the new orleans review

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This issue is dedicated
to the memory of
RICHARD P. ADAMS
1917-1977

OUROBOROS

Assume the sun as center, and our life
Whirls in that radiance, dancing endlessly
In praise of light. The moon is another center,
Pale in the darkness of an inmost night,
Perfused with musk of love. The basking earth
And the beating heart, in the air and in the blood,
Equilibrous tumblers through the universe,
Vibrate around extremes, keeping their trim,
Sunward and moonward and onward, world without end.

—R. P. A.
January, 1975

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by Gebhard Frolich

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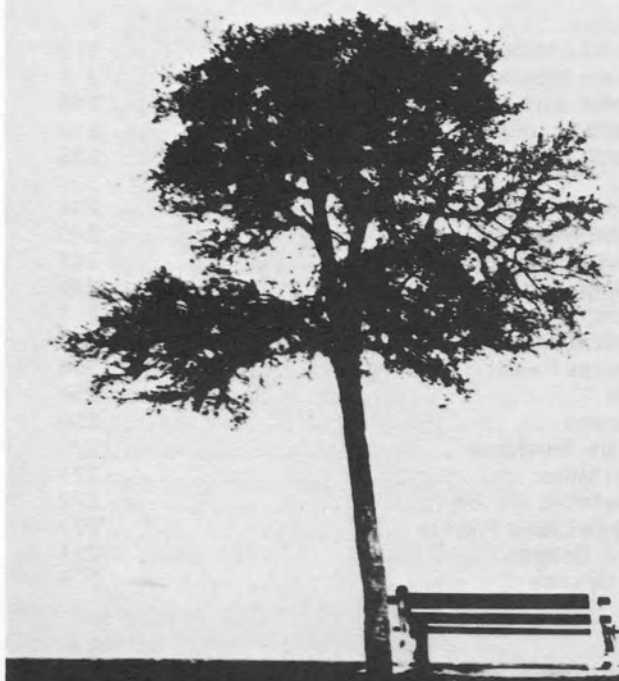
The Associated Writing Programs: A Selection

The Associated Writing Programs, an organization of college and university writers in the United States, held its annual convention at Loyola University in New Orleans, March 11-12, 1976.

AWP members are involved with writing of all kinds: poetry, fiction, film and technical writing, as well as teaching composition. In convention workshops, the association focuses on such issues as getting published, writing for pre-professionals, the problem of literacy and new approaches to teaching writing.

The NOR is pleased to present the work of the following AWP members: Hazard Adams, Michael Berryhill, Doris Betts, Price Caldwell, Peter Cooley, Stephen Gardner, Malcolm Glass, Peter Meinke and Janet Samuelson.



WHY THERE ARE BIRDS

It is difficult, maybe impossible, to imagine
things that are not,
for they have a way of turning out to be
combinations.
Think of the sadness of the Greeks
who invented
all those centaurs and satyrs.

One even guesses that God
came up against it finally
with Australia—after all,
kangaroo, platypus, koala.

And the mind boys,
our brain mappers,
say it's all binary
and no hope,
and poetry is fine
and cultural
and, well, harmless
in its way.

Perhaps it should be reiterated
about now
that they can pass us back
to the primal nerve
and into the sea even,
that we will still go on
making these
ridiculous beasts
and the fields to keep them.

Hardly perfections
and perhaps most doomed
to extinction
and none totally our own
or original—
but, still,
a defiance.

—Hazard Adams

EXPEDITION

Deep in the woods you can only get lost,
he tells me, if you can't see above
the trees, their top branches scraping
the sky, angry fists in the wind.

Timberline he calls it,
the word the middle vein under his tongue
as he plots the trail
in dirt with his finger.

We climbed it only once,
I got half-way, my legs gave out
and he left me between two boulders
with the evacuation line.

Nine climbers passed me that day
on the way down with no word of him
offering me whiskey and advice
on the quick storms, on exposure.

I imagined him on the top,
looking down for me, needing
to find the place between us
that would lose us to each other.

The early autumn snow came fast
as I knew it would and the line
couldn't help me or him at the top
until the clouds and fog shifted

and light hit our side of the mountain
exposing the tundra two thousand feet
around and there he was beside me
running to the first person he'd spotted

in ten hours and we did not speak
running the line to the base,
breaking branches on the way,
our only words for a climb we'd finish later.

—Janet Samuelson

Report From the Interior

by Price Caldwell

"It is imperative that the house be finished before the strong winds come." This is the message that occupies the air these days, lives in the pits of our stomachs, infects our days, echoing down from the perimeters of the sky. We are doing the best we can. To be sure, we got off to a pretty good start; the house was more than half together when we got it, and that was back in the spring. The roof was on, the doors worked, and all of the windows had their glass. Still there is some distance to go. Margaret doesn't seem very worried about it. I don't know why. There's not much time left.

No house can survive the wind forever. This house is seventy-three years old and has seen wind before, blowing down into the bottom of this spacetimehole we live in. By the time this report makes its way out to where you can see it the house no doubt will have succumbed, and the rest of us too. In the meantime there must be more than good shingles on the roof. There must be putty behind the glass of the windows, insulation on the pipes. We must have several inches of compost on the garden, bookcases, a pantry for the canned goods and the liquor, candles for when the lights go out. I don't know what all. A good strong table for the typewriter in the back hall and a heater nearby. Janis says we must fix the house so the thunder can't get in, but I don't know how to keep the sound of it out.

"But why is it hard to keep the thunder out, Daddy?" Janis said. "Because the holes are too big?"

"Always too big," I said. "It's hard to make them small enough. Besides, I've been working on the table instead."

"But why are you working on the table now?"

"Because there must be a place for the typewriter. But it's almost finished now."

"But Daddy, are you scared of the thunder?"

"Yes."

"Me too," Wayne said.

I asked, "Did it thunder today?" In this house it is very loud, even though Margaret says I sometimes do not hear it. Janis was standing on one of my feet, hanging onto my leg. It's hard to work on the table that way. Wayne wanted to stand on my other foot but Janis wouldn't let him.

"But Daddy, it thundered today when you weren't here. It thundered very loud."

"Very loud," Wayne said, rolling his eyes and nodding his head with that air of total certainty. Why does he do that? The moldings have not yet been put back on the windows. Perhaps that would cut down on the noise. I don't have time for everything.

"You must use your pillow, Janis," I said. "When you hear the thunder you can put the pillow over your head and then you won't hear it so loud."

"But Daddy," she said, curling around my knee again. But Wayne shouted "Let's try it!" and so she uncurled and they ran to their room to try it.

"It's going to thunder some more tonight," Margaret said, in the kitchen. "In fact I hear it now."

I thought it was just the refrigerator I heard. I'll have to see what it needs. I need sandpaper too, for the table, and varnish. "Will you varnish the table," I asked Margaret, "if I can get some varnish?"

She said, "Yes, but you've got to get the car together first."

"But the cylinder head hasn't come yet."

The car has been laid up in the back yard for three weeks. It's pretty much together now. What worries me more is the foundation of the house. I've already rebuilt the porch, but while I was doing that I discovered some unpleasant things about the house. Next spring I'll take another inspection tour. I will crawl on my stomach from pier to pier again with the six-volt flashlight. Wayne will squat anxiously at the side of the house with his hands on his knees saying, "Daddy? Daddy? What are you looking at now, Daddy?"

But Margaret came in and said, "Now you children stop bothering Daddy. Get your clothes off, it's time for your bath."

"The table is almost finished," I said. "See, it doesn't wobble much now."

"Can I try?" Janis said.

"Me too," Wayne said. Both of them made the desk wobble.

"I'm running your bath water," Margaret said. "Get your clothes off."

"But Daddy, what is that funny noise?" Janis said.

"That's the battery charger."

"But where is it?"

"On the washing machine. But don't touch it."

"But what does it do?"

"It makes electricity for the battery in the big flashlight."

"Can I turn it on?" Wayne said. Wayne loves the flashlight. When I first bought it he slept with it for a week. We must

remember how he looked when I found him one night at midnight, clutching the flashlight with both arms as if it were a doll, with the weakening light shining up at his chin and nose and sealed eyes. At least we know how the battery got run down.

"No, it's not ready yet. Tomorrow."

"But can I turn it on tomorrow?"

"Yes. Tomorrow night."

"Get your clothes off, children," Margaret said.

"But I will hold the flashlight for you," Wayne said.

"But can I?" Janis said.

"But I said first."

"Get in the bathtub, both of you."

I did not put the typewriter on the table, but I was tempted to. The table still wobbled a little. Something must be said about the life that goes on in this time and place. The children, of course, do not realize how high and narrow the perimeters have become. They do not hear the message that eats away the days here. The house *must* be finished before the strong winds come. At least before the strongest of the strong winds come. It is not very singable but it whistles down from the perimeters of the sky.

"What are you singing?" Margaret said, coming out of the bathroom. "When do the strong winds come?"

"October. Maybe November. I hope not this month."

"Janis is afraid of the thunder, not the wind."

"Thunder can come any time. At least it won't knock the house down. Probably."

"At least you could finish fixing the windows."

"Maybe so."

Wayne called out then and Margaret went back into the bathroom. Probably I should at least get the putty in behind the glass. The tiny cleats that hold the glass are already in place, but the glass rattles in the wind and echoes the thunder. The new ropes are needed too, and the moldings. The moldings might cut out some of the noise and the cold air.

In the bathroom, I heard Janis say, "But Mama, why do you have hair on your bottom?" I strained to hear what Margaret would say.

"Because I'm big," Margaret said, matter-of-factly.

"But will I have hair on my bottom when I'm big like you?"

"Yes."

"Me too," Wayne said.

Margaret came out of the bathroom. "Did you hear that little conversation?"

I said "Shh."

"When you get big you'll have hair on your bottom too," we heard Janis say.

"Just like Mama!" Wayne said.

"No, silly, like Daddy. When you get big you'll be a Daddy."

"Oh," Wayne laughed. "I forgot."

Margaret smiled. "What are we going to do with them when they're teenagers?"

"I can't imagine them ever being teenagers."

"But they will. Before you know it."

I started to say, do you know something I don't know? And then I started to say, where do you get your confidence? But I didn't. She has always had confidence. But she may be right. The hours and days and years niggle away. One might well conclude that there is a future. Yet the perimeters gain height so rapidly they must converge to zero soon. Soon. Perhaps it only looks that way. Is that it?

"It's time for us to go to bed too," Margaret said. "Are you almost finished?"

"Almost." I went into the bathroom.

"But Daddy," Janis said, "when I get big will I have two bottoms like Wayne?"

"No."

"In two weeks will I?"

"No."

"In a few days?"

"No."

"But Daddy," Janis insisted, "when I get big will I have two bottoms like Wayne?"

"No."

"In two weeks?"

"But you are already older than Wayne."

"But in a few days?"

But before I could say no again she said, "But Daddy, do you know what soap does?"

"What?"

"It looks like hair on your tummy." Wayne and Janis both shrieked with laughter.

"Oh," I said. "Time to get out of the bathtub now. Bedtime."

Eventually they went to bed. The table still wobbled a little. I drilled another hole in the leg and drove another screw. It needed glue in one place but I quit. I cleared the tools off the top of the table and got the typewriter. The table did not wobble when I typed a sentence. When the winter gets here at least the typewriter will be ready. In October the strong winds will come. Later the snow will stack up white and thick against the fences in the back yard. The blackbirds will come to eat at the compost heap, where I leave the table scraps, exchanging their phosphates for my fats. Then, perhaps, there will be time to use the typewriter. First I need sandpaper and varnish. And a heater to go by the table to keep me warm. On cold nights Margaret and I will lie in bed listening to the conversation of the children as they lie in their beds. The record must be kept of the moments that pass.

I worked on the porch before I worked on the table or the car. Water had been standing on the floor until it had rotted out. I ripped off the rotten boards and found that the joists had fallen underneath. Some of them were rotten too so I knocked them out and then I sat there under the porch figuring out how to rebuild. Before I started back to work I crawled around under the rest of the house with the flashlight to see how much rot there was.

The floor of the bathroom is rotten too. I already knew that, of course. Whenever I take a bath I can smell it. I opened my pocketknife and pushed the blade an inch into the wood of one of the joists, the one the tub rests on.

All the sills under the house, even the good ones, are riddled with the little holes the powder-post beetles make. Even so they may stand a long time. Some of the nine-by-twelve heart-pine beams have areas of rot over the brick piers they rest on. At some points I could sink my knife two inches into them. Yet there is good wood at the center. I told myself those beams are still better than any you can buy now. But I had bad dreams about them.

The porch itself was in the worst shape. I had hoped to repair only where the water had stood, but the rot ran the whole

length of the front of the house, under the floor. I would have to rip out the boards behind the steps, and all across the front. I would have to support the porch roof somehow. I ordered $150 worth of lumber from the building supply, and two house jacks from the catalogue. While I was waiting I sat in the dirt under the porch trying to figure out how it was to be done.

It took half of July and all of August. At first I had bad dreams every night. In my dreams I followed the rotten boards endlessly with my flashlight. The rot went everywhere. Eventually I discovered I was under my father's house, where I grew up. I remember now that I went under that house one time when I was about seven years old, looking for my pet turtle, whose name was Mick. When I found him he was gone. There was only his shell, and when I touched the shell, ants ran out. At other times in the dream I found myself under houses that I didn't even know. One was a very large house with blooming rose bushes at every corner of its magnificent porch, and glowing white worms which emerged from the wood underneath when I pushed my knife into it.

Eventually I got done. I replaced twelve rotten porch joists and all of the exterior fronting, and eighty-seven pieces of flooring. Janis and Wayne watched most of it and helped me all they could. When each part of the floor was done they argued with each other over who could be the first to walk on it. They tracked dirt from their feet onto the floor, and it stuck on the wood preservative I painted it with, not yet dry. Eventually Margaret painted the floor with grey paint and covered up their footprints.

The trash men came and carried off all the rotten lumber I had stacked up by the street. We sat on the steps and watched. Margaret admired the work and said, "At least no one will fall through the porch now." And Wayne patted me on the back and said, "Good Daddy! Good Daddy!" Of course, we have not yet worked on the bathroom. Did we at least buy a little time? Did we slow the rate of our descent?

After we worked on the porch we worked on the engine of the car. It is very difficult for me to remember when the car was young, or when we could drive it to neighborhoods other than this. I removed and cleaned the hydraulic valve lifters one by one. I scoured the top of the motor block where the new head gasket would go, and scrubbed the carbon off the pistons and around the tops of the cylinders. Wayne and Janis played on top of the car or sat with their feet on the windshield and talked to me.

"But Daddy," Janis said, "why is the car broken?"

"Because I took the motor apart."

"But why did you do that?"

"Because it wasn't running very well."

"Why it didn't run very well?"

"Because it's a very old car."

"But how old is it?"

"Ten years old."

"But I'm five years old."

"Yes."

"But when did you get this car?"

"I don't know. It was Mother's car." It came from out of another place and time, far beyond this neighborhood. Margaret had this car before I knew her. Like Margaret herself, it came from somewhere someplace beyond the sphere of my knowledge and memory, the only tangible proof I can think of for the fact of our reincarnations. Was it the means of our reincarnations? The vehicle?

"The vehicle?" Janis wrinkled her nose and laughed. "What's a vehicle?"

"A vehicle is what takes you where you have to go," I said, straightening up.

"But do I have a vehicle, Daddy?" Janis said.

"You have a little bicycle. That's a vehicle."

"Oh. But does Wayne?"

"Wayne has a wagon."

"Yes!" crowed Wayne. "And one time I carried Mama's big things in it and we went way far away!"

"You went with Mama to the store and carried her groceries in your wagon."

"Yes!"

"How far did you go?"

"This far!" He spread his hands as far as they could go, so far they almost met in the back. In this case that meant three blocks.

Janis said, "But Daddy, do you have a vehicle?"

"This car is my vehicle," I said. "And I have a bicycle too, you know."

I went back to work on the car. Janis and Wayne moved to the fender where they could see better.

"But Daddy, what's that thing?"

"The piston. But get back up on the top so you won't fall in."

"But what does it do?"

"It goes up and down and makes the car go."

"But how does it do that?"

"Well. How do you make your little bicycle go?"

"With my feet," she said, laughing patiently.

"Well, and when your feet go around your knees go up and down, right?"

"Oh! You mean like this?" She jumped off the fender and made her knees go up and down. She jumped up and down on the grass.

"But it makes the wheels of the car go around the same way," I shouted.

"Wayne!" she shouted. "This is how the car goes, just like this." She jumped up and down in huge jumps that carried her all around the yard. Wayne climbed down from the car and they both jumped up and down all around the yard. Then they went to ride their vehicles.

I have to tell you this. After we worked on the car that day the children and I took a bath together. Janis wanted to talk about bottoms again.

"But Daddy, Wayne's bottom is just like yours," she said.

"Yes," I said.

"But Daddy, why does yours have that on it, and Wayne's doesn't?"

"What?"

"That bump thing."

"Wayne's does too, but it's under the skin."

"But where?"

"Pull back the skin."

He pulled back the skin. Janis watched.

"There it is!" Wayne shouted.

"There it is!" Janis laughed.

"But why don't you have skin there?" Janis said.

"The doctor cut it off when I was a baby. But I told the doctor not to cut off Wayne's."

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"There it is!" Wayne shouted.

"There it is!" Janis laughed.

"But why don't you have skin there?" Janis said.

"The doctor cut it off when I was a baby. But I told the doctor not to cut off Wayne's."

"But why did he cut it off?"

"I don't know. Some people like it off." I said. But that sounded silly, I thought.

"But I don't want mine cut off," Wayne said. "That would hurt."

"No," I said. "Yes," I said.

"But Daddy," Janis said. "You are like a one. And Wayne is like a one."

"Huh?"

"Wayne's weewee is like a one. And yours too. Like this," she said. "Poomp." She wrote a one in the air with her finger.

"Oh," I said.

"And I am like a M. See? Poomp, poomp." She wrote an M in the air with her finger.

"Oh," I said. Do you see? Janis was laughing at herself. Do you see why I had to get the table fixed?

The morning after I worked on the table I went to the storeroom and got the swivel chair and sat down to see if my hands fit on the keyboard of the typewriter. I typed a sentence and the desk hardly wobbled at all. Janis wanted to get in my lap.

"But Daddy, what are you writing?"

"Nothing."

"Does it work?" Margaret said.

"Yes. But the table needs sanding and varnishing."

"I'll varnish if you'll sand," she said. "By the way, the Ford place just called. Your cylinder head is here."

"Good. I wonder if Mr. Weaver will let me use his pickup truck?"

"I'll call him and see."

"But Daddy," Janis said. "That's the U."

"Yes."

"Then comes I and O and P. And ¼."

"Yes."

"But Daddy, what's that mean?"

"¼?"

"Yes."

"I don't know how to tell you. It's two numbers together."

"Mr. Weaver says you can use his truck," Margaret said.

"Good."

"But Daddy, can I go too?"

'Me too," Wayne said, from another room.

"OK," I said.

The Ford place is out on the by-pass that circles this neighborhood. Before I was done I made three round trips, as I gradually discovered that the fittings on the old cylinder head did not fit the new one. When the new cylinder head was outfitted properly Margaret had to help me lift it into the car. I took one end and she took the other. Carefully we balanced it on the radiator. Then I climbed into the engine compartment, balanced my rear end on the top of the firewall with my feet on the engine mounts and together we carefully lowered the head onto the freshly-doped gasket.

It took all day. I torqued the head. I installed the lifters and the rocker arm assembly and adjusted the valves. I put the valve cover on and the carburetor and reattached the throttle and choke linkages and the gas line and the vacuum line. And the PCV line and the air cleaner. By then it was dark and turning cold. I did not have time to flush the water jacket and fill the radiator. The exhaust pipe dangled for lack of proper U-clamp. I did not try to start the car. I was tired.

"I was wondering when you would come in," Margaret said. "The children and I have already eaten. Is it going to work?"

"I hope. I wanted to get it running today. Maybe tomorrow it will run."

"Wayne wants to turn on the flashlight. He insists you said he could turn it on tonight."

"Where are the children?"

"In the bathtub."

"I have to go to the store room anyway to look for a U-clamp. Shall I let him go with me?" Come to think of it, we need antifreeze too. I forgot that.

"Whatever you want to do."

"Can I have supper first?"

"It's on the stove."

While I ate supper Margaret got the children out of the tub. I turned on the heater in their room so they could put on their pyjamas in front of the fire. I let Wayne blow out the match and then went back to my supper.

I heard Janis say, "Mama said when I get big I won't have to wear my undershirt and my big-girl pants and my pyjamas too."

"Me too," Wayne said.

"Mamas get to wear just one gown and that's all, and no big-girl pants on."

"Me too."

"No, silly," Janis laughed. "When you get big you'll be a Daddy. Daddies don't have to wear anything to bed."

Hours later when I went to bed I woke up Margaret to tell her about that conversation. She stretched comfortably, waking up a little. "Did you tell Janis that mamas don't always wear gowns to bed?" she said coyly. I said no, I could only admire her powers of generalization.

But before that I finished my supper and then I put the flashlight together. I made Wayne put on his jacket and boots over his pyjamas and we went out to the storeroom to look for the U-clamp for the exhaust pipe of the car. I let Wayne hold the flashlight. It put out a good strong beam of light. Wayne shined it up into the tree branches which were rushing about in the wind. It was getting colder.

We could not find a U-clamp of the right size. When Margaret and I bought the house we got the storehouse too, just as it was, three rooms full of junk. There were three washtubs full of assorted hardware, not to mention rolls of fencing and screen, picture frames, cast iron pots, a hand-made pipe vise, hand-made shovels and rakes, scrap lumber, a box of player piano rolls, a cobbler's last, a bucketful of unusable taps and dies, three perfectly good doors that fit nowhere, two mantles, and an ancient typewriter, full of rust. And more. But Wayne and I could not find a U-clamp.

Wayne said, "But Daddy, I need to weewee."

"Can you run back to the house?"

"But will you go with me?"

"No, but you can go."

"But I want to stay with you."

"OK. Let's go outside."

"But you too?"

"Yes."

We stood behind the storehouse under the biggest pecan tree. It was getting very cold. At the last minute I said, "Let me hold the flashlight." We stood together in the dark.

"My weewee little, your weewee big," Wayne said proudly.

"When you grow up yours will be big too."

"Yes!" he shouted. "This big!" He spread his hands apart. He splashed on my shoe.

"Not that big," I said.

Afterward Wayne said, "But Daddy, I'm a little bit cold."

"Me too. Let's go in the house now. OK?"

"OK!"

Wayne and I talked for a long time after we went into the house. But after he went to sleep I went out to look again for the U-clamp. I was sure I had seen one somewhere. In the washtubs there were huge padlocks of ancient design. There was a block and tackle, large brackets for a television antenna, steel bolts from a quarter inch to ten inches in size, the base of a lawn sprinkler, parts of a gear box for a small machine of some kind, a bicycle chain, a large permanent magnet, nails of all sizes, electrical plugs, a glass disk one inch thick and seven inches in diameter, typewriter keys, six worn cold chisels, and a glass bottle of tiny metal brackets of some kind, perfect and rust-free. But no U-clamp. I went back into the yard.

I let the flashlight beam travel up the trunk of the pecan tree, up to the highest notch. At another point in space and time my grandfather would have done this too. In the highest notch of the tree he would have seen a coon. The coon would have just started up the limb, embracing the tree like a teddy bear. Suddenly I remembered how at that instant my grandfather brought the coon down with one shot from his .22 caliber rifle loaded with hollow-points. But it would have been his love that brought the coon down, wouldn't it, and my grandmother's love would have made a stew of him that fed a family of seven. For me there was no coon. I moved the beam of light up and down the tree. If I had seen a coon I would not have been able to shoot it.

I walked back to the compost heap. It smelled good in the cold air. Several thousand earthworms are there working the clay and the manure and the table scraps and the dead grass and leaves and pecan hulls and sawdust. Occasionally I add bone meal and chicken mash for the worms. The compost will improve the sorry clay I try to grow vegetables in. Later, next summer, the plants will lay their own seeds in their own colorful excrements, fertilizing the humans who fertilize them. Margaret and Janis and Wayne and me.

When I went back into the house everyone was asleep except Janis. She was lying in her bed in the dark looking at the ceiling.

"But Janis, why are you not asleep?" I whispered.

"I did not want to go to sleep," she said softly.

"Oh. Well, sometimes it's fun not to go to sleep, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Some people are night-people," I explained. "They like to stay up very late at night and sleep late in the morning. And some people are morning-people. They like to go to bed early and get up early. But you and I are night-people, aren't we."

She giggled with delight. "Yes. But what is Wayne?"

"Wayne's a morning-people. He likes to go to sleep early and get up early in the morning."

She laughed again. "But what is Mama?"

"She's a morning-people too."

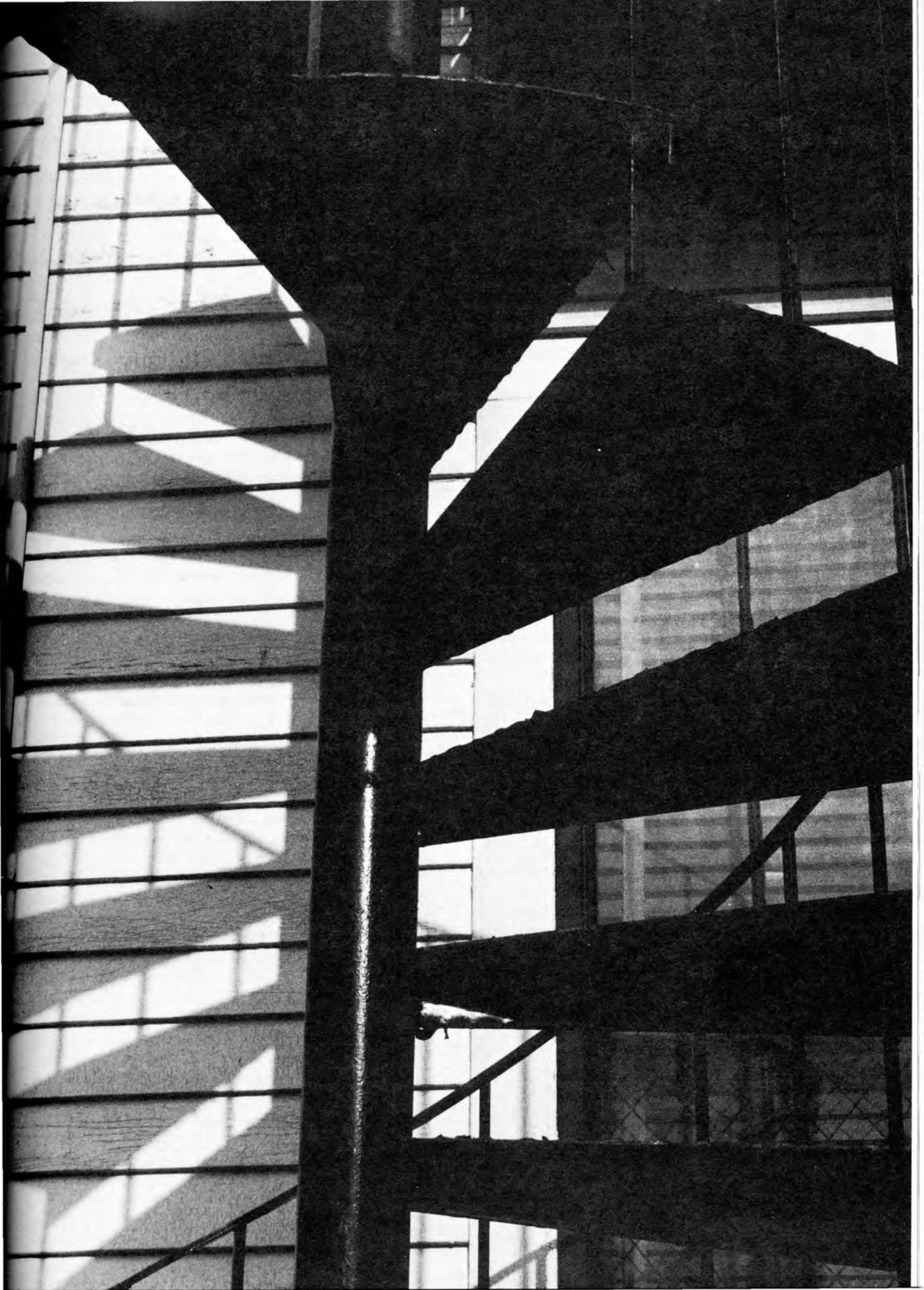
"Oh," she said eagerly. "But some people like to sleep up on top of the dresser, don't they. Some people like to sleep in the drawer where the clothes are. Don't they."

"Well," I said, straightening up. "Maybe so." I went into the bathroom and took a bath and looked at my face in the mirror. I couldn't tell whether the feeling in my stomach was a pleasant one or not. I went to bed and woke up Margaret. That's when I told her about the conversation I had overheard at supper. Then we were not sleepy so we talked for a long time, very quietly, and made love. I think that I will be able to sleep now. The cold wind has surrounded the house and makes the windows rattle in their frames. The glass is thin, but the wind is not very strong yet. Margaret is asleep. Little puffs of cold air are coming in around the corners of the glass.

GOING HOME

Down the road, lying with my face
Pressed into my father's lap, the wheel
He held claiming most of the space.
But I squeezed in, bending up
My knees, with the rest of my form
On the seat and in my mother's
Lap, not comfortable, but warm.
And they would sing together
Old songs. And I still can feel
Their soft strong hands on me again
And the cold hard turning of the wheel.

—*Stephen Gardner*



In Louisiana, the Acadian French Have an Ethnicity Problem

by Anne L. Simon

Tucked away in Southwest Louisiana is an enclave of people of French ancestry who are attempting to resist the American melting pot. They are, for the most part, descendants of refugees from Acadia, now Nova Scotia, who were expelled from their homes by the British in the 1750s. They settled in Spanish Louisiana before it became part of the United States and for 150 years remained in virtual isolation in the swamps and plains behind the Atchafalaya River, mostly non-literate farmers devoted to Church, family and land. In the 1930s the combined forces of education, communication and urbanization assaulted their seclusion. The oil boom brought newcomers to join them. In one generation a language which had survived 300 years of separation from its homeland was threatened with extinction.

The 20th century has been characterized by heightened awareness of cultural heritage. In the United States the Italian-Americans, the Chicanos, the Poles and the Jews have echoed the ethnic consciousness successfully asserted by Black Americans. One movement which has received little attention is the French revival in South Louisiana. In 1955 the Acadians quietly celebrated their American bicentennial and then joined the ethnic parade. An examination of this group is important.

At the forefront of the movement to halt the assimilation of the French into the dominant American culture is the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, known by its acronym, Codofil. It was founded by James Domengeaux, a former United States Congressman, now a wealthy, partly retired lawyer in Lafayette, Louisiana. Codofil is dedicated to the "development, utilization, and preservation of the French language as found in the State of Louisiana, for the cultural, economic and tourist benefit of the State."[1] This is to be accomplished largely through the teaching of French in its written forms, on the theory that to preserve the largely oral traditions of the French in Louisiana a written language must be developed.

From the dream of one man, Codofil has grown into a state agency which supervises the spending of almost two million dollars of state money and advises a federal counterpart as large, mostly in the teaching of the language in the elementary schools of the State of Louisiana. It sponsors over 200 foreign teachers of French; trains twice that number of native language teachers; arranges exchanges, visits, conferences and exhibits; and fosters cross-cultural contacts with French-speaking peoples all over the world. Codofil claims that it has begun a renaissance of French in Louisiana.

That the French language is threatened with extinction in Acadian Louisiana is about the only fact on which everyone agrees. Whether to develop, what to develop, and how to develop are questions infinitely more complicated and controversial, and the answers tell much about the problem of ethnicity in an American setting.

The Language of Acadiana

Colonists from the provinces of France settled in Acadia, Canada, in the first years of the 17th century.[2] Pawns in the political conflicts between France and England, they protected themselves by ethnocentricity and a determined neutrality. When the British eventually prevailed, the Acadians refused assimilation and allegiance to the British Crown. The British determined to rid themselves of this troublesome thorn. They expelled the Acadians, cruelly scattering them to France, Britain, the West Indies and the American colonies. After years of hardship in exile, called *Le Grand Dérangement,* approximately 2000 Acadians eventually found their way to Spanish Louisiana. They brought with them a language which reflected their provincial origins, 150 years of political and cultural isolation in Canada, and a generation of wandering in search of a new home.

Southwest Louisiana was not the bayou paradise described by Longfellow in his romantic poem, *Evangeline.* It was sparsely populated because it was hard country, warm and fertile but cursed with the hurricanes, floods and fever of a tropical climate. Many areas were accessible only by boat. The Spanish Governor granted the Acadians tracts of tillable land along the bayous, permitting them to reestablish the agricultural patterns and strong family relationships of their past. They added trapping to fishing, planted sugar cane as well as corn, gathered moss as well as wood, but remained hardworking, independent, rural folk. Their language was nourished by contacts with the indigenous Indians and the French and Spanish settlers

This Is the Only Time I'll Tell It

by Doris Betts

Maybe we should never have given Zelene the baby.

Except for me, everybody else on those rocky farms had more babies than they could feed.

Tom Jamison could have fed his—he'll never get that excuse from me—that man was always crazy. After his wife died he got drunker and crazier, and it was nothing but accident that Zelene Bolick was walking past his house and heard that baby scream and keep screaming. She beat on the locked front door, she called, and finally ran on the wraparound porch to a kitchen window in time to see him sticking the baby headfirst down a bucket. How Zelene got inside she never said much about. That woman must have exploded through the glass. As usual, she wore half a blanket for a shawl; I guess she wrapped up her head and drove straight through the panes.

Tom, maybe thinking the whole wall would come next, let go the baby's feet and ran out the back door while Zelene yanked the baby's face out of the water and blew breath through the mouth. That picture—her with a scatter of bleeding cuts and her blanket shining with broken glass bits while she matched her big lungs to those little ones—well? It affected us. The baby, a girl, was nine months old.

When she had brought back breath and screams, Zelene opened her clothes and fixed that naked baby flat against her naked breasts and buttoned her tight inside and started running to the crossroads with the blanket wadded to her front. The lump was still glittering with glass when Zelene ran yelling into my store. Blood on her forearms had stained down to the elbow points and dripped off.

While we waited for the Sheriff, she laid the bare baby girl on my counter by the cash register. "Give her your coat," said Zelene, breathing hard.

I wished that wooden surface was softer when I saw the bruises. Would you drive off a sparrow with a log? I just can't tell you.

The Jamison baby cried through my red wool coat. "He's bringing the county nurse," I told Zelene.

"O.K.," she said, stepping back to shake a few bits of glass to my oiled floor. "I'm going back and kill him." Before I could move, she lifted the biggest ax off my shelf and was gone.

She didn't find Tom Jamison, of course. Nobody did for six months, and then in another state. By the time he was safe in prison the baby was better, her arm bones grown back shut; and we Presbyterians had voted her to Zelene and told the State what we called a *righteous* lie about next-of-kin. There's nobody can lie like a Presbyterian if he thinks good sense requires it. My wife's people, Baptists, are a lot more soft-headed; one of them would have read his Commandments wrong and weakened someday.

But we had 37 lifetime Presbyterian mouths gone flat against their teeth till Judgement Day, and 20 of them—not counting mine—had been heard to declare it was a shame Zelene had not drove home her ax.

Before the Jamison baby, see, Zelene had been pitiable herself. She was 38, and built like a salt block. Even the widowers needing a good worker in the house never thought of courting her. I don't believe her broad mouth was ever put to another human mouth until that day in Tom Jamison's kitchen; I don't think more than a washrag had ever touched her chest before. She owned an old cabin her daddy had left, two cows, some chickens, hogs, a garden to can from, one hound dog so dumb it split one ear and then two on the same barbwire fence. She had lived up the road so long alone that she went by touch and not talk. I know I often shouted the weather at her in the store—her nods and pointing made me nervous. She would pinch, too, if you took down sugar when she wanted tea.

But Zelene was a Presbyterian—God, yes.

Yes *sir*, I ought to say. On foot to church and prayer meeting, snow or not. Coming through the rain with her wide face wet, and leaving empty a whole back bench or two around her goaty smell. Bringing, not money for the plate, but one of those oak-stave baskets that she wove, full of squash, beans, or wild fox grapes, for the preacher's table. The basket stayed with the food; I thought he must have dozens getting brittle in his loft.

She brought her own cow on a chain to be bred; she birthed the calves alone and slaughtered a hog in November and cured her own hams. Everything at Zelene's moved through the circles: what seeds she planted she had dried and saved; the cow's turds went straight to her garden rows; she never wrung a rooster's neck until the young cock had whipped him once. I sold her everything on trade. She put good handles on those baskets; I've carried stones in some of mine.

Zelene couldn't read—my wife brought that up at the special church meeting. Two of the elders rolled their eyes away from that Baptist flaw and toward me till I had to stand up, fast, and

brag on the memorized Scripture any of our members knew by now. Somebody else said school buses would stop for anyone's children waiting by the road.

Before the health nurse brought the baby back, our whole church cleaned out Tom Jamison's house of whatever Zelene could use, even the mantel clock my wife would have liked to own. We carried the stuff a long way uphill to her front yard. Zelene came out wearing a blue dress I didn't know she owned, her mother's maybe. We formed a wheel of people near her woodpile for a baptism with cold water dipped out of the Bolick spring. The preacher bent, whispered to her, waited, poured a cupped handful on the head which now belonged to Silver Bolick. The people were expecting some choice more Biblical. My wife said the name would have better suited a cow.

All of us shook Zelene's big crusty hand. My wife told her Silver would never remember all of that early pain. A blessing.

Zelene shook her cropped brown hair. "The pain went *in* her."

Her fierce voice surprised us, she spoke so little.

"I wouldn't ever tell that little girl a thing about it," said my wife, avoiding the baptized name.

Nodding, Zelene only ran one finger down the thin arm that crazy man had broken, saying in silence that the mark was made, made deep, that water meant for drowning had gone inside this child, that no grown body—at any size—would ever be fully dry of that knowledge.

Oh, yes, Zelene, a Presbyterian.

Listen. It's true. Count them by hundreds; terrible things are true. It's all I can take eating Christmas dinner with my wife's stribbly kinfolk. They live on *should be;* I live on *is.* Open your Bible; which Testament is longer? There's not a single good argument against Jesus picking His time back in Egypt, when the Jews really needed Him. Forty years His ancestors wandered to Canaan; He never needed but 33 to set up the whole system. If you were planning all along to walk on the water, why not to Noah?

First time I ever scattered a dandelion seedhead, I knew how much life was planned to be wasted. Right away, Abel was blown on the wind?

I slid my fingers once on the baby's damp hair. "Let's go home," I said to my wife.

You can't make Ruby see anything. She jumps from Genesis 1 to Luke 2 in a breath, and all the heathen before and since those times pass through her mind in some kind of blur, without counting. I see their one-by-one breakable faces, so much like mine. Waking many a night, I have laid furious in my own bed, certain I could have run the whole thing with some speed and a lot more kindness. But you have to be Presbyterian to feel that bitter in the dark.

My wife Ruby sleeps sweetly through the nights like a Christian and prays over sins too small for a man like Adam or me to notice.

All that was back in the thirties. Ruby, who still thought she could pray out a child of our own, let that one go to Zelene with a smile. We have been waiting ever since.

I kept a close weekly eye on Silver Bolick, carried as she was through all weathers to church. When she could walk, I would keep her outdoors during services. We wrote and drew in that packed, hard dirt with sticks, while the high singing voices at our backs bounced through "By and By," and cut by tenor and soprano the Depression down to size.

Sometimes, at the courthouse, I put down a little on Zelene's land taxes. Sometimes for her I turned back the scales at my store. I told her people in town had paid cash for the baskets my mules were then eating from. Ruby wanted to carry the woman and child her own butter and pound cake; she is never going to live in these hills like a native.

All of us natives took on our voted jobs. Some, during church hour, forked more hay into her barn; others would lift Zelene's hens and add eggs. My job was to watch Tom Jamison, keep track of where the State sent him next, when he would come up for parole and how to keep him from winning. One time the guards found a knife in his mattress; I am not going to tell you how I did that.

When she was six, Silver stood behind the organ and said to the whole congregation the Children's Catechism. Thirty-one pages. Not a lip in the house failed to move through the words while she answered those questions, then to mouth prayers one syllable behind her voice. "Give me neither poverty nor riches," she said in this wire-thin voice of hers, "feed me with the food that is needful to me; lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is Jehovah?"

All of us shared the recital except Shank Evans; that was his Sunday to cull out Zelene's two sickly piglets and replace them as near matched as possible. By August, Silver was half through the harder Westminster. That year, she got off the school bus at my crossroads and swept my clean floor every day till her shoes were paid for.

Slowly, I learned what her life with Zelene was like. Kerosene lamps blown out early, though by now the electric tower stood in her own pasture. Each eggshell saved to be fed to the chickens, each chicken bone sucked dry and crushed and sent back mixed with their feed. When the straw ticks went flat, they were emptied on the clean stable floor; what had been shoveled out steamed down their cornrows; every brown corncob started the morning fires. Wheel in a wheel. The girl could learn worse, I thought.

As she grew tall and got long in her limbs, I would try to tell which had been broken. You couldn't see it.

One time she told me her daddy had frozen to death just before she was born. Who would have guessed our Zelene could have thought of that? I passed it on. During cold winters, we took to recalling him for Silver. It was a night like this. So was the ice in the creek that day.

The talk molded Zelene's blunt face to a widow's. With her hair streaking now, with her head thrown back, she had gotten her beauty long past any practical use to her, at a time when our other women were pinching inward.

How to explain this. Well, have you ever walked up on a feeding deer and had your breath stolen? Knowing the deer had no slight intent of beauty, he was just eating grass? Like that.

With Silver, the good looks came early. She could give feed sacks a shape. Where Mabel Jamison's hair had been sparse and pale, Silver's was full as a wheatfield and the edge curled under like a soft hem. Behind that swirl of yellow hair she had a brain you could almost hear humming; I would listen anytime she hugged me. She could outwrite and outspell the low-country children. Nobody else read the Psalms as well. Once when she did parts of Isaiah, I had to go outside and stand by myself in the heated air. She was reading from the late chapters,

what they call The Rhapsodies. "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass." I stayed out there until everyone else had, on her voice alone, mounted up with wings as the eagles.

Did she remember, through some mended crack in a full-sized bone, anything at all? Was there a spot in her trained from the very first to know, some part that ticked far away to the words she read? I could see nothing hurt or frightened in her, and her voice warmed up that whirlwind.

Then she was seventeen, and in my store trading rag dolls for cornmeal, when the man came in.

He looked at her. He was my age. He took a cold wet bottle from the drink box and paid for it in coins.

They did not look alike—let's settle that now.

"How you doing, Coley?" he said to me.

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I kept my axes still on the very shelf. It was so light, the one I chose, that I felt a whole crowd of us had lifted it high, and swung. She did not scream until after he burst to the blade.

Babies should not be beaten; I do not care Who made this world.

BRAILLE

My fingers trail across the page
like a witch doctor reading
toad skins. I listen to this

colorless ink, but cannot tell
an M from a 6. Dots cluster
and blur into the whorls

of my fingertips. I close
my eyes tightly and read
heat lightning on my

eyelids. No one can tell me
what I should see; I
don't even know

what I cannot see.
My fingers go numb.
And then I understand.

My hands are blind, dead.
Dumbly, they translate
the code to a curse:

Leper! Leper!

—Malcolm Glass

brag on the memorized Scripture any of our members knew by now. Somebody else said school buses would stop for anyone's children waiting by the road.

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I kept my axes still on the very shelf. It was so light, the one I chose, that I felt a whole crowd of us had lifted it high, and swung. She did not scream until after he burst to the blade.

Babies should not be beaten; I do not care Who made this world.

BRAILLE

My fingers trail across the page
like a witch doctor reading
toad skins. I listen to this

colorless ink, but cannot tell
an M from a 6. Dots cluster
and blur into the whorls

of my fingertips. I close
my eyes tightly and read
heat lightning on my

eyelids. No one can tell me
what I should see; I
don't even know

what I cannot see.
My fingers go numb.
And then I understand.

My hands are blind, dead.
Dumbly, they translate
the code to a curse:

Leper! Leper!

—Malcolm Glass

DROWNING

After an evening rain the frogs move in
to cover the bottom land behind the city
dump. Their croaking swells like a moonless
tide washing over the haze.

I slip on my sneakers, load the wheelbarrow
and whisper down the back street past
tin cans, plastic bags, and milk cartons,
past flames coiling in bedsprings,
my shadow stuttering across mountains
of magazines and books.

The frogs have taken the wet grass
for miles around, and they hold
the land with screams, their rasping voices
building layer on layer of hysteria.

I unload the mower, coil the rope
and crank up in a burst of blue flame.
I rev up, drowning the frogs
with my own scream. And then I move in.
I see nothing. I never feel a leg or body
under my shoe. I hear nothing but the mower.

—Malcolm Glass

AN AFTERMATH

Heaven is this small room
in the middle of winter, my window
the sky holds up to its face
half-shadows, half-sunlight at noon.

Quiet. Absolute quiet.
All night I have struggled to get here,
wrestling him, arms over mine,
tentacles loose at my throat—

and now I have come to myself
with nothing to call my own
but the sound of my own name, this squirming
from that corner I drove him to,

where he'll squat, one eye sleepless
till the next time he appears,
the spider I call my soul,
nights here in the dark, where god comes.

—Peter Cooley

MENDEL'S LAWS

A monk can do his work on bended knees
inside or out; the bishop looked askance
when Mendel labored in a row of peas
and led the combinations in their dance.
The spark of genius dominates the heavens
and sparkles in the furrow and the loam;
both earth and sky are broken down in sevens
and Christ is captured in a chromosome.

My lover, this was many years ago.
Mendel became abbot and then died.
But all his scorned experiments proved so:
the row of peas spoke truth, the bishop lied.
And what has this to do with us? I'm wild
to know it all since you are now with child.

The double helix and the triple star
work in conjunction, like harmonic tones,
and I will praise—how beautiful you are!—
the spiral staircase turning through your bones.
Genetic links, for better and for worse,
bind us to all creation: in my ears
your voice has blended with the universe
and vibrates with the music of the spheres.

Your fingers on the keys at Christmastide,
so effortless, like natural selection,
pick out the combinations; by your side
I turn the pages at your soft direction
and wonder at your slender hands because
your fingers follow God's and Mendel's laws.

When Eve was cloned from Adam's rib, and stood
by the serpent underneath the Tree
she understood what lovers understood
since first they separated from the sea.
Her choice was meagre; still, she had to choose;
and we, like Eve, have chosen ever since,
face to face, the brown eyes to the blues:
it is the choosing makes the difference.

And in the code that Mendel labored on
our child will be deciphered; there will merge,
in childish shape and spirit, a paragon
where paradox and paradigm converge.
Now I can see Eve's children in your eyes:
completely new, yet linked to paradise.

—Peter Meinke

THE TALKER

I have heard what the talkers
were talking . . .

—Whitman

I first heard him years ago, a voice
At the end of the bridge growing louder,
A phenomenon, like the weather,
A perpetual seminar on one:

In his billess, flapped cap,
His lantern jaw thrust out
Sawing the air—the talker, talking
To no one, talking to the night air.

He broadcasts the city's grief over
The decline of baseball and education,
His voice assails us on evening walks
With the insanity of politics.

He prefers silent movies,
Mutters under the projector's click
Of the quality of things before sound,
Walks out and starts talking.

A friend once questioned him:
A moment of thought, the question
Riccocheted wildly as a jai-alai
Ball. The talker commenced talking.

There is some sensible explanation
Related to war, some horror that
He saw, but did not maim him.
Only silence maims him.

Silence. Silence. Perhaps he saw
The beginning and the end,
And that made the words bumble
Like bullets from his corrugated brain.

But rest, rest. We lie down. He, too,
Lies down. At first the words
Fly up in the air, a pack
Of crazed starlings dotted with sparrows.

That stops, and deep in dream
He sees what started it all:
Something we know about
But cannot imagine.

Every morning my lady, fighting
Against waking, protests through
Clenched teeth some amazement,
Some argument against beginning again.

Nightly we sink into eternity
While the talker talks in his loud
Voice, of the beginning and the end, talks
For us all, uses everything he knows,
Uses words, the only certain good.

—*Michael Berryhill*

UNCLE SAM SPENDS AN EVENING AT HOME

After three highballs,
after steak and salad,
when the clock says seven,
I can watch a peaceful journey by kayak down the Colorado
    become a nightmare of danger and
    Lassie nearly drown,
at seven-thirty a teacher whose all-blonde student has a crush
    on him look up her mother who is a
    glamorous jet-setter,
at eight poor ole Hoss become suspected of murdering
    the leading man of a glamorous actress only to be
    cleared at the last moment,
after which I learn that Silvathins are like the
    best women. I do not want to
    understand this.
Later I watch someone assume a risky pose as a
    drug addict with information to sell in order to
    cross the Iron Curtain,
then a frantic search for the rapid cure of a
    presidential aide who has suddenly been stricken with
    schizophrenia,
and finally, at eleven p.m., for God's sake,
    the news.

—*Hazard Adams*

who had preceeded them, and by their new activities.

The Acadians absorbed other cultures.[3] At marriage, it was the non-Acadian spouse who adapted. In this manner, during the 19th century, German, French and English settlers became Catholic "Acadians." French-speaking masters and slaves who fled the revolutions of Santo Domingo found new homes in the area, bringing with them the dialect and cuisine of the West Indies. Syrians, Jews and other newcomers lived at their sides, adopting many of their cultural characteristics. Eventually French was spoken by a number far larger than even the prolific Acadians could claim as kin.

The singular isolation of the Acadians has been noted by sociologists, historians and poets.[4] Gilmore said, "It is doubtful that geographical, occupational and language isolation have been as effectively combined to produce social isolation of ethnic groups anywhere else in America."[5] There were exceptions; a few Acadians were actively involved in the social, political and economic affairs of the State of Louisiana in its early years.[6] Most remained apart, distinct in language, religion and lifestyle.

Although French was the mother tongue of most who called themselves Acadians, their complex history and the poor communications in the area contributed to the development of many variations in the language. Linguists identify three main strains: first, colonial French spoken by the original French and Spanish settlers and the few Acadians who obtained education and higher social position; second, Acadian; and third, the Negro French of the former slaves. Some find it impossible to make one classification for the Acadian, which predominated, finding a group of dialects of incredible variety, shading imperceptively into colonial and Negro French.[7] The language varied not only according to geographical area and social standing, but a particular circumstance; the same person might employ a different dialect for different situations.[8] Of all the variations, only colonial French had standard written form, and that was used by a very small portion of the population.

In Canada the Acadians had a reasonable exposure to reading and writing in Church schools. Education was interrupted by exile and never reestablished in the new home. Until well into the 20th century most Acadians were illiterate. In the 1930s they became educated, but in English.

Governor Huey Long and his Superintendent of Schools, T. H. Harris, are usually cast as the destroyers of French. Enforcement of the compulsory attendance law and centralized supervision of education admittedly brought the descendants of the Acadians to school, where they were forced to learn to read and write the English language.[9] One repeatedly hears stories of students being punished for speaking French on the schoolgrounds. Glenn Conrad, historian and archivist at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, disputes the decisiveness of enforced schooling. If English education had been the only factor, he asserts, the children would have become bilingual. Unfortunately for the French language, English education coincided with a revolution in communications.

After school the children and their parents listened to the radio, read comics and went to the movies. They traveled on new roads to a world beyond the farm. They were exposed to the American dream, noted that everyone who had achieved it spoke English, and aspired to be a part. Parents were proud when their children left behind the language of their forebears because to do so was to leave, as well, illiteracy, isolation and a standard of living which had fallen behind.

World War II, economic prosperity and urbanization continued the process of acculturation. The original Acadian population, now called familiarly and derisively "Cajuns," was augmented by Americans who came with the developing oil industry.

It had never been possible to know exactly how many Louisianians were "French." Smith and Hitt estimated the native white French population, based on language, Roman Catholic religion and food habits, at 565,000 or 44% of the 1930 total state population.[10] The United States census counted only the language of foreign born. But with heightened ethnic consciousness an effort was made to assess more accurately. Codofil estimated that a million to a million and a half Louisianians had some use of French in 1960. The United States census of 1970, correcting its earlier ethnic myopia, ascertained the "mother tongue," defined as language spoken in the childhood home. In the twenty-two parishes (counties) of the area designated by the Louisiana legislature as Acadiana,[11] 537,291 reported their mother tongue as English, 430,500 as French. The total French population of the State was set at 572,262 of 3,640,000.[12]

Whatever the number retaining some French, probably greater than the census figure for "mother tongue" and less than the Codofil estimate, time was working against the language; every year brought the loss of older persons who spoke French and the birth of children who would not learn it. Grandparents who were illiterate and French-speaking had children who were literate in English, could speak French with their parents, but rarely did so with their own children. These children might understand their parents' French to some extent, but few used the language save for a smattering of colorful expressions and a distinctive Cajun accent.

This rather long account of the linguistic history of Acadiana, admittedly replete with oversimplification, indicates the complexity of the problem of bringing about a French renaissance. What should be reborn? The original tongue of the Acadians was removed from standard French forms, characterized by great variations, and in advancing assimilation. Today's schoolchild barely understands the French of his ancestors. That tongue might differ greatly from the French of the grandparents of the child sitting on his right. The child on his left may have grandparents in the plains of West Texas who never heard a word of either tongue.

The Teaching of French in Louisiana

One Acadian who recognized the problem and determined to do something about it is James Domengeaux. As a Louisiana State Representative and United States Congressman he had noted the passing of the language. He decried the national policies of assimilation which are known by the term "melting pot." In 1965, partly retired and financially secure, he turned his attention to finding a way to halt the process and revitalize French. His object was bilingualism.

Mr. Domengeaux became convinced that an oral tradition could not save itself. It would be necessary to introduce a written form of standard French to nourish the Acadian, which he felt lacked grammar and structure from nonuse. Then it would be necessary to see to it that every child in Louisiana receive instruction in the language of the people who gave

the area its distinctive character. Using his political skills, he steered the project through the Louisiana legislature. The Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, Codofil, was founded as an independent state agency with himself as President. A bill was passed authorizing the teaching of French in every elementary school.[13]

Although many elementary school teachers in South Louisiana were fluent in the spoken language, they did not read and write standard French. There were no teachers to do the job. In a herculean effort of spunk and nerve, Mr. Domengeaux went to France, gained audience with President Georges Pompidou, and speaking in the dialect of his home, engaged help in the effort to restore French to prominence. The first French teachers would come from France.

Mr. Domengeaux conducted intricate negotiations with the Ministry of Education of France, the State Department of Education of Louisiana and the United States Government. In 1970, twenty-nine teachers came from France to Louisiana. They were "*coopérants militaires*," qualified teachers serving two years in former colonies in lieu of military service. The number has grown each year and has been augmented with men and women from Belgium, Canada and other French speaking countries. Today 211 foreign teachers are involved; next year over 300 are expected. Codofil has supplemented the foreign teaching with student and teacher exchanges, historical research, crafts and music festivals, cultural conferences and other manifestations of the linkage between Louisiana and other areas with French heritage.

Two additional programs compliment the use of foreign teachers of French. In 1974 the State Department of Education approved a course for Second Language Specialists, an in-service teacher training program of language proficiency and teaching skills, to prepare Louisiana teachers to assume the teaching job. The advantages of local teachers are several. If a teacher already in the classroom can teach French, administrative problems should be decimated, effectiveness increased, chauvinist criticism answered and the teaching theoretically expanded to any subject. History or arithmetic could be conducted in French.

Ten universities are participating in the training of Second Language Specialists, known as SLS. Five hundred teachers are enrolled in the twenty-four credit-hour course, all at the expense of Codofil and the federal government resource centers. One hundred teachers have been graduated with certification and concomitant pay increase, and many are now teaching French with their regular subjects. An effort is just now beginning to prepare and publish teaching materials to replace those which were, of necessity, imported from France. SLS will soon be using all Louisiana texts.

In addition to SLS, federal programs have supplemented those sponsored by Codofil. They are of two types. The first, under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title VII (ESEA), designed to support the special needs of children educationally deprived because of low income, funds the staff and teachers of the language program in five parishes. The second, under the Emergency School Aid Act of 1968, Title VII (ESAA), designed to aid children overcome the educational disadvantages of minority group isolation, funds bilingual/bicultural programs, with all native teachers and emphasis, in four of the five parishes participating in ESEA. No total budget is available for ESEA programs, but during 1975-1976 ESAA programs in Louisiana received $1,596,041.

It is impossible to trace the source of every penny spent on French language education. Federal funds dominate the programs in five parishes. Codofil and state programs are operating in a total of thirty-two parishes, in Acadiana and outside. The Codofil budget has never exceeded two million dollars, but other state agencies contribute personnel, office space and of course the buildings where classes are held. The SLS program is administered by the state, but it gets support from the federal resource centers. The only generalization possible is to say that French language instruction is accomplished by a cooperative effort at all levels.

The Development of French

Despite the steady increase in the numbers of students and teachers involved in French language programs, it is impossible to say to what extent French has "developed." The target of the Codofil effort has been this generation of school children who, according to best estimates, came to school with latent understanding at the most. Whatever they learn is necessarily a "development." The aim of Codofil, universal bilingualism, has not yet been achieved, but it is not fair to expect that result after five years. The better question is whether or not it is approaching. The failure of children to become bilingual may only mirror their failure to excel in the remainder of the subjects taught at school, but are they learning French?

The program has been in elementary schools. Despite the elaborate reports by the State Department of Education of what a first through fifth grader learns in language classes, the teaching is necessarily "elementary." Little French is available in middle schools. It is too soon to point to the declining enrollment in high school elective French courses as evidence that students do not themselves feel the development, but few education specialists expect a reversal of that trend. If French were developing, would we not expect students to choose to continue the study?

There has certainly been a heightened awareness of the language heritage of Southwest Louisiana. One may call it pride. Adult courses in conversational French attract good enrollment. Signs in stores announce the bilingualism of the clerks and exhort us all to speak French. Many people remark on the greater use of the French language on the streets and in the grocery stores. At one time speaking French was shameful; now Cajuns do not hide their skill. If derogatory expressions about Acadians[14] are publicly used, a spate of objections is sure to follow.

Codofil points to the passage of an act requiring French instruction in all twelve grades as evidence that French language education is an established fact.[15] The Act has an escape clause, however; any parish may elect to remain outside the program unless a majority of parents request participation. That provision reflects reality. French will only develop if people really want it to.

The Preservation of French

Mr. Domengeaux's primary concern has always been language, but in listing priorities, restoring pride in speaking French always comes near the top of the list. Since Cajuns have been long associated with illiteracy and poverty, Codofil ex-

horts, "Soyez fiers de votre langue." Pride introduces concepts much more complex than nouns and verbs. Despite his insistance to the contrary, one wonders if one is only to be proud of the language after it has been purified with standard forms?

The Charter of Codofil speaks of "preservation" as well as development. How can one preserve the language by altering it? Or an even more complex question, will the introduction of refined language forms inhibit native language speakers, causing renewed feeling of shame and an adverse effect on the culture?

It is extremely difficult to frame the issues involved in this problem for the simple reason that there has not been a thorough exploration of what they are. Historians and language teachers have found a home in Codofil; anthopologists, sociologists and linguists have not been as welcome. From outside the movement this latter group raises serious questions about the effects which foreign language may have on local patterns.

It must be admitted that before 1968 assimilation was proceeding at such a pace that another generation would have seen the end of French as a spoken language of the Acadians. Capitalizing on a natural resource, Codosil seeks to generate motivation for French language studies. What alternatives are reasonable possibilites? Neglect would obviously permit further assimilation. The great variety of dialects defies standardization. Phoneticized oral French is also another language, one with no universal use, surely objectionable to non-Acadians.

The Canadian preservation experience is of little help to Louisianians with their language problem. The exile and isolation which interrupted Acadian education did not occur in Canada. In Quebec the French are a majority, with the political and numerical strength to protect their culture and to be an inspiration to the minorities in other provinces. Perhaps most decisive, education is handled very differently in Canada. There is no separation of Church and State. Priests brought education to French Canada; after Dominion their religious schools were continued, receiving equal funding from the government. There are dialects in Canada but the link with standard French was never broken.[16] Canada has not had the problems which face Louisiana.

If Codofil could actually accomplish all of its stated goals, the critics would have good reason to be heard. The rhetoric necessary to generate initial enthusiasm really overstated the purpose. "Preservation" is an ill-chosen word. Codofil's very limitation, its inability to reach older, French-speaking people, prevents it from doing the harm the sociologists fear; it deals mostly with children who have no French. Without Codofil French was dying. The language movement may halt intentional obliteration, add a new generation with a new form of a very old language, but it does not truly preserve.

The Future of French in Louisiana

The French-speaking population of Louisiana does not have the benefit of inherent separateness. Unlike the Spanish minority, constantly nourished by immigration, and the Negro minority, whose distinctiveness is apparent, the educated Acadian blends into the mainstream. Codofil really does not deny reality. It accepts English as the major language and expends its efforts at fostering the bilingualism which characterized the mid-generation—the one between the illiterate French-speaking grandparents and the completely American child—but with one difference. The French of this generation will be the standard form which can be used internationally and which will not be subject to the ravages of the strictly oral tongue. In spite of the rhetoric, the task is that of teaching a foreign language.

It is hard work to learn a language. Where will the motivation come from?

Although the use of French is declining in Louisiana, local color is rich and strong. Customs and cuisine have been receiving national attention. Appreciation of cultural heritage is helpful in inspiring interest in language. The guiding figure in Codofil, Mr. Domengeaux, is less than enthusiastic about attention paid to local customs. He feels that they perpetuate the stereotype of the Cajuns as "quaint folk who live with alligators." Cultural preservation may be beyond the competence of Codofil as presently designed but he cannot prevent the movement from taking this natural direction. Along with interest in language, pride has brought new popularity to customs and traditions. The bicultural programs of ESAA concern themselves with local heritage. Codofil is involved in more facets of culture than just language.

Many who are working hard in the French revival feel that unless there is some economic incentive people will not make the effort necessary to learn the language. A lively trade in exporting crawfish to Paris restaurants or jobs on the oil rigs of Africa would make a big difference in attitude. "The criticism is legitimate," says Mr. Domengeaux. "It has been a matter of priorities. First we had to remove the stigma attached to speaking French, then set up the program. . . . The opportunities for the use of French exist and we will find them." He goes on to point out that many countries in Africa are French-speaking. "Louisiana Negroes, who retain French better than Whites, could one day be ambassadors and businessmen."

The past decade has brought to South Louisiana economic opportunities for which the French language was irrelevant. Sugar cane and oil now support a prosperity unusual in the 1970s; the recession did not reach this far. Whereas most ethnic movements today are efforts of underprivileged to unite to get a bigger piece of the pie,[17] French-speaking Louisianians do not have that motivation.

Nor is there any political drive behind the French revival. Political activity has never been a part of this Acadian culture, not in Canada and not in Louisiana. The one exception is the phenomenon of almost solid support Acadians gave to Edwin Edwards in the gubernatorial election of 1970. Due to this unusual expression of solidarity, Louisiana now has a governor of Acadian background, one who spoke French until he was five years old and is completely bilingual. Separatism in Louisiana is uncomprehensible. "We are not militaristic," says Mr. Domengeaux. Codofil is proud of the support which the movement has received among non-Acadians. Some North Louisiana parishes are enthusiastic participants. Nor has religious prejudice played any part. "A sociological miracle," says Mr. Domengeaux.

Separatism is undesirable, but can the movement survive without inspiring genuine momentum from the grass roots? The amount of local support for Codofil shows tremendous variation. A State Department of Education survey shows parental enthusiasm but, it is submitted, the education bureau-

cracy is a party in interest. The school system has benefitted from the teaching and administrative jobs generated by the movement. Some classrooms participating in ESAA programs have up to four instructors at work at the same time. As fewer students are electing to study French in high school and college, language teachers have hastened to support and find work in burgeoning elementary programs.

Interviews with parents in Iberia Parish confirm the favorable conclusion but the situation in Vermilion and St. Martin Parishes is another story. Those areas with the highest percentage of French-speaking have been the most reluctant to endorse Codofil. Protests have been staged against the foreign teachers by parents in Youngsville, in Lafayette Parish, and the leaders' names are the same as those listed in the first census of Acadians in Louisiana.[18] The criticisms of the sociologists have been fed by these objections.

There have never been any significant number of local organizations supporting Codofil's programs. Codofil has chapters but each one is formed by appointment from Mr. Domengeaux. Some of them have been active and some have not. None has grown from the bottom up. Among the most active workers for Codofil are many whose French is not Louisiana bred; notably lacking are those who are descendants of the Acadians and speak the local tongue. Many rural Cajuns do not feel comfortable with Codofil's leaders.

One can anticipate two future events which might have decisive effect on the future of Codofil: a cutback in federal funds and the loss of Mr. Domengeaux. In both cases it is difficult to predict, however, just what that effect would actually be.

As discussed above, the federal contribution to language teaching is substantial. Several people involved have serious questions about it. James Domengeaux himself says that it is part of the melting pot philosophy which he decries, designed to bring minority groups more quickly into the American mainstream. He feels that the federal government ought to be encouraging bilingualism for its own merits. More serious, perhaps, is the criticism that ESAA programs, designed to facilitate learning by children who do not speak English by giving them early education in their own tongue, are being used by children who do. The federal guidelines are written to define minority so broadly that parents who speak French occasionally qualify their children for federal aid.

A cut in federal contribution would hurt. Whether it would be made up by doubling the state appropriation is doubtful. The lack of federal money might purify the program, in Mr. Domengeaux's eyes, but it would seriously affect the number of children receiving language instruction.

From the beginning Mr. Domengeaux has been the driving force behind Codofil. His political acumen is largely responsible for the passage of the state legislation necessary to authorize and fund the program and to keep it distinct from the State Department of Education. He handles international relations: negotiating treaties, receiving foreign dignitaries, masterminding the connections. It is well known that he spends a great deal of his own money on the program. There have been some critical periods; without him the organization probably would not have survived.

On the other hand, those aspects of the development of French which are not directly related to language teaching have a hard time finding earth in which to put down roots. He adores the international aspects of the movement but seems to be less enthusiastic about local matters. He is very sensitive about publicizing local color which might be denigrating. "Everything has to go through Jimmy," we are told.

Mr. Domengeaux is almost seventy years old and has had four heart attacks. His ability to conduct two bilingual meetings at the same time, and handle a few telephone calls to boot, astounds the visitor but also invites the question, what about Codofil after Domengeaux? There are many opinions. There are those who feel that his influence is essential. Without him Codofil would be absorbed into the State Department of Education, lose its international flavor, and ultimately die. Others feel that such a variety of programs have been established that the momentum cannot be stopped. And then there are those who feel that the seeming success of the movement is attributable to the general popularity of ethnicity. As that fades so will this attempt to turn back the tide. Mr. Domengeaux has prevented Codofil from exploring the linguistic and sociological complexities of Acadian culture. He has not prevented anyone else from doing so, but his loss might facilitate work in these directions. It is needed.

In the spring of 1976 South Louisiana enjoyed a visit from the President of France, an event symbolic of France's contribution to American history and a great compliment to Mr. Domengeaux. At this point one may ask, what is the future of French in Louisiana? Does the visit mark the high point of the French language movement or was it a celebration of a true renaissance? The people of Acadiana are the jury and they are still out.

NOTES

[1]Act No. 409, July 20, 1968.

[2]Accounts of the Canadian experience may be found in Oscar William Winzerling, *Acadian Odyssey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), Naomi Griffiths, *The Acadians: Creation of a People* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1973) and Francis Parkman, *A Half-Century of Conflict* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1892).

[3]T. Lynn Smith and Vernon J. Parenton, "Acculturation among the Louisiana French," *The American Journal of Sociology* XLIV (1938), 360-361, H. W. Gilmore, "Social Isolation of the French-Speaking People of Rural Louisiana," *Social Forces* XII (1933), 79-80, T. Lynn Smith and Homer L. Hitt, *The People of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), p. 107. See also Jacqueline K. Voorhies, *Some Late Eighteenth Century Louisianians* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana History Series, 1973).

[4]See footnote 3.

[5]H. W. Gilmore, p. 82.

[6]William Arceneaux, *Acadian General: Alfred Mouton and the Civil War* (Lafayette, Louisiana: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1972), p. 2, Vaughan Baker, "Nineteenth Century Acadiana," Paper delivered to the Southern Historical Association, Dallas, Texas, November 1975.

[7]William A. Read, *Louisiana French* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1931), xxi-xxii, André LaFarque, "Louisiana Linguistic and Folklore Background," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* XXIV, No. 3 (July 1941), 744-755, Dorice Tentchoff, "Cajun French and French Creole; Their Speakers and the Questions of Identities," *The Culture of Louisiana: Tradition and Change in South Louisiana* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1975), pp. 94-95.

[8]Dorice Tentchoff, p. 94.

[9]T. H. Harris, *The Memoirs of T. H. Harris* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1963), pp. 132-141, 159-163.

[10]T. Lynn Smith and Homer L. Hitt, p. 49.

[11]Acadia, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Calcasieu, Cameron, Evangeline, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lafourche, Pointe Coupee, St. Charles, St. James, St. John, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Terrebonne and Vermilion.

[12]U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Population: 1970,* vol. 1, *Characteristics of the Population,* pt. c, *General Social and Economic Characteristics,* Louisiana, Table 119.

[13]Act No. 409, July 20, 1968.

[14]One term which has been the subject of much controversy is "coonass," used as a synonym for Cajun. Many Cajuns use the term. Mr. Domengeaux claims it has uncomplimentary origins in standard French.

[15]Act No. 714, July 14, 1975.

[16]Louis-Philippe Audet, "Education." *Facets of French Canada* (Ottawa: L'Association Canadienne des Educateurs de Langue Française, 1967), pp. 54-57.

[17]Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, "Why Ethnicity?" *Commentary* 58 (October 1974):4.

[18]Jacqueline K. Voorhies, passim.

DOLLARD

Dollard is beginning to give
himself away,
not only in bits and pieces:

but gone now the chimes and the radio,
the curtains and the chairs,
the rugs and lampshades

and the Chevrolet.
And there are wide silent gaps
all up and down

the old man's armory.
Yesterday, in the pool hall,
he gave as chips the first nails

crowbarred from his house.
This morning, in Bake's Cafe,
he handed Bake a watch, a billfold,

and a wedding ring.
Tomorrow, according to Stocker,
he'll shed his boots and his shirt

and his overalls:
next week, likely as not,
his hair and his eyebrows,

scattering locks.
Generous now to a fault,
Stocker says,

Christ on his way uphill,
forewarned and lonely
and desperate for a cross.

—*William Kloefkorn*

ludi jr practices the sermon
that so far he has not been
invited to deliver

nothing changes
the first skin
finds its way into the bone
the next skin then
its first protection

and all the other skins
saying this doing that
shooting both skeet and savage
from a staggering range

and all the while
beneath them
in the bone
moves that first skin
unchanged

oh brothers! oh sisters!

do not tell me that
there is any sound
but that of a young woman
strangling on my birth

—*William Kloefkorn*

ludi jr goes to bed with the chickens

his gullet blown thin as a balloon
with milo and cracked corn and grubworms
ludi jr waddles as if straddling a line
that distance between the banquet and the bed

outside beyond a mesh of wire
that marks a window
the earliest of the owls
is saying hoot

ludi jr half flies half falls
onto his perch of feathers

it has been a long hard pleasant day:
tomorrow with its strange familiar pickings
rests dormant in the maw of the rooster

meanwhile ludi jr settles his eyes
as if nesting eggs
the coyote prehistoric
broke to heel

countless miles
countless meals
away

—*William Kloefkorn*

at certain times ludi jr
holds his breath,
expecting something

it is when
even the thinnest curtains
freeze their movement

when you slap a cupped hand
over the blue kitchen fly
to crush only a shell
the workings dead for days

when crocker's dog stops barking

and you catch your breath
swallowing air until the stomach
fills with a purple gas

because something is
just around the corner

something under the next rock

in the stuffing of the nearest chair

curious because it will not
release its own breath
until you are there

and you never are

so the lungs must finally burst
and the air is rinsed with the
vinegar of your exploded fear

and the curtains flutter

the blue fly roars into the sky
like a piper cub

crocker's dog begins to bark

and once again
you beat your breast like an apeman
flushed and immortal

—*William Kloefkorn*

ludi jr walks barefooted
through a stickerpatch
without saying ouch

the ends of ludi jr's legs
have been bent over
to form his feet

that now bare as the first baby
are surprising
the stickers

some of them so desperate
they go with him all the way

one needle so long
its point
at the center of the top
of the right foot
bubbles blood

no playground this
no fit place for the tender

but a trick of the very greenest skill

yet so natural
so simple:

the training of anything unshod
to expect the flow
that comes from the hand
of the least eternal
god

—*William Kloefkorn*

The Prisoners

by Erin Jolly

The long-awaited spring and summer Sears-Roebuck catalogue had come yesterday, its fine thin pages smelling of fresh ink, the colorful illustrations tantalizing her with their summer clothes in January. For more than two weeks Mittie had walked daily to the row of mail-boxes half a mile away, where the tenants' names were lettered in black; and now she was battling the wind on the lonely farm road to the big cotton field in the distance, but she plunged into its fierceness without flinching, a grim determination in her akin to the unexpressed anger that she felt toward her husband at breakfast.

She said nothing to him the night before about the need for certain items pictured in the catalogue; she knew he would be tired and contrary. It was the winter of 1945 and German prisoners from the camp a few miles away were snapping the last of the cotton on the Richardson plantation; it was Hamp's duty to check and weigh the long sacks that they dragged along the muddy aisles. Because of bad weather the cotton had remained in the fields too long and now they were snapping instead of picking, breaking off the dried bolls with the dirty ragged cotton inside and thrusting all into their sacks.

"So you got your wish-book," Hamp said when she brought it to the table after they had finished breakfast and he was drinking his second cup of coffee. She smiled, nodding, and opened it to the dishes—yellow-flowered and gold-trimmed, some with pink roses and others with blue dragons and willow-trees.

"Look, Hamp, these dishes in blue-willow design are pretty, and they're cheap, too. We need new dishes for when the preacher comes."

Reaching across the table he took the book, pushing his coffee cup toward her. She rose and poured him a fresh cup and then sat watching his face as he turned the pages.

"Make out the order," he said. Her heart thudded with excitement. "Get me this-here pair rubber boots size twelve. My old ones is giving out and that gumbo is getting mighty cold in my feet. We got to be sensible, Mittie."

"Nothing else, Hamp?" she said faintly.

He drained his coffee cup and rose without speaking.

"Looks like it's sensible to have things nice sometime, Hamp. Looks like to *me*."

"The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God," he said in the stern voice he used at church when the preacher asked him to stand and pray. Taking his heavy coat with his gloves stuffed in the pocket and his wool cap from its nail, he went out into the gray morning.

Now it was the middle of the afternoon and she was taking a tin bucket of coffee to him in the field; noon-time had come and gone and she would not talk to him but he pretended that nothing was wrong and she was nauseated by his false joviality. The sky was overcast as it had been for many days, and she walked with plodding determination, never looking up. She approached the house of her friend, Dessie; it was built exactly like her own, a shot-gun, three rooms in a row, the outside gray *with white trim. A streamer of smoke blew* from the chimney and she turned off the road onto the rough planks that made a walk to the porch. Some compelling urge always made her stop when passing, although she knew almost the very words they would utter. She was as familiar with every stick of furniture in Dessie's house as her own; the front room which served as sitting-room had a bed covered with a yellow chenille spread in case of company; on the wall there was a shiny picture of a sleeping child with its guardian angel. Mittie had been at Dessie's house when the salesman came, offering the choice of a picture free with a box of salve that would cure almost everything. With some qualms Mittie bought a box, Dessie lending her the money because they agreed with the salesman that such an opportunity might never come again. Dessie assisted her in choosing her premium and after a prolonged examination she had chosen the one of two horses fleeing from lightning in a dark sky. There was nothing unfamiliar to Mittie in Dessie's house; in the middle room where they slept there was a scarred dresser with a wavy mirror and on it a vase of artificial pink roses, and beyond that room, the kitchen. Yet at every opportunity they visited each other and sat about their tin heaters, always parting reluctantly and for some reason feeling better about everything than before.

Mittie stood on the tiny porch holding to a post as she lifted one foot and then the other to scrape off the thick black gumbo against a door-mat made of upturned bottle-caps nailed to a board set at the top of the steps. Scrape . . . scrape . . . then she turned and knocked on the door and entered to Dessie's cheerful voice.

Dessie looked up smiling but she did not rise because her lap held bright wool thread and crocheted squares, and a laundry-basket on the floor beside her was more than half full.

r crochet needle never stopped . . . "hello, Mittie, take a air."

"I'll just put his coffee on top of the stove to keep hot while n here," said Mittie, unwinding her hood from her head, buttoning her coat and taking off her gloves.

"Best take off your coat," advised Dessie, "or you won't l it when you get out."

"No, can't stay long." Mittie looked admiringly at the ndry basket. "You sure work fast. I must say them green d yellow squares go good together."

"I'm on my third african," said Dessie complacently. his'uns for the preacher and his wife."

"You-all get your new Sears?"

"Yes, he brought it from the mail-box yesterday. We set up l late, looking. You get your wedding-ring quilt off the mes?"

"Taken it off yesterday," said Mittie. "Room sure looks ot bigger with them frames out of the middle of the floor. n glad it's done. My fingers is all pricked up and there was me specks of blood on the quilt. Had to wash them out."

"I meant to get back and help you quilt some more but I en so rushed what with one thing and another."

"That's all right. It's done now."

"First day sun shines, I've got to wash," said Dessie. "Bought a big new box of Rinso at the commissary Saturday."

"I like Oxydol best," said Mittie, and they exchanged nces of respect.

Dessie's two-year old, Willie Bert, came from a corner of the om where he had been playing with some empty spools. He an pulling at the buttons on Mittie's coat.

"Get away from there, Willie Bert," said Dessie. "Them'll e you."

Willie Bert continued to pull at the buttons. Mittie reached o her pocket and pulled out an empty Prince Albert tobacco n. "I brought you something, Willie Bert," she said softly. took the can and dashed it to the floor.

"Behave yourself, Willie Bert!" scolded Dessie. "He must coming down with something, he's so mean. His paw is on tractor today but soon's he comes in I'm gonna make him to the commissary and get a tonic for that child."

Mittie loosened the thin fingers from the buttons. "Reckon best be going." She rose and tied up her head and buttoned r coat and pulled on her gloves.

"Might's well stay," said Dessie hospitably.

"He'll be rarin' for his coffee." She took the bucket from stove.

"That man sure loves his coffee," said Dessie.

"Dess, you know them big coffee urns they have at the cafes wntown? When I'm dead he won't buy me a head-stone—get one of them to set on my grave."

Dessie shrieked. "Mit, you kill me—you really do!"

Mittie's lip twitched with amusement. "So long, Dess."

"Come back, Mit."

"I will, you come." Again she crossed the plank walk and the middle of the road with the piercing wind.

resently she came in sight of the great field where the soners were working and she left the road that would have en her to the highway, and followed another that bordered St. Francis river, where trucks went in and out of the field. lways, she stared at the dense gray thickets and underbrush ng the river bank, seeking her tree; it was there although barely discernible, lacking a single leaf to identify it. Sometimes she felt guilty because she thought of it as her tree when really it belonged to Mr. Richardson and she did not own a foot of ground; but she was sure that he neither knew nor cared because he owned so many trees of one sort or another and would never notice this one; unless that sudden splash of pink bloom should burst upon his sight on some cold morning in early spring when he was seeing about the first plowing. She had never been able to figure how that little peach tree could have become so intermingled with the impenetrable growths alongside the river, but she watched for it yearly and one day, lo! there it was! She would hasten down to fill her arms with the crooked blossoming branches, putting them in a glass jar of water and setting it on a table in her front room. As long as the tree bloomed in the midst of the woods she watched it jealously until the last petals shattered . . . there never had been any fruit. Once when feeling guilty she had told Dessie about the tree and asked if she would like to go with her and get a bouquet for herself; but Dessie said she was too busy and she speculated that a house must have been in the field there once on a time, with a peach tree in the back yard.

Mittie was near the prisoners now. They wore faded tan clothing and short coats, some of natural tan and others dark blue; on the back of each there was a great *P* and a *W*. At opposite ends of the field there stood a guard with a gun; in the center of the field there was a cotton shed where Hamp and another man weighed the sacks and wrote down the figures in their little note-books. There were twenty-nine workers in the field that day and there was a rule that when a prisoner had snapped two hundred pounds he could stop and wait in one of the trucks until the others had finished and joined him.

Mittie stood watching them without curiosity. Hamp would see her soon and would come toward her and she would meet him with the coffee. Suddenly she noticed that the prisoners nearest her were gathering the cotton in a peculiar manner; when they saw her interest they hastened down the rows breaking the cotton in the customary way. While she waited, the prisoner at the end of the row nearest her darted a swift yearning glance at the bucket she carried, and then looked full into her face. He was neither cowed nor embarrassed; at first she returned his gaze stolidly but then her face lost some of its dullness. He grinned at her looking toward the bucket again, and Mittie's heart began a strange pounding. . . .

He's a German, she thought, I'd ought to hate him; he may be the very one that killed my cousin Tollie Platt, as fine a boy as ever drawed breath. Ad Twittie's boy was killed in the war, it could have been this one who done it; but he looks so young and he's been standing on this wet ground all day. Anyway, what has Hamp Pounders ever done to have life easier than this here kid?

He was snapping the bolls slowly, looking at the bucket now and then, giving her glances from eyes so brilliantly blue that she could not resist them. She looked towards Hamp whose back was turned as he talked with the interpreter near the scales; she bent over and took the lid from the bucket and left it sitting invitingly on the ground. As the fragrant steam floated past him the boy kept his heavy canvas bag between himself and the distant pickers, and bending over he drank the coffee and replaced the bucket almost with one continuous movement. Then he hastened down the row and she picked up the bucket, feeling that she had participated in some high adven-

ture. Warmed by the coffee the prisoner looked back to give her a slow smile; warmed by that smile she felt stirrings of something nearly forgotten, almost beautiful. Then she saw him snapping the cotton swiftly, making no secret of his method; taking up a handful of the blue-black mud he would form it into a stiff ball and place cotton about it and drop it into his sack. Although she knew that all were doing it, she felt alarm mainly for the boy; what if Hamp should catch him? Then she saw Hamp approaching, strutting with that pompous gait he had, feeling important. Three times he turned his head and spat on the ground.

Her anxiety was swept away and she felt only triumph. Why, the prisoners had out-smarted Hamp all day and she had out-smarted him too, giving his coffee away! Him with his big talk, always bragging that nobody could cheat him—and she and the prisoner had done it almost before his very eyes! She wanted to laugh but as he came nearer she began to walk away.

"I dropped the bucket, Hamp!" she called in a voice roughened by excitement. "Your coffee all spilled! I'm going home!"

She pretended not to hear the curses blown on the wind. The prisoners were all far down the rows and none looked her way; she walked swiftly on.

As she walked she became more elated, although she had no words for her fierce joy. She knew only that Hamp was not such a big man after all; he could be trimmed as well as the next one. A boy had smiled at her, had been grateful for her simple gift; who could have imagined *that?* Over and over she relived the slight incident; again she felt the prisoner's smile upon her plain face, recalled the sparkle of his blue eyes. The tightness that had been in her breast since breakfast had gentled somewhat and with a girlish gesture she put up one hand and tucked beneath her hood the tendrils of hair blowing into her face.

Hamp came in for supper, tired and irritable. She stood at the little iron stove frying potatoes, her face still but intensely alive. Always before when he had entered the house in anger she had quailed; but now, isolated by her recent experience, she scarcely saw him. He bent over the table near the door, splashing water on his face, rubbing soap on his hands. "I needed my cawfee today," he growled. "Coldest day we've had and I wanted it bad. You're the wust I ever saw, wasting good cawfee that way."

She made no reply and they ate in silence under the hanging light bulb. Suddenly he knotted his fist and banged it on the table, making the dishes rattle.

"Damned Heinies!" he sputtered, and she knew he wanted to describe their actions but was reluctant to admit that he had been careless.

"After they all left I finished emptying the sacks and there must of been three hunderd pounds of mud-balls wrapped in cotton, some with rocks in 'em! Now tomorrow we got t[o] go through all the cotton they picked."

She felt ripples of inward laughter, but her face remaine[d] placid. "Wasn't that your job," she asked, "to check the sacks[?]"

He frowned at her suspiciously. "Nobody can tell what th[ey] got in they heads. They not like us, they mean as hell. If M[r] Richardson had let me tote a gun like them guards do, I'd[ve] caught 'em at it and shot 'em down like dawgs."

After supper they sat silently about the stove in the midd[le] room, unwilling to let the fire die; the wind whistled about th[e] eaves of the house. Finally he went to bed and lay there puzzle[d] by her confident movements; something of her new vitali[ty] seemed to tease his vanity. His gaze became reflective an[d] he yawned elaborately.

"Turn off the light and come to bed . . . honey," he sai[d] The unfamiliar little word of tenderness seemed to hover i[n] the room uncertainly.

"I'm going to sit up for a while," she said firmly. "Going t[o] look at the new Sears."

"Didja make out the order for my boots?"

It was the first she had thought of it. "I didn't have time."

His grievances returned. "Naw, you'us likely setting an[d] jawing with Dessie and had to hurry to the field and my cawfe[e] sloshed out. You better make time tomorrow."

Presently he was sleeping in exhaustion. As she sat with th[e] catalogue in her lap the brief experience of the afternoon ex-panded . . . already the boy whom she might never see again had ceased to exist for her personally except in her memory of his fearlessness and the flash of his blue eyes like the har-binger of spring.

She rose and crossed the room to look down at the huge pink-plush baby face, perpetually pouting toward the world; why, I never saw him before in my life, she thought, what is that monster doing in my bed? She went to the make-shift closet where her dresses hung behind a cretonne curtain and boxes were stacked on the floor; she took up the folded wed-ding-ring quilt and sat down in her chair again, wrapping it snugly about her. She began to wonder how it would be to walk down that muddy road past Dessie's house and the cotton fields and on down the highway to find a place free of Hamp—to leave these quarters where she walked back and forth into the yard to throw grain to the chickens or gather the eggs, or in the house putting food on to cook, sweeping, pacing from one end of the shot-gun house to the other as a prisoner paces his cell. . . .

Then she remembered the misty gray thickets along the river bank, hiding her little tree. She could not leave just yet—she must await that invincible burst of bloom; and like a prisoner who knows that his time of servitude is ending, she told her-self that anybody can wait for one more spring.

OLD MAN AT THE GO BOARD

You came here, it seems,
hunched, a wrinkled baby,
into the white light of hospital
birth; there were shrieks in the rice
fields. Tonight cars scream
into this game
and clatter four floors down
on a damp ribbon of gray cement.

Old man, I look for you
inside your loose body;
I look for silk skin;
I plunge my hand inside
your chest, a midwife yanking
out the scream of a newborn
frenzy. Your limbs are wrapped in silence.
Each stone your slap between us
ticks in a new quiet.

And across this board
your body sways, a cage
in a mild wind.
Inside, life flutters,
a frantic moth, a wild bird
scratching for windows
to set it free, an infant
in the white light of a flute.

Move your arms slowly,
cautious old man,
with the grace of old masters,
skin frozen, sealed
snug as a winter pond.

—*Lisa Thomas*

Three Sculptors:

Helen Escobedo
Lila Katzen
Athena Taca

Interviewed by Van Foley

Over 600 sculptors, from every part of the world, came to New Orleans for the Ninth International Sculpture Conference, March 21-April 4, 1976. I had a chance to talk to about forty or fifty sculptors and interviewed about fifteen of them in depth. In the interviews, the sculptors gave a conceptual framework for their art, presented their esthetic or outlined their plans for the future.

Sculptors are a dynamic and articulate segment of contemporary society. I found most of them open about their work and eager to present their views on contemporary art. Matthias Goerrity, German-born painter and dean of architectural sculpture, said: "Almost all of contemporary sculpture is in transition, and the larger and more obscure our society becomes, the more it is in need of a sculpture which reflects that transition."

The most interesting group of sculptors were the women. Elizabeth Catlett, a black Mexican sculptor, noted: "It is because we have more to say, and our work reflects that. There are many women in sculpture, but as you look around you, you can see that there are not enough. And sculpture needs women, women need sculpture."

Helen Escobedo, the Mexican sculptor, is presently curator of the new Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City. She and her family live in Mexico City, but she spends much of her time lecturing and arranging exhibitions. Her most famous piece was designed for the 1968 Olympics, and she has had over thirty showings of her work.

Lila Katzen has won many awards, honors and commissions. She received cash awards from the Tiffany, Lannan, Gutman and Goodyear Foundations, and an $8,500 grant from the Architectural League of New York. She has had many showings of her works, and since 1955 she has lectured widely on site sculpture and use of public space. Most recently, the National Gallery of Art purchased her "Antecedents," a massive steel piece. Lila is the first living woman to have a piece purchased by the National Gallery.

Athena Taca, born in Greece, has been an art teacher for many years. Currently, she is on the faculty of Oberlin College. Zabriskie Gallery in New York recently had an exhibition of her sculpture, and her works have received awards in competitions in major cities throughout the United States. She has just been awarded the prize for the Smithtown, Long Island public sculpture competition.

Van Foley

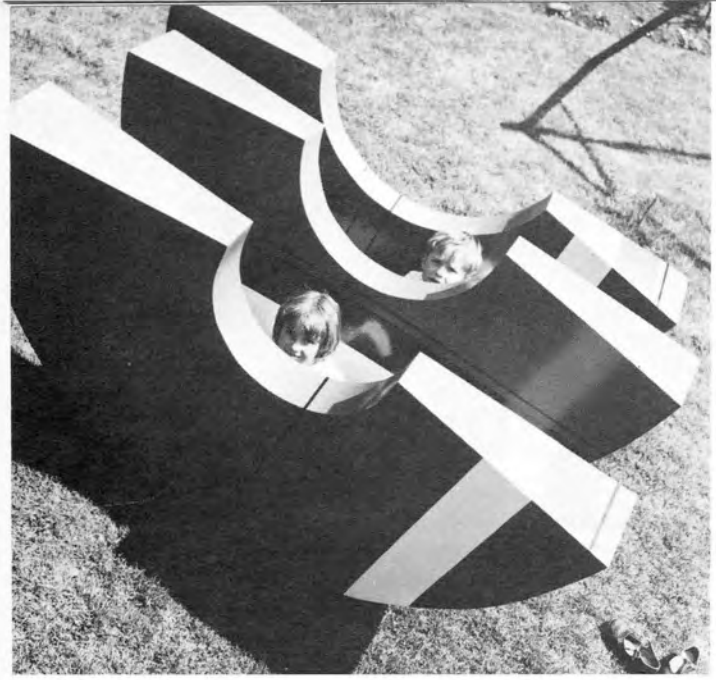
Helen Escobedo:

"I tend to drop the word 'sculptor' for the more general word 'artist.' Because I don't know where sculptor begins and ends nor where paintings begin and end. Sculptures move, explode and disappear. They are no longer on pedestals. Paintings are three dimensional. You know, people ask me what I am. Am I an architect because I build houses or am I a sculptor? Am I a painter because I use a great deal of color in my works? I am a bit of all these things. I know the world encompasses environmental artists and I have even dropped the word sculptor, but I am basically a sculptor.

"I work very much in teams, with other professions. I cannot know it all. I have draftsmen or engineers calculate stresses and strains and wind and all that sort of thing, solve the technical problems for which I hae not been trained. These are professionals who have spent years in their fields. Sometimes I need or use particular craftsmen. When I paint my pieces with lacquer, I can't do as good a job with masking tape as an old man eighty years old who does it for me. He has done nothing else all his life but put masking tape in circles on motorcyles. He's wonderful. So these are the people I look for. I enjoy team work. I believe in it. I believe in sharing experiences with other artists."

Untitled

"I always work on a habitat in relation to the requirements of the people who are going to live within it. Rather than do a sculpture wall that is going to stand on the facade of a building, I find myself wanting to do the wall, not the facade. And once I build the wall I am very closely linked with the architect; I am very interested in what goes on behind the wall, in front of the wall, alongside it, which means the other walls, what happens in the interior spaces, with the textures, and with the light and so forth. So I get interested in everything."

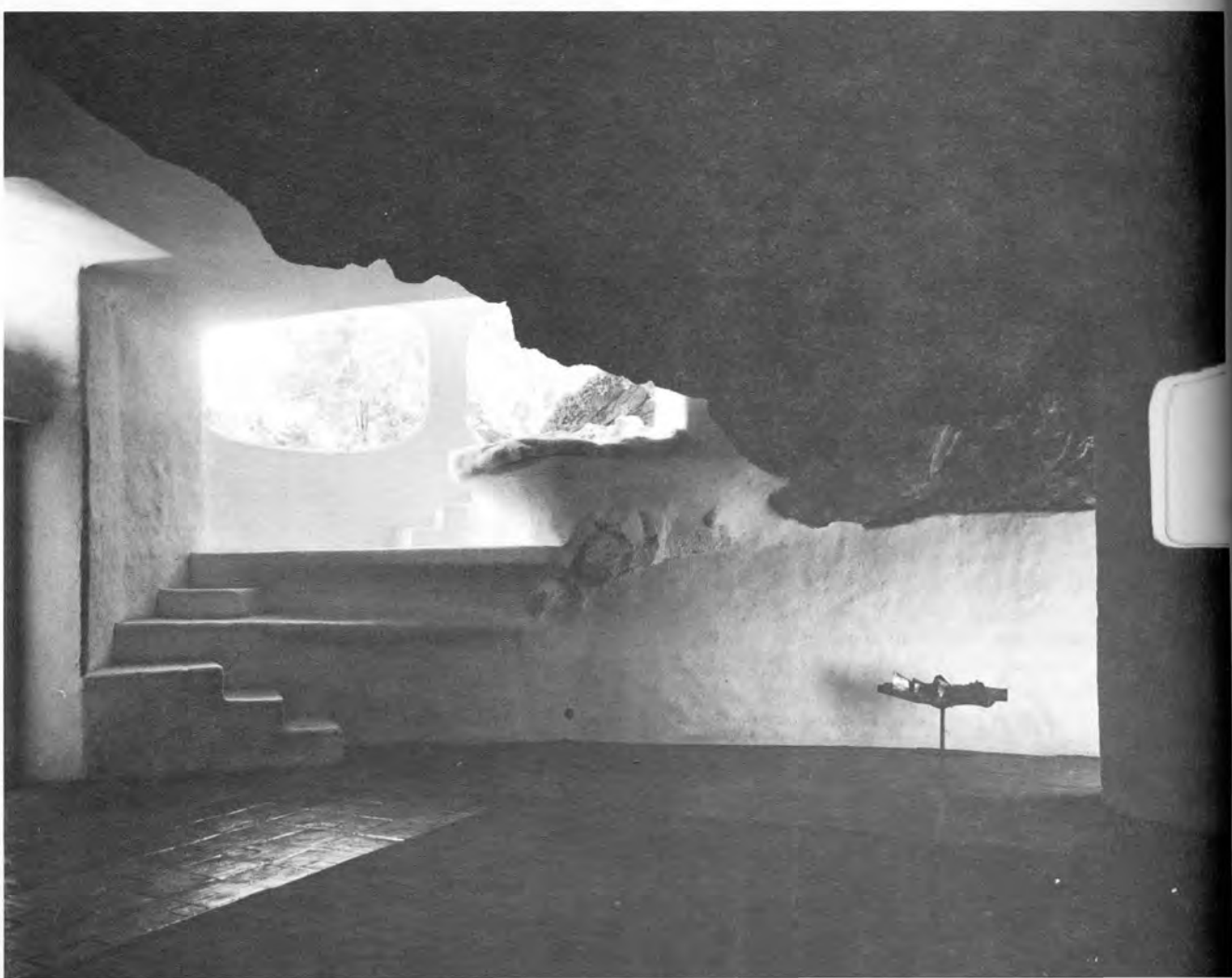


"1, 2, 3"

"I have worked closely with children doing environmental sculpture for a Montessori School, finding out what the problems are of a certain age group, learning how to play with scale pieces. Environmental sculpture has to come close to human scale sculpture since people move about in it. The next step is obviously to make habitats. Habitats are houses and housing needs architecture. I'm not an architect, but I have built two houses."

"I live in a cave. It is a natural rock cave in the southern part of Mexico City. This cave also functions as a living area, with very beautiful white walls which I have managed to merge with the rock. You go up a flying staircase, connected with wooden poles. And over the cave is the village, the village for my family. Each of us–my two children, my husband and myself–has a total habitat, separate little houses of our own. We do not live in corridors. I detest them. We've got an open patio over the cave and each one has his own private house."

Artist's home



"I believe in relating to the person who is going to live in his own space. I must know what he or she wants. The children were very small and couldn't really express their needs. My little boy told me his want: to live in a train. Through a great deal of investigation I found out what he really wanted was a bed at the same level as his window and for the window to look onto something exterior, and a roll curtain that goes up and down. So I did that. Now when he wakes in the morning he can roll the curtain up and feel like he is in a train. The next thing he wanted was to be able to climb up and hide so that he could play airplanes. He wants to be a pilot. So what I did was to design a particular roof with a rope ladder from his bed. It is a double bed, a bunk bed, so he can climb up onto this roof and he has a cubby hole where he can put his tea trays and planks of wood and play pilot. The little girl is going to be a vet so she wanted a little shop to keep animals in. All this has to be figured out: their language, what they really mean, what sort of spaces they are talking about."

Artist's home

Artist's home

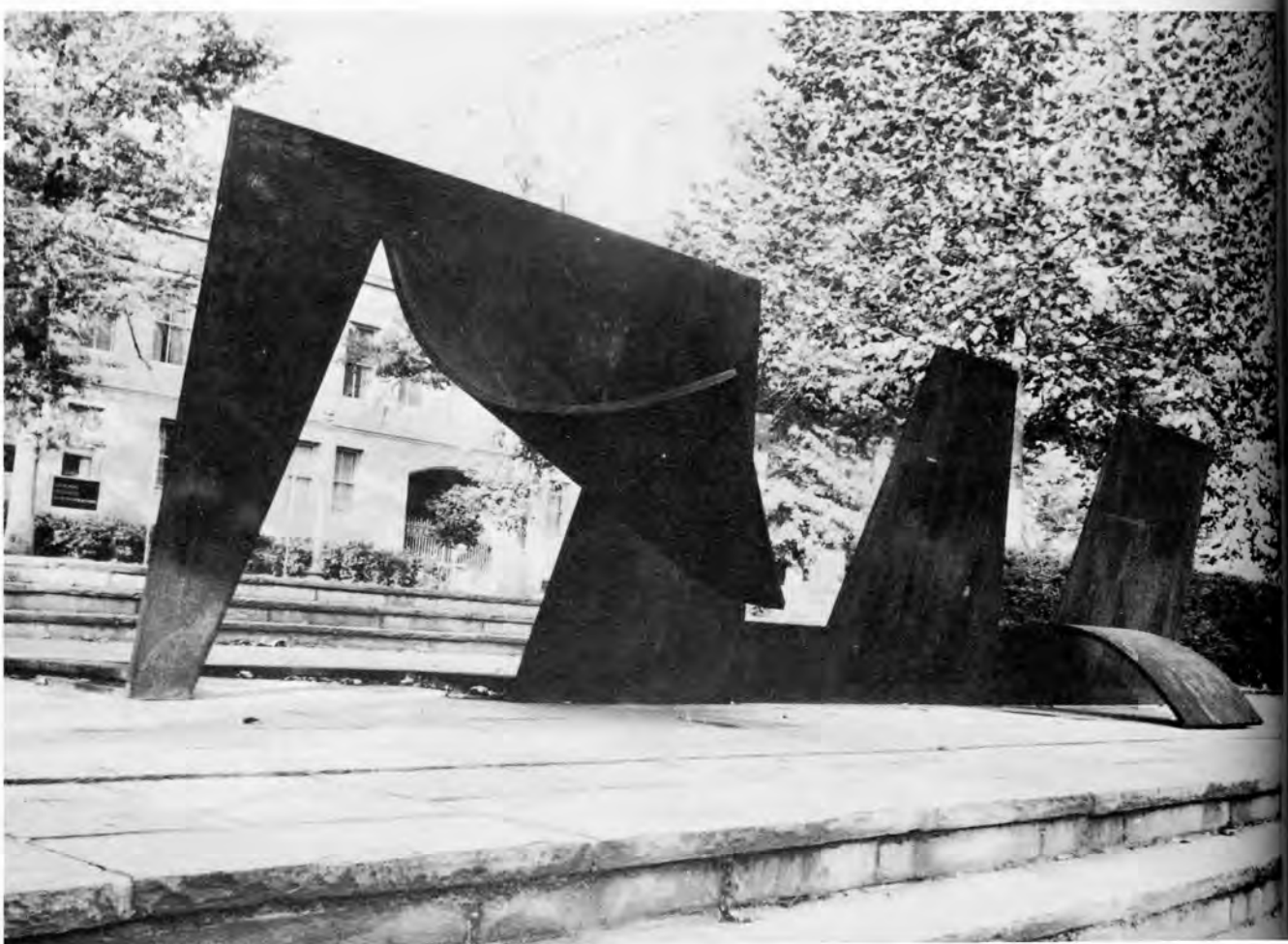
"We must begin to conceive of massive housing with a sense of beauty. The walls that are going to give onto the streets, the walls that we are going to be looking at, should be conceived with a very definite esthetic sense, with a certain continuity. Where there is enchantment, one house leading to the other, with lights, textures and color, the whole outside is very beautiful. Nowadays each architect makes his own little aberration which has nothing to do with the next thing or with the neighbors. One structure stands up like a flag pole, the next one is circular, others are dome shaped, still others pseudo-colonial, Americano. This must stop. We must start planning for humans again. We're all about five feet, seven inches to six feet high. We've all got two eyes, a nose and a mouth. We are all individuals. I don't think we are simply a mass of grey, boring, headless people. We are emotional and are entitled to these emotions, and to our own feeling of beauty which can also be individual. Your colors are not my colors and your spaces are not my spaces. Therefore, what goes on inside these buildings, that is our own private homes, our private spaces, should be moveable to our requirements."

Lila Katzen:

"Here is 'Antecedent,' which is going into the National Gallery of Art. This work is made of one plate of mild steel, two inches thick, and it weighs almost three tons. The dimension is twenty-five feet long, but it is only six feet tall, which means that people are not overwhelmed by the piece. They can walk through it or sit on the curved punctured shape that comes out of the plate. I conceived the piece in terms of my own interest. My work primarily deals with energy, a sense of existence, a sense of the events of the work–in each piece, there is a history of the work itself. We are aware that it is steel plate, a plate that has been made into a configuration. Yet it still retains the essence of its energy, its essential identity as a plate.

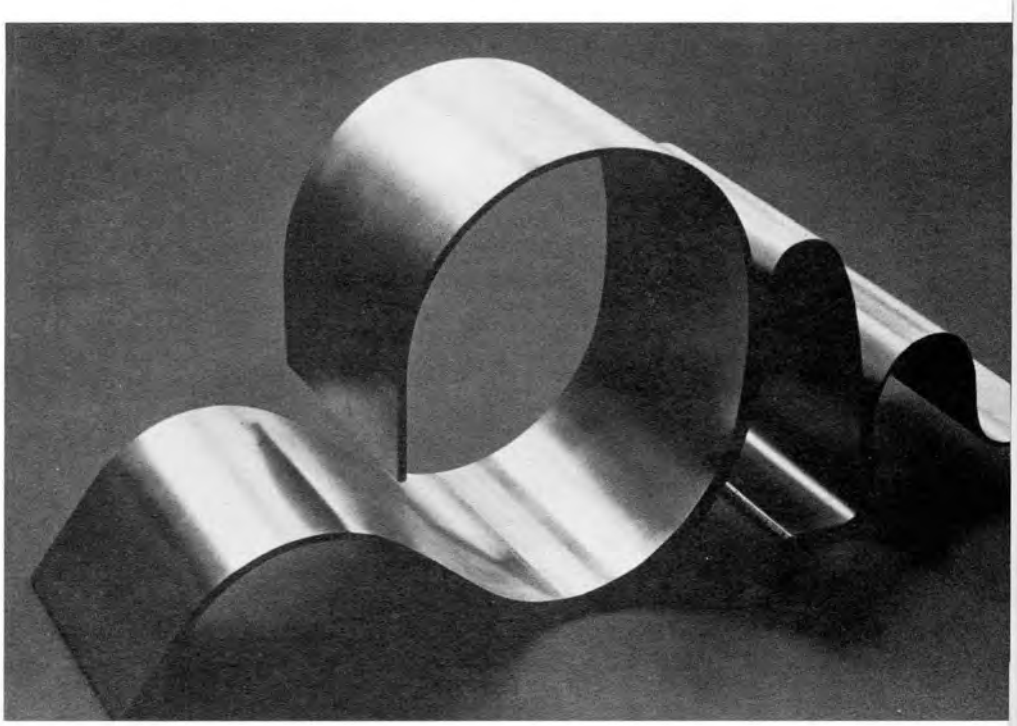
"This is rolled steel, and since it is two inches thick you can imagine it takes quite a gigantic roll to make it. The steel goes over the worker's head and is set into the machine as he operates the machine. I am usually there when he does it. It is a slow, arduous procedure and we are doing it inch by inch. Sometimes the craftsmen will say to me, 'Here, you take it.' And I usually say, 'No, you have had twenty years of working that machine and that is not where I'm at.' "

"Antecedent"

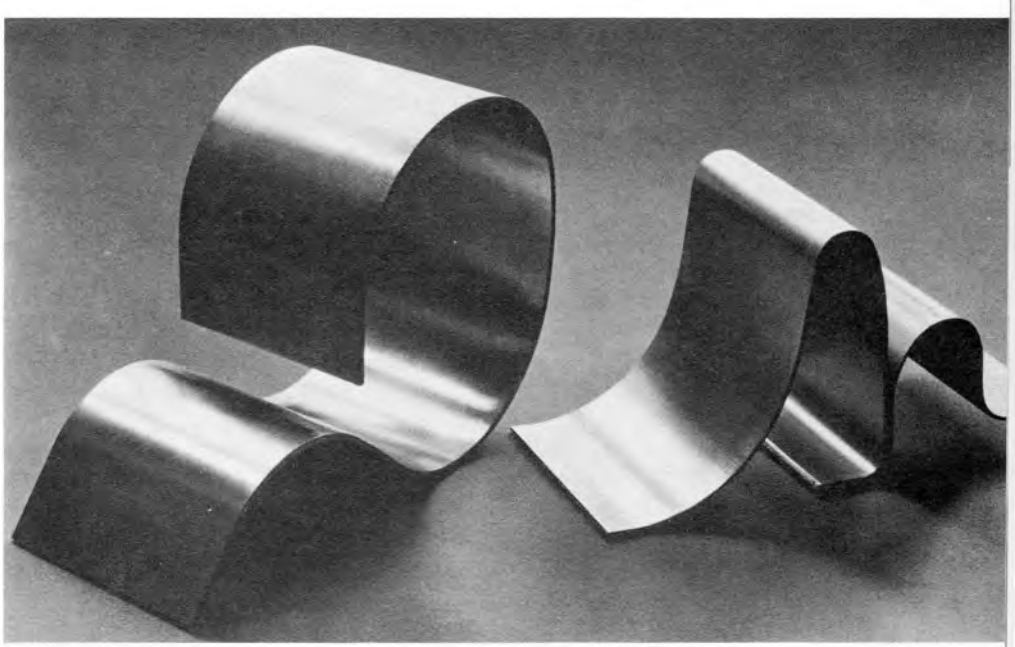


"I am very interested in large scale work and have always had a concern for very large statements, but still I don't want to be 'bagged.' I don't want to be told that all I do is make large scale work. I don't think it's any more meaningful than saying that you are a bronze sculptor, or a steel sculptor, or a marble sculptor. I think a sculptor makes sculpture. You change both material and scale to suit what it is you are concerned with. While I am doing very large works, I also intend to include smaller work. My work has never been pedestal work; it has never sat on a base or been put on some kind of a stand.

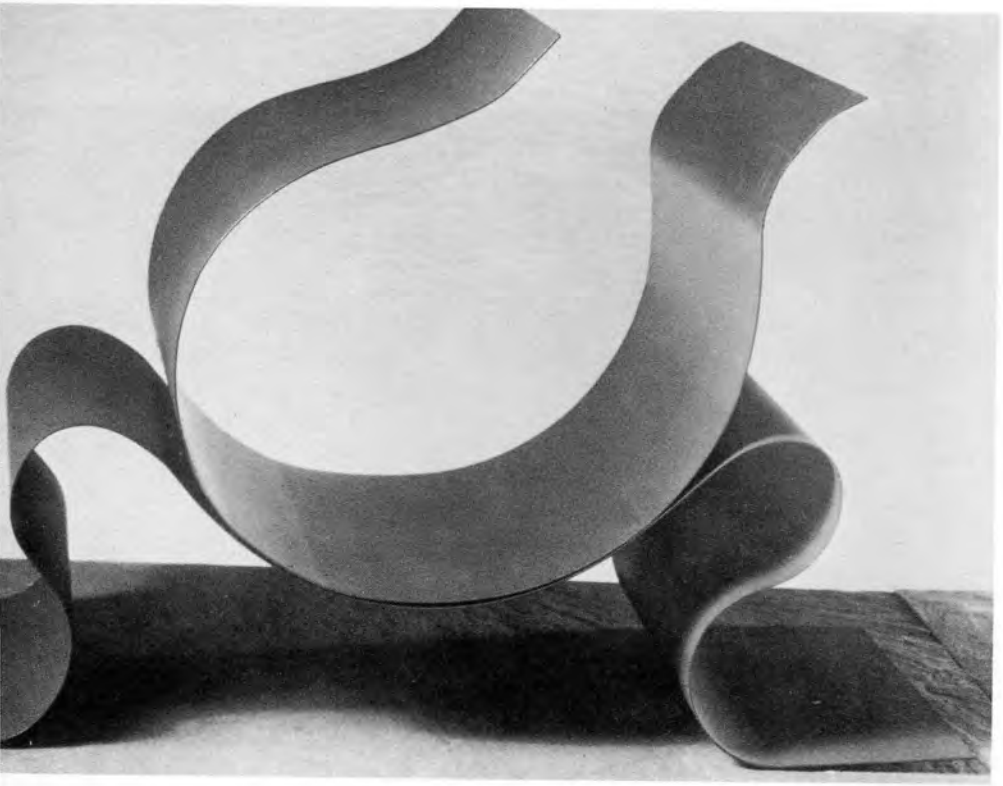
"Sculpture has been largely defined as a male domain: the macho attitude that you must sweat and groan and heave huge weights around in order to be a sculptor is part of the prerequisite. You know, drink your gallon of beer and flex your muscles and twitch your moustache and that makes you a very good sculptor. I find this is a very devastating attitude for the young sculptor who happens to be a woman. In other words she is treated, usually, as the good kid, the girlfriend. Give her less to do, don't put too much strain on her."



"Delphi II"

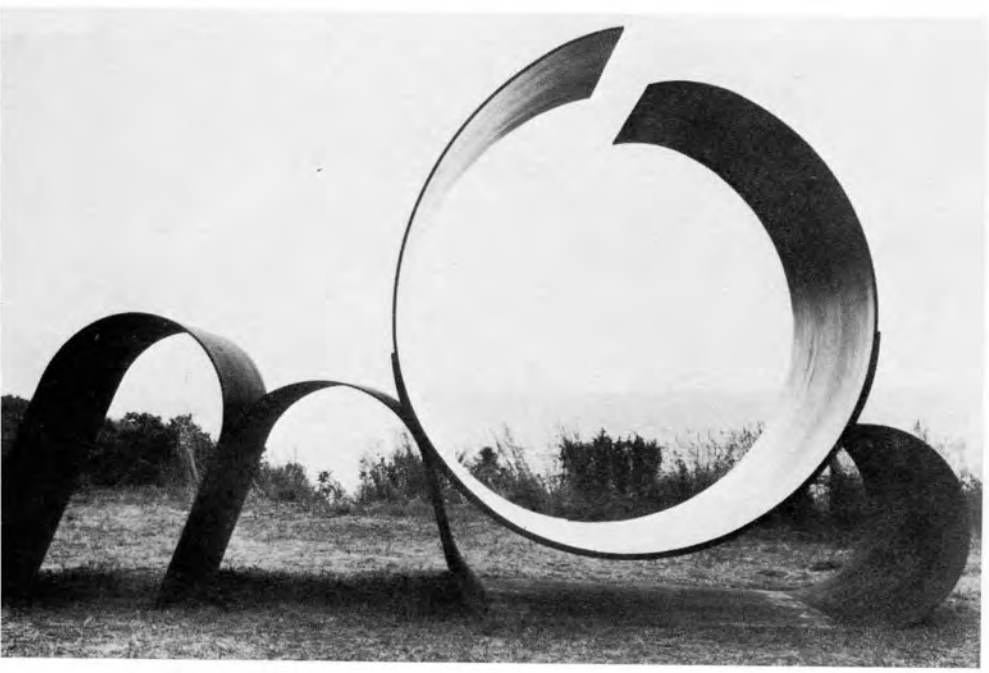


"Delphi II"



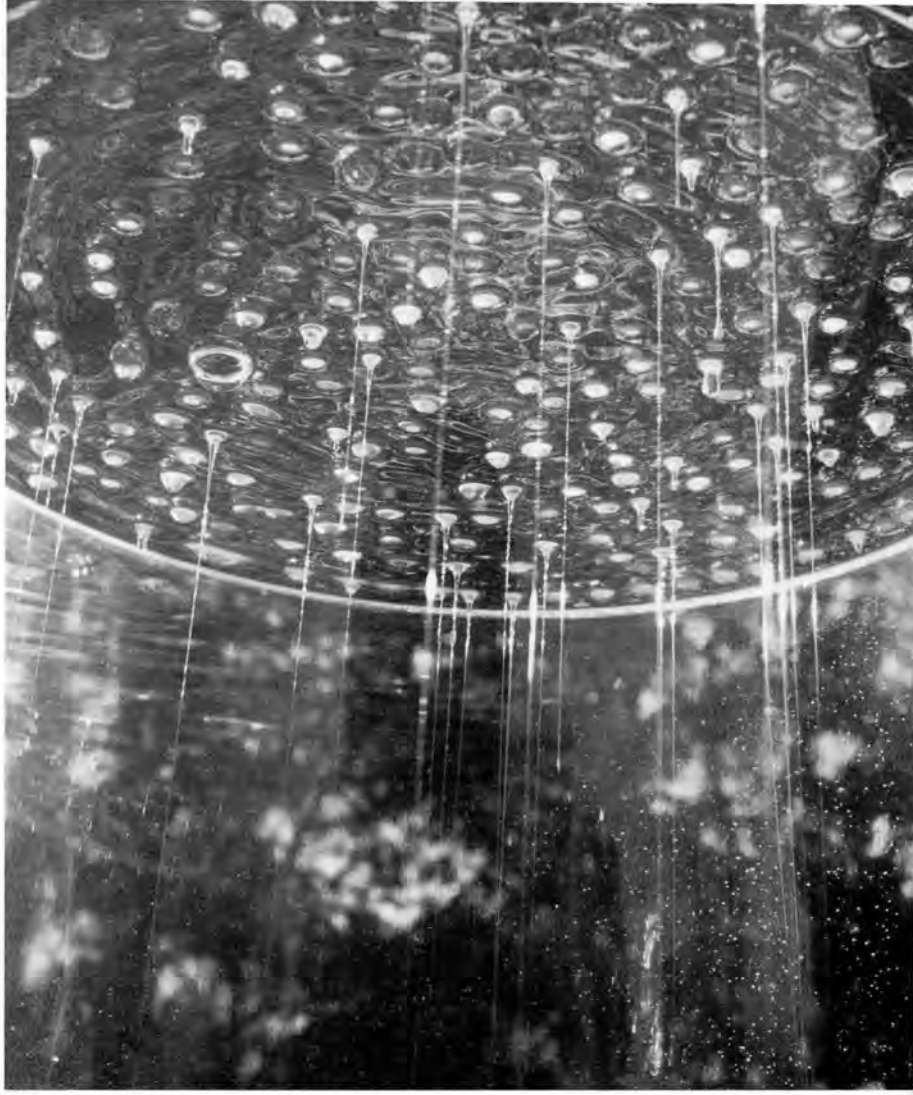
"Double Rotunda"

"The size and scale and weight of the works make it an imperative to have them done in a foundry or large factory. But the conception of the work and the working out of the forms is done with my hands. The energy I feel is my own involvement and that's the energy I'm concerned with in extending form into a moving shape. If something seems too removed from me, I could not be concerned with it."



"Oracle"

"'Oracle' is very participatory. People used to lie in it, make love in it. We used to see the kids–I'm not kidding–roll down the sides. There must be a million skin pictures all over the United States with gals in bikinis, standing up and having photographs taken in this sculpture."



"Dripping"

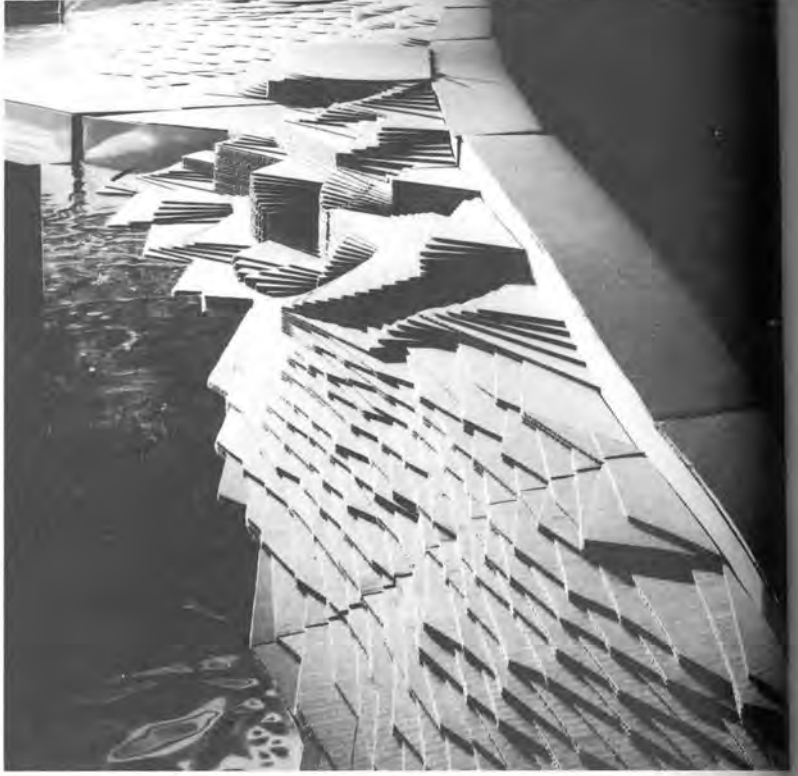
Athena Taca:

"A lot of my images are from nature, aspects of nature that art has not explored, especially the outer universe. I have used liquids that hadn't been really used before in sculpture, such as silicone, scilicum fluids and castroids. Images of outer space were in my consciousness; my interest was to eliminate gravity and create a feeling of floating, of suspension in space. There was a series that I called "Anti-gravity" which had floating balls of solids or liquids floating inside other liquids over the same specific gravity without sinking or coming up. "Dripping" is a clear plexiglass cylinder a foot high and a foot in diameter with just a half inch at the bottom of silicone fluid, very very viscuous like honey–Greek honey in fact, because it too is viscuous and syrupy. As a child I had watched the way Greek honey forms very beautiful little threads and stalagmite formations as it drips. It always drips and you can hardly keep it on the bread. Low surface tension I guess is what makes it fall. And silicone fluid has a similar viscosity, except that it is clear, totally clear, and does not crystallize. In fact, they use it in lubricating space ships. So with that quantity of silicone at the bottom of the cylinder, you turn the cylinder upside down and the phenomenon of dripping starts. It lasts about half an hour, although the most spectacular part of it is the first few minutes.

"Water plays a big role in my work and in my imagery. Again, it is a major part of Greece, the sea. The waves of sands or strata of layered rocks, rock formations: all that comes into my step formations, my step sculptures–you can say they are images of waves.

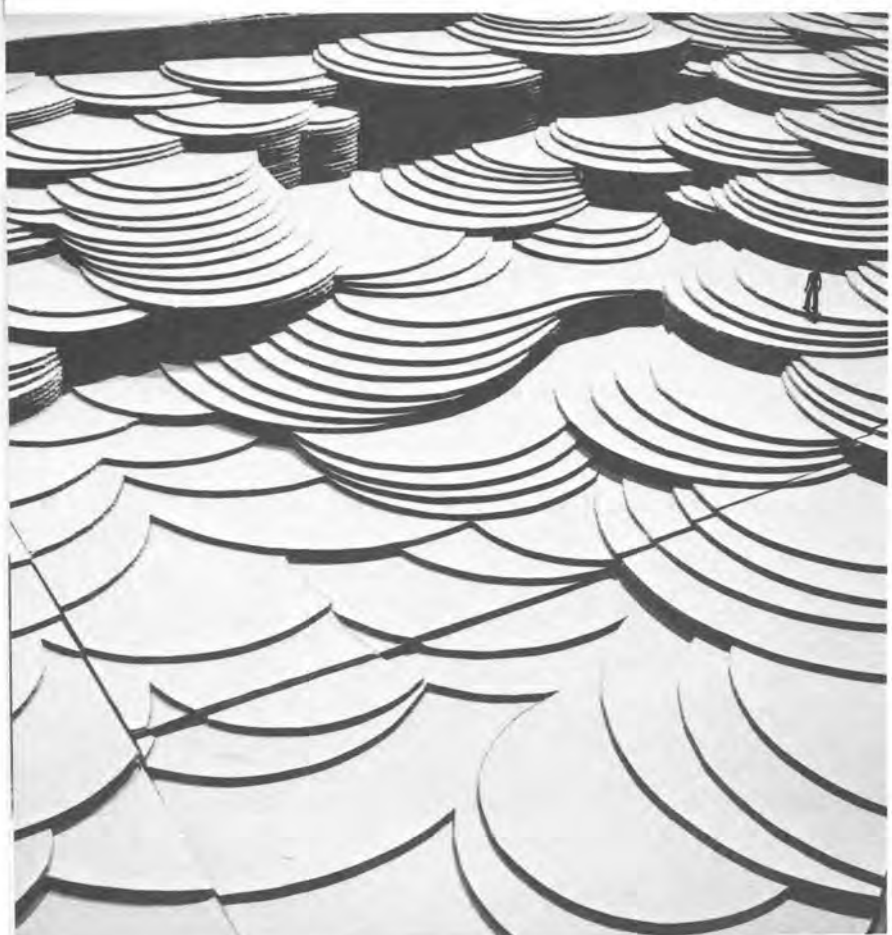
"In the summer of 1970 I went to two Greek Islands where the steps were especially monumental and that naturally impressed me. Greece is very mountainous, and the mountain paths are made very beautifully out of rough stone. I have always loved the mountains and the experience of going up and down. When I returned I started making very simple geometric step formations which were models for architectural spaces where you could go up and down."

"My early steps came out of my past experience, I think, although people who saw them thought they looked Mayan. I went to Peru the summer of 1971 after I had completed my first series of steps. There I really found great affinities, not so much with the Mayan, because they are much more geometric, as with the Inca pyramid steps. The Inca steps are much more adapted to the terrain, to nature. And my work took a turn in that direction since I wanted to get away from minimal and systematic influences. My own temperament led me to irregular, natural forms."



"Charles River Step Sculpture"

"Charles River Step Sculpture"



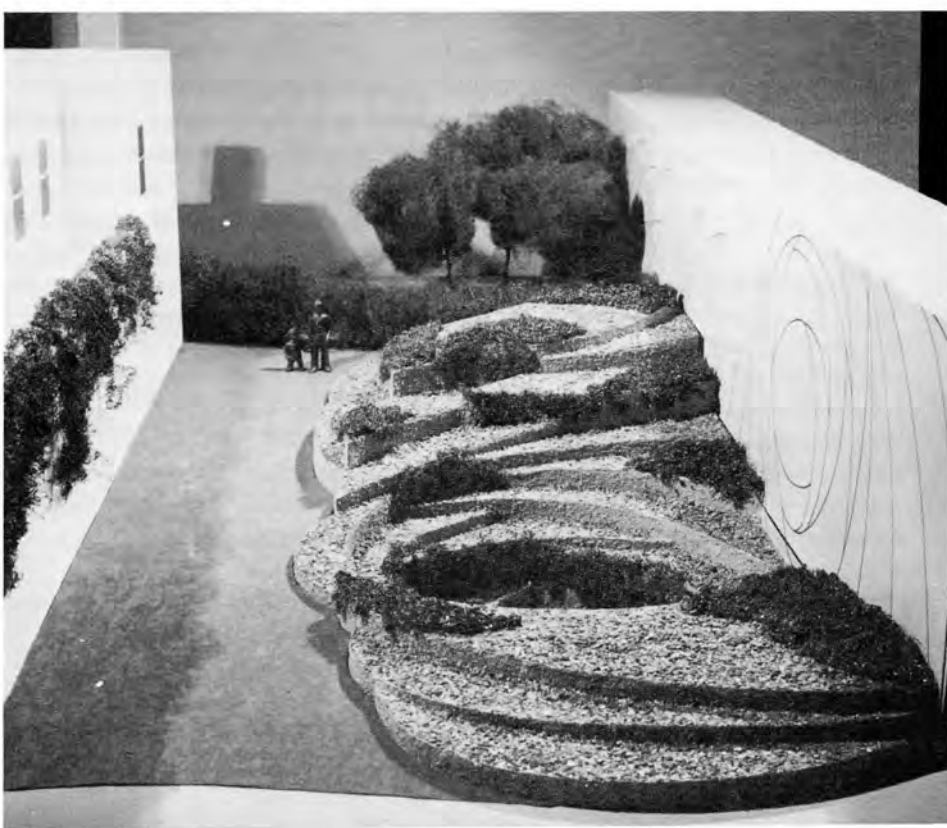
"My first important step sculpture was one I designed at MIT in January, 1974. I was invited to go as a fellow, they gave me a studio, and I asked them what kind of work I was supposed to do. They said, 'Why don't you design something, a step sculpture for the banks of the Charles River?' So I did. It was an imaginary project for a real site, and my most ambitious project because I was not restricted by visibility. I knew it wasn't going to be built there so I let my mind run free. Initially I wanted to design something for a half mile stretch of the banks but I didn't have the time so I did one only for 750 feet. That was the first time I got away from the abstractedness and the geometric character of the earlier steps. I blended into the steps my love for irregular, natural forms such as waves, the bark of trees, stones and rocks. For my step models I have used mainly corrugated cardboard, but I have been expanding my materials and I may go back to using burlap. Those soft works were a way of exploring the method of cutting or folding. They led me to exploring the phenomena of periodicity and involving repeated events like the heart beat, the day and the night, and so on."

"Cut-in #2: Arches"

"If I work for public spaces, I prefer to work on a much larger scale. I don't like the kind of object called a monument, but which is really a studio piece conceived in the studio, enlarged and just plumped out of doors. I do make some sculptures that could be adaptable to a number of environments, but I prefer to work with a particular site and to make each sculpture part of that environment, either indoors or outdoors.

"When I finished my studies, modern art in Greece was fifty years behind everything else. At the time there wasn't a Picasso to be seen, and hardly any modern art in Greek museums. Now there is a national gallery which includes Greek art of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but I didn't see any contemporary art until I went to Paris at the age of eighteen. I was very lucky to go because I had a traveling scholarship. Otherwise I wouldn't have seen any until God knows when."

Sculpture park for Smithtown, Long Island



"I am competing with two other sculptors from New York, Peter Tractus and Scott Burton, for a large sculptural environment for Smithtown, Long Island. It is a project of the New York State Arts Council. A committee of critics and museum people from the area looked into the work of a great number of sculptors all over the country. They chose three: two from New York and myself. Each of us presented a maquette, a model with our proposal to the public of Smithtown last March. The people of the town are now going to vote on which sculpture they want to build. It is going to be very exciting since it is the first time the people are really going to choose." [Athena won this competiton.]

CANVAS

Speaking some language
of cream. Vanishing cats.
I'm tired of these lessons.
They seem like ultimatums. Lacquer
stars. Pears like God.
A woman pouring water
over her knees. Tying a ribbon
around her ankle. Winter
leaks into the gymnasium.
If you're going to write about love,
set the peaches on the sill
until they start from shadows
like whitewashed eggs.
Degas used up all the light.

—*Stuart Dybek*

ARCHAIC TORSO OF APOLLO

—*after Rilke*

The head's no loss. For what he meant to say
is cradled there between the shoulders' flare,
the sleek thighs where
precious futures pooled awaiting day.

And all our temporality is paled
beneath the sun of his unseen expression.
We turn away to seek the quick impression
of that other star, its light entailed

by what we are. And breathe the reek of caves
dark and moist within our weekday souls,
doomed to narrow graves,
empty of stone, futureless moles

housed in the earth where he once lay.
What we have been is dust. Time for a new way.

—*John William Corrington*

A Matter of Metaphor

by Grant Lyons

"How much tip did you give him?" Mattie's voice seemed to rap Stern on the head like a stick.

"Tip?" He stifled an expression of distaste as he met her sharp look. Triumph glittered in her eyes.

"The *waiter,*" she said, as though to a slow child, "how much did you give him just now?"

Stern sat up and looked around for the waiter. "I gave him a fifty, but that wasn't—"

"He *took* it as a tip. You didn't see that grin? How many times do I have to tell you—with these people you have to make it ab-so-lute-ly *clear.*"

Stern sighed and moved his chair a few inches further into the shade. He sipped his tequila sour and tried to fight down the annoyance that was rising in him, refusing to meet her pitying glance. Getting uglier by the day, he thought. Beneath the elastic armor her flesh was soft as Crisco; and all the powdering and plastering and dyeing—what basis was there for such painstaking vanity?

He tried to relax, to enjoy the fine view from the terrace: the bay, milky green at this hour, the dark green patches of islands—or would that be a peninsula? He wasn't sure. But the glare off the water hurt his eyes, and his skin was still hot and tight from yesterday's sunburn. Mexico made him feel like some sort of bug, scurrying from one shady place to another. "Fun-Loving Mexico!"—he could still see the poster at the travel agent's office—"Land of Tropical Sun, Friendly People, the Exotic Fragrances . . ." Land of blistered skin, the incredible stench of human and animal feces in the streets, thick slow swarms of flies on the fruit in the market, obsequious yet somehow menacing waiters, dancing around the torpid white carcasses of the *turistos* like ants around aphids. He almost longed for the raw wet wind off the Hudson.

They could see the limousine pull up in front of the hotel below them. Mattie stood immediately and straightened her dress. "It's here," she said. "If you don't want to ride all day over the wheels—"

"I think I'll sit out Taxco. You go ahead."

Mattie exploded—predictably. Miss the Taxco mines! One of the highlights of Mexico! He simply could not do it. He could *not.* But Stern was firm. He wanted a day to relax, to do nothing, to stay out of the sun. With a last look of cold contemptuous fury she left him. He did not watch her get in the limousine, nor did he notice when it pulled away.

Alone, Stern smiled. It gave him satisfaction to thwart her, at least a little. But a few minutes later, having finished his drink and begun hers, he felt a twinge of remorse. They were getting old. Both of them. Time was wearing them down to little balls with grotesque faces. It was harder on a woman.

Stern enjoyed a light lunch and one more drink, then donned the straw hat Mattie had made him buy in the market, for a stroll along the beach. Weary of the now-familiar cement and glass of the new city, he turned toward the seedier "Mexican" end of the long beach. The sun was scorching hot, and the wind coming off the bay was like exhaust from the back of an air-conditioner.

After walking a short while he felt drawn to the quaint squalor of the old town and turned away from the beach. The dilapidated taxis, burros, handcarts, Indian faces and dusty *guaraches* stirred an exotic excitement in him. It's dirty, he thought, but it's *vital.* He felt quite secure as he passed through, a little like an astronaut in a space-suit.

For contact, and to give himself a project, he began pricing the silver bracelets that were sold, it seemed, at every corner by street vendors. He could pick up a peace offering for Mattie. He was just about to buy one from a boy of about fourteen when it suddenly occurred to him that Mattie had gone to the silver mines and would come back loaded down with the stuff —she would laugh at him for buying it here. He told the boy he had changed his mind, and moved on.

Unwilling to give up the sale, the boy picked up the half-dozen bracelets he was selling and followed after Stern. "Price cheap, *señor,*" he kept saying, pulling at Stern's hands and clothing, "cheap-cheap." He tried to explain to the boy, but only succeeded in bringing the price down ten pesos. He went on, walking more quickly now, but still the boy followed after, crying after him like an injured animal, saying things in Spanish that Stern did not understand. People turned, as they passed, to watch them, and Stern didn't like the looks on their faces. What was the boy saying? Stern was sweating and a little breathless when he arrived at the wide street that bordered the beach. He hurried across and the boy did not follow. The boy shouted something and disappeared into the crowded streets.

Stern, feeling relieved, found himself in front of a restaurant, *"Las Olas Altas."* It extended from the wide sidewalk out over

the beach on long, thin, not very sturdy-looking poles. Several tables had been put on the walk, and at one of these four dark and surly looking men sat around a huge bottle of yellowish liquid. All four wore white shirts rolled up past their elbows and all four glared at Stern. Instead of walking past them back toward his hotel, he turned into the restaurant.

The restaurant was air-conditioned and, to Stern, still damp from his hurried walk, chilly. There were several waiters in white jackets and black, silky trousers, but no customers. On one side Stern could see a little balcony-patio through a sliding glass door, and he headed straight for that. He found it cool, but not cold, and completely shaded. There was only one table and he sat down at it. A waiter appeared and Stern ordered a *limonada grande*.

When the waiter came back with his drink, Stern asked him about the green tufts—were those islands, or was it a peninsula? The waiter ceremoniously sighted along his arm and pointing finger, smiled excessively, and said, *"Sí, señor."*

Stern tried again, using what few Spanish words he knew. If you wanted to go there, how did you go—by bus or car, or by boat?

The waiter again nodded and smiled. "No problem, *señor,*" he said confidently, "plenty boat, *sí,* no problem."

Stern decided to let it drop. He took a long draught of the lemonade. The waiter waited expectantly, then bowed and hurried back through the glass door.

Stern tried not to drink his lemonade too hastily, though he was thirsty. His eyes were drawn back to the green islands— if islands they were—across the bay, and he tried to guess how far away they were. They looked somehow cool and inviting. Then, once again, the glass door slid open and the waiter stood before him. Now, however, he was not alone. With him was a small, very dark man with the sleeves of his white shirt rolled up.

"Boat," the waiter said, jabbing at the man's chest with his finger. "No problem." The man did not look at Stern.

Stern tried to explain—he hadn't wanted a boat, he only wanted to know if those were islands across the bay. Forty pesos for an hour, the waiter replied—very cheap. Stern repeated: he did not want a boat. The waiter's smile faltered, he looked at the little man in the white shirt, then back at Stern. He shrugged: thirty-five pesos. Stern simply shook his head. The boatman pulled open the sliding glass, but the waiter grabbed him by the sleeve. *"Señor,"* he pleaded with Stern, *"treinta pesos,* so cheap, less he no can—"

The boatman looked directly at Stern for the first time, and Stern started. A thick scar extended from the man's hairline across his brow to his eye, and from the eye across the cheek. The eye itself was a blank, a pinkish white with no iris or pupil, as though it was turned back in his head.

"Only *treinta* pesos," the waiter repeated, "thirty pesos, is very cheap, *señor.* Many hours you want."

The waiter was beaming and the man was gone before Stern realized he had nodded an assent.

When he had finished his lemonade Stern followed the boatman down cement stairs to the beach, and then along the beach away from his hotel. They seemed to walk a long time before they came to a half-dozen small boats pulled onto the sand. Each of the boats was a different color. The boatman pointed to a faded red one.

Stern hesitated—was he to get into the boat here? The boatman gently pushed him into the boat and then forced him to sit down. He shoved the boat easily across the sand and into the water. When the water was nearly waist-deep he lifted himself effortlessly—almost magically it seemed—up and into the boat. He lowered an ancient-looking motor and started it with one pull of the rope.

Stern sat with his back to the front of the boat, facing the boatman whose one good eye was fixed on some point over Stern's shoulder and far behind him. They were soon surrounded by blue-green stillness. Gradually the water got darker and bluer. The pulse-like sound of the motor filled Stern with a vague excitement and foreboding. He tried to converse with the boatman, but his Spanish was completely inadequate and the boatman appeared to speak no English. Behind the disfigured face the city slowly spread out, shining and white. Gradually the green mountains behind it rose into view.

The boatman muttered something and turned the boat sharply. Stern turned around. A beautiful pale coral beach sloped down from dense tropical jungle. All along the beach at regular intervals were extraordinarily tall palm trees, and between the palms were handsome wooden shelters, with picnic tables. The sight of the exquisite beach, completely deserted, filled Stern with sudden strange happiness. *A little adventure,* he thought, and the words continued to echo in his head: *a little adventure.*

The boatman tilted the motor up, slid into the water, and towed the boat up onto the sand. Without looking at Stern he sat cross-legged on the sand, leaning on the boat, pulled a crumpled cigarette stub from his shirt pocket, and lit it.

"Muy bonita," Stern said. The boatman said nothing, and Stern stepped out of the boat. He tried to ask the boatman about refreshments, something to drink, but could not make himself understood—the boatman merely shrugged and drew deeply on his cigarette.

Stern walked on the sand with difficulty—it was extremely fine and he sank in over the tops of his shoes so the hot sand scorched his ankles. The sun seemed to beat down on his shoulders and hat like thousands of tiny metal hammers. He hurried as best he could to the nearest shelter.

Sitting on a wooden bench in the shelter Stern admired the view he had of the city, the mountains—and congratulated himself on his pluck. Yes, a little adventure. Everything was so perfectly still, except for the trembling edge of the water.

In a few moments, however, he began to grow restless. What was he going to *do* here, after all? Even if he had brought trunks, he could not risk the sun for a swim. The view was a marvel, but how long can you sit and stare at a view? The trouble with "little adventures," he thought with a worldly smile, is that they're all in the prospect, or the memory: in the event they are nothing much!

He was just on the verge of dozing off sitting up, when to his complete astonishment a figure darted out of the jungle to his right. He jumped from the bench and almost cried out. An almost naked girl ran toward the water, pursued by a huge black animal. But it was only a dog, a German shepherd. The girl, in a blue bikini, splashed into the water and the dog followed. They swam out into the bay, then made a wide arc back toward the shore. The dog barked, the girl splashed water at him, he seemed to take her arm into his mouth and they both went under. When they came up the girl was laughing, a whooping, musical laugh, and then she swam swiftly away.

Again the dog barked, she splashed, they rolled under. Stern watched them incredulously.

After sporting like this for a while, the girl swam back toward the beach. Stern got up and moved uncertainly toward her. The heat, the brightness, the dazzle of the water, made him dizzy. The girl stepped out of the water only a few feet away and moved toward him with a confident, yet curious, smile.

Stern felt his pulse quicken: what an extraordinary beauty! Her deep brown skin, burnished by the sun to copper highlights, had been heavily oiled so that silver droplets of water clung to her body like jewels. Her features were delicate, yet sensuous, slightly oriental; her eyes and her thick hair were black. The swimsuit covered almost nothing and it seemed to Stern that he could feel the heat radiated by her flesh. The dog, bounding up beside her, wagged his tail and appeared to be smiling to himself.

Stern lifted his ridiculous hat. *"Buenas tardes,"* he said.

"Buenas, señor!"

The girl seemed on the verge of laughing, as though a physical joy overflowed her. The dog sniffed Stern's feet. Reaching down cautiously, he gently patted the top of the dog's head. A long pink tongue lolled out between white teeth, dripping steadily onto the sand.

"El . . . el cano es suyo?" Stern tried.

"Perdón, señor?"

He pointed. *"Es suyo?"*

"Ah, el perro, sí. Es mi amor!"

She laughed and Stern did too. His legs trembled beneath him. *This is how rapes happen,* he thought. He felt an insane urge to scream, or else to rip off his clothes like Tarzan and plunge into the water with her. *If I were a younger man . . . he thought. The slight body, the hot brown flesh crushed against his, her features melting with pleasure . . . . The dog licked his fingers.*

He stepped back, flustered.

He tried to converse with her, but he could not get his brain unscrambled enough to remember even the few pat phrases he had once memorized. The girl laughed pleasantly, trying to unriddle his half-sentences; she seemed to enjoy it. Stern patted the dog and laughed at himself. He spoke to the dog in English to hide his chagrin, and this delighted the girl, who exclaimed. *"No, no, señor, este perro no entiende inglés!"* At last, unable to think of anything more to say, Stern stepped aside and watched her climb the slope to a reed mat at the edge of the jungle that had been hidden from him by the shelter. She lay down on her stomach and the dog curled up beside her.

With difficulty Stern slid his feet through the scorching sand toward the boat. Despair seemed to have suddenly swept down on him out of the brilliant sky. A pressure tightened around his chest as he numbly swam through the boiling currents of air. Heart attack? Sunstroke? If he collapsed he was sure he would simply shrivel to a pink husk like the countless tiny crabshells crunching under his feet . . . .

When he reached the boat he waved extravagantly over the boatman—toward the bay, the city—before collapsing into the boat like a heavy coat.

All the way back the salt wind burned his eyes and seemed to suck his strength out through the pores of his skin. He dreaded to think what Mattie would say. No. He wanted nothing now but to sleep. He felt as though afflicted with a sudden debilitating disease, or deadly narcotic . . . it seemed to seep slowly through his body. No. *He would not tell Mattie.* Why should he? It was his own business how he spent the afternoon—his own little adventure! This thought, this secret defiance, gave him some comfort as the little boat softly putt-putted its way through the green quiet toward the glassy glitter of the city.

* * *

"I never heard *that* one before!" Mattie doubtfully arched an eyebrow. Six weeks after their return from Mexico Stern was describing his "little adventure" to a handful of strangers at a party on Sutton Place South. He had thought Mattie was across the room.

He turned toward her and made a little dismissive gesture with his drink-holding hand. "Oh, I got bored at the hotel," he said, "that day you went to Taxco." He turned back to his audience: the boatman was like an over-theatrical pirate in a play for children, he said, and drew a line across his own face to indicate the extent of the scar. And the girl! She was, quite simply, the most beautiful creature he had ever seen.

"As I recall, you were supposed to be staying out of the sun," Mattie said. "You had a sunburn—" Again he waved at her, as though shooing a fly, this time not even turning around. The dog, he said, was a good two hundred pounds. There was an objection—shepherds didn't get as big as that. Stern insisted. At *least* two hundred pounds. "He could easily have put his front paws on my shoulders—and eaten the hat off my head," he said. "And the two of them played in the water like . . . exactly like *lovers.*"

"Hot-blooded Latin types," someone remarked, and the others laughed. Stern was offended—and hurt. He moved sullenly away to another part of the party. It seemed to him that Mattie was to blame in some way. He turned to see if she were following him, ready to butt in again—she wasn't.

Over the next month or so Stern found himself telling and retelling the story of his little adventure. A chance word, a magazine advertisement, or billboard—almost anything might set him off. He took an odd, perhaps overwrought pleasure in talking about it. With each telling the story improved, at some cost to strict accuracy. He had a tendency to exaggerate certain things, like the size of the dog, the deformity of the boatman's face. He himself was a little surprised, both at the uncharacteristic tendency to stretch the truth, and at his need to convince his listeners of just these details. After awhile he noticed that people grew restless as he began to tell them about his adventure—he had told them before. Yet it was nearly impossible to stop himself, even so.

This little touch of the "exotic" that was enlarging into Stern's life seemed to entail a proportional graying of his actual day-to-day routine. He drifted along without interest or even attention, his mind wandering amid the so-called "events," his spirit vaguely troubled and dissatisfied. As Mattie read their daughter's long letters from college he found it hard to believe in the existence of this absent daughter—as, for that matter, he found it hard to remember Mattie's existence when he was beyond the range of her irritating voice and belittling glances. He daydreamed a great deal, mostly about Mexico, or other Latin countries he had never been to, and often he went over in his mind the things he could have or should have said to the girl on the beach, to the boatman, to the four glaring

figures in front of *"Las Olas Altas."* He read much more than before, discovering an affinity for certain hard-bitten cynical novels whose heroes erupt in cleansing, righteous violence. He dreamed of writing such a novel himself, set in Mexico, with the girl of the beach as the central figure.

Stern's general lassitude seemed to turn itself inside out at parties, to Mattie's annoyance and his own surprised satisfaction. He drank more than he would ever have allowed himself before, and after two or three became quite aggressive and opinionated, ripping into the "empty complacencies" of his friends with missionary zeal and pleasure.

He enrolled in an exercise class at the "Y," admonishing Mattie that they were both becoming "little gooey pats of butter." "Pats of butter"—here was another change. A man whose speech had always been plain as sand, he veered toward colorful language, toward outlandish and extravagant metaphors. Sam Bender had "a face like pumice," Mattie's newest dress was "vomit-splatter green," the Frankl boy was dubbed "Brillo" . . . Stern's figures were usually at least half-comic, often unpleasant, and he seemed to take overweening pride in them.

Stern's enthusiasms flared and died with ridiculous rapidity. The exercise class lasted one week. After that it was jogging (four days), walking to the office (almost two weeks), and an Italian ten-speed bicycle. The bicycle last longer than anything else, in part at least because it provided a springboard for one of his crusades: anti-pollution.

Air pollution, water pollution, "sonic" pollution, Stern grew eloquent, almost hysterical, and accumulated heaps of data. The one word he could not bear was "compromise." "Compromise!" he would shout—whether to Mattie, to friends, or even strangers at a party—"How can you even talk about it—with your last *gasp!* What are we—what is *life?* Clean seawater, a little clean air. . . . If God wanted to create a man now He couldn't do it. He'd have to settle for something like a tar-baby. . . ."

It became obvious, even to Stern, that a process was taking place over which he had no control. Perhaps more significant, he had no *desire* to control it. Mattie didn't have to tell him, though she did with tedious regularity—he was alienating himself from everyone. He was becoming, well, *strange.* If he leaned back and looked at himself through his friends' eyes, he was shocked, it frightened him. But the fact was their point of view no longer seemed valid. And every time one of them went ga-ga over a new toy—an iceboat, a borzoi, a car—he seethed with righteousness: "Don't you see? *Idiot.* You're throwing pebbles into the void!"

At work, too, he was derailing himself. He did the actual work as competently as ever. But the subtle minutiae of inner-office politics no longer held his attention, he was no longer "sensitive," as it was so delicately put. When he was passed over for a long-expected promotion Mattie exploded, and Stern, himself hurt and baffled, responded by insulting her so exactly and so unequivocally that she did not speak to him for four days. He was sorry immediately afterwards, but something prevented him from performing the customary rites of repentance and retraction—everything he had said was true!

It was clear to him that somewhere near the heart of what Mattie acidly referred to as his "imminent breakdown" was his Mexican adventure. He thought about it more and more as the weeks and months passed, he embroidered elaborate fantasies, talked to strangers about it. One day in the YMCA steam room he told four men he had never met that he made love to the girl—she had "electrified" him, "transformed" him. . . . A falsehood, of course. And yet—how false was it, *metaphorically?* It seemed to Stern that he was trying to express something profound and elusive, something that had happened to him . . . and that the surface events were not what mattered. The *meaning* of the events was a kind of mystery, and that mystery was the essence of what he was trying to say.

With the first warm days of spring he suffered a kind of relapse. The excitement that had mounted through the winter collapsed. His age, or something leaden and wintry in his soul at any rate, seemed to grip him suddenly by the throat. He forsook the bicycle, rejoined the subway crowds, stopped reading novels, or really much of anything, and rediscovered his dread of parties. He began to regain weight. Arguments bored him—in fact everything bored him. At home he sat and mindlessly thumbed through whatever magazine lay about, usually one of Mattie's. Mattie made a show of concern and insisted that he was *ill,* but he only nodded vaguely. One morning he started laughing as he was shaving, and when Mattie came running in he pointed to the half-lathered face in the mirror. But he didn't know himself what he found so funny.

It was in July that Stern unexpectedly found himself in an unfamiliar mid-town office. The place reminded him a little of an airline office. An attractive young woman sat behind a desk and smiled winningly at him. Spread flat on the desk near her hand was a paperbound copy of *Waiting For Mr. Goodbar,* the spine split. Stern asked her about the intensive Spanish course.

Several days later Mattie asked why he was coming home so late these afternoons. He simply remarked that he was "pursuing new opportunities."

It wasn't like him to lie to Mattie—or rather, to hide things from her. But he did not know how to answer her. How could he explain? How could he make her understand what the Spanish course meant to him when he did not know himself? For some reason it made him happy to submerge himself in this rolling, musical tongue, it gave him a sense of purpose, of direction. The classes began to seem the important part of his day. They gave him a comfortable feeling of detachment from the vicious Manhattan struggle, above which he seemed now to float coolly. In fact the most exciting event of the summer took place on a Saturday in Central Park when he conversed for two hours, in Spanish, with a Cuban who had fled Castro in a rowboat. As Stern drifted through his daily existence—in the subway, at the office, almost anywhere—he was visited by a recurring image: the world around him would cloud, the cloud would slowly revolve in front of him and then open like a milky green pupil. The sea, the girl stepping from it all bejeweled, the immense dog . . . the clarity of this vision, its brilliance and color, made everything else pale like an old photograph.

And then one day he again found himself in a strange office. Another pretty girl smiled at him, expectantly. He booked a one-way ticket for one to Mexico City. He did not doubt that this was merely symbolic, metaphorical, perhaps a kind of magic, but it made him happy.

Meanwhile Mattie seemed to drift farther and farther away, like a persistent, but not particularly pleasant, memory. She looked at him grimly, bitterly, sometimes pityingly, and spent

hours on the telephone discussing him with all her closest friends. She was clearly unable to pinpoint, to formulate precisely, the nature or scope of her fears.

October 22: he packed a small suitcase and hid it in the hall closet. He felt feverish and short of breath. At the office he made ridiculous mistakes, but only smiled serenely when these were pointed out to him.

Mattie complained that some of his underwear was missing, and a few other things. He suggested that the laundry had lost them. "No, no," Mattie said, "I always count." This remark, uttered with such fierce pride, sent him into a fit of laughter.

October 26: he flagged down a cab, the bag in his hand, feeling drunken and dazed. The cabby, with long hair and a drooping, Wild Bill Hickok moustache, asked him where he wanted to go, and Stern burst out: "There's no lien on your *life!*"

"Right on," said the cabby. "Kennedy?"

He arrived at the hotel—the same hotel—with no memory of the flight, the connections in Mexico City, the ride from the airport. It was as though he had stepped out of his life, through an invisible curtain, and found himself on the terrace overlooking the green bay. A mariachi band played as he sipped a tequila sour, and, as it seemed to him, everything clicked neatly into place. The sweet-and-sour drink, the pleasantly discordant music, evoked a condition, an outlook, an implicit philosophy. Just what he had once regarded as indolence. Of course it wasn't that at all, it was a kind of organic calm, a submission to life. Striving, ambition, anxiety—these all sloughed off, loosened by the sweet-and-sour. Pleasure and pain were after all only a fleeting taste of what was finally too large to grasp, a shape beyond imagining—and beyond concern.

Next day he went out on the terrace late in the morning and sat till one. He had exactly *three* drinks and a light lunch before putting on his hat and beginning his stroll to the old city. He priced bracelets and kept his eye out for the boy. A needle in a haystack of course. But if he found him, Stern knew he would buy the bracelet this time.

He didn't find the boy, and so returned to the beach and *"Las Olas Altas."* There were six men seated around a table in front. Stern stared at them, studying their faces, but they did not notice him. He stepped inside. The waiters were not the same, but the restaurant was once again empty. He went out onto the small balcony. A waiter appeared and asked him if he would not prefer to sit inside—the waiter spoke English. Responding in Spanish, Stern said he preferred to be outside, and ordered a *limonada grande.*

When the waiter returned with his drink Stern asked him about boats, a man with a scar, so, across his face. The waiter grimaced peevishly and made a vague gesture toward the beach. It seemed to Stern that he did not like his speaking Spanish, that the waiter did not know what to make of him—neither native nor tourist, but some monstrous hybrid.

He walked along the beach until he came again upon the boats pulled up on the sand. A few boatmen lounged nearby. He asked about the man with the scar, but not one seemed willing to acknowledge acquaintance with him, or even to acknowledge a clear understanding of what Stern wanted. They all showed him scars on their own bodies, and repeated the word *"cicatriz"* with amusement. Stern hired a chubby, jovial man with a front tooth missing and a yellow boat.

Now it was the boatman who wanted to converse, Stern who was stubbornly silent. Ignoring Stern's display of Spanish, the boatman insisted on speaking to him in comical, burlesque English. Stern felt more and more sullen and disappointed. The boatman was an imbecile, the bay was—well, dull, without color or glamor, the sky hazy. As they approached the beach he turned to see that it, too, was disappointing. In the first place, it wasn't deserted, as before. A large group of Mexicans, probably a single family, seemed almost to swarm over it. There were also three tall blonds shouting to each other in what sounded like German. And farther down the beach a couple lay entangled together on a *serape,* the man dark, the woman fair.

All the shelters were alike, there was no way to locate "his," so he simply headed for the nearest. The boatman had not brought the boat up far enough and Stern got his shoes wet. He sat, out of breath, at the table in the shelter, and tried to relax, to assimilate himself into the scene, and to return in some way to that moment exactly one year ago. . . .

But nothing. Simply nothing. Then something odd happened—the scene seemed to slowly freeze. The Mexicans composed a tableau, the Germans disappeared beneath the water, even the waves seemed to curl in place without moving toward shore. His own heart paused—a terrible panic seized him. He felt as though he might be locked into this instant forever, as into one of those scenes encased in glass paperweights. There was a slight movement—the couple far down the beach—and he felt his soul rushing toward them as though for escape. The woman, fat and pink, rolled off the thin, dark body of the man, and he rose up beside her to rest his head on one hand and knead a huge breast with the other. The man's face looked familiar, but Stern couldn't place it. What did it matter? The grin frightened and disgusted him.

Now all the Mexicans went running toward the water, shrieking with joy. The blonds rose from it and walked with long strides toward a cooler and picnic basket near the shelter next to Stern's. A slight breeze brushed Stern's face like a sticky paw. The light dulled a little and he looked up to see wispy clouds screening the sun. Across the bay the city seemed to slowly dissolve into the horizon. Instantly he felt his life burst like a ruptured sac; everything flowed out of him and drained away into the sand.

Was it really possible? That he stood here now on this spit of sand at the very ends of the earth, dreaming, while his life passed into smoke? Or was it just the opposite: that he was only now awakening from a dim, gray dream. It seemed that at this precise moment he stood nowhere, in neither dream, neither reality, but tossed up as it were by both. Already he heard *them,* their smug voices in carpeted rooms, soundproofed offices, moving in toward him like vermin, with their sly, insidious explanations: a last fling, a nervous breakdown, the male climacteric, whatever comforting banality lay close at hand and was part of the canon. . . .

But why *had* he come here? A drunken pilgrim, performing senseless rites of repetition in a daze. . . . Had he expected the girl, dog, whatever, to appear magically out of the bay, to touch him so with a wand and forever separate reality from its skin? A fifty-one-year-old man, truly a gray soul, meets a pretty girl at a beach and . . . what? *What?* For months the image had haunted him, *but what did it mean?* It had entered his life like a bright, glittering knife-blade. . . . Or was it that the gray life

itself had thrown up the image, to mock, to compensate?

When he stood up his legs would hardly hold him. The thought of returning, reassuming the discarded life, filled him with an unbearable dread. But what else? Questions seemed to fly at him like maddened birds, questions and no answers. If he did not begin to move he was sure he would begin blubbering like a child.

He took one unsteady step and then another, out into the sunlight, toward the yellow boat and the grinning boatman. With each step he felt more resolute. The boatman looked at him inquiringly as he approached, but did not get up. Stern climbed into the boat and gestured toward the city. In the back of his mind he was wondering how long he could stretch the traveler's checks he had brought with him.

The boatman jumped up. "No sweem?" he asked. "*Señor?* No sweem today?"

Stern didn't answer. The boatman made swimming motions in the air and smiled encouragingly. "*Señor?* Nice sweem—you no sweem today?"

Stern shook his head. "No. No swim. No swim today."

The boatman struggled with the boat, at last getting it into the water. When he jumped in he splashed wet lumps of sand in Stern's lap.

Stern didn't even turn to glance back at the beach. He sat in the front of the boat, facing ahead toward the mountains, and presently the city. It was as though he were all alone, floating over the bay. As the city came into sight it was unclear —a whitish smear that seemed to hover in the air at the foot of the mountains, hazy, shimmering, obscurely obscene. As it drew closer it seemed to flicker slowly.

AFTER THE SHIPWRECK

After the life's work
the wife the daughter
the steadfast friends
after all but you are gone

the days swell
like slow deliberate waves
that lift imperceptibly to crests
overlooking days
and days of more water

what do you do

you sit down
you pick up your oar

—*John Biguenet*

THE WALL BEHIND THE MIRROR

Text

The lightbulb looks like a pear
if one is willing to forget
what a pear looks like.

And the chandelier of fruit
swaying beneath banana leaves
reminds one of incandescent light.

Homily

Can there be more to metaphor
than imprecise remembering?
Another kind of poem exists,

immaculately stupid,
swallowing the names of things
in favor of their silences.

Exhortation

Take a lesson from your child:
stuff your mouth with your fingers.

—*John Biguenet*

A Confederate Epyllion in Brazil

C. J. McNaspy

A summer spent in exploration of any country, especially one as vast and varied as Brazil, was bound to pile surprise upon surprise. Even so, I was hardly prepared for a United States Bicentennial festival celebrated by descendants of ex-Confederates in the "Colossus of the South."

"I've brought along my Confederate passport, too," was my cryptic self-introduction to Dr. and Mrs. Jaime Jones in Americana (State of São Paulo). They smiled. "Confederate passport?" asked Mrs. Jones. I took out of my U. S. passport a faded photograph of my grandfather proudly sporting a Confederate captain's uniform. I had brought it along to show to some remote cousins before flying to Brazil.

The Joneses were delighted and invited me to participate in the Bicentennial ceremony, to take place on the following Sunday, July 11. Dr. Jones is president of the Fraternidade de Descendência Americana—a group of several hundred ex-Confederate descendants—and works hard to muster a group on the second Sunday of every third month. I asked why the meeting wasn't held on July 4. "If you only knew how hard it is to get people together!" he replied. "I was afraid to break the regular sequence even though this year's July 4 is special." He explained that members of the Fraternidade would have to come from fairly great distances.

We sat in the garden, surrounded by magnolias and mossy trees. Dr. Jones explained that he had brought the moss from Mobile, on one of their trips to the States. Had it not been winter, we should have had mint juleps; instead, we were served a strong brew of coffee that made me think of Louisiana. He pointed to various shrubs brought from "home."

"Your English is perfect," I admired, "with just the right Alabama flavor." "We try to keep it up," he replied, but occasionally he had to ask how to translate a Portuguese phrase. "Our grandchildren are learning English in school, you know. Part of the new ethnicity here in Brazil. The fourth generation is always interested in recovering roots. They take more interest in our Fraternidade than their parents do. I expect the Bicentennial to be a big event. You must come."

I changed plans, cut short a visit to baroque churchs in Minas Gerais, and reached the Cemetério dos Americanos, between Americana and Santa Barbara, on the morning of July 11. The Joneses were already there, setting up bunting and other decorations in chapel and picnic pavilion. Soon caravans of Volkswagens, Brasilias and other cars began to arrive. I noticed licenses from as far away as Rio.

Toward noon we gathered in the cemetery chapel, behind an obelisk bearing such names as Thatcher, Whitaker, Gaston, Cullen, Kennedy and Steagall, as well as the Stars and Bars. The choir of the Presbyterian Church of Americana had assembled up near the pulpit, where Rev. Cicero Sathler, pastor of the same church, was preparing the service. When I offered to participate, he warmly invited me to read the gospel—in my best, newly acquired Portuguese. Welcoming smiles followed his introduction of "Padre Clemente McNaspy, jesuita de Nova Orleans, Estados Unidos." It seems, I was to discover later, that this was the first time a Catholic priest had ever participated.

We sang an enthusiastic, laboriously and strangely accented "Star-Spangled Banner," after which the pastor improvised a prayer for both our countries, and introduced the speaker of the occasion, Senhor Charlie McFadden. "Charlie," as he called himself in Portuguese, read a splendid discourse on the U. S. Constitution, pointing out to his fellow Brazilians that the Commemoration of the Bicentennial event marked only the beginning, not the achievement, of American independence. Then the congregation sang "Divino Salvador," a hymn for Brazil to the melody of "My Country 'Tis of Thee," and ended the ceremony with a rousing performance of the Brazilian national anthem (which, I recalled, had been the theme of a great fantasy for piano by the New Orleans-born composer, Louis Moreau Gottschalk). These were obviously Brazilians, and spoke of the United States as "our grandmother country"—"nossa patria avó."

Right after the ceremony, a young lady rushed to me and asked in Louisiana English: "Are you Father McNaspy from Lafayette?" "Yes, how did you guess?" "I'm Boni Black, from Franklin, and I go to U.S.L., where the stadium is named after your father!" "Small world," I gasped, clutching at the nearest cliché. She and her family were visting friends in São Paulo and had been invited to the ceremony.

The picnic was festive, featuring such nostalgic delicacies as Southern-fried chicken, biscuits and humble grits. "Charlie" showed me a picture of himself with no other than "the Jimmy Carter." "Our next president," I commented hopefully. I met at least a hundred McAlpines, MacKnights, Millers, Lanes,

Vaughns, Byingtons and Greens—all Portuguese-speaking, a few proud of their bits of atavistic English. Venerable ninety-year-old Lizzie McAlpine MacKnight (Mrs. Jones' mother) spoke uncontaminated Alabamian: "Why, reverend, I do declare, this is just the loveliest thing, your being here and all." When she saw my grandfather's picture she commented: "My daddy looked just like that in his Confederate uniform!"

I was able to get a copy of *Soldado Descansa!: Uma Epopéia Norte-Americana sob os Céus do Brasil* by Judith MacKnight Jones (Dr. Jaime Jones' wife), which I have read in detail since my return. The title *(Soldier Rest!: A North-American Epic Under the Skies of Brazil)* is taken from the tombstone of Mrs. Jones' grandfather, Napoleão Bonaparte McAlpine, which reads:

> Soldier rest! Thy warfare o'er.
> Sleep the sleep that knows no breaking,
> Days of toil or nights of waking.

Like most Civil War history buffs, I had known vaguely of a series of hejiras from the defeated South; my own grandfather had even ventured as far as Kansas as a homesteader, only much later returning to Louisiana. But I had no notion of the magnitude of such emigration. I was to discover that approximately 4,000 Southerners had made their way to Brazil, in what Mrs. Jones termed an "epic."

The modern city of Americana, with some 110,000 inhabitants, preserves hardly a trace of its eponymous origins. Apart from the Joneses, only thirty or so other "American" families live in or around Americana, some in nearby Santa Barbara. In fact, the *Folha de S. Paulo,* one of Brazil's leading dailies, did a five-column, well-illustrated article in its July 4 issue, titled poignantly: "Americana Loses Traces of Its Origin." The article begins: "Perfectly integrated into the life of the 110,000 inhabitants of Americana, the elements of the third generation of Southerners who emigrated from the United States to Brazil, starting in 1866, at the end of the Civil War, reflect for a few moments when asked what remains of their ancestors. Then they answer: 'just about nothing.' There is, in fact, really no trace in the city suggesting the presence of a colony, made up of Americans from Alabama, Georgia or other Southern states."

The Confederate cemetery—properly "Cemetério dos Americanos"—had been started in 1868, fifteen kilometers from Santa Barbara, in the middle of a cane field that reminded me of south Louisiana, save for red dirt more reminiscent of other parts of the South. The area had been settled by Colonel William H. Norris and family, who hailed from Alabama, and the cemetery itself was opened for the burial of his wife Beatrice, one of many victims of the stern journey.

Originally called "Vila dos Americanos," Americana grew up nearby around a railway stop near Santa Barbara, some twenty-five kilometers from Campinas. Eventually the name was shortened to "Vila Americana," and finally to the present abbreviation. It was only one of many attempted settlements by American exiles (see Lawrence Hill, *Confederate Exodus to Latin America,* Southern Historical Society Papers, J. S. Pike).

Even before the Civil War, Brazil had stirred the North American imagination. Imagine a country considerably larger than continental United States (3,275,510 square miles to 3,022,387), with only nine million inhabitants. Clearly a world to be conquered! Accounts of superstition and popish failure to preach the Gospel offered another source of interest to Protestant missionary zeal. In the 1850's, Daniel Parrish Kidder, a Methodist, and James Colley Fletcher, a Presbyterian minister, published a volume in the United States (which I have not seen) titled *Brazil and Brazilians.* This was to be reprinted in 1866, 1867 and 1868.

In September of 1865, five months after Appomattox, a Southern Colonization Society was founded in Edgefield, South Carolina. A month later, Thomas J. Adams, Hiram Q. Adams, Major Robert Meriwether and Dr. H. A. Shaw set out from Augusta, Georgia, succeeded in obtaining passports in Washington, and sailed from New York to Rio, which they reached after a month's journey.

In Rio they were to discover that Charles Gunther, from Montgomery, Alabama, and Rev. Ballard S. Dunn, of St. Philip's Episcopal Church in New Orleans, had already established themselves there. Soon several ships set out from New Orleans, Galveston and New York for this new world.*

Even apart from chauvinism, I am particularly fascinated by a now rare volume, published in 1866, by New Orleanian Rev. Ballard S. Dunn, after his return from Rio. Its title unambiguously states Dunn's case: *Brazil, the Home for Southerners.* There follows, in the style and punctuation of the age, a rather elaborate subtitle: *A Practical Account of What the Author, and Others, Who Visited That Country, for the Same Objects, Saw and Did While in That Empire.* (Publishers: George B. Richardson, New York, and Bloomfield & Steel, New Orleans, 1866.)

Rev. Dunn opens his Preface disarmingly: "This little book lays no claim to literary merit." (Indeed, acording to Blanche Weaver, early reviews of the volume are severe regarding its literary quality.) "It is a plain, true story, for honest, true people. It is written for such Southerners as are seriously contemplating expatriation, from manly motives."

Soon one senses the chagrin of a chaplain who had served in the defeated army: "No attempt has been made, at giving reasons, why any should leave this country. If those into whose hands it may fall, have not already good, and sufficient reasons, for quitting the United States, I should be the last to furnish anything of that nature." Following this preterition, the author goes on to give some thirty pages of vigorously worded reasons why Southerners should indeed leave the United States. The work becomes an authentic *cri de coeur.*

Next Rev. Dunn recounts his own trip to Brazil. "After procuring permission to travel, from my new masters, I made the best of my way to the nearest port; and was thankful to find the little Schooner Valiant up for Rio de Janeiro . . . After sixty days of buffeting with the waves, our little craft entered the matchless harbor of Rio de Janeiro. Here I brushed and cleaned my very best, and only suit, and with a heart still aching but resolved to try, sought the best means of obtaining an interview with the proper official to encourage, or dishearten."

At that time, Brazil, under the enlightened emperor Dom Pedro II, was welcoming, even soliciting, immigrants from the United States and elsewhere. Accordingly, it did not take long for Rev. Dunn to meet Paulo Souza, Minister of Agriculture.

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*Much of this information, and a good deal more, may be found in two well-researched articles by Blanche Henry Cleark Weaver in the 1951 and 1961 volumes of *The Journal of Southern History.*

Senhor Souza "received me more like a friend and equal than my shabby appearance would seem to warrant me in expecting. He bade me accept the hospitality of the Empire, and freely state my wishes."

Dunn then stated his wishes, which were to discover Brazil, "with a view to becoming a citizen, and of obtaining the privilege of forming a compact settlement of my countrymen, should things prove favorable." The Minister was not only courteous, but eager, and replied: "Certainly, I will furnish you with free transit to any part of the Empire you wish to examine; and with an engineer and interpreter, who will see that your journeyings cost you nothing."

Such a reception was more than Rev. Dunn had anticipated: "A transition so sudden, from my floating grave, which had brought me from the bleak field of battle, where the roar of artillery, the greeting of piercing bullets, rending bayonets, and gashing sabres, had taught me hardness, to the genial sunshine of generous friendliness, offered by a minister of State, had a singular effect, and I was foolish enough to shed tears." (While Rev. Dunn never explicitly calls his exodus an epic, one feels that his classical education must have suggested certain analogies to wandering Odysseus and exiled Aeneas, who was not exempt from tears.)

The author cannot say enough of "the genuine spirit of hospitality at every point. Some of our entertainments were upon a scale, equally, if not more magnificent than anything of the kind I had ever witnessed. In some of these palatial residences, I saw plate which, while it was more massive than any I had ever seen, reminded me sadly of the dear old heirloom silver, which my darling sister wrote me, long before the surrender, had been torn from her own, and our poor feeble mother's hands, by the gallant officers and men, who finally succeeded, through the assistance of Europe, and Africa, in overrunning and crushing my native South."

Nonetheless, after two months of exploration, Rev. Dunn returned to Rio "and told His Excellency, the Minister of Agriculture, that while the immense country I had traversed was rich, healthful, and beautiful beyond my powers of description; I had found no body of land that was cheap enough, or sufficiently extensive, to suit our people, as many as would probably wish to settle together." The Minister suggested that he try the interior or the South.

"After a few days of preparation, we were off again, and steering southward, soon found a delicious climate, a most romantic, thoroughly rich, and beautiful country. In two months of travel more, I found a region surpassing anything I had expected to find. And, what was of greatest interest to me, most of the land was yet the property of the Imperial government. I here selected, and located, a tract sufficiently large for all of my friends: returned to Rio de Janeiro, took out my patent of naturalization, which was given by special act of the chambers, then in session, and decree of the Emperor. I also received a provisional title to the land, with authority to regulate its occupancy, according to the wishes of myself and friends."

At this point, Rev. Dunn returned to the United States "for the purpose of assisting my friends to emigrate to Brazil. I do assert, most positively, because I have seen it with mine own eyes, that a very large proportion of Brazil, is immensely rich: and large enough to contain ten such populations as now inhabit the United States, without being too densely peopled." (At the time, the U. S. population was approximately thirty-five million. Today Brazil, with some 110 million, is still sparsely populated, save along the coast.)

By way of allaying Southern apprehensions, Rev. Dunn then gives a brief account of the Brazilian constitution, stressing its liberality and respect of private property. For example, he states: "I know a Massachusetts Yankee, who refuses to be naturalized, and yet he owns several slaves. I know many southern gentlemen, who have bought large numbers of slaves, and much real estate, during the last year. I hope these instances will quiet the apprehension of the over credulous and timid, on these points." Brazil was not to emancipate slaves until 1888, a generation later.

He finds it appropriate to clarify popular confusions regarding his new country. "I have been greatly amused, since my return [to the United States], at the talkative ignorance, and pretentious manners, of many, who have undertaken to catechise me on the subject of Brazil." He speaks of "one United States Senator who was particularly confident, and assuming. 'You think,' said he, rather sharply, 'you think the government of Brazil is not despotic. How can it be otherwise? when it is composed of such Spaniards, and their descendants, as wish to continue, in the new world, the same despotic forms of government that curse the old. . . .' My reply was, 'I will tell you; if you will permit me to state a few facts, that I know to be such, from personal observation, and personal experience. In the first place, the Brazilians are not Spaniards, nor the descendants of Spaniards. They are descended from the Portuguese, who discovered the country, colonized it, and held it, until, under Dom Pedro the First, son of Dom John, the Sixth of Portugal, the Colonies declared for independence, and won it: under the glorious constitution, that has since been so dear to the heart of every Brazilian, and the admiration of the first statesmen of the nineteenth century, in both hemispheres.' "

With more patriotism than precision, Rev. Dunn goes on to explain how superior Brazilians are to the "treacherous race" of the Spaniards, and how they "warn their sons against the folly, villainy, and insecure character of [Spanish] republicanism." Further, Brazilians "have a just pride in the Portuguese language, their mother tongue, which is the elder daughter of the Latin, and boasts a literature, second, only, to that of the French, among the descendants of the Romans." (Devotees of Dante and Cervantes, please take note.)

"Lizzieland" was to be the name of Dunn's new settlement for Southerners in Brazil. "It lies along the Juquiá River; with a strip four miles wide on one side, and the main body, or a tract twenty miles wide, on the other. To follow the meanderings of the river, through the entire survey, which is forty miles long, I suppose the distance would be near one hundred miles. The river is navigable for steamboats, of four feet draught, about half way through the entire tract; there, the navigation is interrupted by an immense fall, where there is water-power sufficient to turn half the spindles of Manchester. I feel justified in asserting that there is no region in the world better watered than this. The same amount of labor that it requires to prepare one acre for the plow in the Mississippi bottom, would prepare three times that amount, as a general thing, throughout this entire region." Lizzieland, named after Dunn's second wife, is clearly to be the promised land.

The rest of *Brazil Home for Southerners* is given to corroboration by other Southerners who had already settled in Brazil.

Among them are M. F. Demaret, born in Louisiana, who finds Brazil "the best of the best," and Captain W. Frank Shippey, "an officer of our late navy," who eulogizes "the liberal policy of the government, the equity of its laws, the climate, soil, and vast resources of these hitherto unexplored lands."

Lest any suspicions still lurk regarding Protestant freedom, Rev. Dunn grants that "there are a few legal and religious or canonical impediments to the foreigner or emigrant, such as that he may not, if a Protestant, erect a Cross upon his Church; yet the whole spirit of Brazil is opposed to such hindrances, and a mighty and united effort is now being made, with the most certain prospects of success, to place the naturalized citizen and the native Brazilian on an exact equality, in all rights, in all privileges, and in all honors that the Government can bestow." Further, "religious opinions of all kinds are respected, and though a Roman Catholic country, the Government pays Protestant clergymen for the benefit of the German colonists."

Little wonder that, given the dim prospects offered by Reconstruction and the glowing vision of Brazil, some 400 Southerners followed Dunn to set up "Lizzieland." Sadly, however, the new promised land proved a disappointment, and in a short time Lizzieland's colonists had dispersed, while many of them, including Rev. Dunn, returned to take their chances anew in the United States. This makes all the more poignant Dunn's letter of January 14, 1867 to the Brazilian Minister: "Everything is going as well as possible. Our immigration will be a success. My book is influencing many fine people. . . . The opposition is strong, but feelings are intense." One further detail suggests another epyllion: a young girl named Lizzie Freleigh, a fourteen-year-old inhabitant of Lizzieland, met Captain W. Frank Shippey, fell in love with him and was married; when Lizzieland fell apart, the Shippeys returned to the United States and settled in Florida. (The name Lizzie seems to have been particularly popular in those days.)

No one, not even Judith MacKnight Jones nor Blanche Weaver, knows precisely how many ex-Confederates went to Brazil nor how many stayed. Two expeditions were shipwrecked off the coast of Cuba—one under Major Lansford Warren Hastings, the other under Frank McMullen, who somehow managed eventually to shepherd his group to Rio. In some areas, notably near Santarém on the Amazon, results proved generally disastrous.

Even so, between 1864 and 1874, 3,690 Americans (some ex-Confederates, others adventurers from the North) immigrated through Rio, in addition to others who landed at other ports. A safe estimate is that somewhat more than 4,000 did go to Brazil, and perhaps half returned to the United States, finding (in Blanche Weaver's words) "that the old South would not exist in Brazil."

Near Americana, however, the experiment was more successful. Though one can point to no compact, major colony of American descendants comparable to the epic German settlements of southern Brazil, the hardy pioneers from the States made lasting contributions to agricultural and educational methods. Their name commands respect.

In retrospect, then, the Bicentennial celebration near Americana, for all its modest, bucolic setting, takes on a nostalgic tone for an American who happens to be also descended from Confederates.

TO JACOB, ON HIS LEAVING

Move slowly and free yourself carefully.
Use oak leaves and dry grasses, use linens
And fresh winds to pack away your goods.

Leave at night and take the old highways.
Take your journey lightly as a handshake.
The road knows you and the sun is yours.

One day you'll come across the border
Like an old friend. No one understood
These limits until you came along.

Pass over and find a good place to work.
One morning think on where you are and
Remember why you've left, why you've come.

—*John Dean*

Sylvia de Swaan

THE WAKE

I lived 900 years
with the old bastard
and now he's dead,
leaving me here
with gray pubic hair
and a fallen vagina.

I forgave him everything:
that hussy heifer
who pissed away
his whole month's check
at Bill's Beer Joint,

the hunting trip
where he didn't just
not kill a deer
but shot off half his hand
in the bargain,

the evening he handed
me his work pants
and told me to grow
a set of balls
when I told Jake and Sam

he wasn't playing poker
until he planted
at least one field
of corn for the stock—

but those things
weren't a blighted tomato
compared to this:
died with me asleep
in the same bed!

He never had consideration.
If I had him back
I'd croak him myself,
going off to hell
like that and leaving me
here with no one
to cry at my funeral.

—*C Trent Busch*

WHEN I WAS AN ACCOUNTANT

I sat mostly
saving breath
and the evening
to audit bad debts.

Which is what
accountants
do, fixing numbers
till they're content.

For this
we're well equipped
with machines and
a pencil, gripped

to leave nothing
ever to chance—
striking even years
for want of balance.

—James Reed

DON'T TRUST THE FACE

of your dead friend
he will talk in colors
hold but one look

the hue will cry
"I was ready"

this is a lie of powder and paint

eyelids and lips will touch
as if nothing
wanted to be said

this is a lie tied shut by thread

—James Reed

Last of the Softball Biddies

by Daniel R. Bronson

If Bonzo Martin had not been a midget, people would have wondered at his name. No one did. Some giggled, but most nodded on introduction as if the connection between name and body were apparent. Bonzo had long since ceased to be sensitive about this, but in the business world he had learned to travel as "B. Z. Martin." Why do more to stand out than was necessary? Not that Bonzo was concealing things. He just thought it was not good business to belabor the obvious.

* * *

That's as far as it goes. I've been trying to get past that paragraph for months now, but no luck. It seems to be the limit of my objectivity. Ad men know about objectivity and good writing. It's a good paragraph, what with all that subtle self-awareness, but it won't budge. So let me try to say what I'm trying to say another way.

At the most basic, I look in the mirror and see Bonzo Martin, a perfect man in miniature: curly brown hair; a face too readily called "boyishly handsome"; a body made muscular by constant exercise. I could have wrestled in college, if there had been anyone for me to wrestle. Even now a new acquaintance may ask if I'm a retiree from the midget bouts. You learn to play such jokes to your advantage—yes, of course I moonlight in costume as an organ grinder's monkey; no, I wasn't born in time to be a Munchkin, but if they remake the film I'm ready; gosh, do you really think they'd try jockeys at the greyhound races? After thirty-some years, you learn.

Not that I consider myself special or unusual. I've always prided myself on how successfully I can be like everyone else. I am ordinary, mildly different from others perhaps, but with the same feelings, views, aspirations, the same life. There are minor annoyances—the indignity of children's clothing stores, the occasional, witty policeman who stops me while jogging and asks for my mother—but they do not detract from what Bonzo Martin essentially is. I am a relatively successful writer of advertising, a key man in a large firm—a midget who can direct a campaign to sell stilts has to know something, but to sell volleyballs he has to be good. I am rather popular with women; if they're moved to mother me with affection, is that my problem or theirs? I play the flute passably, am a practiced gymnast, drive a small, expensive sports car (admittedly specially equipped) and live in an apartment complex befitting a young man on the way up. Other matters have always been inconsequential. I like to think of the routine of my life as a beautiful mechanism. At least I used to.

It was Saturday, precisely two days after I'd returned from my father's funeral. My feelings for the old man had grown to match his. They were nonexistent. My father's only other relative was an older brother, a farmer whose capacity to drink so outdistanced his ability to grow that dad had retired him to a convalescent home in a dry county. A sledge hammer sense of humor. He used to write the old goat twice a year, just so he could close with "to your health." Always swore I'd make a perfect ashtray if I were bronzed. I'm drifting. Just say I was not overcome with grief.

A note arrived. "Come at once! After 11:00 A.M./Aunt Lucinda Ann," all written in an antique style popular with my grammar school teachers. I was puzzled. My long-dead mother was an only child, or so I'd been told. Then who was this imposter, and where did she get off demanding my presence?

I recall crushing the note disgustedly, returning to the ad campaign—a national mortician's bill of rights, how's that dad?—I'd worked on through the funeral. Then I was out the door with my coat on, trying to remember the address on the envelope. One did not locate "lost" aunts every day. I could not imagine why anyone would wish to claim me as their nephew. Who isn't curious?

She was a large woman by anyone's standards, but not soft; grey-haired, age difficult to determine. She did not stoop. Must I recount the vaudeville scene? She didn't see me. Squinted down the hallway looking right over me. It's one of those comic moments I detest, where in the movies the little guy is supposed to jump, shout and wave his hands in people's faces. Dignity means a lot to me, especially before strangers. I cleared my throat as loudly as politely possible. She looked down at once, reacted as expected, but recovered quickly. Not bad. Even the quizzical expression was proper.

"Mr. Martin?"

"You expected more?"

"I certainly would not have expected less."

"You are disappointed?"

"In what?"

"In me?"

"I cannot judge that yet. Come in." Again the command. I almost left then, but matters would have remained unresolved.

Her parlor was crammed with bric-a-brac, suggesting someone who had never had children or pets or long since had seen them go. Ordinarily I resent such places. Collectors of miniatures tend to categorize me with their possessions. Here I felt nothing. Too much was massed together for there to be any order. Everything almost tumbled toward a large, silver trophy on the fireplace mantle. The cup was singularly out of place.

"You are . . ."

"A midget. Dwarves are often malformed." I'd been through all this many times before. Would she ask how the weather was down here?

"My younger sister's only child, I believe. I do not like to be interrupted, particularly by irrelevencies."

I conceded a point to her. I would be more patient.

"I was not aware until recently that you resided in the city."

"I was never aware that you even existed."

"And now?"

"I remain unconvinced."

"Really?" And, after a moment's pause, "What must one always remember when taking a bath?"

She was mad, there was no doubt. And yet something rose in the back of my mind, something vague which flustered me all the more. When I spoke, it was like listening to another voice.

"Turn off the hot, before the cold. Better a moment's chill than a longer scald."

"You are my sister's child, nonsense and all."

Two to her. Perhaps I had underestimated.

"And stop playing these idiotic games. They are what made your father so especially noxious."

Three to her. I was demolished.

"Forgive me. I was . . . well, you are rather a surprise to me."

"I might say the same, with some justification, young man."

"Yes. Of course. Only no one ever told me I had an aunt."

"How did you get that name?"

"My father. Said he'd always wanted something named Bonzo. Anything. I was the first thing to come along."

"That man was unfit to swill hogs! He was unfit even to be swill! I told my sister as much. When I'd learned their choice of a name for you, I told her to forget we'd ever been sisters."

"But it's not a bad name, only . . ."

"It's a perfectly fine name. For a dog! Which is exactly what it was. He was my dog and your father ran over him. That is how he met your mother. I was choking him, daintily and as politely as society will allow, when she interceded. Never could stand the vermin. Your name was his idea of a joke."

It was too like the old man to be a lie. Do you have moments when you feel absolutely ludicrous? Imagine thirty years.

"He never told me."

"Naturally. That was part of the jest. And telling you of my existence would have ruined it. I'm sure my sister was too ashamed to say anything. Just as well, eh? What could one say?"

I remember little more of that visit. There was tea and cake—or was it sherry and crackers?—and the old woman talked at great length. A promise was extracted to return the following week, Sunday. That was all. It was enough. I forgot to examine the trophy.

It should not have bothered me. I know that, but I moved in a daze. Finally, addressing a board meeting, outlining a new campaign promotion (prune flavored soft-drinks for the elderly), I was myself again. I was still successful, still popular, still accomplished. Only now I had an aunt. Otherwise everything was normal. Admittedly, I asked my secretary to remove her dog's picture from her desk.

My second visit to my aunt elicited a third, and so on, until every second Sunday of that winter and early spring became a not unpleasant part of my routine. I admit I never fully believed this woman. I kept a healthy mental distance from her. And i shall never forgive the ancient hassock she'd retrieved from some attic because she felt it suited my person. Looking down at me from an immense chair of velvet and antimacassars—the vision is sufficiently ridiculous. But I always returned. For all her crochets and unintended insults, Lucinda Ann was fascinating.

She would talk for hours, lecturing on her two favorite subjects at length, politics and the game. Nothing surprised her in politicians. "Little men whose appetites have outgrown their capabilities," she would say repeatedly, then catching herself, "Ah, but no offense meant to you." My first name never crossed her lips.

It was "the game" for which my aunt reserved her eloquence. Let me interrupt to note my own tepid feelings for most of our organized sports. Ordinary soul that I am, perhaps my lone peculiarity allows me an insight into the world of mammoth freaks we too frequently watch and adore. I find most team sports distateful for just such reasons. I have no more desire to see a giant hang about a metal hoop than he would to see me run through a half-opened Dutch door. Is it all not a trifle boring?

When Lucinda Ann first mentioned "the game" and her enduring love for it, I was prepared with a wholehearted yawn. When she finally announced that the source of her ardor was softball, I literally fell off my hassock. Who could wax rhapsodic over a game reserved for middle-aged potbellies at office picnics? Aunt Lucinda Ann could.

She had followed the game for years. Until an accident had stopped her driving two years previously, she had been in the habit of touring all those little towns and villages renowned in jokes, going from game to game with an appetite that was insatiable. She knew the names of players who had moved from team to team and town to town for countless years. Their families, their lives, their peculiarities, almost nothing escaped her. Only statistics were beyond her. She called them unimportant.

"But how can you possibly enjoy so childish a game?"

"Precisely because it is so. Of course, I'm not referring to the better professional teams. They're every bit as tedious as other major sports. But the lesser teams, the amateurs and semi-professionals . . ."

"They must be awful?"

"Regularly. They are ordinary men playing a child's game, often very badly, because it satisfies them to do so. I do not believe they are aware of how silly they appear. After a time I cease to see that myself. Do you never try such things?"

I did not. As I've said, why belabor the obvious? Someone once used a midget as a pinch hitter in a major league baseball game. I hold nothing against the man who thought up the idea —it was a brilliant promotion. I hold everything against the midget in question. Bad taste is always worst when closest to home.

I have been insufficient in describing my aunt. I keep getting in the way. Disregard her size, her *grande dame* manner. Her questions set me thinking. What kept bringing me back was that, outside of business, she was the only person who talked to me, not at me. There was a challenge in it all, I suspect. Regardless, that one fact allowed me to endure much drivel. The trophy on her mantle was the championship cup from an obscure upstate town's annual tournament. It was only a year old.

With spring my aunt began making less veiled hints about her desires. All discussion centered upon the game, how soon the season would be upon us. "Upon you," I would say. Pictures of villages, of individual players and motley groups were drawn from scrapbooks. I remained oblivious, even before prized photos of crewcut fifty-year-old pitchers, hopeless beer-swelled paunches attached to grotesque right arms. Eventually hinting ceased.

"I want you to drive me to a game next week. It is not far."

"I don't want to go to any game."

"I do not care about that. I wish to go very much. And I think it will do you a great deal of good."

"I was not aware my situation was so dire."

"We shall discuss that another time. I shall expect you by ten." And after that command, why did I consent to go?

Aunt Lucinda Ann owned a car! It was parked in front of her building the following week as she and an attendant stuffed the trunk and back seat with parcels. My car was too small for her, let alone all she had to transport. Her car would do.

It was an ancient monster, a huge, black Oldsmobile 98, vintage 1949. Not to worry. It had an automatic transmission. And that week she'd had it prepared for my use.

And it was. Imagine driving a tank with blocks on the pedals and pillows on the seat. The steering is so hard you have to stand while accelerating to yank the beast around the corner. Got the picture? I did and said it was all off. There was no way I would go through with such a farce.

"If you fail to fulfill your promise to me, I shall never speak to you again."

"That's fine with me lady."

We left within the half-hour.

Not far, I discovered, was how my aunt defined anything within a two to five hour drive. That first day it was three hours towards upstate New York. We were stopped twice by police, once in alarm, once from curiosity. Trucks careened as they passed. I muttered a great deal, cursing civilian band radios. My aunt cheerily reminded me that we had not been killed, yet. I told her we would be the first victims of a car stopped by harpooning.

Our arrival could be felt. It was a scene repeated numerous times that summer, one I never got over. A town green, a newly chalked field, clusters of cars, wives, children, farmers, a few townspeople, coolers of beer and, of course, the players. All swarming towards our car. The dowager empress had come.

What was it she had? What did my aunt do to deserve such attention, such devotion? People grasped for her hand, vied for her conversation with desperation. None of her gifts amounted to much. Nothing she said was inspirational. She seemed to watch the game rarely, catching only snatches. Never did she express preference for either side. She moved continuously between the various groups, now grabbing a nondescript local like some long-lost kin, now trading insults with the players on both benches. At the end of the game she was given the ball, which she refused. She did not want them wasting good money on her. How much can a lousy softball cost?

Let me interject to note that my reception had been muted. With some delicacy, my aunt had introduced me as her nephew, "Mr. Martin," and had left me to my own devices. No one expressed the slightest interest in my presence. If my aunt's desertion of me was disturbing, the anonymity was not. I was pleased to observe her uninterrupted.

We wound up giving an aging shortstop with bottle-thick glasses named Roy a lift "down the road" which turned into thirty miles to an identical little town. He was going to play another game that afternoon, with a third in still another town that evening. Through the mirror I watched an owl talk with a turkey.

"Well, Miss Lucinda Ann, we ain't seen you in some time."

"Two years, Roy."

"We're the worse for it."

"Nonsense. You're all the same. Good as ever. I'm the one getting older. Aging and decrepit."

"That'll be the day. Even after the accident, you . . ."

"Where will you be playing next week?"

"'Round here, upstate Pennsy. Connecticut on Sunday."

"Well, perhaps we'll run into you coming or going."

"Well, I sure hope so."

And so on. I was mildly surprised that Roy and others I met knew more about my aunt than I, not just about her obsession. I mentioned this heading home.

"Does that disturb you?"

"Not really. I can take surprises or leave them. About that accident, though?"

"What is there to say. I crashed coming home from an outing. The car took it well. I did not. I have not driven since."

"By choice or order?"

"Does it matter?"

"Only to your driver."

"I repeat, does it matter?"

"I suppose not. But after today, I wonder none of those folks ever offered to drive you."

"What makes you think they did not?"

"Well?"

"I do not need pity. I will not put out those good people. They have very little. Even a ball means a great deal to them."

"And what about me? Am I being put out?"

"You are different. And you are kin."

"Oh?"

"Do you still doubt that? Very well, doubt it. But you will drive me next week."

"And the week after?"

"We shall see."

How many weeks, months, were we on the road? Eventually Saturdays and Sundays, sometimes creeping into Fridays. Why did I begin sneaking off early to continue chauffeuring the Queen of softball groupies? And what did that make me? The Clown Prince? The Fool?

The second week, in upstate Pennsylvania, someone asked if I'd pinch hit. Much snickering. I sulked in the car, refusing all pleas and apologies. My aunt exploded with rage and finally both teams carried the car to midfield and declared they would

not continue until I accepted their apology. My aunt drew from them a solemn oath. She would never return if I were not treated properly. They swore almost in terror, I relented. The word soon spread through that little world. I was never baited again. She meant that much to them.

In time I began to sense part of the fascination this strange caravan had for my aunt. There was something ridiculous and admirable about a man who had gone hitless for three weeks, driving two hundred miles in a weekend, knowing he'd continue his streak. The good players changed teams regularly, depending on who had a few extra dollars or a friendly debt. The bad players, the most of them, scrambled as best they could, always preaching of that one more inning they felt was coming them. It was a roadshow of factory hands, semi-pros, onetime phenoms, aging wonders, hasbeens, neverwases. The slugging milkman, the one-eyed pitcher, the volunteer firemen and sheriffs who'd rush off in mid-swing, the lady thirdbaseman who was said to catch many things better than a softball. And Lucinda Ann. And, finally, me. We were all playing at something in the end.

One weekend in July I actually played an entire game. A busload of players was stranded on the way and they needed bodies to go around. Pleaded with to take right field, I spurned all entreaties. Catcher was too tempting to refuse. If I couldn't play with these bozos, I couldn't write copy.

With neither pride nor sorrow I report that in seven innings I missed innumerable balls from the one-eyed pitcher, let in three runs, got one scratch single—they refused to allow me walks—and caught a pop foul off the bat of the slugging milkman while diving almost into the cleavage of the lady thirdbaseman for what proved the final out of the game. It was some time before they could get us extricated and find the ball in my glove; I almost suffocated. I honestly can't remember whether my team won or lost. I do recall three people calling me "Shorty" throughout the game. Two of them were teammates. The third was my aunt. I was awarded a cap, several sizes too large, which she insisted I keep. I wore it backwards on the way home and felt surprisingly unsilly.

"You're very chipper, aren't you?"

"I concede nothing, tall and tubby."

"Watch your liberties, young man, and the road as well. Anyone who carries on with a woman so scandalously in public . . . and refers to me after as tall and tubby . . . Well. My, but you are a sight."

"More or less than usual?"

There was no spoken reply. We were stopped twice on the way back. I was exceedingly flippant. During the week at work, I was shocked at myself; I informed my boss that his pet project, freeze-dried gazpacho, was the most idiotic idea ever conceived. Two weeks later, I was toasted into drunkeness in Connecticut and almost crashed the car. Never drink boilermakers with ladies from a church social group who know "where you can get a nip after closing." My aunt and I passed the night parked in a rest station on the turnpike. I do not believe she slept at all and I fear my part in that was not small. She was drawn and weary for some time after. I gave up my hat and never played again, avoided lady thirdbasemen and tatooed bootleggers. No loss.

It was a Saturday in early September when I arrived at my aunt's to find her missing. No one knew where she might be. No one knew where to find her.

Having nothing to lose and playing a dumb hunch, I drove up to the first place we'd gone together. A game was in progress as I pulled in, but no one had anything to say about Miss Lucinda Ann. I waited for the game to end and persuaded that same owl-eyed Roy of long ago to join me for a beer. He kept saying how he was surprised I didn't know, but he never got around to what it was I didn't know. The more he drank, the bigger his eyes got. When they seemed the size of saucers, he finally opened up.

"Know something, Martin?"

"How's that?"

"That aunt of yours is somethin' special."

"Guess so."

"No damn guessin' about it. Know what makes her so special?"

"Uh-uh."

"She always comes."

"How's that?"

"She always comes. To see us play. Us!"

"Yeah, I see."

"No, I don't think you do. No offense, mind you, you're special, too. We ain't. None of us kids ourselves that much. Some of us are better than others. Nobody's that's good. I mean, we play because . . . because we have to. Even when we're terrible. And most of us are. But she comes to see us, talks to us, the families, everybody. Just cause she came, three, maybe four hours in a car, has to mean something, don't it? I'm not special, see, but her being there means a lot to us. Not like we're worth seeing. Hell no! But she keeps coming anyway, even though she knows we ain't worth it. And that means somethin'."

"Sure, but . . ."

"So that's why we gave her that cup last year when she couldn't come. Every damn league in all these counties would've given theirs. She chose ours as the only one she'd need. That's got to mean somethin' to you, huh?"

"Of course, but where's she gone?"

"Hospital, I guess. You didn't know, huh? Maybe I wasn't supposed to tell you. Guess it don't matter now, though."

"What do you mean? What hospital? Why?"

"Don't know. You find out yourself, let me know. Ain't nothin' more to say."

And there wasn't. I got back to town and checked hospitals and homes without knowing why. I almost slugged a nurse who wanted to help find my "mommy." Eventually I found Lucinda Ann.

"What are you doing here?"

"That seems obvious enough. This is a hospital."

"But what's wrong with you?"

"That is as irrelevant as the first thing you ever said to me."

"Be serious. Why didn't you tell me you were here?"

"Because I wanted to see if you would care enough to find out. Now go away."

"May I come back?"

"Yes. Later."

"Should I tell anyone? Any of them?"

"No one."

"They will not need to know?"

"No."

For a month-and-a-half things went on this way. She grew thinner, appeared to tire easily, but remained as irrascible as

ever. I found excuses to leave work and she blamed me for doing so. I worked late and she blamed me for not coming. We argued over anything, agreeing only once late at night, when we both conceded that she had been as big around as I was tall.

Twice she dispatched me to the hinterlands to report on important games. Winners didn't matter. Who was there and how they were doing did. Driving her car into towns was still a talisman, bringing out both familiar and new faces, with pictures, remembrances, good wishes. I was under orders to refuse anything "too big"; I became a good judge of that, I suppose. She was pleased that I'd been accepted as her emissary.

Will I seem stupid if I tell you I never definitely discovered what was wrong? Some things came to me. Her accident was the result of her passing out at the wheel. It was not dramatic, just inevitable. She was old, the problem was inoperable. It was merely a question of time. Everyone had known it but me.

Look, I didn't love her. She hadn't been there and then she was, and that's all I'd ever made of it. It was all too rapid for me to make any sense. Only the game remained constant. We talked about it as my promotions and her obvious conclusion went ignored.

"Mr. Bonzo Martin?"

"Yes?"

"Do you still have any doubts about me?"

"Does it matter?"

"Touché. You are the cleverest small person I have known."

"I am the only small person you have known."

"Perhaps. There are some papers I wish you to have which may shed some light on matters of mutual concern. Examine them at the appropriate time. I fear I shall miss your response. Now go away."

As simple as that. We both knew what she meant. I left and she was dead two weeks later. I was the only one at her funeral. None of them came. I believe they felt she would not want them put out. Perhaps she did not. There were flowers everywhere, which would have angered her. They should not have spent so much. Perhaps another cup would have been fitting, but a ball, bat and glove in mums and orchids? She'd left me there, ludicrous at the end, a little figure amid all those mammoth displays.

Since then I have tried to piece things together. I remain what I am, still successful, still popular, still accomplished. Still. I have taken a brief leave of absence from the firm. I burned the papers without reading them. What could have been in them that might have been of any interest? I am now the owner of two cars; the attendants have almost stopped snickering when I drive the big one and I almost don't care.

Have I remembered well enough? Have I said half of it? No. Only one scene sticks in my mind. After she'd died I was called to the hospital to claim the body. All the doors there are closed when someone dies, so the other patients won't be upset. Her bedlamp was on and I could hear her roommate wheezing behind a separating curtain. And, what I remember most, standing there, stretching to look, holding that incongruous moment, was that some helpful attendant had tried to replace her false teeth in her mouth. Perhaps so I might save them? Perhaps so I would not think they'd been stolen? Who would care? She had so wasted, had become so hollow-cheeked, that they would not fit. Her mouth refused them. Transfixed before her this last time, I did not know if I should laugh or cry.

Several months gone, some memories remain and some do not. I am not exactly sure what I will do, or if there is anything to do. Come spring, perhaps I'll rev up the whale and take in a few games. Perhaps not. Sometimes I feel I have a great deal to think over. Other times I believe there is nothing to say. I suspect the words ordinary and special are both nearer and further apart than I'd ever thought. I only know for sure I've got to go out one of these days and start finding out what it's really like to be small.

FIRSTLING

The Love

no more the lights down
we've undone by the window
with the dust and the sun
and taken to the ancestral bed
that hoarse and Slavic sings
among porcelain cups and a crucifix

so we love like immigrants
in the way of firstlings
ears to sound and backward glance
around this house the dead
and the grass whisper stories:
the years of harsh snow, the cattle
and children found in the thaw,
and how work went on more worn
but loved like a rosary of days

and we rock and we rock
not still sick or old
damp and warm is the comfort
we know

The Work

alone raking hay in the wind
and all this green I have
watered my shirt and work cool

swallows are skimming
the imperfect rows
advised by instinct
to seek out any motion

and what they miss
the motion beneath my skin
more than the ripple of labor
a certain sweet abandon
in my pulse known to colts
calves and all other firstlings

—*David Johnson*

Bits of Broken Glass

by Kent Nelson

I came back to Boston after a weekend at home to find that Adrian had been there while I was gone. The apartment smelled of grass and the magazines he'd been reading were strewn over the bed. But there were no clothes, no suitcase, no guitar. He hadn't waited.

And to add to that, when I sorted through Friday's and Saturday's mail, there was a letter from the anthropology department. Carter couldn't have sent it because he'd been in Washington for a week lining up his trip to Africa, so it had to have come from the main office. I'd been waiting for that letter, really, for over a year. In essence it said, 'Sarah M. Richardson: Finish up your doctorate this year or you are through.'

I threw the letter on the floor and thought: perhaps I shouldn't have hitched back. I might have caught him. There had been that long wait outside Albany, and if I'd taken the bus as my father had said, I would have been here four hours sooner. But four hours wasn't much time.

Anyway, I'd had time to sift things out in my mind. Was I doing things wrong or right? Of course my father thought wrong.

"When are you going to get your degree?" he had asked me when I arrived. That was his first question. He sat in a leather chair holding a Scotch and water and looked over his glasses at me. "You've been up there for seven years and haven't got anything."

"I had one degree when I went."

"And haven't used it," he said. "You aren't married."

I did not understand the connection. "I work on the thesis when I get a chance."

"Sarah," he said, putting down his drink, "no one takes seven years to get a PhD. Not even a man takes that long. You're twenty-nine years old and should realize that you aren't going to make it. Why don't you come to grips and get a job in Buffalo?"

"I want to see Africa another time," I said evenly. "And then I'm going to finish the whole thing off."

In truth, though, I hadn't taken the thesis out of the envelope for six months. I was log-jammed and couldn't get rolling again. And Africa was simply a dream. Carter was going but he wasn't taking me.

"And what are the chances?" my father asked. "That piece of dried meat, Carter Ames, isn't going to let you on the gravy train again for a long time. Give me some odds."

I did not give him the satisfaction. Part of the trouble, I knew, was the topic itself. I was working on the myths of the Kalahari desert—about Bushmen's myths—and I had a certain aversion to putting anything down. Perhaps I loved the idea too much to spoil it by making a scientific study. Carter had taken me twice in my seven years in the department, and I knew the language and cared for the people. But most of all it was the desert which fascinated me: an expanse of nothingness, inhabited by a forgotten tribe. No shade there, just miles of vision, clear and hot.

"There might be a training job in my office," my father continued. "Seven years wasted doesn't look like much on a record, of course, but I could try."

The idea of working in a bank struck me funny, and I laughed. Was that my father's vision of me? Did he think that after I had come so far, that I would give in?

So we hashed it all over again: why I couldn't work at a bank or any other place he helped me get in, why seeing four walls and a clock was not my life, why the people who worked like that, including him, did not interest me. I didn't want money or reputation or prestige. Then he had asked me about Adrian.

"Is he going to marry you?"

"I don't have to marry anyone."

"It might be proper."

"Nothing is proper anymore."

"I want *you* to be proper," he pronounced slowly.

"Anyway, I haven't seen him for six weeks."

That was the end. It had been Friday evening, and we were already through with one another. He had satisfied himself that I would continue my aimless living. And I knew more than ever that my life was unsanctioned. But I was, at least, still alive.

When Adrian visited we slept together in a single bed under the eaves of the wooden house. I had told my father six weeks, but it had really been longer. Until that weekend. And then I had missed him.

He was seven years younger than I, had long blond hair, and strong, inquiring eyes. He had tried college and had found no answer, and he wasn't one who continued to pretend to question when there weren't any more questions to be asked.

At first it had been easy. I had often sat up late, having smoked, listening to him play. The eaves seemed to lock up the sound of his voice, of him, and he was good. His head tuned to one side, his long hair falling in shadow over his face. He sang to distance.

> And in between what might have been
> and what has come to pass
> A misbegotten guess, alas,
> And bits of broken glass.

But even then I could see its coming. So much of the time would be waiting. We argued it out in silences as I drank wine from a paper cup and watched the tides in him change.

After he went on the road I would get an occasional letter from the places he was working. He did college towns and small clubs in the cities, and he once sent a poster advertisement of the show. But blue eyes in a black and white photograph were not the same; they didn't change from day to day, which was what I needed. No, he wasn't faithful, but what difference did it make? He said he didn't love anyone else.

On Monday I was back at the department. The Crane Center was a white, modern gleaming tower, and the professors, including Carter, had the outer-rim, glass offices. The assistants had inner offices along the corridors: small, stuffy, and metallic. In cultural anthro there were four assistants, and by the nature of their fields, they all worked under Carter. The select group: Stets, Sobel, Pembroke and me.

Carter Ames had been practically raised by the Bushmen. His mother and father had lived for ten years in the Kalahari as Carter was growing up, and at thirty-five he seemed to show the rigors of that life. He was a hawkish, nervous man, and my father's description of him as dried meat was not far off. His skin was cracked and tough as leather, and was almost obscene. Yet despite is childhood, he had adapted wholeheartedly to the modern world. He loved flying, good food and gin. Generally he was patient with his students, especially with me, and he enjoyed a good anecdote if one could be found. In his short career as a professor he had written four books on men and their artifacts, and we all believed him a genius, a master, a god.

He was not there that Monday because he was negotiating the final arrangements for his imminent expedition for the Smithsonian and the National Geographic. Stets was going with Carter this time and had just talked to him on the telephone when I came in.

"When's he coming back?" I asked.

"Tomorrow," Stets said. He looked up mournfully from his tiny desk. "I don't want to go to Africa. I have never wanted to go to Africa. You can't learn anything about poetry there. You can't learn to write."

Stets wanted to write poetry for a living, but everyone knew it was impossible. There are no markets for poems, and every morning he arrived on his bicycle for another day of glory in anthropology, getting farther along toward his degree and farther away from what he said he really wanted to do. Without fail he wore his Montana hat, under which a full head of curly brown hair never saw light. No one called him by his real name anymore. Even Lois-the-fish, Carter's inane secretary, had come around. Everyone called him Stets for his hat. But here he was going off to Africa, thinking it would be his death rather than his life. And I was staying behind.

Pembroke, who had come all the way from Liverpool to study under Carter, came in with coffee. "You told me yourself just a month ago," he interrupted, "that this was your golden chance to perceive your own culture from abroad."

"I want to go to Paris," Stets said. "Everyone starts selling things from Paris."

"You only need experience," Pembroke consoled. "Anywhere you get experience you can learn to write. Think of your man Hemingway."

"Hemingway went to Paris."

"He went to Africa, too."

"But he started in Paris. Everyone starts in Paris. He went to Africa to shoot game. He didn't go with some lunatic to observe baboons on the plains of Madagascar."

"Malagasy Republic," I corrected.

"Carter calls it Madagascar. He writes 'Madagascar' all over our equipment, food, books, everything." Stets turned to Pembroke again, as if in argument for his cause. "And do you know what he's taking over?"

I smiled as Pembroke shook his head.

"Nine gallons of Tanqueray gin and twenty pounds of kippered herring. Have you ever heard of something like that? Cultural adaptation is not necessary, says Carter. Passe, he says. Sit in the trees all day and watch baboons romp through the field of your binoculars, then eat over a fire, and top it off with a few kippered herring and a gin wash. A fine way to learn to write."

"Wrong attitude, old man," Pembroke said. "Think of it as another obstacle in the long and tortuous path. Surmount the odds and all that."

"That's English history," Stets said. "This is Africa. The Malagasy Republic, Africa." He paused a moment to stir his coffee. "And another thing, Hemingway didn't write many poems."

"Then why don't you quit?" I asked abruptly.

Stets looked at me without hostility, but rather with a kind of shock. "I can't quit. I'm almost finished here. I've stuck it out, sacrificed my art."

"I'll go to Africa for you," I offered.

"My thesis," Stets said. "I need the research. How will I get a job?"

I stood up. You can't argue with someone who has no courage. Anyway, I had to teach a class for Carter.

Carter's office was always locked tight when he was away, and Lois-the-fish had the only key. I had often used this as an excuse for not working, because Carter's sanctum contained much of my precious and necessary material: his books and journals and translations which did not exist anywhere else.

Lois was the loyal breed of secretary, too old to be the thirty-two she claimed. Poor Lois, with her bulging, insipid green eyes and her heavy lips. I did not like to look at her. And poor Sobel, too. He had fallen for her.

He was the youngest of us, a Yalie who seemed to know exactly where he was headed. The problem with Sobel was that he had no problems. He studied hard, did the required reading, never missed a class he was supposed to teach. Perhaps he thought that by loving Lois he would become Carter's

favorite, but he was so innocent that it seemed to be more of an effort to prove his manhood.

At any rate, after my class, I went to see him.

"Listen, Sobel," I said. "I've got my notice. Thesis or else. I need the key to Carter's office."

"Why don't you ask Carter if you can have one."

"I want it now, today, before he gets back."

Sobel gave me a white-faced, quizzical look. "How can I?" he asked.

"Are you or are you not making it with Lois?" I asked bluntly.

He looked comical, confronted with that question by a woman. In a way I felt sorry for him, and he looked around his bare office desperately for some escape. "That's not your business."

I smiled. "So you can get the key."

That night I went back to the Crane Center to have a look at Carter's material. I was not sure what I would do—take some things, plead with him to let me have what I wanted, or what. But I knew I had to do something before he went off for six months to Africa.

The Center was deserted, and I went up to the department with some trepidation. But any decision was spared me. For when I put the key into the lock of Carter's office and opened the door, he was sitting there at his desk beneath a single string light.

I stood speechless, and he motioned me inside. He looked thinner, even, than I remembered him, and for a long time he did not say anything. He seemed not to notice that I had walked in with a key, and for a while I thought he must know about the Dean's ultimatum. Then he finally asked, "Sarah, how would you like to come along with us to Africa?"

"What?"

"I have permission to take another man. They don't have to know it's a woman."

I stood without moving, the thought like a renewal to me.

"We'll be in Madagascar, which isn't too far from the Kalahari. You could slip off for a few weeks and tie up your work. I can't imagine taking Sobel along, and Pembroke is too green." He paused over a cigarette which I noticed for the first time. I let the dream sink in slowly, envisioning the low line of treeless hills and the heavy sun.

"My thesis," I said, "that's why . . ."

"Your thesis, my bladder," Carter said. "You haven't looked at that mildewed paper in months. Who cares? You've been here for so long you're part of the furniture. When the authorities come to me I tell them that you're working hard on an intellectual project they would never understand. Don't kick her out, I tell them, she's the only sane one I have."

I smiled, looking at his intense, expectant face. I had much to thank him for. But I shook my head. "It's my last year," I said. "I've had the official notice."

"Surely you can speak with them. A thesis like yours needs time." He saw that he was making no sense. "Well, then I can talk to them. I'll get you permission, if that's what's bothering you."

That was not what was bothering me, which I thought was surprising. I did not care about the degree or the seven years I had spent under Carter or about the supposed humiliation of being kicked out. I thought of those things and was surprised that I felt nothing about them. But what had suddenly hit me was that if I went now I would probably not see Adrian again.

Carter did not press me. He told me to go home and think about it, waving me out so that he could finish his work. He had never mentioned the key.

So I went home to my room under the eaves and I took my thesis out of the envelope and read what I had written so many months before. There was a lot of material, and in those hours of the early morning, I began to recapture the desert.

With Carter's introduction, I had lived with the Bushmen, hunted with them, and walked in the morning light. It was the closest I had ever been to starving or to any other kind of death. I lost weight to the bone; I learned to be silent on my feet; I learned to throw a spear. Some nights I cried and wished for home. But there was a beauty in it, too. The barren plain stretched unevenly for miles, changing in the light and the shadow of the different times of day. Sparse brush, sand, hard earth, sometimes grass. It had been a half-life, but I began to feel full. Days, years, centuries—men and women and children passed through time without a trace in a land bleached out by the fire-sun in a magic of yellows and browns and its orange dusk.

Night was the only constant time, at least for light. There were always sounds. We would sit together by the fire with dry roots or pieces of tough game flesh, chewing them for hours for the last nourishment and listening to the screeching and movement of animals in the darkness around us. I was often afraid. All of life seemed in the darkness beyond the fire. Crouched in that circle, their voices like insects with their strange clicking language, the Bushmen told their myths. I had only listened and had never, until afterwards, written a word. For myths radiated from the center of life and did not change—just as the width of the sky never changed, nor the length of the unmeasured hours, nor the shapes of the horizon hills, nor the humble light of that one flame in the night.

It was different for me now. All life did not exist beyond a small fire, and there were many lights to blind me. I listened to the walls creak and to the wind rattle at the loose frames. The joy with Adrian had been counted by the number of days he could stay with me. I understood that he had to try to make it, and I loved him enough to keep silent about what it did to me. I thought I was used to being by myself.

When I finished reading I went back to the Crane Center to see whether Carter were still there. I walked slowly down the long corridor to his office, where I found the light still shining beneath the door.

I knocked.

"Come in."

I stepped into the room. "I can't do it," I said.

His dark eyes blinked, as if unused to the darkness in which I stood. "What do you mean?"

"I'm not going."

"I've already signed you up."

"I thought about it," I said. "I just don't see how I can get away."

For a long time he did not say anything, and I wondered whether he saw the fear working in me. It was not easy to turn down a chance like that. He looked at me with a Bushman's fierce gaze, a disciplined stare that seared the flesh. Then, after a moment, his look was tempered by a slight smile of recognition.

He stood up and came around the desk and offered me a chair—something I had never seen him do for anyone else. Then for a while he paced. The telephone rang and he did not answer it. His eyes grew smaller, it seemed, and more intensely dark. Then finally he said, "It's not my business to know why you're not going to come. It isn't the thesis. No, to hell with that."

I started to explain to him about Adrian, about the room under the eaves, but at the moment it seemed useless to speak. His look kept me quiet.

At last he stopped his pacing and stood by the desk. "You know when I was living in the desert with my parents we moved around. I heard many stories, and now I don't remember who told them, or where it was, or when." He paused a moment and looked at me. "Let me tell you one of the myths I remember."

He sat on the edge of the desk very close to me so that he did not have to raise his voice to be heard. I had never seen such a look of kindness in him before, and I could feel his openness as he sat before me. The room seemed to shrink. Suddenly he started speaking in the Bushman's dialect, the soft tones and clicking noises rolling from the roof of his mouth. And he poured out to me the myth.

"Gabri—so the name sounded to me in the dialect—was a young and beautiful woman, prone to be lulled by her emotions. Yet her curiosity was great, and one day, hoping to discover the purity and grace of the animals, she wandered out alone into the desert. After many hours during which she nearly died, she found a waterhole. But in the day's heat, no animals were there. She decided to wait, and a short distance away, she lay down beneath a tree to sleep until the animals returned.

"The lion, feared for his encompassing virtues, found the young girl asleep under the tree. He had hunted for many miles in search of flesh and water and was joyful to find both so near at hand.

"Yet the lion could not decide which he desired more—flesh or water—and he at last chose to first satisfy his thirst, so hot had been the day. He left the young girl asleep under the tree and began to walk over the hill to the water hole.

"The lion wondered at the wisdom of his choice, and he continually looked over his shoulder to make certain the girl was still there. Before he passed the crest of the hill, he changed his mind.

"But the girl awoke suddenly, sensing the danger. She saw the lion approaching, yet so admiring was she of his strength that she did not call out. He made no sound on his feet, gave no sign of emotion. This animal was the one she had come to see.

"Then she realized her folly and felt ashamed. How could she have been so foolish to wander alone into the desert? And she began to weep.

"The lion in compassion licked away the tears from her eyes. And then he killed her."

On the night before I left for Africa, when my trunk was packed with manuscripts and clothes and books, Adrian called. I had not heard from him since he had been in my room.

"I'm in Baltimore," he said. "I thought I would say hello."

"Can you come up?" I asked. "Right away?"

"What's happening? You sound afraid."

"I just want to see you."

He paused on the wire. "I have something in Philly tomorrow night. Philly, New York, Hartford. Then Boston. I'll be there in two weeks."

His voice sounded far away, as if in a tunnel, and somewhere in the background a horn honked.

"I need to see you now," I said.

"I'm starting to bring them in. I've got a schedule."

We talked a while longer about how he was doing, about the crowds and how easy it was becoming now that the momentum had started. He could get engagements now whenever he wanted them.

The horn sounded again, and I asked, "Is someone waiting?"

"It's all right," he answered. "Listen, I'm loving you."

When we hung up I sat for a long time on my trunk. There was no sound in the house that night, but it did not matter to me. I had come beyond the point of being afraid. I suppose I had lived in that isolation long enough to know it inside and out. And yet I did not blame Adrian. He had the urge, like all of us, to believe that he was free.

Perhaps he would have taken me with him now that it was going well for him. But I knew that was not enough either. For I thought about the desert. I thought about the grueling hunt, the miles of walking. It was the one place that made you earn everything.

I had many lights now, and reflections of lights, but I wanted just one light. I wanted that one small fire that the Bushmen build at night when the magic color is gone from the day. I wanted to listen to that forgotten and unwritten language that was as much a part of the myth as the fire and the night. Maybe I would write about those myths someday. But I knew I had to sit around that flame again, as the people there had for centuries, drawn into the fire because in the midst of the miles of darkness it was the only light.

YOU, THEODORE ROETHKE

Baboon and buzzard; lizard, lamb, and shrew
Abound when I root round my furnished zoo.
I celebrate the small. When I'm outdoors
I turn to grass before the carnivores.

I keep my Yeats at home beside John Clare
And take my metaphysic from the air.
In lean times I light out for the far fields,
Consume what fiery toad or toadstool yields.

I knew a woman once, but then forgot
Myself. Our aerobatic turkey trot
Ground to a waltz that I had danced before.
I recollect myself upon the floor.

I listen for my bones' prophetic rattle,
Stay out of swimming pools around Seattle.
Contortionist, I'm hanging tough and loose,
A slick corkscrewing gander to time's goose.

My journeys bear me through the neighborhoods
Of outermost and intimate dark woods.
I've molted till there's nothing left to shed
And learned by going where to go instead.

—*Miles Wilson*

ELEGY FOR HOWARD HUGHES

Since no one seems to care you died
but only where the will is
I'll set down a few poor thoughts
on the meaning of your meager end.

When I pass a place where chicken is fried
I see my grandmother's yard. It still is
a pain, not a burn but a bruise of thought
on what happens at life's end.

She'd wring that chicken's neck. I cried
when I heard the pop, could feel its
pain as it ran dying, blood-spraying, sought
what belonged on the neck's end.

Bloody ghost, vermilion flecked white, abide
within wintry dreams, the reel is
over. Life shattered, your stiff-legged run taught
me on what cruelty I depend.

Rich man, scrawny old ghost starved
amid billions, the world dreams of wealth's thrills
and knows nothing of the running battles you fought.
Neck snapped you cannot buy one friend.

—*Leslie Palmer*

EMILY'S DANCE

Armies do not move
in the night.

cars slug up the street
with johnson rod hanging
an alternator out of
whack mrs lipshitz breaks
a dish in the apartment
below over her husbands
head what he gets for
looking at young girls
boy you should see her
oily flesh bulge through
thin print dresses and
that bulldog face.

the clouds stop like chickens
hearing the slaughterer's
boots break a twig.
something in the night lurks
in the first fist of an
insect growing larger
by my window.

horses gallop through shadows
of the owl. i have
put everying in order.
i should answer the phone
and the doorbell
and the invitation
to emily's dance.

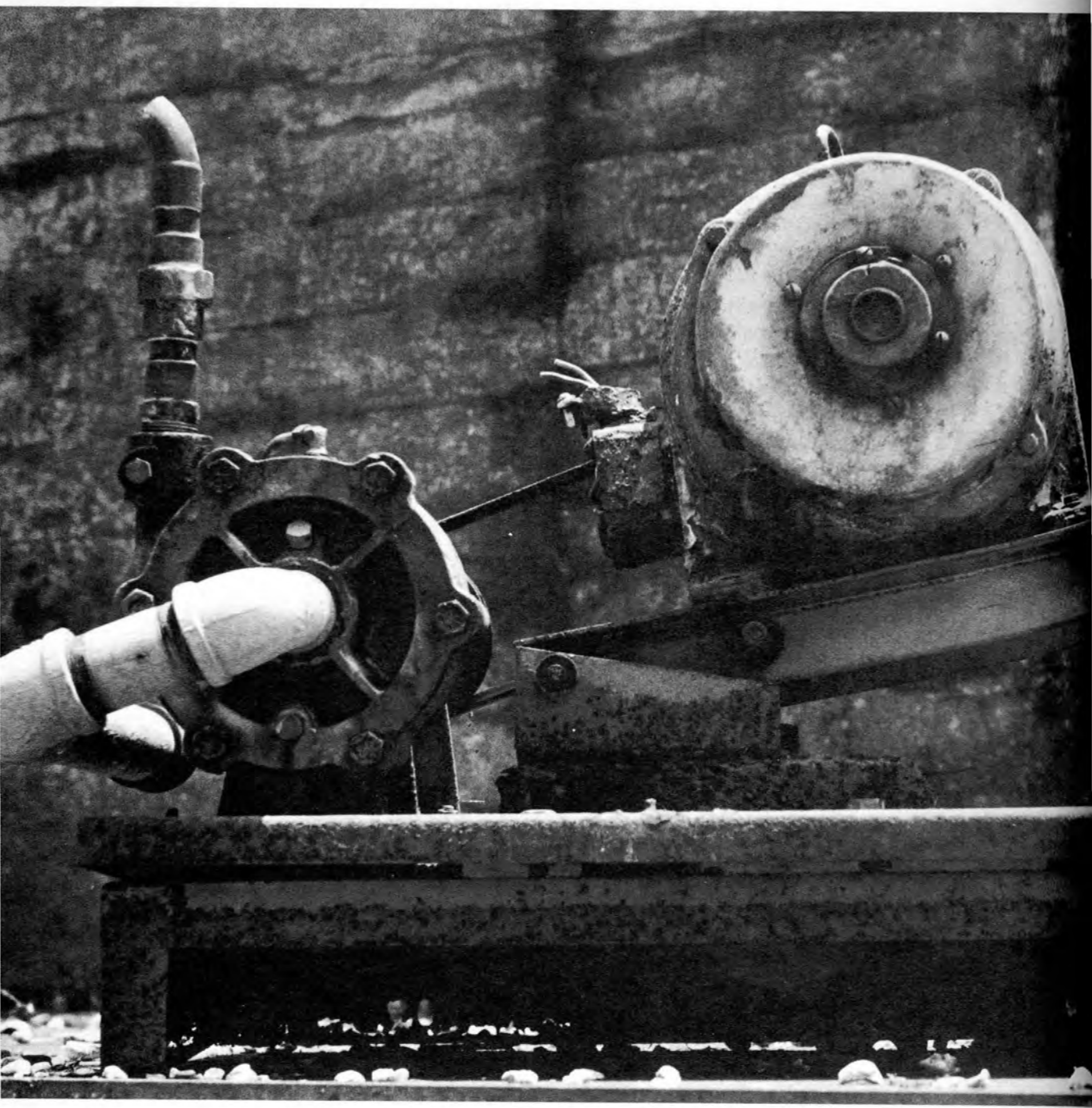
armies do not move
in the night.
a knife. a hunting knife.
a hunting knife
in the bottom draw
of my desk.
.moves.

—*Marcus J. Grapes*

BREAK-DOWN

of course you're alone.
in america on a texas highway
watching the last smoke on the sun
grow black
without oil, without gas,
without a pay phone that works.
tonight you'll be killed:
that, you know.
a drunk pick-up
does it as a joke,
or the night swans
who prowl for your kind,
who leave your shoes,
and take the camera,
the luggage, the money.
you're alone, you're going
to be dead, if you walk
toward the closed texaco station
one mile up
or sit it out
till morning,
you're going to be dead.
where were you going?
el paso?
on the map, for some reason,
you circled carlsbad,
and sonora.
the last for gas, you thought.
then:
a pair of tail-lights turn
on the gravel shoulder
and slowly become headlights.
you begin to laugh;
make an outstretched gesture,
as if sending aloft
a dazed insect
from the palm
of each hand.

—*Marcus J. Grapes*



Rebecca Mason

Reviews

uch Waltzing Was Not Easy, by Gordon Weaver, 132 pp., **A eason for Unnatural Causes,** by Philip F. O'Connor, 116 pp., **urving Road,** by John Stewart, 128 pp., **Crossings,** by Stephen linot, 166 pp., University of Illinois Press, $6.95 each (paper 2.45).

We can no longer say, as we often said in the Sixties, that a writer an more easily publish a first novel than a first short story. It's true nat mass circulation magazines that publish short stories are still carce, and *Playboy* and *Redbook* are still among the few that publish nore than one or two each issue; most new magazines, such as *New imes,* neglect fiction entirely.

While judging a contest for The Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines last summer, I examined over 250 small publications, put ut by gloriously foolish individuals or subsidized by reluctant universities; I concluded that opportunities for publishing poetry and *elle lettres* are virtually unlimited, while only a minority of even these nti-establishment publications are friendly to fiction; many of those ublications exclude fiction entirely, while only a few are devoted xclusively to short stories. *Fiction* magazine is one of those few. Among the better magazines that devote a great deal of space to ction are *Tri-Quarterly, Ploughshares, North American Review, New Orleans Review, Quarterly Review of Literature, Transatlantic Review, Antaeus* and special issues of *The Southern Review.* Experimental writing is welcome at *Panache* and *Fiction International.* Readers wanting to explore those magazines may consult *Writer's Market* which contains descriptions and addresses) in the reference department of most libraries.

It is cold comfort that the opportunities for the young or unestablished hort story writer are much better now than for the first novelist whose ook lacks obvious commercial possibilities, even for the nonelebrity, established writer of "artistic" novels. The commercial novel hrives now as never before.

Publishers are even more hostile to collections of short stories than o first novels. The economics of paperback publishing allow a few ditors of integrity to bring out reprints of volumes of stories. In its andsome Plume series, New American Library makes the stories of obert Coover, Leonard Michaels and Stanley Elkin available; Avon as published Jonathon Strong and Irvin Faust. Bantam has picked up he only paperback quarterly, *American Review.* Other paperback ouses reprint *The Best American Short Stories* and *O. Henry Prize tories* each year. Above all, let's be grateful to Anchor books for listening to the pleas of writer-teacher George Garrett, and for risking nancial losses on *Intro,* a collection of the best fiction and poetry oming out of the country's proliferating creative writing programs. *ntro* is a project of the indispensable Associated Writing Programs; umber eight has just appeared.

Still, commercial publishers are generally neglectful; but the explanation lies more in the quirky habits of reading in this country than in the bizarre logistics or the perverse economics of publishing. Many people pick up the habit of reading novels instead of short stories in college classrooms, for academia relegates the short story to a low position on its list of priorities. Many literary quarterlies coming out of universities publish short stories, but most of their critical articles deal with novels or poetry. The only scholarly journal devoted exclusively to short stories is *Studies in Short Fiction.*

We have the right to expect university presses to take up the task others have shirked. In the late sixties, a movement got underway among university presses to offer short story collections, but today only a few carry out their responsibilities. The University of Missouri Press publishes a few first volumes of stories. The Iowa School of Letters gives an award (now in its ninth year) for the best of an average of 300 manuscripts submitted, and the press publishes it; among the winners are H. E. Francis, Jack Cady and Philip O'Connor. Since 1968, Louisiana State University has published eight volumes, including the work of William Peden, Willard March, Leon Rooke and Hollis Summers; in 1975, for the first time, a volume appeared simultaneously in hardcover and paperback—Lee Zacharias' first collection. But the most ambitious of all is a series created at the University of Illinois Press by Richard Wentworth. The first four volumes in the Illinois Short Fiction Series are *Such Waltzing Was Not Easy* by Gordon Weaver; *A Season for Unnatural Causes* by Philip O'Connor; *Curving Road* by John Stewart; and *Crossings* by Stephen Minot.

I want to talk about one story from each of these four writers.

Willy Loman never achieved the status of supersalesman; in Weaver's "Wave the Old Wave," Wally McFadden, car salesman, refuses, finally, to consecrate himself to that ideal. He mooches off his school-teacher wife, Alice, until she begs his boss to give him another chance. Following Wally through part of his first Monday back on the job, we see the perfect details of the showroom, listen to the sales lingo, and watch the development of Wally's attitude toward a typical customer. The climax is his realization that he can no longer do unto this neighbor as he feels his neighbors are doing unto him; he cannot sacrifice this gullible customer (with whom he shares that most intimate of mortal conditions, mutability) on an altar before his bucktoothed wife (whom Wally sees as his manager) and his children, four cross-eyed daughters, strangers, who grow older, faster, each day. Wally has the techniques of the supersalesman, techniques that sometimes work, but because he cannot match himself up "with the kind of context" he lives in, he becomes "trapped by the crosslines of his context," drifts into alcoholism and finally walks off the showroom floor. "And he waves. Once. The old wave."

Weaver captures a sense of what Fitzgerald meant when he observed that there are no second acts in American lives, consequently, "in a real dark night of the soul it is always three o'clock in the morning, day after day." American literature is rich in salesman lore. Weaver's story belongs with Miller's *Death of a Salesman,* Williams' "The Last of My Solid Gold Watches," O'Neill's "Hughie," Welty's "Death of a Traveling Salesman" and Bellow's "Seize the Day."

A father's grief over the death of his son, who accidentally hangs himself by the strap of his toy gun, is the focus of O'Connor's "Cold Places." This brief, impressionistic story generates the deepest, most lasting weather of psychic monotony; in its center, we stand at the still point, where the dance has stopped. Told in the present tense, the story is like a photograph that captures a moment of the past in the persistent present of a cold image. "Cold Places" is the rare sort of story that brief discussion diminishes, but that opens out fully in any random passage:

> We took a photograph and he couldn't find his mitten and the cake tasted funny and the other two had already gone over the fence and he followed by the strap hooked on the top and he fell and the strap twisted and his feet didn't touch the ground.
> She is gone.
> And the baby, the baby is gone too.
> My sister came, and her husband.
> The man on the radio kept saying six above zero.

Stewart's "Stick Song" belongs with the best home-coming stories in literature. An Americanized West Indian (Stewart is himself a native of the West Indies) returns in 1966 to his village after eight years. Because he is used to the "subtleties of Miles Davis, Max Roach . . . Coltrane," the beat of the drums shocks him into the past. "Could economic theory, political awareness, a revised history—could any of these overpower a drum beat?" Not even such ironies as the fact that he had to go to America to learn the history of his own people can arm him against the elemental pull of the past.

Throughout the home-coming ceremony of rebirth, Daaga recalls parallels in New York and Los Angeles: "the town is on fire. Black men, women and children on rampage in the streets, harvest their due. . . ." Daaga has "thrown rocks at armed policemen; and armed himself with a new name, a new awareness of his historic enormity he had returned to teach, to awaken the peasant mind from which he had once sought deliverance. Awaken it to its own dormant power." But ironically, in a single night, the old culture reawakens ancient powers dormant in him.

In this village, the violent stick game was born, a game that terrified him when he was a child. He is the grandson of Gonga Barra, a champion of earlier times. The prodigal has taken the name of the first stick-man, Daaga, a warrior of the eighteenth century who turned on the Spanish who enslaved his people. "Hoping to ignite some feeling of kinship, comradeship, some contact," he is drawn into the game and defeats the current champion, Crazy Desmond, and becomes the new stick-man hero, and thus resurrects the spirit of that first Daaga.

Minot's "Estuaries" is a more cerebral "back to sources" story. A forty-five-year-old history professor is living in his antique summer house in Worwich, Nova Scotia. His family reminds him frequently that the house, often immersed in fog, is a long way from anywhere. Unable to concentrate on the writing of his second book, *The American Liberal Tradition Between the Wars,* he sits at his desk, which he has himself built into the dormer window, gazes out over the marshland estuaries, reads his father's diaries (1919-1938), and talks to himself and to his dead father, making himself and his family fear that his grip on sanity is slipping. "Guiltily, I observe my own conception," he tells us, as he concentrates on the year 1919 when his father met and made love to the narrator's mother. "Sitting here in my study, looking out my dormer window across salt marshes, I try to catch memories of my own." One of those memories is of the dormer windowseat in his nursery in a similar old summer cottage on Cape Cod.

Perspective

Two Views of Black Fiction

by Jerry W. Ward

Black Fiction, by Roger Rosenblatt, Harvard University Press, 211 pp., **$8.50. The Way of the New World: The Black Novel in America,** by Addison Gayle, Jr., Anchor/Doubleday, 339 pp., **$10.00.**

Black Fiction and *The Way of the New World* are antipodal in their approaches to interpreting the literature of black Americans. The first is informed by a cyclical theory of history in which literature can only assume a finite number of patterns. The second book proposes that history is an on-going series of conflicts and that literature is a functional extension of man's situation at a given point in history. Roger Rosenblatt, a former Harvard professor and currently literary editor of *The New Republic,* believes the apprehension of character is the proper beginning for the criticism of fiction. Addison Gayle, a professor at Bernard Baruch College and one of America's most provocative critics, is more attentive to the need for diachronic explanation of fiction; like such sociologists of literature as Leo Lowenthal, Alan Swingewood and Lucien Goldmann, Gayle wants to focus on how social and political forces serve to modify genre and character types. While Gayle and Rosenblatt share a commitment to historical interpretation of literature, their vastly different conceptions of history lead to unreconcilable conclusions. The positions of these critics are reflective of the endless battle for hegemony in literary study between the intrinsic and the extrinsic camps. The positions reflect more directly a kind of agon for control of interpretation within the boundaries of black literature.

Rosenblatt and Gayle have constructed two distinct possibilities for the critical imagination that would explore the problematic terrain of black fiction. For reasons I will discuss later, the crucial issue is how to mediate between extremes that constrict rather than enlarge discourse about literature. It must be noted that the explanatory models used by these critics are "original" in emphasis, not design; the procedures are derived from previous studies of black fiction. An overview of those studies gives us a vantage from which to measure the achievements of Gayle and Rosenblatt.

The serious criticism of black fiction is an enterprise less than fifty years old, and the number of book-length studies is small. When Vernon Loggins published *The Negro Author: His Development in America* (1931), a survey of literature from 1760 to 1900, he was able to call black literature "a field of American literature which our literary historians almost without exception have neglected." Loggins commented on every kind of black literature, and his ideas were influenced by normative obsessions. By his standards, black writers had "not yet written an enduring masterpiece." Black literature might become significant if it evolved from the stronger folk literature. Five years later Nick Aaron Ford published *The Contemporary Negro Novel,* an examination of novels from 1924 to 1934 in terms of attitudes, racial differences and literary values. Ford adumbrated a position that has found favor with many critics of black fiction. He claimed the black novel "is more a creature of environment than that produced by any other group," and he suggested it might become better if it took up "the cudgel of propaganda." While Loggins could only envision

He deciphers the code his father used to keep others from knowing his secrets; the narrator imagines that the father he hated so intensely, who gave up trying to be a father when he was thirty-four and the boy was ten, suspected his son would someday violate his privacy. The narrator begins to gain perspective when he realizes that at forty-five he is reacting peevishly to his tyrannical father. Near the end we learn that in the hurricane of 1938, all of his childhood home vanished except "a section of the roof and the dormer of my room." And when he reads in his father's diary that the relationship with his mother was consummated before their marriage in a salt hay field at the head of Marsh Harbor, the narrator begins to understand not only his father but also his own life. The lyrical passages at the end give a feel of this fine story:

> And now I recall how we as children . . . used to explore the marshland's winding canals, paddling our homemade kayaks. We would turn first one way and then the other, mobile as tiny, wriggling fish, working our way upstream, the dank saline smell heavy about us, past soft beds of salt hay.
>
> . . . .
>
> I watch this boy in the lead kayak, threading his way through multi-colored grasses, and I see him beckon to me. Startled, I realize this child of eight, this explorer with my name, is reaching out to me, teaching me how to explore the sources before me. He is showing me how to meet my parents.

The use of that charged image, with its Freudian symbolism, is obvious, but I think it works.

Despite academia's unconscionable classroom and scholarly neglect of short stories (and of the little magazines that most faithfully and fanatically publish them), most of the volumes published by university presses are written by teachers of creative writing (many of whom are graduates of writing workshops). At University of Southern Mississippi, Gordon Weaver created one of the few doctoral programs in writing (and started the *Mississippi Review);* at Bowling Green State University, Philip O'Connor helped develop one of the most vital programs in the country; Stephen Minot teaches writing and has written one of the best textbooks in the field, *Three Genres;* John Stewart has taught writing, though he now conducts the Afro-American Program at the University of Illinois.

With the somewhat unusual commercial success and critical reception of Mark Costello's *The Murphy Stories* (winner of the Third St. Lawrence Award for a first volume of short stories, conducted by *Fiction International),* Richard Wentworth was encouraged to inaugurate the Illinois Short Fiction Series, presenting each year, in hardcover and paperback, four volumes, all at the same time, with preference given, when possible, to first collections. University of Illinois Press's important venture, if it is successful, should encourage other university presses and perhaps even commercial publishers to show faith once more in this particularly American literary form.

The fate of the short story does worry the hell out of me—but only when I am resting between writing one story and the next.

Reviewed by David Madden

English in America: A Radical View of the Profession, by Richard Ohmann, Oxford University Press, 344 pp., $15.00 (paper $4.95).

Is the primary function of college English departments to transmit humanistic culture? Do the teaching and scholarship of English professors commonly work to enrich the experience of students, making them more alive to their culture and themselves? Many professors and students have begun to doubt this, sensing that cultural enrichment has in recent years come to be more of an exceptional than a standard product of their English departments. Richard Ohmann, in this rather uneven but highly provocative book, attempts to show why this is so.

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black fiction as a variant of American fiction, Ford sought to explain the function of fiction within a racist social order and in terms of multiple imperatives within black culture and psychology.

Hugh Gloster's *Negro Voices in American Fiction* (1948) was the first attempt to evaluate fiction from William Wells Brown to Richard Wright in the context of how black imagination dealt with the broad problems of American cultural structures. Gloster's study is mainly descriptive, but underlying the description is a keen awareness of the social, political and historical forces that shape thinking in fiction. Carl Milton Hughes conceived of *The Negro Novelist* (1953) as a bringing up to date of material on black fiction, but he only treated the novel between 1940 and 1950. The work of Loggins, Ford, Gloster and Hughes was superseded by Robert Bone's *The Negro Novel in America* (1958), which covered the novel from 1890 to 1952; the 1965 edition of Bone's book extended coverage to 1962. Bone's was a sophisticated and controversial critique, for he discussed the earlier black novel in sociohistorical terms and measured later novels by aesthetic criteria.

Bone's suggestion that black fiction needed to free itself from both nationalistic and assimilationist propaganda was taken to an extreme in David Littlejohn's *Black on White: A Critical Survey of Writing by American Negroes.* No work prior to *Native Son,* according to Littlejohn, was worth consideration. Even the novel after Wright could not satisfy his belief that great fiction should be "an achieved, balanced, self-contained embracing of the widest domains of truth." When Littlejohn published his book in 1966, the battle lines were clear. The situation was either/or. Either the critic went the route of aesthetic criticism or he emphasized the extra-literary aspects of black fiction.

Edward Margolies chose the latter path in *Native Sons.* Margolies created new myths to account for the literary failures in "Negro subculture" and did not hesitate to make broad generalizations on the basis of analyzing a mere sixteen authors. But that was 1968. With Noel Schraufnagel's *From Apology to Protest: The Black American Novel* (1973) and Roger Whitlow's *Black American Literature* (1974) there was a return to comprehensive method in the criticism of black fiction. Schraufnagel used attitudinal categories to discuss the black novel from 1940 to 1970. Whitlow chose thematic categories for his survey of black American literature from 1746 to the 1970's.

With the exception of studies appearing in scholarly and popular journals, these nine books represent the drift of attention given black fiction before the publication of *Black Fiction* and *The Way of the New World.* It is not hard to discern which critics Rosenblatt and Gayle have chosen as ancestors. Because he is willing to insert black fiction into referential frames that may or may not be cogent, Rosenblatt descends from Loggins, Bone, Littlejohn and Margolies. Gayle stands in the tradition of Ford, Gloster, Hughes, Schraufnagel and Whitlow, trying to overcome their limitations by forging a theory of black fiction.

It is unfortunate that Rosenblatt's delightfully readable study is marred by a ferris wheel theory of American history and by the kind of argument that only faith not reason can accept. It is easy to dismiss his naive ideas about history by referring to John Hope Franklin, Samuel E. Morison and Henry S. Commager. To dismiss his argument involves throwing out the bath water, the baby and the basin, and I think the baby and the basin are worth keeping.

Rosenblatt argues in his introduction that there are "discernible norms and patterns which have been common to black fiction from 1890 to the present, the detection of which in no way undermines the individualities of the writers." These norms and patterns have been shared by some mysterious process of interaction between blacks and whites in America, and they in every way undermine the individuality of the black writer. For Rosenblatt views black writers as so many items in a mass of items, and the literary framework in which the writers create is as rigid as the Elizabethan world picture. How the Elizabethan view of the universe remains intact in present day America is left to the

He wrote it, he says, to expose "the great muddle at the heart of the confidence and prosperity" which the English teaching profession has enjoyed over the last twenty years.

In a general way one can blame the muddle on the divergence of teaching and scholarship from each other. Scholarship, as many have complained, has become increasingly abstruse, more and more remote from the concerns of students and from the vital themes of the literature itself. Ohmann, however, focuses on that other factor, the one that is less widely appreciated outside the profession: the relative status of teaching. The real main function of most English departments, he reminds us, is the teaching of writing, specifically freshman composition; it is this function which justifies such large and costly English faculties. Our society simply needs college graduates who are able to write, much more than it needs people who are sensitive to a cultural past. The irony is that status within the teaching profession is determined almost wholly according to scholarly output, while teaching effectiveness—admittedly a harder quantity to measure—goes largely unrewarded. The irony is intensified by the fact that graduate schools continue to emphasize scholarship in the training of future college English instructors, yet most new Ph.D.'s end up teaching mostly freshman composition, for which they are underprepared, and which they commonly feel stifles their scholarly development. In Ohmann's view they are carrying out the principal service their departments perform for society, thereby freeing senior colleagues to pursue their scholarly interests.

But the maladjustments of composition teachers account for only half of Ohmann's muddle. The other half involves the content of the writing courses themselves. The covert subject of most composition courses, he claims, is how to think like an organization man, which is the very type of thinking responsible for prolonging the Vietnam war: it is conservative, narrow, establishmentarian. Ohmann does offer some impressive analyses of corporate prose, but he fails to convince us that this is invariably the type of writing encouraged in composition courses. His argument here rather reeks of an inquisitorial hunt for impieties in which anything not explicitly revolutionary is considered complicitous with a sinister system. Besides seeming out dated, this line is quite offensive to those of us engaged in the daily battle to elicit some sort of thinking from students.

A bit more solid, however, is his assessment of fourteen sample textbooks for composition classes (rhetorics). Ohmann observes that they all tend to address some abstract student, not a real one rooted in particular economic and social realities and who might have some personal use for argumentation to alter these realities. Ohmann finds the sort of argumentation taught in these books to be "divorced from power, money, social conflict and consciousness," and he therefore terms it "pseudo-argument." It is, he says, perfectly adapted to a society which plies itself with a "pseudo-politics," that is, one in which

> basic decisions . . . are mainly made and confirmed through a network of bureaucracies . . . by processes almost imperceptible to the "citizen" and certainly inaccessible to him through official politics; where both political parties share a vast ideological common ground; where the media constantly show people that everyone's interest, more or less, lies in increasing consumption of ever more numerous products; where class conflict has, at least until just the other day been unmentionable; and where the ordinary technician or manager or professional or white collar worker (i.e., the college student of yesteryear) has little role in making social choices except to facilitate and sometimes narrowly modify basic policies that are mainly taken for granted . . . .

It is a chilling picture, all too familiar to anyone involved in political protest over the past ten years—as so many young English instructors have been, in contrast to their current students. Such a picture rather encourages resignation, especially when one is confronted with students who seem to have grown up wholly within the cocoon of the mass media.

Fortunately, there are two reasonable objections to Ohmann's conclusions here. First of all, the "system" and even the conditioning

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imagination, while Rosenblatt charges forth to claim that black fiction is closer to classical tragedy than other forms of fiction and that "all black fiction of significance in America is modern fiction." In Rosenblatt's vision (and his whole book depends more on epiphany than logic), there is unity in black writing; writers use the same symbols, engage the same problems, reach the same conclusions. Unity, or perhaps continuity, has little to do with chronological sequence, "but instead derives from a cyclical conception of black American history upon which practically every American black novel and short story has been based." What Rosenblatt presents is a circular thesis supported by a circular argument that leads to a cyclical conclusion. Donne and Marvell would have appreciated Rosenblatt's wit, but it is rigor that takes us forward in literary interpretation. Rigor Mr. Rosenblatt lacks.

The baby and the basin, the solid parts of *Black Fiction,* are Rosenblatt's readings of individual works. He is sensitive to social and spiritual dimensions within fiction, and his analyses are dramatic and powerful. Chapter One, "Lord of the Rings," identifies three cyclical patterns: civilization through savage behavior in *Native Son,* damnation in *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and personal cohesion in disunity in *Cane.* In the second chapter, "Eccentricities," Rosenblatt examines Richard Wright's novella "Big Boy Leaves Home," Hughes's *Not Without Laughter,* Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and McKay's *Home to Harlem* as attempts to break the enslaving circle. Chapter Three, "Exceptional Laughter," contends that black humor serves to affirm the inevitability of cyclical history and treats the use of humor in the Simple stories of Hughes and in Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* (a better choice would have been Alexander L. Lacy's *The Rise and Fall of a Proper Negro).* Chapter Four, "White Outside," comments on the treatment of white America in novels by Dunbar, Petry, Kelley and Baldwin. The fifth chapter, "The Hero Vanishes," discusses the nature of heroism and tragedy in black fiction, using Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go,* James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man.*

Rosenblatt concludes by repeating that "the patterns in black fiction are cyclical, enclosed and self-sufficient. The hostile world or nation leaves its mark on its characters, but try as they may, the characters do not reciprocate." The hero vanishes. His only freedom is self-disintegration. And *Black Fiction* comes near its own self-destruction, for it shirks the responsibility of answering questions implicit in its design. For example, Rosenblatt suggested that the enemies of modern white heroes, "even when externalized, are theoretical and abstract. Whereas the enemies of the black heroes exist within history." Does the critic really believe metaphysics can be divided in just this way, or is he playing games of hobbit logic? Having excused himself from thoroughly historical discussion, he should have focused on thematics not theory. For inept theory renders *Black Fiction* yet another book from which the reader must extract needles from a haystack.

Addison Gayle avoids the consequences of impressionistic criticism by starting with a functional view of literature and history. "If knowledge of history has any practical importance for us," Lucien Goldmann wrote in *The Human Sciences and Philosophy,* "it is because we learn from it, about men who, in *different* circumstances and with *different* means, for the most part inapplicable in our own time, fought for values and ideals which were similar, identical, or opposed to those of today. . . ." *The Way of the New World* expands Goldmann's observation: if knowledge of the black novel in America has practical importance, that importance is located in the use we make of literary history. In Gayle's purview, literature is a means of projecting self-image and values, and as such, it is to be connected with all of man's actions in language. Gayle wants to speak of change and the dynamics of change in literature.

He is concerned with grasping how transformations in society came to be and how they are related to literature, especially to the novel as

which most of today's freshmen have been subject to are not airtight. The students feel the malaise, they sense the contradictions; the problem is their feeling of powerlessness and the accompanying underdevelopment of their faculties for reflection and criticism. Secondly—and other reviewers of the book have stressed this point—a course in writing should be a course in thinking, and if students learned to think properly, analytically, critically, they would not be so susceptible to the deceptions of the media and our "pseudo-politics." So how does one motivate students to think? One has them work on material they are concerned about, issues which touch them. And what if they remain largely untouched? At this point Ohmann faces the very same resistances in his would-be attempt to raise political consciousness as his critics face in provoking analytical thought. In fact, it's virtually the same problem, one which Wayne Booth has accounted for by citing most college students' lack of developed character: they have simply not interacted widely and vitally enough with the world, or else their interactions have been too numbing.

An important point that Ohmann makes and might have said more about is that university life itself often contributes to this numbing process. Students, especially those who must work to support themselves in college, are often under so much pressure that they feel rushed or fatigued whenever they do schoolwork. As a result they develop inefficient work habits, doing assignments half-heartedly or just to get by; one sees very little imagination in their work, and any critical reflection on their situation (which might lead to demand for change) seems quite beyond their energies. "Perhaps I was asking students to be free, critical, and creative," writes Ohmann, "in a situation where society was asking them to be of service, docile, and limited." The implication is that the conditions of education determine students' expectations and capacities in their later lives, and as Ohmann reminds us, much if not most of the work in this society is stifling and/or trivial. The clincher is that many composition teachers feel the same way about their own work—which completes a sinister circle.

Ohmann's solution to all this is the simple exhortation to "be political," hardly very fortifying even though he does offer counter-arguments to five of the most common objections to the idea. (For example: to those who claim political activity is a threat to academic freedom he replies that academic freedom is always being threatened, while the more immediate threat may really be an ivory tower complacency.) But this solves nothing; we hardly even hear this debate any more. Ohmann may have just worked himself into a corner with his insistence on ideological explanations of why composition courses fail. The only real solution, despite its imperfection, is inspired, devoted, individualized teaching, a thing which cannot be guaranteed by a textbook, and which, as already noted, is largely undervalued in English departments. This in itself tends to dampen one's enthusiasm. In addition, the great teaching burden placed on composition instructors in number and size of classes tends to hamper one's inspiration while decreasing the opportunity for individual attention.

What are these but political issues?—the politics of the university itself, and the politics of the state if it is a public institution. This is where Ohmann might have offered some strategies. Campus-wide protests no longer have much meaning; it is the detail work, the hard work, which remains to be done. The shift in political attention to the infrastructures of our institutions parallels the shift in tactics outside the university from mass movements to community organizing. We must not lose sight of the overall picture, of course, but if our universities are going to work despite ever more restricting conditions, we—students, faculty, and all those concerned with the effectiveness of American higher education—cannot afford to content ourselves with litanies against the "system," which do little more than validate our own isolated frustrations. We must work to make conditions more favorable to the type of teaching our students desperately need.

Reviewed by Joel Simpson

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genre. While his special interest is the black novel, Gayle does not slight the non-black social, political and historical forces that play vital roles in the production of the novel. To be sure, he is committed to black nationalism, and his "reading" of the historical process involves ideological determinants. Gayle knows the procedures of literary criticism very well, knows that technical excellence and the author's consciousness must be incorporated in dialectics. Regardless of the problems his ideology might raise, one can, at least, argue rationally about his method.

Gayle begins by reviewing the difficulties of accepting literary criticism that maintains a separation of sociology and literature, making the Agrarian critics and their followers his target. He then recounts highlights in black literary and political history. He notes the peaks and valleys of nationalist consciousness and the spots at which traditional ideas of form and plot become dysfunctional. This capsule history of how literature has functioned in black American history is also a sketch of Gayle's procedures. Throughout *The Way of the New World* he links the novel with cultural and political movements; he speaks of novels as paradigms of experience, as reflective or projective examples.

The polemical nature of Gayle's book does not admit of easy summary. The first two chapters ("Paradigms of the Early Past" and "The Souls of Black Folk") investigate how the early black novel is conditioned by pre- and post-Civil War conditions in America, by the overwhelming popularity of the Plantation school (Thomas Nelson Page, Thomas Dixon and Joel Chandler Harris), and by the much discussed opposition between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois. Gayle contrasts William Wells Brown's *Clotel* (1853), the first novel written by a black author, with Martin Delany's *Blake* (1858), the prototypical black revolutionary novel. *Clotel* reflects the aspirations of the black middle class, the will to assimilate, while *Blake* is the model of the novel used to combat negative images of black worth and to project healthy revolutionary ideals. Dunbar's novels accept the stereotypes of black people created in the minds of Euro-Americans. On the other hand, Charles Chesnutt grapples with problems of tradition and history and the failure to produce a humane social order. Gayle isolates these oppositions within the progress of the black novel because he wants to demonstrate how certain divisions in social thought are consistently present in art.

In the third and fourth chapters ("The New Negro" and "The White Man's Burden"), Gayle draws attention to matters in the history of the black novel that have been too frequently ignored. He gives close attention to the work of Sutton E. Griggs, the first writer among blacks to publish and distribute his own work. He readily admits that the quality of Griggs's writing was poor, but he finds that Griggs merits notice as a novelist of ideas. Gayle also makes a brief analysis of ideas in DuBois's *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, a novel that should be talked about more as an example of naturalist fiction. He gives credit, long overdue, to the Garvey movement as a shaping force for images and ideas that were prevalent in black fiction during the Harlem Renaissance. Gayle's discussion of novels by Jesse Fauset, Nella Larsen, George Schuyler, Claude McKay, Rudolph Fisher and Zora Neal Hurston in chapters five and six ("The Confusion of Identity" and "The Outsider") is an excellent prelude to his critique of what Wright, Himes, Petry, Ellison and Baldwin achieve in fiction in chapters seven through nine ("Christ in Black Face," "The Black Rebel" and "Of Race and Rage").

Chapter ten ("White Nationalism") is concerned with crucial issues that surround the emergence of the Black Aesthetic movement and the creation of new black fiction. Gayle defines White Nationalism as "a subtle or overtly held belief in the superiority and dominance of the cultural artifacts of men of white ancestry over those of peoples of different skin color. Colonialism and racism are synonyms." Here Gayle probes the nature of literary politics, of "the war between the proponents of black power and White Nationalism in the cultural areas." In chapter eleven ("Revolutionaries, Three") Gayle suggests

The Female Imagination, by Patricia Meyer Spacks, Avon, 435 pp., $2.45; **Literary Women: The Great Writers,** by Ellen Moers, Doubleday, 336 pp., $10.00.

When furor and upheaval give way to balance and moderation, we say adolescence has passed into adulthood. So too with literary studies: the days of Kate Millett's fury in *Sexual Politics* are gone. Patricia Meyer Spack's *The Female Imagination* and Ellen Moers's *Literary Women* make clear that women's studies and, in particular, women and literature courses have come of age. These are generally judicious books by mature scholars (Spacks's earlier eighteenth century studies and Moers's *Two Dreisers* and *The Dandy* are solid scholarly works).

Spacks's readings of more than eighty works of literature from the seventeenth century until the present are so lively and thought-provoking that even when I disagreed with her, the disagreement was fruitful. Her criticism is excellent: it sent me back to the literature itself—to review, to rethink, to try to see the work anew. Likewise, her comments about teaching women's literature are stimulating—if occasionally distressing: one Wellesley student's response to Spacks's passionate defense of life committed to both career and family was, " 'But do you ever send your daughter off to school with dirty underwear?' "

But the theoretical underpinning—in a sense, the *viewpoint*—is disturbing and undermines the whole. Perhaps one clue is that the book grew out of a colloquium entitled "Woman Writers and Woman's Problems." That is, Spacks approaches women's literature in terms of problems. Thus "defensive mechanisms" appear everywhere, and the freedom (of the characters and authors) frequently "unnervingly resembles resignation" to her. Many of what she treats as women's problems are in fact human problems: aging, search for meaning in life, death. With particular figures, the limitations of her approach are readily apparent. When she discusses Mabel Dodge Luhan's life, Spacks comes up against a woman who is "not beset with the cares of a large family, she is aware of no difficulty in establishing and maintaining personal relationships, she makes no effort to suppress he emotions or to conform to a feminine norm." In other words, a wo man without "women's problems." Yet Dodge indeed had a problen —a *human* problem: the problem of a person with no self, no devel oped sense of identity.

Likewise, Spacks seems unwilling to acknowledge triumph o heroism in a woman. Lillian Hellman apparently made Spacks's clas "nervous": she "didn't fit the established categories." She seems to disconcert Spacks as well. Hellman's triumphs both in her work and in her life are said to rest on an egotistical foundation of intense self-absorption. This is highly ironic, for despite her supposedly blame-worthy self-concentration, Hellman produced a significant body of work (outside her self), actively engaged in a rich political life, and enjoyed a long, profound, if unorthodox, relationship with Dashiell Hammett. How many people, men or women, have lived as deeply, accomplished as much?

Spacks concludes that the triumph Hellman adumbrates depends "at least partly on denial or avoidance" because Hellman denies "significant difference between the sexes." Again, the insistence on shortcomings or "problems" rather than strengths. Spacks's remark also raises a fundamental question about which she makes contradictory remarks: are men and women different in other than the obvious physiological sense? And how are we to determine whether these differences are largely cultural or biological, since humans are ineluctably part of a culture and are therefore never in a "natural" state? At the beginning of her book, Spacks asserts that there is "a woman's point of view" which is "doubtless the result mainly of social conditioning." However, in discussing de Beauvoir's description on menstruation in *The Second Sex,* Spacks concludes that physiological differences—and not cultural pressures—make women inevitably different from men: "How can women fail to be in some vital respects—psychic as well as physical—different from men? Surely there must be something we may call 'woman in general.' "

Similarly, Spacks initially asserts that the reason we have no female Shakespeare to point to is not so much women's "social, economic,

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that the lives and thinking of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Imamu Baraka (LeRoi Jones) are paradigms that give impetus to new black writing. In the final chapters ("The Way of the New World, Part I and Part II"), Gayle discusses the marriage of cultural ideology with social and political ideology as "the unifying structure of much of the literature of the nineteen sixties and early seventies." He envisions the novels of Ernest Gaines and William Melvin Kelley as indicators of the new form and content that will manifest itself in the black novel. Gayle ends on a less than happy note. He phrases the enduring problem for the black novel as a question:

> Having opted for cultural plurality and manifested awareness of a distinctive African-American cultural system, how can such plurality and such distinction be contained within the European art form, the novel?

The dilemma persists. Only after years of experimentation, Gayle adds, will a new form be "created to contain the nuances of black thought, speech rhythms, life-styles, and storehouse of images and symbols which have helped to validate a people's humanity."

Two views of fiction. How does one mediate between them? From the vantage of previous criticism, it is obvious that Rosenblatt leads back toward needless mystification of a subject that requires clear analysis. From the same perspective, it can be argued that Gayle's interpretation is uneven, biased, inattentive to the role of criticism in the unfolding of fiction. Yet, *The Way of the New World* reminds us that literature is grounded in the complexities and contradictions of human history, that literature is our vital link with the past and the future. Between the Scylla of impressionism and the Charybdis of ideology the only safe passage lies in formation of new questions about fiction and history. And never be content with the answers.

Jerry W. Ward

olitical conditions" but "their psychological condition." But by the nd of the book, her conclusions belie all these earlier declarations. 'Society's failure [not women's psychological conditions] is the large act that emerges from contemplation of women's writing." And instead of inevitable male/female differences—whether caused by the physical differences or different cultural experiences—she finds that "women's needs are identical with men's."

In her concluding sentence, Spacks observes that women writers define "woman as she is and as she dreams." On the contrary, what Spacks's book suggests is the difficulty (if not impossibility) of describing "Woman": *The Female Imagination* is a testament to the extraordinary, rich variety of women.

I first sensed something amiss, something forced, when in the preface to *Literary Women* Ellen Moers admits that Mrs. Gaskell and Anne Bronte once bored her, that she could barely read Mary Shelley and Mrs. Browning, that even Emily Dickinson was an "irritating puzzle as much as a genius"—and then declares only four pages later that her book is "plainly a celebration of the great women who have spoken for us all."

The same "willed" enthusiasm and insistence that ironically belie the surface assurance are likewise evident in the opening chapter. Moers's undeniable (and uninteresting) assertion that "a woman's life is hard in its own way" (well, isn't everything?) is followed by the more problematic "as women have always known and men rarely understood." Women always known? "Total Women" don't even know it *now!* And the "men have rarely understood" introduces an anti-male animus which continues throughout the book—as if to say that the only way to "score points" for women is to kick men out of the game. As the "always" of the first sentence seems strained, so the "every" and "finality" of the second sentence ("Literary women speak for themselves on this matter as on every other with finality") make me question Moers. And the very next sentence asserts that the horrors of the housewife's lot have *never* been more powerfully evoked than in one of Harriet Beecher Stowe's letters. The excess of unqualified absolutes is disconcerting.

Sometimes Moers's anti-male feeling is against male writers: Ted Hughes is pronounced "a grotesque figment of the Plath imagination." And her handling of men's and women's responses is hardly even-handed. She admits Mme. de Stael declared Jane Austen's fiction *vulgaire* and that Charlotte Bronte said Austen "cannot be great" because she lacked poetic grandeur. But Moers declares Emerson's observation that "suicide is more respectable" than the incessant consideration of money and marriageability in Austen's novels a product of "outraged masculinity" as well as "outraged gentility." Surely it was outraged transcendentalism as well.

Likewise her treatment of male critics is often unduly harsh, as if they could only sully female writers by paying them critical attention. Lionel Trilling comes in for questionable abuse on two occasions. He castigates him for his "relative lack of interest in Austen's concern with the economic aspect of a man's professional choice" and considers this failure a sign of the "masculinity of the critic" to bypass the feminine quality of Austen's realism." Even more bewilderingly, he attacks Trilling's acute (and, ironically, pro-feminist) paragraph about Emma having "a moral life as a man has a moral life" and labels a disgrace—because Trilling neglects to say that Emma is an heiress.

Similarly, Moers's celebratory aim leads her to critical excesses in favor of women (Dickinson, not Whitman, is "the American poet of passion") and rhetorical flush: all women writers are said to share the passionate honour of the woman" Thackeray saw in Charlotte Bronte. If some male talked about the "passionate honour of the man" which all male writers shared, I'm sure Moers (and I) would chortle.

There are curious inconsistencies of tone and taste as well. Moers quotes the motto from "the ad which sells cigarettes to the liberated woman." Surely that 'liberated" is ironic, and surely Moers should resist quoting a company that turns serious women's issues into commercial ploys. She says that it is "improper to pry" into Willa Cather's private life and comments on her own initial fear that to discuss female sexual imagery in women's literature would "insult the memory and downgrade the writing of the greatest among women writers." She mentions a crude light-weight like Erica Jong more often than Adrienne Rich.

The straining for excessive claims for women writers and stylistic excesses mar the many genuinely excellent aspects of Moers's book. Her study reflects an acute sense of the intellectual and literary history of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, and individual chapters and readings of single works are provocative and convincing. Particularly brilliant is her reading of *Frankenstein* as a birth myth with the "motif of revulsion against newborn life, and the drama of guilt, dread, and flight surrounding birth and its consequence."

In the course of her book Moers remarks on the danger to women writers of a "shallow and premature glory." I wonder why she didn't heed her own advice.

Reviewed by Bonnie Lyons

Lady Oracle, by Margaret Atwood, Simon and Schuster, 345 pp., $8.95.

Lady Oracle is proof that when it comes to fiction, the whole is sometimes not equal to, let alone more than, its parts. Many of the parts of Atwood's finally unsatisfying third novel are witty, excellent, insightful. This is a complicated narrative about Joan Foster, who plans her own false drowning to avoid the exposure of her separate lives (the supposedly lazy, incompetent wife of a perpetual radical with ever-changing causes, she also secretly writes Costume Gothics, is the author of a notorious book of man-hating poetry produced by automatic writing, and has recently taken a lover) and her hidden past (as a child she was circus-obese and, naturally, lonely and alienated).

Lady Oracle is also an uneasy mixture of Gothic parody and a comedy of manners. The parody of the Gothic shows us still another side of Atwood—whose prolific production of fiction, poetry and criticism, like that of Joyce Carol Oates, suggests that cold, Canadian air must be invigorating for women. Her main character's Costume Gothics reveal what might be a scholarly knowledge of the field as well as an uncanny feel for the psychology behind them. Likewise, much of the comedy of manners, the social comedy, strikes precisely the right note. Atwood creates a mad, real world of publishers ardently pushing our heroine's poetry as a combination of Kahlil Gibran and Rod McKuen (she can't play the guitar and be "a sort of female Leonard Cohen," however); of would-be radicals whose major triumph is spitting in a policeman's face; of "con-create" artists whose avant-garde work consists of exhibiting freezers full of animals killed by cars on the road.

But these various aspects never emotionally connect or mesh into a unity: in fact, the parodic and satiric parts detract from the most interesting and moving material—the evocation of the heroine's childhood. The heroine's mother, a bitter social climber who pushed her fat, ungainly daughter into the "right" Brownie troop and dancing lessons, is painfully and accurately drawn. And the vision of fatness—its causes, trials and results—is the finest aspect of the novel. A chubby, awkward, vulnerable child abused by her peers (tied and abandoned by fellow Brownies!), the heroine knew she was distasteful to her mother; she not only hated but *used* her fatness—as revenge, as a weapon, finally as a disguise, and as protection. In a memorable scene in which is forced to play a "mothball" among the "butterflies" in dancing school, she turns her pain and anger into power, makes her performance "a dance of rage and destruction," and triumphs perversely. Many and subtle are the meanings and uses of fatness in the novel.

What is perhaps most disturbing about *Lady Oracle*—and a clue to its ultimate failure—is its strange closeness and yet distance from *Surfacing,* Atwood's last novel. Many of the same themes and images pervade both works. In both first-person novels we have heroines interested in magical transformation, exploration of the past, especially in relationship to parents, death and the disappearance of a body, mystical religion, an examination of the sources and uses of art. But where magical transformation involved a genuine quest in *Surfacing,* here it is automatic writing and false drowning. Where mystical religion meant trying urgently to contact the local nature-spirits in *Surfacing,* here it is an easy world of aged spiritualists. Where the growth in *Surfacing* involved abandoning commercial art and seeking deeper roots in childhood drawings and Indian pictographs, here the art is Gothic novels rejected in the end—in favor of

science fiction. On one level, *Lady Oracle* seems almost a parody or weird distortion of Atwood's most serious themes.

In essence, *Surfacing* is an exploration, a quest novel; *Lady Oracle* is an entertainment, an escape novel—in both senses of the word. The resolution of *Surfacing* is aesthetically and emotionally satisfying, entailing as it does a genuine metamorphosis, a psychological transformation. The resolution of *Lady Oracle* is witty, emblematic and contrived—a comic gesture. This is unsatisfying because the novel is basically serious, unlike Atwood's first novel *The Edible Woman*, which has the same sort of conclusion.

The very necessity and emotional meaning of the heroine's false drowning are belittled by zany contrivances. Besides being blackmailed, receiving threatening phone calls and finding dead animals on her doorstep, she is discovered by a long-lost first lover, a Polish exile she met in London; he takes her to Zerdo's, an artsy restaurant formerly known as Bite-A-Bit, where our heroine worked when she was courted by a Greek immigrant who called himself John—and now calls himself Zerdo.

Our feelings for the once-fat and now self-divided heroine struggling with her separate selves simply cannot survive such absurd coincidence. So, finally, when we hear the mysterious footsteps down the hall approaching our heroine, we no longer care if she is "saved" or "got"—we and, I suspect, her creator, can't quite believe, let alone feel for her.

Reviewed by Bonnie Lyons

Galveston, by Suzanne Morris, Doubleday, 429 pp., $10.00.

A tale of three women rather than a city. There was Claire: impregnated and left by Damon, bereaved of their child, unhappily married to Damon's brother, frustrated by Rubin, Damon's *ersatz*, pushed by jealousy to the brink of insanity and to murder by the maternity of Rubin's wife and over the brink and to death by the betrayal of her one trusted friend.

There was Serena: Rubin's teen-age adopted daughter who, revolted by the prospect of life as the wife of the church organist, sought fulfillment in the arms of Ramon, the jazz musician, though constantly anguished by the fear of being simply another of Ramon's summer diversions.

Finally there was Willa: independent but confused adopted daughter of the oil tycoon who fears sex but is preparing to wed Sidney when she traces the clue to her parentage to Galveston, to solution and to self-identity.

Sexuality is certainly the motivating force of the plot; deception and alienation follow from it; guilt and tragedy are normally its final results. Yet the actors are not mere pawns of the classical Freudian sex drive. The women, though strongly attracted, freely choose their partners. Only Rubin, supposedly the most highly principled, is unable to control his sexual impulses and is gradually destroyed by his guilt.

At first glance the characters seem stereotypes: the jilted wife settling for second best; the mild-mannered, long-suffering, understanding husband; the converted-sinner Episcopalian priest; his puritanical wife; their rebellious daughter; her Latin lover; the wild young debutante. But they do come alive. Perhaps it is the authentic touch of historic Galveston locations and events. Perhaps it is the introspection. Perhaps the dab of detail.

The technique of narration by three persons stimulates interest. While unresolved questions create suspense, the resolution in the final pages gives me the impression of a Ma Bell lineman splicing a severed cable.

Facit: *Fin de siècle* Galveston

Reviewed by Leo Nicoll, S.J.

The Abyss, by Marguerite Yourcenar, tr. by Grace Frick and Marguerite Yourcenar, Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 374 pp., $10.00.

There seem to be special difficulties involved in creating successful historical fiction. For one thing, we are acutely aware of the pastness of the past, of the differences among historical periods, and we expect our history to be dutifully remote. Only by appreciating this remoteness, so the argument runs, can we fully comprehend the evolutionary course of civilization. Our fiction, on the other hand, must speak to the needs of our own time; thus the phrase "historical fiction" contains built-in conflicts. The special power of *The Abyss* grows largely from its reconciliation of such conflicting demands.

Take the title, for instance. It is a familiar enough code word in our own literature of anxiety, but to the 16th century alchemist "the abyss" referred to that stage in the alchemical process when all substance is in a state of separation and dissolution. In the novel the alchemical term is a metaphor pointing to the existential experience. Thus as Zeno, the hero, meditates, all of experience enters the state of the abyss:

> Time, place, and sustance were losing those attributes which for us are their boundaries: form had ceased to be more than the torn bark of substance; substance dripped away into a void which was not its true counterpart; time and eternity were but one and the same, like dark water entering a vast expanse of dark water.

The abyss is also the condition of thought:

> There were moments when he trembled, as if on the verge of a transmutation: some particle of gold appeared to be born within the crucible of the human brain; yet the result was but an equivalence, as in those fraudulent experiments wherein Court alchemists try to prove to their royal clients that they have found something. . . .

Zeno is no fraud, and his personal confrontation with the abyss is real. Born illegitimately in 1491, Zeno—alchemist, atheist, scholar, and physician—wanders the landscape of the European Renaissance. Hunted in his old age by the thought police of the Counter-Reformation, his final quest is for his own authentic self, a quest in which he touches more gold than he sees. But if the alchemical abyss is a metaphor for Zeno's private labor of becoming, it is also the condition of civilization's becoming. In one of his meditations, entirely in the spirit of Renaissance numerology, Zeno rearranges the numbers in the year of his birth, trying to imagine 1941. The point is clear: history itself is in the abyss, gold, like Augustine's heavenly city, existing only beyond time.

The author does not belabor the parallels between her hero's time and our own, but the similarities are there in the many manifestations of physical, intellectual, and spiritual tyranny and the general failure of institutions to meet human needs. One of the grimmest chapters describes the Anabaptist's experiment at Munster—a crucible without gold, a self-imposed Auschwitz of the soul.

The Abyss was begun in the 1920's as a short story to which Yourcenar has returned over the years, and it reveals the care and depth of its years of composition. Indeed, the texture of authentic historical detail is so dense as to be occasionally distracting. In an Appendix describing the process of composition, the author refers to a scene in which a lady breast-feeds her infant in a living room full of guests, assuring us that historical records exist recounting such an event. Sometimes such fidelity seems to encroach on novelistic considerations, but this quibble only shows how little dross there is in this fine novel. An achievement in plain style, its eloquence is always inherent in the conception, never imputed by an artificially purple prose.

Assuming that Marlowe's Dr. Faustus is a composite of the same historical figures Yourcenar drew on in creating Zeno—Leonardo, Copernicus, Bruno, Paracelsus (and she lists others in the Appendix)—this novel clarifies the essential dishonesty of Marlowe's play, a reactionary bone thrown to an establishment that had begun to growl at Marlowe's own untidy life. As one follows Zeno's journey, one realizes that the bargain is rarely with the devil. And it is not for a Grecian whore that the Zenos of the world risk the abyss.

Reviewed by Bruce Henricksen

Leonardo DaVinci, by Jack Wasserman, Abrams, 179 pp., (139 illustrations, 48 in color), $25.00.

This book contains the best reproductions of DaVinci's paintings that I have ever seen. Too often DaVinci reproductions are retouched so that the colors are brighter and the cracks less apparent; the results are usually garish and lose the delicacy of his famous *sfumato* technique. This book is worth every penny of its price because of its excellent color reproductions; even the black and white illustrations of the artist's drawings are authentic because they capture his famous delicacy and precision of stroke.

Jack Wasserman's text, on the other hand, is uneven. His brief discussion of the artist's life is superficial and says nothing really new. While he does give the facts, he never interprets them with much depth and stays very clear of DaVinci's many fascinating sexual encounters and liaisons. However, Wasserman's commentary on the artist's paintings and drawings is quite perceptive. He begins by destroying the myth that the artist invented everything in his notebooks. "The general belief among specialists is that Leonardo copied machines he saw in factories, in armories, and in manuscripts by other engineers and artists as part of his usual learning process," says Wasserman, but he points out that the artist did sometimes improve the machines he was copying into his notebooks. Wasserman also provides commentaries with each of the forty-eight color illustrations and these are often insightful. He notes, for example, that as DaVinci himself grew older the madonnas he painted aged, which suggests a significant identification in the artist's own mind. Wasserman is also helpful when he compares the way the artist approached the same subject in an earlier painting or drawing and the way the final version has been altered for more interesting pictorial effect. DaVinci is, of course, famous for psychological insight in his portraits, and while Wasserman has no new theory about the *Mona Lisa's* smile, he does show how the light and shadows on the face create the highly suggestive psychological appearance. Wasserman also perceptively discusses the artist's distinctive style of landscape painting and its inherent symbolism.

If you want a fine biogaphy, read E. M. Almedingen, R. Calder, or R. Wallace; if you want interpretation and period analyses, read Bernard Berenson, A. Chastel, or C. Seymour; but for precise, authentic and gorgeous reproductions, this is the book to buy.

Reviewed by John L. DiGaetani

Stanislavski on Opera, by Stanislavski and Rumyantsev, Theatre Arts Books, 369 pp., $18.24 (paper $8.45). **The Music Theater of Walter Felsenstein,** ed. by Peter Paul Fuchs, W. W. Norton, 188 pp., $10.95.

What can German and Russian Communists tell us about opera today? A lot, I can report after reading these two new books. Stanislavski is, of course, already famous in the West for "method" acting, but this new collection of his remarks to his students indicates that he did much work in opera as well. In 1918, in addition to starting the Moscow Art Theater, and despite the terrible poverty and deprivation of the post-revolutionary period, he formed an Opera Studio to begin opera performances. This book is the result of one of his student's notebooks and recollections of the famous director's comments about staging opera.

After a general introduction about the beginnings of Stanislavski's Opera Studio and its goals, the author (Rumyantsev) relates detailed production notes for seven operas (*Eugene Onegin, The Tsar's Bride, La Bohème, A May Night, Boris Godunov, The Queen of Spades* and *The Golden Cockerel),* all directed by Stanislavski. What emerges from both the theoretical and practical points of view is an intensely theatrical and dramatic approach to opera that emphasizes diction, theme, characterization and motivation, and does its best to destroy the old operatic tradition that includes terrible acting, "operatic" set gestures, mincing to the audience rather than playing to the other chracters onstage and making brainlessly pretty sounds.

All this was revolutionary in 1920, and still is to many opera houses that pride themselves on superstars with gorgeous voices and grotesque bodies. The revolution that Stanislavski argues for has already been attempted in this country at the New York City Opera, the Houston Opera and several others. What makes this book valuable is not the operatic goals, since most enlightened opera goers agree with them already, but the explanations of how those goals can be achieved.

The chapter on *La Bohème,* the most familiar and popular Italian opera of the standard repertory, is especially useful. In Stanislavski's initial 1922 production, the opera was presented in Russian rather than Italian, for only about two percent of the audience knew Italian. The time period was altered from 1840 to 1890 to make the production more contemporary, the text was changed to eliminate the children's chorus in Act II, and some of the music was cut. Even to tamper with Il Maestro's music was radical surgery—but the result was great musical theater and a huge popular success. We need this radical approach desperately in America if opera is ever to stop stinking of elitist snobbism and become a viable, popular part of our culture. And slowly, in New York City, Houston, Santa Fe and Seattle, this is happening.

A recent and highly influential disciple of Stanislavski's method is Walter Felsenstein. Peter Paul Fuchs, of Louisiana State University's music department, has done a real service to the opera-going public in gathering together this anthology of Felsenstein's writings and essays about him. One drawback of this method is a constant repetition of Felsenstein's principal theories, but they do come through forcefully.

Felsenstein varies from Stanislavski in emphasizing the actor-singer's personality. While the Russian director preached his interpretation of *Carmen, La Bohème* or *Tosca* to his cast and directed them to take notes, Felsenstein feels that the actor is at the core of the musical-dramatic experience and all characterization must come through that person's own personality to be finally convincing to the audience. Thus, in his discussion of Carmen, Felsenstein makes clear that the particular performer of the title role can use many different approaches, whichever she is comfortable with. The director's function is to insure dramatic viability, consistency and an overall cohesion in the production.

Since Felsenstein emphasizes the theatrical aspects of opera, he will not stage *bel canto* operas, for they were written for vocal display. He also avoids Wagner's operas because of their epic rather than realistic qualities. Felsenstein demands singers who can act, and he has nothing to do with the operatic superstars of our time. A Sutherland, Caballe or Pavarotti would not be willing to give Felsenstein the hours of rehearsals he demands for each new production. Felsenstein uses only his own ensemble at the Komische Oper in East Berlin and rarely does guest productions elsewhere in Germany. As a result of his method, he can rarely keep the most beautiful voices in his company. But he doesn't really want stupid songbirds anyway.

Can opera be a viable theatrical experience? Yes, according to both Stanislavski and Felsenstein, but only under certain conditions. Hours of rehearsals plus trained and determined acting singers, led by the right kind of director, can produce it. Opera does not have to be a concert in costume with fat sopranos and bald tenors who gallump unconvincingly around the stage until they belt out their big numbers. These men have proved that opera can be an exciting dramatic and musical experience.

Reviewed by John L. DiGaetani

Harlequin's Stick—Charlie's Cane, by David Madden, Bowling Green University, Popular Press, 174 pp., $10.00.

Harlequin's Stick—Charlie's Cane is a playful instrument, an academic toy. This is not to say the work is unimportant. The movie industry was based upon scientific, optical toys, such as the zoetrope. What David Madden has given us is a gift in the form of a scholarly peepshow.

The Commedia dell'Arte as a vital theatre form had been dead or dying for a century before the birth of silent films. The stragglers from the Commedia tradition found their way into various forms of popular

entertainment, such as pantomime, circus, vaudeville and the music hall. When the early films needed entertainers who could create popular theatrical images without words, some of these stragglers joined the movies. From their nearly-forgotten techniques and their performers' intuitive understanding, a new form which resembled the old Commedia was created, the silent slapstick comedy. If it was less lusty, without satire of guts and snap of wit, perhaps the audience, which must shape the nature of these things, was duller or simpler than the earlier one.

Meanwhile, back at the Theatre, there were very conscious attempts to use the principles of the Commedia. The turn-of-the-century innovators (Stanislavski, Gordon Craig, Copeau, Reinhardt, etc.) turned to the Commedia as they sought new ways to bring the theatre to life. The movies used character types similar to those of the Commedia and built their plots from improvised material. The theatre was trying something else which had been essential to the Commedia, but was denied to the film because of its celluloid nature. The theatre was able to improvise on the moment, and make changes, however subtle, to suit the particular audience in a particular mood. The Art Theatre of that period was concerned in creating a living relationship between the actor and the audience.

Now, after the rise and fall of the Movies, the Commedia, true to its origin in the Satyr, has new stirrings in its old groins. This can be seen in a number of ways: improvisational theatre created by Viola Spolin, her son, Paul Sills, and others; Marcel Marceau and a new generation of Mimes; old Commedia forms with new approaches by such teachers as Jacques Le Coq; R. G. David and the San Francisco Mime Troupe with its strong political satire; and most recently, the Street Mimes, young people wandering from city to city, often with inadequate technique but always a great joy in performance. All of these things and others show a reassertion of the Commedia's virility, a new desire to bring into existence that unique experience between live actors and living audience.

Mr. Madden's volume comes at a good time. It seems obvious, and appropriate to his subject, that Mr. Madden has a great sense of fun and entertainment. In his fear of boring his audience with scholarly detail, he has edited his work to a very fast-moving form. In the chapter *The Body, Language of Gesture,* for instance, he has allowed only six pages to cover this complex area. Of these, three are devoted to eight pictures. Of the remaining three, there are four short paragraphs totalling thirty-four lines—not much more than a respectable footnote for many scholarly works. Mr. Madden does not give a full-bodied text, but rather a preview or scenario. Its value is experiential. In lieu of a long, profound, scholarly work, Mr. Madden has created a little thing of delight, a peepshow volume.

The metaphor has not been forced. Even the format of the book looks much like a peepshow. It is easy to read and easier to look at. The amount of written material has been kept to a minimum, accounting for only one-third of alternate pages. The text is hardly more than the information flashed upon the silent screen to make connections and to hold the images together. Opposite the text are two pictures, usually, one of an old Commedia print and the other of a still from silent films.

These images, the heart of the matter, are carefully chosen. Their composition on the page, one above the other, appears to be a vertical stereoptican card, with the two images interacting in juxtaposition.

A Peepshow: *Harlequin's Stick—Charlie's Cane.*

We open the volume. Looking through the unique lens Mr. Madden has made, we focus our attention. We flip the pages in a regular rhythm set by the brief text and pictures. The two images of the Commedia and the Silent Film are magically superimposed. With a trick of the eye and a flick of the imagination, the older image is animated by our memory of the younger one. In some strange perspective, we glimpse that almost forgotten, fantastic theatre of Commedia dell'Arte. Perhaps it's an illusion. But you will believe it!

Reviewed by Bob Fleshman

The Little That Is All, by John Ciardi, Rutgers University Press, 86 pp., $5.00.

Over the past thirty-odd years John Ciardi has brought out ten volumes of poetry, a complete translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy,* a collection of his columns, *Manner of Speaking,* and numerous volumes of children's verse. This latest volume, *The Little That Is All,* reminds us again of Ciardi's vision. Through superb craftsmanship, he has consistently offered a tough-minded assessment of what there is—the joy of some of it, the ugliness of much of it—all the world we have. He writes of ritual in a time suspicious of it, often reshaping the old rituals. In "Washing Your Feet" the old patina is off the picture, replaced by tones of Ciardi. "Washing your feet is hard when you get fat./In lither times the act was unstrained and pleasurable." In other times "Mary Magdalene made a prayer meeting of it./She, of course, was washing not her feet but God's." He writes that Degas painted ladies who seemed to be washing God's feet while washing their own feet. The speaker wishes he could "paint like Degas or believe like Mary." One thing he is sure of: "To touch any body anywhere should be ritual./To touch one's own body anywhere should be ritual."

Ciardi keeps his classical and Renaissance learning comfortably in the background in "A Conversation with Leonardo." Da Vinci measures the dreamer for a picture, but the dreamer tells him "if what you're after is ideal proportion,/you're sketching the wrong times." Perhaps he is looking for Praxiteles, perhaps for God's image. The dreamer explains that after Leonardo "came genre—the thing/measured not by absolutes but by other examples/of the same school. I am, alas, *that* man." The theme of self-conscious exile persists in Ciardi's poetry. This poem sustains the vision of a man who knows the absolutes are gone, of a disturbance "no man asked for and none yet has welcomed." But, as Ciardi writes in the final poem of the volume, "Memo: Preliminary Draft of a Prayer to God the Father": "I do not complain: I describe."

Ciardi goes on to describe the little that is everything in the poem "Minus One." His attention is caught by seven sparrows sitting on a wire who suddenly whirl away from a hawk's shadow. Only six return to the wire, and the poet asks, "Is there a kismet/the size of one of seven/sparrows?" For if there is, even if it includes us as a statistic, "Whatever remembers us, finally, is enough./If anything remembers, something is love." For most of the poem, this speculation about kismet is carried out from a little distance, the argument imagined to be academic, when suddenly the speaker ends: "I have spun loose/again and again with your sparrows, father, and whose/hawk is this now? unchosen? come to choose?"

To know who you are is to know who you're not and cannot be; to know what there is is to know what's been lost. In defining who he is and "the little that is all," Ciardi pursues this knowledge relentlessly throughout the volume. The sense of loss and exile is a prime mover in his art. He "explains" this to Erato in "An Apology for not Invoking the Muse." Erato is in a pique for not having been invoked by the poet in forty years; the poet begins to explain by saying he "cannot summon an adequate emotion/except in sensing how all loss belittles/what's left to make a truth of." His explanation to Erato resembles his reminder to Leonardo. This is the wrong time for ideal harmony. Nevertheless, Erato's stormy departure has left the poet unsettled, reflective. "How had I dared to imagine I might dare/be only what I am?/and yet . . ./and yet . . ." This, of course, is just what Ciardi has done, with precision and the frankest emotion.

Reviewed by William Mills

Notes on Contributors

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DORIS BETTS teaches creative writing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is the author of *The River to Pickle Beach*, among other novels, and three collections of short stories, including a National Book Award nominee, *Beasts of the Southern Wild and Other Stories*.

JOHN BIGUENET edits *Black and White*, an international review of the arts. A former Poet-in-Residence at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, he has published work widely in journals such as *Mundus Artium*, *The Village Voice*, *Contemporary Literature in Translation* and NOR. His poems also appear in several anthologies, including *Eating the Menu* and *Contemporary Poetry in America*.

DANIEL ROSS BRONSON is a visiting instructor of English at Montclair State College in New Jersey. *Hudson River Anthology* and *New Writers* feature his stories, and he has a poem forthcoming in *Mississippi Valley Review*. His play on George Washington's last months is making the rounds.

C TRENT BUSCH, a native of rural West Virginia, uses Appalachia as a setting in most of his work. He teaches English at Valdosta State College in Georgia, and has contributed to *The California Quarterly*, *Lake Superior Review*, *The Georgia Review* and *The Miscellany*.

PRICE CALDWELL's fiction, criticism and poetry have been featured in *The Delta Review*, *Mississippi Review*, *South Carolina Review* and *Carleton Miscellany*, as well as NOR. His story, "A Sense of Place," was chosen for the Role of Honor in *Best American Short Stories of 1972*. He is an assistant professor of English at Mississippi State University.

PETER COOLEY teaches creative writing at Tulane University. His poetry may be found in periodicals such as *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *Poetry* and *The Atlantic*. Recently, the University of Missouri Press brought out a collection of his poems, *The Company of Strangers*.

JOHN WILLIAM CORRINGTON's short story, "The Actes and Monuments," appeared in *The O. Henry Award Stories* and *Best American Short Stories* in 1976. His latest poetry is in *The Southern Review*, and an essay on the work of Eric Voegelin will be published in a collection from L.S.U. Press this fall. Mr. Corrington practices law in New Orleans.

JOHN DEAN, who lives and writes in Paris, expects his Ph.D. from the University of London this year. Former Executive Editor of *Sennet*, Europe's higher education weekly, he is now a faculty member of the University of Paris. He has published poetry and criticism in *The Texas Quarterly*, *Palaestra*, *Silo*, *College English* and *Alkahest*.

JOHN DIGAETANI, a regular NOR contributor, currently teaches at Bergen Community College in New Jersey and Touro College in Manhattan. He is working on a translation of Gozzi's play *Turandotte* and a book on Puccini.

STUART DYBEK is an assistant professor of English at Western Michigan University. *Paris Review*, *Poetry Now*, *Antioch Review* and *New York Quarterly* are among the journals which have featured his poetry. He also has non-fiction in *Commonweal*, and fiction in *Sou'wester* and *Chicago Review*.

ERNEST FERLITA, S.J., serves as Chairman of the Drama Department at Loyola. He has just returned from a sabbatical in Rome where he completed a new play entitled *Purgatorio* and interviewed Lina Wertmüller for a forthcoming book on her films.

BOB FLESHMAN directs the Mime Conservatory in New Orleans and is a member of the Drama Department at Loyola. *Mime News* and *Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama* have printed his studies.

VAN FOLEY free-lances in New Orleans.

STEPHEN GARDNER is an assistant professor and Coordinator of the English Department at the University of South Carolina at Aiken. His work may be found in *Poetry Northwest*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Descant* and *Mississippi Review*, and his first volume of poems, *The Lady and the Dream*, is looking for a publisher.

MALCOLM GLASS has contributed poetry and fiction to periodicals such as *The Sewanee Review*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *Wisconsin Review* and *Prairie Schooner*. He is the author of several textbooks and an anthology published by Scholastic Book Services, and is currently working on an opera libretto. Mr. Glass teaches English at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee.

MARCUS J. GRAPES is known as Jack to his friends. He works, while writing, as a television and film actor in Los Angeles. His poems have appeared in *L.A. Free Press, Nexus, Wormwood Review* and *Bachy*, and he has published five collections of poetry. He recently edited *Alley Cat Readings*, a West Coast anthology.

BRUCE HENRICKSEN, a faculty member in the English Department at Loyola, has recent articles in *The Explicator* and *Texas Studies in Language and Literature*.

DAVID JOHNSON attends the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville in the M.F.A. program. He is also an instructor "of the fine art of grammar and sentence structure."

ERIN JOLLY lives in Parkin, Arkansas, where she teaches piano and writes. Her publications include a book of poetry, *Flowers of Stone*, and contributions to *Harper's, Massachusetts Review* and *Voices International*. She was a book reviewer for *The Memphis Commercial Appeal* for eight years, and writes a column for *The Wynne Progress* called "The Book Shelf."

WILLIAM KLOEFKORN's poems featured here also appear in his recently published collection, *ludi jr.* He is an associate professor of English at Nebraska Wesleyan University, and the author of three additional volumes of poetry. His work may be found in numerous journals, including *Wisconsin Review, Poet and Critic, Dacotah Territory* and *December*.

BONNIE LYONS teaches English at the University of Texas at San Antonio. She reviews books for *Congress Monthly*, and has written articles for *Shenandoah, Studies in Short Fiction* and *American Literature*. Her book on Henry Roth is forthcoming from Cooper Square Publishers.

GRANT LYONS is a free-lance writer whose varied work, including essays, stories and reviews, has appeared in *Redbook, Northwest Review*, the Boston *Globe* and *Louisiana History*. His children's book, *Andy Jackson and the Battles for New Orleans*, is just out, and he has short fiction soon to be published in the University of Missouri Press' "Breakthrough Series."

DAVID MADDEN's collection of stories *The Shadow Knows* was a National Council on the Arts Selection. He is co-editor of *Studies in the Short Story*, a new textbook.

C. J. MCNASPY, former fine-arts editor of *America*, peripatetic scholar and author of several books, is currently book review editor of NOR.

PETER MEINKE is Director of the Writing Workshop at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida. His book, *The Night Train and the Golden Bird*, is included in the University of Pittsburgh Press' Pitt Poetry Series.

ERROL MILLER, a resident of Monroe, Louisiana, has been a featured poet of *New York Culture Review, In a Nutshell* and *Phantasm*. His poems may be found in over 100 magazines and in his four published and forthcoming books.

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

KENT NELSON is a part-time municipal judge in Ouray, Colorado. Since he began writing full-time in 1969, his short stories have been published by a variety of reviews, such as *Four Quarters, North American Review, Carolina Quarterly* and *Southern Review*. His story, "Looking Into Nothing," appeared in *Best American Short Stories of 1976*.

LEO NICHOLL, S.J. was recently appointed Assistant Dean of Arts and Sciences at Loyola. He has articles appearing and forthcoming in *Motley* (put out by Spring Hill College) and an Austrian publication.

LESLIE PALMER was raised in Tennessee and Kentucky, and now teaches English at North Texas State University. His poems grace the pages of *Green River Review, Laughing Bear* and *Stone Country*, among others. He has also contributed articles to *Forum* and *Tennessee Studies in Literature*.

PHILIP PIERSON recently completed a collection of poetry, *Ceremony for a Slight Rain*. He co-edits *New River Review* and teaches at Radford College in Virginia. His publishing credits include *Yale Review, Epoch, Ohio Review, Kansas Quarterly* and the NOR.

JAMES REED is an instructor of freshman English at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, where he is enrolled in the graduate program in creative writing. He has poems forthcoming in *Puerto del Sol* and *Intro 8*.

JANET SAMUELSON teaches creative writing at Texas Tech University, and is assistant coordinator of the Texas Reading Circuit, a group that brings nationally known writers to Texas for workshops and readings. Her poems have been published or accepted by such journals as *Aspen Leaves, The Texas Slough, Café Solo* and *Sam Houston Journal*.

ANNE L. SIMON practices law in New Iberia, Louisiana, and also works as a graduate assistant in the Political Science Department at the University of Southwestern Louisiana. She has articles printed or to appear in *Louisiana Bar Journal, DEA News* and *Louisiana—200 Years*.

JOEL SIMPSON is an English instructor at the University of New Orleans, and has been a reviewer for *Books: A New Orleans Review*. He plays piano for The New Leviathan Oriental Fox-Trot Orchestra.

LISA THOMAS is a newspaper arts columnist and free-lance reviewer in Washington. *Lake Superior Review, Spirit That Moves Us, Puget Sound Quarterly* and *Jawbone* are among the magazines that have included her work.

MARK TRECHOCK serves as Pastor of Bethany, Zion and Viking Lutheran Churches in Wyndmere, North Dakota. He has contributed poems to *Quoin, Graffiti, Snowy Egret* and *Blue Cloud Quarterly*.

JERRY W. WARD acts as advisory editor to *Obsidian* and *Black Box*. He is completing work on his Ph.D. at the University of Virginia.

MILES WILSON, a fire prevention guard with the U.S. Forest Service in Oregon, has work featured in *New York Quarterly, Western Humanities Review* and *Poems*.