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# NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY

THE CONCEPT OF HONOR  
IN CALDERON'S DRAMA

Edwin Honig

THE CONTEMPORARY  
ARTIST & COMPOSER

John Donald Robb

FIVE STORIES

Edsel Ford Charles East Winston Weathers  
Marion Montgomery Barbara Ann Maynard

CORONADO

a narrative poem by Maude Davis Crosno

POETRY

Walter Darring, Kenneth Fields, Philip Legler  
Howard McCord, Stuart Moses, William Slaughter  
Hollis Summers, John Taylor

BOOK REVIEWS

VOLUME XXXV NUMBER 2

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# NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY

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 EDSEL FORD, journalist, poet and short-story writer, has had his work published in some 150 periodicals. In 1961 Homestead House published a volume of his poems; his most recently published book is *Love Is the House It Lives In*. In addition to recording poems for the Library of Congress, he has received the Arthur Davison Ficke Memorial Award, awards from the Poetry Society of America, and, in 1965, the Conrad Aiken Award granted by the Poetry Society of Georgia. He has been a frequent contributor to *NMQ*.

*Edsel Ford*MRS. COLVILLE'S FIRST HUSBAND,  
AND OTHERS

MRS. COLVILLE'S SEARCH for a second husband was somewhat hampered by the fact that she had murdered the first, albeit she had won an acquittal and a quarter-million dollars in life insurance.

Rubert—Rubert Schlaefly (that is, the first Mr. Colville; he had to take her name or the deal was off) had been a first-rate pretzel-bender, but when, on the second night of their marriage he became bored with his bride and attempted to contort her into a Figure 8 on the floor of the bridal suite, she sliced him into a slim Figure 11 and kept him warm until the insurance papers could be executed. It was an otherwise uneventful marriage. The attorney pleaded self-defense, and the prosecution agreed (privately) that nobody with a bust like that could possibly be guilty of murder with malice.

Her suitors were mostly newcomers to town, whom she picked up at the ice-cream parlor. They stopped coming around after the first or second meeting, or anyway after she had taken them by the hand into the mausoleum to meet Rubert.

The morticians had put Rubert back together so skillfully and the electricians had backlighted him so exactly that the seam hardly showed, even if you knew. He sat in his favorite chair, in air-conditioned comfort behind the plate glass, like a manikin advertising Early American or York or PP&G. He smiled benignly, which, frankly, was not Rubert's bent; but in his public condition, it had been agreed all around, there was no umbrella like a smile. Mrs. C. herself had tied his tie and turned the *New York Times* so that the Financial Section showed to viewers. (Which, if you have to know, left Rubert staring smilingly into the Obituaries, which did not include him, for the *Times* has never been overly taken with pretzel-benders, even those who end up so fittingly as Rubert. The *News*, yes; but not the *Times*.)

Mrs. Colville felt obliged to caution those few suitors who hung on after their meetings with Rubert that she had done him in. Some ran; some laughed; some went straight up; and one little guy fainted

on the spot. She gathered him into her golf cart and hauled him home.

His name was Willie Burgess. He was five feet four inches tall (half a head shorter than Mrs. C.) and he weighed, she estimated, one hundred two pounds when out cold, as he still was when they arrived home. His feet were flat and his head jerked continuously, even then. Although his hair was pale as duckdown, she guessed his age to be somewhere between what she pretended hers was and what the prosecuting attorney guessed it was when he decided not to divorce his wife for her.

Willie, when he came around, cried out unabashed confessions of love for Mrs. C., albeit in Sanskrit. She couldn't understand a word of it. But somehow she got the gist of it, because Willie's upper lip quivered passionately when he spoke and fathoms of desire welled up in her.

So it was settled. Willie moved in with her. That is to say, he stayed; for he was already in and there seemed to be nothing more to move. Although he was unable to make it entirely clear to her, Willie appeared to have nothing in the world to encumber him; it was as if he had only arrived, possessing nothing but the clothes on his back (a Penney's suit; it fitted rather well, considering) and the tic of the upper lip to convey passion and desire. Mrs. C. tried to find this droll, but succeeded only in finding it devastating. She offered herself with humiliating abandon, and while nothing especial happened, it was a quite satisfying nothing; and Mrs. Colville found herself wanting it a dozen times a day. Willie, his resources apparently without limit, obliged.

She never really knew whether he became Mr. Colville (the Second) spiritually, due to this aggravating lack of communication between them; but he did, at least, legally. They were soul mates, she kept telling him, while his upper lip trembled and Mrs. C. went all to pieces with love. They quit only long enough for the ceremony and signing of the papers, during which she dared not look at Willie for fear of shrieking with ecstasy in front of the J.P.

On Tuesdays they went to the mausoleum to pay their respects to Rubert. It was a ritual which failed to disturb Willie; indeed, he seemed to look forward to the weekly visitations. As for Rubert, he continued to smile benignly above the obits. If he were affronted by this unique brand of posthumous cuckoldry, he showed no sign. He merely listened in good patience as Willie hailed and farewelled him



in Sanskrit and (possibly) remarked upon the virtues of their wife, one large fact notwithstanding.

As the weeks passed, Mrs. Colville noticed that Willie appeared increasingly eager to visit Rubert and increasingly reluctant to terminate these Tuesday sessions. For her part, she could hardly bear anything which diverted Willie's attentions from her for more than an hour. Yet it was unseemly to expect him to quiver for her in front of her first husband. So she restrained her emotions and urged him gently to return home with her. Willie's head jerked angrily one day and he rained curses on her in Sanskrit. She put up her hands to conciliate him, and stepped outside for a breath of sunlight. When she went in again, Willie was standing close to the glass, quivering his lip at Rubert. The newspaper had dropped from her first husband's hand.

She was perfectly furious. To punish Willie, she drove him in the golf cart across the river and put him out on a lonely road. Then she got lost in the woods and did not get home until nearly dark. Willie was sitting on the front step, muttering, like a little boy who has been spanked for a wrong which has not been adequately explained to him. Mrs. Colville took him inside, tousled his duckdown hair forgivingly, and smiled. But Willie only stared back. He would not quiver his lip, though she by turns enticed and threatened him.

The next day he went out alone, a thing he had never done before. She found him, not to her surprise, at the mausoleum, talking amiably with Rubert. Not *to*, she noted, but *with*, for Rubert's expression had changed. He had a confidential, almost chummy look about him. Mrs. C. shamed Willie, took him outside, and tied him to the Angel of Mercy. When she got home, he was already there, angel and all.

Now he began going out before daylight. She found he had set up a table with a checkerboard in the mausoleum, that he was carrying on a game with Rubert, whose expression altered day by day until he no longer appeared to be the Rubert she had, ah, relieved of life. Mrs. C. ranted up and down the resounding room, but neither of them paid the slightest attention. Willie made his move, then ran to the glass to inquire (she presumed) what Rubert's next move might be. He was terribly considerate; he made no effort to hurry Rubert, to cause him to make an ill-thought move. At times, when Willie was poring over the board again, Mrs. Colville thrust her face against the glass and quivered her lip at Rubert, working it angrily to elicit some response; but her first husband only looked back glassily and some-

how cockily, as if thinking that his next brilliant move would dispose of his opponent altogether. She shrieked at him, but it only brought the old caretaker, who shook his head pityingly and went out again, embarrassed by the magnitude and longitude of her grief.

When it became evident that her marriage was, for all practical or impractical purposes, dissolved, Mrs. C. began frequenting the ice-cream parlor again. Not much was said about this. After all, she did have a quarter-million dollars, beyond which no wrong was conceivable.

She still went to pay her respects to her first husband each Tuesday. During these visits, Willie seldom moved from the checkerboard, or if it were Rubert's turn, from the glass. Even Mrs. Colville, divorced forever from the world of Ideas, sensed the shaping up of some kind of cataclysmic conflict.

The day she took Elmo Sanderigger (a devout salesman of pornography and simples) to meet Rubert (and, in a manner of speaking, Willie—though she did not in this instance make any effort to explain Willie) was the day she first noticed the rift. Whether it was caused by shoddy workmanship after all or by a change of lighting prompted by Rubert's relaxing into eternity, she could not be sure. At any rate, he was beginning to bust out. The seam was slitting, starting at the top of his head. It gave him a decidedly rakish look. Mrs. C. turned Elmo away as soon as she saw it, and nervously marched him back to the ice-cream parlor and never saw him again.

To her surprise, when she returned to the mausoleum, Willie was gone. All of the red checkers (Rubert's) were on the board, while Willie's black ones were scattered over the floor. Mrs. C. hurried home, expecting at last to be quivered at again, but Willie was nowhere to be found. She sighed; dust back to dust. Tomorrow, the ice-cream parlor again.

But even with a quarter-million dollars she was not the same woman she had been a few months prior. She was a nervous, shrill, unsavory character; they threw her out. She went to Rubert for consolation.

But Rubert had troubles of his own: he was still peeling. Even while she watched, the schism spread downward and the two sides of his head fell upon his shoulders. She watched in wonder as he split from top to bottom, and inside was Willie, who also split from top to bottom, and inside was Mrs. Colville herself, tied in a perfect Figure 8.

Edwin Honig

## THE CONCEPT OF HONOR IN THE DRAMAS OF CALDERÓN

Calderón is known mainly as the author of a dozen hair-raising revenge plays. To some it may come as a surprise that he could also write such a delicate and intricately turned comedy as *The Phantom Lady*. Well, we call it a comedy, but is it? For what has he really done here—the author of those bizarre wife-murder plays, *The Surgeon of his Honor*, *The Painter of his own Dishonor*, *Three Justices in One*, *Secret Vengeance for Secret Insult*—but clapped a happy ending onto a situation full of incest threats, near-rape-hysteria, and something just stopping short of bloody murder?

There is the special thrill in comedy, seldom available in tragedy, that goes with the freedom to mock taboos. Comedy indulges in this freedom as though it had never heard of the taboos, as though it had just wandered out of the Garden of Eden. It wants us to enjoy the near miss, the hot breath of approaching disaster. And we know at the start that this is the kind of thrill Calderón is preparing when the breathless Doña Angela appears, fleeing from her own brother-turned-swain. All quivering and temptingly veiled, she solicits a stranger's, Don Manuel's, protection, then disappears.

"Was that a lady of a whirlwind?" asks Manuel's servant, Cosme, the great comic exhibitionist of the play. The question tumbles us right into the lap of the mystery.

What is this mystery?

It may be put in the form of two further questions. Can the whirlwind be made to materialize? And then, will she cease to be a wildly pursued erotic force and become human, a real woman? To offset these possibilities here, as elsewhere in Calderonian drama, there is an underlying assumption that women (like poets, madmen and devils) are as fascinating as they are dangerous and disruptive. They should be handled carefully and put away, unless they can be placated by marriage. Women subsist on the margins of the serious life; they have nothing to do with the business of living in a world charged with

purpose and patrimony. They are sirens, temptresses, something to pick up, enjoy, and abandon along the way: love 'em and leave 'em, as the old military formula puts it.

In *The Mayor of Zalamea*, with its half-comic, half-revolutionary solution to the honor quandary (the offending officer garroted by the dishonored peasant father), we have a clear example of the extremes of female alternatives. Let the woman be jolly and companionable; let her enjoy herself. Then she is cast as the camp follower La Rebollada, openly available and proud of it:

I love to sing, and where  
other women burst into tears  
over any little trifle,  
I myself burst into song.\*

The only alternative to this is to be the mayor's young daughter, who must be hidden from all rapacious eyes. Otherwise she is likely to succumb, as all virgins will, to any lingering male, of whatever age or rank, who happens not to be related to her. When the secret gets out that she is staying in an upstairs room, she is fair game to Captain Alvaro's incited Donjuanism. He must seduce her, or else he is no man. As he says,

Now perhaps if she were here  
and quite available,  
I wouldn't care two pins about her.  
But just because the old man's  
locked her up, so help me, he's made me  
want to get at her up there.

Even the zany, out-at-elbows knight, Don Mendo, must make his flourish. In one breath he swears the peasant mayor's daughter has his undying affection; but when asked why he doesn't marry her, he replies more realistically,

Aren't there nunneries enough  
where I can drop her if she bores me,  
without my marrying the girl?

---

\*All verse translations in this essay are from Calderón: *Four Plays* (New York: Hill and Wang, Inc. 1961), edited and translated, with an introduction, by Edwin Honig. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Not every available woman is raped—at least not immediately. There is a code, a safeguard against assault, that usually works in broad daylight. Don Alvaro temporarily subsides when he is reminded of the code by the mayor's daughter, whom he will rape later:

Gentlemen like yourself  
are duty-bound to honor  
womankind, if not because  
they're individuals,  
then because they're women.

Actually no woman can be free if no man is free. The proof of this is what happens in a militarist society, frankly portrayed in *The Mayor of Zalamea*. Yet, as it turns out, there is little difference between a militarist and a civil society if the same prohibitions and violent assaults against women prevail. And so in the honor plays, the humanity of all characters is severely reduced, often annihilated, almost accidentally. In the typical situation a vanished lover suddenly reappears in disguise to reclaim the newly married wife; when he persists, the slowly aroused husband must kill them both. A woman may not be touched—many of the crucial marriages are by proxy; often, she may not even be seen without serious consequences for the beholder. For once glimpsed by another man may mean once loved, hence adulterated. From this follows the need for strategems, undercover manipulations, clandestine meetings, walls, darkness. Hence too, the need for protection by a father, or, where there is no father, by a brace of brothers, as in *The Phantom Lady*. Double protection may not be enough; the lady is still in danger. For safeguards themselves may lead to exposure. Isabel is forced to dematerialize, become a phantom, partly to escape the designs of her brothers, for whom the appearance of Manuel, a potential male threat in the house, seems to be only a ruse, an excuse for predatory activities on their part.

So the woman is a mystery, part of untamed nature, a destructive force, a whirlwind.

In an age of allegory, emblematic writing, baroque symbolism, the whirlwind has a special power, an additional appeal that broadens the theme of a play. In Calderonian drama the figure of the wind recurs like a leitmotif where woman is fatally involved. At the start of *Life is a Dream* there is the famous hippogriff and the destructive wind it symbolizes. Rosaura invokes it—the woman who is out to

avenge her lost honor, who can travel freely only in disguise while she is acting as a man. From this whirlwind issues the rebellion of the son Segismundo against his father, King Basilio. And the power he wrests from his father is used to reconcile the principle of internal freedom to the principle of external order. But this, significantly, does not happen until Rosaura's honor is restored so that she can become a real woman. In effect, then, the whirlwind, hinting at anarchic destruction, is tamed and redirected by the human power to love and to conciliate.

There are other winds—winds that drive lovers away and drown them, or perhaps only seem to. The wind may return, bringing the lover back, as if resurrected, to pick up the adverse chain of events that will lead to the tragedy. This is the kind of wind that appears in *Secret Vengeance* and in *The Painter of his own Dishonor*.

There is the tempest wind in Calderón's Faustian play, *The Wonder-Working Magician*, a whirlwind out of which the scholar Cipriano brings Lucifer, so in turn he may invoke and materialize Justina, the woman Cipriano yearns for.

Even the premonition of a whirlwind carries symbolic force. This occurs when the Mayor of Zalamea thinks of the wind as an augury, emblematic of the violence that will sweep away his daughter. The premonition comes in a scene of peace and plenty, while he is regarding his own ripened fields:

I went to see the fields all richly  
 heaped in piles with sheaves of grain.  
 They looked like mounds of purest gold  
 as I approached them, and the grain  
 so precious it could only be  
 assayed in heaven. The breeze  
 flows gently over them, the fork lifts  
 grain to one side while chaff falls  
 to the other; even here it seems  
 the meek make way before the strong.  
 I pray God grant me leave  
 to bring it safely to the granary  
 before a squall flings it far away  
 or a whirlwind lays it all to waste.

The ominous wind the Mayor fears, the tempest wind of Cipriano and Lucifer, and the whirlwind that casts Rosaura into the bleak

wasteland where the captive Prince is chained are the same element belittled by the impatient Don Lope, awaiting his bride across the waters at the beginning of *Secret Vengeance*:

Don Lope. . . . I'd be happier still  
if I could only fly  
away today.

Manrique. Like the wind.

Don Lope. That would not help me much.  
The wind's a sluggish element.  
But if love would only lend  
me wings, I'd be borne away  
by passion's fire. He who'd use  
the wind must go by way  
of wind's unsteady wallowings.  
But the course that Love would choose  
requires fiery wings.

Don Lope's impatience is a growing fault that will lead to raging suspicion. Fire, stirred by an unexpected wind, will in the end materialize in a flaming house in which he has just slaughtered his wife.

In *The Phantom Lady* Angela holds on to her reputation as a whirlwind because it is part of her job: she must spend a lot of time in finding ways to get through solid walls. As Cosme, the play's arch interpreter, points out, since only devils and phantoms can do this, she must be one or the other. The idea is that as long as she remains the center of a mystery she can be mercurial, magical, desirable, while those who seek her, including her dragooned lover-protector and her two brothers, appear heavy-footed, ludicrous.

Walls that separate, walls that divide, underground passageways, mazes, falls from parapets and stony heights secretly aspired to by luckless lovers—Calderón is full of such ominous emblems for crucial situations. And they are in his comedies as well as in his tragedies. Whirlwinds, fires, walls, labyrinths, confrontations in the dark are the paraphernalia of magic and mystery. They keep an audience alert and in suspense; they keep an audience diverted. Neither pure nor impure, they are theatrical devices that start by working centrifugally, moving away from the main plot interest and thematic center. Since they are used both in comedy and in tragedy, the tonal effect is neutral. But at some point in the action, the devices begin to work back centripetally, toward the main theme of the play, to uphold, to rein-

force, to extend its message and meaning. Such devices, sometimes moving outward, sometimes inward, sometimes held in suspension, become the elements of intrigue in the play. In this sense, intrigue is only a name for the constant proliferation of illusion issuing from the initial metaphor and mystery, such as the phantom lady. "Was that a lady or a whirlwind?" frames the theme of the play. It also sets up the metaphoric base of operations from which all complications flow.

To speak of the intermingling of violent romantic actions (that is, potentially tragic elements) with comic elements is nothing new. Anyone who has heard of the Renaissance critical insistence on decorum also knows how far the great writers of the age strayed from it. Stated baldly the doctrine says that elegant and low styles should never share company in the same work. Yet there is the famous Porter at the gate in *Macbeth*, the notorious play within a play in *Hamlet*, and so forth. More than one example of such disparity appears in almost every play of Calderón's. The tragicomedy, in fact, is the typical Renaissance contribution to the drama, the mixed type that grew out of the morality, the mystery play, the fabliau of the Middle Ages, and Seneca's revenge play.

There are other and wider implications about the mixing of style. They bear upon the particular ways Calderón works out his themes; but something should first be said about the general matter of what gets mixed in the process.

The mixture of genres and the mixture of tones were exploited in all Renaissance art and literature. When St. John of the Cross wants to express religious joy he uses the symbolism of pastoral poetry with that of the *Song of Solomon*. Christ is a shepherd sacrificing himself for his loved one, the human soul; or Christ is the bridegroom while the human soul is the bride. This intermingling of profane and divine love is a commonplace in Renaissance poetry. It shows not only that Eros is being rediscovered but also that the glorification of God is being envisaged in a new way. Along with the feeling that Hell is being defeated, man finds himself aggrandized; the human personality begins to understand its potentialities in a suddenly expanding world. Lope de Vega writes a play about Columbus and the discovery of the new world and the play glows with a wonder at and a fascination by a new kind of man, the Indian. But a hundred years before that there is the heretical cry of the lover in the *Celestina*—"In your beauty I see the glory of God!" There are the Faust plays, discovering that the



power and range of human intellect transcend God's. The same experimental view brings a clash of motives and loyalties and makes for the strangely eruptive energies in Calderón's plays, with their strangely contradictory themes and resolutions. The feeling for an exploratory view emerges in the triumph of individual human values in many of Calderón's plays. *Life is a Dream* and *The Phantom Lady* propose a new sense of possibility, a new way out of the bleak fate of the hero trapped in the honor quandary. The avenging man, the sufferer, need not be dragged down with the victim he hardly even knows; he need not be blinded by society's legalistic impositions on his conscience. The new dispensation brings a human order that seems to overcome the mechanical, inhuman order that devastates life in the revenge and wife-murder plays.

With a human order goes an overwhelming interest in speculative doodling, strange physical and psychological combinations, paradoxes. This is typical of the baroque style in painting and literature. Essays, poems, portraits, emblematic and allegorical designs treat the monstrous and the fatuous, the mirror and the object, the painting and the reality, the grotesque and the ideal, dream and reality, faith and doubt, the rare and the plausible. There is a serious popular literature of the journey, of shipwrecks and far-off lands, of werewolves, astrology and witchcraft. Cervantes, a scrupulous craftsman, speaks of having to create the sense of a disordered order, so as to bring about greater verisimilitude in art. Like Calderón who followed him and picked up certain of his themes and tricks, Cervantes was interested in discovering human beings in all their complexity, not in misleading or cheapening their nature as readers or as audience. He believed that if the absurd were to be accounted for, it must be made to balance and fill out the real, so as to make it more lifelike. For the absurd, according to Cervantes, becomes more credible the more it is documented—as though everyone had accepted it, as though it were not absurd at all.

*Admiratio* is the term used in the seventeenth century to describe the absurd made fictively plausible; it is thus the third aim of art along with pleasure and instruction. Alonso López Pinciano discusses *admiratio* in a well-known treatise of the time, *Filosofía antigua poética* (1596), a book Cervantes probably knew. The term embraces all elements of the wondrous and the marvelous in language, characterization, and action. When *admiratio* is controlled it allows for a channeling of inventive energy so that the unexpected, the incon-

ceivable, the patently crazy thing, becomes feasible instead of bathetic or ludicrous. *Admiratio* would induce awe, the pleasurable gasp of surprise, something between tears and laughter. Speculating on this in a famous passage of the *Quixote*, Cervantes observes,

The falsehood is better the truer it looks, and the more it contains of the doubtful and the possible the more pleasing it is. Fabulous plots must be wedded to the reader's intelligence, and written in such a way that the impossible is made easy, enormities are smoothed out, and the mind is held in suspense, amazed, gripped, exhilarated, and entertained. (I, 47; III 349)

In Cervantes and others, but particularly in Calderón, this shows up as an aspect of style in the hyperbolic address to ladies: the Petrarchan compliment, the absurd and delirious comparison. In effect the woman is put on a pedestal and in orbit around the moon, as though being convinced of this would benumb her and make her easy prey to any seducer. Magically, as in an ecstasy, she must be verbally transformed and made to stand outside herself, not knowing herself. The swain, intoxicated by his own hyperboles, also seems not to be there; he is a disembodied mouthpiece, a medium for the supernal message he is delivering. Nobody human can rape an angel; the Bible tells us—unless the angel is so caught up in being an angel that it isn't watching.

Calderón's romantic ladies know all about mysteries that turn into miseries. They know that to be overpraised is to be dehumanized. They have all read *Don Quixote* and know that Dulcinea is what she is, not what the Knight says she is. To save themselves they must cut short the swain's hyperbolic compliment. They must continually fight to make a human confrontation possible, so as not to be victimized by idolatry, whose real name is seduction.

Calderón makes other stylistic and technical uses of *admiratio*. He exploits the double-talking sonnet, addressed simultaneously to two different people and carrying appropriately different messages. As a dramatist he is perhaps best known for the heavily freighted soliloquy which indulges in the fantastic pyrotechnics of conscience-display, that incidentally sets forth the hideous legalities of the honor quandary. There are the labyrinthine exits and entrances, underground tunnels, darkened passages through gardens and nunneries, where anyone can turn out to be somebody else. There are the repartées, the

verbal pirouettes of the servant gagsters. Calderón's *graciosos* are great technicians. Since they are never emotionally engaged, they can be expert strategists and escape artists. As such they are the counterparts in action to the hyperbole-fixation swains, their masters.

*Admiratio* is also involved when the conventions of courtly love and the honor code are used in order to undermine them. Cervantes comes readily to mind. Mocking conventions, which he is half in love with, forces a confrontation with them. This gives an unexpected, sympathetic insight into them. Dulcinea is appalling when she appears in the flesh. It does not matter how much we favor realism, we find ourselves reneging, preferring the Knight's luminous hallucination to the real thing. Compared to the gross peasant girl, Quixote's image is warmer, more generous and believable, even when the reader is allowed to see through it, with the author's complicity. Already half-disenchanted, but not admitting it directly, the Knight responds in this way to the Duchess' request for a description of his lady:

"If," he said, "I could but take my heart out and lay it before your Highness's eyes, upon a plate here on this table, I should be able to spare my tongue the trouble of telling what is scarcely to be conceived; for in my heart your Excellency would see her fully portrayed. After all, why should I undertake to describe and depict, point by point and feature by feature, the beauty of the peerless Dulcinea? That is a task that should be laid upon other shoulders than mine, being one worthy of the brushes of Parrhasius, Timanthes, and Apelles and of the chisel of Lysippus; artists such as they should preserve that beauty in pictures, in marble, and in bronze, and a Ciceronian and Demosthene eloquence are called for to eulogize it." (II, 32; Putnam translation)

The encomium works and takes us in even while we share with the author the knowledge that we are being hoodwinked. Perhaps in some sense the romantic is always anticipating the ironic, and the ironic, after it has done its work, looks lingeringly over its shoulder at the romantic. At any rate, in this instance, as elsewhere in Cervantes, it would seem that the romantic and the ironic, much more than anticipating each other, are actually interchangeable. The notion has interesting implications for tragicomedy.

One way of describing the heroic fault in Calderón's wife-murder plays is to say that it is the result of tragic *hamartia*. The hero, usually

the husband, is a strong or influential man so blinded by credulity that he is unable to see his own shortcomings. This blindness not only makes him vulnerable but also leads to a course of action that ends in multiple murder and often suicide. (Think of *Othello*, Shakespeare's most "Spanish" play in this regard, and you have a good example.) In *Secret Vengeance* the injured man, the husband who thinks himself wronged on circumstantial evidence, is triply impelled to his revenge. First, because the blight on his honor (whether real or imagined cannot finally be determined) must be redressed in blood since that is required by the honor code. Secondly, because others may begin to wonder at his uneasiness, the revenge must be accomplished in secret; that way the murder will look accidental, if it is revealed at all. Thirdly, because as a possibly cuckolded man he must fight another man's usurpation of his wife as well as the imagined imputations which the wife-theft brings up regarding his own potency. But even after taking his revenge he has no satisfaction. He is reduced in stature, he is almost dead. What is possibly worse, he looks ludicrous.

Now if we think of the cuckolded husband in comedy, say in Cervantes' interlude, *The Jealous Old Husband*, we see that the ludicrous core of the situation is precisely the element that the dramatist exploits. There is the characteristic *hamartia*, the same failure at work as in the serious play; and the hero is also an elderly man, like Don Lope of *Secret Vengeance* and Don Juan of *The Painter of his own Dishonor*. Like them he is blind to the fault he passionately regards as a strength in himself. Like them he thinks he is invulnerable to seducers of his wife but he has a wife whom others know will deceive him. But in the Cervantes interlude the discovery of deception never comes to the old man. The dramatic irony prevails, the husband is kept in the dark. This is one way of punishing him for his cupidity. The implication is that he cannot be further reduced by the revelation of his wife's unfaithfulness. Also, if this were revealed he would have to embark upon a course of revenge—something he would be incapable of doing. It would also be out of character for him to do so—we would have to take him seriously. He is ludicrous and must be laughed at. By the same token, we *cannot* laugh at the strong man who believes himself wronged and seeks vengeance; in accomplishing his vengeance he punishes himself. Yet in being revealed and reduced by his own blindness, he subsists in the same world as the comic cuckold.

Beyond this crossroad, where the comic and tragic meet, we seem to be headed toward middle-class realism, the beginning of the modern novel. Pathos displaces laughter or tears as we watch the downward progress of the weakened hero, victimized by circumstance, who becomes the class-determined, anonymous, naturalistic man.

But if this later deterministic hero develops at one end of the tragicomic spectrum, then the personified hero, the abstract man of the moralities, is his ancestor at the other end. For it is out of the church plays and the *commedia dell'arte*, with their simpler typological characters, that the Renaissance heroes emerge. Dramatists, in order to cope with a more sophisticated view of experience, adapt the earlier conventions in the comic subplot as well as in the idealized behavior of the hero in the main plot. In the subplot the exemplary action of the main plot is underlined by opposition. But the trouble is that the opposition is rigidly maintained throughout; it is never bridged. And this is not lifelike. The reconciliation of opposites, so often sought in tragicomedy, occurs fully perhaps only in *Don Quixote*, which is a novel and not a drama at all. There, what begins with the typical kind of splitting, on the allegorical principle that characters represent oppositional or complementary moral elements, is turned around; what follows is a merging, even a transposition, of types—as Sancho becomes more like Quixote and Quixote more like Sancho.

Something of this sort of merging goes on, though not completely, in Calderonian comedy, possibly with Cervantes as the model. In *The Phantom Lady*, Manuel, the master, and Cosme, the servant, infect one another as they never would be permitted to do in a serious play. Cosme's effect is to weaken his master by playing on his superstition, his fear of ghosts, devils, women—in a word, by attacking the rational faculty that Manuel is so proud of possessing. (And incidentally, it is just this rational faculty, overused and all-encompassing, that becomes the weapon the honor hero turns against himself in the revenge plays.) But now Angela, at the other extreme, works by a mixture of white magic, love, and counter-rationality, almost like a Shavian heroine, to inoculate Manuel and to free him from an honor quandary into which she too has almost fallen. He must accept her, her gifts and her other remarkable attentions, in order to save them both. But because he is kept ignorant he cannot understand what is at stake until the end of the play. Once he has accepted her everything

and everyone are magically reconciled. Honor is regained, the incest threat is put down, and the phantom lady becomes a real woman. This is the triumph of love.

Things turn out rather differently in *The Mayor of Zalamea* and in *Life is a Dream*. The emphatic reconciliation at the end does not involve everybody. The mayor's daughter, because she has been raped and the culprit legally killed, has no other way but to end her life in a nunnery. The point of honor is what her father gains when the king justifies and even rewards him for garroting the gentleman seducer. In the other play, Rosaura does not marry Segismundo, who loves her, but the count, her cousin, who wronged her. Also the ring-leader of the revolt, which Segismundo successfully led against his father, the king, is punished and permanently imprisoned in the tower. In tragicomedy someone must pay the price of freedom. We recognize this is no black-and-white morality but the dim gray sound of the problematical, which is much closer to human experience and possibility.

The ground in Calderonian drama is not always dim and gray. We have seen that it can be luminous and scintillant too. In fact, once a truly human order is discerned as struggling to assert itself, then the degree of its triumph may be measured by the type of situation or character alternative that is set up in the plays. This generally works itself out according to one of the three principal solutions we have been noting in the plays all along here.

First, there is the pastoral solution. Though provisional and incomplete, it indicates a new view of possibility in allowing the individual conscience to assert itself against the social stratifications of class or rank. This is what the victory means when it comes to the Mayor of Zalamea; a peasant may josh a *comendador* of Spain, as an equal, and speak to an emperor of Spain, man to man, and justice will be awarded him even under the tyrannical dispensation of the honor code.

Secondly there is the romantic solution. This is somewhat more complete, perhaps because it is more elusive—a case of poetic justice being made to seem superior to the legal variety. It works in *The Phantom Lady* as the reconciling principle of love and of woman's right to assert her own choice in love. Still, the victory comes only after everyone has narrowly escaped the voracious claims of honor, summarily and magically appeased at the end.

There is, finally, the ironical solution that turns up mainly in the revenge plays. Here the typical hero is cut down by his own blindness

and machinations, impelled by the insane legalities of a code which demands an eye for an eye. And here the tyranny of honor is most openly criticized. In the other solutions honor is used and temporarily assuaged, though it is indicted as the disrupter of the human order. There, in effect, honor is put to work upholding the newly emergent principles which the human order nourishes. Where the justified peasant and the triumphant woman rise in stature, the anguished hero-victim sinks, even to absurdity. Peasant and woman seem to gain their identities, the honor victim only loses his.

The strangeness of honor in Calderón is that it brings out of an incredibly negative code of behavior, out of a tightly restrictive law, an unexpected redemptive effect—the vision of a totally different possibility. By using honor in this way Calderón seems to allow humanity the minimum choices it needs to overcome the oppressions of an outworn, dehumanized system it could otherwise not cope with. And in making for a *reductio ad absurdum*, Calderón goes much beyond what his puzzled critics call the ludicrous effect of tragicomedy. For the strangeness behind the strangeness in his use of honor is that he thereby establishes a dramatic way of pointing toward the difficult ascension of the human, the discovery of what it means to be a human being.

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*Charles East*  
FISHERMAN'S WIFE

It was in the spring of the year that Ada noticed something wrong. The river was high and the sky was overcast. Any afternoon she could see the water from the house and she could see Jimson by the river bluffs, his shoulders hunched into the wind, walking there. His back to her; he watched the far bank, the bar to the north, and to the south the mud flat where the willows grew. The spring before, the spring before that, he would have been busy with his lines and nets, mending traps, caulking his boats. He built his own boats, painted them himself, named them pretty names like the *Beulah* and the *Wandering Jew*. And one he called the *Ada Dee*. Spring was a busy time of year. The smell of tar was in the air, and Jimson came in tired and slept hard. But not this spring. This spring his back was to her; he watched the far bank. Maybe it's the boy he's thinking of, she told herself. Maybe blaming himself. If he hadn't let the boy go work on the dredges. . . . Once he said that. And she said, "You couldn't've stopped him nohow." Nobody could. The boy had a mind of his own—got that from Jimson. He went off and worked on the dredges, and one day up near Talahaw, trying to clear a line, he slipped.

He came up once, they said. He came up and he tried to swim, but the current there was strong. He went back under. And Jimson went up to Talahaw to help them look for him. For almost a week he was gone, and all that time she waited in the little house that they had lived in first. She could see it through the window there, beyond the berry bushes and this side of the bluffs where Jimson walked. He had brought her downriver from Cairo in a skiff and he had built that house for her. It was one room and it was built high, so you could see the coal barges and the sternwheelers, and when Jimson was out running his nets, out in the channel there, she could see him, too. But after the boy was born he built this other house—three rooms and a

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porch, and screens for the windows and a tin roof for the rain to beat against. Now the screens were out and the roof was dull with rust.

So she watched Jimson walking by the bluffs, and she wondered what it was that bothered him. Something I done, she thought. Not been good to him. But I been as good as I knew how, she thought—come way off down here with him, looked after him, let him when he wanted to. Only now he never wanted to. “What’s the matter?” she said. “Nothing,” he said. “Something,” she said. And then he took to going into town. Not often. Maybe once a week. One night he didn’t come home at all, and when she asked him why, he wouldn’t say, just turned his back on her. Then she knew. It was as if she had known a long time, and in a way she was glad. It was nothing I done, she thought.

One morning he went out and walked and he came back in again. He changed his clothes. “Where are you going?” she said. “In town?”

He stood there, his shoulders hunched, looking out the door. In a minute he said, “I’m liable to be gone a day or two.”

“That long?” she said.

“You need anything?”

“No,” she said.

He kept standing there. There was something on his mind. “Ada Dee,” he said, “if I was to . . . .” He turned. “If I was to bring somebody back with me . . . .”

She looked at him.

“You know what I mean?”

Maybe so, she thought.

“A man . . . .”

A man needs somebody young, she thought. She was younger than him once. She was younger than him when he brought her down from Cairo in a skiff.

“He can’t help himself.”

She didn’t let on that she heard. Maybe she didn’t.

“You going to be here when I get back?” he said.

She started to say, “I always am, ain’t I?”

“You going to be here?”

She nodded.

That was all he said. He picked up his hat from off the chair and went out the door and down the steps and got in the pickup. Ada stood there watching him. The last she saw of him he was headed up

the levee side, going fast, and he blew the horn to signal his good-by.

He was gone three days, and two of those it rained. On the second day, in the rain, she moved. She got some of her things together and carried them down the path through the berry bushes to the other house. She swept it out and made the bed and she built a fire in the grate to take the dampness out, for the April wind was cold. During the night the rain stopped and in the morning the sky was blue. She got the rest of her things and carried them down the path to the house. Then she fell across the bed, and for the first time since Jimson left she slept without remembering.

She awoke hearing her name called. It was Jimson's voice. She went to the door and opened it.

"I been calling you and calling you," he said, coming down the path.

"I was asleep," she said. Her eyes burned.

"What you doing down here?"

"I come down here yesterday," she said. She knew he had looked for her.

"Come up to the house," he said. "I want you to meet somebody."

Behind him, on the steps of the other house, she saw the girl, saw her hair, yellow in the sun. "In a minute," she said. She went and combed her hair, hunted for a mirror she could look into. She found a piece of one. But she could only see her eyes. Her brother Fred used to say she had the bluest eyes. She cocked her head. She held the mirror out from her. She could almost see her face in it.

"You coming?" Jimson called. He was by the steps still. She went outside and up the path with him. Neither of them spoke until they reached the other house. Ada walked slow. Sometimes he got ahead of her. "I called you and called you," he said.

"Did you?" she said.

They went up the steps. The girl was on the porch.

"This here's Eddris," Jimson said.

The girl smiled timidly. "Hidy-do," she said.

"Eddris?"

"Yes, ma'am," the girl said.

Ada looked at her. "You're pretty," she said. "You got pretty hair, and I see your feet are little."

"Thank you, ma'am."

She turned to say something to Jimson, something about a girl ought to have little feet, but Jimson was gone. She saw him going

down the steps. "Eddris," she said again. "That's a pretty name." And she thought: he'll name a boat for her.

"I never liked it," the girl said.

"You didn't? You know how Jimson got his name?" Ada waited until she shook her head. "His daddy was named Jim and they got to calling him Jim's son. Jimson. You know how they call people."

The two of them stood there.

"Don't you want a peach?" the girl said.

"No, thank you," Ada said.

"We bought a bushel at a place up near Rena Lara."

"This time of year?"

The girl nodded. "Must've brought them in from Florida."

"You live up near Rena Lara?"

"No, ma'am. I come from out the other side of Pace. My daddy . . . you know him. Lige Moore. He used to farm the old Grimmett place."

"Oh, yes," Ada said.

"I was born out there."

"You're mighty young," Ada said.

"Yes, ma'am."

"When I come here . . . ." She saw Jimson out among the nets. "I was no older than you. The river was . . . ." She pointed. "Way out yonder where you see those stobs. You see those stobs?"

The girl nodded.

"It was way out there. You see where it's cut away at the bluffs? One day it'll run right under us. You wouldn't think so, would you?"

The girl shook her head. She was looking out toward the river.

"Only I don't guess we'll be here then."

"When?" the girl said.

"When the river's where we are."

"I mean, how long you guess . . . ?"

"Oh," she said. "I don't know. Maybe a hundred years." Or a night, she thought. She remembered the dream. There was nothing here. She was standing on the levee and there was nothing here, not even this house. Just the river. And she remembered the night Jimson came back from Talahaw. *You didn't find him?* she said. And he said, *No.* And she said, *I want my boy.* And he said, *He won't never come up, Ada Dee. He's down there in one of them eddies and he won't never come up.* And she said, *Never?* And he said, *Never.* "Well, I got to be getting back . . . ." she said.

The girl looked at her.

"You need anything?"

"No, ma'am."

"Well, if you do . . . ."

"I wish you'd take some of these peaches," the girl said.

Ada shook her head. She's wanting me to take something, she thought, and I'm wanting her to take something. She stood there on the steps and she could see Jimson looking up at her. She was almost to the path when she heard him call to her to wait. She stopped.

"I like to forgot this," he said. It was black and it was shaped like a hatbox. He lifted it out of the back of the pickup.

"What?" she said.

He set it on the ground. "Open it."

"You," she said.

He stooped and opened it.

"A Victrola," she said.

"I got you some records, too," he said.

She ran her fingers across the bright green felt on the turntable, saw her face, and then his, caught in the nickel-plated arm. "Give it to her," she said.

"I got it for you," he said. "You always wanted one."

"I know I did."

"Well, it's yours."

Over his shoulder she saw the girl standing on the porch. "No," she said. "Give it to her." She started to say, "It gets lonesome here." But Jimson never knew what lonesome was.

He closed the Victrola and picked it up, stood there in the path.

"Anyway," she said, "I wouldn't have time to play it."

He looked at her. "When I got back here and didn't find you . . . ." he said. He kept looking at her. "I thought you'd gone someplace."

"Where?"

"I don't know."

One day I guess I will, she thought.

It was a bright moonlight night. The way Ada lay she could lift herself and look out of the window toward the other house. She could see the light in the back room and she could hear the Victrola music, quick-step music she lost the time to, and then there would be a spell of quiet before the music started in again. The land was lit by moonlight as far as she could see. There was the house, and there

were the nets, and the cottonwoods, and behind her, if she looked, the river bluffs. She knew how the river looked at night when the moon was out and the clouds were scudding across the sky, how the water lapped against the bar, how the bar was warm in the moonlight, and how toward dawn it cooled. How white it was. How lonesome, too.

"Here's where we'll sleep tonight," Jimson had said. He caught the skiff and pulled it up the bar. Then he took the blanket out and spread it on the sand, and he pulled her down beside him there. But the moon was in her eyes, and the sound of water lapping in her ears. She began to cry.

"What's the matter?" he said. "You scared?"

"A little," she said.

"There's nothing to be scared of." He caught her hand. "You sorry you come away with me?"

"No," she said.

"Want me to take you back?"

She shook her head.

"You sure?"

"I couldn't go back now," she said, "even if I wanted to."

"Wonder what your papa said—you running off with me."

A Shanks, she thought. *I hear you been runnin' around with one of them Shanks*, her papa said. And she said, *Just because . . .* And he said, *You gonna end up with one of them towheaded babies, livin' back of the levee. You ever hear of a Shanks that amounted to nothin'?*

"Plenty," she said.

Jimson smiled.

"How far we come?" she asked. They had lost sight of Cairo just as the sun came up.

"A good way," he said.

"How far we got to go?"

"Three . . . four days," he said. "We'll follow the river down, and we'll look for us a place."

"What is it about the river?" she said.

"What?" he said.

"A Shanks can't leave the river . . . ."

"No," he said, "it's in his blood, I guess."

Ada thought of Jimson, the river bar and the moonlight, and of those she left behind: her papa and her brother Fred, her Aunt Della, the one-legged man her aunt was married to. He liked his liquor. Her

papa did too. He'd get drunk and he'd come home cussing, saying things he didn't mean. Only Fred said he did. *That old man*, he said. *One day that old man . . .* And the boy. It was strange now how she thought of him, like somebody she had never known, or had known but forgotten. A face. Not even a face. Like the touch of wind or the sound of water on a bar. If they had found him, she thought, if there was someplace I could go to . . . take some flowers to . . . a place the other side of the levee . . . but the river . . .

In the distance she heard the Victrola music and the sound of laughter, a young girl's laughter. She lifted herself on her elbows and looked out of the window toward the other house. The moon was bright. It inched its way across the sky, across her window and the sill, and when it touched her arm she drew back, pulled her arm away, for the touch of it was cold.

That night Ada had a dream. She was standing on the levee. She had stood there in her other dreams. And this house . . . the other house . . . there was nothing here. Just the river. She wondered where Jimson was. She had waited so long. And suddenly she knew what she was waiting for, what she had always waited for, and she came awake and cried out, "No!" I ought to tell him, she thought, and she got into her clothes and started up the path to the other house. But there in the moonlight she stopped. He'd only laugh at me, she thought.

When she awoke in the morning Jimson was out caulking his boats. The other mornings he was up early, and he was out late into the afternoons. She watched him from her window there, and sometimes when she watched, the girl was beside him or behind him, but close to him, or running to the house to bring him things. He worked hard and when the men from town came to rent his boats, his boats were ready, and when the river dropped, his nets were tarred and his boxes strong enough to hold the fish that he would catch. I'll tell him yet, she thought.

Ada had never found time before; she had been kept busy doing things. Now there was nothing to do. She got up in the morning. She went to bed at night. One day she sat down and wrote a letter to her brother Fred. She never knew where Fred was, except Cairo maybe, but she wrote him anyway, told him what she was doing, which was not much to tell, asked him what had become of him, what had become of her papa, her aunt Della and the one-legged man her aunt was married to. *I guess all dead*, she wrote. And she wrote a P.S.: *I*

hope not. The letter was returned. She folded it and put it away, and she told herself that one day she would write to the postmaster in Cairo and ask him Fred's address.

The things she needed Jimson brought. Once, sometimes twice, a week he went into town and he brought her her things first, stood at the steps and called to her, and when she answered came inside. "You all right?" he would say.

"I'm all right," she would say.

"You need anything?"

She would shake her head.

"That chimney," he said once. "It needs fixing. I got to fix it before winter comes." And he looked at her like he remembered how cold it got there in the little house they lived in first.

She wanted to say, "I had a dream . . . ."

But he said, "You don't never come up to the house."

"No," she said.

"Why not?"

"Oh," she said, "I get busy . . . ."

One evening when she came out to get a breath of air he was standing in the path. He had stood there other times like that. "Hot," she said.

"Yeah," he said.

"It's lightning. Maybe we'll get some rain."

He kept standing there. In a little while he came and sat down on the steps by her. Neither of them spoke. They just sat there, the way they used to sit. Sometimes they wouldn't say anything for an hour or more, and it would rain, or the baby would cry, or the mosquitoes would get so bad they had to go inside. And she thought: what if I had never come off down here with him? *You gonna end up with one of them towheaded babies*, her papa had said, *livin' back of the levee* . . . . And she thought: if I had it all to do again . . . .

The girl on the porch was calling him.

"All right," he called. He got up. "Well," he said, "I guess I got to be going . . . ."

"Jimson . . . ."

He turned and looked at her.

"Be careful," she said.

"What you mean?"

"I mean, be careful."

He laughed. "Ada Dee . . . ."

“When you go out on the river,” she said. And she knew it didn’t matter. She had told him but it didn’t matter.

That was in July.

One August noon two of the men who came to rent the boats brought the word. They came skimming across the water to the landing out of sight and up the bluffs between the cottonwoods. They brought the word to the girl, and Ada heard her holler. She heard her holler and she went up the path through the berry bushes to the other house. It’s over, she thought. She didn’t even ask; she knew.

The men told her. Jimson was pulling a net, out in the channel there, and he fell out of the boat and went under and never came up. They figured he got tangled in the net, and they hauled it in, but they never found a sign of him. He never came up, so they figured maybe an eddy took him under, spun him around and held him there, close to the bottom in the undertow.

The men told her; then they left to go for help. They went to get the men and the hooks, to grapple in the river until the sun went down. Ada tried to talk to the girl, tried to tell her things. “You’re young,” she said. “Sooner or later . . . .” But the girl cried harder, and after a while Ada walked away. She walked down the steps, and the sun was bright, and she stood there listening. Nobody called her. Nobody said, “Ada Dee.” She went and got her things and put them in a cardboard box. She changed her dress. Then she tucked the box under her arm and went out the door and up the path, past the house, and up the road toward the levee and the other side. She heard somebody calling her. She looked back. The girl was on the porch, calling her to stay, but she had told the girl all there was to tell, and the road ahead was long. She reached the top of the levee and saw the world from there, the fields and the grove of mock orange trees, and she went down again, to the cattle gap and across it to the gravel road beyond. She walked slower now, for the river was out of sight. And as she walked the men came in the pickup trucks. The truck in back stopped, and the men who had gone for help called out to her, “Mrs. Shanks . . . .”

She turned and looked at them.

“Have they found him yet?”

She shook her head. The dust blew over her.

“We got to get on up there and start looking if we’re going to find him by sundown.”



"You're not going to," she said.

The men looked at her. "How come?"

"They never do," she said.

They tipped their hats. The truck started up. A voice in motion called to her, "Where you going?"

"Cairo," she said.

CHARLES EAST'S most recent publication is a volume of short stories, *Where the Music Was*, issued by Harcourt, Brace & World this past September. His stories have appeared in *Mademoiselle*, *Yale Review*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, and *Antioch Review*. After holding editorial positions with *Collier's*, the *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate*, and *Baton Rouge State-Times*, Mr. East is now assistant director and editor of Louisiana State University Press.



*Winston Weathers*

## MONDAY NIGHTS AT MRS. GASPERI'S

Movy was a clown. Oh, I don't mean a clown by profession, like in a regular circus, but he was certainly a clown in every other respect. You know what I mean. Making everybody laugh all evening whenever we went down to Mrs. Gasperi's on Monday nights to drink.

Movy would be there on Monday nights, right out in the middle of things, telling all those bawdy jokes or imitating the cop down at the corner on Clarence Street or any such thing, all of it lots of fun, and you were glad Movy was there, letting go that way. We always went down on Mondays because we knew he would come down to drink and he made life better, and brighter too, the way he looked at it. It was all a joke to Movy. He said that himself, how it was all a joke and you might as well have fun, you know, and laugh and sing and stand on your head if you had to and just let go like that. "Life is bubbles, bubbles, bubbles," Movy would say. "Drink to it, boys, drink to it!"

And Mrs. Gasperi adored Movy. "He's like wine," she would say. "Or champagne! You can get drunk on Movy. God if you can't do that! He's such an utter fool!"

Movy would come down out of the darkness of Clarence Street and stand for a minute on the stairs that led down to Mrs. Gasperi's. Then he'd throw his straw hat sailing down on to one of the tables, then come leaping after it, and he would throw his big arms around Mrs. Gasperi and cry, "Ah, my chérie, where have you been all my life? Tell me now, where have you been!" And all the time he'd be making ugly faces at Dr. Pratt who would be sitting off to himself trying to read the newspaper. Or Movy would start winking at you and the way Movy would wink was hysterical, it was so funny, you just died laughing. And then Movy would let go of big Mrs. Gasperi and walk over to Dr. Pratt and flip him on the ear, and Movy would put the money in the juke box and Mrs. Gasperi would set up the drinks and it was always like that on Monday nights down there. You were glad to be there out of the darkness of Clarence Street and you were happy be-

cause of Movy, because Movy never made you mad or embarrassed, but always seemed to be saying, "See how silly we all are! We're in this together! I'm silly for you! I'm silly because I like you and I want you to see how stupid I am!"

And Mrs. Gasperi would urge him on. "Now, Movy," she would say, "look like a dog!" Or Mrs. Gasperi would say, "Now, Movy, do us the ballet dance!"

We had wonderful times, you bet, with Movy acting the clown all the time, Movy with his straw hat and his yellow sweat shirt and the khaki pants, Movy who was so big and had muscles because he worked in the brewery doing something or other like carrying the kegs or something like that, Movy coming down to Mrs. Gasperi's to drink it down and make us happy, his blond hair cut so short he was almost bald, not really, but like a soldier or a sailor with a crew cut, Movy grinning and making faces and winking at you all the time. Movy was the clown all right, you bet, and Mrs. Gasperi's was his circus.

But something was different that one Monday night. We were all there waiting for Movy—Mrs. Gasperi and Dr. Pratt and Little Arnold and me—and we were thinking, Gee, won't it be swell when Movy gets here and we really let go. But Movy came late and he didn't throw his straw hat down the stairs but just came on down and sat off to himself at one of the tables and had Mrs. Gasperi bring him a drink and he didn't say anything but looked dreadfully solemn, a way he'd never looked before, never since I had started coming on Monday nights. It was something dreadful to see Movy like that. You didn't know what to say to anybody because you were all ready to laugh and now there wasn't any laughter and the clown wouldn't be a clown and you didn't know what to do.

Movy sat at one end of the room and the rest of us at the other. He just sat there, drinking, and staring off into space, and he wasn't winking or anything and there wasn't the slightest possibility of a smile on his face. It was terrible. It made one weak in the stomach. You know how it is when people stop being funny; they look so washed out and ugly.

"Well," said Little Arnold after awhile to the rest of us. "What's the matter with him?"

We all looked at each other. We had to face the question. Dr. Pratt cleared his throat. "Perhaps it is the state of the world," he said. "World conditions being what they are, the conflict of ideologies and so forth—"

"Are you crazy or something?" Little Arnold asked. "Movy never reads the newspapers. He isn't bright enough. He don't go in for that stuff."

"Maybe it's something at the brewery," I said. "Maybe he's lost his job."

Little Arnold grinned. "Now you're crazy. Movy's already lost five jobs this year. It never bothers him at all. You know Movy. He wouldn't let anything at the brewery bother him."

"Maybe he's drunk," suggested Dr. Pratt.

"Oh Lord," said Little Arnold. "You're raving tonight. When Movy gets drunk he gets funnier. He don't get so glum as all that. You've seen him drunk before. He's never like this."

"Well," said Dr. Pratt, "what do you think is the matter, if you're so smart?"

Little Arnold shrugged his shoulders. "How should I know? I just know what it ain't." Little Arnold just shook his head back and forth. "It's just pathetic, that's all."

But Mrs. Gasperi, who was infinitely wise about the ways of the world, scowled across the table at all of us. "Ah, you idiots!" she said. "Don't you know nothing? It's obvious." She bit her lips in remorse. "Movy's in love."

We all turned and looked at the clown. In love? Impossible. Yet—could it be? For Movy? Love is a tragedy that occurs in many lives and few can laugh themselves out of its clutches, but surely Movy could do that. Surely the clown could see that it was all bubble, bubble, bubble and would not let love do this terrible thing to him, depress him, rob him, destroy him.

Dr. Pratt leaned back in his chair and giggled, "Oh, Mrs. Gasperi, you are my darling! You think of everything."

And Mrs. Gasperi, in all her bosominess and strange, feminine glory, frowned and sighed with all the sincerity she had within her. "Yes," she said. "It's all too obvious. I've seen it before." She shook her big bushy head and sighed. "I've seen it happen before and it is always terrible."

Then we all had a drink. Even Movy, sitting there in his own little world, sitting like a stranger, not at all like good old Movy with the big smile and the big pat on the back, not at all like good old Movy, even he seemed to know the terror of it. And finally Movy got his straw hat and he went up the stairs and out into the darkness of Clar-

ence Street and we were all a little sick inside. Mrs. Gasperi cleaned off the tables. She shook her head and said again, "I've seen it before and it's always terrible."

And so that had been the beginning of it all. After we had left that Monday night, we wandered away, a little ill at ease about the mysterious ways of the world. Yet when we had gone back the next Monday night we had something of hope in our hearts, thinking maybe it was like a sickness that you got over in no time at all, and hoping and thinking that maybe Movy would be back with the good times and all the bubble, bubble, bubble and you could forget that one night and never say anything about it. We had thought that maybe Movy would come and we would all have a drink and a good laugh and that would be the end of it. We had all thought that, except Mrs. Gasperi who was a very pessimistic and very melancholy woman underneath all her glitter.

"You claim it is love," Dr. Pratt had said to Mrs. Gasperi. "You might be wrong of course. It might be something else entirely."

"You are a pig-head," Mrs. Gasperi said. "I know all about these things. I know Movy and I know what love can do to a man. It can turn him inside out. It can kill him."

"I thought love was supposed to be beautiful," Little Arnold said. "I thought it was supposed to do good things for you."

"You are thinking of sex," said Mrs. Gasperi. "Sex will do that for you. But love will destroy you. I know all about these things."

"Well," said Dr. Pratt, "I didn't think that people who laughed a lot ever fell in love."

"Oh," said Mrs. Gasperi in a sudden rage, "you are a regular eunuch! People who laugh a lot are sometimes the most susceptible. They are good natured. They get taken in."

"Well," said Dr. Pratt, "I never thought it would happen to Movy."

But when Movy had come at last we knew it was worse than ever before—not the clown at all, but the corpse of the clown, and we had to stay in the same room with it and watch it drink and sit there, staring into space, and it wouldn't say a word, but only sigh, now and then, and roll its eyes and sigh again and slouch down in the chair, holding the drink in its hands, and after awhile get up and go with a very gentle and solemn, "Good night, Mrs. Gasperi," and "Good night, Dr. Pratt," and "Good night, Little Arnold," and even to me he would say good night, and we all knew that Movy had it bad,

somehow, someway, and all the laughter was done, like spring and summer and autumn are over, and all there is is the winter, very cold and very cutting and very callous. And when Movy had left and Mrs. Gasperi went to wipe off the table, she stood over it and then started beating her fists on the top of it, she was in such a rage.

“Oh,” cried Mrs. Gasperi. “Some wench has a hold of him for sure! Look at this! Look at what he has done.” And we went over and saw where Movy had secretly carved a little heart deep into the varnished top of the table, and mingled with it in the wood was another heart, the two hearts intertwined.

“It is love,” said Dr. Pratt.

“Oh, God,” cried Mrs. Gasperi. “I’ve been saying that all along.”

“Well,” said Little Arnold, “I hope he doesn’t come anymore. It depresses me.”

“Some wench is doing it,” muttered Mrs. Gasperi. “I know all about these things.”

Then we had a drink and tried to forget it all. But we couldn’t really forget it and the Monday nights grew worse. Now it was so common and tawdry and dull, one hardly wanted to go down to Mrs. Gasperi’s on Monday night. Everything had grown so difficult and dull down there, and the whiskey didn’t have any taste to it at all, and one just sat down there and drank beneath the glaring lights. You went down to Mrs. Gasperi’s though because you had to go, it was a part of one’s life and life never really changes much. We all went down there, because we couldn’t help ourselves, and there was always hope of course—you always keep hoping you’ll find whatever it is you’ve lost, keep hoping you’ll get all the loveliness and the fun and the laughter back, even though something else inside you keeps saying you’ll never get it back, it’s all over and done with, it’s the end of the season, and it’s time for winter.

And Movy had kept coming, too, as though he had to come, like the rest of us. But he didn’t ever stay long. Just came in, had a quick drink, looked around the place, then went out again. In a way, it was like he came to prove something to us, to show us he had gone to another world, to show us that the clown was dead and what were we going to do about it anyway? More and more, he seemed to be saying, “If you don’t like it you know what you can do about it.” And you know how we go back to old places to show off our stuff, saying, “See how I’ve changed and I’m not like you at all anymore, you

never did really know me, I wasn't really like that at all." Well, that's the way it was with Movy now and he never said anything, but just drank and would stare at us sometimes as though daring us to say a word about it.

And worst of all was the way Movy began to change in other ways. He stopped wearing the straw hat and he let his hair grow out, not too long, but the way most fellows wear their hair, and he began to shine his shoes, and he stopped wearing the sweat shirt and wore white shirts and you could tell that something was happening all the way through Movy like that. Then he stopped wearing the khakis and bought himself a pair of wool trousers that were always pressed with a sharp crease. Oh, it was terrible to behold such a decline. The night he wore the necktie was the worst of course, the very depths, the ultimate loss of all the glory and freedom and laughter that had been Movy. When Mrs. Gasperi saw him she had almost cried, Oh Lord, she did cry I guess, seeing him stand there at the head of the stairs in his polished shoes and his pressed trousers and the white shirt and now, at last, the necktie.

"Oh, the wench," she cried. "Oh, the wench. Don't you see what's happening, you idiots! Someone's trying to make him respectable!"

"A damn shame," said Little Arnold.

"Respectable and serious," cried Mrs. Gasperi.

"It could happen to anyone," said Dr. Pratt.

"Oh, but to Movy," cried Mrs. Gasperi. "It's like turning out the light."

And we would all agree to that, what was happening to Movy, all that laughter and all that fun, well, it was like turning out the light, and it made you want to cry while you had your drink and it made you want to go back to the good old times and forget how bad things had become. And when Movy came down into the room that night and sat there and had his drink we knew the worst at last.

"You can smell him," whispered Little Arnold.

"Scented soap," said Dr. Pratt.

Mrs. Gasperi had collapsed onto the table, burying her big, bushy head into her fat arms, and sobbing. "Scented soap, scented soap."

She could take no more. The champagne, the wine that Movy had been, had grown tasteless and terrible to her, she could not bear it, she wanted to be rid of it at last. Movy was dead at last, love had conquered him, it had compromised him, the circus was over. All that

was left to do was to bury the corpse, cover the body, let it all be over and done. The snows of winter had come at last, in spite of all, they had at last come and covered us.

So now we gathered, we knew, for the last time, on the last Monday night. It were as though it were a funeral or a wake, a wake I guess would be more the word. We had a drink. Dr. Pratt proposed a toast to the good old days, the happy days. Darkness had already fallen across Clarence street and we were sitting, solemnly, forlorn, around the big round table at the far end of Mrs. Gasperi's place, saying little, for it was a sad occasion.

"Shall we sing a hymn?" asked Dr. Pratt.

"We can't," said Little Arnold. "I forgot to bring the pipe organ."

"Well, then," said Dr. Pratt, "we shall only meditate."

"Oh, you knuckleheads," said Mrs. Gasperi. "You are a curse to me, a very curse."

We all had another drink. Dr. Pratt picked up the newspaper and started to read. We were sitting there, after the darkness had fallen across Clarence Street, and the bright lights glared in Mrs. Gasperi's place, and we did not notice the door open, but there was only the sudden spinning of a straw hat down through the room and landing there on the table before us. Mrs. Gasperi blanched, turned white. Dr. Pratt choked on his whiskey. We looked and there was Movy, the old Movy, big, dumb, good old smiling, pink-cheeked Movy standing up on the stairs and he came leaping down and he threw his arms around Mrs. Gasperi, crying, "Ah, my cherie, where have you been all my life, now tell me, where have you been?"

"Ah," cried Dr. Pratt. "The clown has come home again."

Then Movy leaned back and roared with uncontrollable laughter. It was irresistible. We could not help ourselves. We began to laugh too, at first shyly and uncertainly for we had not laughed for a long time, but it was still there in us and it came swelling up out of us, out of our stomachs and our hearts, and we let the dam break in us and we felt the laughter and the good times coming back again, delighting us, like new wine rising in us. The drinks were served around, the music played.

"It has been a great joke!" cried Movy. "How long could they last I wondered. You're stupid all of you! Didn't you see the fun of it all! Didn't you see the great fun in it?"

And Movy roared with laughter, his great body doubling up there



inside the sweat shirt and the khakis. He had even cut his hair again and he folded Dr. Pratt's newspaper into a funny hat and strutted around the room with the funny hat on. There was the clean smell of a man about him. His cheeks glowed with the flush of new life. He had risen from the death of some terrible and alien decency, and now his face flushed red and alive like the bright paint of a clown's face.

Everything was beautiful again and we drank and were very gay at Mrs. Gasperi's. Oh, what a clown Movy was that night. Movy was standing up on the table, he was laughing, bursting with laughter and making ugly faces.

"Bubbles, bubbles, bubbles, life is only bubbles," Movy was singing. "Drink to it boys, drink to it!"

"Ah," I whispered to Mrs. Gasperi, between the gales of laughter. "It was all a great joke. He's been teasing us all along! He was pretending to be dead."

But Mrs. Gasperi leaned her big, bushy head over toward me and whispered, "Do not believe him. He's a great liar. I know all about these things."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"God, you are an idiot," she said. "Can't you see? He's been jilted. The wench has deserted him."

And I turned to look at him, at wonderful Movy who had come home again to us, to sparkle through the Monday nights while darkness pressed across Clarence Street. Could it possibly be?


"Movy, my clown!" Dr. Pratt was shouting. "You are my darling!"

Little Arnold was giggling over his drink.

Mrs. Gasperi began dancing around and around with Movy. His great muscular and hairy hands were holding her. She was so glad he had come back to her, glad that the clown and the fool had come home again and that the wench had fled away and left him, and that Movy would never be respectable or serious again, but we would all be free again, and he would be like wine to her or champagne to her and one could get drunk on Movy, God knows one could.

But as I looked at Movy there, I saw within his eyes, within the bright eyes of the clown, something deep and terrifying I had never seen before in Movy. Something more terrifying than I had seen in all the weeks past, and it was like someone had turned out a light in Movy. And you know how it is when the light goes out, there is a darkness. For Movy was beginning to cry, the tears were in his eyes,

and he buried his face into his hands and all we could hear was his sobbing, "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord." And as he sank down at the table, we didn't laugh anymore. Little Arnold just shook his head, saying, "Ain't it a shame? Now ain't it a shame?"

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HOLLIS SUMMERS

THE GIFT

Somebody was bound to come before the announcement  
Got out. It was a boy who entered, as wretched  
As alone, hardly knowing the name of the year,  
And never imagining noisy worshippers  
Lined up, as if to have their pictures sketched  
Or act in a rather pretty pageant.

He had decided he was through with sheep  
And being tired and isolate and cold;  
He had left his stupid flock at the edge of town  
And scuttled dark to the stable near the Inn,  
Hoping, at least, to warm a few of his bones,  
At most, to give them full sleep.

The woman had born her baby privately—  
Her husband still searched for a friendly stranger;  
The boy, afraid, but curious as afraid,  
Waited until the woman, crying, made  
A straw comfort in the stable's empty manger.  
The boy heard the baby cry.

He knew that night, here, waited as a place  
To know. He recorded the scene as well as he could,  
The feel and sound and smell of straw and breath  
Moving and being moved. Before he left  
He looked hard at the child's dark head  
And the way his eyes fitted his face.

He returned to his sheep at once, of course, to move  
Among them, not remembering the face at all  
Even while the sky bloomed song and light  
Enough to shatter December and the very night.  
Sleepless, time and again, he could never recall  
The face, but considered love.

HOWARD MC CORD

BEING MEN & WOMEN TOGETHER

For Jo and Clarence

Being men and women together,  
Loving and breaking,  
Finding the hand wiser than the eye  
And the eye wiser than the hand,  
Knowing that joys will be taken away  
And hurts always replenished,  
Watching Saint Paul writhe, normally and morally,  
At his, or our defeat, or from it,  
(we are not sure)  
We try to grasp our properties.

In the shifting and the grave of love  
We hide the inside dark till dawn,  
Then wake to all the sour tasks  
That keep us civilized;  
Yet whatever the day gives, the night,  
Or blood, or a lover has taken away.  
For in our wretched haste to kiss  
We bite each other's lips,  
And though we cry, and plead forgiveness,  
We are nourished by the other's wound.

There is laughter at parties, and friends  
Who find the ear wiser than the tongue  
And the tongue wiser than the ear,  
Who have spent years circling the game of language,  
Which one need not play to lose.  
And what we hear as voices tell us  
We should speak to one another,  
As we should love,  
But utterly in our eyes are jeers and catcalls  
And the obscenity of silence.

There should be a pulse, a harmonic,  
A pattern of sense; but intentions warp,  
Motives suck on themselves, and I,  
A man, know the ignominy and betrayal  
My prick has led me to.  
And being man, and honest, and likely deceived,  
I pray women are led to no worse traps than I,  
That whatever screams hide in their wombs,  
Whatever flow it is they're tuned to,  
Whatever puzzle they delight to make of love,  
Their hurt may be the less.  
And may they pray this so of me.

We pray often—to God, or whatever moves—  
For quiet, for numb Saturday mornings  
And the end of hurt, for one more stinking fit  
Of happiness, one hour without  
The lurching, stumbling cretin of doubt  
Grabbing at our hands and calling *Father*,  
To forget the disgust at what we eat  
(though the taste will never be out of our mouths).

We would be loyal, deliberately choosing  
(for no reason, no reason) someone  
Out of bedlam to focus on, to invest  
As axis or center,  
But we are traitors to our own wills;  
And smile at the incredulous hurt  
That knots her face with our repeated treacheries.  
And she, in turn, watches us carefully, openly,  
In pain.

We sometimes try to speak by music, and Vivaldi,  
Henry Purcell build us walls to talk against,  
But these fall, or go out like fires, or Haydn.  
And the children disappear, little wax figures  
Melting in the years.

And then we cry.

KENNETH FIELDS

*THE DEER'S SONG*

Brown-shirt's eye  
I saw  
Along his arrow.  
Into the brush, whistling,  
It goes, behind me.

KENNETH FIELDS

*A ROADSIDE FARM*

Nothing is dry for miles around;  
The season sinks into the ground.  
The land, long dried by summer's heat,  
Now gathers moisture to the roots  
Of willow and oak, while tiny shoots  
Stiffen in cold. Through grayish light  
And scarcely visible, a train  
Enters the distance and the rain.  
The chimney of the weathered farm  
Exhales exhausted native oak  
In blue, almost immobile smoke.  
The house, the broken fence, the barn—  
The anciently assaulted farm  
Settles beneath the coming storm.

PHILIP LEGLER

*THERE IS A TERRIBLE SNOW FALLING*

At first there were letters like a first snowfall,  
A sudden down-draft, and he fell  
As if he had parachuted down and landed  
Almost softly, guiding himself in the wind.

And thinking of her, he had a compass:  
Surely he'd find the way back, his clothing  
Warm enough to keep the cold out;  
Thinking of her, he'd find the true north.

The first night, lost, he kept her in mind  
Like someone keeping his eye on a certain mountain;  
The snow seemed to stop, and the drifting,  
And he did what he could to keep warm.

Using his memory like a flashlight—  
Ask any guide or person who has been there—  
Snowblind, he found her everywhere,  
A bright spot until the batteries ran down.

Next morning the mountain seemed a mirage  
And once, days later, his spirit broken  
Like a leg or an arm wrapped in a cast of snow,  
He thought she was near, a plane circling.

Slowly the cold is deadened like a white sheet  
Drawn even more slowly over his person.  
The body, like a fur coat, isn't warm enough;  
Huddled by imaginary fires, he goes to sleep.

WILLIAM R. SLAUGHTER

A POEM FOR YOU

Believe me  
I tried  
to write  
a poem  
for you  
but from  
that room  
off the  
town square  
I heard  
the courthouse  
clock tell  
the time  
to sleep  
and like  
a fool  
I listened.

JOHN TAYLOR

POEM WITH AN IMAGE FROM TU FU

Polite intrigue behind red-painted doors  
Always renewed,  
Banquets at court are lewd.  
*The Maids of Honour are growne wild*  
The lords of folly sing. The court ignores  
The way the envoy smiled.

Hills on the frontier crouch like beasts,  
Brown in the dawn.  
Another night has gone  
Across the pass. The guard makes tea  
Over a tiny fire of dung, and feasts  
In his own company.



STUART MOSES

*THE HORSE IN THE BATHTUB*

One foot, broad, ungulate, and dark,  
Projected from the edge, wigwagging gracefully  
In tiny circles, down from which a stream  
Of water drained in drips and dropped  
Into a puddle there  
Upon the floor.

"Get out," I said, "You've soaked  
There much too long already, and you'll surely  
Wake the neighbors with the awful noise and bangs  
You make when you get out of there, just like  
You always do when you get out,  
And I won't have it, now,  
I simply won't."

But he said not a word, and sat  
Serenely there, and mocked me with an awful leer  
He uses when he wants to mock me, make  
Me feel ridiculous and foolish,  
Make me wake the neighbors  
With my shouting.

And so I went to bed, and felt  
Just miserable, for after all I might offend  
Him, talking to him in that angry tone  
Of voice, but he won't care, I'm sure,  
And soon he'll get out, dry  
Himself, and come to bed,  
And then we'll talk.

WALTER DARRING

BATON TWIRLING

The dean, I am told, once had an idea.  
That's the incredible part;  
The rest is commonplace.  
He thought that Baton Twirling (to save it)  
Might be made a science—that is:  
Instead of dogmatically  
Saying that one should do "thus" with one's  
Hands, legs, and baton,  
We should empirically  
And statistically  
Record what people—The People—actually do  
With their hands, legs, and batons.

Phys Ed balked on the grounds  
That such extensive poll-taking  
Was too difficult an assignment for young girls,  
And that though Baton Twirling  
May be an art, a profession, or a pastime,  
According to one's interests,  
It can NEV-er be a SI-untz.

The idea died in committee. But then  
So had the dean, several years ago.

Marion Montgomery  
KINGDOM BY THE SEA

EVEN MR. FARLEY'S ARRIVAL at Sunnyside was unusual! Instead of arriving on a weekend, accompanied by children or relatives who had arranged time off to get him settled, he got out of a taxi in front of the main building on Thursday morning just before lunch. He wore a dark suit and a black bow tie and carried a cane on his arm, and he walked so briskly to the front porch of the building that the taxi driver lagged behind him with the two suitcases and the valise.

"You must have gold in this one," the taxi driver said, dropping one of the bags on the porch.

"Books," Mr. Farley explained, a slight smile at the corner of his mouth. "Food for an ancient mind, my good man." He took a thin, new billfold from inside his coat and handed the man a crisp, new bill. "Keep the change."

Mrs. Maxey, the nurse and, for the past two years, manager of Sunnyside, met him at the front door.

"Mr. Farley?" she said. "I'm Mrs. Maxey. Welcome to Sunnyside."

A woman in a wheelchair watched him over the magazine she held perched on her lap.

"Mrs. Maxey," he said, removing his hat and nodding slightly, "I trust my room is ready."

"Everything is in order, as I said it would be in my letter," she said.

Mr. Farley nodded to the woman staring at him from the wheelchair, and she quickly looked back into her magazine. He turned slowly, surveying the ground and the buildings. "Sunnyside," he said. "Oh, yes, in the afternoon certainly. I see it faces westward."

"Beg pardon?" Mrs. Maxey said.

"I beg your pardon," Mr. Farley said. "It is only that I was remembering William Wordsworth's poem, 'Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye' . . . as I was driving out from the station. And our conversation somehow reminded me of his 'Stepping Westward.' You do know William Wordsworth?"

Mrs. Maxey had had ten years experience at Sunnyside, and she decided to humor him. "No," she said, "but you must tell me about him." She picked up the two bags, leaving his valise, and started toward the door.

"Oh, Madam," he said, "surely there must be a porter who can . . ."

But she was already holding the door open with her foot and maneuvering the bags through the opening. "Must have lead in these," she said.

"Books," he said. "You see, William Wordsworth is our great romantic poet, a man possessed by the fear of death, I suspect, to the extent that he continually turns to the past, to his childhood, insisting upon its joys as proof of immortality. A kind of desperate rationalization," he added, following her into the dark hallway, "actually proving nothing of the sort."

The woman in the wheelchair listened to his voice as it continued until the building swallowed up all the sound. Then she wheeled herself to the door and made her way down the hall to the dining room to be there first as the others arrived for lunch.

MR. FARLEY did not appear in the dining room until most of the plates were served, and by that time the word had gone round that he was rich, with no relatives, and an educated man. And as ages ran at Sunnyside he was said to be rather young. When he entered the doorway, everyone stopped talking. He had changed into less formal clothes, wearing now a straight tie with a Windsor knot and a light brown sport coat with dark brown trousers. His gray hair was immaculately smooth. He smiled to the room as he surveyed it, and then chose to sit between Mrs. Wilson, whose several children contributed to her upkeep at Sunnyside, and Mrs. Turner, whose son was a major in the regular army, travelling a great deal. Because of her heart condition, Mrs. Turner could not be with her son. Mrs. Wilson was a stout woman, heavily wrinkled about the neck and forehead. But she was lively, and managed most of the conversation. Mrs. Turner was quite the opposite, delicate and retiring, a woman who gave the impression of having been in her youth as beautiful as a Gainsborough painting.

Mr. Farley directed his attention to Mrs. Turner, and most of his conversation to Mrs. Wilson, and before the meal was over, Mrs. Wilson had learned two facts that would have startled any one of those present. The first was that Mr. Farley would be eighty-one years old within a few months. The other was that his were the only natural

teeth among the residents of Sunnyside. The first fact she acquired directly from him, he giving his age to her discreetly as if wishing not to reveal himself. Secretively, lest the others should hear, she protested that it could not possibly be so. The second item of information she determined privately from close observation as he smiled, which he seemed continually to do. Armed with these two items, Mrs. Wilson could hardly wait for dessert of applesauce and cream to be over so that she could retire to the sun porch to share her information. Meanwhile, she noticed, rather pleased, the expressions of mild irritation toward the newcomer on the faces of the three men who sat across and down the table from them.

But it was Mrs. Turner and not Mrs. Wilson that Mr. Farley asked to show him about the grounds in the warm afternoon sun. And to Mrs. Wilson's surprise, as to Mrs. Maxey's as well, Mrs. Turner did accompany him under the live oaks in the side yard, pointing out a Dolly Madison rose on the lawn that was beginning to bud. Those who were accustomed to resting after lunch on the sun porch watched them.

ONLY MRS. MAXEY felt uneasy, for reasons she could not at the moment formulate. But the very fact that Mr. Farley had singled out the shy Mrs. Turner so quickly disquieted Mrs. Maxey. When the couple came into the front yard, she watched out her office window as Mr. Farley picked three late narcissi from the edge of the spirea hedge and presented them to Mrs. Turner with a slight bow. Mrs. Turner hesitated, and then took them. Mrs. Maxey was so disturbed that, as they climbed the three steps to the front porch and came in the door past her open office, she turned quickly toward the file cabinet and pulled out a drawer as if she had not seen them.

IN MANY WAYS, Mrs. Turner was herself unusual. Most of the patrons of Sunnyside, even though such a select group, on first arriving sank immediately into a despair, from which they slowly emerged after about two weeks. It was a pattern constant enough for Mrs. Maxey to use as a guide in her relationship with new people. But when Major Turner brought his mother the year before, efficiently arranging her situation so that no details were neglected, Mrs. Turner did not seem disturbed emotionally. Major Turner gave Mrs. Maxey to understand that his mother suffered from a heart condition which might at any moment prove fatal, thereupon completing with her all arrangements

for burial in the event his mother should die while he was on his new three-year tour of duty in Italy. Mrs. Turner, meanwhile, was unpacking her things in her room, finally placing on the efficient white hospital dresser two photographs—one of her husband, who had died a full colonel, leaving the son he had wanted to follow after him to bear his name and profession. The other was of young Major Turner, who gave promise of dying a general at some remote point of honor, for he had gone about the business of his profession with a quiet determination. Major Turner was determined that his mother should be properly cared for in his absence.

Mrs. Maxey learned that Mrs. Turner had been well educated—reared a lady, with the refinement that suited her delicate nature and condition but which ill-suited her to the heavy life that was the colonel's. For the last ten years of the colonel's life, she had lived; quietly and alone, in a city apartment, visiting galleries, attending concerts, waiting to establish a home for her son when he finished school, should he wish a home. After her husband's death and her son's graduation from West Point, she attempted to keep a house for another ten years, but his constant moving in the line of duty and the necessary readjustments soon told. In the eleventh year, in the year he was made major, he had brought her to Sunnyside, a place remote from her girlhood home and from the spot where her husband lay buried.

But she seemed neither depressed nor tearfully unhappy. She accepted the new change quietly, remaining remote, though not aloof, from the others at the home. It was only slowly that she came closer to the others, a movement that Mrs. Maxey happily declared to herself completed, when after many Sunday afternoons alone on the grounds of Sunnyside, Mrs. Turner finally began to attend the afternoon services.

The Sunday afternoon gatherings in the recreation room were presided over by the town's ministerial association, and a variety of ministers rotated their services like doctors on weekend call. Depending upon the minister, there would be a brief reading of the scriptures, a prayer, songs from a hymnal and occasionally an inspirational talk. The gatherings were calculated to keep the residents of Sunnyside in good spirits rather than to prepare them for the inevitable, for the inevitable was so near as to be easily depressing in the eyes of the ministers.

Their singing was sometimes good, sometimes not. When two or three members were absent visiting family, or, as was more usual, were having their families visit them and walk with them on the grounds,

the volume of the singing was considerably reduced. Occasionally also one of their number would be quietly removed, having reached a state of decay that made it necessary to put him in a hospital or direct him to a mortuary to await arrangements.

But even when there was volume, the singing lacked one thing, a piano accompaniment. On one occasion, a minister brought his wife, and thereafter whenever his turn for the Sunday afternoon services came around, he returned with her. But as a rule, the singing was without accompaniment to smooth its raggedness. Slowly Mrs. Turner was drawn into the community of Sunnyside, and slowly she edged toward offering her services as pianist. She had had training as a girl, though it had been years since she had played. And she had never played the music of the hymnal.

Mrs. Maxey found her late on Sunday evening, after the others had retired, in the recreation room, softly playing "Jesus, Saviour, Pilot Me." Within two weeks, she had been persuaded to play publicly, and very shortly she began to accompany the singing regularly. Mrs. Maxey had wondered what the major would think of his mother if he could see how well she had adjusted to her new home. Pleased, she wrote him an assuring letter, but received no reply, though she knew he wrote his mother regularly once a month.

So Mrs. Maxey was understandably disturbed by the interest Mr. Farley directed to Mrs. Turner, what with the poetry reading and flowers. It was unseemly at their ages, and Mrs. Turner would be with her another year and a half at least, provided that her heart did not fail.

The effect of these developments on the other residents was immediate. All, except the two or three confined to their beds, became acutely aware that Mr. Farley was in fact wooing Mrs. Turner. A new spirit possessed them. Within a week, the cook complained to Mrs. Maxey that the food was not going as far as it should, and Mrs. Maxey watched closely. Her residents were eating it. There was no longer the rather languid air of children at chores about the dining room at meal time, but lively conversation and, if not a hearty clinking of silver on china, there was nevertheless a clinking. Mr. Selby, the retired businessman whose son and daughter visited him regularly every two weeks, became friendly toward Mr. Farley. And one or two of the other men made overtures. Mrs. Wilson was constantly at hand and as constantly talking.

After lunch, instead of the quiet rest on the sun porch as usual, several would walk in the yards, where Mr. Farley and Mrs. Turner were

nearly always to be found. Mrs. Wilson, who seemed the most interested in what she liked to call "our little affair," on two occasions heard specific and direct love talk, which she found at once amusing and touching, as she hastened to tell her listeners. One afternoon she heard Mr. Farley saying, while the two were sitting under the live oak on the stone bench by the bird bath, "How do I love thee, let me count the ways." Mr. Selby concluded when he heard this from Mrs. Wilson that Mr. Farley must be an accountant as well as a rich and learned gentleman, but Mrs. Wilson missed the joke and he went off to the recreation lounge. They heard him a little later picking out the melody of "My Old Kentucky Home." He'd never confided to any of them that he could play at all, though he did join in with a good bass at the Sunday afternoon singing.

Unfortunately, the effect of the affair on the Sunday afternoon singing was not a good one. At first Mrs. Turner continued to play but Mr. Farley never joined them. Mrs. Wilson was confident he had a good voice, but he would not be persuaded. Always, if one looked through the voile curtains of the recreation room during the service, he could be observed on the bench outside, dressed in the suit he had worn when he arrived, with the cane leaning against the bench beside him, his legs crossed. Mrs. Turner's playing had been steady and dependable, but now there entered into it an unevenness that confused most of the singers, except Mr. Selby, whose firm bass was not influenced in the least by the piano. Mrs. Turner speeded up "The Old Rugged Cross," which Mrs. Wilson repeatedly requested, to the point that they were very much aware that her interest was divided. Mrs. Maxey wasn't even sure that Mrs. Turner even knew she was being wooed, the Lord only knew toward what ends, but she did know that emotionally Mrs. Turner was becoming less settled. And then one Sunday morning at breakfast Mr. Farley made an announcement, tapping his water glass for silence.

"I hope you will forgive me for stealing your charming pianist away," he said, "but Mrs. Turner has kindly consented to go motoring with me this afternoon after lunch."

Mrs. Wilson clasped her hands in delight, and Mr. Selby said, setting his coffee cup down, "Well, well, well."

"Yes," said Mr. Farley. "We thought we might drive through the residential district, along the river, and see something of the spring gardens. Then perhaps we might have an early dinner somewhere downtown."



"Have a good time," Mrs. Wilson said to Mrs. Turner, patting her affectionately on the arm.

Mrs. Turner glanced down at her plate, the color rising to her cheeks. "We'd be happy for some of you to go with us," she said. "It's . . . ."

"Oh, no. Not at all," said Mr. Selby with mock exaggeration. "We old-timers will stay here and get our rest."

After lunch a taxi arrived at the front door and Mrs. Turner and Mr. Farley went out, he holding her arm down the steps. When they got into the taxi and the driver had closed the door, Mr. Farley smiled and tipped his hat toward the faces at the windows. The taxi drove off leisurely toward the city.

That afternoon the singing was very melancholy for Mrs. Wilson. The young minister sang lively enough, waving his hand to keep time for them. But the piano was silent against the wall. Only Mr. Selby's bass continued steadily. He, himself, was aware for the first time in several off-Sundays that he would not see his son and daughter that afternoon. After the service in the recreation room, he went out on the sun porch, only to find that all the chairs were taken. Restless, he walked in the yard a few minutes, and then returned to the recreation room, where he picked out a few bars of "My Old Kentucky Home." Finally he went up to his room and lay on his bed until time for the evening meal.

Although Mrs. Wilson chatted as lively as ever, there was a gentle gloom about the evening meal, and by the time the cook had put the leftovers in dishes and set them in her big refrigerator, most of Sunny-side's residents had retired to their rooms to write letters or read. Just after the street lights came on, a taxi stopped at the front door, and Mr. Farley and Mrs. Turner got out and came up the walk, he holding her arm as they climbed the steps to the porch. They came in quietly, and there was no one to see them except Mrs. Maxey, watching from the darkened office window, and Miss Jackson, sitting in the recreation room in her wheel chair. Mrs. Jackson saw them say good night at the elevator. Then Mr. Farley went up and Mrs. Turner made her way along the first-floor hallway to her room.

So the romance, if it was a romance, blossomed toward summer. Mrs. Wilson, acting out of the general hunger and hope, pleaded with Mr. Farley to read to them some evening, and finally he agreed. The arrangements were that he should read a Sunday evening after dinner, and though the couple again excused themselves that afternoon for

their regular trip to town, the singing at the service in the recreation room was better than usual. The minister chose to summarize his morning sermon for them, a sermon on the text "Lest ye become as little children." Mrs. Wilson thought it an excellent topic, she told Mr. Selby afterwards, and he asked her how she might reconcile those sentiments with the passage that concludes "but when I became a man I put away all childish things." Mrs. Wilson perceived that he was making fun of her again, and dropped the conversation.

That evening, Mr. Farley and Mrs. Turner returned early and had dinner with the others, after which he withdrew to his room to select some things to read. Meanwhile, Mrs. Wilson arranged the chairs in a semicircle around the wooden lectern that had been provided for the visiting ministers and chose a seat immediately before it, reserving one beside herself for Mrs. Turner. Mr. Farley had promised to appear at seven-thirty. Five minutes late, Mr. Selby and two other men appeared, pausing at the door as if undecided. They discovered most of the chairs taken and, relieved, sat near the door. Ten minutes late, Mr. Farley appeared.

He had changed from his dark suit into the light brown sport coat and dark trousers. His shirt was open at the collar, revealing to Mrs. Wilson's surprise that his neck was rather wrinkled. His gray hair was smoothly in place as always, and his gray eyes shone steadily. The natural teeth flashed white as he began to talk.

"I hope the gentlemen will forgive me," he said, "but I have chosen poems especially for the ladies this evening. On another occasion, should you wish it, I shall select a program specifically for the gentlemen."

He cleared his throat as he turned the pages of a book to a place marked by a card. There was a quiet shuffling as the listeners made themselves comfortable. "I shall begin," he said, "with a poem you're all familiar with, by perhaps our greatest poet. To make it a bit more interesting, I think I shall see who can name the poet after I've finished.

"It was many and many a year ago  
In that kingdom by the sea  
That a maiden lived whom you may know  
As the beautiful Annabel Lee . . ."

It seemed to Mrs. Wilson the most beautiful poetry she had ever heard. She stole a glance toward Mrs. Turner beside her, but as far as

she could tell, Mrs. Turner wasn't listening. She was staring straight before her at the piano against the wall. It was the very poem that Mrs. Wilson had heard him saying to her one afternoon in the garden, without a book to read from, and she didn't even seem to be paying attention.

"She was a child and I was a child," Mr. Farley continued, "In that kingdom by the sea. . . ."

When he was finished, Mr. Farley asked them to identify the poet. No one spoke. "Mrs. Turner?" he finally asked.

"It . . . it is Pöe, Edgar Allen Poe," she said. Mrs. Maxey, who stood listening at the door, could hardly hear her.

"Edgar Allen Poe," Mr. Farley said approvingly. "Now let me read you another by the same." He turned to another passage marked by a card.

"Helen, thy beauty is to me  
Like those Nicaean barks of yore  
That gently o'er a perfumed sea  
The weary wayworn wanderer bore  
To his own native shore."

Mrs. Wilson was aware of a little stab of anger. Of course Mrs. Turner would know the name of the poet. Hadn't he told her in the garden? No doubt. She became aware of something else also. Mrs. Turner, though she was called Mrs. Turner by every one, had a first name, and her first name was Helen. Very clearly Mr. Farley had chosen his program specifically for Mrs. Turner, and not for all the ladies, as he had said. She was quite sure of it when he read a final poem by Mrs. Browning which began, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." Mrs. Wilson felt a general movement of realization through the audience and turned to meet Mr. Selby's glance. The other two men had quietly withdrawn, but Mr. Selby sat where he had been.

When the reading was over, Mrs. Wilson thanked Mr. Farley profusely, examining the book from which he had been reading. It bore the title *An Anthology of Famous English and American Love Poems*. He promised to let her borrow it soon, and she patted Mrs. Turner on the arm. "Good night, Helen," she said with softness. Then she went upstairs and on an impulse wrote her oldest daughter, whose husband worked in an aircraft factory on the west coast, all about the little affair that had come into being at Sunnyside.

MRS. MAXEY watched closely and determined that Mrs. Turner was becoming noticeably affected. Her food was more often than not picked at and left on her plate. She refused to let Mrs. Maxey go with her to a heart specialist for her regular monthly checkup. Mr. Farley, on the other hand, was quite as robust as ever, quite the life of the establishment, carrying on lively conversations at table, assisted by Mrs. Wilson and at times by Mr. Selby, who was friendly but wryly ironic in his remarks to Mr. Farley. Mr. Farley ate well, as did the others, except for Mrs. Turner and Miss Jackson. Miss Jackson had always insisted on eating like a bird, to call attention to herself in Mrs. Maxey's estimation. Since Mr. Farley's arrival she at least came to the dining room in her wheelchair instead of insisting that she be fed in her room. The affair was a puzzle, and a disturbing one, to Mrs. Maxey, who was beginning to regret accepting Mr. Farley on his own recommendations. Several vacancies might not after all be the worst situation. What advantage could there possibly be to this man whose records showed him indeed beyond eighty years old? Clearly, however, he was taking, or intending to take, some sort of advantage of Mrs. Turner, a woman who must always have been lonely, her husband in the army and away from her, and now her son.

Late one evening, after she had cleared her desk of food bills and correspondence, Mrs. Maxey got out the folders on Mrs. Turner and Mr. Farley. She studied them closely, side by side. Mrs. Turner's burial instructions caught her eye, and she realized that for Mr. Farley she had neither address of kin nor burial instructions. She noted the address from which he had written her, making arrangements and sending her a year's fee in advance. The letter with his check had come from a large city in the next state. She decided that, instead of taking up the matter with Mr. Farley directly, she would investigate to see what she could learn about him on her own. The next morning she mailed a letter to the son of a former resident, a middle-aged lawyer who had been quite happy with the care she had given his father and who had volunteered to act as reference for her. She reminded him of that offer and asked that, as a favor, he find out anything she should know about Mr. Farley.

A week later the reply came. Mrs. Maxey paced up and down her office, reading the letter over and over. It appeared that Mr. Farley had no living relatives, or if he had, they had long since abandoned him. He had lived in that city for five years prior to his coming to Sunnyside. The awful shock was that, before the immediately prior

five years, his address had been a federal penitentiary. There had been several convictions, principally for manipulating middle-aged widows in order to get charge of their investments. The word *extortion* stood out at one point on the page like the black headline of a tabloid. The details of the charges and convictions were briefly summarized. The lawyer concluded that he hoped having such an inmate would not damage the good reputation of Sunnyside and that if he could be of any additional service, she must feel free to call on him, since he felt himself obligated to her for the excellent and humane treatment she had given his father in his last years.

Mrs. Maxey stopped pacing the office and got out the folders on Mrs. Turner and Mr. Farley again. She studied them until well into lunch time, leaving the management entirely to the cook and her helper. Before lunch was over, she had reached a conclusion. Mrs. Turner had been left financially independent by her husband. She was presently in Sunnyside at the expense of her son. Undoubtedly, the money Mr. Farley had sent for himself was the last he had in the world, after which he would be destitute. He had found in his younger years comfortable subsistence from widows. Fooling widows had been his profession. Why not in his age of decline? Mrs. Maxey began to look at the bookish side of Mr. Farley's nature in a different light.

After lunch her suspicions were confirmed when a taxi drew up at the front door and stopped. A minute later, Mrs. Turner and Mr. Farley walked down the steps toward it, he dressed in sports clothes and a tie. They got in the taxi and drove off toward town. It was the first time they had taken such an outing during the week, though of course Mrs. Maxey had regularly scheduled outings in good weather for all the residents. They were going to town on Thursday afternoon. She glanced hurriedly over the letter from the lawyer again as if it might tell her just what Mr. Farley was up to now. Something devious, but what? A shudder passed over Mrs. Maxey. "Oh dear God," she said. "What if they are on their way to get married!"

AS THEY WALKED down the steps to the waiting taxi, Mr. Farley held Mrs. Turner's arm gently, and when they were on the level walk he carefully placed her arm in his. The taxi driver got out and held the door for them, and when they got safely inside, which seemed to take forever, he closed the door. When he was under the wheel, he turned for directions and noticed that the two were holding hands, though the small old lady quietly withdrew hers while the old gentleman gave

directions. He turned to his driving, pretending not to have noticed, but in the rearview mirror he saw that the old man had reached across and taken her hand again. The taxi driver rolled up the window so air would not blow on them and so that he could hear better.

"But you would have left him," the old man was saying. "You are too delicate and sensitive not to have. We should have had such a life together."

"Perhaps," the fragile little lady said, staring straight ahead. "If only there had been more children. A daughter . . ."

"We would have had a dozen," he assured her, patting her arm. Embarrassed, again she withdrew her hand from his.

"Perhaps," she said in a whisper barely loud enough to be heard in the front seat.

The driver carried them through the rich residential district along the river. At one point the old man asked him to stop near a bluff, and the two strolled across the grass of a little park until they stood looking at the river. He held her hand, ostensibly to steady her, but the driver watched with sly pleasure the spectacle of a very old man courting a very old lady. It was unbelievable, which was exactly why he could hardly wait to get back to the dispatch station with his story. But the old man was in no hurry. The driver wondered whether the old fox was actually going to try to take her to a hotel room and laughed softly at the idea. "Never say die," he said, turning on the radio to a program of loud music.

When they returned to the waiting taxi, he turned off the radio and helped them into the back seat again. They were both about ready for rolling-chairs. Out on the town. Going to a restaurant that had a cocktail bar. "How crazy can you get?" he thought to himself as he got under the wheel and headed slowly for town.

He carried them to the restaurant the old man had asked him to recommend. With strict politeness, he helped them out onto the sidewalk, received his fare, along with a generous tip, and bowed to them, touching his hat. Then he got in and jerked the taxi back into the traffic, heading toward the dispatch station before reporting his taxi empty and ready for a new fare.

THE WAITER ushered them into the quiet, dark room.

"Near the orchestra, please," Mr. Farley directed. The orchestra advertised on the billboard outside would not be playing until eight in the evening, but there was a lonely piano player on the raised plat-

form playing *Memories* when they came in. There were only three other couples in the room since it was early. A young man, leaning earnestly to a brunetté holding a drink in both hands before her lips, her head cocked slightly to one side, did not notice them. But another couple did, glancing up briefly, startled. They concluded that the old couple were after lunch, but had been ushered here since the regular dining room, with its business-men's lunches, was closed until later toward evening.

Mr. Farley and Mrs. Turner chose a table with a curved leather seat almost surrounding it. She sat down gingerly, uncomfortably. When he had ordered the wine, he moved closer to her, close enough to take her hand once more. Hesitantly, she removed it and sat staring into the lighted candle on the table. Her hands played with her white gloves, and when the waiter brought the wine and poured it, setting the bottle in ice near Mr. Farley's elbow, she took up her glass quickly and began drinking.

The piano player moved fingers languidly along the keys. *Moonlight Becomes You, Red Sails in the Sunset*—all the heart songs, as if they had been requested. The music mingled secretly with the wine and Mr. Farley's gentle talk.

When the bottle was two-thirds drunk, Mrs. Turner's eyes had begun to glow. She still stared into the candle, its flame playing kindly along her white cheek. Mr. Farley was leaning toward her.

"Yes," Mrs. Turner said into the silence that filled the room as the pianist paused and selected another tune. She looked up quickly as if startled to discover where she was. No one but Mr. Farley had heard her. The word, which she wanted desperately now to take back, was not so loud as it had seemed. Her cheeks flushed, and he squeezed her hand.

She withdrew it quickly and began slipping the white gloves back on. "We must go," she said.

"But my dear," he said. "We've not finished our wine." He motioned toward the bottle at his elbow.

"I'm sorry," she said in a whisper. "I'm sorry, but I don't feel well. Please. Please take me back . . ."

"Why, certainly, my dear," he said. He motioned to the waiter, who brought their check. Mr. Farley laid several bills on the tray, then rose and helped her from the seat and the two of them went out the door, unnoticed by the two couples that remained. They got into a taxi, which carried them briskly back to Sunnyside.

Miss JACKSON was sitting in her wheelchair on the front porch when the taxi stopped and the driver helped Mr. Farley and Mrs. Turner out. Mr. Farley paid the man and walked up toward the house, holding Mrs. Turner's elbow to steady her. Mrs. Turner looked very white, Miss Jackson noticed, as she came up the steps. She went inside and immediately to her room. That night at dinner, Mr. Farley and Mrs. Wilson carried on a lively conversation, with Mr. Selby joining in as usual, but Mrs. Turner did not appear in the dining room at all.

Mrs. Maxey was waiting when Mr. Farley came out from dinner.

"Would you mind stepping into my office for a moment, Mr. Farley?" she said crisply.

"My pleasure," he said, bowing.

She closed the door behind him, went around behind her desk, and picked up the letter from the lawyer.

"Mr. Farley," she began, tapping the letter against one hand, "you came several months ago, on your own recommendation and at your own expense. Everything seemed perfectly in order, and I accepted you. But now it appears that all was not quite in order."

"I don't follow you," Mr. Farley said.

Mrs. Maxey hesitated. "I mean that there is no listing of relatives, for instance. No one whom I could notify if . . . ."

"If I should die?" Mr. Farley said helpfully. "But I shan't. Not anytime soon. I can assure you."

"Well, as awkward as it is to talk about such things," Mrs. Maxey said, "I have to prepare for whatever may happen. You see, I never accept people here without trying to know exactly what actions to take in case they should . . . they should . . . ."

"Die," Mr. Farley said.

"Yes," said Mrs. Maxey. "Mrs. Turner for instance. She has a delicate heart condition. Her son, who is in Italy, made arrangements in advance, and . . . ."

"Oh, yes, she told me," Mr. Farley said. "A very thoughtful young man. What you mean to say is that you would be relieved if I would do the same, since you aren't quite sure about my financial condition beyond my own word concerning it. I can assure you, Mrs. Maxey, that I am well prepared. You shall find a will in my room, providing for distribution of my estate to various charities, after your expenses. In fact, I have been so much pleased by Sunnyside that I have considered changing my will to . . . ."

"The will," Mrs. Maxey said, her hand shaking the letter toward



him. "That is it. Change the will. Mr. Farley," she said, dropping her voice, "I must ask you where that money comes from that you're being so generous with."

"I beg your pardon."

"I said I must know what the source of your income is or has been."

"My dear Mrs. Maxey, I can't see that that is of any possible concern to you. Your only concern is that the money is."

Mrs. Maxey was angered by the evasion. "See here now, Mr. Farley, I have in my hand a letter from a lawyer who lives where you lived these past five years. He tells me that prior to that you were . . . ."

"So," said Mr. Farley, his shoulders drooping slightly. "So. Well, I can state to you that the money I have was well earned. No taint upon it is so great as the taint of forcing from your rest home an eighty-year-old man with no relatives and no place to go. I think, Mrs. Maxey, that if you don't mention the errors of my youth, I shan't. Now if you'll excuse me, I must retire. I'm rather tired after this afternoon excursion."

"One moment," Mrs. Maxey said. "One moment. Precisely what is your game with Mrs. Turner?"

"My game? Really, Mrs. Maxey, don't you think I'm rather old and out of shape to be playing games?"

"I happen to know that she is a very lonely person and that you are a very smooth operator. It's a bit absurd on the surface of it, but you are. Now I also happen to know that Mrs. Turner is not rich, but secure. Further, I happen to know now, by the help of this letter, that she is exactly the kind of person you . . . ."

"Mrs. Maxey, please," Mr. Farley said. "Let us not destroy so beautiful a friendship as exists between myself and Mrs. Turner. Why should you? After all . . . ."

"Did you or did you not visit a lawyer about a will this afternoon?" Mrs. Maxey demanded. "You may be old," she said, "but you are not senile. You are not above the law."

"I am highly flattered, Mrs. Maxey. The old lion grows younger when the antelope tells him his fangs are sharp." He thought a moment. "Do you, Mrs. Maxey, know of a quiet little restaurant called the Ivy Bower? Well, if you must know, Mrs. Turner and I drove there and had a glass of wine and returned. A very pleasant, invigorating afternoon."

"I warn you that if Mrs. Turner leaves her money to you, I shall see to it that . . . ."

"Mrs. Maxey," Mr. Farley said kindly. "Look at the situation from my point of view. Do I need money? I may stay here, surrounded by companions who thrive on my good nature. I have a little money yet, but I feel certain that even if I didn't, you would not be so cruel as to force me out into the world again. You see, it would seem excessively mercenary of you to take me on my own recommendation because I had the money and then force me out, ostensibly because of my record. Not only am I a very old man with no kindred, but a man who has paid a debt to society and lived an exemplary life since doing so. Would you have it said publicly that you refused me shelter because of my past? Mine, Mrs. Maxey, would make a very sad story indeed."

"Mr. Farley, I am not an old lady to be hoodwinked or blackmailed. You'd better start tomorrow morning making plans to move elsewhere.

"But you've accepted me for the year, and after that we shall see."

"Get out of here," Mrs. Maxey said. "Get out of here. No wait. Mrs. Turner . . . ."

"Yes?" Mr. Farley said, his hand on the door knob.

"Mrs. Turner has a very delicate heart condition," Mrs. Maxey said. "You must . . . ."

"Be assured, dear lady, that my intentions toward Mrs. Turner are entirely honorable," he said with a smile. "I have endeavoured to bring a little kind attention into her life. There is no will that I know anything of. I promise you, the subject has never and will never be discussed between us."

"Think what her son will say if . . . ."

"But he has already made the arrangements, Mrs. Maxey. Besides, my word of honor." Mr. Farley bowed as he opened the door and went out into the hall where Miss Jackson sat in her wheelchair reading her magazine.

FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS Mrs. Turner took meals irregularly, sometimes in her room, sometimes with the other residents. Mr. Farley divided his time between Mrs. Turner, who on those occasions became highly nervous, and Mr. Selby. Mrs. Wilson joined either conversation, noticing when Mrs. Turner upset a glass of milk but failing to notice the sharp repartee that rose between Mr. Selby and Mr. Farley when they talked. Had she noticed, she would have ascribed Mr. Selby's careful temper to jealousy as she did Mrs. Turner's ner-

vousness to love. Mr. Farley enjoyed secretly the triumph of the afternoon at the Ivy Bower, aware of Mrs. Maxey hovering helplessly about him.

On Sunday, Mrs. Turner kept to her room during the afternoon service in the recreation room. Mr. Farley strolled about the garden swinging his cane and whistling quietly to himself.

On Tuesday morning, Mrs. Turner did not come to breakfast. At lunch she had still not appeared, and Mrs. Wilson, who had been busy arranging some flowers about the dining room, did not hear the news until Miss Jackson rolled hurriedly into the dining room. Mrs. Turner had died in the night. Her body had already been removed and the funeral arrangements completed. On Wednesday afternoon, Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Maxey, and Mr. Farley attended the graveside services—Mrs. Maxey glaring angrily across at Mr. Farley throughout the reading of the scriptures, while Mrs. Wilson wept quietly into her handkerchief. Mr. Farley stood very erect, his hat held firmly with both hands. When the service was completed, he hooked his cane on his arm and strode out of the cemetery to Mrs. Maxey's car. Mrs. Maxey drove them back to Sunnyside silently.

At dinner that night, a heavy gloom descended and kept them from eating as heartily as usual. But Mr. Farley did well enough, and before the meal was over Mrs. Wilson had begun to talk a little, thanking Mr. Farley for having made Mrs. Turner's last days such happy ones.

The following Sunday, when his son and daughter came to visit him, Mr. Selby had his things gathered, and left with them, his children having agreed to share him two weeks at a time in their homes. On Monday, Mr. Farley sat down by Mrs. Wilson at lunch. She had the poetry book she had borrowed.

"I never had much time for poetry," she said to him. "Not after I left school. I read it, and it doesn't seem the same as when you read it."

"It is a matter of practice," Mr. Farley confided. "A great poet has so captured the music of an emotion—love or what have you—that with a little practice a person can tune his soul to its music. Even when one doesn't feel like it, given enough practice and a little understanding, he can tune his soul by poetry. I'm convinced of it by long experience."


"It may well be," Mrs. Wilson said, "but I simply haven't had the practice."

"Suppose I help you with it," Mr. Farley said. "Perhaps . . . ."

"Well," said Mrs. Wilson hesitantly, "if you don't expect too much of me."

"I shall be patient," Mr. Farley said.

Two afternoons later Miss Jackson wheeled herself onto the sun porch after lunch to tell everyone that Mr. Farley and Mrs. Wilson were walking in the garden and that he had under his arm the book of poems with the card markers sticking from its edge. Miss Jackson was pretty sure that Mrs. Maxey already knew about it.

 MARION MONTGOMERY is the author of a novel, *Wandering Desire*, published by Harpers in 1962, and of *Darrell*, published by Doubleday last year. The University of Nebraska issued a volume of his verse, *Dry Lightning*, in 1960. Recently Argus has published another book of his poetry, *Stones from the Rubble*. He is a teacher of English at the University of Georgia and his work has been included in a number of literary and critical periodicals.

*John Donald Robb*

THE FUNCTION OF THE  
CONTEMPORARY ARTIST  
AND COMPOSER

THE MAN OR WOMAN who dedicates his or her life to the composition of music or to painting, faces a lifetime of grueling work with few of the daily satisfactions which come to other men. The arts, for the creative person, do not as a rule provide even a decent living. The most successful artist cannot hope to achieve the worldly success of the leaders in politics, business or the professions. Many of the world's greatest benefactors in the field of music have died in utter poverty and discouragement. And yet year after year some of the world's best minds and hearts are devoted to the problem of advancing the progress of art.

It is obvious that there must be a motive for this dedication—a motive shared by creative minds in all the fields of art. In this sense all artists are brothers and are united in a common loyalty. They face essentially the same problems. If we would understand contemporary art, we must understand the creative artist of today whose heart and brain pour forth the works which constitute the stream of art.

Music and the other arts, together with religion and science—and in fact all of mankind's activities—are motivated by what has been called “a truly monstrous assumption of the vast importance of mankind in the universal scheme.” Physically this assumption is indefensible. When man contemplates the vastness of space which is measured in light years, he seems a puny fact indeed. When he contemplates the span of a mortal life or even of the life of the race and compares it with the vastness of geologic time, it is easy to conclude that man does not matter, that there is no need for heroic efforts on his part. Yet mankind is conscious of something within itself for which can be found no comparison in nature except in the great cosmic plan itself. The surmise naturally arises that there must be a cause for the effect and there could not be such a vast plan without

a great planner. And since man is able with his mind to comprehend ever-increasing ramifications of the cosmic plan, and to feel the intense excitement which comes with his increasing mastery of the knowledge of that plan, he naturally feels that he is related to the planner. Hence the history of human thought is the story of man's effort to identify himself with that great cosmic ultimate, which the faithful call God, but of which believer and unbeliever alike are conscious.

The religious belief in eternal life is in part an attempt by mankind to reconcile the short span of life and the vastness of time. Science attempts to overcome the disparity between man's tiny physical powers and the awe-inspiring forces of the cosmos. Art attempts to match the beauty of man's perceptions and emotions with the almost incredible beauties of the creation.

It is a heroic struggle—the pigmy against the giant. Yet it goes on unceasingly and, though the individual members of the race fall and eventually pass into oblivion, the race holds the ground taken by the fallen and other individuals press on to establish new beachheads in the future.

The ground won and held in this onward struggle of the race insofar as the arts are concerned may be called tradition. Tradition in this sense is incomparably greater than the efforts of any individual, however great. This should, however, not detract from our admiration and appreciation of the individuals who have contributed to tradition. It seems to be the custom of human beings to refuse recognition to great men who live too close to them in time or space. We accord recognition to great men only gradually and, following the lead of generous souls like Felix Mendelssohn who wrote, after hearing some lesser men criticize Mozart, "If, in the course of my life, I never achieve anything else, I am at all events determined to be unutterably rude to all those who show no reverence for their masters . . . ." And despite their achievements and mankind's ultimate verdict on contemporary composers, we owe it to them to recognize that they are the valiant in the vanguard of musical civilization—who are staking their own lives in the attempt to advance the musical tradition of the race. And there is consolation even for those composers who may not win the laurel wreaths of greatness in the realization that their efforts have contributed to the work of greater men who themselves are only a part of the tradition of the race.

IN EVERY INTELLIGENT HUMAN EFFORT there is an end and a means. For every musical composition this means that there is an idea to be expressed and a technique to be employed for that purpose. However, it will appear that the ideology of a composer is sometimes unexpressed or only vaguely expressed in words—for of course composers express themselves primarily in their compositions, whereas the technique employed is generally much more tangibly in evidence.

Since I have been challenged by my former students for stressing technique and since many people wince at the very word, I shall quote from a most lucid explanation of the importance of technique. I refer to an article by Rhys Carpenter entitled "The Basis of Artistic Creation in the Fine Arts," one of three essays published by the Rutgers University Press in 1942 under the title *The Bases of Artistic Creation*. While this essay deals with the graphic arts rather than music, it seems to me equally applicable to the art of musical composition.

Mr. Carpenter says (and in quoting I shall skip freely but attempt to avoid any distortion of meaning): ". . . the artist's confidence in his own unlimited power to create is fallacious. . . . For otherwise, how is it that to the trained beholder every painting is not merely its maker, but also its date and its environment? . . . Let us recognize that there is something which guides and shapes the destinies of artistic expression through the centuries, something neither wilful nor chaotic, but ordered, measured and inexorable. This something shows itself most clearly as technical evolution. . . . The popular notion of genius, surviving probably from the Romantic movement, as an effortless and God-given illumination . . . has corrupted our understanding of the artist's real nature and encouraged all manner of outrage from sheer laziness to sheer impudence. . . . Art which does not have its source in emotion and does not find its end in a corresponding emotion in the beholder is mere academicism. True; but *mere intensity of feeling never produced a work of art* . . . every artist must feel deeply. . . . Yet it is not because he feels deeply that he can create deeply."

It is no doubt true that the general public is more interested in the results of artistic endeavor than in the means by which these results were achieved. But this is true also of science. Yet no one would criticize the scientist for his interest in experiment and technique, nor the position of the scientist who maintains that knowledge for its own sake is a sufficient goal for the scientist. The public has long since

learned that the most abstract and seemingly useless investigations in science have sometimes produced, in the long run, the most far-reaching practical results. This is the old question of applied science versus pure science. The victories of the applied science arouse almost immediate and widespread public interest. The victories of pure science are often of interest only to scientists, college professors and students of science. Relatively few people were interested in or understood the earth-shaking importance of the mathematical formula  $m=E/c^2$  announced by Albert Einstein in 1904. But the world was electrified by the news in the closing days of World War II that practical scientists, working from that formula, had discovered how to split the atom and unlock its awesome energy in the form of the atomic bomb. The time lag in this case between the thought and its realization was only about forty years. In the case of some scientific discoveries, the time lag has been centuries.

There is a similar time lag in the world of music between the thought of the experimenter and its realization in great compositions advancing the art of music. We who wish to understand the development of music in our century cannot afford to neglect the technical experiments which have been going on in our time, for out of them will be developed the music of the future.

THE CURRENT SITUATION in the field of art, to my mind, is analogous to the situation in the field of music.

It has been said that with the beginning of the twentieth century, a six hundred year period, during which the painter had but one problem, ended. That problem was how to represent in opaque paint on a two-dimensional surface, the three-dimensional world of transparent light.

The student of musical history of the western world knows that, for a similar period of time, the composer has had a similar problem, to express the world of man's thought and feeling within boundaries of a musical system which consists of a set of diatonic seven-note scales (with five auxiliary tones in each scale) of which one tone is the center, and of which all others should be merely satellites. This is the system of tonality.

These problems have been solved, it is said, and with their solution, a period ends, or, to use a better word, dissolves.

It has been said that the three signs of the dissolution of our period



are classicism, archaicism, and universal eclecticism—the imitation respectively of the classical masters, the primitive artists, and a general borrowing from anywhere and everywhere.

Of both the graphic arts and music, I think it is safe to say that the end of the nineteenth century brought the end of a period. In both fields, the technical problems had been solved at least to such an extent that the law of diminishing returns had set in. It had become increasingly difficult to paint a picture or write a piece of music which would not seem to be a rehash of something which everyone knew had already been created—during the nineteenth century. The resemblances were so easily apparent that it became a favorite sport to point them out. So we have had our tune detectives. Naturally the composers who dislike being ridiculed or criticized in this manner reacted against the nineteenth century.

Some, like Schönberg, apparently broke entirely with the past (though he denied this). Others turned to less obvious models than the nineteenth-century masters—to the primitive artists, or to other miscellaneous sources such as Oriental art. These are the four tendencies which we may somewhat pedantically classify as experimentation, neoclassicism, primitivism, and eclecticism.

The first of these was condemned as arid; the others were condemned as imitative. Hence the past half-century has been a painful period for the creative artist.

It appears that the only true course for the creative artist is ahead. And the way ahead, whether we like it or not, is represented by what Mr. Carpenter calls “the weirdly heterogenous phenomena of ultra-modern art.” The creative artists of today have been forced to attempt the creation of a new style or tradition and that attempt is represented in all the experiments of the past fifty years. We must therefore examine that experimentation, virtually all of which, no matter how wild it may seem, is destined to influence the future of music. It is not, of course, to be studied as in a laboratory—in its pure form. Most of the compositions of today represent a mixture of experiment with tried and true elements derived from the past. Somehow, out of this mixture of experimentation with enlarged tonality, polytonality, atonality, nineteenth-century romanticism, neoclassicism, primitivism, exoticism, and general eclecticism, our composers are evolving works exhibiting greatness and novelty. A new style and a new tradition are in the making.

IT WOULD NOT PAY to conclude that the mass of mankind has been entirely convinced. The movement which I have described has been "a palace revolution" led by composers and conductors and acquiesced to by the critics. The public still loves the romantic music of the last century. Slowly, grudgingly, it has commenced to feel and concede also the excitement of the new ideas.

Of course the time lag in public acceptance of new ideas is not peculiar to the world of music. I have mentioned Mr. Einstein's equation. The English historian Lecky has pointed out that the same is true in the field of politics. He concluded that it takes about twenty-five years to arouse the public to an awareness of social injustice sufficiently to cause remedial legislation to be enacted.


One of the reasons for this time lag is the great numbers of people involved and the time and expense required to disseminate information to them—particularly when there is no vested interest equipped with the funds and facilities to push the process of public education.

In the field of music a very concrete reason is apparent. Music can not fully be grasped by a casual hearing. However the music publishers will not lay out their money, especially for the publication of large works, until the public demand has been created. The composer perforce must wait until some famous conductor or artist takes him up and popularizes his music and, perhaps even more important, his name.

The scores (and what is even more important to the layman, recordings) of many new works are now becoming available.

Little by little the contemptuous intolerance of the layman toward these contemporary developments must necessarily give way to an appreciation of what is truly good in them. The concept that the last of the geniuses died at the stroke of midnight which ended the last century is fallacious.

Great geniuses are at work among us. To discover them should be one of the exciting adventures of mankind during the next fifty year.

 JOHN DONALD ROBB, UNM Professor Emeritus of Music, is known as a composer, a conductor and the author of a large number of books and articles in the fields of music and law. A graduate of Harvard Law School, Mr. Robb practiced law in New York from 1922 to 1941. After a time as head of the music department, he became dean of the College of Fine Arts at UNM, a position he held for eleven years. He has composed over sixty-five musical works, many for orchestra.

*Barbara Ann Maynard*

## THE VISIT

LEAVING THE COUPE crammed into the berry patch which hugged the roadbed, the two crossed the highway and began to walk along a rutted, narrow wagon path. With a small, sweaty hand, its palm lined with rusty grime, Felix unconsciously wiped his forehead. With his other hand dangling in the hand of his father, the two shuffled screens of copper dust as they walked.

"Pick up your feet, Felix. Lookit your shoes," the father muttered rapidly. Felix ceased dragging his feet.

It was late August, late August when the summer heat scratched flesh. Even the afternoon rains, when they came, were not enough to quell the mounting layers of dust as they floated above the gravel roadbed and stained the weeds. Along the path grew four-o'clocks, which, with the approach of dusk, would give out sweet odors to mingle with those of the wild onion, buttercup and Queen Anne's lace. But that day Herman Frankly did not notice the summer odors, and even six-year-old Felix seemed to forget that soon he would get to pet old Pansy and twist the sticky althea blossoms to bring home to his mama. For they were paying a visit to Uncle Anson, and Uncle Anson was dying.

"What's the matter with Uncle Anson, Papa?" Felix asked for the dozenth time.

"I told you," the man whispered, and as he did so he looked about but did not see anything—the dessicated fields of cane and cotton, the mule chomping bloodweed, or the gradually approaching white clapboard house with its familiar three steps and wrinkled veranda, nor the inner tube dangling ownerless from the chinaberry tree, or the humps and bumps of the sparsely-grassed front yard.

"I told you, now. Your Uncle Anson is dying."

The boy nodded and reached inside his T-shirt to scratch.

"How do you know?" he asked timidly. "Did he tell you?"

The man did not answer. He kept walking; then he pulled the boy a bit to make him walk faster.

"There's Esther Lee waving at us from the stoop." Felix wrenched

his hand away and began to hurry up the path toward the house where the girl, several years his senior, stood beckoning.

"Hi, there, Esther Lee. We came to see Uncle Anson. . . ." And as a breathless afterthought, "because he's dying." Felix whispered the last word.

The girl didn't smile at him nor touch his hair; instead she peered steadily into his face. "You ought not say such things, Felix. You know no better? Besides, he ain't dying. Mama said so."

Felix uttered a spontaneous grunt, which gave voice to his indifference. He didn't exactly know why he shouldn't say such things or why he had whispered the word "dying." Somehow the thought of death and the way his parents mentioned it made it seem exciting. He knew that things went away after a time, as his first dog had done and a bird he had found. And with a certain thrill he had dug them up at irregular intervals only to discover that they didn't look or smell the same anymore; they became completely different things from those he had known and loved. And he would lie awake in his bed and wonder. He early decided that his parents had been playing one of those odd grown-up jokes on him by removing the bodies and replacing smelly hunks of something else instead, but he didn't know why. Now he suspected that they were playing another joke on him. Uncle Anson was not dying after all. He felt angry tears gather in the corners of his eyes.

"I don't care anyhow. Living or dead, it's all the same." And he sighed like his mother did when she said the same thing.

"Oh, no it ain't," she countered. "When you're dead nobody sees you anymore or plays with you. You get plastic flowers on your grave and people complain about weeding it. Other people play with your things, too. There's a lot of difference between living and being dead. Ask anyone, silly." Esther Lee ground her eyes into Felix who was scraping his feet ferociously against the tough ground in an effort to propel himself in the inner tube.

"Hey there, Felix! Stop it! Come in here and say something to your Uncle Anson. He's looking for a visit." His father bulked huge in the doorway, the narrow opening leading into darkness. The man shook his finger, and the boy dropped silently from the tube and shuffled toward the steps.

He tensed his lips, kicked a withered clump of crabgrass, and skipped one of the flaky steps. The veranda boards sighed beneath his small weight. "Where is he?"

His father fingered for the small, wet fingers, and maneuvered the child down the center hall toward the back of the house where they took an abrupt left turn into the second bedroom. There was a familiar odor about; Felix compared it to the calla bed behind his mother's kitchen. And everything was so dark. The boy put an arm around his father's pant's leg.

"Oh stop it, Felix. There's nothing here to fright you. Just your Uncle Anson in here, resting himself." His father shoved him through the cloth-draped doorway.

The room was dark, too, with the exception of some afternoon light coming in through a small window on one side of the brass-poled bed. A patchwork quilt, soiled with crusty yellow spots, was gathered at the foot of the big bed. Felix's eyes washed the room with curiosity. He noticed the night table with bowl and pitcher and a lot of little greasy-fingered bottles, the slop jar shoved almost inconspicuously beneath the bed; the Bible on the windowsill, the dusty cloth covering the closet, a closet so small that it could only hold a few hanging things. The walls weren't painted. Felix's room had white walls, and he had a mirror. Uncle Anson had no mirror.

"Is that Felix I hear?" Felix could barely distinguish his name, but he knew that he was being summoned.

"Yessuh," he muttered and stood fast.

"Well, come here, Felix, and let me see you. I ain't seen you in a long time. My, you grewed a lot in a year." The sick man reached out a hand.

Felix demurred. The outstretched hand had long fingernails, thick and yellow, like the witch in *Hansel and Gretel*. He stuffed his small hands into his pockets and the fingers wrestled there with one another. The yellow claws twitched a command.

"Shake hands with your uncle, Felix. You want him to think you ain't mannered?" His father pulled one of his hands from his pocket and offered it to his uncle. The boy shuddered as the claw raked his palm and the dry, palsied hand slowly closed over his in a tight, almost unbearable grip. Felix stood immobile.

"He's a fine boy, Herman. Would that I had one. I don't repent my four girls, but a son is . . . a son. You're mighty lucky, Herman, mighty lucky." The man had raised up from his pillow and now dropped back.

"Felix is smart, too. He gets good grades. He's a good boy. . . . Now, Anson, Esther Lee will add even more grandchildren." The boy

was somehow torn to attention when so much stress was put on his being a boy. Somehow he knew that grandchildren from a daughter just weren't as important as having a son. He twitched a smile at the sick man.

There was a long silence in which Felix blushed to find himself staring at the man in the bed. He could not keep his eyes from watching the almost imperceptible drops of saliva roll from the man's mouth and down his chin, or else collect in the corners of his lips so that when he spoke it looked as though he were talking through chewing gum. Felix figured that there were about seven drops collected every minute or maybe second. When it was so quiet, he couldn't guess the time very well. And it was quiet—quiet as when he lay in bed and could hear his pulse or heartbeat echoing through his pillow. And he followed the little throb beneath the bed sheet, the heaving of the breast when the man spoke, and he could feel the man's hand burning over his, and his own hand began to itch with a passion that almost made him cry out. He slowly bent his elbow and attempted to retract his hand, but it was useless. The claw had him.

"You comfortable, Anson? I can get Sarah." Herman considered calling his sister-in-law who was sitting in the cramped parlor at the front of the house.

"No. Leave her be. She gets little sleep as 'tis." The man began to cough, to choke.

Felix felt his fingers stiffen within the grasp; he could not get loose. His face felt warm and his eyes stung.

"The doctor say anything new?"

"No. Nothing I didn't already write. A month, week, any day." The two men studied each other.

"Will you die any day, Uncle Anson?" Felix blurted; then, with the sharp look from his father, he allowed his pinioned hand to relax, to be resigned.

"What sort of thing is that to ask a body, Felix? Ain't you got no manners?"

"Well," he began and glanced quickly at the two men. "Well, I was told first that you were going to die. And then Esther Lee said you were only bad sick. I . . . I just wanted to know." The last sentence dripped off into a hushed gust of boy-breath.

The two men looked at one another, and Felix saw tears form in his father's eyes. Again, there was a deep silence, and the boy writhed

inwardly at his awkwardness and hated himself for believing a girl.

For what seemed like the next several hours the two men spoke of times that Felix knew little of, of the lean years when there was no money and no liquor, before the children had come, when Anson and Herman had no thought of women but could only be concerned with the giant coon in the hollow or the scratchy sound of the gray squirrel as he ran frightened across the oak and pecan leaves, of the great catfish wallowing in the mighty river, teasing the grass-shrimped hooks as they dangled near the muddy bank, and the biannual gathering of Spanish moss with which to stuff new ticking, or the hog-butchering on a chilly day, and the feel of cool bayou water in July. On and on they talked and every so often Felix could identify himself with them and in his imagination wrestled with them in the October haystack and stole cucumbers and merlition from the stringy patch around Bayou Noir. There were so many things he, too, could remember, and he wondered at it all—the remembering, the knowing that they did the things, too—even though the two made no mention of him, no acknowledgment that he was even in the room. Again, he attempted to retract his hand; it was futile.

“And how about that whopper of a cottonmouth? Weren’t he the big one? You always were a shot, Anson. Did I tell you, Felix, that your Uncle Anson were a shot?”

The boy nodded. It seemed that every squirrel season his father reminded him of his uncle’s prowess with the .22 and his wish that he, Felix, would soon be able to shoulder the gun and bring home even a brace of geese. The father had bad eyes. But Felix shied at the thought of having to make still the sounds he loved, the cool warmth he enjoyed holding, but he said nothing, just nodded and hoped that his father would forget all about the .22 and his small shoulders, his age, and even his existence.

“I feel a sleep coming on, Herman. Mind while I doze a bit?” The sick man closed his pale eyes, the watery-sick eyes which fascinated Felix. Felix blinked when the scaly lids plunked down. But his hand was held fast. And the boy could feel a tightening in his spine as he turned his head toward the open window and saw the oleander branches bowing with the breeze.

“Maybe we’d better head home, now,” his father said.

Felix could have wept then. The air in the room was congested with the multiple vapors from the Vicks’ bottle and from the other bottles

he was unfamiliar with. He knew only the Vicks' bottle and the Per-tussin bottle to keep away the coughs which made his chest feel like ripping out when he caught cold, as he usually did in the fall. It was almost fall. He swallowed.

"Uncle Anson dying of a cold?" he asked and glanced at the medications.

"No."

"Oh." He lowered his head and wished that he would not ask so many questions because they made his father seem different. But everything was so exciting and at times he just couldn't contain himself.

"I can't get a-loose," he stated bluntly.

"What?" His father was distracted.

"He has me. See?" Felix pointed to the claw.

"It's affection, Felix. He loves you. Now be patient. When he falls deep asleep you can unfix your hand."

Felix waited. He didn't want affection. And he waited. But the hand did not relinquish its grip; in fact, the deeper the man fell into slumber the tighter he grasped the boy's hand. The yellow knuckles became white as they tightened. Felix was loath to cry out, but bit by bit the increasing pressure made the vague aching much less vague.

"What's the matter now?" his father spat at him. His father was fanning his uncle with the palmetto-leaf fan from church.

Felix felt tears roll slowly and quietly down his flushed cheeks. "He's hurting me, Papa. I can't get away. He's hurting me." The boy began to shake spasmodically.

Herman ceased fanning the sick man and as he did so the man shifted uneasily for a moment and continued his shallow rapid breathing. Every so often the man would twitch violently, then cough until the sputum ran down the sides of his mouth, along the deep wrinkles in his chin, dropped to the withered neck and rolled upon the already much-soiled pillow. Herman removed his handkerchief and wiped the sick man's mouth.

"Is he dying?" Felix whispered, squirming in the grasp.

"I don't know," the man snapped. "But I don't figure so since he has such a hold on you. Can't you just sort of wiggle out? I can't believe that you can't pull away, Felix. Besides I'm afraid to quit fanning."

Felix shook his head. "Help me."

The father rose and walked quickly over to the other side of the bed



where Felix stood shaking and writhing, unable now to feel any life in the imprisoned arm, as if it were severed forever from his body. He kept swallowing but the tears continued to flow, now quite freely. Still he did not cry out.

"Esther Lee said he was only real sick. You don't have to die when you're real sick, do you?" The question came as a plea.

"No, I reckon not. But he's going to die, Felix. The doctor said so. Esther Lee doesn't know that. You do." With these words Felix felt a sudden bodily control upon him. He ceased writhing for a moment as the comment was realized.

"I know . . . and she don't," he whispered softly to himself.

For nearly half an hour the three huddled together, the father resting a hot palm upon his son's shoulder, and the dying man unconsciously clutching the boy's tender fingers. Together they waited, Herman for what he had resigned himself to, Anson oblivious of mortal moments, and the boy, curious and expectant and feeling guilty about being that way.

Near seven, as twilight shown in its most subtle pinks, grays and blacks, the sick man began to breathe in a queer fashion. Intermittently, he squeezed the boy's limp hand; then relaxed; then squeezed again, almost as regularly as a heartbeat.

"That's a death rattle if I ever heard one," the father exclaimed. "I heard it when your Uncle Jason passed away and I heard it with your big brother."

Felix recalled neither. But at the words "death rattle" he fixed his eyes on his uncle's Adam's apple, watching the bumpy marble of life bounce up and down, strain against the crepey skin until the sere flesh became taut, then settle lower into the throat to prolong the vital breath. Felix decided that the eerie, raucous sounds did indeed resemble the noise the beans made when bobbing in his Mexican gourd rattle.

"Yes!" he exclaimed. "It sounds just like a rattle, all right!"

His father was too preoccupied to scowl at him for his exuberance. He fanned the sick man's face and body with wild, erratic motions; all the while tears mingled with the red-clay dust and made bloody streaks down his cheeks.

"Get Esther Lee and Sarah!" he ordered.

"I can't. I can't pull a-loose!"

"Dammit, Felix, get them!"

The boy gasped, strained to retract his hand, the sensation in his fingers a long time vanished. He could feel the itchy beads of sweat form beneath his hair which hung limply across his forehead.

"I can't," he whined; panic seized him.

The father ceased fanning long enough to slap the boy resoundingly with the palmetto frond. "Goddamit, you get!"

Frantically the boy tugged to release his hand. But the more he pulled the tighter seemed the grasp.

"Lemme go, Uncle Anson," he moaned desperately. "Lemme go!" But the dying man held.

Again his father swung at him, cursing and crying and sweating. The palmetto frond began to shred. And the dying man gagged, choked, rattled and clung.

Felix howled, "Esther Lee, Aunt Sarah!"

The first to arrive was the girl. With her slender shoulders hunched she peered into the room. "Mama is in the rocking chair. The heat makes her sleep."

She waited for a reply; Herman Frankly motioned to the sick man.

The girl tiptoed to the side of her father, cautiously bending over the withered form. His breathing was even more shallow, his face no longer flushed but slightly blue. She then glared at Felix who still stood caught by the reluctant fingers.

"It's his death rattle," hissed Felix knowingly.

The girl became rigid; then she looked at Herman.

"Is it?"

He nodded and slapped a moist palm across the sick man's forehead.

"I told you," Felix added. "And you said he was only real sick."

Felix straightened his shoulders as the girl glared at him. Yet he continued in his attempt to extricate himself from his uncle's grasp. But it was futile; the white knuckles closed ruthlessly, desperately over his. He looked imploringly at his father.

But Herman continued to fan his brother with the jagged remains of the palmetto frond; deliberately and violently he wafted the frond back and forth with the frantic tempo of futility. Anson's breath grew slighter and slighter; his eyes showed slitlike through the scaly lids, and the boy could see no pupils.


Transfixed, Felix watched the splotched tongue reach out and lap the spittle from the cracked lips, saw the frail limbs convulse and relax, and the eyes gleam sea-foam white. The claws began to pierce the flesh of his palms. He could stand no more.

"Lemme go, lemme go, Uncle Anson!" And as if to no avail, "Lemme go, you dying man, you old, smelling, dying man!" The boy's face was white with rage and horror, his lips compressed so firmly that small blue lines formed in his neck. He began to kick the rickety bed, pulling and tugging as he struggled to break that grasp.

Suddenly, with a pop so audible as to startle the father, the boy's hand broke free and, with the momentum, he fell backwards upon the dusty floor. Still shaking from his rigidity, he slowly stood up and stared at the slit-eyed man, slowly allowing his bright eyes to travel to his father, noting the fierce anguished face there, and moving to the bland, sallow face of Esther Lee. He looked at the rattling, gagging twittering form lying upon the soiled linen.

"I hate you!" he sobbed with the quaking vehemence and indignation of a six-year-old. "I hate all of you!" And he bolted through the door, down the hall toward the sagging veranda and the path toward home, past his aunt oblivious in her rocker, tears dribbling down his peaked face.

Once outside he stumbled over the tick-hound Pansy as she clattered the top step and falling upon her he began to beat her old body, and as she whimpered he beat her harder until the sting in his hands wearied him, and he clutched her and wept.

 BARBARA MAYNARD, instructor in English at the University of Colorado, has had her stories appear in *Delta* and a poem in *America Sings*, a publication of the National Poetry Association. Formerly she was a member of the staffs of Louisiana State University and the University of California at Berkeley. She taught at Montana State College before she joined the University of Colorado faculty in 1964. One summer was spent at the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-on-Avon, England.

MAUDE DAVIS CROSNO

## CORONADO

(Mexico, Spring, 1542)

I want a light, Alonzo! Bring a candle,  
 Night's other star, and banish here these shadows;  
 For yonder yellow sun drops through the hills.  
 The west flames gold on lakes and cloudy trees  
 Then dies. The candle? Place it on the ledge  
 There; possibly I should make notes; my mind  
 Clouds. Oh, Alonzo Alvarez, that I  
 Were once again the man I was; I greet  
 Mendoza on the morrow, firm Mendoza,  
 Our Viceroy and my friend; this expedition—  
 His . . . mine . . . the King's—failed, stands at zero now.  
 God's will be done; this was my destiny.  
 A friend in Salamanca prophesied  
 I would be great in distant lands and die  
 There from a fall; that second winter at  
 Tiguex, to cheer our cheerless camp, I raced;  
 My sorrel steed outdistanced that of Don  
 Rodrigo Maldonado, but my saddle  
 Girth, rotted, broke. I fell. His horse's hoof  
 Struck, muddled this poor head; thus I return  
 Not dead, nor yet alive; Mendoza saw  
 Two stretched years back, three hundred mounted men  
 In silvery armor ride from Compostela  
 Where followed peoples dressed in motley brightness;  
 Mendoza rode with us two days and left.  
 At Culiacán, we played the Easter games,  
 Then on; Friar Marcos guided us;  
 He knew the trail, but not its cost, nor I!  
 Culiacán, the army's formal end, brought June,  
 The rainy season, and my dwindling forces.  
 We, I no horseman now, but litter-borne,  
 Recrossed those swollen streams, I've lost their count.

Their torrent took our time, a man, and that  
Great horse that moved in all magnificence;  
I see him yet—the golden chestnut Friar  
Jiménez gave me—all aquiver, swimming,  
Head high, caught, turned, and screaming, seaward swept.  
I, helpless, gently lifted, crossed. And was  
It there, Alonzo, going, we spent four days  
While each man, mounted, cradled gently, one  
By one, each sheep and, splashing, rode the river?  
How shall I say again there was no gold  
In that vast land where blues are gauge to distance  
And plums and purples wash the evening air?  
No gold, unless I count along the river  
The golden leaf of autumn's cottonwoods  
And brush the bloom of goldenrod up from  
The mesas? These no ballasts make for kings.  
At Tusayán, Don Pedro de Tovar  
Found seven mesa-mounted towns; we at  
Háwikuh, Cíbola, found corn; Hernando  
De Alvarado, first to glimpse the cow  
And journey to Cícúye and Tiguex,  
Saw none; the village, Alcanfor, became  
Our winter quarters; tragedies bemeaned  
Us there, and cold cut through our borrowed dress.  
But hope of gold, revived by tales the Turk  
Told, kept us sane; a golden-bracelet plot  
Involving Ysopete and Bigotes  
Brought grief, as did the Arenal defiance  
And fights; the burning at the stake against  
My patient plans dissolved all breath of peace.  
That spring, you know, we left to test the worth—  
The Turk's tales held and moved—what weary leagues!—  
Across those treeless, blowing plains of grass  
As markless as the running seas; tall grass  
That hid a man on horse would hold no print  
Of path or passage; men lost were reclaimed  
By trumpets, bells, and drums, or yellow fires.  
And there the mangy, woolly cows in drifting  
Herds carried human parasites; alarmed,  
These herds, like storms, rush heedlessly, and once,

Like boulders rolled in flood, they, falling, filled  
A sudden wash until they levelled with  
The bank and, running on, all bellowing,  
They crossed their noisy, dying bridge; three horses  
Among them fell, the riders somehow safe!  
King Charles and Viceroy Mendoza have  
A letter each from me sent from Tiguex  
Reporting on Quivira, all I saw,  
And that the country—distant, primitive—  
Had little recommending it to us:  
No gold, great distance from the oceans, cold  
Cold winters; I so plainly stated these  
That what I say tomorrow seems review.  
Yet, yet again there was no gold; it frets  
Me now, and had Cortéz joined us as was  
His wish, what more lay there for gain? I have  
The Viceroy (kind Mendoza), Church and King  
And wife, if comfort can be now; this head  
Is fuzzy like those woolly cows, but I  
Have much; my mind contains vast lands  
Plus places others brought to me; that one  
Proud Garcia López de Cárdenas  
Caught me in wonder with; he and his men  
Approached this canyon, earth cleft so deep  
A mighty river was a ribbon far  
Below, and men who dared to, walked its walls  
One-third down, finding rocks that seemed like men  
In height, but topping all the reaching towers  
Of glorious Seville. Alonzo, plots  
There may have been, but I return in hope  
And faith; so trusting friends and God, I wish  
My rest. Now take the candle; put it out.

John M. White

## A MODERN MR. MALAPROP

Then Sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts;—and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries;—but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not mis-spell and mis-pronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. —This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know; —and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

(Mrs. Malaprop in Sheridan's *The Rivals*, 1775)

THE SPIRIT of Mrs. Malaprop, that artful twister of words, is still very much alive, even after almost two centuries. In all parts of the country and from all walks of life, you can find her devotees still carrying on her elegant tradition of finding the right word for the wrong place. H\*Y\*M\*A\*N\*K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N with his inimitable choice of "woids" was such a follower: "So de doctor insulted odder doctors and dey took him in Mount Sinai Hospital. He had double demonial! So dere vas spacial noises, an' fromm all kinds maditzins de bast, an' an oxen tant, he should be able to breed. Even blood confusions dey gave him! An' dey shot him in de arm, he should fallink aslip. Dey gave him epidemics." (*The Education of Hyman Kaplan* by Leonard Ross, 1937.)

Gracie Allen and Chico Marx used to be masters at the art of substituting the wrong words for the right ones on radio and TV. Jimmy Durante can still fling a mean malapropism to get laughs. Witness his "Am I disconfabulated!" Yogi Bear, in television cartoons, talks of a convention of "wood peppers." The examples are many. The art of Mrs. Malaprop is not dead. Far from it. The other day a lady said to me, "I was simply nonpulsed, absolutely nonpulsed."

The chief exponent of Mrs. Malaprop's art among my personal acquaintances is Nacio, who has been my neighbor for the last twenty years. He talks about excavating (evacuating) people in chem-

ical welfare (warfare) and freshlights for flashlights. He refers to a snooze (for a snort) of rum. When a man gets drunk, he's got a snoozeful.

His daughter is "imbedded" to him, he points out, adding that she's real "shark" (sharp) at times. Anaesthetic and antiseptic are words that he uses interchangeably. The other day, he told me someone had been "officiated" for asphyxiated.

Nacio is not exactly a young squirk, as he would say. He's been a jack-of-all-trades—carpenter, plumber, electrician—for most of his fifty-odd years. So when he says he's going to do the walls of his den in nutty pine, with rock-to-wall carpeting, you know he'll do a real shark job of it. The object in the middle of the table may be a centerpiece for most folks, but to Nacio it's a masterpiece.

Dogs are a favorite topic of conversation with my friend. He likes Colliers and Spiegels and sometimes Cocker Spaniards. His dog has lots of punk and has to be kept on a leech. He doesn't want his mug (mutt) to be contaminated with other mugs. And he feeds his pugs (pups) Wagon Train dog food. He says the food helps his dogs to follow their accent.

Nacio says his grandfather became a neutralized citizen after he had lived in this country twenty years. He died after brewing over his wife's death. And he never elected his family.

As a good churchgoer, Nacio follows his fate (faith). He wanted his daughter to marry within the Church so that he won't be excriminated. He's going to leave her a legacy of some chairs in the bank. He bought his grandson a baskinette.

When he says he's going to raise his salary, Nacio is referring to celery in his garden. And when he mentions barkley, he means broccoli. Smashed potatoes are his favorite vegetable.


The other day, he told me he saw the Harem Globetrotters on his Zinnia television set. He didn't feel so good because he's eaten some tribes (tripe), but after he'd shaved off his whispers he felt better and went for a drive. The engine of his car just purred along.

One of the chief weed pests in Nacio's lawn is nutgrass, but when he talks about it, it comes out like Snodgrass, the name of one of our pioneer families. With typical transposal of consonants, he talks about boats when he means votes and vice versa. His "sheeken" for "chicken," and "shursh" for "church," also follow some unwritten Grimm's law. A castoff is a "kidsoff" (or maybe it's "kissoff"), for some reason known only to Nacio.



Here are some other Nacio-isms that pop out so fast sometimes that you can't remember them unless you write them down on the spot: "British slang" for the accent of an Englishwoman; "igloo" for gigolo; "magician" for musician; "chlorinator" for coordinator; "gargles" for gurgles; "addimatically" for automatically; and "shattered" plane for chartered plane.

This is the art of malapropism at work. Like Hyman Kaplan, Nacio has the advantage of knowing English as a secondary tongue. It seems to help if you know a second language that you can mix up with the first one.

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## REVIEWS

THE ROMANTIC CONFLICT, by Allan Rodway. New York: The Humanities Press, 1963. 256 pp. \$6.

Allan Rodway, Senior Lecturer in the Department of English, University of Nottingham, England, has written an account of the sociological and psychological roots of English Romanticism—suited to the needs of undergraduate students. Part I, we are assured, “attempts to assign romanticism to a time and place—on grounds of critical utility [whatever that means]; to show why English romanticism should have come when it did and been what it was; to give evidence of social pressures not existing before or after the romantic period . . . and finally to indicate the creative dilemma (the inward aspect) which this situation put the English romantics into.” Part II includes “detailed discussion of individual poets and poems,” i.e., Smart, Chatterton, Cowper, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, and Keats, along with passing notices of most of the writers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—all in one hundred seventy-one pages, an average of less than twenty pages per author. Poems of major significance are treated often in one or two sentences or in a paragraph largely of commonplace judgments, not infrequently with the implication that nothing of importance remains to be said.

Perhaps more dismaying than the orthodox judgments are the original ones. He discovers in Blake, for example, a violent recantation, a “repudiation” of his views in *Poetical Sketches* and *Songs of Innocence*. To support his thesis that in youth Blake was “orthodox to the point of naivety,” he quotes from “The Chimney Sweeper” the lines:

And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,  
He'd have God for his father, & never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,  
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.  
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm;  
So if all do their duty they need not fear harm.

He comments that the poem “end piously,” apparently not seeing that the last line is savage in its ironic denunciation of the orthodox who cynically counseled acquiescence in the evils besetting the chimney sweepers,

and who offered the pious assurance that the balance would be trimmed for the suffering children in the next world.

He similarly quotes from "Holy Thursday"—a poem among the most violently ironic and denunciatory of church, inhumanity, and the status quo—the familiar lines:

Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor;  
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from the door.

He comments in apparent seriousness: "Neither in content and style nor in the simple hymnic rhythm of these and other poems is there any indication of irony. . . . The implication is that Blake was orthodox before the Revolution—at any rate, an orthodox nonconformist—and meant the songs to be what many still seem, Sunday-school propaganda."

"Holy Thursday" and "The Chimney Sweeper," it is true, contain no "indication" of irony: they are irony. In "Holy Thursday" we see what Blake detested most: aged men representing repression, the status quo, and hypocritical, negative religion, leading the suffering and forlorn pauper children into St. Paul's and applauding themselves in the full completion of their duty. The children needed love, laughter, green fields, and clear brooks, and the whole livelong day in which to be children—not a chill, dark, and solmen church in which to become wizened, sad old men before their time.

In "The Clod and the Pebble" he finds a statement of Blake's alleged recantation of his earlier naive orthodoxy:

". . . its bitter recognition of the actual, reproves the whole race of sentimentalists—including Blake's earlier self."

The poem has long been considered remarkable for its ringing denunciation, not of idealists or sentimentalists, but of cynical, avaricious, selfish men who have been perverted by a corrupt society. Love, which should be as the clod affirms—selfless and beautiful—has become, through the church, the moral code, and marriage, a sick and loathsome institution of greed, lust, and exploitation. One's frail confidence in Dr. Rodway's thesis is not strengthened by the evidence he supplies.

The chief value of this book lies in the bird's-eye view it supplies of a vast range of material. Here the critic sees not deep but wide.

—Norton B. Crowell

Norton Crowell is a professor at UNM where he has at times served as acting head of the Department of English and is now a member of its faculty. He is the author of *The Triple Soul: Browning's Theory of Knowledge*, which was published in 1963 by UNM Press.

A WORLD, by William Burford. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962. 46 pp. \$2.75.

A WEDGE OF WORDS, by Frederic Will. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962. 46 pp. \$2.75.

The poets discussed here represent two of the first five volumes of poetry issued by the University of Texas Press in their Tower Series. Each volume in this series is elegantly designed, of a uniform format and price, and decorated by an individual artist. Kim Taylor, the designer of the series, is to be congratulated on books as beautiful as these. It is a pleasure to read good poets in handsome books, a truly rare combination these days.

William Burford's poetry is marked by a precision of imagery, plain diction, and a flowing metric. He writes with equal ease in both free and traditional verse. His line is spare and clean, and he resists the temptations of rhetorical decoration.

These lines from the first section of *In A Wave* demonstrate the acuteness of his perception:

Seen beneath the glassy wave  
The naked, floating figure,  
The limbs, the drifting hair, and face—  
Is our own:

But distant there, strange,  
Image of the years gone,  
That lived once, had those features—  
The wave lifts it with outstretched arms—  
That for a minute stays;

Then draws it back into the ocean,  
Where lost, it sinks away.

The fourth line of the second stanza, where the corpse is lifted "with outstretched arms," is the turning point of the poem. It quietly presents an ambiguous horror. If it is taken to mean that the corpse is raised on the outstretched arms of the wave, the image concentrates on the finality of death as well as the helplessness of man outside his environment. If, on the other hand, we take the line to mean that the wave lifts the corpse with its arms outstretched, we get the paradoxical vision of crucifixion, a surge of joy in the despair of death—a meaning no matter how vague or transient. Read either way, the line has great power. Its basic ambiguity, combined with the sparse language, creates an epiphany. In the second section of the poem the poet concludes that it would be better if death were final, if the corpse were bereft of all human features; and, as the

corpse is washed into annihilation, the poet also desires the annihilation of the idea of death in human language. Stoically, he says that the vision will return again and again, just as the corpse sinks and rises in the pounding waves. One is reminded on Valéry's great line in *La Cimetière Marin*: "La mer, la mer, toujours recommencée." In Burford's poem, the thought of death, like Valéry's sea, is "forever rebegun."

Death, the dumb hostility of nature, and the human contribution to a brute world are Burford's main themes. He writes without sentiment or triviality.

*The Anatomy Lesson*, a poem occasioned by Rembrandt's painting of the same name, allows Burford to analyse the concept of immortality. Beholding the ignobly flayed corpse, he writes:

'I am the Resurrection and the Life.'  
Do the lips, that are dead, still move?  
'The body with the soul shall rise.'

But the body is butchered meat  
And the shroud, a bloody sheet  
From which stick out the dumb feet.

The stumpy metric and masculine rhyme of this second tercet manage to express the poet's indignation both at the fact of death and the ignominy of the autopsy. Where is human dignity? Only a small shred remains:

But the human face is sad  
Still wearing its brave mustache,  
And has been slowly turning blank

The dignity, irony, and despair contained in these simple lines is awesome indeed; the mustache is remarkable.

Burford's stance is that of an enthralled witness. In a relatively simple poem called *Vase with Poppies* he restates a similar theme: the flowers in the vase are beautiful, and yet the flatness of table and wall, the human environment framing the beauty of the flowers, is the element in which they shall die. With this simple device Burford is able to state the ambivalence between man and nature: by enhancing our lives with the beauties of nature, we kill the very thing we thought beautiful. In the wave, nature conquers; in the vase, where there is a quick beauty, man conquers, but is remorseful. Nature is hostile, alien, totally other; and yet man, the most alien of natural creatures, is still an integral part of the world: man is focal, in the sense that he creates nature by naming it.

Other poems worth special attention are *At the Green Tavern: five in the afternoon* where Rimbaud, an exhausted traveler, takes an almost

apocalyptic joy in the simple pleasures of food, a buxom waitress, and beer; *At the Track* presents an eerie vision of Death; and *The Screen*, with the lines "has a grayish silver tinge/ Like a brain that is blank and mad" emphasizes man's passive indifference to the viewing of horror in a movie theatre: after viewing his own imminent destruction by the Bomb, the poet, like the rest of the audience, walks home and sleeps soundly till the break of day.

Frederic Will is a quieter poet than William Burford. Both of them possess an enviable technical accomplishment; both eschew rhetorical flourishes, allowing the rhythm of the poetic form to carry the undercurrents of their meaning. Will is contemplative, once removed from his subject. But he is not passive. His vision is sharp, exactly rendered, as in *Hartford*:

Where spring, an accident that's never covered,  
Creeps libidinous from house to house,  
And trickles, when the last martini's gone,  
Into the actuary's careful blood.

In a town where "policies are read before each meal," spring is the unaccountable accident, the disaster against which there is no insurance. Like living, it is adventitious; it creates disorder in parks and on neat lawns. And, with a finely controlled anger, the poet points out that even the most callous of calculators, after he is drunk enough, becomes infected with the rank exuberance of spring, the virus of living, and the cycle of the seasons. The four lines express the clandestine lechering of suburbia, its annihilating drunkenness, and its despair of the true terms of living.

A poem called *Zoo Piece* deals with instinct and captivity, with "Murder flickering under/ The still lids" of the caged animals. Even though these animals were born in a zoo, in an environment of peanut shells, concrete, and iron bars—their unnatural, natural habitat—the jungle still asserts itself in their urban spirits.

Will is also capable of rendering tight, astringent epigrams. *Death at the Cellular Level*, a poem dealing with cancer, shows this ability at its height:

Death on the cellular level comes  
Slowly at first and takes a part.  
Something about its movement hints  
Less of violence than of art,  
Careful revenge for something old.

This poem is reminiscent of a letter of Descartes to Princess Elizabeth in which he stated that the relationship between the body and soul was

not that of ship to helmsman. The epigram contains this wonder, the awe that comes on realizing that the relation between mind-body is a kind of symbiosis. Which is host, which parasite, changes with the amount of control one part exerts over the other.

Of philosophy, Will has this to say:

Weaving particular grammars,  
Shaking existence until it broke.

These last lines illustrate Will's single problem, his ambiguity. In the above couplet, which ends *Philosophy*, one may construe the lines as being an indictment of philosophy or a statement that the philosophers, by breaking existence, have broken through to truth. But the two notions are not compatible together, and the ambivalence detracts from the poet's intention, loosening his execution. The ability to sustain contradiction, a Whitmanesque hangover so highly praised today, is actually an inability to choose between alternatives.

Nevertheless, in both these poets, we have real voices with hard visions, and a craftsmanship seldom met in an age when what passes for poetry sometimes depends merely on its typographical layout.

—Gus Blaisdell

## Poetry Contributors

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KENNETH FIELDS, a doctoral candidate in English and American Literature at Stanford University, has received the Wallace Stegner Creative Writing Fellowship for poetry and the Academy of American Poets Award. His verse has been published in *Sequoia*, *American-Scandinavian Review*, and *Southern Review*.

PHILIP LEGLER's poetry has appeared frequently in such publications as *Poetry*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Commonweal*, the *New York Times*, and *NMQ*. In 1964, the University

of Nebraska Press issued a volume of his verse, *A Change of View*. Richard Howard's critical essay on Legler's work will be published in Horizon Press's *Fifty Poets*. Mr. Legler is currently a member of the English faculty at Sweet Briar College, Virginia.

Poet HOWARD McCORD's latest volume, *The Spanish Dark and Other Poems*, was published by Washington State University Press this year. Born in El Paso, Texas, he has taught at Texas Western College, the University of Utah, and is now on the English faculty at Washington State University. Last summer he was in India at the University of Mysore on a Fulbright Fellowship. In addition to three published volumes of poetry, his work has appeared in many magazines.

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✿ HOLLIS SUMMERS has published poetry in such magazines as the *Sewanee*, *Saturday* and *Hudson Reviews* and is the author of three novels, *City Limit*, *Brighten the Corner*, and *The Weather of February*. Harpers has published his

volume of verse, *The Walks Near Athens*. Mr. Summers taught for several years at the University of Kentucky where he was chosen "Distinguished Professor of the Year," and is now a member of the Ohio University English faculty.

✿ Verb Press will publish poet JOHN TAYLOR's new book, *The Soap Duckets*, this year. Other works have appeared in the *Kenyon*, *Paris*, *Chicago* and *Massachusetts Reviews*, and in other literary magazines. He teaches at State University College in Buffalo, New York.





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