fans whirr so fast above my head, I think they will spin off and fly around the room like boomerangs. As I pass the neat rows of old women's bones, I can almost hear their arteries ticking, using up pulse like minutes of a clock. And that clock gone wrong.

Paula stares at the ceiling, the flesh that used to fold like pillows around her bones seared off from inside. She seems smaller today than last week when I came. She is a cinder now, burned out, but the fire inside burning quicker still every

day. I can see the hot coals throb behind her eyes; I can see the coals like blood behind her eyes.

Paula waits until I lower my body into the camp chair next to her and lets the puffing sound my lungs make slow. Then says something new. Says, "This is the last time." She looks at me, the only slowness I have felt today, though I see those coals flare up inside her eyes, quick, then says what she has always said, dips into that old song well. I lean forward to catch the whisper of her voice, trying to will the blood beating in my ears to quiet.

"Never learn," she whispers. "Crazy climbing that hill for somebody already gone. Crazy out in that heat and selfish too. Always having to see something more, always thinking you got to know it. What do you care about this place when I am already gone? Why don't you satisfy yourself? Think about that baby trying to rest inside—but no, you got to satisfy yourself and come see somebody already gone."

She croons this to herself awhile, then slips to silence in the middle of a sentence. We hover together in the quivering air. Then "Ham," she says, in a high, sweet voice, and closes her eyes down. She sleeps.

Ham: stole fifty dollars from Paula's hiding place, her cracked Spode teapot Daddy broke one night and threw away. Rescued it for a bank until Ham smashed it up against the fireplace and took the fifty dollars and himself off to Detroit. Then sent the fifty dollars back, then fifty more. But no return address, and then one year of silence, and then nothing.

I can feel him out there on some rushing street, the dirt flying up into his eyes, grit and silt of city; but he is lost to this world, will never return, is gone for Paula always now.

Her breathing is shallow and rapid. Under the slippery sheet her small lungs bellow in and out, fanning those fires inside. The ceiling fans whirr and sing and threaten to fly down upon my head. Over her bed now, leaning as close as my front will allow. Sleep tight, she would say over my bed. Sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs. . . . Paula, sleep cool and sweet in your dark. Satisfied at last to be finished, to be done at last, to end your hopeless song.

V.

In winter Michael's windows frosted over with Cambridge soot and ice, and steamed inside from the burning gas jet heater.

My windows, she told herself. My windows too now, rooting deeper into the sagging mattress, curled against Michael's sleeping thighs.

Winter had come like a white streak, an unexpected flashbulb crackling into air. She walked now into a cold, wet wind, often to snow that tapped against her eyelids, pushing them closed. Some days she found herself lost on a corner she could not place inside her head, eyes closed against that tapping ice. The streets she met outside Michael's high white room, they lulled her, slowed her step; the faces she threaded through all masked now, muffled against air that burned into her ears and flamed inside each breath, her lungs contracting.

He moved against her breath now, turning, and eyes still closed, pulled her to him, fitting her to his skin, ridges and valleys, hollows, the crooked crescents of their arms rising,

pressed cool and tight. She felt her skin first warm, then turn to burning in his hands; felt her body opening, bones fluid, her self flowing out into liquid, into warm, rushing dark. Sank into his white and silent flesh as if wrapping herself into thick, furry shawls. Then counted the colors he poured into her, colors of ice and fire: that flash of crimson and light, that flame licking inside her. For an instant it pulsed into the darkest hollow she owned, throbbed in that blind place, then washed away, and she swimming back into her own cold skin. She thought she knew now what it was to die a frozen death. Not to want to move, not ever needing to know, ask why, see anything but that blank place, that endless space of warm, of untracked white that lay behind her eyes.

Michael, she said, sounding the letters of his name in the shallow cup of his neck. Michael. It would not make a song, no matter how she tried.

VI.

Going down the hill is easier, the invisible hands still pushing from behind, but now gravity is on my side. I go fast, faster, tilted forward. I skate downwards, the kudzu a green blur to the side of my eyes. Even the baby is affected. All summer I have felt him twining out, little cells like tendrils travelling around inside my belly. A flutter first, the tender blossom of his own heart flicking; then like leaves unfolding in a fast-action camera, thumps that grow and spread and double under my stretched skin. He branches out, roots deeper into me, sways in the water that feeds him. A willow with blood-red leaves, a crimson flower. Now on this downhill trip, he somersaults inside me, once, and is still.

The last time, Paula said, and I know she is right. My eyes will never touch her again, she will never hear me when I name her name.

The sun lunges at me now, swoops down and chips away at the back of my skull. The heat comes down in waves that swell and swell, faster, so fast I lean against a crumbling wall and feel my own lungs swell to catch some air from that swift fire. Behind the wall a garden has exploded. Fat zinnias in outrageous colors rise from their thick stalks: magenta, fuchsia, pomegranate. Colors like rich sauces poured over the scraggly lawn. A sun hat wags behind them and then two gnarled and blue-veined hands part the stalks like a curtain and a puckered face peers down at me. My inside voices start again, quickening; my blood starts up that rhythm Paula's face had momentarily calmed (*O Paula is gone*), call *older so fast*, beats *afraid*.

"Honey, you all right?" The face is a dried-up flower stuck in-between the zinnias. They are ravenous, they are sucking up all the air.

"Yes," I say, "yes," and the face disappears behind its curtain again, reappears floating atop a body reed-thin, swallowed in a dotted swiss housecoat.

She eyes me for a moment, clicking the garden shears she holds with one hand. "Hot," she offers, and gives a snappy click towards the heads of some Devil's Paintbrush crowding towards the zinnias. Bees make a chorus above us, not hovering, but in a kind of race from color to color. "Don't I know that face of yours?"

My face is puffed and swollen and I wear it like a mask. "No m'am," I say. "I believe not."

But she is someone whose name is filed inside my head.

Like smoke she moves between me and her real self now—unbidden, unwanted. It is Mrs. Kramer, the chief checker from the A&P. Retired now, I suppose, though I see her vaporous fingers flicking over the cash register keys, toting up nickels and dimes, stuffing the bills Paula hands her into the drawer like something worth less than it was.

"Pheou," she sighs and fans her dried-up face with the sun hat, slapping it through the leaden air. "Unnatural hot. Sixty-three years I lived through summers like a wet sponge, only this one takes the cake."

"Yes, it does," I say. "It takes the cake," enjoying the old-time words I have not heard for so long. Sweat starts up under my arms, at the roots of my hair and trickles down my sides and back, but I want to ask someone, to confirm my suspicions, so I stay and, after a decent time, say, "Does it seem to you things are speeded up?"

For a moment her eyes go squinty and I am afraid she will disappoint me, but it is only the sun that changes her expression. She shields her face with the hat and points towards the garden with the shears clicking again for punctuation. "Speeded up? Speeded up? What do you call those flowers if they ain't speeded up? Ever see such carrying on? Overindulgement, downright indecent. Look at 'em." She instructs me to take in the broad, rude faces swaying on their stalks. "You said it, honey."

I make a smile and rise from her rotting wall, feeling the hot imprint of stones still on my bottom. "Well," I say, that old Southern word that is preamble to all departures, endings, decisions.

Grasshoppers are whirring in the zinnia foilage; they leap frantically between us now, then plunge again into leaves.

"If you don't mind me saying so, sugar, you look a bit speeded up yourself. Ain't it about time you set at home or, better yet, get you to a hospital?"

The garden shears snap towards my stomach, and I look down to the sweaty, cotton cloth sticking to my swollen front. Everything is still inside, the only still thing I can sense at all. And suddenly I begin to feel strange. Not unwell, not ill, but as if I am losing control somehow. Perhaps it is the heat, though I know better each instant that it is not. There is a pressure now inside that I have never felt before, muscles and tendons tightening I never knew were there. I take a deep breath of sticky air and shrug towards the puckered face.

"When is that baby due?" the face demands and thrusts itself out on its neck towards me.

"Anytime, I think," and I begin to turn towards the last fifty yards of hill and the intersection beyond.

"Then where are you going now?" Mrs. Kramer insists, calling after me, for I am already moving fast again down the last incline.

I pause long enough to see her grounded like a bit of statue in that riotous garden. "That's what I have to decide," I call, and back away. I wish I knew.

VII.

"It's the blood," she said. "Always there. Comes and goes. And all those chickens. If it isn't the blood spurting out, it's those chickens, they bleed so much, you wouldn't believe. Chickens too."

She drifted into the high white room, to the windows frosted

and smoked. Down the billowing hill of the bed Michael's shadow moving towards her. She could watch him through the pulsing veins in her eyelids, through those blue lines, speaking something she would not hear. She struggled to push up inside her head towards his voice, though still she felt the warm blood splattering her legs. And then an icy thickness coiled onto her arm, a cold pain feeding into her. Michael. Michael's hand.

"Only a dream," he said from some great distance, though the cool skin circled her arm, touched her here, now. "Wake up now. You can wake up now."

Even between, behind those blue line traces she could see the weariness in him, back now, sucked back by his voice. She allowed herself to be lifted against him, pressed against his cool, white skin, gathered up like cloth, smoothed and petted and stroked. Allowed herself to be rocked in his arms' cradle, but could find no comfort there, though she held on fiercely now, digging her chin into his shoulder, held on. But that blood still shimmered like a veil beyond his shoulder. She held on, tasting its salty tongue in her mouth.

VIII.

The white hen feathers spluttered at her feet as she dashed inside the pen, heading towards Luke backed up against the far wire corner, her eyes on her daddy and Ham, too busy to watch her come; they tucked into her vision so tightly she saw only their arms moving. Nothing else. Her pushing feet exploded the wild hens; they cried high and mad, and her daddy turned towards where she stood, panting now beside Luke.

"Go home," he called, loud over the chickens screaming.

She shook her head mutely, her back pressed by Luke's along the burning wire, sagging against it.

"Then watch, watch good," he warned, his voice black in the sun's wide bowl above them.

That was when she saw the ax in his hand. That was when she saw how it was done:

Ham ranged around the pen, arms lunging, bare skin glistened onyx in the light, sweat spraying as he dived into white feathers pouring through his hands. Lunged and grabbed a chicken by its feet, raised those bright orange, thorny legs in air. And then, then: swinging, swinging that whiteness over his head, swinging that whiteness; feathers rained down, feathers suspended in still air above, drifting down. Then twirled the feathers once, twice, down upon the broad tree stump that rose waist-high.

She heard the *wham*, heard the delicate head bones crack, dry kindling, brittle matchsticks. Then her father's arm, raised high and in slow motion, the ax glinting shards of light, but his arm speeding up, came down fast, fast, one arm. And she saw that head pop off, saw that chicken head leap from its body into air, then onto dust below the stump. More heads there, more: three, five, seven? Before she could count, Ham lifted those horny feet again and flung the body sideways, like nothing special tossed aside.

And the feet moved. She saw, she watched it well: the feet moved. A fountain of blood spewed up where the head had been, but the feet ran beneath, still trying to escape, to outrun so much red blood. She watched that body racing round the

pen, the blood turning feathers crimson, the blood flowing up and out of an endless faucet. Those thorny feet ran in circles while she held her breath, and when she had to breathe, still ran. Ran until the feathers, soaked now, slowed; then wobbled; then simply tilted over. And the blood still coming.

She saw the other headless chickens now, could find them by their color, laid among the rushing white that skimmed above them, shone like clumps of fresh red paint in the dust. Then as Ham lunged and lunged again, as those orange feet twirled above, as the ax cracked down and the next head popped into air, the blind hen eyes seeing, seeing, the body tossed off to flee the blood washing down and over, that would not be escaped; then, then she knew the color and taste of fear. Could smell blood now in the thick morning sun, the smell of dust and drenched chicken feathers, of death in the daylight, the stench joined now and always into that voice that hid inside her own blood beating *afraid*.

Beyond the red film over her eyes, the smell and sound of her own blood's call, the white hens squalling up against the fence, she heard her father's voice.

"Now, Missy, had enough? Satisfied?" He wiped his forehead with the hand that held the ax, dripping sweat and blood.

And just as she almost found the words to answer, Luke clattered up the fence beside her, head hung down outside the pen. Vomited, vomited down upon the weeds. And she climbed beside him, holding him safely there, then helped him down the other side. Not a word between them, not a sound. Watched him moving fast back towards the flower fence, then turned back to her father. They stared at each other through the feathered air and though she had the words to speak, she kept them to herself, kept them capsuled safely in her head.

But the words would have said: nothing that lives and bleeds is safe from harm. And later would have added: all that lives can harm and is not safe enough for me.

IX.

She had been standing by the window a long time. She could tell because when Michael rounded the corner, stories below, his head tucked against the wind, she knew it was nearly six. The mail had come mid-afternoon and Luke's letter was still in her hand. She remembered now: opening the envelope as she climbed the stairs, then finding his words, then nothing, until Michael. In a little while, he banged the door open and she turned: Michael red-faced, wearing his ridiculous cap; Michael thrusting something towards her—sticks, a handful of bone-thin sticks, brown and dry.

"Spring," he said, shaking the sticks in her face. "Spring."

She saw then the yellow thumbprints climbing up each reed, the curled yellow buds. "Forsythia." Obedient student, she named it like a fact, took the fragile twigs and laid them on the bed.

"What is it? What's wrong, what's happened?" Michael took her by the shoulders and turned her like a top, facing him. "The baby? Is something wrong?"

"No," she shook her head. Then shook her head again and forced herself to look into his face. Dear face, cold-splotched, tightened with wind and worry. Forced a sorry smile. "It's Luke, he's gone. That's all. I miss him, it's like he's dead. I miss him already. I won't see him again, I won't, I know."

She handed him the crumpled letter, hardly a letter. Small

printmarks on a page that said he had been present, then, there.

Dear Missy. You got away because you are strong. I had to wait until he died and even then, it's been two years more. I'm ready now. Don't know where. Will let you know where I am, when I am. Wherever, you are always in my pocket.

Luke.

Michael folded the letter in half and pressed the crease with his fingers. "I'm sorry, Lucinda."

"Don't call me that."

"I'm sorry, then."

She moved before he touched her, back towards the window. The wind lashed at the trees. No green yet, not the slightest hint. But Michael said *spring*, brought evidence, brought fact. Spring.

"Don't be so sad, it's almost selfish. He needs to go, too; he needs something, too."

She nodded her head, knowing it was true.

"You have me," Michael said, but said it like a question.

"You have me?" his voice asked, "and the baby?"

And still she could not answer, poised for what had to come:

"Isn't that enough?"

X.

I am walking fast now, back on level ground. Not to my rented room, I am sure of that, but trying to make the wheels of my mind match my speed. Inside the pressure comes and goes. Builds like a rising wave, tightens like a bolt. Going and going, where?

XI.

That night she pressed herself against the wall behind her bed and heard her daddy talking to Paula over his supper. She could stretch her hearing sometimes as far as it needed to go, and so she heard him saying, "All mixed up and turned over. One, by God, I should be able to talk to, quiet as a stone. Never a joke, never a goddamn sentence he doesn't have to say. The other one always wanting to do what he should do, saying the things he should be saying besides. Sometimes I think if she could have managed it on purpose, if it was physically possible for her to play this trick on me, then—(the dishes jumped on the table behind her wall and clattered over his words)—... just one more thing she left me to. I can hear her laughing right now. I can hear her clear as day."

She was named Lucinda, the mother who was gone. Paula said *divorced*. She only understood that Mother was gone, taking her voice away from this house, taking her name with her (my name too, she thought; that is my name she took too), reduced to that emphatic sound, *she*, her father spit like a seed from his mouth some nights.

Luke did not remember her at all. She remembered terrible voices in the night, doors slamming. The crash once of glass beyond the dark of her room. And if she twined her memory back, back, a hazy face that sometimes smiled, and, back further, her father sounding a name like musical notes in the evenings: *Lucinda*.

Paula said, "Hush. Be satisfied."

The windows were open behind them and the cool breeze lifted papers off the desk, turned the pages of open books. When she thought to look, she could see the pigeons nesting already on the windowsill.

He watched like a careful child, sitting crosslegged on the bed, feet tucked beneath him. Watched and watched her race around the room. She flung open drawers, drug suitcases from the closet. Watched silent as she stuffed clothes into each case, then dumped books, letters, photographs into a heap in her arms and tossed them towards the trashcan. Slammed each suitcase tight. She felt the click the locks made like a key turning inside her. And stopped then, hung her head down, unable to meet his face. But his voice pulled her vision up, so quiet, so soft.

"Don't you love me?"

His face alarmed her. She saw a little line moving in his jaw, under the deadly calm. Saw a vein throb in his forehead. Wanted to reach out to touch him, tap the sweetness of his body, reach and hold him close. Only, "Yes," she said, "yes."

"And that isn't enough? What more? What more?"

She opened her mouth to speak, but found no words to give him, only the blood beating inside her head, that old tired rhythm.

"Then go," he said, his voice a dangerous whisper. "Go now." And he leant and thrust a suitcase towards her feet.

On Main Street now, my feet ploughing along, I wonder where they're going, I need to know. This is no walk, no stroll. Inside the red waves build and build, irregular rhythms. My belly is a hand that clenches in a fist, then flexes loose at random. When the wave rises and the hand inside closes down,

I pause and breathe the sticky air, I know enough to do that. I know. Speeded up now, the waves begin to make a pattern, slow, but a timed pattern, a metronome of pressure swinging closer and closer together.

I have not visited the cemetery once to mark his grave with my sight or speak whatever words I thought I stored to say: there are not any, I know that now. I need to go home, I said to Michael. *You have no home.* I need to see Paula, I said. *You never listened to her, you never listened to me.* I have not visited the house to see who lives there now. I don't want to see the changes, I don't need to see the land: it grows inside my head and will not leave. Old boomerang, old homing pigeon, I have come back to, come back to. Thought I would find. What more, he said, what more. I am running and my blood coils inside me, pumps up into my heart and down into my belly, pumps and pumps, I am running now.

Climb the six steps slowly, breathe against the blood waves rising, ready to break. Breathe against the blood waves rising faster. At the counter, I dig into my pocket. Pennies shoved under the grate, the hand extends a small white card. At a far corner, the ballpoint chained to scarred wood, barely writes. Press and press until ink comes: faded, grainy. Lean against the counter now while the wave rises higher than before and faster coming. Write against its pushing. Write:

Michael:

Cøme. Dø'n't cøme.

Not thinking any longer. Think. My own blood's rhythm overcoming now those two old songs: *afraid, be satisfied.* Press down hard against the thick white card so the ink shows.

Come, she wrote, and then she signed her name, so he would know she had listened and had heard.

Lucinda.

"AND WE MADE LOVE AND ONLY THE SEA WAS WATCHING"

We resemble satin waves
when the moon holds our symmetry.

Tides come in,
wide sashes with white tassels.

Sea birds curve
toward their destination.
We startle each other
with changes.

—Myra Hambrick

COLD HARBOR

I have died three times already here where dog eats dog in the
Wilderness anticipate anything a fourth death or simply a
change beyond recognition the rain leaks into the marrow
bones of a man it exposes the running gutters the luce of his
being my scars are no longer the exaggerations of a spy you may
believe what you hear what the wind says in dried cornstalks
in a winter field where you are the chill of wet stones or
the wind again on the teeth of a man running open mouthed
over brown plains of buffalo grass where there is nothing
to stop the wind on the morning before snow falls here we also
have cut such a swathe through the woods in order to see
gray ghosts of men appear at bone heaps of fences to bore
more holes in an old rag to worry a wolf from his lair
in the urinous earth there is a stink in my moving now
no undoing can mend I am earth flayed to origin the fleas
go elsewhere the crab lice leave me the sap of my man
fat is expended I have buried your letters in damp leaves
like a dog his bone I shall not return there is no reality
in such things or there is as much reality in the bag
of a groundhog caught in the fork of a tree I have survived
myself three times how shall I extract myself again out of
the earth no I say no to myself I have come after all
home among roots it is just as I expected even when I was
with you earth gun metal coffee grounds and the musk of men are
one odor or the eye gristle is only the bleb of ice on a stump what
glitters is ice or mica or gristle or metal you'd be bound to
mistake what has never shone in the dark even my bloodstream slows
to the pace of any underground river I no longer can tell
my hands from the bark or the back of a leaf this is the
husk and the shard I have chosen to speak to you out of a
pit picked clean by the winds I found sanctuary here
I am free of your voices be calm I have outrun your love
I have won beyond echoes this end in the quiet of my skull

—Michael Mott

THE STATE OF GEORGIA (August, 1969)

"By the power invested in me by the state of Georgia,
I pronounce you woman and life . . ."

1

O this place is my state
of perpetual Mickey Mouse—
a shape on a map, the south
of an old whore, a hole plugged
with excrement, a moist rotten
splotch under the skirts of
America: not decently
east, nor cleanly west—

in Georgia, in August, woman
cannot afford disbelief
in Salvation by the Blood
that flows slow as sorghum—
in Jesus, the savior of whites,
of Mary Magdalene & all defiled . . .

2

At two a. m., slugs streak
across the floor near the sink,
Out of my white-hot shrouds, off
a mattress shoved to the floor

I step on one, dreaming how
this moment, maggots move beneath
the back wooden steps, the mercury
reads one hundred two, crawls
toward the line of high blood . . .

and push the screen of the door
to walk over tiger lilies
gone slick & brown. Kudzu—
an arm, a boa constrictor—
squeezes out thought. As dumb
as a mongoloid, I pause

near the tropic of garbage—
the tampons, melting boxes—
the rind of my breakfast peach
feeds a dozen pale bodies:

more slugs lay chains of glitter,
and I, too, weave moonside out,
an animal secreting silver—

unclean, as are all creatures
here, I simmer, rot & await

3
the gun of a deadly September,
the act by which I shall be freed.

—Rosemary Daniell

TALKING OF STARS

Talking softly of stars
we lie within our beds.

Nausea pulses my throat—
galaxies make me faint,
thinking how we float—
light things in shadowy
sheets.

Later, wakening
from dreams of peacock wings

fluttered to dust ten thousand
years ago, I move through
quiet doors. In darkness,
my back presses the shivery
earth—

with the old bone of
an animal, I love myself.

—Rosemary Daniell

Jesus in the Brush Arbor

An Interview with Will Campbell
by *Walter B. Clancy*

Will Campbell is the editor of *Katallegete*, a journal of theology, philosophy and social criticism published by the Committee of Southern Churchmen. A noted theologian, graduate of Yale University and commentator on the South, Mr. Campbell is the author of numerous articles and books which reflect his concern with the Southern religious experience.

This interview was recently conducted by Walter B. Clancy, on special assignment for the NOR, at Mr. Campbell's home near Nashville, Tennessee. Dr. Clancy is former president of the Southern Churchmen and presently Professor of Social Welfare at the University of Arkansas' Graduate School of Social Work in Little Rock.

NOR: *First of all, can we speak of a "Southern Experience"? Is there an identifiable sub-culture of the South?*

CAMPBELL: Yes, I think there is such a thing as the "Southern Experience" and we can speak of it. At least we can speak in the spirit of it—I am not sure we can verbalize what it is. I know it is more than just the fact that the South lost a war. I know it did not arise because the South owned slaves. America and the South pretty much brought that practice and that era to a close in the community of nations, but it was not unique with us and certainly we did not originate it. I know that it was not and is not simply the agrarian influence. Other parts of the nation were and are more rural than the South, and Rogation Sunday was not put on the Church calendars by the Georgia Grange. In short, every single historical factor which may be used to sum up the South or explain the Southern experience can be duplicated in other regions or in other nations. And yet no other region in this nation, and I suspect any nation, is quite so distinct, so identifiable, with a history as a separate academic discipline from American history or history in general, with schools of literature, and politics, mores and behavior patterns. Now, of course, all that is changing, has already changed, and it is questionable in most circles to speak of "The South" anymore. But there was a Southern experience and vestiges remain and there are holdouts who are not willing to give it up to the world of Howard Johnsons and McDonald hamburgers. And it is interesting to me that it is not the bigots

who are the holdouts for the most part, but the romantics and those loosely called progressives who never equated "The Southern Way of Life" with racial discrimination. Those who did and still do equate "The Southern Way of Life" with racial discrimination seem seldom to oppose the coming of the roads, strip mining, technology, urbanization, the disappearance of the small farm, and all the rest. Leander Perez might scream "nigger! nigger!" to the point of near ex-communication, but I do not recall his resisting the encroachment—Federal or otherwise—of industrialization in his Louisiana parishes. But just what the "Southern Experience" is I would be afraid to try to sum up. What produced the Faulkners, Weltys, O'Connors, Percys, etc.? Is it just the fact that we were a defeated and suffering people? I think not. If so, where are the literary figures of the vast majority of the world which is also defeated and suffering? Harry Williams suggests that the two most radical political figures in American history, Huey Long and Lyndon Johnson, were Southerners, and he implies that they could only have been Southerners, despite the fact that the South is generally considered the most conservative area of the nation. Why? And certainly it takes more than injustice to explain the rise of the Civil Rights Movement, for the demon of injustice is as alive on the lower East Side of New York City as it is in Alabama or Mississippi. Maybe the term "Southern Experience" should read "Southern Tragedy."

NOR: *What do you see as the Southern tragedy? Was it the war and its aftermath of economics and politics or is it something else?*

CAMPBELL: The Southern tragedy, in my judgment, is that here we had two groups of people, one black, one white, living side-by-side, both in the same boat, both having come here as servants or slaves, who if they had ever banded together could have taken over the country. But instead they have continued to this very day to be the enemy of each other.

NOR: *You will have to take me a little further. I don't understand the bit about each group being slaves. Was*

that not an experience which only the blacks had?

CAMPBELL: Well, certainly they had the experience to a larger degree. But I believe that one of the historical factors in the bleak racial picture in America which has never been dealt with fully is the matter of indentured servanthood so common during the early days of this country. "Serve me for five years or seven years and I will give you passage to the new country and then I will set you free." But freedom to what and in what context? Freedom to flounder, to wander westward and try to scratch out a living in a wilderness and in competition with the gentry with large holdings, good education, and free slave labor. Certainly not all the poor whites, woolhats, peckerwoods, rednecks, etc. are offsprings of indentured servants. But a lot of us are. And if the origins of our history were to be played down as we taught our children, then the slave origins of others, in this case the blacks, had to be played up. Plus the fact that the two groups were played off against each other. Tell the rednecks that if they persist in their egalitarian activities in such things as the Populist Movement, the Farmer's Alliance or even the Long regimes of the Thirties, Forties and Fifties, their daughters will be ravished by black bucks. And thus far he has always backed away.

NOR: What does Religion as opposed to the Church have to contribute positively to the Southern experience?

CAMPBELL: Well, Walter, I guess it will be necessary for us at this point to define some terms or we're going to misunderstand each other. You are a cradle Catholic talking to a deep-water Baptist. I think I know what you mean by "Religion" and "Church" and I have no quarrel with your usage. But I am not sure that my thought patterns are the same. I gather that when you use the term "Religion" you use it in a positive way. And when you use the term "Church" perhaps you are not thinking so positively. Or maybe it is the other way around. Anyway, I do not use either of these terms in a favorable light. I might use the term "Gospel" where you are using "Religion." I believe that our Lord was among the most anti-religious ever to come along, for He came breaking the rules, smashing idols, tearing down structures, and proclaiming freedom from all such. And rules, crusades, and structures are the stuff religion is made of, whereas Jesus came proclaiming deliverance. I grew up in the Protestant tradition which was alleged in the beginning to espouse that deliverance from the prison house of structures. But, of course, it didn't work out that way. No religious group in the world is now more structure-bound than American Protestant groups. And when I use the term "Church" I am thinking of those institutions which make and enforce the religious rules. (Now when I use the term "The Church" I am thinking of what Jesus said that He would establish and did establish. But it does not depend for its existence or efficacy upon buildings, promotional schemes, names, places, computers, etc., etc. It is simply a relationship, the believers acting out the "Good News," the Gospel of deliverance from sin and death.) So, I suppose my answer would have to be that both Religion and Church have contributed negatively to the Southern experience. It was, after all, Religion and Church which provided the moral and ethical justification for slavery. And it was also, after all, Religion and

Church which provided the morale which sustained the Civil War, long after the Southern cause would have collapsed otherwise. Certainly that is not the same as saying that "Gospel" did those things. And we can look back now and say that there was nothing Christian in those things. I have appreciated and learned so much from Walker Percy on this point: his insistence that Southern religion during that era was Stoic and not Christian says a lot.

NOR: Some say the churches were the principal instrumentalities in moulding the "Mind of the South." Do you agree?

CAMPBELL: Yes. And then no. Religion as discussed by Percy certainly did do much in that direction. But that was the religion of the aristocracy, of the very few. But the religion discussed by Cash and others, I believe, had no such influence. In fact it didn't even exist. Nothing, I think, has been so grossly exaggerated as the religiosity of the rural South prior to the Civil War. It was not religious. The aristocracy had their chaplains from Canterbury and Geneva, and yes, sometimes from Rome, though not as often, but the masses had the occasional visits from the circuit rider preachers on their way from Philadelphia to Natchez, the half-remembered Biblical quotes from those visits, old wives' tales, all mixed with Indian lore and some carry over from the religious tradition of their ancestors—which wasn't much because those brought over as indentured servants were not apt to be those seeped in Christian theology or any other kind of theology. Now these people were recruited and enlisted for war and given religious instruction simultaneously. And when the war was over and they were once more on their own, they would do much with their religious teachings. But by then "The Mind of the South" was pretty much made up. The religious conversion by the chaplains of the Confederacy included the rightness of slavery and the inherent inferiority of the blacks. And this carried over. But it was not Redneck Religion that brought it into being.

NOR: You seem to speak of "Redneck Religion" in almost positive terms. Isn't this a step backward in the Southern experience?

CAMPBELL: Well, I seem to be getting that reputation. The syndicated columnist, Paul Greenberg, recently referred to me as the Aquinas of the Rednecks. While I would prefer to be the St. Francis of the Rednecks or the Pope John of the Rednecks, I was not insulted by his designation. Nor am I insulted that you would suggest that I speak of "Redneck" in positive terms. As you know, I have tried to do some writing on this subject and it is something in which I have more than a passing interest. That is from two reasons. That is my heritage, my history. I come from the poor-white group. I tried to live that down for a long time. Now I try to live it up. I think that a person is not whole until he or she can come to terms with his own history, whatever that history might be. But whatever it is, it is necessary to come to terms with it. The second reason is that I know the real racists in this country are not a few poor, pitiful people marching around a burning cross in a Carolina cow pasture. The racist enemy of us all is the system, those structures in which all of us who are white live and move and have our being and continue

to profit from in one way or another every day of our lives. And the leaders, rulers, owners, managers of those structures are not the rednecks, but the university-educated, the sophisticated, nice gentlemen and ladies who make broad their phylacteries in the Cathedral (be it of Rome, Canterbury, Geneva, New York, or Nashville), know where the salad fork goes, have good taste in literature, music and philosophy but continue to maintain a system wherein a very few whites own and run it all, while all blacks and most whites run none of it. Also, I am offended by the term "redneck." It is the same as "nigger." But if the term is going to be used, then count me in, call me one. And I'll deal with it as best I can, just as black people have had to deal with "nigger."

NOR: *In the past you have criticized liberal churchmen for selling out their religious birthright for "a piece of the social action," yet you demand that they witness to what they are. What kind of witness are you looking for?*

CAMPBELL: You have answered your question. Of course, I do not "demand" that they witness to what they are. The word is "implore," the same word used by St. Paul in II Corinthians 5. What he said was, "We implore you, *Kattallegete!* to God." The key to this is that it is the Greek imperative usage of the verb. Be Reconciled. He did not say, "Try to become reconciled," but rather "Be Reconciled"—"be what you already are," is what he was really saying. Earlier in the chapter he had said, "He has reconciled us men to himself through Christ." He has—past tense. It is over, it is already done. Well, I see that I will have to engage in a bit of horse-and-buggy exegeting to make the point. So let's back up a bit. In that chapter, St. Paul, in my judgment, summarized the Gospel in a fashion never done before or since. Earlier he had said that God has already reconciled, settled things, set things right between people and people and between people and God. And then he added a very crucial message when he said, "... no longer holding man's misdeeds against him." (I have always assumed that that meant women too.) Now if our misdeeds are not held against us that means we are free. It means we do not have to do anything. We are not called upon to establish a Kingdom but to abide in one already established and to bid others to do the same. Just groove it, man. "And He enlisted us in this service of reconciliation." There's all the doctrine of the Church anyone needs. That's what the Church is—those who accept this enlistment. And all St. Paul called upon us to do is to live as if what God did in Christ is true. But our programs, schemes, strategies, next steps in this, that, or the other say that Paul is a liar—that God did not really reconcile us to one another and to Himself. I believe that He did. Therefore, if I am reconciled there is no such thing as nigger, redneck, pollock, spick, Injun, Mick, Mackerel-snapper, Kluxer, etc., etc. To document that this is the case, Paul, in the same passage, said, "No longer do we judge anyone by worldly standards. Even though once we did [and we damn sure did] in our understanding of Christ, we do so now no longer." (That is the New English Bible translation I am quoting.) So. There you are. It is quite clear. If those categories do not exist—all those worldly standards, or human categories we place one another in—then the problem is solved. We just live what has

already been done for us. If I am reconciled to someone then I sure Lord ain't going to lynch him, don't care if he lives next door to me, goes to Mass in Jesuit Bend, goes to school with my children, marries my daughters. That is the radical word from St. Paul. If you know of a denominational social action program that goes quite that far let me know and I'll be glad to join it. Most I am familiar with are pablum, romantic nonsense. I recall something Thomas Merton wrote for our journal not too long before he died, "Bonhoeffer himself said it was an 'Anglo-Saxon failing' to imagine that the Church was supposed to have a ready answer for every social problem." And the point of Merton's observation was given in a later issue of that journal by another Catholic, this time a layman, John Howard Griffin, when he recalled that good Trappist's answer to the perennial question of oppressor to victim: "What can we, as Christians, do to help?" "Before you do a damned thing," Tom would reply, "just be what you say you are, a Christian; then no one will have to tell you what to do. You'll know."

NOR: *Let's change the subject.*

CAMPBELL: Okay by me.

NOR: *Is the preoccupation with Church in the South a valid expression of religious conviction or a substitute for the more complex urban experiences of the rest of the country?*

CAMPBELL: I don't know.

NOR: *You don't know?*

NOR: *Well, I don't know how that will read in manuscript form but if you don't know, you don't know.*

CAMPBELL: Well, I don't know.

NOR: *Would you care to speculate?*

CAMPBELL: No.

NOR: *I understand the parallels you find between the alienation of the poor black and the poor white in the South. Are there any parallels in their expressions of religious belief?*

CAMPBELL: Oh, I think there are. In both groups religious expression is still largely a matter of feeling. And I must say I am inclined to agree with them. There is emotion expressed in each group. And, of course, we are beginning to see some of that in mainline Christianity as well. But I don't know how authentic it is. There is a difference between the strings and drums and horns of a Pentecostal religious service and what some of you, since Vatican II, are seeing as liturgical renewal, which is, generally—"And how many guitars did you have in the Mass yesterday, Father?" There is a difference between the fervor of a completely impromptu singing and shouting which might take place in a Holiness mountain brush arbor and the finger-picking of a well-rehearsed, though still double-jointed, Dominican in the so-called *Folk Mass*. It is not *folk* unless it is *from the folk*, and I don't believe that what we are seeing in Catholic and many sophisticated Protestant circles is of the folk any more than—add any good reliable Catholic liturgical source.

NOR: *Would you then want us to go back to Latin in the Mass?*

CAMPBELL: My God, yes! Wouldn't everybody? But anyway, we were talking about the parallel expressions between the poor black and the sects of the poor whites

in the South. There is the same crying out, agonizing, begging of Sweet Jesus for deliverance. And there is a similar social activism in both as well. The stereotype is that the religion of the sects is a "pie in the sky by and by" sort of passivity. That is not true. We don't have the time here, but I believe that I can document a good case that the record of the sects in actively opposing, or at least seeing as major moral issues, such things as poverty, racism, exploitation of labor, war, and even sexism is considerably better than mainline Protestantism or most Catholic groups.

NOR: *Why do you suppose that is?*

CAMPBELL: Well, it may be as simple as the sects not having as much to risk or lose as the more established institutions. You can rebuild a brush arbor a lot easier than you can rebuild a cathedral. Or it may be that God is choosing to work and speak through the sects today, or is judging us through the sects. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!

NOR: *What is the future of religion in the Southern experience?*

CAMPBELL: Certainly I don't know for sure. I suppose no one does. In the first place I'm always afraid to try to second-guess God. He's such a character, you know. In my judgment the established churches of America, what I call "Steepled Religion," stand precisely where the rich, young ruler who came to Jesus stood—rich, powerful. And good. No one ever, certainly not I, accused the Steeples of being bad. It is a good outfit and can generally be counted upon to meet its quota in any community drive, right up there with the Red Cross, the UGF, Boy Scouts, League of Women Voters, etc. And certainly it is powerful. And certainly it is very rich. Yet Jesus said to go and get rid of all that and then come back and they would talk about discipleship. To render ourselves powerless, poor and therefore, in this culture at least, no longer good, would be, in my judgment, the most responsible thing we could do. I saw in the paper not long ago where one congregation paid just under two million dollars for an adjoining lot. It was not to be used as a parking lot, or to house the computer (oh, yes, a lot of Sunday School lesson material is now being planned by a computer), or to build a new Betty Crocker kitchen annex or skating rink or gym. It was not to be used at all. It was bought just because it was there and because they had the money. Now you might say that is caricature. But is it? I mean really. Don't most of us do the same thing though it might be on a much more modest scale? And all of it casting its physical shadow, to say nothing of its spiritual shadow, on vermin-infested slums, pimps, addicts, whores, drunks, bums, and the rest of the least of these that Jesus announced He had

come to bring sight, comfort, good news, and freedom to. That has got to be blasphemy. Calling evil, good. And good, evil. But anyway, what is the future of it all? I imagine the South will follow the rest of the country. The institutions will go on getting better, richer, and more powerful. Rome will move to Nashville. The Southern Baptist convention will send an ambassador to the Vatican and a Methodist Bishop will exchange diocese with a Catholic. And we'll call it progress and improved understanding and tolerance.

NOR: *You aren't against tolerance are you?*

CAMPBELL: Yes, I'm against tolerance. Who wants to be tolerated? I just want to be accepted as a Brother for whom Christ died.

NOR: *Let's try to end on a realistic note. You know that what you are suggesting as responsible is not going to be done. We are not going to sell all we own and give it to the poor. But let's suppose that we should. Just how responsible would that be? What would the future then be?*

CAMPBELL: It would be a lonely day, wouldn't it? Standing there naked and alone. No bells, no pews, no steeples, no air-conditioned sanctuary. I don't know what would happen if we drove down one morning for the seven o'clock Mass and there was nothing there: I suppose we would drive back home, have two or three cups of coffee and maybe a quick Bloody Mary, read the funnies, the sports page two or three times, and move on to the A&P ads. And maybe that afternoon we would meet down by the gas station, appoint a finance committee, and start all over again. But maybe also the lonely priest, now unemployed, would drop by. Maybe we would say, "Are you hungry, Father?" He would say, "Yes, if you have some bread would you please bring it out. And maybe a little wine." And maybe we would sit around this very table here in the kitchen and the Eucharist would be celebrated and we would know it was being celebrated in our very midst. And we would cry real loud and real long and hug and hang on to one another desperately and beg of each other: "What are we going to do? What are we going to do?" Like when somebody dies, you know. And maybe this would be followed by shouts of "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Maybe the joy of it all would be overwhelming because maybe we would be singing the psalms for the very first time in our lives. Maybe, Walter. I just don't know. But that would be realistic, wouldn't it?

NOR: *Is there anything you would like to close the interview with?*

CAMPBELL: Naw. I don't believe. Thank you anyway.

MOON IN AQUARIUS

people
sprouted volcanoes

crevices
appeared upon their
swollen tongues in
split for new gods

homes
lost foundations
everywhere

tents
& wheels webbed
the remains of
the landscape

children
roamed the hills
no longer playing
games

rivers
reversed courses

men
looked to the stars
& to the moon for
answers

the earth
shook trying to
free itself from
a long pregnant

shadow

—Vaughn Duhamel

Southern Revival

Text and photographs

by Jim Magdanz



Last July, a big tent revival came to town for two weeks, setting up more than 500 folding chairs under canvas south of town.



Evangelist R. W. Moore of Savannah, Tennessee, works hard at his job, singing, chanting, praying, healing and shouting.

An impromptu dance erupts during one of Rev. Moore's frenzied songs. "We call it leading the spirit, doing what the Lord wants us to do, and I get about as emotional as they do."



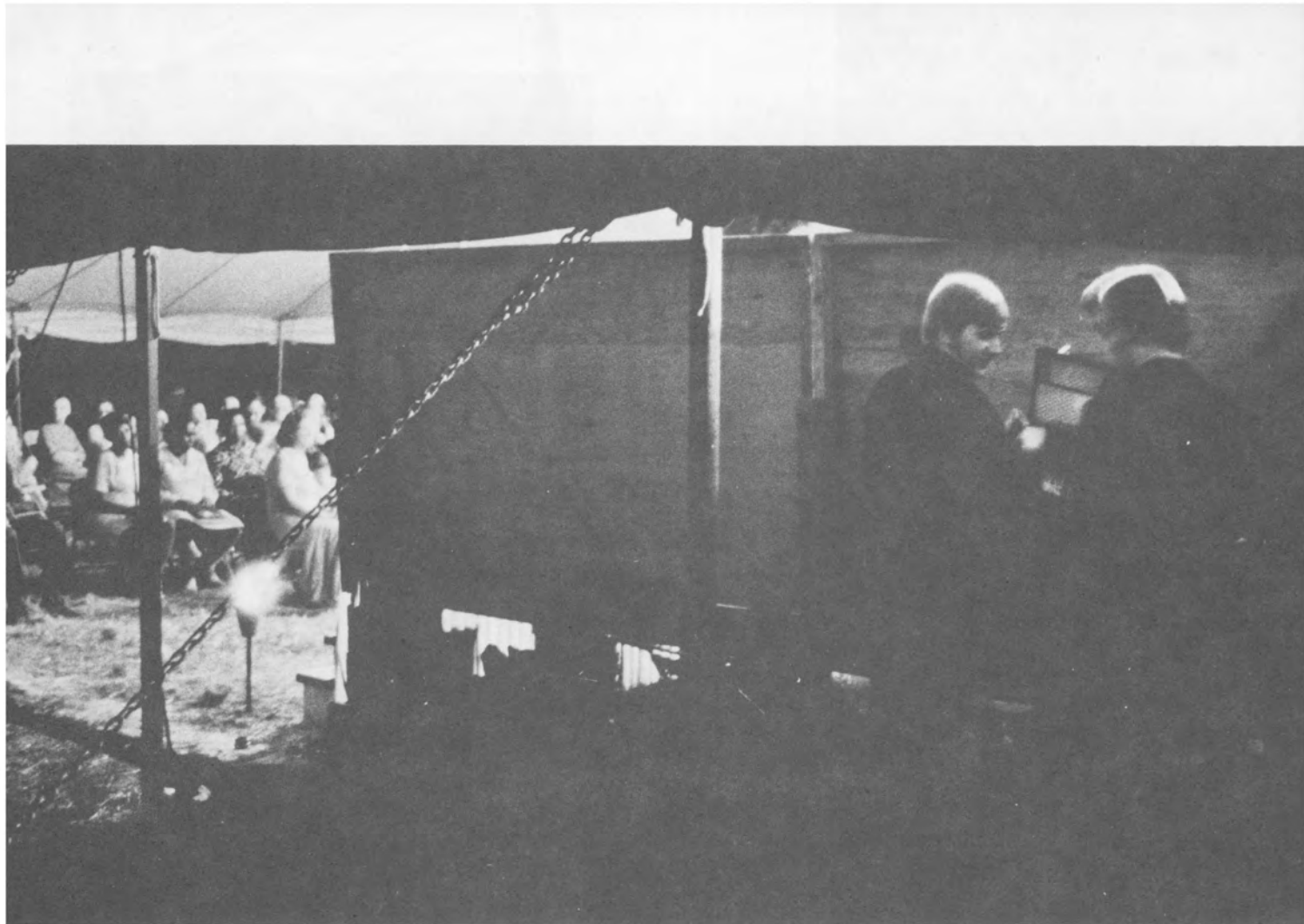
*Rev. Moore lays on his healing hand.
"Doctors will tell you that 70 or 80
per cent of the people they see are
not sick organically; it's just
psychosomatic. I believe in cleaning
up their minds."*



On Saturday night, the tent fills to overflowing. At intervals, Moore calls on the audience to come forward, and they dance, hop, writhe and collapse in front of the stage. "The people who come to our church enjoy it," he says. "It's sort of like going to a ball game; instead of cheering they shout and dance."

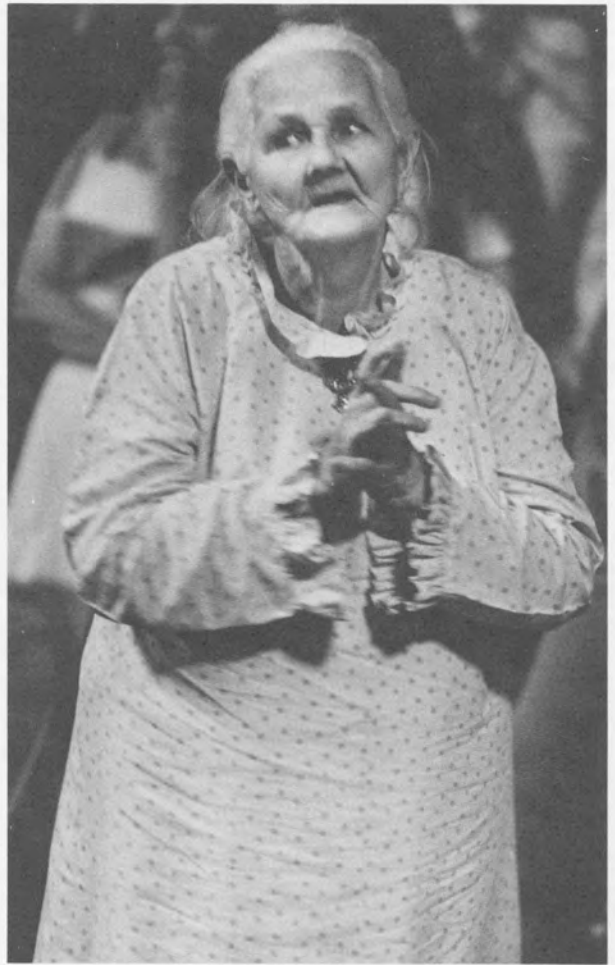






"I've got four on the payroll and a \$9,000 tent to pay for. They (the musicians) work for about \$50 a week, but when the offering comes in pretty good I give them a bonus." The collection is taken in big plastic buckets and counted in the dark backstage, then stuffed in a big, black briefcase.

*"The church is their whole life,"
he says of the typical person attend-
ing his tent revival. Some are too
young to crawl; others, too old to
walk.*



*Near the end, Rev. Moore dons a
flowing, multi-colored cape. He
sings and dances, then sheds the
cape, tears it up, and flings scraps
into the waiting crowd. Healing
cloth.*





The involvement of the faithful is complete, intense and unbreaking. They cry, shout, chant and sing with the evangelist, with conviction rarely seen between stained-glass windows and mahogany pews.

CONTINUUM

Those who have slept
their lives long underneath these trees
and by day
move among them as quietly as dust
down the ladders of light,
looking up at the peaks
of them, the jagged patterns
treetops make against the sky
and through them the cut of a hawk's wing,
the curve of the river
of cloud shapes, these people

will dream of them
shifting like silt in the creek-bed,
or quartz as it heaves
in the earth's slow migration of seasons.

Their voices
will make of this turning
a music to echo their vision,

and likewise
their fingers will praise its existence
on bearhide and stone in a sundance
of spectrum, will take
every movement the wind gives
to water and weaving
it into their baskets and beadwork
will leave it to the sure waste of time
and the people who, like us,
come after them, having forgotten

that such a design
as my Waxing Moon Sister
Marina has seen beneath museum glass
and for three hours copied on paper
to transfer to fabric in stitches
so fine she can't see them
and so must be led by the touch of the thread
toiling under her fingers

is forest itself, all
the forms of it translated into this fingerwork
through which the first sign is given
that says to us: See

and so make of it
something.

—Kathryn Stripling

Jesus Stories

by *Dennis Brackin*

Flies on the Back Porch

I didn't feel like bitching at the flies on the back porch today, so I went out to the car to see what Jesus wanted to do. I'd forgotten to roll the windows down that morning and it was hot as hell in there. I had to let the doors stand open awhile before I stuck my head in. He sits in the back seat all the time. I make like I'm cleaning out my car so my mother won't ask me what I'm doing—I usually do that while I'm talking to Jesus. We don't talk with sounds. Once you stick your head in the back seat that close to Jesus you always get some idea of something to do. I do anyway! Jesus wanted to go fishing today.

I don't care a lot about sticking hooks in things or pulling them out; but, if I have to swelter, I might as well swelter while I'm doing something. I like to get real hot from the sun, but after awhile it gets to you physically, unless you're doing something; and then, for some reason, it doesn't bother you as much. Nothing bothers Jesus anyway. He just sits in the back seat in his white robe. Sometimes I've tried to dress him up; I've always wanted him black with a purple fluorescent robe on; but for some reason he always appears plain white with his beard and long hair and white robe. You've seen him, like the one in the center of the crowd at the big, long table who feeds everybody his flesh and blood—bread and wine.

Jesus' suggestion was practical anyway, since I live out in the country in a big-old Civil-War-type home, not a big-columns type, but just a big-old house. We live off the highway about a mile down a rock road. The lake is behind the house, about a half-mile back through the woods. There is, though, a something resembling a road that runs down to it. It's more like two worn paths passing one another down a grassy lane.

That's where we went in my car—we, my brother-in-law and me and Jesus. My sister and brother-in-law are staying with us right now because the tire plant he works at has been on a strike for about ten or twelve weeks. He is a big hunter and fisherman. I'm not crazy about him; but he's good at teaching me how to fish because he's on top of the world

when he's showing somebody how to do something. (Mother suggested I take Gilbert when I told her I was going fishing. She wants me to try to be more sociable with him so that he won't feel uncomfortable.)

We got the fishing tackle boxes and our rods and reels out of the car, and Gilbert back-pocket-chewing-tobacco-assed and cowboy-booted the way forward to the boat. Jesus followed behind. We got in and Gilbert pushed off and started to guide-paddle our way to one of his spots. Jesus sat in the middle and held on to the sides. He sat looking at me. His white cloak blew in the breeze; he looked like a small sail with his hair blowing at full mast. (Sometimes we come out here alone and he does the same; sometimes he sits at the front with his face forward and hands on the prow, like a figurehead.) He's not crazy over Gilbert either, and he doesn't always get out of the car when Gilbert has to come. He shrinks over to one side of his plank seat if Gilbert moves to help me take a bait out of a fish or something; but, he doesn't gripe much. When he does gripe, it's not aloud. Sometimes when he gets pissed off, he'll clam up and won't say anything to me at all for a good while. He got pissed off once when I bought a cheap, Styrofoam beer cooler and kept him shut up in it—most of the time along with beer and ice. He turned the cooler over one day when I was going around a curve, what was in it then was water. Ice from the night before had melted in it. He turned it over and flooded my back seat and the floorboard. I threw away the cooler after that. He said he didn't mind me drinking beer; he just didn't like being shut up in the cooler. Another time, an old ex-girlfriend gave him a companion. I told her about Jesus being in the back seat; she thought I was crazy. But I kept referring to him from time to time, so she told me what he needed was a girlfriend too. She put Catherine-the-Great of Russia back there with him. I thought maybe he would really get the ass over that, but he didn't seem to mind the Empress very much. He just sat there quietly most of the time; I saw him turn to look at her a good many times. Catherine really wasn't as rowdy as I would have thought. She seemed to enjoy the back seat rides with Jesus. He didn't get tired of her either, and she stayed

in there constantly for about six months, till my girlfriend and I broke up.

Back to the lake—the day turned out pretty good. We caught seven fish, all big-mouthed bass. And Jesus seemed to like it. He laughed at me trying to catch a dropped fish flopping in the bottom of the boat. He even turned around and watched Gilbert reel one in, about a three-and-a-half pound one, the biggest of the day. When we went in, Gilbert let me steer the boat. Of course he told me each move, barked out orders like a sea captain. I had to jump out in about three feet of water to pull the boat up; Jesus jumped out too and helped. He got his gown wet and feet muddy. I had to stop and wait on him because he stood in the shallow water squishing his toes in the mud. Gilbert was in a hurry to return home to show our catch off.

We started back home, all happy with ourselves. Gilbert talked about fish for supper while I listened and Jesus leaned on the front seat to hear.

Beer Bottle Roller Derby King

I thought I was only going to mention Jesus and go on to something else; I've got to tell you about him and his beer bottle rides. I didn't mention it at first because I didn't want you to get the wrong idea about Jesus, but every time I think about this I laugh.

I started drinking beer in bottles because you get a metallic taste when you drink beer from cans. After three or four beers it doesn't matter because you don't notice the taste; but, when my girlfriend and I used to go to the drive-in a lot, I'd only get three or four to take with me to drink during the show—usually two before we started playing around, and then the others at intervals.

We made Jesus sit up front during all this; he watched the movie. After the movie we'd move back up front and leave the quilt and pillow in the back—we always took a quilt and pillow. (I had a pretty good girlfriend when it came to playing around; she liked to play around as much as I did.) So Jesus, getting back in the back seat, got into the habit of crawling into one of the empty beer bottles. He'd lead the others rolling around in the back floorboard. I know he got the ass about the whole thing because after a while one beer bottle would roll up to the front under my feet. That's the reason my girlfriend put Catherine-the-Great back there with him. I told her that it was Jesus who got in the bottle and rolled it like that. She said she knew what the bastard wanted!

After that, the next time at the drive-in, when Jesus got back in the back seat, the Empress did like him and got into one of the bottles. That started it. They began to roll back and forth and knock into each other. You could hear them rolling and clanking all night. They got this thing going; Jesus didn't roll under the seat anymore; they'd have these contests while rolling from side to side, like a roller derby. They'd bust into each other and get the empty bottles going too. All kind of racket happened. Sometimes the Empress would slip under the front seat for awhile to rest, and the empty bottles too, but not Jesus. He was obsessed with his roller derby. When all the others were lodged under the front seat you could hear Jesus rolling back and forth and butting the lower part of the back seat.

He stopped all that after the Empress left. He had plenty of bottles to roll in, but he returned to just sitting back there. He got mad at me for throwing so many bottles back; and instead of rolling in them, he started putting his feet on them to keep them quiet. He didn't say anything about the Empress leaving, but I know he misses the roller derby because he asked me what happened to my girlfriend and told me it was too bad because he had liked her.

Fight With Jesus

I feel like Jesus was a good faithful friend; I still feel like he is, although I don't know if he would claim me anymore. I'll explain that remark, and also a few other things that need to be cleared up. First I want to apologize for bringing up Jesus again; I know how easy it is to get tired of a person if somebody keeps on time after time talking about that same guy; but judging from some of the questions I have been asked, I need to clear up how Jesus came to be a constant rider in the back seat of my car. To tell the truth, I'm not sure I remember the first time I noticed Jesus being back there. He must have been there when I bought the car. The car was a 1962 duck-yellow Ford. Ford Galaxy to be more specific. It drove like a tank, but it had plenty of room; so Jesus could have just been taking a nap when I got the car and I didn't notice him. I do remember that it was soon after I got the car, and I was just riding around because I was still excited about having a car of my own; I glanced in the rear-view mirror and there was Jesus; I couldn't have missed him, he was sitting right in the middle of the seat, blocking my view. I knew right away who it was; I'd seen him in pictures so many times before. We shot the bull for a while and I finally chauffeured him to Ed's. That's a beer joint just on the other side of the river bridge. It has a nice terrace overlooking the river where people can sit and drink with a good view. Jesus wanted to go there so he could get out for a while. I had no objections; I liked to sit there too. That was the first time I got drunk with Jesus. Of course he didn't drink anything, said he didn't need to drink to get high.

I must add, though, that later on as we got to know each other better, he often drank wine with me. And got drunk too, but he never would admit it. I could tell when he was drunk; he didn't say much usually, but when he got drunk, he would tell all kinds of tales. I'd believe them too, at the time he told them anyway, because I'd usually be drunk too. If I remembered about them later and ribbed him about them, he'd get mad. As I told you before, when he got mad he'd just not say anything, for days sometimes. It was aggravating getting into the car and having to drive around seeing his silent figure staring me in the face from the mirror.

He and I got along pretty well after we got used to each other. We had our share of disagreements because both of us were demanding in our own way. But because of that we also grew to respect one another. He even tried to take up for me once.

It happened one night at a party. A friend of mine had invited me to a party at his trailer which was set in the country as a camphouse. So Judy my girlfriend and I went. Of course Jesus went too because he was in the back seat, but he wouldn't get out. I took along a bottle of wine for him, and came out to check on him a few times and sat and drank with him

for a while. It was a good party too; most everyone got drunk and we all danced and sang. All went well until we got ready to leave. Most everyone had already gone except for Judy and me, Phillip the guy who gave the party, and Charlie and a couple of other guys. I was outside talking to Phillip, we talked for a good while because we were drunk and hadn't seen each other in a long time. Judy got tired and I told her to go ahead and get in the car. She didn't want to at first because she hated to be in the car with Jesus by herself. I don't know why, he never bothered her. Well, she started toward the car, but Charlie stopped her. Charlie wasn't so drunk as everyone else, but he was in a bad temper because he hadn't had a date and hadn't had such a good time. He wanted Judy to kiss him goodnight; it wouldn't have bothered me so much, but Judy didn't want to kiss him. He was really only playing; but I hollered at him to leave her alone. He called back for me to make him. If I had been sober, it might have just ended with a little word jabbing, or at the most a little playful sparring. But I set my bottle of liquor down and went over and pushed Charlie down and then hit him upside his head after he got up. As drunk as I was, I was in no condition to fight anyone; Charlie knew it, but I made him mad when I hit him on his head. He was shorter than me, a couple of inches, but we weighed about the same and he was fast. If you're ever going to fight when you're drunk, don't pick someone who is fast; it's better to get someone even bigger than you, a fat, slow fellow; at least you have a chance. But if you get somebody who is quick with his fists, you can't do anything; because being drunk, he'll hit you three times before you can get your guard up to block the first blow. I must say Phillip, being the friend he was, tried to break it up after he saw Charlie had gotten mad, but the others stopped him; they were drunk and wanted to see a fight. Charlie hit me a good lick in my left eye right after I hit him in the head. I couldn't see his right hand coming at all after that. Jesus saw what was happening; it was the first fight I had been in since we had met. He was unnerved to the point of getting out and coming to help me. I swung so hard, hoping to connect with a lucky punch, that I swung myself off balance into the arms of the other guys, who stood me up and cheered me on. Charlie started toward me. Jesus jumped on his back, but that didn't phase Charlie. Charlie cocked his arm for the big punch, Jesus grabbed his arm, but Charlie swung like Jesus wasn't there, throwing Jesus on the ground. I hit the ground too, right after Charlie hit me. Next thing I knew, Charlie had me pinned down with knees on my arms and his weight on my chest. He had his fist drawn back again and told me that, hell, he was just playing around and that he didn't want to hurt me, but that I had made him mad as hell by hitting him on his head like that. I told him okay, but that he didn't have any business messing with my girlfriend to begin with. He said he wouldn't anymore, and that he'd let me up if I'd cut this shit out. So I got up and he and Judy, who had gotten into the car during the fight

to keep from seeing it, helped wipe the blood off my face from where my nose had bled. We shook hands and he apologized and Judy and I left.

Jesus had gotten back in the back seat after he saw that all his efforts were in vain; I thanked him for helping me. He nodded assent but he didn't say anything. Charlie had slung him down with that last punch; he had fallen in the dirt and had gotten his gown dirty, his face smudged, dirt in his mouth, and had skinned his knees.

The next day I woke up with a black left eye and a swollen left jaw. I bruise easily; I can't help it. The worst thing about the fight was that I had to suffer through two weeks of retelling over and over first how and then who. The pain during the fight was only temporary, but the people just won't let a fight end. I pretty well let everything end with the fight. Charlie and I were friends again, with only occasional remarks about it. I hardly ever saw him anyway. I don't think I would mind fighting, clean fighting, if I never had any marks afterward, or if everybody would stop asking those same questions over and over. As for Jesus, I carried him some Merthiolate out to the car that next morning, but he said that he had rather suffer. He could be strange at times.

It was his strangeness and his demanding air that caused our separation. He stayed with me for a good while; he was still around after Judy and I broke up. We got along fine till I decided to trade cars. The Ford Galaxy was getting old and was beginning to give me troubles. I told Jesus and he strongly objected. We had a short, heated argument; he told me I should keep my Ford. I told him he was out of his head, that the thing just wouldn't hold up any longer; then, as usual, he shut up and refused to argue.

I went ahead and traded anyway. We had one last drunk together the night before. I drank wine so Jesus would drink with me. As I had hoped, the wine opened him up a little. I begged him to leave his place, but he wouldn't. We carried on over old times, being very sentimental. I told him he could have the back seat of my new car; I would even get a station wagon so he could lie down if he wanted. He said he was sorry that he couldn't do that.

So I traded for a newer model and Jesus and I parted. He stayed in the back seat of the old car. I missed him. I would ride by the car lot just to see him, and I'd wave. He would wave, with a pitiful, longing look on his face. The old car stayed there a long time; they finally shined it up a bit and put it on the center display, with the lights making it glow at night. But no matter how they shined it, it was still the same duck-ugly, old Ford Galaxy. And Jesus stubbornly persisted to stay there.

The car was soon gone after that. I haven't seen it much since. It's too bad, Jesus was such a good friend. You see why I didn't want to talk too much about Jesus to begin with. It would have been much better if I had just told you the first part and then quit. That's what I like to remember anyway.

ALL CHILDREN SHOULD BE FISH

Nan

The dune path went down
leading your eyes

Nan says you was six then
You sat staring
into something few ever saw
You called NAN
NAN
I WANT TO I WANT TO
and she stooped over
picked up her cane pole
bended and raised her bones. Another wave
broke onto shore

You never saw the pain in that pole
as it ached its way down
the bluff
slowly
squarely timed to each poke
No one else knew that Nan
sat there too
lost
Nan remembers it
You were six then

Black-Eyed Peas

There's no smoke left from
the candle to keep those bites
from turning into lumps
The meat is cold again
The black-eyed peas don't
taste the same
There's no salt
Ya can't feel how good it felt
to see Nan serve up rice and peas
Ya can't see the candle

Cold Fish

Grandpa always did have a way with words
Fisherman didn't wait for the dawn
The fish didn't sleep well and he had
to check them up
I wonder what the fish dreamed that made
them want Grandpa to come see them
Nan said they were cold and needed
to get warm. I sure was glad
she always had a skillet ready
I never did like cold fish

Salmon

You had to come in and take my beach away
Second prize
for a lousy science fair
those damn teachers don't know nothing
NAN LOOK
AN ARROW HEAD
There's not much to it
the fun's in the writing
not the reading
GO ON UP AND SEE AUBREY IN PORTLAND
I HEAR THERE'S A LOT TO EXPLORE THERE
Hatcheries don't fool me
Mississippians don't fool easy
even when it comes to salmon

Fisherman

Another time a fisherman
opens to me late in the night
just as suddenly as the time
he picked and placed on me
the deck of his sea swollen belly
putting me fast to sleep
with his rhythmic ups and downs
GET YOUR SON OF A BITCH HANDS
OFF ME Nan would say and her broom
never could come about
to whiff away the smell
of his old spice

Hurricane

Fisherman's out in his boat
The table was set
ready for shrimp
or mullet
MY NET CAST THE DIFFERENCE
not today
YOU LOUSY NO GOOD BASTARD
Nan's hungry
as if Camille wasn't enough
Though the first hour be quiet
the second never did clean up the mess

—George F. Thompson

Burning Boy

by Sena Jeter Naslund

1: Time: 1962-63

Place: The Quarters, Birmingham, Alabama

Skeet watched his mama sit up in the bed; the light from the fireplace caught the oil on her high cheek bone. Papa's place was empty. Mama was going to look round now. Yes, she did. He saw the whites of her eyes move around, and he closed his eyes loosely, not screwed up like he did when he was five.

Was Alfie asleep? And Margaret Rose and Willy? Their knees were pulled up and they lay rounded and natural. The quilts were up to their ears. Mama walked barefooted to the fireplace. Her white soles flicked under her dark feet like she was walking on light. She picked up a lump of big coal and laid it down in the glow. The embers shifted, breathed and poo-pooed ashes. Mama looked around mean, scowling, right at Skeet. But he didn't show any life.

She went back toward her bed and Skeet thought *Where's my Christmas skates? Gimme my skates. Mama! Mama!* She lifted back the quilts and got into her hollow. She was pulling the covers over her shoulder and then she was turning over, facing the wall and the space where his daddy should have been. Skeet exhorted her to get up and find his skates. And Margaret Rose's white majorette boots. And Alfie—he's old enough to know. Never mind about Willy. I didn't ask for no bicycle. Nothing but roller skates. Bright and shining. When you hold a skate on its back and turn a wheel with your finger, click-click-click, it's got tiny little balls inside.

He dreamed that his mama was an angel walking on the light, her feet glittering, and then he saw it was because she was riding his skates. She skated all night; sometimes Skeet said *Watch out, Mama. Watch out. White man's gonna get you.* Finally she fell and her stumbling was like the little bells when you walk in the grocery store to buy a moon pie.

2: little bells

The small coal was rolling out of the skuttle like little bells and his mama was saying, "Ain't nobody in this house

interested in Christmas?" Then his pappie was climbing up the porch steps and he fell heavy against the door.

"Hey, woman, lemme in this house!"

In three mean steps Mama crossed the room. Alfie was sitting up, but Margaret Rose had sense enough just to hang her head over the side of the bed to watch.

"Watcha mean come dragging in this house on Christmas morning?" Her wrath flung out the door like a pan of dish water.

"Now, I done bought a little tree." She cracked open the door.

"Why, sure enough." Her voice swung on open—wide and warm, and Margaret Rose whipped out of bed and ran calling, "Daddy's got us a tree!" and so did Alfie, and Willie babbled, and finally Skeet raised up in bed. Then he saw packages on the breakfast table after all. Skeet zipped over the linoleum. He lifted his box and it was heavy with metal heaviness. Then he walked over to his family slowly. With his eye he measured himself taller than his daddy's little green tree.

3: weightless

Some skated backwards and some danced and clapped. Some skated in a circle around the whole drove. For blocks and blocks and miles and miles. Their sound was big like airplanes. Skeet could keep up good even if he was only six, and they wouldn't leave him up here alone on white folks' streets anyway. Not on Christmas. When all at once, Skeet found a dime. Perfect, slender, weightless, it slid into his pocket.

4: Skeet-baby

That was the next to the last day that Skeet ever saw his father. On the 26th of December Pappie got up cussing and puking. After he'd stirred up the air, the whole cabin smelled like Christmas gift whiskey, spoiled and rotted and puked up. At the steel mill Pappie was grabbed up by the Big Machine and didn't nobody, not even the preacher, look in his box 'cause he didn't look like hisself anymore.



Skeet did not much miss his father. He could hear Margaret Rose snuffling in her bed sometimes, and twice Alfie cried out in his sleep. Willy was too young to have any sense, but Skeet was simply amazed: a person can die. And he tried to think of Paw. "Paw, he dead," he would say to himself from time to time. Once he said it when he and his friend Malcolm started to drink a grapico; once he said it while he was feeling his tea-pot under the covers, and once he had said it when he was walking out in the February cold, looking for his mama among the neighbors' houses in the Quarters. He discovered that he liked to say it. It made him feel big and little all at once.

One evening in March, his mama called to him before he went to bed. She was sitting beside the fire in a straight-back chair. She wasn't doing anything, just sitting, staring into the fire with her knees spread apart and one hand on each knee. She sat straight and strong as a man, and Skeet admired her. Suddenly she said with full knowledge, "Skeet-baby, how old are you?"

"I six, Mama," he said promptly.

"Come here, baby." She put a big arm around Skeet, and he put his skinny child's arm across her shoulders.

"Skeet, you can't be six any more. You eight."

"Why, Mama?" he said softly. Skeet felt no surprise at all, just the sort of drowsy, hypnotic pleasure that he felt in church. He looked close into her scalp and at the skin on her forehead and on the top of her ear. Mama was different from these, but they were Mama. He must say, "Yes, sir," and "Yes, ma'am." He must not be afraid. The little gully in her ear twisted down to a hole and inside that was Mama. But Skeet had not thought of being afraid.

"Boss-man, he need a boy to work—straightening and picking up—in the grocery store in Birmingham. He say he want

a boy ten-years-old, but I say I got a boy—he ain't but eight. And he say bring him up next Saturday. And I say yes sir, I see 'bout it."

Skeet leaned up close to his mama. His mind was quiet and blank.

His mama was quiet, too; then she murmured, "That right, Skeet." And she felt strong in the knowledge that she had trained Skeet to respect her, to be patient and unquestioning. He was going to make a steady man. She held him close and catechized him.

She told Skeet to say that he was in the second grade, that he had failed once because he couldn't read too good. Since Skeet had never been to school at all, his mama said that he'd better look smart, but he was not to say anything at all that he could help. For three hours on Saturday afternoon, he would be given fifty cents. Mama would come after him and get the money.

Her hand softly engulfed the protuberance of his hip bone. He loved the way they fitted, bone and hand, cradle holding him above the swaying waters, being the swaying waters.

5: at the store

Skeet stared down hard at the floor where it was safe: the fronts of Mr. Whistler's pants legs were sharp. They moved toward Skeet and then back away. *He's not use to white folks just yet.* The leg moved inside the sharp trousers and the trousers caved in near the bottom. *But, Marie, there are going to be white people all around him here.* Mr. Whistler's shoes were as shiny as plastic, and his white hand hung down like a little plucked chicken. Sometimes they ran around tossing blood, their necks ran up to ragged nothing. It jerked like the ghost was still in it. Then it rose up, white and plucked, to his coat

pocket and floated into the cloth. A green lollipop done up in cellophane. O.

Skeet held the lollipop close against his belly; he watched it like a traffic light as he began to move across the floor. One white finger touching the point of his shoulder bone. Moving him across the floor like magic. To Mr. Jackson.

"Why, he's no bigger than a tadpole. Come here, boy—" kindsome and laughing blue eyes—"and I'll introduce you to the artichokes." Mr. Jackson rubbed the palm of his hand over Skeet's shoulders and hugged him over to the vegetable bins.

6: ladder

It was not real work. Work was where Paw was chomped up whole, like Mr. Blank makes ground beef; turning the crank makes it come out. And people eat it. And real work was on top of the church, roofing. Black men working, with ruffled hairs, like Paw's hairs.

Skeet watched them working up against the sky. Three of them. Their heavy shoulders moved across the air and they descended the ladder to drink coffee that always came steaming out of a plastic tube. They ascended again to the church roof which was the Holy Tabernacle of King Jesus. Skeet watched their bodies bend to hammer, walking high, working up in the air. Skeet stood at the bottom of the ladder, measuring the spaces from step to step. Sometimes they caused it to tremble, and Skeet moved away.

After one of the men came down the ladder, his back-end swaying, he turned to Skeet and said, "Don't you study 'bout goin' up this ladder, child."

Skeet answered sullenly, "I ain't studyin' that ladder." The man shambled away, his big body swinging from his wide overall straps. Skeet ran around in front of him and said, "Mister, did you see my paw?"

"Who that?" he said good-naturedly.

Skeet pointed silently toward his cabin. The man followed his finger and said "Where 'bouts could I of seen your paw?"

Skeet said, "When he die in the mouth at the mill."

"No, child. I ain't seen no accident."

7: peroxide

That night when Skeet and Malcolm and all the others were playing hide-and-seek around the lumber and the stacks of roofing, Skeet stepped on a long, rusty nail. They made him a pack-saddle and carried him to his house, the nail and wood-block still dangling from his foot. Skeet had begun to feel proud and important until his mama saw him. She grabbed him and ran to a chair. She began to rock him against her body and shriek "O, Lord, O, Lord." The neighbor women came quickly. Mrs. Green took him from his mama and Mrs. Taylor pulled the nail out in a slow, agonizing stretching motion. The blood flowed out and Skeet cried and his mama wailed. Mrs. Golden scolded Mama—"You got to hush this cryin'. Taking on like a child yourself." But Mama went right on saying, "O, Lord, You done took my man. O, Lord, my baby. O, Lord." Suddenly she was quiet.

"I'm gonna call Mr. Whistler."

"Now what you talkin' 'bout, Marie?" Mrs. Taylor said. "I

done got the nail out. He's gonna be okay, ain't you Skeet-baby?"

Skeet kept on crying, but he was not intent on it. He was watching his mother.

She quit crying, and then she said, "No, I'm a-gonna call him."

The room held still, frozen like a church tableau.

Mrs. Watson, grey-haired and skinny, came in, carrying a brown bottle. "I got the peroxide," she said daintily.

"There's no need to call anyone, Mrs. Powers," she said. "We will take care of Charles."

And they let go of their poses, but still Skeet felt weak. He watched his mama loosen up and then she took strong, mean steps across the linoleum. She stepped over his spots of blood and out the door. The ladies were silent. They all looked at each other. They froze again and thawed again.

"I could have gotten Walter," Mrs. Green said. Her lap began to feel hard and strange, not like Mama's. "Walter's not working tonight."

Mrs. Taylor said, "Hush, Lula." She reached for Skeet's foot and took the shoe off and then the sock. "Gimme that peroxide, Mrs. Watson, please ma'am." She knelt down on the floor; Skeet watched her fat finger curl around the bottle cap and twist it off. She said loudly, "Four or five of you younguns come here and blow on this baby's foot." He watched Malcolm and James and Dick and two others draw round and squat down around the bottle and his foot. Mrs. Littleburg came up and stood by. Suddenly with a quick motion Mrs. Taylor poured the fire into his wound, and Skeet closed his eyes screaming for his mama.

When he opened them, his friends were blowing and sucking in and blowing. Mrs. Taylor said, "He's all right now. Let's put him on the bed." She struggled up from the floor and caught Skeet just under the knees while Mrs. Green lifted his body. Mrs. Golden held a folded cloth against the sole of his foot. They settled him, and Mrs. Taylor said, "Margaret Rose, you'd better look smart here. You and Alfie sit here on this bed and hold this rag on his foot. If he want you to, you blow on it. Your mama, she be back soon."

Malcolm and Dick and the others slipped out into the night. They had been very quiet. Skeet heard their bare feet move softly across the porch. The ladies floated toward the door.

Mrs. Taylor stopped and said, "If your maw want any of us, she know where we at."

Then she left. Skeet felt scared. Margaret Rose felt important, knowing that she represented both the community and her mother, and that as the community she must disapprove of her mother. Margaret Rose was glad to do it. She felt complicated and knowing. She began to take off Skeet's other shoe.

"You're not supposed to wear shoes in the bed," she murmured. Her voice was reciting a known fact; she was not scolding.

"I couldn't help it," Skeet said timidly.

She hadn't expected him to reply. After a second she answered, "I know it."

Mama came up the steps heavy and fast. The first thing she said was: "Margaret Rose, you get under the bed, please ma'am, and fetch me out my good shoes."

Margaret Rose sat still on the bed, expecting her mother to explain.

"Move, girl!" Mama said. Her voice slammed down hard.

Margaret Rose moved.

"You, Alfie, get Skeet his jacket out the box. Skeet, we going to the Emergency." Alfie started to cry to go too, but Mama said Mr. Whistler was going to drive up to their doorstep and take her and Skeet in his car hisself. That was all, and Margaret Rose could carry Willy and stay with Mrs. Taylor. Alfie too.

While he lay on the bed, Skeet looked down his body at his foot. But he was knowing that Margaret Rose was feeling sassy. She muttered, "We know where Mrs. Taylor is at," but it didn't mean anything to Mama. At least not what Margaret Rose intended. Suddenly Skeet thought *Margaret Rose is scared and sneaky*. Not like mean hard steps on the floor. Scared and sneaky. Margaret Rose is different from Mama. . . .

"Sit up now, Skeet." She shook his jacket hard, and all the crumbles moved out. Then Mama helped him into it. Her hands were soft, smoothing his shoulders. Then she reached down and held his hand. They sat and waited. Margaret Rose went and sat out on the porch steps. Alfie climbed up on the other side of Mama, and she put her other arm around him. The summer night breezes moved through the house.

They did not stir till Margaret Rose dashed in saying, "He coming!"

Mama stood up and held out both arms to Skeet and carried him outside. Alfie crowded close to her; his head moved along beside Skeet's hurt foot. Sure enough, the lights from Mr. Whistler's car were bobbing up and down as the car dipped into pot holes.

Whistler saw them on the porch with relief. He hadn't been down in the Quarters since he was a boy. These days and times it probably wasn't safe. He hoped the boy wasn't hurt much; he already had a slightly odd gait. She had put him in a wrinkled, tan jacket that was too small. He looked much younger held in his mother's arms than he did in the store. Whistler never had believed he was eight, but you can't tell about niggers' age. She had done right to phone him. He had told her so at once. Lockjaw was no joke.

Whistler leaned across the front seat and jerked up the lock on the back door. Marie climbed in, and Whistler turned toward them.

"Well, Skeet, fella, so you stepped on a nail, did you?"

"Yessir," Skeet said.

"Hurt much?" Whistler tried to figure out the best way to get back up on the street.

"Nosir."

"What's the best way to get up to the road, Marie?" he said.

Mama started explaining, and Skeet looked at the seat covers and bright knobs and handles. He watched Mr. Whistler's hands on the steering wheel. He had heard Mr. Whistler talk and move around the store. He had seen the others watching for him and being glad when he'd gone on, but he'd never seen him *do* anything before. His hands were plump like small plucked chickens. Mr. Whistler was not like Mr. Jackson.

They drove up through the white neighborhood where Skeet had skated on Christmas day. Mr. Whistler talked to Mama and sometimes to Skeet. Once he said, "Getting sleepy, fella?" Skeet liked to hear him talking to Mama, nice and polite. But she talked like she always did when she talked to white folks, like she was Mrs. Watson, saying "Charles" and teaching the Bible. Their voices rolled together in his mind until he heard Mr. Whistler saying "Skeet, Skeet" and Mama was jostling

him till he said "Yessir" and then he started telling Skeet what was going to happen. He was going to have a shot. It would hurt some, but he had to have it. It would not hurt long. Skeet said Yessir whenever Mr. Whistler paused. He knew that he was sleepy; but later when he thought about it, it had happened just like Mr. Whistler said it would. Only, the light hurt his eyes when they got out of the car under the bright porch.

When his foot healed, Mr. Whistler bought Skeet a pair of beautiful brown lace-up oxfords.

8: sugar man

Mama and Skeet sat out on the porch steps in the early fall sunshine. One of Skeet's brown oxfords sat in her lap like a kitten, and she stroked it with her polishing rag. Her strokes were light and satisfied on the shine. She had finished rubbing the leather hard. She had gotten pleased and started the gentleness. She was smiling and turned her head lopsided, loving the shoes. She ran her hand down inside the shoes, poking out the wrinkles on the toe. She wouldn't talk. Skeet pictured himself walking close to the mud, carefully; but he didn't tread in any slime.

She held the shoes up together by the heels. "How that, sugar man?" she said. They glowed new brown and Mama's face was glowing, too.

Skeet said, "Real nice, Mama. Jes' fine." They were lovely. Skeet put them on over his clean socks, took up the slack in the laces, and made the knots while Mama watched. He had beautiful feet.

He scrunched his toes inside the shoes and the inner leather was slippery and smoother than mud.

"Skeet," Mama said, "nex' week you's gonna start in at the school."

Skeet looked up with practiced slow eyes. Mama was looking at him. He let his face open with pleasure: "I is," he said with triumph and finality.

"You sure is doll-baby," she said.

Teacher was the funniest color. After school Mama said that she was what you called a almost white mulatto. Skeet thought that Mama didn't much like Miss Smith. She told Skeet that he could learn his lessons no matter if Miss Smith was green. But Mama seemed troubled, and she told Margaret Rose that she couldn't start to school just yet.

Skeet felt sorry for Margaret Rose. She was almost eight.

9: nigger boy

Late one Friday afternoon when he came in from playing, he heard Margaret Rose talking to his school shoes. They were sitting on the crate beside his bed, and she had knelt down beside them, glaring at them and muttering: "You is a nigger and don't you forget it."

Skeet said, "Margaret Rose, what you mean talking at them shoes like that?"

She whirled around, very angry, and hissed that Skeet was stuck up. But Skeet knew it wasn't true and he said she was a lie. Then Margaret Rose said something wicked: "If I want to, when I big, I can sleep with any white man I wants to. But you ain't never gonna have a white woman, nigger boy."

Skeet felt his insides sucked away. Then he felt so sorry for Margaret Rose that he wanted to cry.

"Don't talk like that, Margaret Rose, please."

She had begun to cry a little, but she went on, "I is glad I'm gonna be a woman and not no worthless man." She turned and ran away, and Skeet ran out of the cabin, too.

He dodged around houses, avoiding everybody. Finally, he walked around the churchyard. The sun was setting behind the new church roof. Skeet remembered how the men had walked up there almost in the sky. He remembered their big ladder. He could be a carpenter. Or he could work in the steel mills like his daddy had. Or he might be a teacher like Miss Smith.

And Miss Smith had said:

(he was white) is Aaron Fleet, and he plays a musical instrument called the VIOLIN, printed on the blackboard.

And it was under his chin and out in his arm and his other hand cutting across it and it made a sound better than and different; more than and calling.

Skeet sat down on a pile of old shingles. He stared at the square church.

And Miss Smith had said:

Change is counted in pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters and halves. And Skeet held them all in his hands and shook them with joy like bells.

And Miss Smith had said:

The word is PASTE, but it does not stick things together. It is for mouths, or more exactly for *teeth*, but it cleans your breath, as well as your teeth—toothpaste. Delicious as ice cream but not cold. To be spit out.

And Miss Smith had said:

There is a story about each one of you. And she wrote it. Before everyone. On the blackboard:

SKEET IS SEVEN YEARS OLD.

SKEET HAS A MOTHER, ONE SISTER AND TWO BROTHERS. HE HAS PRETTY SHOES. HE WORKS IN A BIG STORE. HIS REAL NAME IS NOT SKEET. IT IS CHARLES POWERS.

And Skeet said, softly, to the presence on the shingle pile:

Margaret Rose, you must call me Charles. But she answered, sure and strong: You're gonna die called *Skeet*. Not one gonna call you anything but *Skeet*. Your grave rock, it say *Skeet*.

Skeet whined and accused her: Mad 'cause you can't go to school.

She answered: I can go where you'll never go.

He could feel her squatting on the shingle pile beside him. Mean, sneaky, asking questions, knowing, whispering, wanting

what was his, despising his ignorance and his weakness.

You're a lie.

Ask Mama. If you know where she at. She gone off with Mr. Whistler.

His wife is *sick*, Margaret Rose. Mama helps care for the sick. That's in the Bible.

But Skeet was scared, and his tears pattered down on the rotten roofing.

It ain't in the Bible to take money.

For working. We is paid to work.

For swelling?

And Skeet thought of swelling. Swelling up like before Willy, like before Alfie.

He sprang up from the mound and ran into the church building. He cowered in the back, not placing himself close to the holy altar. He sat on the floor with his back against the wall, rolling his eyes around the walls. He sensed the Quarters laid out around the church knoll, and the paved roads into the white world, the grocery store, and in the sky the smoke stacks of the steelmills, pushing into the rose of sunset. He pressed frightened against the wall of the church and did not like the haunted darkness.

And Miss Smith had said:

Here is the President of the United States and his family.

Do not talk when I turn off the lights; do not leave your seat. Do not laugh in the dark.

And he came onto the wall, walking and talking, with beautiful white teeth and crisp thick hair. Sometimes in striped clothes called pajamas, smiling and playing with two little children. Tossing the little boy up into the air. A beautiful little white girl.

When the lights were on Miss Smith said, "It is possible in this day and age, in your life time, for a Negro to be President of the United States!"

And Skeet was washed clean in the memory of the words and peroxide rolled in his veins, and in his head the sound of hammers on the church roof beat prophetically.

10: Charles Powers and the President

On Saturday afternoon when Skeet's mother came to the grocery store to get him, once, just once, the knuckles of Mr. Whistler's hand crossed her backside and left it jiggling.

That night, Charles Powers and the President descended Jacob's ladder into the mouth of the blazing, fiery furnace and found his father.

IN THE MEADOW

In the meadow on the far side
Of your name

I found a second face
A third

Crude menhirs stung by
Salt

And carrion syllables
Picked stark
Against

The sky
Of yet another name

Something used to evade the landlord at
midnight

In the meadow on the far side
Of your name

The little string of eviction notices
Is endless

Your furniture
Piling slowly under the horizon.

—Thomas Johnson

SEEING THE GULLS, A BRIDGE, A RAINBOW AND JELLYFISH, LANDLOCKED, IN GEORGIA

BECAUSE PERFECTION IS DENIED THE HUMAN, machines complicate
whatever is punched in them, somebody said not too lately
and I wonder o I do, in a type of blues
 whitey can't sing the blues they tell me, whitey can't
 make it, make it ever

doll. EVERYBODY'S A BARBIE DOLL TODAY. INTO THE POOL.

o. I grits like. I greens like. Is something wrong with me?

shall that be my chorus? Further questions to be referred to executrix of the
estate.

That's almost by itself a poem, and I scarcely meant it, that was the intro, the
few words of intro, the falling intro

spection.

whitey can't do it, ever, whitey can't make it, BABY WHITEY's a total
somethingorother. You know what I think?

I think the things I see are where they aren't, like the gulls
gulls wheeling, one by one, in several arcs, knife-tip winged
slicing meagre circles in the azure and empty white

 sky, I think I see them

where sparrows swarm, chattering

where I sense a scent of the ocean, someone's steak on coals
euchres me, and I wasn't even playing. Spring is still
the bridge of seasons, carrying rain and rainbows
and did you ever notice jellyfish on the beach
how rainbows circle in their skin?

dead

of course, without the water. And of life I think
somebody said whitey can't do it, make it, I
sing whatever comes to me, blues

damn you, I know
the tiniest tip of grassblade up
is pale, pale blue
you think I don't
know blue?

there is this advertisement so blue is
white is

from the water, from the ocean salt brown murk of water
surf froth climbs up and says its say and merges

and all around, the sand lies still forever.
And here there's clay.

—Ruth Moon Kempher

WHIFFED

the honeysuckle of letters, I see
no swear I
saw him! My fur and whiskers the Dalai Lama
in a Jesuitical crisis the eiptome
of coat flaps! calling several strangers "Monsieur"
Damn if I didn't! In Paris
head full of pebbles, rubbish, broken matches
besides not knowing Greek
the owner of several cinemas in Switzerland, according
to whose current circle
sparrows upswing over all as the sky darkens
a crow approaches a nunnery. Brilliant!
consulting one of five or four watches
lips pursed. "Mr. Lewis will instruct us
in the art of the Chinese."
someone else says he is a poet
chiefly interested in mattresses
O God, my God
"an uninhabited dressinggown," nothing changes
I see I saw him, crumb by sparrow
upset me. Rabbitwise.

—Ruth Moon Kempher

FISH

contain
food for the
brain

&

have three lumps
for thinking thoughts

cold-blooded
bastards dipping shrimp dip
& digressions at
parties

synapses
of how to be
happy

flounder &
fool have only
similar distinctions
medullar

jellyfish
babbles of how to
be happy plus wishes for
you and
me to
or we
to do

at least
the kissing fish
have something to
occupy their
flukes

if wishes
were seahorses
porpoises

would have to
move out

—Ruth Moon Kempher

The Water is Wide

An Interview with Pat Conroy

by A. M. Karimi

Pat Conroy's *The Water Is Wide* belongs to a series of books written in recent years by teachers depicting the education of children against devastating social odds and the search for new ways to break through centuries of neglect (Jonathan Kozol's *Death At An Early Age*, Herbert Kohl's *The Way It's 'Spozed to Be*, John Holt's *Why Children Fail*). It all began for Conroy in 1969 when he took a job teaching black children in a two-room school on Yamacraw Island off the coast of South Carolina, near Savannah, Georgia. The path that led him to the backwaters of Yamacraw was, to say the least, an indirect one. An Irish Catholic Southerner, he grew up, as he puts it, "a bona fide cracker boy," and went to The Citadel, the military college in South Carolina, intending to follow his father's (a Marine Corps colonel) career. Then, at the age of 21, he changed his mind and decided to teach high school at nearby Beaufort, South Carolina. The new teacher found himself in a distinct minority position when he began to voice his doubts over the wisdom of our country's deepening involvement in the Viet Nam war. An event which had a profound influence on his life was the assassination of Reverend Martin Luther King, whom he admired. During these turbulent years, he felt the sore need for a new hope and vision. So after a European sojourn, he left his apartment in Beaufort and boarded the tiny motorboat to Yamacraw Island. To his amazement, Conroy—the children could not pronounce his name and called him Conrack—discovered that in his class of eighteen children (grades five to eight) not one could tell him what country they lived in, who the President was, nor that the body of water near them was the Atlantic Ocean. His problem was complicated by the fact that the school principal, who had terrorized the children, was black and despised her own people. Conroy does not think of himself as a hero and is aware of his failures and mistakes, but what transpires—and perhaps Conroy himself is not completely aware of this—is a warm, humorous, moving and often angry story of an unrepressed young man taking on the challenge of teaching a group of deprived black children.

In this interview with Dr. A. M. Karimi of Loyola's Communications Department, Pat Conroy discusses his background, his experience at Yamacraw Island, and the adaptation of his novel into the film *Conrack*.

NOR: When you first went to the island did you encounter any hostility?

CONROY: No. The island did not have the twentieth-century hostility that would normally exist, I think, if I had gone somewhere else. I've gone into big cities and teachers tell me there's hostility between black kids and

white teachers, and white kids and black teachers. This island was not with it. I was like a dinosaur. This was the first year of teacher integration in South Carolina—the first thing that had happened in, you know, one-hundred years in the history of the South. So this was all new. I didn't know much about what was going on and neither did they. There was just curiosity.

NOR: Was there a marked difference between the blacks on the island and the blacks in Beaufort?

CONROY: Oh, yes, there was a marked difference. In Beaufort they were much more sophisticated, but outside on some of the other islands you would get the same type of isolation. But what really got me was that these kids were educated in the same county that I had been educated in. My parents had told me about the old separate-but-equal stuff and for years I'd believed it, and all of a sudden I am going off to teach in this school on Yamacraw Island where the kids can't tell me what country they live in. Something seemed a little wrong. I was very desperate and rushed to give these kids as much as I could that particular year. Being young and dumb I did not realize I was doomed to failure, but you know, that was a different time.

NOR: Why did the children call you "Conrack"?

CONROY: This happened in the first week of school. What they could not show in the film was the Gullah dialect spoken on the island.* The kids had trouble with my name and we had great difficulty understanding each other the first weeks of school, but the movie didn't make this clear.

NOR: Your experience on the island changed your feelings and attitudes which now seem to be in sharp contrast to your early years at Atlanta and Beaufort. Would you say something about your background?

CONROY: Well, I am Southern, I am Southern white. I was raised in the South and grew up thinking things Southern whites think. But I also lived through the 1960s, and anyone who had lived through the 1960s and was not changed by this must have been dead during that time. And it changed some of the things I had thought. I spent a great deal of the sixties dodging the hell out of the draft,

but to tell you the truth I was not really involved in the civil rights thing except for teaching in a newly integrated school. But just living through the civil rights movement, watching TV, reading, you know, all these things change you. I was going through one of those evolutionary processes. I was not struck down on the road to Damascus or anything, but there were things that happened that made me change my way of thinking. My Dad called me a "crack-house liberal," so that was the way it went. You see my Father is a Marine Corps Colonel and he looked around at me one day and said, "My God, I've raised seven hippies." You know, he's very upset about what's going on in his world. Dad still basically thinks the same: he's not going to change and I've quit talking to him about it. My consciousness is very different now; you learn things as you go along; I did things wrong that I would do differently now.

NOR: Are you pleased with the film's treatment of your book?

CONROY: When at first the book was sold to the movies, I was not quite sure what would come out of it. I had heard that writers and Hollywood are natural enemies and hate each other's guts, and I didn't know if after I had seen the movie I was going to be leaping across at the director's throat. I had no idea how it was going to come out, but you know, after I saw the movie, I kind of liked it; it was changed, it was different, certainly, but I think that overall I didn't mind what the movie was trying to say. At least they had respect for the story; they didn't make me an Eskimo. There was one Hollywood company that wanted to make me a kid from Harvard because a white boy from the South is not supposed to think that way. So, at least I had the feeling of the book, and I was happy about that.

NOR: Was the movie filmed on Yamacraw Island?

CONROY: No. It was filmed on St. Simons Island, off the coast of Brunswick, Georgia. I think the photography is beautiful and captures that part of the country very well.

NOR: Were the children professional actors?

CONROY: No, they were amateurs. They interviewed about five hundred kids from Brunswick, Georgia, and picked out twenty that they used in the film.

NOR: How closely did you work with the script writers and the director, Martin Ritt?

CONROY: We didn't work together at all, and they got to know me after the film was made.

NOR: How often were you on the set during the shooting?

CONROY: I waited until the last three days of filming when it was almost over, and my wife was dying to meet Jon Voight. She had spent about three weeks in the beauty parlor getting ready for this. When I went over there, I was really scared and nervous about doing this. So, I went down there, met everybody, and Voight comes out of his dressing room without a shirt on, walks over, and my wife says "God, I wish I were married to him instead of you." It was just an amazing thing this guy coming toward me, and you know, he does not walk, he just undulates, and his body is rippling, glistening in the sun. It was very strange just going through that whole thing. I met the director that day and he told me that he didn't mind writers coming on the set as long as they kept their mouths shut.

I hadn't even seen the script and didn't get a copy until the last day I was down there. So I waited until I was back home to even read it. It was a little intimidating in some ways, but I was glad I went down afterwards.

NOR: Isn't the character of Mad Billy considerably changed in the film?

CONROY: Oh yes. You will not believe what Hollywood did to that one. Mad Billy could barely talk in real life, much less my teaching him how to read. I think they wanted a role for Paul Winfield and they built it out of this.

NOR: What about the portrayal of the children in the film?

CONROY: You see, movies again. For example, everytime Voight talked the kids worshipfully looked up, and everytime he said something they responded. Kids aren't like that, you know. At times I could have stood on my head or done anything else and the kids wouldn't have listened to me. The movie didn't emphasize the failures that all teachers have, that you always have. Do you remember the scene in the woods where Voight is teaching them about the plants? It should have been the kids teaching Voight about this. Because when I went into the woods this was where the kids ruled, this was where the kids became teachers. And when we went to the river shore this was where they told me things. I wish they could have emphasized more the give and take of the learning experience, the sharing of the learning experience more than they did.

NOR: How do you feel about the use of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in the film?

CONROY: Well, people interpreted it differently. It bothered some people because they thought that it was pessimistic—you know, dealing with death. But others felt that it meant from now on we are going upward and onward and we are going to fight it out. When I heard it I was very moved, simply because Beethoven's Fifth had become sort of an in-joke with my class and me. I wasn't thinking of death, but I was moved by just remembering that whole thing, and how life had changed, and how things had gone on.

NOR: While we are on the subject of optimism and pessimism, when you were fired did you become discouraged or lose hope for the human condition?

CONROY: See, I never really considered that I was doing great things for mankind just being over there. I knew that the experience could never be taken away. I had a year and a month over there and it was a good year and a month. My whole thing was not profound, except that I hated everything about the superintendent. There were no profundities involved in my going over there; there was nothing earthshaking. It was just that I wanted to do it. I didn't lose hope; I seldom lose hope. Things will go on; things will be all right; they'll smell for a little while, but they will be all right.

NOR: These days some people tend to believe that only a black man can help a black man and to them a character like Conroy seems either bigotted or sentimental. How do you feel about this?

CONROY: Well Conrack is certainly not a "now" movie. I have been touring around and going into a lot of cities, and, you know, some blacks get quite annoyed. This is

certainly part of it: the film is not a *Superfly*. This is very difficult for me to explain. I always ask if Paul Winfield were playing Jon Voight's role, would it be all right, and almost invariably they say yes. As I look back I didn't know that all this was going to happen. I just taught for a year and it so happened that I was teaching black kids. There are a lot of white teachers teaching black kids and a lot of black teachers teaching white kids, and if you have to be a certain color in order to get things across, then we are in worse shape than I thought. I spent my whole life fighting that conception, and I just don't want to go back to it now.

NOR: *Have the children seen the film?*

CONROY: I sent them tickets to the opening in Savannah. I was going to take them to the actual opening, but when I wrote the book I realized that just writing about these kids was an invasion of privacy. Second, the movie was a further invasion. I thought that subjecting them to questions by the press would be even worse. So I told them to go see the movie on their own time and I got them tickets.

NOR: *Have you been back to the island?*

CONROY: Yes, I have been back a couple of times. It is changing very rapidly, and in the last year or two, real estate developers have discovered it, bought it up—in the next couple of years there will be condominiums, hotels and golf courses all over the island.

NOR: *Who took over teaching after you left?*

CONROY: The store-owner's wife took over for a couple of months. Then after that a good friend of mine from high school took over, and had a completely different philosophy than I did—they made very sure of that. I had written the superintendent a letter telling him that I thought he ought to look for a black couple to live on the island. I thought that if he could find a young, sharp, black couple who wanted to go out and live there it would be much better probably all the way around. But now I have heard that Mrs. Scott is in charge of all eight grades. The superintendent was recently rehired for four more years.

NOR: *What are you doing now?*

CONROY: Writing another book. For a year after *The Water Is Wide* came out, I went around South Carolina talking to all-white groups and telling them what had happened. Of course they were expecting Godzilla to walk through the door after this: I made sure my hair was cut and I smiled a lot. I just wanted to tell them the story of growing up in South Carolina and what had happened. But writing is nice: there are no superintendents and no principals. I like writing very much, and I like what writing can do. The enjoyment is amazing.

*The Gullah dialect of the South Carolina islands is a combination of an African dialect and English. Some linguists claim that remnants of Elizabethan English survive among the Gullah people.

NEW BETHLEHEM

I carry this clearing around with me
Ringed by blue fir
Where the mothership
Will land

This clearing that will not live in
Robot brains
That drive the car
And weigh a pound of tomatoes

Nor behind the crystal pane
Of the pineal body
Where lizards leave the damp rocks

This clearing I carry around
Wants to drop anchor
Next to yours

To make room
If the instruments fail
If she comes down wide of the mark!

—Thomas Johnson

Buddy Rough

by Martin Kirby

That's the South down there—damn it to hell.

I want to see the moonlight on top of the clouds, not the damned South. Damn those weathermen. Continuous cloud cover all over the Southeastern United States, they said. Damn them. Damn their satellite photographs. Knoxville looks like a pile of cheap jewelry.

Have you ever spent time in the South? Well, if you ever get out into the back country down there, beware of any man who calls you "boy," pronounced "boa," as in constrictor, because he is a bully and a degenerate. Likewise, beware of any man who calls you "good buddy," and *most particularly* watch out for any man who calls you "buddy rough"—that's pronounced "buhdih ruhff"—because when they get to the "buddy rough" stage, they are irritated with you, or makin' out like they are, which leads to the same thing.

Clouds again. Look at that moonlight. That is probably the pre-eminent positive result of the damned Industrial Revolution, the fact that we can see that sight just about whenever we want to. That's why I always fly at night. It don't take much to make me happy. Wordsworth thought it was hot stuff, too. He had to climb a mountain to see just a little bit of it. Wonder what he'd think if he could see it from a jet. Probably go nuts. The moonlight on the clouds is a lot better than what's on the other side, let me tell you.

Yes, dammit, I'm from down there. But I escaped. Got away. Haven't been back in twenty-six years. Well, I take that back. I've been home to bury relatives, and sometimes, like now, I make a little raid into one of the cities to give a talk for money. I'm pretty big on the lecture circuit. Besides the fact that two-hundred-and-nineteen papers carry my column, I put on a pretty good show. My audiences get a kick out of me. It's got something to do with the fact that I can pronounce the letter "i" as good as any Yankee when I want to, and still turn on the ol' regional idiom when I feel like it. The United World Federalists out in Lower Merion Township, Pennsylvania, thought it was a real knee-slapper the other night when I told 'em Nixon was a "pure-D son-of-a-bitch." He is, of course. So are they. Damn teapipps.

I come from a place a little bit to the west of right down there, across the river. You wouldn't recognize the name. I

call it Sarcoma. Sarcoma, Arkansas. About sixty miles south and a little bit to the west of Little Rock. It's still there. Hasn't changed a bit. Things like that don't change. They metastasize. That's why they all look alike, all those grubby little towns. Full of bullies and degenerates, every last one of 'em.

Honey, a little more of that there Wild Turkey, if you please.

Sarcoma, Arkansas. My native soil. My fatherland. God, how I hated it. I got away from there so fast, wavin' my high school diploma and screamin' obscenities. But I learned how to deal with 'em before I left, the bullies and degenerates. I'm still after 'em. I've made a career out of dealin' with bullies and degenerates. You read my column? I suppose ol' Ike would have called me a sensation-seekin' columnist or commentator. You wanna know what I *really* am, ha? I'm a *professional nigger-lover*. Oh, yes, Lord! That's gonna be the title of my autobiography, *Memoirs of a Professional Nigger-Lover*. You may wonder why I follow such a calling. Look down yonder. See that little cluster of lights? Well, right down there are some good Christian, Southern folks, and each of those good people knows two things: Jesus rose on the third day and niggers ain't human. Now, that bein' the case, what do you think they think of a professional nigger-lover, ha? You're soooo right. Every time I expose one of these damned racist politicians for being the crook or the concupiscent bastard he is; every time I egg on the civil rights crowd, what's left of 'em, I think *They're readin' this back in Sarcoma*. By God, readin' and weepin' and wailin' and gnashin' their teeth. And their little baby bullies and degenerates are sittin' in school right next to those little black kids, who I admit probably will not grow up to be much better. But they have an excuse. *They were forced into it, degeneracy I mean*. And I never lose a chance to let it be known that I'm from Sarcoma, Arkansas. Qualifies me as a Southern expert, don't you know? Establishes my credentials, so to speak. And gets my old townspeople's backs up. They all hate me down there. If they've heard of me, they hate me. It makes me so happy, so glad, I tell you a thing like the South metastasizes. Look at the vote Wallace got in Michigan, Sarcoma North.

Ol' Sarcoma. Home of the Skunksniffers. Conference champs. God, how I wished I could have grown up in some

neutral, normal place like Ohio. I *presume* Ohio is neutral and normal. *Some* place on earth must be. It was bad enough growing up in the South, but my God! *Arkansas!* Back east of the river, I read, I don't really know, they have traditions, memories, a sense of order. In Mississippi, I hear tell, the ground reeks with blood and decay, and guilt hangs in the air like cold germs. But, *Arkansas*, now. Most of the place wasn't even settled until after the Civil War. Sarcoma wasn't even founded till around nineteen-hundred. In Mississippi, I guess, you could be a racist, money-grubbin', oppressin', know-nothin' pig and feel like your ancestors would have approved. In Arkansas you didn't *have* any ancestors. I always felt like I had been stolen by a war party when I was a baby and was growin' up with the wrong tribe. My peers, as they say, were cretins (don't give me any of that stuff about democracy), and the less cretinous ones were baby Babbitts. I was a crypto-intellectual, and I knew that my real home was way, way out yonder. I didn't know about metastasis then. In Sarcoma, Arkansas, I was a freak, and I suffered a freak's trials. But I learned to give as good as I got.

Let me tell you a little story about survival in ol' Sarcoma. When I was in high school I was tormented almost every school day for over a year by a bully and degenerate named William Nathrup. I don't need to describe William Nathrup. Suffice it to say that he was one of those big, tough redneck thugs that towns like Sarcoma produce in such abundance. He was nineteen years old and still in the eleventh grade even though he had been kicked off the football team long before. You might think he would have dropped out and joined the army or got sent to prison or something. Not him. He stayed in school like an old cow that hates to get too far from the barn. Every morning before the first bell he stood across the street from the school yard with some others like him and smoked cigarettes and talked dirty. We went to the same schools for eleven years and never said a word to each other the whole time until he started pushing me around.

William Nathrup liked to bully other kids after school. Usually he had a few hangers-on with him, littler and younger kids, mostly. Apprentice thugs, you might say.

One afternoon I had to walk past William Nathrup and his little group. He made some kind of remark, which I ignored. And he said, "Boa, I'm talkin' to you." I moved on. I didn't want any trouble. I just wanted to serve out my sentence in that hole and shake its dust off my feet. But my face turned red. I wasn't scared. I was in a bloody rage. I wanted to kill William Nathrup, his gang, ninety-nine per cent of my school-mates, most of the teachers, and practically everyone else south of Pennsylvania and east of New Mexico. William Nathrup saw he was getting to me. He took a step forward and said, "Buddy rough, you a stuck-up son-of-a-bitch."

Never heard the term "buddy rough?" Well, maybe you only find it around Sarcoma. I wouldn't know. I spent eighteen years on my fieldwork, so I know my subject backwards and forwards, but I only studied one clan and didn't make it around to the neighboring tribes much.

The word "buddy" is a degenerate form of "brother," you know. I bet if I dropped a ball bearing out this window right now it would land on the head of some cluck who was legally named Buddy and didn't have the least notion what it meant. So, anyway, "buddy" is a kinda lefthanded, unserious way of sayin' "brother." It's friendly in some tones of voice, and

in others it's nasty. Now, if you add the word "rough," you sort of mean that the guy you're talkin' to is, you might say, someone like you, who's on your level, who'd be your buddy if he didn't think he was "rough." It's somethin' a guy with a chip on his shoulder says to another guy who he thinks has a chip on *his* shoulder. Get it? You say "buddy rough" to a fella, you're sayin' if he thinks he's so big, why don't he come on and fight. You're sayin' he ain't no better than you are.

Anyway, I saw that William Nathrup wanted a fight, and I saw that he could probably win. Now, I was mad enough to fight, but two things held me back. First, I couldn't have stood the humiliation of gettin' licked in front of that little crowd of slobberin' pinheads; and, second, it so happened that I was in the tail end of my religious phase and I didn't believe in fightin'. I wouldn't tell that to just anybody, but you look like an understandin' sort. Now, you can see from all this that I was well on my way to becomin' a prize nut. I didn't believe in fightin' and I massacred the entire population of Sarcoma every day in my mind. The upshot was, I went on home and William Nathrup told everybody I was chicken.

He never left me alone after that. He was like a dog that barks when there's nothin' to bark at. He kept lyin' in wait for me, hiss'n' little obscenities. Now, I had enemies all around, kids, teachers. I kept showin' 'em how dumb they were. They would have just loved to see me get licked. And, if I *had* gotten into a fight on the schoolground the principal would have treated me pretty rough. He might have expelled me. It might have been enough to keep me out of college. They wanted to bring me down to their level, but I wouldn't bite. I took to readin' catalogues from out-of-state colleges and carryin' 'em around with the front covers showin'. One day William Nathrup took one of my catalogues and threw it out the second-floor window, and some girls giggled.

I went outside, picked up the catalogue and started for home. My religious phase ended right quick and that was the last I saw of it. I was gonna get my daddy's 38 and come back and kill William Nathrup and as many others as I had bullets for. Don't grin at me like that. I don't joke about serious matters. I was gonna do it. They were all bullies and degenerates and life was wasted on 'em. Many a time I had set up a machine gun in my mind and just mowed 'em down. Now, I was gonna do the job with the next best thing to a machine gun that I could get hold of. I kept seein' William Nathrup grabbin' at his belly and thrashin' on the ground. But right then I had a thought: If I shot William Nathrup I would not get to go to college. I kicked a hicker nut. Then I kicked an old dead stick and it broke to pieces. And I went back in the school house.

After that I went into trainin'. I lifted weights and I did push-ups and sit-ups and whatnot. I went out in the country and ran on the dirt roads. I did this for months. I was gonna stomp William Nathrup, but I was gonna do it in my own sweet time when nobody could get me for it.

About February of my last year in high school, William Nathrup finally got kicked out of school. I guess he sassed a teacher, maybe, and they suddenly remembered how old he was. He stayed away from the school, but he didn't leave town. There were no steady jobs for his kind, so he did odd jobs in town and on farms. He might have found somethin' to do in Little Rock, but he didn't go. I think now that he

found out somehow how stupid and degenerate he really was and he was afraid to go out into the big world where he would have been squashed like a bug. He was gonna stay in Sarcoma and rot.

Pretty soon he got married to a female version of himself who was maybe five months along. In May I graduated and went lookin' for him. I found him mowin' a doctor's yard with a push mower.

When he saw me comin' he sort of grinned like a nasty, stray dog. He came at me. He said, "Hey, boa.—" And I hit 'im.

It was a good fight, but I had the upper hand from the start. The doctor's wife came out of the house yellin', "*You boys stop that fightin'!*" I vaguely remember takin' a swipe at her, but I guess I missed. I licked William Nathrup good, and I left him rollin' on the ground with little bits of cut grass pasted in the blood on his face.

So, now I'm on my way to the City That Care Forgot to

give my talk on, "The Remaining Tasks of Southern Liberalism." And maybe I'll sing and dance and tell funny stories.

Yep. That's either Lake Pontchartrain or we've overshot by a hundred miles and we're about to crash into the Gulf. Hope you can swim. Ha. No, it's the lake. You can see the Causeway over there, those lights on the water.

They always fly in this low because, well, New Orleans is a low town in more ways than one. Lemme tell you something about Lake Pontchartrain. It's got so much sewage and junk in it, or it did the last time I checked, that the city health officer takes bacteria counts at the beaches and has 'em read over the radio and the t.v., so you can know much risk you're takin' by swimmin' in it; how bad a disease you're gonna get.

And here we are, dry as bones. New Orleans. The South. My old stompin' grounds. Well, good buddy, so long. I've got some tall stompin' to do.

HUNTING MONOLOGUE

for William Meredith

*It is this way with verse and animals
And love, that when you point you lose them all*¹

one shot left in the chamber
I aim at a doe
feeding near Upson's birch

and miss

we dislike killing things this way
rather catch them on a silver point
violate a naked page
anything we bag
is less than our sights promise

poachers

grateful sneaks in a foreign field
we blame ourselves when we miss
and leave the clearing as we find it
except for a shattered nest
from a shot gone wild

¹From William Meredith's *Sonnet on Rare Animals*

—Shael Herman

I sign the invoice

the truck creaks up my driveway
crushes earthworms in its path
pushes out its rusty rear
spills a ton of river sand on the lawn

it smells foul as mangy dogs in rain

I remember what the driver said
it don't seem like much till you start shovelling
I quit counting at five hundred and twelve
rake and sift the sand
scuttle it across the grass in a feeble wheelbarrow

I am in the dirt
it is in me
fingernails eyebrows forehead
I cannot tell if I am digging in or out

at dinnertime
my daughter comes out
with a trowel a watering can
a pack of seeds from the feedstore rack

I open a furrow in the mud
shake out some feathery seeds
spread the earth over them
she thanks me for the start

I go back to the shovelling
dream my own funeral
wrinkled wineskin wrapped in heavy sheets
stones on my eyes

no important landowner
I cannot keep up with the weeds

across the lawn
she jabs the earth with the trowel
makes holes delicate as Belgian eyelet
tucks the seeds asleep in their lumpy beds

each shovel moves me closer to heavy clay

—Shael Herman

Ramón El Conejo

by Natalie L. M. Petesch

Dawn, Ramón felt, was perhaps not the best time to get a hitch, since in the unfolding darkness, curled and echoing as a conch, a figure as small as he was, with what must appear to be a rucksack on his back could scarcely impress the speeding tourists from Laredo. Yet he was glad he had worked all night as usual, and had finished out the week at *La Hoja Verde*—collecting the three dollars pay which would, if necessary, buy him a bus ticket to San Antonio. By the time his mother and his stepfather had realized that he was missing, he would be nearly to Miami. He only hoped that his disappearance would cause his stepfather much trouble with the law on the American side of the bridge—though whatever they did to that *cabrón* would not be enough: it could never erase those weeks and months of humiliation, the foul names boiling like lava in Ramón's memory—nor the brutal mark of the boot heel in his back. When he had got rich as a waiter in Miami, Ramón resolved, he would return to Mexico, kill his stepfather, and rescue his little brother Mauricio.

Except for the thought of his mother's grief, he could relax and enjoy in detail his triumphant departure from Nuevo Laredo: how for the last time he had thrown the crudely starched waiter's uniform of *La Hoja Verde* into the laundry bin, then had taken a thick crayon and had scribbled into illegibility those words in the men's room which had mocked him for two years:

*Puercos y perros
Mean por los suelos*

Then he had carefully rolled his own father's cape, the *muleta* of the bullfight, with its leathery congealment of his father's blood still mingled with that of the bull which had killed him, so that the black shroud of satin with its sanctifying stain lay rolled inward, while the brave crimson which had challenged the bull now lay shining on Ramón's back: a signal of courage in the mist of morning darkness fleeing before the first light of the sun.

As he bent toward the highway, he twisted his body into a scythe and raised his thumb into an imploring signal. A couple of returning tourists whipped by, their yellow

SANBORN'S INSURANCE stickers flashing victoriously, like pennants. . . . Soon, he indulged himself in the reflection, his mother would be knocking at the door of every cousin in Laredo. "Have you see my Ramón, my little rabbit?" she would say. "He slept not to his home last night. Last pay night Aguijón took away from him again the three dollars. 'He eats here, let him pay: is he a pimp to live on his mother's work?' Aguijón said. So my *conejo* jumped and kicked him right here—*los hombres temen mucho sus cojones, tu sabes*—an' I thought sure Aguijón was goin' beat him to deat' for that, *el pobrecito*." . . . Ramón allowed the illusion of his mother's voice to lull him, echoing in his consciousness like a brook followed by the quick chirrup of a bird bathing. . . . But he knew his thoughts were not true ones: *la madre* never pitied him; rather, she had always seemed to fear pity as though it were a form of spiritual bankruptcy, like drunkenness or gambling: the more a man used it, the more he needed it. Nevertheless, he enjoyed the image he had created more than reality, as one enjoyed the marvels of mescal; and he would have gone on weaving *la madre's* odyssey into endless epics of love rewarded, except that he was reminded by the slashing of gears as a van crested the hill that here was a chance for the long hitch.

The crunch of the truck spewing gravel as it came to a halt before him made him feel like a hero; he stood transfixed by a sense of his own power, marveling at what he had wrought: the truck's thickly groined tires, raised like relief maps, had stopped level with Ramón's eyes; its fog lights still burned watchfully in the waning light; on either side glared restive warning lights, red and lethal as the eye of a bull; and within the cowl of the truck sat the hunched figure of the driver, staring sightlessly down at him from behind a green spread of sunglasses, wide as a mask across his temples.

Ramón said a hurried, breathless prayer as he stood by the opened door.

"Climb up. I'm goin' straight through to San Antone with this here load. Been ridin' all night. Think you might could keep us awake till we get there?"

That was all there was to it. Ramón was to fire the consciousness of the machine with a wakeful din while the driver sat immobile, a robot rooted to his leather seat cushion, his arms

on the steering wheels like mountain cacti—club-shaped, thick, spiny and bursting with strong juice: the sun-bleached hairs stood up in porcine hackles. . . . The truck now roared through unresisting lateral space. . . . “No Riders Allowed,” Ramón read on the door, and at once pitched his voice to a rising strophe of gratitude.

For more than two hours he blew his lungs out, his mouth dry and unbreakfasted; it was a strange kind of torture based on prestige and a sense of honor: without his voice flailing the wind, the oversized toy at his side would tremble, and with a final click-click, counterclockwise, spin into a silent sleep. Suddenly the machine stopped.

“They got a river here. The Frío. Great for bustin’ you in the eyes with a cold bath. I’m gonna have me a swim in ’er. To Ramón’s astonishment the mammoth-haired robot began to strew his clothes around like a madman, wrenching himself loose from the wet undershirt gummed to his skin like tar. For stunned seconds he watched as a bolt of flesh torpedoed the sunlit water, then surfaced, snorting and blowing a spume of water. Then again the barrelled curve of the back sluiced through the waters, turned suddenly with piscine ease and rested its arms oarlike on the surface; motionless the body floated in the sunlight, the eyes closed in stilled absorption: a buddha.

Gaining courage by the fact that the floating body really ignored him, Ramón hid behind a tapestried willow branch dipping in the riverbank, then plunged into the cool, gently-crescented waves. The water charged at his skin, flayed him with its ice, stripped him of identity: while at the same time his warm blood rushed to the surface to meet and merge with its primordial element. It filled him with a sense of having already accomplished great things to think that this water, perhaps, would go all the way to the sea—starting here with this river, dipping into an estuary at the Nueces River, and so on into a surging flood outside Corpus Christi and the Gulf. *El Frío*: the Cold One.

He dried himself with his T shirt, which he noted had begun to thresh small holes under the arms. Then he lay on the river bank and waited for the driver to dress. . . . His brain rang with the cicadas teasing and burring in the sage around him; with his senses he absorbed the world: the pure white yucca blossoms and the wombly splash of red gillias, the lissome swoop of the willow branch, all fretted and whirled by an ecstasy of birds. Across the river a lonely gnarled manzanita reared its scuffy black head to the sky.

The intensity of the morning blurred his vision—it was like an eclipse of pain; and he was sure that in all his life he had never been so happy.

Nevertheless, he tried to be greedy about it, to point out to himself that if this patch of earth brought such wonder, what must Miami be? . . .

He was somber and silent as the now wakeful driver revved the motor to a steady roar, as if on an endless elevator climb: they proceeded the short distance to San Antonio in silence.

When they hit the outskirts of San Antonio, the driver asked him where he wanted to get off. Ramón looked around desperately. He wanted to appear as if he knew the city at least well enough to know where to get off. But he could think of only one or two places. . . .

“Just by the Alamo, it’d be a’right. I gotta lot of places to go first.”

“Don’t want to drive this big load through the middle of town. Look, whyn’t you just get out right along here—hop one of them buses into town, they go along Espada Road.”

The driver stopped in front of a local cemetery, very neglected and rambling. Ramón would have protested; he had a superstitious fear of burial grounds, but with a conscious rise of valor, he leaped from the truck onto the cracked earth. Evidently it had not rained here in a long while. . . . A network of puffy-headed red ants, looking like a form of future life which was to survive man’s extinction, rushed around sending furious messages of invasion. Ramón stamped his feet, shaking them from his sneakers; he could remember how in *la madre’s* chicken house, they could pick a piece of chicken clean in a few hours, then perforate and atomize the bones.

With a startling belch, the truck jerked forward; the green-glassed driver nodded from the rear view mirror and was gone.

Ramón’s situation depressed him; he saw no indication that this was a bus stop. The scraggly cemetery, scattered with sage and an occasional mesquite tree might have been in the middle of a Mexican prairie for all he knew; but a black American car glittering with chrome in the summer sunlight cheered him by its spectacle of efficiency and its apparent geographical sense. He began walking in the same direction. The cemetery seemed endless; however, it abutted suddenly on the stone stilts of a dun-colored house in front of which a clothesline flurried signs of inescapable life: a cotton shirt, diapers with round holes through which scraps of sunlight oddly capered, a pair of bright red woman’s panties—strangely unrecked and shameless in the early light. There was no other sign of life in the morning silence: the clothesline with its crude effigies fluttered across the earth filled in turn with its dead; it waved, it fluttered; it struggled to move, and subsided.

Ramón knocked at the door, hoping to get directions and perhaps breakfast: his stomach felt like cracked glass. A Mexican woman, incredibly uncombed, came out, looking at him with eyes still puffy with white scars of sleep; but her voice was charged with a strangely garish and cheerful energy. She pointed in the direction the black car had taken.

“You goin’ fishin’? Need worms?” She showed Ramón their sign, making a cannon of her fist from out of which she shot her index finger. WORMS: FOR BAIT. The sign was meaningless to him. “Here, I’ll give you some *free*, give me good luck—start the day with a blessing’. ‘Give somethin’ away: have good-luck today!’” she chimed. She thrust a small can, Hunt’s Tomatoes, into his hands, and quickly shut him out.

Ramón hurried away from the woman whom he thought of as a madwoman, a *loca*; he was consoling himself, however, with the thought that at least she had offered him food, when he raised the jagged lid of the can and saw the squirming, writhing clot of worms.

“*Dios mio!*” he breathed, his heart stopping with horror. There was something diabolical, sacrilegious about it—was the woman a *bruja*, a witch, living on the nearby human flesh? He could imagine her suddenly, with that wild clutch of hair, late at night, digging, digging. . . . for the worms which toiled at the bottom of her necrophilia.

He threw the can with all his strength; he heard it hit the side of a tombstone, then roll in the sandy earth. He stood by the side of the road; the glass in his stomach heaved and cracked, but fortunately he had had no breakfast. . . . It would have been an unlucky way to begin his first day of freedom,

he thought. With the patience of certainty, a cleansing ritual to rid himself of the ill effects of this brief encounter with doom, he began to tell his rosary beads, feeling a sweet swell of gratitude toward his God for having furnished in His foresight, such an infallible restorative. For good measure he lightly tapped the St. Christopher medal inside his T shirt, and felt himself again in complete control of his fate.

The bus did come, finally, and he sat down in its fantastical coolness; he found that his experience had swathed him in perspiration; he shivered, but the air-conditioning which wafted around his feet felt good, and he removed his sneakers, allowing the jets of air to tingle his toes. He was just becoming accustomed to this miraculous inversion of temperatures—winter in July—when the bus had stopped, everyone got off, and Ramón stood barefoot in the streets of downtown San Antonio.

Dazzled by the sunlight and the traffic he stood in the street a moment, uncertain where to go, when to his immense delight he saw a familiar sign: Mexican Tourism; he crossed the street and looked into the window as if it were an outpost from Home. Inside, he could see an elderly lady with carefully screwed curls dilating her forehead, sitting at a large desk; another American woman sat in a chair beside the desk, a baby on one arm, a small blue and white canvas bag in the other, labelled PAN AM. The floor was what magnetized Ramón: polished as the human eye it lay in tessellated squares, a dark pool of reflected light, surely as cool to the bare feet as the river Frío. In the very center of the polished redwood wall had been laid a mosaic of the Holy Family, a gleaming rondure of semi-precious stones: the blue eyes of the baby Jesus were made of sharp slices of sapphire; His eyes, one realized, were meant to pierce the Darkness, nothing was to remain hidden to Him. . . . The ascendancy of the Christ child, and the mystic glow emanating from the floor made the place a paradise. For was it not as Father Sebastian had told him was described in the *Book of Revelations*: "In Heaven the floor is laid with diamonds, real diamonds; their brightness is blinding; it is all light, but still cool, very cool, and you walk your way along this path of diamonds till you see Jesus. . . ."

The sight of the Infant Jesus reminded him that he wished to offer up a long prayer before he caught the train to Miami. Opposite the tourist office was the place the bus driver had called out, St. Anthony's: was not St. Anthony one of the earliest of Catholic saints? Its proximity was surely a good omen. . . . He started for the corner, so as to cross, this time, with the traffic light.

He paused at Travis and St. Mary's, feeling mildly edified by this posting of holy names by the wayside, like the Stations of the Cross. A city saturated with holy relics: he knew people who had brought home splinters from the San José mission, and had performed miracles with them. . . . His problem now was so simple that he flushed with shame. He could not find the doors to what he had thought was a church—and stood with amazement as there passed in front of him on the sidewalk, a huge black car, as long, it seemed, as a mule team and wagon, driving straight into the hallowed vault of this building. Ramón could see, just ahead of it, dozens of other cars, honking, idling, pushing slowly but aggressively forward, shouldering their way through the crowd. The rear of the car was in the street; he wished he could touch its shiny flank, graceful and

silent as a cropping horse, but he dared not. Instead, he walked around it, nearly four feet into the street where the sloping rear panel had stretched itself.

He stood for a moment staring into the faces of the people driving into St. Anthony's; he gazed at them with an almost religious awe, as though they were white Spanish Gods, bringing arms and horses and commerce and misery to his people; but they did not notice him. They were relaxed; blue-haired, black-hatted, as white and clean as boiled rice. They spoke to each other gently; there was no noise within the automobile, one could see that, except for their voices; the blue windows held out the sun, sealed in the cold air. Ramón saw a hand, the color of burnt hay, like his own, adjust the air conditioner to the new cool of the garage, and for a split-second Ramón gazed into the eyes of the chauffeur, brown eye to brown eye, eyes of my people—and there was an exchange, an understanding between them, silent and subterranean, like the soundless explosion of rifles in a dream. . . . Ramón, stunned by the intensity of this look, stood alone on St. Mary's.

He saw at once that St. Anthony's was not, after all, a church, and he laughed at himself, though troubled by his sacrilegious error as he hopped through the door, a door sliced like a giant grapefruit into four equal parts, spinning on its axis.

He stood uncertainly in the lobby of St. Anthony's, his sneakers around his neck, his bare feet upon the red carpet; his eyes clouded with shame when he saw he had left two sooty footprints, so small they reminded him of his little brother Mauricio's toes. He could scarcely believe that it was he, Ramón, a grown boy, who had thus dirtied the carpet: when the dapper brass-buttoned desk clerk raised his plucked eyebrows at him, it made him feel like a dog. *Puercos y perros*. . . . With an illumination of memory, as of a sign in Braille raised by the heat of shame to living words, he remembered something Father Sebastian had read to him in English: "'Juárez could not forgive me'" Santa Anna said, "'because he had waited on me at table at Oaxaca in 1829 with his feet bare on the floor.'" The great Juárez, too, had run away when he was twelve—and like Juárez he, too, stood now shivering with shame, his feet bare on the floor, and expecting the brass-buttoned desk clerk to throw him into the street. . . . As fast as he could Ramón slipped into his sneakers, tied the rotting laces into a knot; then he felt respectable: he cultivated a slow dignified stroll, trying to look as if he were waiting for someone. He even sat in one of the green leather chairs with its winged bronzed back soaring above his head, its graceful concavity to his back; he put his head back on the brass-nailed trimming: not very comfortable, but *caramba*, it was cool against the skin. As he slid off suddenly, violently, his own wet skin made an inadvertent rasping sound against the leather; so that again Ramón stood frozen with shame, involuntarily shaking his head in denial and going through the comedy of repeating the sound on purpose so that the elevator boy would see how he had accidentally made the noise with his bare skin.

But he became at once indifferent to the judgments of the elevator boy as his eyes fell on a beautiful bronze statue of a woman (the sign said *Roman* and he was glad it had been no Mexican *mala hembra* who had posed for it) with one exquisite breast exposed while with the left hand she held up a lamp as bright as the sun. Her breast was round and high and looked soft to the touch as the inside of a melon;

but it would never have occurred to Ramón to touch it: he knew that though she was nearly naked it was nevertheless a thing of beauty—as when *la madre* exposed the spurting curve of her breast to Mauricio—and not to be profaned by inquisitive hands.

Ah, how he wished, though, that he might take one long gliding run on the red carpet, but he dared not; the faint nervous nausea of his stomach reminded him that the excitement of the beautiful place had not fed him. He had begun to drag his sneakers slowly along the carpet toward the incredibly symmetrical radii of the door when he noticed a pair of vases taller than himself—surely the most beautiful urns in the world. Father Sebastian had once told him that in the days of Rome just such urns were filled with rose petals, or even with one's own tears and preserved: the memory of one's grief distilled to aromatic bliss.

He longed to look deep inside, and raised himself on tiptoe, clinging to the lip of the vase for balance, and peered into the darkness. He whispered into it, his susurrant breath returned to him like a dead voice from out of the past; he tried to make a tear, so that like the ancients, his sorrow would be sanctified forever. But he felt no grief, only ecstasy; so instead, with his tongue he scooped up a small bubble of saliva from the soft of his cheeks and dropped it with a tiny *plink* into the bottom of the vase.

It was for this that the hotel clerk threw him out. That was all right—he had to do that, Ramón realized, and felt neither fear nor humiliation for the rude ejection: he had reached the point where he could feel only hunger. So he quickly adjusted his manly pride by inhaling a robust whack of air and raced at top speed for several blocks, in a wild exuberance of freedom. He stopped short at the river, and leaned most of his small body over one of San Antonio's myriad bridges. There, on the opposite side of the river, was a Chinese restaurant. Calm and commercial, a Mexican boy travestied an Oriental waiter in white jacket and silk flowered Bermudas. On the near side, immediately under him lay stretched along the turbid river *La Casa Mía* Fine Mexican Food.

La Casa Mía—the name attracted him, made a spasm of violent homesickness in his belly: he could hear his mother calling him and Mauricio, "*Vengan hijos a la casa, a comer.*" . . . Almost hopping with delight Ramón descended the granite stairs of the bridge and sat down at one of the tables inlaid with mosaic. Beside him were round tables rooted to the floor by a single stone base, and on the wide diameters of their surfaces, Aztec gods, birds, Zodiacs, Virgins, had been wrought in mosaic. From where he sat perched in his iron chair, he could see on the table next to him the hundred eyes of a peacock's tail, glinting in the sun; piece by piece it had been created, by tireless hands for whom each dainty piece meant a tenth of a peso.

A young couple sat down opposite Ramón: a blonde-haired girl with bangs like a scythe across her forehead smiled at him tenderly, glancing down at his tongueless shoes. The waiter came, hesitated, looked around helplessly, grinned at the blond girl, who was nodding meaningfully. "So O.K. *niño*, you want tortillas, we got 'em, plenny of 'em. *Con mantequilla*," he added in the tone of a man describing a Christmas tree; and had vanished before Ramón could protest against the butter; it would cost too much, especially in this place.

The waiter brought tortillas, toasted crackers and several

mounds of butter; from the table next to him where the beautiful blonde-haired angel was still smiling at Ramón, the waiter transferred more crackers and a soft drink which *el angel* pushed into his hand. Ramón devoured this rapidly, and left a five cent tip.

He was about to leave when blind tears stung his eyes, and he realized with a shock that they had simply sprung like a tincture dilating the surface at the very moment the Mariachi music had struck his ears: they were serenading the couple at the next table. While his stomach ecstatically digested the tortillas, he took in at every pore the elixir of sound: oh sweet Mexico, to find you on this river. . . .

The guitarrero was strumming a hat dance, his fingers working with casual perfection. The singing tenor, flamboyantly decked out as a *vaquero* (we had cowboys before they did, Ramón silently boasted), stood beside a beautiful Mexican lady adorned with traditional tiara and mantilla. . . . In fact, they looked more Mexican than any Mexicans Ramón had ever seen—his people, masquerading as themselves. Ramón left the restaurant feeling crushed. There had been something about the Mariachis which had reminded him of his father—the pale, yellow resoluteness of their faces, and the sweating back of the guitarrero, whose silk shirt had clung to him in a wet, arrowlike wound, like Papa's shirt at the *corrida*. . . . He was trying, not rationally, but with a leap of personal apprehension to grasp the relationship between those two orbiting wounds of sweat; thus he hardly noticed that he had taken over an hour, as he strolled up St. Mary's Street, to find a church, and even then he did not look at the name—it sufficed for him that he saw two nuns emerging in black robes, their heavy crucifixes hanging at their sides.

As he opened the door and stood in the transept of the church the cool beatified air, exempt from earthly heats, swept around him. He dipped his fingers into the holy water, glad his hands had been cleansed by *El Frío*; then he advanced to the Communion rail where he knelt and offered up a fervent prayer for courage in the new land.

At last he rose from his knees, satisfied that he had been heard. He sat down in one of the polished pews, lucent as amber, and feasted his eyes on God's earthly Temple: on the blue velvet altar cloth with the chastened glow of the chalice and the softly breathing flames flickering like souls from out the red glasses, and beyond it all, above him, a cross of gold on which Christ hung in agony.

From the pocket of his jeans he pulled out the frayed train schedule he had kept hidden for months, ever since his stepfather had first slept at their house. He had studied the schedule many times, had supplemented his uncertain comprehension with patient inquiry darkly reticulated in the pockets of conversations till the information had returned to him repeated, axiomatic: take the Southern Pacific to New Orleans; switch for the Louisville-Nashville; watch out for railway guards and queers. His head nodded over the long-familiar schedule, and while the filtered light from the mullioned window rained silence, he dozed. . . . When he awoke, he was in terror a moment, not knowing how long he had slept; so he jumped to his feet and began running, running as fast as he could, spurred by the vision of vanishing freight cars. He ran, sweating with fear and speed, the entire two blocks to Commerce Street, where at the railway yard, he stopped.

Fortunately he had not missed his train; that would indeed

have been a bad omen. What remained now was merely to find a place to wait, so that when the train approached and the railway guards flew their lanterns of consent, he too would fly, silent as the hawk, and descending upon the box car with a swift swoop of arm and limb, would lift himself into the car and be—free.

When the train came at last, it proved to be interminably long—freight after freight of cotton, lumber, oil products, and Texas beef—freshly slaughtered, flash-frozen, to be made into steaks worthy of a nation of conquerors. The thought of steak made his stomach rage suddenly with hunger; but he had no time to think of his stomach now; for he must be watching, watching, for the moment when the flares descended and the cars bumping together in their blind haste would begin to move forward. Now the railroad guard had evidently raised the gate at the outer end of the station; for the train jerked, splattered, steamed like the ejaculation of a bull, and began to move—one car following another like some thundering herd hard behind its leader.

The noise was terrifying, but even more terrifying was the possibility that this controlled acceleration of a miracle might vanish without him. . . . So he leaped . . . and the roar and motion of the cars was like an earthquake, in the midst of which he clung, clung to the opened door, till a momentary stalled jerk of the boxcar allowed him to pull his legs up; and he let go. He was flung with a lurch into deep sawdust, for which his brain flashed a marveling wink of admiration as the shavings cushioned his fall. The boxcar roared on, and he found himself alone, triumphant, looking outward from where he lay on the floor.

Keeping his head out of sight, he gazed on the city from his vantage point. The usual railroad outskirts pricked his vision, kaleidoscopic and searingly familiar as they sped by, ugly shack upon ugly shack, like his very own street, spotted here and there with geranium pots: a huge scab covering the wound of the City, healed now and then with a concentric beauty and health only to break open from time to time in suppurating disease as they sped away from the festering little homes and ruts of streets out into the infinity of Texasland, a land as wide as the Salt Sea. . . .

When they were out on the open road, Ramón felt at last protected against vagrant eyes that might wish to take over his squatters' rights. . . . Stacked on one side of the car were a single bushel basket, and several empty pinewood boxes with various labels: Texas Peaches, Buford's Huisache Honey, 100% Pure, and Sam Slaughter's Packing House: Fresh Frozen Produce. He was kneeling in the sawdust, looking for any stray bits of food that might have been set adrift in the boxes when he heard the cars come to a screeching stop. Without a second's hesitation, Ramón rolled himself like a pill bug under the empty peach basket and lay there without breathing while he listened to grunts, groans, heaves and what seemed to be the rolling wheels of a dollie. After about twenty minutes (which felt infinitely longer) the marching and dragging subsided and darkness shrouded the staves of his basket. He was safe; for the first time in his life his small unfleshed body had been an asset; he squatted for a moment on his haunches, then stood up, chilled with relief, his hands cold from the prolonged fear. . . .

On their way out they had slammed the doors to, all the way, and locked them, and in the semi-gloom he could not

at first make out what food his benefactors had left him; but as he raised his head he collided with the flayed and dangling limbs of a cow, evidently so recently killed that it had not yet begun to smell dead; as he stood beneath it a drop of blood, like a raindrop, fell to the sawdust. Such was the inert company they had brought to share his vault: he saw them clearly now, hanging from hooks in the ceiling on which were skewered the delicacies of edible flesh: hams and shoulders and legs of mutton and carcasses of beef; there were even two or three blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked heads of porkers spiked to the side walls like condemned victims beside a medieval drawbridge. A whole hennery of fowl lined the wall, and a rabbit, which for some reason had not yet been skinned. It hung head down, slender-footed paws nailed to an iron tree, its delicate nostrils and fine whiskers still alert with fear. The other animals, stripped of their deep cow-eyes and bleating tones, were mere anonymous flesh meant to renew and construct the body and mind of man; but the rabbit's fur was still dappled grey, stippled with the colors of the prairie, dogwood blossom and cenizo-colored leaf. . . . Ramón felt suddenly a great desolation and wished they had left the door open for him so that he could stare out at the roiling escarpments of color—at the orange clay and blue gentians and purple paint brushes and yellow star grass and white shreds of thistle, so that he might close his mind to what seemed to him the still echoing shriek of the slain animals, their not even memorable grief—the mere pitiless pain of the charnel house.

He had found a softly rotting peach, but in spite of his hunger, he could not eat it. The grizzly spectacle had chilled him to the bone; he realized suddenly, that his teeth were clenched and chattering, though he could feel drops of nervous perspiration congeal under his thinly woven T shirt. He shivered and tried the door, eager for the now-fading sunlight, but as he had suspected, it was immovable. If only there were a window through which he could watch the moonlight and stars during his all-night vigil across the Louisiana delta: twelve hours before their arrival in New Orleans, and he would not once see the glory of the heavens.

More practically, he murmured to himself, if there were a window he could dry his perspiration, hold back this progressive chill: was he getting a fever, hot and cold as his body seemed to be? He unrolled his father's cape and enveloped himself in it, with the black side, the side with Papa's blood close to his heart; but still his teeth did not cease to chatter; his hands remained stiff and cold. It was odd, too, that the *muleta* had no smell; almost always, and especially on hot, humid days, the smell of the dust and blood of doomed bull and father would pervade his nostrils; but now he could smell nothing. He breathed only the icy fumes of his own nostrils; his breath made a cottonlike burr which eased away from him, refusing to cohere.

As he sat on the sawdust floor, shivering and peering longingly at the sharp blade of light slitting the throaty darkness of the door, he became aware of a humming in his ears, a bedtime murmuring as if *la madre* rocked him, cunningly, to sleep. Was it the sound of the wind—or the sound of a motor? He rose, gasping painfully at the cold which now burned at his chest like dry ice—he felt he would not be able to endure it, and he began whimpering softly to himself, clutching his rosary in rigid hands: *oh hace frío, oh god, oh Jesús, hace frío.*

He remembered suddenly that moving about might keep him warm, and he began, not walking but hopping—his left leg had scraped against the side of the boxcar and now was numb with pain—hopping to and fro beneath the contorted limbs of the friable bodies. He was still stubbornly hobbling back and forth in the box car when with a loud shriek the train began to cross a trestle and threw him against the wall. His hands clutched the wall in amazement: it was lined with coils and covered with a light, damp frost, like rail tracks in mid-winter; and his fingers pulled away with an icy burn.

In despair he threw himself down on the sawdust-covered floor, sobbing. *Oh Jesús help me*, he prayed with blue lips that made no sound as he moved them; but as the unarticulated prayer sounded in his heart, he clutched the sawdust which oozed through his fingers like sand: like sand that one could burrow in and be warm. With a sudden rush of energy, he

moved all the hanging bodies to one side of the car, and with his arms and shoulders began shoving the sawdust into a corner of the car. The floor had been liberally covered with sawdust, and he murmured little orisons of gratitude as he swept. And *oh Jesús mío*, how good it felt to crawl into it, submerged almost to the chest. Covered by the black and red cape and buried in the sawdust, he felt as content, almost, as when swimming in *El Frío*—when beneath him, sustaining his body, had reposed the infinite shales of immovable time, and above him, skittering across his naked chest like dragonflies, had darted the sunlight. . . . And as he had trusted then to the maternal, caressing rills of sunlight, he trusted now to the ooze and ebb of the blood of his body, the very treachery of whose congealment seemed to warm him as he slept, lifeless, his rosary in his rigid hand.

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THE FUTURE OF CHANCE

In the revolver's empty chamber
Maps of blood and
Bone
Spread on a rough table.

In a hat
One thousand names.

Transparent,
Laid one on the other

Like a clock shaken together
In a sack

The topography
Of some distant ticking

With its hollows
With its trigger curve

Like the waists of beautiful women.

—Thomas Johnson

THREE POETS

I

The Maverick

Down side streets of nowhere,
in time-out-of-joints,
he commits rotgut hara-kiri
with tedious flourishes.
Stay him with busthead and Beethoven,
comfort him with any willing broad:
for he is sick of their
Authorized Version of Life
enshrined on coffee tables,
and he vomits bloody contempt.
When the mixture's right,
and he turns his eyes just so,
he sees the moment
uncurl incipient fronds
that may (breathe gently)
coalesce to poem!

II

The Prize-winner

When the planned society
slips a little
and the advertisements
and THE END don't quite mesh,
the poet is allowed to drop a poem
into the space to tighten up things.
His credit card is good
anywhere on Route 66,
but some nights he wakes
out of a sweating dream of
having dropped a monkeywrench by mistake.

III

The Lady From the Poetry Society

Her rhinestone cliché,
in vogue at literary teas
of yesterday,
glitters obscenely amid
the artful cleavage of the present.

—John Allen Adams

WAITING

"you may find peace and tenderness
even in the center of the fiery winds."

Dudley Randall, Sanctuary

What if sound ceased
and waves of air
no longer volatile
suddenly became oceans
raging raging
a giant, moving wall

It is Spring now: March
and the buds of leaves rush into form
The immanence of season
vaporizes thought
Mind has hardly time
to space itself

I am unsettled by silence
It is an echo
splitting the brain
penetrating hollows of eyes
creeping creeping

Light frames itself around
the evening The sun
mirrors in waters
Winds tremble in the bayous
rustling the stillness
polarizing edges of years

If I were wiser
I would grow horns—
antennas, rather
and grope my way to the river
where living things
spin spin
with the tide

A voice in me whispers:
Structure the sunlight
form and pattern
Hold hands with the beauty
of Spring rain

I run with directed madness
into the green wild wood

waiting for something to happen
for trees to drop into holes
or sky to swallow tips of tongue
dancing on fire

—Pinkie Gordon Lane

SPRING

There is noise outside
my window:
the kids are playing ball.
One slithers across the grass
yells like a cowboy.

Spring again
and the uncertain weather
brings each dawn
breaking new season.

Long before daybreak
I lie like a burst apple.
I straddle the night
and when the light comes
I find a voice
in the dark hollow
of bones
my belly a cone's shell
my breasts pin cushions
my ass the bride of my pillow.

Who turns the yellow dawn
to fire—
the sky a ring of striped flame
warming my body to ice? My desire
for you a wind's draft
sweeping past the gray
and clotted silence of
thought
lost and then found in the new day's
beginning.

—Pinkie Gordon Lane

Reviews

Faulkner, A Biography, by Joseph Blotner, Random House, two volumes, boxed, 1846 pp., plus 411 pp. of preface, notes, and index, \$25.00.

If you yearn for a story of thrilling adventure, or a description of the most amusing character ever known, or a psychiatric analysis of a tortured mind, or a socio-historical investigation of Southern customs and mores, or a brilliantly penetrating critical study of modern literature, Blotner's *Faulkner* is not for your hammock leisure. It is not a hammock book at all, unless you have a heavy-duty hammock. It is a heavy book in every sense of the word.

My list of the things it is not is not altogether facetious or fanciful. Some of its early reviewers have complained about its not being some of these very things. Heaven knows why they expected, if they really did, that it would or should be. One would think that a person of average intelligence, picking up a two-volume work weighing eight pounds or so, which plainly calls itself "A Biography" and nothing else, would expect to find just about what you will find if you pick up this book.

There has been no general shortage of adventure stories, character descriptions, psychiatric analyses, socio-historical investigations, and studies in literary criticism. We have even had critical studies of Faulkner. What the Faulkner industry has not produced until now is a detailed, full-length biography. The psychiatric, socio-historical, and critical studies which the industry has produced have always been hampered by lack of available biographical information and by the fact that what little we had was fragmentary, scattered, and often unreliable.

There were excellent reasons for that. Faulkner was savagely jealous of his privacy, and he was seldom capable of telling a story, about himself or anyone else, which was not in some degree fictional. Once he told the truth, when he quoted himself as calling himself, in *Mosquitoes*, "a liar by profession"; elsewhere his statements are not to be taken without some grains of allowance. The result, for which he would probably make no apology, is that he set a hard row for biographers to hoe. So it is not surprising that, although scholars and critics of Faulkner have been many, his biographers have been few. Only two, that I know of, have come out publicly with intent to write the whole life. The first to begin was Carvel Collins, who was superbly equipped for the job and who has produced several of the best biographical fragments, along with some of the most brilliant literary criticism, so far. But, for reasons which eventually may appear, his full-length account has not yet seen the light of print.

The first complete biography is the one now issued by Random House and written by Joseph L. Blotner, Professor of English at the University of Michigan, formerly at the University of North Carolina and before that at the University of Virginia, where he helped to arrange

Faulkner's classroom interviews and edit transcripts of them for publication. Later he compiled a catalogue of the books Faulkner owned at the time of his death, and began the eleven-year labor of research and writing that has led to publication of the biography. He probably had fun along the way; he certainly visited some interesting places and met some interesting people. He also did a great deal of hard, conscientious work, which you may feel has not been sufficiently concealed in the result. I would rather have it done and shown than not done at all. If and when Collins publishes, we will have a standard of comparison, and I hope it may come soon. Until then, Blotner has the only game in town, and we had better make the best of him. If you have been waiting twenty years for a full and reasonably reliable account of Faulkner's life, and if you have given up holding your breath for Collins, and if you have been too lazy to undertake the job yourself, as I have, then Blotner's is not only the book for you, it is the answer to a persistent prayer. If you are or aspire to be a systematic reader, scholar, or critic of Faulkner, you will find it indispensable.

One fault has to be conceded. As previous reviewers have rightly remarked, Blotner's style is poor. A reviewer should not go out of his way to pick nits, but what about elephants such as "an eighteen-year-old professor's daughter" (p. 774), "two or three near-escapes from death" (p. 835), and "a vastly smaller return" (p. 1588)? The same insensitivity to language may be what makes Blotner also an unreliable reader of Faulkner's texts. Granted that he has ample company among the would-be scholars and critics, still he need not have said, for example, that Ike McCaslin in *Go Down, Moses* is "father to half the county" (p. 1091) when Faulkner said in the first paragraph of the novel that Ike is "uncle to half a county and father to no one"; that is an error that could not have been made by anyone who understood the book. Reviewers who complain that Blotner did not indulge in enough literary criticism are less well advised than Blotner was when he decided to stop where he did.

In spite of these complaints, my feeling as I went through Blotner's book has been like that of an explorer who has traveled long and often in a region of complex geography in which important landmarks have always been obscured by fog and mist, and who now for the first time sees the territory clear and whole. The benefit is not only that countless details of Faulkner's life and career as a writer are newly visible, important as that is. A more impressive effect is that several major and central facts, of which I at least had been only vaguely and tentatively aware, and which I had in some ways misjudged, are finally out in the open where they can be regarded, weighed, understood, and properly appreciated.

The most impressive of these to me is the frequency, severity, and extent of the damage Faulkner did himself by his excessive drinking. I knew, of course, that he drank; I knew that he went on occasional

benders; I knew, or I had been aware of rumors, that he was under medical treatment after one such bender when he died. I had suspected, mistakenly it now appears, that alcohol poisoning might have been a direct or immediate cause of his death. The evidence Blotner presents makes me realize that for Faulkner drinking was never the harmless, if occasionally hangover-producing, form of relaxation we generally assume it to be. It was, from a much earlier age that I had even hypothetically supposed, a frequent, obsessive, uncontrolled, and apparently uncontrollable tendency to a rather thorough kind of self-destruction. I now believe that it destroyed a good part of Faulkner's talent, that is his capacity for sustained and coherent composition at a high level of quality and intensity, long before his death.

Another dissipation which Faulkner indulged at cost to his genius was his frequent and extended devotion to hack writing for the magazines and for Hollywood. In this matter, as in the matter of his early drinking, I had supposed that he suffered little or no severe harm; again Blotner's evidence convinces me that I was wrong. Like his mentor Balzac or his contemporary F. Scott Fitzgerald, he was almost as much addicted to financial self-destruction as he was to alcohol, or as Balzac was to women. Unfortunately, whereas Balzac's handiest resource was to write another novel, Fitzgerald and Faulkner were continually tempted to fall back on the *Saturday Evening Post* and the movies. Faulkner trapped himself under an incubus of a contract with Warner Brothers, which held him in virtual bondage, off and on, from 1941 to 1948, when, ironically, a payment from MGM for movie rights to *Intruder in the Dust* freed him. The sad thing is that Warner Brothers, with or without a contract, could not have enslaved him without his consent, and he was never really that much in need of money. He and his family could have survived without the wages of Hollywood, which could certainly have survived without him, and he might have done substantially more good writing if he had foregone the things that the Hollywood money bought: airplanes, real estate, boats, liquor, and horses.

Especially horses, one or more of which appear quite literally to have broken his back, causing persistent, chronic, severe physical pain which in turn aggravated his drinking problem. His reaction

showed a further symptom of his tendency to self-destruction: he would neither give up riding nor let his physicians give him adequate medical treatment for the repeated injuries he suffered. These dissipations tended to mutual reinforcement. The more money he spent, the more he was in pawn to Hollywood, the harder he drove himself in work and play, and the more he drank. None of it was good for his writing.

Here I begin to feel myself in some danger of being told to send a few barrels to the other generals. The dissipation side of the Faulkner picture, important though it is to our understanding of him and his work, and necessary though it is to a final judgment that should be as sympathetic as accurate, is only the negative aspect of an enormous achievement, which is infinitely more important and more difficult to comprehend. In the nature of things, Blotner contributes less definitively to our positive awareness of Faulkner's greatness, but what he does contribute is very substantial and helpful. It lies precisely in the modesty of his aim and in the meticulous if laborious thoroughness with which he doggedly carries it out. It consists, simply in principle but in practice with enormous elaboration, of the arrangement of as many facts about Faulkner's family background and personal life and work, in as nearly an absolute chronological order, as possible.

The positive revelations that result are to me less surprising but far more exciting than the negative disclosures. One of the more significant, in my view, is the extent to which Faulkner used the people, places, and events of his local environment as raw material for stories. The number of actual names of north Mississippi people that found their way into his fiction, including some of the ones that seem most symbolic, such as Hightower and Dewey Dell, is staggering. In Faulkner's best fiction, the Yoknapatawpha stories, almost nothing is fabricated out of whole cloth; almost everything is adapted, borrowed from real life, remembered. This fact helps, I think, to account for the density, verisimilitude, and consistency of the Yoknapatawpha legend, which is so astonishingly like the density and consistency of the real world. We had some notion of the extent of this infusion of reality before Blotner, but now, because of his concentration on the side of Faulkner's actual experience, it becomes immensely more visible, more knowable, and more clearly understandable.

Perspective

"Then what . . .?"

by Dawson Gaillard

The Shadow Knows, by David Madden, Louisiana State University Press, 186 pp., \$5.95. **In Love and Trouble**, by Alice Walker, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 138 pp., \$6.50. **Beasts of the Southern Wild and Other Stories**, by Doris Betts, Harper & Row, 192 pp., \$6.95.

The compulsion to tell, to bring some event to life in words, is the mark of a storyteller. Often in Southern letters, as in many of Faulkner's works, a living memory becomes familiar to its listeners, but never old, by telling and re-telling. In our own experience we can see a regional penchant for swapping such stories. In the midst of the June 1973 Watergate hearings, the following exchange was reported by my local newspaper:

During the legal argument with Gurney, Ervin said he was reminded of a story about a constituent who had visited the Watauga County courthouse in Boone, N.C.

Later the man was asked what had happened and he said, "Some of the lawyers were objecting and some of the lawyers were excepting and the costs were piling up."

That brought up Baker with a story from his own Tennessee.

A Scott County lawyer, Baker said, had been asked to defend a man who had just shot someone. The lawyer agreed to defend him and asked, "Did you kill him?"

"No, I just wounded him."

"Well, just remember," Baker quoted the lawyer, "He'll be an awfully hard witness against you."

Sen. Daniel K. Inouye, D-Hawaii, whose turn it was to question Dean, then began: "I regret I have no Hawaiian stories to tell."

Southerners have stories to tell, particularly stories with a regional flavor. Ever since Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and Robert D. Jacobs published their anthology of essays, *Southern Renaissance*, in 1953, critics of Southern literature have discussed the sense of place, the feeling of community that has produced and has pervaded Southern fiction. However, as Eudora Welty said in 1969, "Today the South is not the same to the eye as it was, and no longer can it be quite the same to the storyteller's memory; there are other reaches to the old perspectives that have opened to our searching minds. Place must be seen with Time walking on it" (*The Delta Review*, Nov.-Dec. 1969).

The old perspectives are physically changing, partly because of the bulldozer and the media. In "The Search for Southern Identity" from *The Burden of Southern History*, C. Vann Woodward sees so much change occurring in the South because of the bulldozer that he says the region is experiencing the Bulldozer Revolution. In 1962 John Steinbeck found other changes. In *Travels with Charley* he comments on changes occurring in regional speech because of the influences

Faulkner's best fiction is nevertheless purely fiction, and it comes to us at a level of artistic intensity and heightened awareness that only an utterly transformed reality can attain. Above and beyond the density it owes to the actual is added an enormous thickness of symbolic and emotional implication, with even more enormous reaches of unconscious depth and metaphysical reverberation. In these dimensions are mysteries that Blotner's light cannot dispel, but he still takes us part of the way, by showing how much Faulkner read and how sensitive he was to cultural subtleties in the air of his time. We may never know precisely why or how, by what demon of exigent demand, Faulkner was driven to transcend his rural origins, to absorb and assimilate such worlds of vicarious experience in books, music, and the graphic arts. The ultimate mystery is how he succeeded in mating what he had learned abstractly and vicariously from his reading with what he knew immediately, and concretely, and largely unconsciously from his personal experience. Either kind of knowledge alone was for Faulkner, as it probably is for any artist, inert, sterile, and uninteresting. The most fascinating questions for a teacher or critic, I would suggest, involve the ways by which the great artists bring these halves of their inspiration together and thereby bring their work into life, power, and beauty. Blotner does not deal directly with such questions.

But he succeeds as no writer on Faulkner has done before in helping us to arrive at a point where, if we want to answer such questions for ourselves, we can confront them with as good a chance of success as our own ability and training will permit. We no longer have the handicap of severe ignorance about the author's life to hold us back, undermine our confidence, or excuse our failure. Doubtless there will be corrections and additions made to Blotner's findings; no scholarly work is ever perfect or complete. There will, I hope and trust, be further biographical studies of various more or less specialized kinds. They will benefit, as critical studies will, from the spadework Blotner has done. Whatever happens, I strongly believe that we will always have good reasons to be glad that Blotner's contribution came along when it did.

Reviewed by Richard P. Adams

The Question of Flannery O'Connor, by Martha Stephens, Louisiana State University Press, 205 pp., \$8.50.

The latest volume of criticism to be released in the ever expanding series on the works of Flannery O'Connor is Martha Stephens' *The Question of Flannery O'Connor*. The question of the title is only indirectly the one raised by O'Connor; namely, how can the modern world fail to believe? Rather, as the book unfolds, it is clear that the question is basically one that Martha Stephens raises in behalf of the modern world, i.e., how can one enter emotionally into the works of a writer "possessed of so eccentric, at times so . . . repugnant a view of human life" (3)? The "question" of Flannery O'Connor for Martha Stephens, therefore, becomes the "problem" of appreciation blocked by disbelief. Stephens appeals ironically to Eliot's final resolution of the problem of "poetic assent" in which he felt that he could not "in practice wholly separate [his] poetic appreciation from [his] personal beliefs" (13). The irony of course rests in the fact that Stephens uses Eliot's principle to reject a world view that Eliot obviously accepted.

What Stephens does, therefore, is raise once again the perplexing question of art and belief in Flannery O'Connor. Her stance, however, is unique in the light of previous criticism. Of the major critics thus far only Miles Orvell in *Invisible Parade* (NOR 4:1) has treated the issue with the seriousness of Martha Stephens. The quantitative difference in their concern is that Orvell passes on to other considerations whereas Stephens makes this question the substance of her work; qualitatively they differ more drastically: Orvell follows the new critical line and divorces belief from art while Stephens, following Eliot's theory, effectively rejects the art that she considers tinged with O'Connor's "repugnant" world view. Her approach is not, however, as honestly heteronomous as was Eliot's, although the effect is the same. Stephens chooses the still rather nebulous literary category of "tone" as her justification for taking umbrage at O'Connor's "stubborn refusal to see any good, any beauty or dignity or meaning, in ordinary human life" (9). All too often, though, her hand is exposed. She clearly prefers a secular humanistic viewpoint to O'Connor's sacramental

of radio and television. He laments an even more serious change that will accompany the loss of regional accents: "For with local accent will disappear local tempo. The idioms, the figures of speech that make language rich and full of poetry of place and time must go. And in their place will be a national speech, wrapped and packaged, standard and tasteless." Standardization was also Flannery O'Connor's concern when she said,

The anguish that most of us have observed for sometime now has been caused not by the fact that the South is alienated from the rest of the country, but by the fact that it is not alienated enough, that every day we are getting more and more like the rest of the country, that we are being forced out not only of our many sins, but of our few virtues. ("The Fiction Writer and His Country" in *Mystery and Manners*)

But to return to the literature of the South and its anguish—Louise Cowan expressed a view in 1960 that was consistent with what many critics had been saying: "When we view modern Southern writing within the framework of its time, we should be struck by a remarkable distinction: in this whole body of literature there is little sign of that insistent theme of loneliness which has so noticeably marked the twentieth-century arts" (*The Georgia Review*). In the seventies, however, we can say no longer that loneliness as an insistent theme is absent from Southern literature. Loneliness, alienation, and separation are as pervasive in Southern literature as they are in much recent American fiction. Professor Mary Rohrberger made this point recently in a seminar held at the annual Madewood Festival in Thibodaux, Louisiana.

Three short-story collections illustrate what I find to be representative in Southern fiction of the 1970's: a balanced opposition between content and mode. Many of these stories do emphasize late twentieth-

century concerns with alienation and separation, the dissociation of individuals from each other and their land. But in many instances I also find what John Steinbeck called "local accent." The mode of expression, in contrast to the ostensible concerns, becomes a means to reunite or at least suggest the possibility of reuniting author and readers with Place in spite of Time's walking on it.

Many of David Madden's characters in *The Shadow Knows* (a National Council on the Arts selection) feel homeless and outcast. Ken McLain in "The World's One Breathing" returns home to recognize how unplaced he has always felt; Frank in "God Proud" helps his grandfather relocate, feeling more rootless than the old man who has been forced out of his home.

Change and separation are ever-present in the operations of the bulldozer. In "God Proud" it is menacing, pushing Gran'paw out of his home to make way for a highway so that tourists can view the way pioneers lived. He tells the government man that he still lives the pioneer's way: "We came to stay," and I told him I didn't have nothin' in mind but doin' just that . . . Of course, he cannot stay. The same necessity as a result of the bulldozer is evident in the first story of the collection, "Lone Riding," where the basement windows of old houses are "marked with a yellow X now for where the freeway's plowing through. . . ." In "The World's One Breathing," Ken McLain thinks that "now tractors and bulldozers are doing for him what he has been unable to do for himself."

The South in these stories is disappearing as tractors and bulldozers raze it, much like the bulldozers on a recent CBS presentation razed acres of MGM's movie sets. Perhaps David Madden is suggesting that the South we hold in our memories is a gigantic movie set, a loving memory, but no longer visible in everyday reality. Though he may suggest the staginess of our traditional views of the South, he also dramatizes the pain of discovery when joy and wonder clash with vicious reality as in "The Pale Horse of Fear," "Love Makes Nothing Happen," and "The Day the Flowers Came." In the latter story the

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humanism; in fact, she would not even be inclined to call it a humanism at all (pace David Eggenchwiler, *The Christian Humanism of Flannery O'Connor*). For Martha Stephens "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" is prototypical of the discord between comedy and seriousness in Flannery O'Connor. Dorothy Walters in *Flannery O'Connor* (NOR 4:1) allows the two to meld into the genre of tragicomedy; Martha Stephens places a "tonal barrier" between the two insofar as O'Connor's "unreasonable doctrine about human life" (145) finds its dramatic expression in this otherwise humorous story's abruptly serious conclusion.

That Stephens' ultimate norm for judgment is philosophical rather than aesthetic is clear in her treatment of the works. "The tonal problem in ['A Good Man Is Hard to Find']," she concedes, "is really a function of our difficulty with O'Connor's formidable doctrine" (35). *Wise Blood*, which Stephens calls variously the "queerest" of O'Connor's "queer books," a "wacky novel," and a "barren farce," achieves requisite compassion only in its last chapter where "there is a gradual but more and more perceptible and pleasurable mellowing of the spirit of the tale" (80). Stephens feels that the reaction "the reader constantly strives to achieve in O'Connor's books—a feeling for the humanity of the characters that transcends questions of conscious belief . . . —is exactly the kind of liberal feeling towards belief that O'Connor means to attack" (73-74). Stephens is obviously more successful here in identifying the precise attitude O'Connor attacks than she is in convincing us that she speaks for the typical modern reader. Conversely, *The Violent Bear It Away* begins with "the creation of one deeply engaging and vivid character" (142)—Mason Tarwater—and then deteriorates rapidly into another "adventure into the mystery of God's will for men" (104). The modern reader's concern here, Stephens insists, is "for the mystery and agony of life without belief, of life which must somehow be lived without the hope of finding final truth at all" (104). Although I would agree with Stephens about the agony of life without final truth, I regret that she has failed to distinguish between philosophical truth and the truth of faith, or simply between "truth" and "belief," to use her language. It is indeed presumptuous to imply that there are no modern readers who believe. Nevertheless, aside from this

exception to her reading of life as we live it, my principal objection to Stephens' method rests on the more demonstrable grounds that she has used a literary category as a mask for philosophical preference.

Stephens treats in detail only four of the short stories—"A Good Man Is Hard to Find," as I have said, to illustrate the precise nature of the question of tone; the other three—"A Circle in the Fire," "A Temple of the Holy Ghost," and "Parker's Back"—to specify what she considers typical of the "tonally successful" stories. This latter group of some "nine or ten nearly perfect stories"—including "Revelation," "Everything That Rises Must Converge," "Judgement Day," "The River," "The Artificial Nigger," and apparently also "A Late Encounter With the Enemy" (Stephens never really lists all nine or ten as such)—are all "tales which seem to have no quarrel to pick with the reader, where because consent to the truth of the experience portrayed is assumed, one might say, by the writer, it is easily granted by the reader," even though some of them have "Christian experience as their subject" (184). Nearly all of these "tonally successful" stories, Stephens concedes, "can accommodate—but the point is they do not really demand—thoroughgoing Christian interpretation" (184). Stephens' distinction between what the stories accommodate and what they demand, although apparently similar to Miles Orvell's statement about asking and demanding is nonetheless quite different. Orvell at least has granted the validity of O'Connor's religious question.

Where Martha Stephens' "tonal" optic allows her to see with Flannery O'Connor, she has added extraordinary freshness to our reading of at least three stories and portions of the two novels. It will be hard to surpass the sensitivity with which she leads us to an appreciation of the creative genius in O'Connor's portrait of Mason and her description of the exchange between Haze and Mrs. Flood. And although her philosophical perspective leads her to judge a substantial portion of O'Connor's oeuvre artistically unsuccessful, she has not like Josephine Hendin (NOR 3:4) used heteronomous norms to misinterpret the meaning of the works. In the final analysis, one regrets not so much the secular humanistic appraisal Stephens offers as the implication that hers is the contemporary reading.

Reviewed by John R. May, S.J.

Perspective . . . continued

slowly emerging awareness of the central character to the death of his family ends in an image much like the final scene in James Joyce's "Araby," an image that dramatizes the isolated state of the protagonist bereft of former illusions.

In *In Love and Trouble* (winner of the National Institute of Arts and Letters' Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Foundation Award), Alice Walker also dramatizes pain and isolation. In "Her Sweet Jerome," Mrs. Jerome Franklin Washington, who resembles Carson McCullers' Miss Amelia of *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, goes almost mad with loneliness as her husband comes home less and less. She searches the town to find the woman who is stealing "her sweet Jerome." Instead of a woman, a personal presence, however, she finds books entitled *Black Rage*, *Black Anger*, *Black Revenge* and then books with *revolution* in the titles. Though we join her in her anguished response to this discovery, she still must suffer alone.

In most of the stories in this collection, love leads to trouble, to suffering apart from others as in "Her Sweet Jerome," "The Child Who Favors Daughter," and "Strong Horse Tea." There are two stories, however, where love is a strong bond between people and creates a sense of place, of belonging. The loneliness among people is dispelled in "To Hell with Dying" (a story about a beloved old man named Mr. Sweet, for whom the narrator's story is a paean), and in "Everyday Use." In the latter story, Mama, the narrator, is awaiting with Maggie, her younger daughter, the arrival of her elder daughter, Dee, who has been living away from home. Dee arrives in a long dress and long, gold earrings. She is carrying a Polaroid, and Mama tells us, "She never takes a shot without making sure the house is included. When a cow comes nibbling around the edge of the yard she snaps it and the cow and Maggie and the house." Like the tourists in David Madden's "God Proud," Dee views her home as a bit of quaint history. But not Mama. And we are in Mama's head. It is with her that we sit serenely with Maggie and watch the dust of the departing car settle.

In content, Doris Betts' collection *Beasts of the Southern Wild* and

Other Stories (1974 nominee for a National Book Award) resembles *In Love and Trouble* and *The Shadow Knows*. Many of her people are alone, lonely, and helplessly aware of their inability to pull the pieces of time and place together. For example, in "Burning the Bed," Isabel resembles Kenneth McLain in Madden's "The World's One Breathing." Like Ken McLain, she has returned to her home to await a death. Her father is dying; her brother is dead. She does not feel in place in her home town, and when she calls Baltimore, she realizes that she is also without community there because her lover has taken another lover in her absence. The final sentence captures her painful isolation: "The long singing as emptiness rushed along the black highway, beside the asphalt road, by the rutted road, down the wires, to Isabel, across the state of Virginia, humming inland over the muddy yard, into the house and through her ear and into her brain, like that old tent peg the Hebrew woman nailed through the brain of Sisera when he took refuge in her tent."

In the dream-like story "Hitchhiker," Doris Betts captures the state of mind of a woman who feels isolate. The protagonist awakens after a party where she felt as disassociated from the party conversationalists as a "languid billiard ball" crossing and recrossing the room, "thumping" into clusters of people. On the day of the story she sees women hitchhikers, all in red, before she drives off the road and into the river to become a hitchhiker herself. In the last scene, standing in a boat, she "wavered to keep from falling overboard, threw out both arms, and yelled, and on both sides the towns and cities of the earth drove by."

In "Hitchhiker" and "Burning the Bed," loneliness is a central theme. In most of her stories, however, Doris Betts dramatizes the ambivalence of life, such as is tearfully expressed at the end of "Still Life With Fruit." The new mother's response to giving birth reveals her mixed feelings: "Something crawled under her skin, like the spider who webbed her eyelids tightening all lines. In both her eyes, the spider had spilled her hot, wet eggs—those on the right for bitterness, and

The Form Discovered: Essays on the Achievement of Andrew Lytle, ed. by M. E. Bradford, *The Mississippi Quarterly Series in Southern Literature*, University and College Press of Mississippi, 110 pp., \$5.95.

This book puts in hard covers a dozen essays on Andrew Lytle, ten of which have been previously published and eight of those in a 1970 issue of *The Mississippi Quarterly*. Justification for such an enterprise is presumably to give permanence and accessibility to a significant number of critical essays on a writer whose work has been surprisingly and regrettably neglected. It is the first book devoted exclusively to Lytle. Among its practical merits are a checklist of works by and about Lytle and an index, which distinguishes it from other collections of this sort.

M. E. Bradford explains in the preface that the aim of the volume is to focus attention on Lytle's fiction. There is an essay apiece on each of his four novels, his novella, and three of his most significant short stories. While they are primarily explications of individual works, some are more ambitious. One of the previously unpublished essays, Brewster Ghiselin's "Andrew Lytle's *Selva Oscura*," presents an overview of the fiction. Edward Krickel's discussion of initiation in "The Mahogany Frame," which examines the story in the light of Joseph Campbell's myth criticism, is one of the most impressive of the contributions.

Since the emphasis of the book is Lytle's fiction, one wonders why the editor chose to include an essay by Allen Tate on his criticism, especially since there was omitted from this collection a more thorough discussion by Robert Weston which had been included in the MQ issue devoted to Lytle. Tate's essay originally appeared as a preface to Lytle's own collection of criticism, *The Hero With the Private Parts*, and is therefore readily accessible. Why include a superfluous and extraneous essay by a prominent man of letters who has long been associated with Lytle and at the same time exclude a well-written essay on the same subject that is not so readily available by someone whose reputation has not been established?

One of the more dismaying qualities of this book is the permeative

attitude of unbounded enthusiasm. Because I am an admirer of Lytle's work, I feel it is only a disservice to it to make inflated claims for it. For instance, Thomas H. Landess says that *The Velvet Horn* is so complicated that, like *Ulysses*, it can only be fully appreciated after it has received more critical commentary. Now I agree that *The Velvet Horn* is Lytle's best novel, but even implicitly to compare it to *Ulysses* is extreme. And to suggest, as Sidney J. Landman does, that the first sentence of "Jericho, Jericho, Jericho" is "quite as memorable as" the first sentence of "The Open Boat" indicates to me a lack of critical perception. "She opened her eyes" simply does not carry the same sort of resonance that "Nobody knew the color of the sky" does. Lytle deserves more attention than he has received, and he deserves more serious scholarship than this book demonstrates.

Reviewed by Nancy Joyner

Serpent in Eden: H. L. Mencken and the South, by Fred C. Hobson, University of North Carolina Press, 242 pp., \$8.95.

Fred Hobson has done a very thorough, scholarly job of chronicling H. L. Mencken's explosive impact on Southern thought and literature—an impact which Hobson sees framed by the publication of Mencken's "The Sahara of the Bozart" in 1920 and the Nashville Agrarians' *I'll Take My Stand* in 1930. Gerald Johnson explains in the Foreword that "the title of [Mencken's] essay reflected a genuine opinion that the relation of the South to modern civilization roughly paralleled the relation of 'Bozart' to 'beaux arts,' to wit, a crude and slightly comic distortion" (p. x). Mencken the propagandist and muck-raker employed the rhetorical distortions of hyperbole to expose the Southern cultural Sahara. He finds Southern poetry and prose unreadable, excepting James Branch Cabell,

but when you come to critics, musical composers, painters, sculptors, architects and the like, you will have to give it up, for there is not even a bad one between the Potomac

Perspective . . . continued

those on the left for joy."

Bitterness and joy are the emotions Doris Betts portrays so vividly, much like Alice Walker. There is isolation, but there is togetherness also. For example, in Betts' "Mother-in-Law" we find separateness because of time. The narrator goes back to 1932 in her mind to see her mother-in-law die of cancer. Though they are ghosts to each other, the two women can understand each other. But this very understanding brings separateness:

She understands and her gaze burns past to where Ross still sleeps in a brace in the crib she bought. I understand her, too. Even on weary nights, I am glad her desire found me, drew me to this room.

He's just fine, I say. He will live a long life.

Then, for one icy moment, the ghost of her envy stared at the ghost of mine.

In the title story, the protagonist escapes from the everyday world of house-hunting, grading twelfth-grade English themes, and talking about the Seven Basic Foods into a world she creates in a dream. The everyday world is where she feels the threat to the self that lonely doing can bring: "I could get old here, in this house. Stand by this same sink when I'm forty and fifty and sixty. Die in that airtight bedroom with its cedar closets when I'm eighty-two. By the time they roll me out the front walk, the boxwoods will be high." Her humor and her dream life save Carol Walsh. The dream world begins to be more real than her everyday life, and more satisfying. The result is not only displacement, but also replacement in Doris Betts' South.

David Madden's South is mobile and swiftly changing. Alice Walker's South remains rural. The changes are not in her external landscape, but in the minds of her people. The still rural landscape contains a people whose revolutions of the spirit embrace joy and heartbreak. "The Flowers" ends with a compressed image of her South: a landscape

of beauty where the wild pink rose grows through the skeletal head of a lynching victim of long ago. And there is tension in the spirit of her people just as there is ambivalence in her landscape. The journal keeper of "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" writes of her relationship with her husband: "I wonder if he feels our wills clashing in the dark. Sometimes I see the sparks fly inside my head. It is amazing how normal everything is."

It is also amazing how normal everything is in Doris Betts's South, amazing because it is another country, the familiar world transformed. South becomes equated, as in the title story, with a dream place, a place often more real than the everyday world. In "The Spider Gardens of Madagascar," South takes on exotic connotations that allow a young boy to escape the neuroses of his mother. In "Benson Watts is Dead and in Virginia," Virginia is not the state of the Union, but a union with the state of death. This Virginia has trees and waterways, but, as Benson Watts says, the woods look "odd and fictional." He also says,

It seemed to me even the tree trunks were spelling words I could nearly read. I rested my hand on the bark of one, and tried in its cracks and lichen crusts to make out the Braille. Not since I was a child had I felt this expectancy, as if at last I were on the verge of seeing everything unveiled.

Doris Betts renders the Living Word by means of her South. In fact, all three of the short-story collections that I have discussed convey a sense of what the Priest of the Sun in N. Scott Momaday's novel *House Made of Dawn* says about his old Kiowa grandmother:

When she told me those old stories something strange and good and powerful was going on. I was a child and that old woman was asking me to come directly into the presence of her mind and spirit; she was taking hold of my imagination,

mud-flats and the Gulf. Nor an historian. Nor a sociologist. Nor a philosopher. Nor a theologian. Nor a scientist. In all these fields the south is an awe-inspiring blank—a brother to Portugal, Serbia and Esthonia [sic]. (p. 15)

Hobson notes that Mencken's essay is somewhat elegiac, mourning the vanished antebellum aristocrat and the ascendancy of the poor white. That the essay would be taken as a war cry, a rallying point for many young, sympathetic Southern writers apparently surprised Mencken, who broadened his attack to include religion and the "Puritan shamans," the K. K. K., and racism. Hobson's book primarily deals with this dual role Mencken served, simultaneously firing missiles into an outraged South (that in turn made much of Mencken's German heritage in its counterattacks) while counselling new writers with a social-realist or satiric bent and channeling their work to new little magazines such as the *Richmond Reviewer* and the *New Orleans Double Dealer*. One has to be impressed at the number of literary pies Mencken had his fingers in: he would discover new writers and get them published in the new Southern magazines, where they could polish their craft and eventually write articles and stories for Mencken's own *American Mercury* and *Smart Set*. Besides promoting new fiction writers such as Julia Peterkin, Walter F. White, and Frances Newman, Mencken also aided and inspired new essayists and social critics such as Gerald Johnson, Howard Odum, and W. J. Cash, who would begin a series of reevaluations of Southern culture.

The bulk of Hobson's account concerns this influence of "Menckanism" on the new Southern magazines, writers, and social critics. A chapter is devoted to Cabell, who shared with Mencken the horror at the Southern "desert," a distrust of democracy, a comic detachment, and a view of man as fundamentally apish (in Mencken's words, *boobus americanus*). More important, they opposed Babbitt's and More's new humanism by agreeing that literature has nothing particularly to do with morality. Mencken saw Cabell as a last aristocrat, a cultural atavism of the superior antebellum days.

The most interesting part of the account for me is the Fugitive-Agrarian counterattack, epitomized by the twelve essays comprising

I'll Take My Stand. Hobson points out that Mencken never really understood the Nashville group, because he was a less adept critic of poetry than fiction and because he couldn't accept the Fugitives' interest in literature for its own sake rather than as a weapon of social criticism. Nevertheless, the Fugitives (Tate, Ransom, Warren, Davidson, et al.) had at least a distant respect for Mencken's influence on the Southern renaissance until the Scopes Trial in 1925. Mencken's treatment of the trial as a circus was, according to Hobson, a pivotal moment, for it helped the Fugitives to define their basic allegiances to a non-scientific, religious Southern culture. The few anecdotes of Mencken staring incredulously from atop a courtroom table at the Tennessee yokels or walking on all fours to a revival meeting are part of the delight of this chapter.

provides with scrupulous research a very full, detailed view of interacting personalities, events and ideas. Hobson reveals the human inconsistencies and ironies of Mencken who attacked Southern rhetoric and preoccupation with the past with his own purple language and mourned the passing of the antebellum culture, who encouraged Southerners to rebel from a stagnant milieu and yet admired Cabell as "the last aristocrat," who fostered a Southern literary renaissance but was insensitive to the contributions of Tate, Ransom, Warren, Wolfe, and Faulkner. This might seem tragic, yet Hobson makes clear Mencken's essential temperament of the fighter and reformer—a man so caught up in struggle and attack that the ultimate victory seemed almost irrelevant. Indeed, Mencken's view of the artist as a rebel against his time and place is, in Hobson's opinion, an important reason why he could not appreciate Wolfe and Faulkner, who were successfully incorporating Southern concerns for rhetoric, religion, the past and myth.

My only complaint about this study is the occasional sense of overlap and repetition in some of the exposition, such as in the opening pages of chapter four. But this is perhaps unavoidable, and Hobson's research and unobtrusive tone are more important, counterbalancing virtues. Hobson knows when to ask the relevant question that highlights apparent contradictions in his subjects or gives due emphasis to pivotal moments in the Southern literary climate. Mencken emerges as a bulldozing figure, almost single-handedly pushing the South out of lethargy

Perspective . . . continued

giving me to share in the great fortune of her wonder and delight. She was asking me to go with her to the confrontation of something that was sacred and eternal. It was a timeless, timeless thing; nothing of her old age or of my childhood came between us.

Alice Walker's prose brings us into the presence of the mind and spirit of the folk teller. One of the persons to whom *In Love and Trouble* is dedicated is Zora Hurston, whose style of telling Alice Walker assimilates and makes her own. It is homey, earthy, the words often as lush as the landscape and people they describe. The speech patterns and analogies individualize and place their creators. In "Roselily," the protagonist's thoughts are juxtaposed with the formal words of the marriage ritual: "we are gathered here/Like cotton to be weighed." And when the ceremony is over, her feelings are that "her husband's hand is like the clasp of an iron gate." The speaker in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" describes the new house that her husband has purchased for her, comparing it with "new Southern house everywhere. The bricks resemble cubes of raw meat; the roof presses down, a field hat made of iron. The windows are narrow beady eyes; the aluminum glints. The yard is a long, undressed wound, the few trees as bereft of foliage as hairpins stuck in a mud cake."

The individual presences of her characters are caught concretely and visually by the author in such descriptions as that of Mrs. Jerome Franklin Washington—"Her eyes were bloodshot and wild, her hair full of lint, nappy at the roots and greasy on the ends"—and that of the old woman of "The Welcome Table"—"She was angular and lean and the color of poor gray Georgia earth, beaten by king cotton and the extreme weather. Her elbows were wrinkled and thick, the skin ashen but durable, like the bark of old pines."

And then there are the voices that speak out, bringing us into communication with them. Mama in "Everyday Use" says, "One winter I knocked a bull calf straight in the brain between the eyes with a

sledge hammer and had the meat hung up to chill before nightfall. But of course all this does not show on television. I am the way my daughter would want me to be: a hundred pounds lighter, my skin like an uncooked barley pancake." And we hear Mrs. Kemhuff in "The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff" telling Tante Rosie and her apprentice why she wants revenge on Sarah Marie Sadler Holley:

Well, I want you to know that that little slip of a woman, all big blue eyes and yellow hair, that little girl, took my stamps and then took one long look at me and my children and across at my husband—all of us dressed to kill I guess she thought—and she took my stamps in her hand and looked at them like they was dirty, and then she give them to an old gambler who was next in line behind me!

The oral quality of Alice Walker's stories creates a community of people who live in the memories of her readers. Her stories seem to emerge from the same attitude as that of the good-natured neighbor who told Zora Neale Hurston that there was no danger of the old tales' being forgotten because "that's all some people is good for—set 'round and lie and murder groceries" (in *Mules and Men*). Though many of Alice Walker's stories may be about what we call the modern dilemma, alienation and disorientation, her mode of expression—the earthy figures of speech and the oral rhythms of her prose—implicitly announces the presence of the communal world that Louise Cowan said was explicitly present in Southern literature of a few decades ago.

In Doris Betts' short stories also, underlying her style, is a communal mode of expression. Group experience and a communal way of dealing with it are implicit in her choices of technique: folk humor and old stories. Several of her characters think in humorous hyperbole, a folk technique that connotes spirit and energy and the ability of a people to survive even in the face of intense suffering. Because of their vitality

and self-approbation. Hobson sees his relation to the South as Arnold's was to Victorian England, using criticism to weed out and fertilize an intellectual soil where creative thought can germinate. Grafting my metaphor onto Hobson's, "[Mencken] was . . . the truth-telling serpent in a self-deluded Eden, and the forbidden fruit he offered was a knowledge of the South's inadequacies" (p. 10).

Reviewed by John G. Hammond

The Old South, by Arna Bontemps, Dodd, Mead & Company, 238 pp., \$6.95.

Arna Bontemps' *The Old South* is more than a collection of short stories linked by autobiographical passages. The subtitle, "'A Summer Tragedy' and Other Stories of the Thirties," is misleading, for the book is more than one acknowledged masterpiece plus other stories about black life during the Depression years in the South. A carefully organized collection of essays and stories, *The Old South* is a Southern writer's testament about the South as geographical region, as setting for historical events, as a state of mind, as a formative influence on the writer's life and sensibility.

Coming at a time when the man's genius was beginning to flow with renewed vigor, Bontemps' death on June 4, 1973, was a summer tragedy for American letters. One feels the loss strongly while reading the sensitive narrative in this book, for one knows that one of the few writers who expressed adamant pride in Blackness and in Americanness has been silenced. *The Old South* is an option to the onslaught of recent neo-slave narratives that support a dismal conception of black life in America. There is a need for the whole truth in Afro-American literature. And like Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray, Bontemps made it his task to fill credibility gaps. Through the juxtaposition of direct comment and fictive snapshot, of fact and fiction, Bontemps delineated aspects of the black South that are removed in time, but not in impact.

Arna Bontemps was born in Alexandria, Louisiana, in 1902. Although his family moved to California when he was quite young, Bontemps

retained an awareness of his Creole heritage, an awareness of how his family background shaped his real and literary explorations of life. In the introductory essay, "Why I Returned," that prepares us for the autobiographical and the purely imagined stories, Bontemps remarked that his "had not been the varmint-infested childhood so often the hallmark of Negro American autobiography." His literary career, stretching from the Harlem Renaissance into the Black Seventies, was not typical either. One might expect that *The Old South* would be similar to Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*. *Au contraire*, the book is more akin to George Washington Cable's *Old Creole Days*—not in subject matter, of course, but certainly in what might be called unveiled romantic attitude.

The Old South is a prelude to Bontemps' autobiography, an autobiography one hopes his literary executors will publish soon, even in a fragmentary state. The twelve stories between the opening and closing essays are intimations about what it means to be a Southern writer. They suggest, too, that Bontemps held the notion that the South, black and white, could only be known and evaluated through the complex interplay of reality and imagination. Note the arrangement of the stories: "The Cure," a sketch about Bontemps' mulatto uncle; "Talk to the Music," a tale of a Storyville singer and the blues; "Lonesome Boy, Silver Trumpet," the blues motif woven into a Southern folktale; "A Woman with a Mission," a trickster tale of patron-artist relations during the Harlem Renaissance; "Heathen at Home," a study of the missionary syndrome that yet plagues Southern black education; "The Devil is a Conjuror," "Let the Church Roll On," "A Summer Tragedy," "Hop-pergrass Man," "Saturday Night"—all stories based on Bontemps' experiences as a young teacher in northern Alabama in the Thirties; "Boy Blue," the running-nigger theme developed from a double perspective; "Mr. Kelso's Lion," a child's view of what does not change about the South. The closing essay, "3 Pennies for Luck," brings the reader to the present by explaining one of the writer's lifelong idiosyncrasies. Indeed, what we are given to deal with its Bontemps' working out of his relationship to Southern life, black heritage, mixed roots.

To borrow Sterling A. Brown's words about Bontemps, one can say *The Old South* is a collection of "sober, austere, melancholy,

Perspective . . . continued

and of their presences that make of her characters living, speaking voices, we confront Doris Betts' characters with joy. The speaker of "The Ugliest Pilgrim" looks at her ugliness: "I touch my hand now to this cold mirror glass, and cover all but my pimpled chin, or wide nose, or a single red-brown eye. And nothing's too bad by itself. . . . I comb out my pine-needle hair"; and later she says, "I put Flick's paper in my pocketbook and there, inside, on a round mirror, my face is waiting in ambush for me." In "Still Life With Fruit" we hear Gwen, about to deliver her baby, think, "If they'd let go of me once, I'd flop all over this damn sterile floor like a whale on the beach. I'd bellow like an elephant." In "The Glory of His Nostrils," Wanda Quincey torments the town, playing God to the town-as-Job, because of her husband's death. She wanders about reading Job, which she tore

intact from her King James Bible, leaving Esther right next to the Psalms; and when she walked up Locust Street to town she carried pages 370 to 390 in her left hand and read to herself aloud. There was little traffic in Richdale, and drivers looked out for her as she jaywalked in front of them, hissing aloud, ". . . and hath burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. . . ." If anyone dared to touch his horn, Wanda Quincey would flap the thin Bible pages in the air as though God Himself were brushing at flies with tissue paper.

Other Biblical allusions sometimes appear in the *Beasts of the Southern Wild* collection. Doris Betts creates new contexts for the old stories so that the Word comes alive again and thus fuses listeners and speakers by means of eternal truths as did the Kiowa grandmother's story-telling. For example, in "Burning the Bed," Isabel listens to the preacher's reading to her dying father. Through the window, she hears "that

the story was about Moab, the Canaanites, and Deborah the prophetess: ' . . . for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman,' " an allusion that is picked up again at the end of the story, which I have already quoted, and vividly dramatizes the timeless truth of an old story.

Hyperbolic humor and old stories—these are the materials of Doris Betts' collection, materials which have their origins in ancient human impulses to talk, to dramatize the vital springs of experience. Both Alice Walker and Doris Betts capture the spirit of these ancient impulses, creating from folk speech and folk humor a sophisticated verbal art* that impels the reader to read aloud, to share the sounds that draw us together in wonder and delight.

David Madden explicitly utilizes the storyteller as a character to show the communal bonds that telling can weave. In "God Proud" the McCartles sing a song about Jack and Pluma, their sister and her lover: "Don't let the chiggers, snakes, and sheriff bother you, / Run with your sweetheart into the mountains blue." The outsider, Frank, who is being pulled into the world of the McCartles, asks to hear the story behind the song. "They kidded Frank awhile, then, in a soft voice that seemed to go with the cooing of a dove outside and the rhythm of the stream, Lufton told him."

In "The World's One Breathing," one of the passengers on the bus says "Give me a good story any day." There is magic in telling, the magic of transforming a real-life event, such as Jack's and Pluma's racing in old jalopies up and down the mountains, into a story and the story's becoming a song to be carried down the mountain and into Knoxville, as in "God Proud." In "The World's One Breathing," old men reminisce within Ken McLain's hearing about a 1921 mine explosion: "McLain doesn't want to listen, yet he *does* want to listen, but he doesn't want to get drawn in."

The power of a story, as the Priest of the Sun said, is in its ability to draw us in, to share in wonder and delight, to confront something sacred and eternal. Before the end of "The World's One Breathing,"

meditative, meticulous Christian" memories. The pains and joys, the disappointments, the strengths of being a Southern black writer are given to us with a fine sense of humor and casual honesty. *The Old South* is not a masterpiece, but it is an important and honest confession. As such, it will endure as an intrepid expression of Afro-American attitude.

Reviewed by Jerry W. Ward

Fugitive, by Marion Montgomery, Harper & Row, 373 pp., \$8.95.

Marion Montgomery's *Fugitive* is anything but an "amusement," yet it relies on some strongly defined literary characters and situations to "amuse" the reader while, with his free hand, as it were, the author goes about some more significant efforts in this unusual and remarkable book.

The "story," the novel's "action," is the least of Montgomery's achievements. Walt Mason, a Nashville songwriting success (under the alias Bobby Moss) migrates to the town of Weaverton, Georgia, seeking community and, finally, identity that is *real*—in short, Walt Mason seeks to make tangible, *beyond words*, the spirit of life that country music only cheapens with its lyrics and rhythms. A pliant, inwardly receptive man, Walt is gradually absorbed into the community bosom, ends up marrying the eligible widow attached to the county's ruling family (the Weaver family, of course), and will, as the novel closes, be elected mayor, replacing the just-murdered Judge Weaver.

Along the way toward this conclusion, Walt learns the standard Southern rituals of rural life, coon and rabbit hunting, hog killing; he resurrects one of the county's abandoned mansions, a fading landmark, attaches himself to a semi-literate red-clay Socrates, Hugh Akers, helps to organize a volunteer fire department, and even writes a hit song based on a neighborhood eccentric, Mort Thompson, the eventual killer of Judge Weaver. There are other highlights in the episodic structure of the novel—Walt "wrestles" a trained chimpanzee at a carnival, a country music show is held in Weaverton (featuring Walt's songs)

—but *story* as such is not the center of interest in this fine novel.

At first puzzling, Montgomery's manipulation of point-of-view, his weaving in and out of various narrative voices, is the most interesting technical feature of the novel. The book begins and ends with direct addresses to the reader by what can be called the implied author—and this has the effect of disarming the usual lines of critical analysis. These notes, in conjunction with the very fluid strategy of viewpoint, serve to remind the reader that we are always, in the novel, and in life, for that matter, immersed in a "reality" constructed of words, and that the self-conscious use of words (the literary use of language) to grasp our reality can and does, usually, divorce us from that reality. In short, the novel's larger concern seems to be the dilemma that *thinking* man (man using words, living by words) faces in simply attempting to *be*, to become man *being*.

The sheer literacy—and the very marked literary quality—of *Fugitive* makes it a difficult novel to live in—in the best sense. Thus, Walt Mason's exchange of very cerebral letters with Harry Springer, a Nashville music entrepreneur disillusioned by his success, is relevant to the novel's action and necessary to the accumulation of the novel's thematic thrust, but, in and of themselves, tends to be brittle, even tiresome. Hugh Aker's folk aphorisms and fables and parables are truly funny, but any native or resident of the Deep South will have heard too many of them before. Walt Mason's interior deliberations are, of course, the center of the novel's consciousness, but at times seem too much like set pieces; the reader occasionally feels that a novel as steeped in awareness as this one comes to have a required "program" that the author is bound to follow, no matter what the effect.

But these are carping strictures. Marion Montgomery is an accomplished novelist. His rural characters *do* come alive, in the traditional naturalistic sense, despite the way in which Southern prototypes in fiction nudge all new fiction about the South toward stereotype and parody. What is more, he is also an intellectual, and *Fugitive* is a novel of ideas, a novel that examines the clash of idea and reality (or *ideal* and *real*), and to bring this off as well as the author has is no easy task.

Perspective . . . continued

Ken McLain is drawn in as he listens to a story unfold, being made right in front of him. The bus he is on stops beside a crowd of people gathered around a pregnant woman hugging a young boy's face. Around her are scattered groceries which have spilled from their sacks. She tells what happened and as she tells it the people ask, "Then what?" And hearing more of the story, they ask again, "Then what?" As more people arrive, she tells the story again, adding details, refining the action now that the initial fright and surprise have been forgotten. The process of the story's entering memory is what David Madden dramatizes, entering memory to be told and retold as the real-life event becomes part of the town's communal mythology just as has the mine explosion.

Thus, in coming into the presence of the wonder and the delight of the storyteller, Place with Time walking on it becomes for a while a community of listeners confronting something sacred and eternal. We feel with Benson Watts that we are on the verge of seeing everything unveiled. Ethnic literature, with its roots in a particular human community, often has that magical effect which the Priest of the Sun describes. And, to me, much Southern literature also has that effect, an effect that has its source in what folk tales are all about: living

presences and the vitality of the human spirit.

In much Southern literature today we do find alienation, dissociation, and the isolated self. However, we also find implicit, as in Doris Betts and in Alice Walker, a strong sense of belonging to old traditions. In David Madden's stories we similarly find those old traditions; sometimes, however, they belong to other people, and not to his main characters, who remain outside. In all three collections, the alienation and separation that we find is mitigated somewhat by the excitement with which we approach the storyteller and with which sometimes the characters themselves approach the storytellers, as does Cassie in Madden's "Lone Riding": "Lone was almost asleep when Cassie spoke in his ear, her breath hot. 'Then what?'" The hot breath of closeness and the desire for the teller to continue talking—these qualities, with their sources in a sense of Place, hopefully will last beyond the bulldozers and the standardization of everyday speech in the South.

*See *The Folk of Southern Fiction* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1972) By Merrill Maguire Skaggs, who suggests the folk tradition in Southern literature had its source in a cultivated literary tradition, not just in popular culture.

Fugitive (and the reference to Vanderbilt's *Fugitives* is deliberate, self-conscious; Montgomery knows their work, and Walt Mason appears to have been taught by no less than Donald Davidson) successfully examines the Agrarian thesis against the actualities of contemporary life in a small Georgia town (as the novel concludes, the city is already headlong in its assault upon the country—the abandoned Academy has been razed, the site paved). Further, it is a novel that dramatizes (with words) the insufficiency of words to either create or comprehend the hard-and-fast of man being.

If this begins to sound like thesis (word) and antithesis (reality), then synthesis (life lived, *living*) in *Fugitive* is both aesthetically coherent and emotionally valid. *Fugitive* is a novel that correctly transcends the inhibitions imposed by the weight of Southern literary tradition; its achievement lies in Montgomery's having at his command both the adequate novelist's facility and the academic's requisite learning and intelligence to go beyond a well defined tradition to a satisfying scrutiny of its implications for the way we all must live, here and now, in the Deep South.

Reviewed by Gordon Weaver

Bijou, by David Madden, Crown Publishers, 500 pp., \$8.95.

Even if Thomas Wolfe had not been the author chosen to replace the movie gods and goddesses in Lucius Hutchfield's existence, *Bijou's* relationship to *Look Homeward Angel* would be inescapable. Both novels provide a fascinating insight into the early development of a writer. As Lucius Hutchfield, aged thirteen, sits on the "magic carpet" woven by his grandmother's "voice acting out all the parts, like the sound track of a movie" telling one of her many stories, he watches his younger brother's reactions and remembers his awareness of his own response and his "desire to cause other people to feel as he'd felt, to make them live so vividly in the world created by his own imagination that spit drooled down their chins before they realized they'd forgotten they inhabited bodies. He wanted to do to others what Mammy and the movies had done to him."

In *Bijou* David Madden fulfills Lucius' ambition. Madden tells an absorbing story about an adolescent lover-writer-Bijou usher who weaves his physical, imaginative, and remembered realities into a magic carpet which takes off in Cherokee, Tennessee, lands in Asheville, North Carolina, and covers a vast amount of territory in between. The carpet's pattern, bordered by the narrator's voice which follows Lucius' consciousness from September, 1946, to June, 1947, accented by flashes of dialogue from movies of the 40s, is threaded through by Lucius' own revelations. Lucius' stories (written and oral), his nightly ritualistic talk with God, and his diary reveal his past and present physical reality as well as his imaginative past, present, and future.

The spectacular, intricate design of the carpet also includes the characters created on screen by Humphrey Bogart, Cornel Wilde, Gene Tierney, Hedy Lamarr as well as inhabitants of Cherokee: Mammy divides her time among running her cafe, telling stories to her grandchildren, and "seeking privacy" with Chief Buckner, her boyfriend, who puts out fires and once a week drives around in the old car belonging to Luke (missing in action) whose brother-in-law Freddy, in his effort to live with the fact that he had dynamited a bridge with his friend on it, stays drunk and harasses his wife, Irene, who spends her time divorcing Freddy, going out dancing, reminding son Lucius of Freddy's affair with Barbara (whose husband is in prison), visiting youngest son Bucky in reform school, and worrying about eldest son Earl who spends his time escaping reform school, reproaching Lucius for implying that his "own brother" would steal, and stealing from Lucius whose friend Duke alternates between the hilarious imitation of a tough gangster and the painfully shy, obedient son who finally murders his parents and whose subsequent confinement is mourned by Joy, friend of Raine Clayboe, beloved of Lucius and daughter of the bootlegger who supplies whiskey to Freddy, father of Lucius, who loves Raine, ushers at the *Bijou*, is a writer, and takes a magic carpet ride which ends in Asheville, North Carolina, in the house of Thomas Wolfe, in the presence of the spirit of Thomas Wolfe who had recorded "the endless flow of his reveries in those huge accounting ledgers:

ledgers that contained every impression of his lived and remembered experience."

Reading *Bijou* is a lived experience not likely to be forgotten.

Reviewed by Jo McManis

Miss Sally, by Robert Joe Stout, Bobbs-Merrill, 200 pp., \$6.95.

Since Faulkner launched his brilliant career on the puffing freighter *Sanctuary*, why shouldn't Robert Joe Stout embark on his literary journey as captain of shrimpboat Sally? The parallels are not facetiously drawn. Stout has competently displayed the breadth and depth of his considerable talent in such stories as "The Living, the Dead" (NOR, IV, 1); nor was his talent sleeping during the composition of *Miss Sally*, but sluggishly waking as Faulkner's was in *Sanctuary*. Only rarely does a page or a paragraph of Stout's book fail to rivet the reader's attention to the story. Despite her impotence against evil and her gormless amorality, Sally grows more believable as the tale unravels. The weaknesses one finds in the book do not condemn Stout (as the story condemns Sally) to perpetual failure; they point toward summits he may yet reach.

Sally Halm, the first-person narrator-protagonist, suffers through her pre-teen puberty and her shortlived marriage at thirteen like a moth being raped by fire. *Fuck* (in its literal sense) is one of her favorite words, but *Jesus* runs a close second, since her family (especially her mother and one brother) are strong revivalists. A rollercoasting sensationalism races through this novel, as it does in Oates' *Wonderland*, but sensationalism is not the whole story, just as the "battered bun" scene does not constitute the jeweled core of *Last Tango*.

Pessimistic naturalism à la Hardy provides the sombre background against which Sally's smudged portrait is painted. Poor Sally Halm, doomed from page one to fall, and fall again, and again, to fall until failure itself is her hallmark, her badge of honor, her name. On page one she contrasts herself with her sister Hilary.

She was smart in school, I was dumb. She was tall, I was squat. When she lost her two front teeth everybody clapped their hands and gave her presents—she was that cute. Me they called "Piggy, Piggy!" and told me to close my mouth. . . . She wore glasses . . . but I don't remember anyone teasing her about them. Me, they teased all the time. I used to wet my pants, for one thing. And suck my thumb and spill washwater and get lice from the chickens.

Great expectations? Well, it's all downhill from there.

At puberty, Sally and Hilary begin their joint expedition into the tangled jungle of sex just after Sally stealthily watches her older sister getting the full treatment from a boyfriend. But Hilary is away when Sally, without "really" wanting to, lets two boys "f—" her. They go to an old shed, where five more boys show up unexpectedly, pin Sally down, and "take their pleasure of her," one after the other. The scene stays with her throughout the novel, and throughout the novel woman is man's victim—Sally seems to have a special talent for the role.

After the fivefold rupturing of her virginal state, she is "saved" at a revivalist meeting. She wants to be like the reformed prostitute, Amy Granville, who travels with the show as an Assembly of God witness. Encouraged by another preacher, Sally tries to help save others. But who does she choose? One of the five who broke her hymen. She agrees to let the boy (Larry) "f—" her if he promises to go with her to a tent-meeting. He agrees, has his fun, then calls the whole deal off.

Sally is soon whisked out of town to a cousin's farm by saddened and outraged parents. But the sorrows of young Sally are far from over. Circumstance—the deputy of hard-hearted Fate—forces her into marriage with an elderly sadist whose ulcers hemorrhage and whose two vicious dogs almost tear poor Sally to shreds. As her husband lies dying, Sally attends a last prayer meeting where her guiding light, Amy Granville, calls again for that young "someone in need" to come get salvation. Sally kneels on the floor in the aisle, but Amy passes her by.

The music was ebbing; I was alone. And it seemed like the lights went out.

The vision that informs *Miss Sally* emerges in a short dialogue that echoes the famous "blighted star" scene in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Sally is talking with Cousin Matty, a noble if often drunken and fornicating savage. Sally and Matty had just held a mare (Trixie) down with ropes while a stud donkey mounted her and "took his pleasure," snorting all the while. Sally, stuttering with remembered horror, says

"... that, that's what they [the five boys] d-did to me."
 "There ain't much difference." He nodded. "We think we're special but we ain't. We're all just animals."
 "Just ... animals?" I repeated. "Y-yes, but, but we've, I mean, we've got Jesus, Trix-Trixie doesn't."
 He snorted and pushed himself to his feet. "Either that 'r He's got us."

Stout's dialogue is generally better than that. But the book has other problems. The first-person narrative is not always consistent. Sally is not a girl of thirteen or fourteen when she tells the story—her sister Hilary is a grown woman, a noted biologist who has written books and appeared on television. Yet Sally's story stops in the revival tent when she is still a teen-age wed unmother. And her diction is not always right. In the early part of the book, she repeats Hilary's explanations about the "Dawn of Civilization" and the penis-itch theory of male-female relationships as if she was reading them from a high school textbook written in oversimplified language.

The Christianity depicted in the novel is a watered-down version of Flannery O'Connor's backwoods evangelicalism. No one has been truly touched by God, and those who think they have—like Sally's mother—use religion as a club. Sally's religious thoughts and emotions become entangled in the spidery web of her sexual confusion. God watches impassively, if at all—his expressionless white face never alters.

Like Lena Grove, Sally is an earth figure, but an earth figure molded from the dust of this blighted star. She views sin as a necessary corridor to the grand ballroom of salvation. But her corridor winds Kafkaesque down endless dark detours till it stops at dead end.

Despite its faults, *Miss Sally* is a book with verbal and visually evocative power. Though I don't much care for Hardy's or Norris' world, I appreciate the skill with which they paint it. Stout has succeeded in creating a believable character, a young girl, telling her own tale of woe, pleading her own case before the tribunal of the righteous. She does what she does (she says) because she really had no choice from the beginning. Echoes of Dewey Delf. The grapes of evil planted in the soil of heredity grow in the vineyard of environment and are crushed in the winepress of inevitability. The cup we drink, at last, is our own life's blood, for evil runs in our veins.

It is an old vision, a well-worn *Weltanschauung*. I had hoped to find some fresher insight in this talented writer's first novel.

Reviewed by Forrest L. Ingram

The Entombed Man of Thule, by Gordon Weaver, Louisiana State University Press, 186 pp., \$6.95.

The title story of Gordon Weaver's collection compactly expresses the central concerns of most of the stories in the book: the loneliness of human existence and the cold out-reaching of the world. Besides the entombed man himself, an image recalled by the protagonist, there is the TV weatherman, "Pathetic LaZotte," "Poor LaZotte." The narrator of the story evaluates LaZotte's condition: "He tries, he explains. But his eyes, set in dark hollows, are vacant with ignorance. . . . LaZotte gave warnings." Separated from his hearers, LaZotte talks on. And buried in ice, arms and legs outstretched, looking "more astonished than dead," the entombed man and LaZotte are counterparts for the people in Weaver's collection.

Weaver's people talk, write, think—sometimes to themselves, sometimes to others—and overall, we feel that the words are somewhat like mirrors in Dracula's castle (had he any). They do not reflect the total scene. Weaver's art seems dedicated to dramatizing the failure of words. However, if we back off a bit, we find that he is also convincing us that the word is not wholly a failure. Even though the speaker is often dissatisfied, the reader feels satisfied in the special knowing

that art can provide. Like the son to whom the father speaks in "Oskar Hansen, Jr., Speaks to His Son," we are the listeners to the teller's attempt to have us know his father—not the facts, he says, but the feelings, the presence of the father, his energy. And we do feel his presence in images recalled by the speaker: "In the mirror, my eyes, distorted, bulged, my hair glossy, pores visible, I see myself as glorious as his satisfied, posing smirk assures me I must be—because I am his, he has made me, just as he has shaped the lay of the hair on my head." And just as his father made him, Oskar Hansen, Jr., makes his father. Like the Shaper in John Gardner's *Grendel*, the narrators of Gordon Weaver's stories create worlds and people for us to know by feeling.

Most of the characters who speak out, however, are trapped like the entombed man of Thule, buried alive as, paradoxically, life is the cold force of nature that holds Gordon Weaver's people in a death grip. In "Finch the Spastic Speaks," the first story of the collection, having received his death sentence from the doctor, Finch asks questions which cannot be fully answered by the people who see him from the outside nor by himself. We come to know him by entering his head, a head as active and controlled as his body is active and uncontrollable. His "staring eyes often roll wildly behind his thick glasses." His voice makes noises "like the creaking of a heavy casket lid." These descriptions in the third person are Finch's own about himself. He knows what he does and how he looks and sounds doing it, but he still doesn't know Finch. "What is Finch? Is he the body. . . . Or is he the mind. . . . Or is he something even more than these, a total greater than the sum of his parts?" The answer to Finch is that he is a sum greater than parts; he is and he is not.

As in "Finch Speaks Out," death is present in most of Gordon Weaver's stories. In "Big Old Good Old Thing," the death of Golden Boy is rendered as follows: "It was like the scream of a winter, when it comes all cold and mean on you in a single day and there is no place to go to be away from it." Life is a process of dying in "Waiting." The aged widower of the story, now living uselessly with his daughter, writes his friend of fifty years: "It is no good to be my age Bill." He tears up the letter. What's the point of sending it? the gesture indicates. The sudden presence of illogical death provides the dynamic of "Wouldn't I?" in which the main character, somewhat like the oiler in Stephen Crane's "Open Boat," is the least likely person to die. And yet the story ends in a tableau of his vulnerability as a young boy holds a pistol to his head, saying—in reply to the protagonist's question: "You wouldn't just here and now shoot me, would you?"—the words that give the title to the story.

Overall, Gordon Weaver's language and sentence structures are stripped of complexities. Most of the sentence structures are straight declarations: "I move," "He waited," "He crawled." A computer would prove me wrong, I feel, but the impression I receive from reading these stories is that the language and the structures are more spare than, perhaps, in fact they are. The style affects me as a holding back, a characteristic that suits the essential concerns.

Where there is gusto is in the humor of the stories, even when the characters are pitiable. Finch the Spastic recalls a scene where he is speaking to a girl on the telephone: "'Oh,' Ellen said, and waited for me to speak. I rocked fitfully on the small seat in the booth in the empty dormitory corridor. It might have sounded, in her ear, like the wild and frantic banging of someone prematurely buried." Self-directed humor also appears in "Elements of the 10th Mountain Infantry Reconnoiter": "'Oh but you got the choppers, though boy!' he said, and glared at himself in the mirror, lips drawn back to expose his white, even teeth, to the gums. His wife caught him just that way."

And we, similarly, catch *The Entombed Man of Thule* people in a variety of poses and situations. The answers to Finch's questions are contained in the varied collection that Gordon Weaver has assembled. He is a craftsman and a shaper who suggests, finally, that the answer to Finch is in the totality that art can provide because of its perspective that reaches beyond the limitations of the characters and sees into the ice to the trapped presence below.

Reviewed by Dawson Gaillard

Pursuit, by Berry Morgan, Houghton Mifflin, 241 pp., \$4.95; "Son" and "The Chance," by Berry Morgan, *The New Yorker*, Vol. L, No. 6 and Vol. L, No. 2.

In 1966 Berry Morgan's first novel, *Pursuit*, was published and received the Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship Award. It was brought out in England and followed by a series of funny, yet hard and revelatory, short stories. One of these, "Andrew," has been televised in Scandinavia; it and others have been anthologized and are working their way into English literature courses. For the past two years Mrs. Morgan has been writer-in-residence at Northeast Louisiana University at Monroe; and now in 1974 her second novel, *The Mystic Adventures of Roxie Stoner*, a sequel to *Pursuit* and part of a series *Certain Shadows*, has also received the Houghton Mifflin award.

As this article is written, the proofs are not yet out on the Roxie Stoner book, but any mention of that name raises hopes because of the remarkable tales about this middle-aged black woman which have been running in *The New Yorker* for a period of eight years. The best of these stories—such as "The Passing," "The Flower Gully," "Miss Idella, the Travelling Hoe Lady," and "Son"—are haunting, and all of them display immense technical skill and a compression of form and action which results in wild bursts of spiritual vision.

Mrs. Morgan has written in very concrete dimensions about a woman who could, should, might exist. After two or three stories you know Roxie. You wait for another story to appear in *The New Yorker*; and your spirits lift when you spot one, knowing it will be wild, bizarre, factual, funny, and sad.

Roxie, who is slow-witted, tells the stories and the result is a work, sometimes deceptively slender, which is profound in unspoken resonances. Through her benign gaze efforts of people are set in relief as outgrowths of greed or as outlandish attempts to restructure a past which is irrecoverable.

So far about a dozen and a half of these austere crafted stories have been published, the latest, "Son," being one of the most powerful. In it, as in "The Flower Gully"—which offers a wild vision of a woman who has made a career of mercy-killing other people's animals—the situation is fraught with past emotion and harm. Roxie, now an inmate of a "nerve hospital," keeps wanting "to do for people," and is assigned to stay with a white boy whose parents "had given wings to the hospital." The young man, Son, wants only to sleep. Roxie can rub him, help him ease his mind. The ludicrous mixes with the pathetic. Since Roxie might have to go home with him occasionally, then come right back with a Rescue Squad when his pills no longer work, he sounds like a "fast-moving" person to her. She will have her own little room next to his, but she can think only in terms of nursing him. She will sleep against the wall. "That way every time he stirred I'd be right up again."

Of course she helps him. Son likes light scratching best, rather than the lean-on kind, in between the shots and pills that make him sleep. She listens to his endless complaints about his people.

Then, in a single, rhythmic paragraph, Roxie tells of a new emotion.

I am coming to a part now that I don't much like to speak of. By me being so completely with one gentleman all the time, and such a beautiful one as Son, I got to having happenings. It looked like my age hadn't settled on me as good as I believed. It was that same thing I spoke of while ago—I would look at him and think we were the same. Every time Son moved or talked, I would start getting elevated, the way I do in church. I knew it wasn't fitting, me being old and colored, but I had a case of love. I don't mean a nurse's or a Christian's, I mean a sinner's kind. It was making me happier than I'd ever been before, but still I knew I had to stop.

As usual, she refers her problem to Her Saviour.

I asked him to stop me, but the trouble is once you really get to sinning it's hard to want to stop. I prayed though just the same—it doesn't matter to God what sin His Sinner wants.

Suddenly Son's relatives come for him. His father has been made first citizen of Mississippi and will be out making speeches. Son must not be an embarrassment, in the hospital; he will go to a relative. Son berates them for having left him in a hell hole with a Negro.

The final line, again simple and rhythmic, is weighted with irony and sorrow.

Then all of them left out, and I guessed they had forgotten me in the start of my chastisement.

In "The Chance," another recently published story, Roxie's emotion pales beside that of a murderous boy. For this reason the story lacks the power of "The Passing" or "The Trip" or "Son," which involve her directly in loss and humility. Moreover, here Roxie is a thinker and doer, an awkward role. It is particularly interesting though to see how the story holds, because the inner logic holds (the operation of love in the world, at cross purposes to logic). This is also an interesting story to discuss because readers (including students and some faculty) have indicated they are unsure about the ending. Some have received the startling impression that Roxie kills a man! To a "student of Roxie" such an act would constitute an intolerable character break, render the action meaningless. In this story Roxie seeks redress, but she would see no reason for revenge. Characteristically, she sympathizes with everyone—with people on both sides of a situational fence.

"The Chance" does, however, have problems. First, anything Roxie thinks and plans runs the risk of appearing stupid on a natural and practical (but not spiritual) level. More importantly, here she seems to err instinctually in not realizing that the boy is very dangerous. One would expect a sense of the spirit to want to protect him from killing as well as another from being killed. But this is *worldly* logic, rational thinking, hardly Roxie's *forte*. It connives, as the poor old world will do, with deciding how people should act. Roxie does not feel the boy's danger personally, so she doesn't structure it imaginatively.

Usually Roxie prevails by responding to any given situation or emotion as it arises and by referring crises as she perceives them to the Lord. Unfortunately for readers, in "The Chance" she temporarily forgets to pray and decides to have her own way. This behavior represents a lapse, but she is after all human. Always Roxie is as natural as the rest of us. Her speech and action take on symbolic stature because they are rooted in spiritual life.

This lapse is valid, although small, since her efforts are not self-serving, even in terms of vanity. Ironically, for Roxie it is a fairly large lapse, a little like playing God.

Roxie's lapse reveals the line of logic that underpins these stories. In terms of the spiritual dynamics of "The Chance," the fact that she is disobedient and connives against the hospital means little. In freeing the boy, she is obedient to a call of the Spirit. Of course in Berry Morgan's hard world such a response is doomed because it is impractical and runs crosswise to the World's standards for behavior.

It is Roxie's insistent plotting and planning that cause philosophical problems which necessarily affect the story. In structuring events (and time) for others, she is skating close to disaster; for in the dynamics of Berry Morgan's writing, diabolism occurs through people's attempts to control others. People who are insistent in this are dangerous; it takes a merciful, and usually zany, intervention of grace to forestall trouble. Roxie, however, as usual, is protected by grace. In the end nothing happens, a paradoxical protection which rests on the fact that what normally would happen in this situation would be murder.

There have been many lost chances—of the murderous boy, his people, his family, of other inmates of the asylum. The person who most needs a new chance is not the boy—as Roxie accurately recognizes—but a small business man. He is redeemed but unaware, a logical and terrible paradigm of the world. With his "good knowledge," he sits among attestations of faith, rounding out a paltry spiritual life. Not only society and history but his own connivance have kept him obdurate to the true dimensions of charity such as prevail in Roxie's life.

The story is brief. Roxie effects a wily escape from the mental hospital in order to take along with her the young, black man, who has been totally castrated by society (robbed of his inheritance—land, "spaded," tossed into the hospital). He feels bound to murder the finance company man. Roxie feels the encounter will give the finance man the chance

to redress a wrong, "to stand up to being a person . . . you couldn't throw wrongdoing on a company. It really wasn't anything but the people in it." They get through the woods for she is wise about directions. Then immediately the young man is picked up, at the door of the finance company.

In one terrible, funny line, when the police take the boy, we visualize the free spirit trying its best to communicate and help:

I tried my best to climb in with them so's to explain about
our business, but the police pushed me away and drove
off with the fire alarm turned on . . .

Her business indeed (her *Father's* business)—of course they had to get out the alarm! On a naturalistic level, quite plausibly they had no use for her, who seemed to them a middle-aged, dusty nut.

Roxie chats a while with the manager, then in perfect obedience (no one tells her to do it) returns to the asylum. It's all over. But by this time no aspect of the story is left untouched by irony. Roxie has received a ball-point pen which proves companies *do* exist. It was of course a pen that brought the boy's family to ruin and caused the entire line of action in the story. Finally—to spare her fatigue—even The Lord enters the irony, as the final sentence pops the seams of the story, pushing everything that has gone before into bizarre spiritual perspective.

Well, I thanked him for the chair rest (he gave me a writing pen with the company's name on it) but I was out on the street again and starting for the hospital (got a ride all the way thanks to the Good Lord and made it back that night) before I understood that in spite of his good knowledge—the finance company man—he hadn't ever known he had the chance.

When The Lord gets Roxie a ride, He serves both technique and idea. Technically the phrase ends plot, avoids the story of her return trip. Philosophically, the act of perfect obedience restores her usual, shambling comfort.

The vision of the Roxie stories is of a fierce interplay between love (Roxie's for anybody) and worldly exigency. Action stems totally from Roxie's personality, in the wide sense of the word. This held true also in *Pursuit*, in which action stems from Ned Ingles' failed personality. It will be interesting to see what happens to Roxie as she enters the world of *Certain Shadows*. *Pursuit* ended with Ned Ingles lolling besottedly in his plantation cemetery. He had lost a son whom, quite literally, he idolized. A child exists, however, from his second, unblessed marriage (the people are Catholics). The young mother has left, exhibiting the kind of will that usually makes for trouble in a Berry Morgan story.

Roxie barely figured in Ned Ingles' story. One wonders if her benign sway will influence his child, or more probably, if the child will repeat the perversity of Berry Morgan's people who fall in love with themselves and power. Mrs. Morgan is a realist. So far she has produced only one Roxie.

Reviewed by Mary Frances Berry

Wind Thoughts, by Pinkie Gordon Lane, South and West, Inc., 59 pp., \$4.50.

Wind Thoughts! The title of Pinkie Gordon Lane's first book of poems stirs the imagination. Is "wind" a verb instructing the reader to sound or to breathe thoughts? Is "wind" an attributive indicating the thoughts are like air in more or less rapid natural motion? Dr. Lane, Professor of English at Southern University (Baton Rouge), provides a hint in the closing lines of the title poem:

but I will surround myself
with the color of wind-days
and speak to the stillness
that follows thought upon thought
and touches my eyes like the rain.

"Wind" can be understood both ways. And it becomes clear after reading the forty-two lyric and narrative poems that "wind" is an organizing metaphor. The poet conceives of poetry as felt intellectual motion caught in language. Yet, poetry is also convertible, through mediation, into a force like the wind.

Identification of the poetic act with natural forces allows Lane to make intense poems from the commonplaces of life. In her poetry, autobiographical facts, memory, love, suffering and death become both subject and object. Sometimes the themes are treated passionately; more frequently, with stoical grace.

What is attempted in *Wind Thoughts* is difficult: to convey weighty experiential insights in simple, unobtrusive language. However, Lane knows the magic of language, has control of the subsurface of language. Well-chosen words cluster into powerful image and symbol. Consider, for example, the beginning of "Incident in a Black Ghetto":

Eyeballs staring
unhinged from sockets
dispossessed of faces
pillaring stone steps
suspended from gaping
hound windows.

They roll on
screaming walls
of trembling house.

The effect is devastating. The reader has meaning blown upon and into him. The poet's voice recommends this book, for it is a voice that bids the reader to participate in the act of poem unfolding.

The shorter poems are good. The longer ones—"Poems to my Father," "Songs to a Dialysis Machine," "Love Songs of an Outcast"—are superb. *Wind thoughts* in the latter blow full force.

Lane obviously recognizes the relations that obtain between tradition and her individual talent. She finds resources in Greek mythology, the Bible, *Beowulf*, Milton, and Melville; she also finds inspiration in Gwendolyn Brooks, LeRoi Jones, Sonia Sanchez, Charles Right, and Joyce Carol Oates. The sensibility here is that of a black woman poet who defines and defends the human, who makes finely precarious poems.

Those readers who would venture to experience language risking us to the void and shielding us from its terror will want to immerse themselves in *Wind Thoughts*.

Reviewed by Jerry W. Ward

The American Catholic Church and the Negro Problem in the XVIII-XIX Centuries, by Maria Genoino Caravaglios, ed. by Ernest L. Unterkoefler, Rome: Tipografia delle Mantellate, 375 pp.

This is a major contribution to the ever-growing bibliography on the American "Black" problem. The author has read widely and deeply, using normally inaccessible archives and private libraries both in Italy and in the United States. As a native Southerner, long a student of the question, I must express amazement at the quality of the author's research, the soundness of her judgment in an area not always grasped by people living far from the scene, the objectivity of a scholar treating a subject that normally evokes more heat than light.

A full introductory treatment of the Catholic Church and slavery takes up the fifty-six pages of Part I. Far from irrelevant to the theme, this treatment situates a complex topic in a context needed for full understanding. While most members of the Church are somewhat proud of Christianity's influence on the mitigation and eventual disappearance of the evil of slavery, they find it embarrassing (in this age of revolution and impatience with gradualism of all sorts) to realize that Christians have not been consistent. For, while "Christianity alone definitively enfranchises the individual," as the author states (p. 3), "at the same time, by obligation of respect for legitimate authority [it] removes all fears of disorder and anarchy." Here, as elsewhere, the author is eminently objective, even if one very much wishes the historical truth had been somewhat otherwise.

Part II deals at length with slavery in the North American colonies and the early United States. The author points out that "the Catholic colonists were, from a numerical and cultural point of view, an insignificant minority in the British colonies" (pp. 69-70). The situation was somewhat different, of course, in Louisiana and Maryland, where "Catholics tried to establish the relations between slave and master on the basis of traditional Catholic doctrine: that is to say, they allowed the slaves to receive religious instruction, to be baptized and to attend religious services regularly." Further, the "Black Code" promulgated by Bienville in Louisiana was in some ways more humane than the Anglo-Saxon tradition elsewhere. For example, it forbade the work of slaves on Sundays and religious holy days, forbade the breaking up of families, forbade torture and inhuman treatment of slaves, and obliged colonists to maintain their old and disabled slaves. The Spaniards in Louisiana, under Governor Carondelet, made similar provisions. In fact, "these laws issued by Catholic governments were the most constructive pieces of legislation of the time, the only ones that were in favor of the Negroes" (p. 76). Little wonder that at the time of the Civil War three-fifths of Negro Catholics in the United States were in Louisiana and Maryland. At the same time, when it came to emancipation there was no consistent position among Catholics. "The pass-word given to the American Bishops whether from the Old or the New world was: *neutrality*" (p. 118).

Part III treats of abolitionism and the Civil War, with its immediate aftermath. In individual dioceses, bishops "did take part in debates on the burning question" of slavery, though not in their general councils. A very special case is that of the first bishop of Charleston (S.C.), John England. An Irishman by birth, he was determined not to alienate the population of Charleston. He opened a school for Negro children, but had to close it when a state law forbade teaching of slaves. He defended the Church against the "charge" of being abolitionist, believed slavery was compatible with true religion, though eventually published a statement that he was opposed to the continuation of slavery: "but I also see the impossibility of now abolishing it here; when it can and ought to be abolished is a question for the legislature and not for me" (p. 135).

While, to be sure, some bishops were strongly opposed to slavery, they never reached a consensus that might have led to leadership. The author concludes: "The American Catholic Church never achieved a true awareness of the situation. She was a missionary Church, whose members were poor and ignorant and who lived as strangers in the land . . . and too conservative to initiate positive action in this field" (p. 218).

The last third of the book is dedicated to documentation, including photostats of invaluable documents. Poignant to a Southerner is the letter of Jefferson Davis (a photostat of his own handwriting) to Pope Pius IX, addressed as the "Most Venerable Chief of the Holy See and Sovereign Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church." Dated September 23, 1863, it thanks the Pope for offering to help in a settlement of peace, assuring him that "we desire no evil to our enemies nor do we covet any of their possessions; but are only struggling to the end that they shall cease to devastate our land and inflict useless and cruel slaughter upon our people and that we be permitted to live at peace with all mankind, under our own laws and institutions which protect every man in the enjoyment not only of his temporal rights but of the freedom of worshipping God according to his own faith."

Even a work of such high scholarship as the present study cannot include everything. A Louisianian regrets the omission of reference to the "gens de couleur"—a very special chapter in the history of Black Catholics. I should have hoped, too, for references to the work of Dr. Charles Rousseve and that of Albert S. Foley on the famous Healy family; indeed, I find no reference to Bishop James Healy, an American bishop with Negro blood; and while the author did work in Georgetown University Library, she did not mention Bishop Healy's brother, Patrick, president of that University, and technically a "Negro." A number of misprints, too, prove slightly distracting, but are not surprising in an English-language work published by a non-English printer. These reservations, however, do not in any way invalidate a work of original research which will prove indispensable to all students of American history.

Reviewed by C. J. McNaspy

State and Local Taxes in the South, 1973, by Eva Galambos, Southern Regional Council, \$75.

This booklet addresses the fact that state and local taxes throughout the nation are regressive and have damaging effects for specific parts of the United States.

"State and Local Taxes in the South, 1973," is a study sponsored by the Southern Regional Council. In twenty-seven pages of text and tables, it reveals that although these taxes bear most heavily on moderate- and low-income families across the nation, they hurt these families worst of all in the South—the poorest region of America.

Beginning with a careful analysis of the structure of sales taxes in the eleven southern states, the study also shows that in the South, state and local levies on corporations and the wealthy are even lighter than is characteristic of the nation as a whole. The study also reveals that death taxes imposed on the estates of the wealthy—the kind of levies that surely should hurt the least—are too low everywhere, but are even lower in the South than elsewhere.

One of the best sections of the study deals with property taxes—still the main source of revenue for local governments. In the South, however, the effort to collect revenue via property taxes is substantially below the national average. As a matter of fact, while the national effort has been increasing, in most of the South it is diminishing. Although, unfortunately, plenty is wrong with property taxes as now levied—some of which we can hope to remedy gradually—the study warns that across-the-board property tax cuts almost inevitably result in higher local and state sales taxes. When property tax rates are cut, much of the savings go to the owners of business property. But when sales taxes are raised to make up for the revenue loss, most of the added burden falls on moderate- and low-income families who already are bearing the greatest part of the sales tax load.

Finally, the study reveals the heavy state and local tax burden imposed on the population of the eleven largest cities of the South, and it shows how this burden goes up as family incomes go down.

Reviewed by David A. Boileau

Yesterday in the Hills, by Floyd C. and Charles Hubert Watkins, University of Georgia Press, 184 pp., \$6.00

In his essay on Faulkner's *Light in August* Alfred Kazin says "to the same degree that the South is what it is because of its rural background, its 'backwardness,' its isolation, its comparatively homogenous white population, to this same extent does the American need to value and venerate one's own region or place as the only escape from American bigness, American smoothness, American abstractness, American slogans, the juggernaut of American progress, find (at least it used to find) its deepest expression in the South." As Kazin suspects, the thing which the Agrarians greatly feared has now come upon the South, not only in Atlanta, Memphis, and New Orleans, but in Spartanburg, Macon, and Monroe as well. It is for this reason that many in the South will welcome the re-publication of Hubert and Floyd Watkins' *Yesterday in the Hills*, not as an antidote—it is of course too late for that—but as a kind of bill reminding the Chambers of Commerce of some of the hidden costs of the bigness, the smoothness, and the progress that they have embraced.

Yesterday in the Hills is likely to remind the reader of *Foxfire*, that remarkable journal published by Appalachian high-school students intent on remembering their grandparents' way of life. Like *Foxfire*, the Watkins' book describes not only the way people lived and the things they did, but also the tools they used and the songs they sang. A major difference, however, between the book and the journal is indicated by the book's title. The hill country is that area which lies between the mountains and the Fall Line; as Calvin Brown observes in the "Foreword," the "hill people of North Georgia have more in common with Faulkner's hill people four hundred miles to the west of them than with the mountaineers thirty miles to the north." An even greater difference between this book and *Foxfire* lies in the fact that the "yesterday" of the title is a time lived by the authors, father and son, who knew the people, growing up not merely among them but of them. It is because their recollections arise out of lived experience

and somehow manage at the same time to avoid sentimentality that the book acquires its special character.

Never easy and seldom pretty, the life of the hill people, at first glance, was not the sort that evokes sentimentality. If a farmer earned enough during the year to buy shoes for a houseful of children, two pairs of overalls for himself, and an occasional supply of salt and coffee, he felt that the Lord had blessed him. Children over six were expected during the summer months to help with the exhausting labor of chopping cotton and pulling fodder. There were few physicians, and most families knew sooner or later what it meant to bury a child. But it is not so much from these generalizations that we get the strongest sense of the rigors of hill country life as from the keenly realized and sharply drawn images of pain: the father who promises his children a trip to the carnival but has to tell them as they leave the field at sundown that there is not enough money for tickets, then tries to console them with the promise that he will go himself and describe it to them later; the neighbor who dies of rabies as his family pins him to the bed; the baby naked on the floor, every orifice black with flies; the faint odor of the unembalmed corpse during a summer afternoon funeral. These are the features most likely to impress those who live today in comfortable suburbs, but the hill people did not know that they were "backward" and isolated. As Jess Hudgins says, "it was just the way of living." And that way of living included good times as well as bad, from the simple pleasures of a homemade toy to the high spirits of a coon hunt, a quilting bee, or dinner on the grounds after a long Sunday of preaching.

As the Watkinses describe this way of life, we feel as though we are witnessing a holiday reunion of a father and son who enjoy swapping old stories long since worn smooth in the telling. The best stories are the ones about particular individuals—stubborn and irascible old General Wheeler who built a church on his own place because the Baptist preacher, he thought, misquoted the Bible; his bachelor brother Bud who always commenced preaching when he got drunk and hollered once, "If I'da had the practice, I'da been a damn good preacher"; the beloved but reserved Doc Saye, who fired at Boogermole Boling in his henhouse one night and treated him next morning free of charge for shotgun wounds. The telling of these stories amounts to more than nostalgic recollection; for it is mainly from these vividly drawn characters that we derive an understanding of the quality of life that they knew. We discover their sense of family in Jess Hudgins' recollection of how long it took to pop popcorn in the fireplace for "Pa, Ma, Grandma, and us ten children"; their sense of community in the account of neighbors' coming to help sick Zack Thompson's wife with the plowing; their strong sense of individuality in the story of Aunt Cora Wheeler who, deserted by her husband soon after her marriage, made her own way until she grew too feeble to support herself and then refused an old-age pension "because somebody else might need the money more than she did."

Yesterday in the Hills is not art; it is a deeply felt, unadorned recreation of a way of life that was raw, tough, and in many ways healthy. As the Watkinses put it in their "Preface," the hillman "was, simply, himself, and he knew what he was in the eyes of himself and his neighbor and his God."

One cold morning last December a professor from the University in Athens stood in a hill country churchyard and read the headstones of five brothers and sisters buried between 1895 and 1910, and it seemed to him for a moment that he could see an old woman coming up the red clay road, past the graves of her children, to Sunday morning services. In that moment he recovered an understanding of the life of the hill people and drove back to Athens aware that something has been lost. Like that churchyard, *Yesterday in the Hills* restores to us such old people and the world they lived in.

Reviewed by James Kilgo

Travels in the Old South, Selected from Periodicals of the Times, ed. by Eugene L. Schwaab, with the collaboration of Jacqueline Bull, The University Press of Kentucky, two volumes, 579 pp., \$25.00.

This selection of pre-Civil War magazine articles is issued as a supplement to Thomas D. Clark's bibliographical *Travels in the Old South*

(Oklahoma, 1956). Clark, however, sought to be inclusive—he listed all the travel books he could find—and though he gave generous abstracts of the books' contents, he did not seek to reproduce their texts. Eugene L. Schwaab's book differs from Clark's on both counts: since his texts are short, he reproduces them in full; once committed to texts in full, he must be selective. The period covered by Schwaab is roughly the same as that of Clark's second and third volumes, 1783-1860. He utilizes Clark's seven temporal sub-divisions, and in the process of selection, seeks to give approximately equal representation to each, and to each of the states and regions of the old South, without reference to the amount and quality of the material available for each time and area. The result, as he admits in his Preface, is that some better articles are suppressed at the expense of others less interesting and less well written. Since this is primarily a scholarly book, one is surprised by the absence of any bibliographical list of the articles which were located but not reproduced. Such a list would have better supplemented Clark's work without adding much bulk to a large two-volume publication. A footnote gives bibliographical information about each of the articles reprinted, but even in such cases the casual reader is left to guess the city and nation in which the magazine appeared, and is given no sense of its circulation, audience, or diffusion. But all such cavils belong more properly to a historian reviewing for a professional journal. To him I leave matters of accuracy and even sins of omission.

What does the non-historian find here? A handsome, boxed, two-volume set of unusually wide format. A variety of styles, from the callow and semi-literate to the polished. A variety of interests ranging from the agricultural and mechanical to the geological, architectural, economic, and social. A variety of origins and points of view among the writers. A good many of these, especially in the later periods, are evidently professional journalists, sometimes with the circumlocution, archness, and ornamental phrase one associates with such writing in Victorian America. Generally the best writing is by Englishmen, notably the anonymous author of "An Englishman in South Carolina, 1860" and G.P.R. James, the popular author, who described "Virginia Country Life" for *Knickerbocker Magazine* in 1858. But there is much tedium in these pages, too: comments on the inadequacies of innkeepers and remarks on the condition of the roads which, while they have some meaning to certain historians, can hardly either instruct or divert the general reading public.

In all likelihood the buyer will acquire this book because of the particular region he is interested in. For instance there are seven or eight articles dealing wholly or chiefly with Louisiana, written between 1802 and 1853, none of them commonly known. Steamboating, sugar, New Orleans cemeteries, Mardi Gras, river geology and plantation life are all represented. My interest in folklore especially drew me to the articles dealing with All Saints' Day observances and with Carnival before the Civil War. The anonymous A.L.S., writing for the *Ladies Garland* of May, 1849, gives us a good notion of Mardi Gras a decade before the inception of the current secret society, parade-and-ball formula:

... thence to the "Neutral Ground," the division line between the American and the foreign section of the city [i.e., Canal Street]. Here we encountered the procession of mummies. They had just entered Chartres street, and that popular thoroughfare ... never appeared so narrow and crowded before. Every window was wide open ... and balconies ... were laden with all ages, from the smiling infant to the glad octogenarian, who chuckled as the fantastic figures passed along. ... The pavé too was covered with spectators and maskers—the latter either on mules and horses, or in vehicles—in some cases superbly decorated, in some grotesquely. The characters were chiefly comic ... everywhere were to be seen the most outré caricatures of both man and beast. ... Instead of throwing back, as the rest did, the sugar-plums with which all were playfully pelted by the ladies from the windows and piazzas as they were passed, [a previously mentioned masker representing Dr. Graham of Graham cracker fame] was disbursing his bran-meal in copious showers upon the heads and shoulders of all within his reach.

Doubtless the Arkansan will be as much intrigued by a description of the first settlement at Hot Springs, and a Texan by the account of missionary journeys and attacks by Comanches in the early days of the Republic by Bishop J. M. Odin. Incidentally, Odin, later Archbishop of New Orleans, wrote in French for a French audience; our text is a nineteenth-century American translation of his original.

The unusual format has already been mentioned. It was no doubt chosen to accommodate the numerous sepia-tone full-page illustrations. Strangely, except for small print crediting such sources as Bettmann Archive, the editors have not indicated the provenance of their illustrations. The skimming reader might well assume that the illustrations accompany the original magazine articles, but in most cases this cannot be true. The first reprint, for instance, "Sketches of the South Santee," is descriptive of the 1790's, and was first published in 1836, but the editors' first illustration, showing black ricefield workers, is in a style typical of the 1870's or 1880's. A little later the same article's reference to water mills on the Santee is accompanied by a romantic picture of a watermill. But in the background is a large city with two handsome Gothic spires on its skyline. Surely, whenever this picture was drawn, it does not seem to illustrate the Santee river. The absence of captions is far more confusing, for instance, in Thomas Chapman's "A Journey through the United States," where, of the six illustrations accompanying the text, or rather, provided for it, I was able to identify but one, the natural bridge of Virginia.

Of course this kind of illustration has nothing to do with scholarship. The two volumes, the box, the illustrations, the odd format and the unnecessarily high price all are indications that the publishers decided to tap the "coffee-table and conversation piece" market as well as the scholarly and library buyers. Ought they to have their knuckles rapped? This volume and others like it raise the questions: For whom do these presses publish and with whom ought they to compete?

All American university presses are subsidized, at least to the extent of free rent and the payment of several salaries by the university or consortium which stands behind them. Granted this subsidy, is it the task of the directors to make as much money as possible, or to lose money beneficially—beneficially for the scholarly world? A crucial question which comes up in university presses when a scholarly manuscript is submitted is always, "How many copies will it sell?" The individual press wants to put out a substantial list. But if in an absolute sense almost all university press books lose money, one can only afford to put out books which lose a little, rather than books which lose a lot, if one is to spend one's subsidy or loss-factor to the end of sustaining and amplifying a long publication list. This phenomenon produces some odd emphases. Notoriously, people who buy in the literary field buy poets and novelists rather than critics. But the former are chiefly published by the trade publishers. On the other hand, the history amateur buys contemporary historians rather than source materials, so that the university press will lose less on a Civil War book than on a first-rate study of Matthew Arnold or a superb essay on Lope de Vega, even if the Civil War book is quite mediocre. Therefore there is a tendency for mediocre books in relatively saleable fields to proliferate. In the treatment of the book now under review, one sees an attempt to reach beyond the circle of history buffs and to compete for the even larger market commonly reached by such trade publications as McGraw Hill's "American Heritage" series, and the gift book market. This is all very well unless it modifies the original and scholarly plan. If the box, and the sepia pictures, and the two volumes meant that American historians were deprived of many of the articles tracked down by Schwaab, and had an extra ten dollars been tacked on to the price in the process, then I believe that a publication such as this one is seriously reprehensible. Presidents and boards of trustees ought to dedicate some time to thinking about the press output which finances occasion and what can be done to make the university press more responsive to the general needs and concerns of the universal scholarly community.

Reviewed by George F. Reinecke

Southern Voices, Volume 1, Nos. 1 and 2, published by the Southern Regional Council, 80 pp., and 82 pp., \$1.50 per issue.

Southern Voices is unprecedented in Southern cultural history, an expensively-produced, slick magazine of Southwide circulation and

serious aspirations. It is published by the Southern Regional Council, a liberal organization which since 1944 has tried to help solve Southern social problems by gathering and disseminating information and establishing "human relations councils."

The Southern Regional Council for the past several years has been financed to a large extent by the Ford Foundation, from which the organization has obtained additional funds to subsidize *Southern Voices*. The new magazine replaces two Southern Regional Council publications, *New South*, an intellectual quarterly, and *South Today*, a more topical publication. Both *New South* and *South Today* dealt more or less exclusively with Southern social problems. *Southern Voices* will emphasize social problems, but it is also publishing fiction, poetry, graphic art and artistic photography.

The new magazine's editor is Pat Watters, who among other things, is the author of a well-regarded book, *The South and the Nation*. The fiction editor is J. Mitchell Morse, an author, critic and faculty member at Temple University, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The poetry editor is Charleen Whisnant, who published the now-discontinued *Red Clay Reader*. Both Morse and Whisnant serve on a consulting basis. Among the rather large list of staff members, contributing editors and advisory editors, *New Orleans Review* readers might recognize the following names: Robert Coles; John Egerton, (author of the recently published *The Americanization of Dixie*); Robert Sherrill; Louis D. Rubin, Jr., a scholarly critic of Southern literature; Julian Bond; Charles Morgan, Jr.; C. Vann Woodward; Will Campbell, theologian and editor of *Katledge*; and Alice Walker, author of *In Love and Trouble*, a recently published short-story collection.

At this writing, two issues of *Southern Voices* have appeared. (The magazine will appear every two months.) Judging from these examples, *Southern Voices*, in tone and content, will resemble a Southern-oriented *Atlantic Monthly*, with aspects of *The New Republic* and *Newsweek*. The first two issues contain thirty-two articles of varying lengths, eighteen poems, an excerpt from a novel-in-progress by Reynolds Price, three short-short stories by Beth Crawford Parrish, described as a free lance writer living in Statesboro, Georgia, and an autobiographical essay by Jesse Hill Ford.

The magazine's prospectus said that *Southern Voices* would publish "... essentially anything about the South or by Southerners which would appeal to people interested in the South and aware of its advantages, problems and possibilities." The articles already printed include: a funny piece on two men whose hobby is getting publicity for the huge watermelons grown around Hope, Arkansas; a profile of Charles Morgan, Jr., the current head of the American Civil Liberties Union, who is from Alabama; a reminiscent tribute to a recently deceased black educator; Tom Wicker on Sam Ervin's anti-civil rights record; integration in the Richmond, Virginia, public schools; the election of a black mayor in Raleigh, North Carolina; religious snake-handlers in Appalachia; the status of coal miners in Harlan County, Kentucky; the Atlanta Arts Council; Southern Republicanism; unfair Southern taxes; and the sterilization of welfare mothers. (I contributed an article on an organization in Arkansas that works for the betterment of low-to-middle-income people.)

Perhaps the most interesting things published in the first two issues are seven full-color pages of reproductions of the paintings of the late Walter Anderson who did most of his work on the islands off the Mississippi Gulf Coast, with an introduction and an excerpt from his journals; and a long and intelligent interview with Walker Percy. (Question: "Do you think there are many good Southern novelists writing today?" Percy: "Well, the so-called Southern thing is over and done with, I think." Followed by an articulate expansion of the point.)

Graphically, the first two issues suffer from feast-or-famine syndrome, with lavish use of color on the covers and one or two places on the inside, and stark black-and-white elsewhere, aggravated by a quasi-newspaper-style makeup. The atmosphere of newspapers hangs over the whole effort, including some of the writing, probably because of the predominance of former newspaper people among the writers and staff. This is understandable. If you want to be a writer, particularly in the South, you either work for a newspaper, in which case you do very little outside writing, or you become a college teacher, in which case the kinds of writing that obtain promotions and tenure generally do not include even upper-class journalism, thereby leaving

the upper-class journalism field open to the present and former newspaper reporters.

It is mildly anomalous that a well-financed liberal-intellectual magazine devoted to the South should appear now, when, as many writers are almost creating a new genre in pointing out, the South has gone a long way toward merging with the rest of the nation. The time when such a magazine was acutely needed was anytime from 1865 to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Now, when the edges of Southern distinctiveness have been blurred forever, perhaps the real service of *Southern Voices* will be not to the South, but to the nation, to echo the title of its editor's book, by providing an outlet for contemplative socially-conscious journalism and a badly-needed, relatively well-paying market for serious fiction and poetry. I doubt that more than a very few of the articles published in the first two issues would have found a publisher if *Southern Voices* had not come into existence. The articles tend to be relatively too intellectual and subjective to be published in newspapers, and too specifically Southern to be published by national magazines. Articles about the South, other than news stories, tend to be few and scattered. The sudden appearance of a regular compendium of such articles is almost an unquestionable blessing. But, as I indicated, I think that the true value of *Southern Voices* will rest in its social liberalism and in the quality of the writing it publishes rather than in its "southernness."

Any publication's pay scale has considerable influence on what it prints. *Southern Voices* is paying from \$5 to \$300 for articles and fiction, depending on length and quality, and \$15 apiece for poems. The \$300 top price is a good fee for regularly employed persons who want to write thoughtful articles, perhaps related to their own work and requiring a minimum of research, and for essayists and humorists. It is not nearly enough to encourage the production of articles requiring a great deal of time and research. This problem may be solved partially by the publication of the Southern Regional Council's own research reports and by the organization's program of grants for investigative reporting. Nevertheless, by not paying more, *Southern Voices* is sure to miss some good articles and to be topheavy with shorter "think pieces."

On the other hand, by offering \$300, *Southern Voices* becomes

the top-paying market for Southern-oriented short stories. (It is followed, according to *Writer's Market '74*, by the *Southern Review*, which pays three cents a word.) It can be expected that when the word gets out, *Southern Voices* will start getting the first chance at practically every short story and novel-excerpt with the least bit of Southern flavor that manages to get written, and that it will be the second port-of-call for most Southern fiction that is sent by over-optimistic writers to the better-paying national publications. Three hundred dollars is a very poor price for a short story, considering the effort required to write one and the rarity of a good one, but, in terms of the present literary-economic situation in which many literary magazines, including some of the more prestigious ones, pay nothing at all for fiction, \$300 approaches being a bonanza. Fifteen dollars for a poem is either a joke or a bit of unexpected lagniappe, depending on how you look at it. If writers could get paid decently for individual pieces of work they would not have to spend so much time working for newspapers and colleges, and serious journalism, fiction and poetry might begin to slough off the aura of sameness inculcated by the excessive adherence of writers to these trades.

Southern Voices is starting with a "controlled" circulation of about 25,000, which means that it is working from a mailing list of potential subscribers, plus the leftover paid subscriptions of *South Today* and *New South*, which also augmented their paid subscriptions by sending free copies to persons on mailing lists. Not very many years ago the idea that 25,000 Southerners could be found who might be willing to subscribe to a liberal, intellectual publication might have been laughable. Perhaps we can see here the outlines of a general law: a publication that asks readers to think about their culture cannot hope for a general audience until the old rigidities have begun irrevocably to crumble. The more rigid a culture is, the less thinking its people have to do.

I hope that *Southern Voices*, coming toward the end of the historical phenomenon of "southernness," might find its true calling in helping us all to think out a program for a more honest and charitable United States.

Reviewed by Martin Kirby

Notes on Contributors

JOHN ALLEN ADAMS writes that his education has covered "10th grade formal, plus 54 years' informal" experience; the owner of a bookstore in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, he has published in *Saturday Review* and *South & West*.

RICHARD P. ADAMS is Chairman of the Department of English at Tulane University. A distinguished Faulkner scholar, he is the author of *Faulkner: Myth and Motion* (Princeton) and articles which have appeared in several journals.

MARY FRANCES BERRY divides her time between city life in New Orleans and a farm in Mississippi; she has written book reviews for the *Vieux Carré Courier's* "Books" supplement and the *Richmond Mercury*.

DAVID A. BOILEAU directs the Institute of Human Relations at Loyola; his publications include a two-volume study on discrimination, published by the University of Louvain Press.

DENNIS BRACKIN teaches social studies at Caritas Community in Crystal Springs, Mississippi; with the exception of stories and poems which have appeared in the Mississippi State University literary magazine, *The Other*, the NOR presents his first publication.

HENRY CASSELLI is a New Orleans native and former Marine Corps combat artist whose paintings have been part of over 200 exhibitions and traveling shows, including the Smithsonian Institute, the Philadelphia College of Art, the American Watercolor Society, the National Academy of Design, Audubon Artists, the United States Information Agency, and the Franklin Mint's Gallery of American Art Gold Medal Invitational; his paintings of Marines in Vietnam have been viewed on the national television documentary, "60 Minutes." His work will be featured in the December 1974 issue of *American Artist* magazine.

WALTER B. CLANCY is former president of the Committee of Southern Churchmen and is now Professor of Social Welfare at the University of Arkansas' Graduate School of Social Work in Little Rock.

ANNIE DILLARD has received widespread critical acclaim for her prose narrative recently brought out by Harper's Press, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*; a resident of Roanoke, Virginia, she is a contributing editor to *Harper's Magazine*, a regular columnist for the Wilderness Society, and the author of a collection of verse, *Tickets for a Prayer Wheel* (University of Missouri Press).

VAUGHN DUHAMEL is a founder of the New Orleans Poetry Forum and a peripatetic traveling poet; he has given readings throughout the United States, has published poetry in over three dozen small magazines, and is presently editing an anthology of New Orleans poets.

MYRA HAMBRICK writes from New Roads, Louisiana: "I am totally involved in poetry—its pages are my sort of mythology, and words have strong gentle pressures all their own." She recently graduated from Dillard University, and has published poems in several journals in addition to giving readings of her work.

DAWSON GAILLARD is Chairman of the Department of English at Loyola, fiction editor of the NOR, and special editor for this Southern issue; her essays have appeared in *Mississippi Quarterly* and *Georgia Review*.

JOHN G. HAMMOND teaches English at the University of New Orleans; his critical study "*The Island: An Explication*" has appeared in the University of Texas publication, *Corral*.

SHAEL HERMAN combines poetry and law in New Orleans, where he is a director of the New Orleans Poetry Forum and an associate professor at Loyola Law School; a former Breadloaf Poetry Scholar, he will soon be participating in the "Law and the Humanities" program at Harvard.

FORREST L. INGRAM is Chairman of the Department of English at Moorhead State College in Moorhead, Minnesota; former Editor of the NOR, he is currently editing a volume of essays on short-story cycles.

THOMAS JOHNSON edits Stinktree Press in Memphis, Tennessee; in addition to giving numerous readings and contributing poetry to various quarterlies, he has published two collections of verse, *Homing Signals* and *Footholds*.

NANCY JOYNER's critical studies have appeared in scholarly journals such as *American Literature*, *Southern Literary Journal*, and *English Language Notes*; she is an associate professor of English at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, North Carolina.

A. M. KARIMI is an associate professor in the Department of Communications at Loyola, where he coordinates the Film Studies program; he has produced numerous industrial, documentary, and traffic safety films, and has a book forthcoming from Indiana Press, *The American Film Noir*.

RUTH MOON KEMPER helps operate a tavern in St. Augustine, Florida, has published over 350 poems and three books, and is in her first year of the Ph.D. program at Emory University.

JAMES KILGO is an assistant professor of English at the University of Georgia.

MARTIN KIRBY, ex-newspaper reporter and for two years editor of the *Arkansas Advocate*, is now doing free-lance writing out of Little Rock, where he lives with his wife and young son.

PINKIE GORDON LANE is a widely published poet, a professor of English at Southern University in Baton Rouge, and winner of several awards for her poetry; in addition to editing and appearing in many anthologies of black poets, she is the author of a volume of verse, *Wind Thoughts*, which is reviewed in this issue of the NOR.

DAVID MADDEN, a native of Knoxville, Tennessee, is Writer-in-Residence at Louisiana State University. He is the author of several works of criticism and fiction, including the recent Book-of-the-Month Club alternate *Bijou*, and is the editor of many collections of essays; his most recent is *Remembering James Agee* (LSU Press). *The Hero and the Witness* is an early version of his first novel, *The Beautiful Greed* (Random House, 1961); it has been rewritten for publication in this issue of the NOR, and is soon to be published with three other novellas about Lucius Hutchfield.

JIM MAGDANZ edits the editorial page of the Jackson, Tennessee Sun, where he has also worked as a photojournalist. A 1973 journalism graduate of the University of Missouri, he is now doing graduate work at Memphis State University.

STEPHEN R. MALONEY has published articles in such diverse journals as *English Record*, *South Carolina Review*, and *National Review*; he is an assistant professor of English at the University of Georgia and a past editor of the *Georgia Review*.

JOHN R. MAY, S.J., an associate professor of Religious Studies at Loyola, is the author of several studies of theological literary criticism, including a book *Toward a New Earth: Apocalypse in the American Novel*.

JO MCMANIS has published in the *Southern Review*, and has previously contributed reviews to the NOR.

C. J. MCNASPY, former fine-arts editor of *America*, is a widely-traveled scholar and author of several books; he is now book review editor for the NOR.

MICHAEL MOTT is currently Writer-in-Residence at Emory University in Atlanta, a former editor of *Kenyon Review*, and a prolific and varied author; his poems and reviews have appeared in many magazines and newspapers; he has published three volumes of poetry; and he has written two children's books and two adult novels.

KEITH MOUL is completing his Ph.D. at the University of South Carolina; he has contributed poems to periodicals such as *Sewanee Review* and *Centennial Review*, and is currently preparing a volume of translations entitled *The Anglo-Saxon Heroic Experience*.

SENA JETER NASLUND teaches creative writing and 19th-century British literature at the University of Louisville, where she is an assistant professor; she is presently working on a novel about classical musicians.

P. B. NEWMAN, Professor of English at Queens College in Charlotte, North Carolina, has had over 150 poems featured in literary quarterlies such as *Southern Poetry Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Literary Review* and *Prairie Schooner*; a recipient of numerous awards for his work, he is also the author of three poetry collections.

NATALIE L. M. PETESCH's stories and excerpts from novels have been featured in a wide range of magazines and anthologies; "Ramón El Conejo" is one of the stories in her collection entitled *After the First Death, There is No Other*, which received the 1974 Iowa Fiction Award and will soon be published by Iowa Press. Although she presently lives in Pittsburgh, Ms. Petesch has studied and taught in Texas, and writes that she does "feel the lure, the call, the responsibility of being a Southern writer!"

GEORGE F. REINECKE is editor of *Louisiana Folklore Miscellany* and Chairman of the English Department at the University of New Orleans; his publications include verse, numerous articles, and reviews, in the fields of Medieval and Renaissance literature, folklore, and Louisiana studies.

LARRY RUBIN is a widely published Southern poet whose work has been featured since 1956 in magazines throughout the United States, including *The New Yorker*, *Southern Review*, *Saturday Review*, *Poetry*, *The Nation*, and *Harper's Magazine*; he has received many awards and

grants for his work, and has appeared in several anthologies, most recently *The Norton Introduction to Literature: Poetry*. Mr. Rubin is presently Professor of English at Georgia Institute of Technology.

JESSIE SCHELL has contributed poems and stories to *The Greensboro Review*, *Georgia Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *The Dragonfly*; she is also the author of a novel, *Sudina* (E. P. Dutton), and lectures in creative writing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

KATHRYN STRIPLING teaches English and creative writing at Western Carolina University; she has poetry appearing and forthcoming in *Southern Review*, *Georgia Review*, *American Scholar*, *Intro #1*, *South Carolina Review*, and *Poem*.

GEORGE F. THOMPSON is a sophomore at the University of Alabama, where he is enrolled in New College, studying creative writing and contemporary literature.

JERRY WARD has work appearing and forthcoming in *Mississippi Folklore Register*, *Black World*, and *Mississippi Review*; he is an assistant professor in the English Department at Tougaloo College.

GORDON WEAVER edits *Mississippi Review* and directs the Center for Writers at the University of Southern Mississippi, where he is an associate professor; he has published three books (*The Entombed Man of Thule* is reviewed in this issue of NOR) and has a novel, *Give Him a Stone*, which is soon to be brought out by Crown Publishers; he has also received several National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, and has been a Visiting Poet and Poet-in-Residence at schools in Mississippi and Louisiana.

ELECTA WILEY is a professor of English at Southern University in Shreveport; *Voices International*, *South & West*, and the *Arkansas Gazette* have included her poetry, and she has recently published a first book, *Tiers*.