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## ICarbs, Volume 5, Issue 1

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# ICarbs

VOL. V, NO. 1

SPRING-SUMMER, 1985

Mordecai Gorelik / *Christian Moe*  
/ *Marie Kilker*

Jean Cocteau / *Frémont & Gobert*

James Joyce & Molyneux Palmer / *Myra Russel*

Hugh Dalziel Duncan / *Charles Elkins*

Reginald Hunter / *Kenneth Hopkins*

XXVIII Gentle Lady

Molto andante ♩ = 15R

Gentle lady, do not sing

Said  
Sings a-bout the end of love. Lay a-side

The image shows a handwritten musical score on a white background, enclosed in a black rounded rectangular border. The score is written in black ink. At the top, it is titled 'XXVIII Gentle Lady'. Below the title, the tempo and meter are indicated as 'Molto andante' and '♩ = 15R'. The first system of music consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics 'Gentle lady, do not sing'. The second system of music also consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics 'Said Sings a-bout the end of love. Lay a-side'. The piano accompaniment features a complex, rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and rests.

# ICarbs\*

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SPRING-SUMMER, 1985

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\* ICarbs is the National Union Catalog symbol for Morris Library, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

While time and circumstances dictate that *ICarbS* be an "irregular" (i.e., published less than twice a year) publication, the editors did not mean it to be as "irregular" as the period between the last issue and this one has been. We thank the Friends of Morris Library, and especially the periodicals recording clerks at libraries everywhere, for their patience and good humor. The next issue of *ICarbS* is not far off.


The career of Mordecai Gorelik is highlighted in this issue. The two articles about him had their geneses in presentations made recently when Mr. Gorelik received special honor at the annual meeting of the American Theatre Association. His extensive picture files continue to serve as a source of ideas and inspiration for set design classes and productions here at SIU, and his papers and designs are often-sought scholarly resources.

Your attention is called to the list of bibliographic contributions and exhibit catalogs at the back of this issue. The Joyce catalog, marking the centenary of his birth, has been in particular demand.

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## Mordecai Gorelik A Scholar and Writer Who Addresses Humanity

by Christian H. Moe

It is foolhardy at best to attempt to discuss a man the stamp of Mordecai Gorelik as critic, scholar, and dramatic writer within the brief space allotted me and think to do him justice. I am not so naive. Yet having accepted the assignment, I will like Sisyphus forge ahead on an impossible task.

Let me begin with some personal impressions. It has been my privilege to have known Max Gorelik for ten years as a colleague in the Theater Department at Southern Illinois University where he gave me, my fellow staff members, and the students an experience seldom relaxing but never dull, an experience constantly stimulating that pushed one up to the mark and that furnished by dint of the man and his mind and his art an enriching influence on us all. My impressions are of a man cantankerous yet kindly, opinionated yet open-minded, who is a tough-minded, highly gifted artist and intellectual, firm in his criticism. He is a man who argues with crystal clarity in thought and expression and always from a depth of experience. He is opinionated, and one may not always agree with his opinion, but should one attempt to challenge it, he had better marshal well his arguments. That is not to say that Max Gorelik is inflexible or unseeking of the reactions of others to his work. He simply expects reactions to be supported by reasons, by rational thought, for without the latter, he justly contends, reactions are of small practical use to him. Having offered him evaluations of many of his plays, I know whereof I speak. Let me also say he is a most perceptive and constructive critic of the creative work of others. His mind is like the sun at high noon, burning down overhead, illuminating all corners, and admitting no shadows. And we certainly find this mind at work in his critical writings.

To my mind Max Gorelik as critic and scholar and artist has successfully assumed the challenge implicit in the words of the Russian composer Moussorgsky: "Art is not an end in itself, but a means of addressing humanity." For more than sixty years of a still active career his writing has "addressed humanity."

Turning first to his critical writing, we find it covers a long waterfront. There are essays in newspapers and in notable journals like *Theatre Arts*, *Theatre Annual*, *Players Magazine*, *New Theatre*, *(Tulane) Drama*

*Review*, (*Educational*) *Theatre Journal*, and Australia's *Masque*, to mention a few. There are book and production reviews, articles on theatre in both the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and *Encyclopedia Americana*, contributions to books, like his superb article on the scene designer in Gassner's *Producing the Play*,<sup>1</sup> and the now classic *New Theatres for Old* written in 1940, which synthesized a century of modern drama and theatre and solidified a belief progressively developed through his writings that the theatre exists to enlighten as well as to entertain audiences.<sup>2</sup>

Salient influences in Gorelik's life generated a wide scope of research interests. His immigrant youth in the backyards of Brooklyn gave him an affinity for the working class (further strengthened by the Great Depression) and for European culture, ultimately leading to research on European theatre production and design with a focus on the German and Soviet theatre. Travel abroad, supported by foundation grants, allowed him to view his subject firsthand. His work with Group Theatre, the Workers Theatre movement of the 1930s, Robert Edmond Jones and the latter's advocacy of the new Stagecraft movement contributed topics for a number of articles. Gorelik worked for and visited abroad with Bertolt Brecht (well before the latter was discovered by Eric Bentley) and became so impressed with the Epic Theatre of Brecht and Piscator that he seldom abandoned it as a subject for study. World War II and its aftermath of Cold War made firmer his views on the theatre's social purpose as he later recorded his observations about the American theatre, lamenting its tendency toward psychological introspection and its avoidance of social issues.<sup>3</sup> Also springing from the influences and experience of his life and career, other topics in his research spectrum encompassed his stage and film designs, the aims and methods of a course called "The Scenic Imagination," Australian theatre, the "Irrational Theatre" of Absurdism, and the participatory theatre of the 1960s.

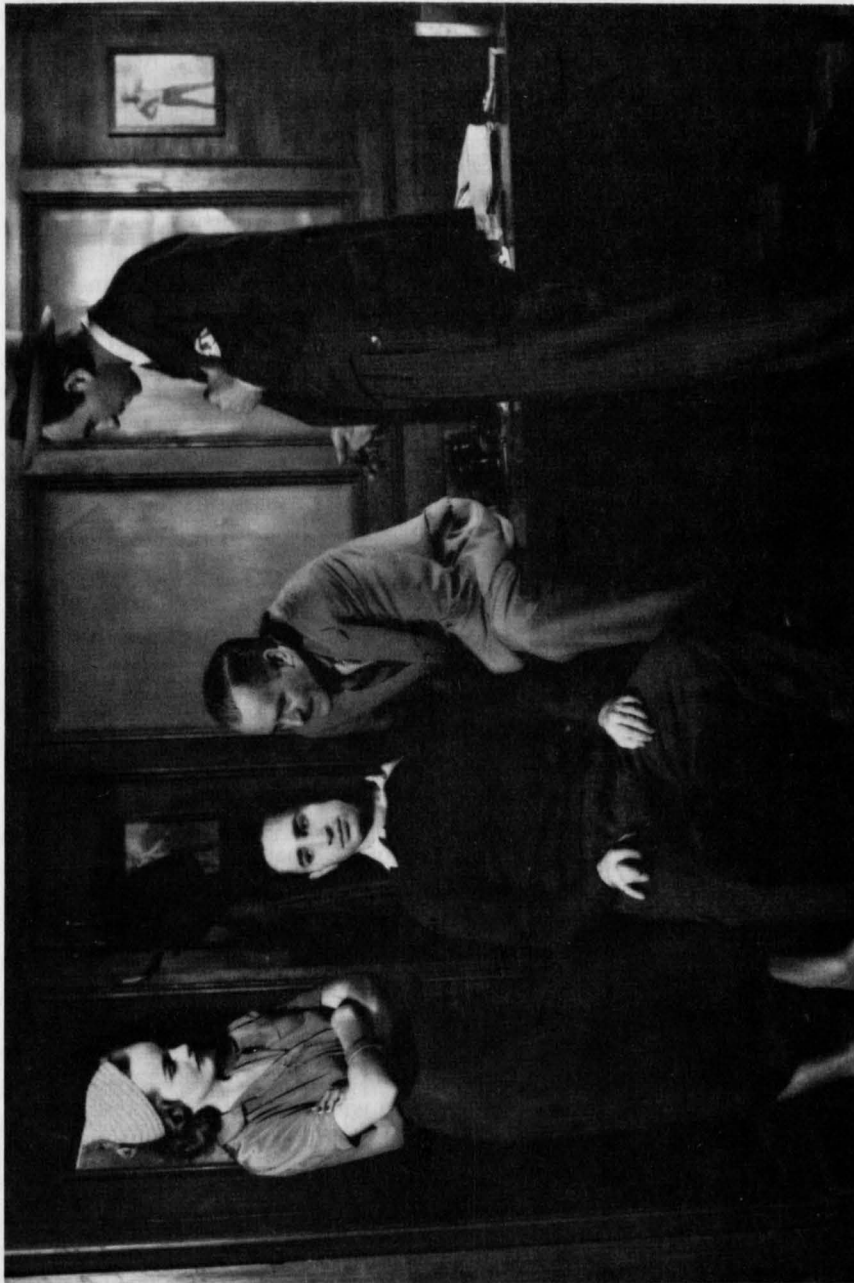
By the 1930s Gorelik began to publish articles—a habit he happily sustained over five decades to the present—reflecting his developing ideas about the nature of theatre and the art of scenic design. Here was a practicing professional designer who not only could be articulate in print about his own work but also about the entire scope of theatre. Early articles about scene design expressed beliefs that the setting should serve the actor,<sup>4</sup> go beyond mere illusion and pretty pictures to employ "immediate ritual" and a "cubism of experience,"<sup>5</sup> and be less important than the playwright.<sup>6</sup> Gorelik's dissatisfaction with a middle class theatre not responsive to social needs and his belief that the theatre belonged to the people surfaced in essays on the Workers Theatre Movement of the 1930s.<sup>7</sup> Contact with Bertolt Brecht and Epic Theatre concretized for Gorelik qualities that he sought in theatre: "moral sensitivity," "scientific accuracy," and "stirring imagination."<sup>8</sup> With Brecht he shared a conviction that the theatre should deal

with contemporary problems and the plight of the common man and the poor. He found Brecht's demand for the employment of the scientific method a means for the revelation of the truth. Consequently he championed and clarified the cause of Epic Theatre in such articles, written before and after World War II, as "Brecht: I Am the Einstein of the New Stage Form,"<sup>9</sup> "An Epic Theatre Catechism,"<sup>10</sup> "Epic Scene Design,"<sup>11</sup> and numerous others.

Twice awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in the thirties, Gorelik was helped to complete a study of the theatre which resulted in his masterpiece and now acclaimed international classic, *New Theatres for Old*, in 1940. Orson Welles noted in a review that Gorelik's perspectives are "sharp but true; his findings are alive with enthusiasm and always opinionated enough to be valid."<sup>12</sup> Walter Pritchard Eaton commented: ". . . once you get your definitions settled with him, his book becomes a stimulating and provocative one, and . . . leaves you with the uncomfortable feeling that the designers are more imaginative and intelligent artists just now than the playwrights. Every dramatist should be made to read this book."<sup>13</sup> And Barnard Hewitt observed the work to be "in many ways the best book on the theatre that has appeared in 20 years."<sup>14</sup>

In *New Theatres for Old* its author sees theatre as an instrument for the better understanding of life, not as mere entertainment or as an outlet for pent-up emotion. "Theatre," states Gorelik, "is entering on a long struggle to maintain its integrity and freedom of thought, to hold on to its sacred duty of clarifying life."<sup>15</sup> Examining the theatre of the past and present on the premise that the purpose of theatre is to "influence life by theatrical means," Gorelik concludes that the theatre is script, that most theatre in this century has failed to realize its social responsibility to illuminate the life of its audience, and that the future theatre will abandon peep-box illusionism for presentational staging (called "conventional staging" by Gorelik) which introduces the stage as a platform for action and the performance as a ceremony in which actors and audience take part.<sup>16</sup> He suggests the theatre of the future combine Epic Theatre's scientific accuracy and methods and the Symbolist's imagination (that is, a merging of art and science, imagination and fact) to best realize its capacity for the revelation of life. In terms of production styles, much of this prediction has occurred in the theatre; content has not yet been so widely affected. A masterpiece of scholarship, *New Theatres for Old*, is a veritable encyclopedia of information and provocative thought.

Gorelik's published work in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s went beyond a steady focus on Epic Theatre and world theatre to center largely on three other areas. First, the aims and methods of his course called "The Scenic Imagination" are outlined in several articles. In "The Scenic Imagination: Still Evolving," he discussed the importance of metaphor—a core concept



Golden Boy, 1937, cast (l. to r.): Frances Farmer, Elia Kazan, Roman Bohnen, Lou Polan

of the course requiring the design student not only to analyze a play as thoroughly as a director but also precisely to describe its meaning in terms of an image. Additionally, he listed as criteria that the metaphor chosen be:

- Implicit in the documentation of the setting  
(geographically and historically)
- Vivid in its evocative power
- Adequate for the calibre of the play
- Dynamic in its ability to change and develop
- Useful to the actor<sup>17</sup>

Also he no longer accepted from students such obvious images as a prison, a cage, or a cave for dramatic settings, or a merry-go-round for comic settings. Eventually, "The Scenic Imagination" was worked into a book-length manuscript. Publishers offered it did a disservice to scholarship by not bringing it to print.

Secondly, the limitations of the American theatre and such forms as Absurdism became objects of concern in other articles. In a 1969 essay entitled "Root-Freeze of American Drama," Gorelik complained that dramatic writing of the past two decades "has twisted and squirmed to avoid controversy" and rebuked our drama for its narrow focus on domestic disharmony, sexual neuroses, and narcissistic psychological introspection as the chief sources of conflict.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, he credited dramas like Jack Gelber's *The Cuban Thing*, Joseph Heller's *We Bombed in New Haven*, Howard Sackler's *The Great White Hope*, George Sklar's *And People All Around* (as well as Brecht's *Mother Courage*) for dealing with "human beings caught in the great contradictions of our times."<sup>19</sup> Absurdism, another Gorelik target, was taken to task for its discounting of rational thought and its delight in obscurantism. In "The Theatre of Sad Amusement," he wrote: "Absurdist plays contain no living characters of recognizable dilemma. They do not clarify life, but instead offer senseless speeches and cryptic frustrations."<sup>20</sup>

Doubtless to the delight of its theatre page readers, the *New York Times* printed an energetic debate on the subject waged by Max Gorelik against champions of Absurdism.<sup>21</sup> A statement of Gorelik's apparently summing up his persistent concern about the American theatre, and one still holding urgent currency in the 1980s, is found in "Legacy of the New Deal Drama":

If the theatre's history of more than two thousand years means anything, vital drama has always been dedicated to the defense of human values. It still has the obligation to clarify life for its audiences in terms of dynamic action—even more so in an era of confusion, sloganeering, and possible atomic disintegration. The national crisis of the 30s gave its dramatists an urgent sense of their responsibility and of the need for independent thought to go with it.

But they were supported morally by a nation that had taken a constructive political course. The drama of commitment, and the general insurgency that gave it strength, were finally erased by the reform legislation of the New Deal, by the long period of prosperity following the Second World War, and the advent of the irrational-minded New Left in the theatre. It will be interesting to see if the American dramatic experience of the 30s has left a viable tradition behind it.<sup>22</sup>

That Mordecai Gorelik stands in the top echelon of critics and scholars of the theatre will not be contested. Let us now pass on to another phase of his career, namely his dramatic writing.

Not content to be just a scene designer as well as a critic, historian, director, and teacher, Max Gorelik also writes plays. As early as 1926 he advised the ambitious scene designer that he must always be the "slave of the playwright" and that if he found that realization demeaning, then he would have "no alternative but to write his own scripts—not mediocre ones either, but good ones."<sup>23</sup> Taking his own advice, Gorelik pursued playwriting with a passion. He plans to publish a collection of his plays encompassing five full-length works and three of his seven or more short plays. In addition to these dramas are two other works, a translation/adaptation of Max Frisch's *Herr Biedermann and the Firebugs* and an adaptation of *Hamlet*.

Thanks to Gorelik, the Swiss dramatist Max Frisch became known to American audiences and readers when his *Herr Biedermann and the Firebugs*, translated and adapted by Mordecai Gorelik, was published in Block and Shedd's widely-used anthology, *Masters of Modern Drama*.<sup>24</sup> The play has enjoyed about two hundred American productions in community and university theatres, including a short-run off-Broadway premiere in 1963, which Gorelik designed and for which he shared directing credits with Gene Frankel. Two years later it was produced with great success at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. The play presents a middle-class businessman (Biedermann) who naively allows two arsonists, obvious in their incendiary aims, to be guests in his house. Despite Biedermann's courteous hospitality, they burn the house down. The translator chose to see the play as a parable of "middle-class behavior in countries which threaten each other with nuclear incineration," and continued to remark in a program note for the 1965 university production, that "faced with the terror, the bourgeois citizen resolutely shuts his eyes in the hope that it will go away."<sup>25</sup> The idiomatic translation, subtitled "A learning play without a lesson," evinces the sure-handed skill of Gorelik as a translator.

In 1961 came *The Annotated Hamlet*, an experiment in Epic style that combined dramatic production with the quality of a lecture demonstration.<sup>26</sup> With the aim of clarifying *Hamlet* for present-day audiences—in particular those spectators not familiar with the play—he adapted the Shakespeare drama using Epic Theatre devices such as projected slides

and a commentator to juxtapose scholarly comment and historical exposition with key scenes from the drama. A 1961 production designed and directed by Gorelik at Southern Illinois University proved both exciting and controversial.<sup>27</sup> While a portion of theatre goers already initiated into Shakespeare felt that *Hamlet* needed no such clarification and rearrangement, few failed to be stimulated and enlightened by the experimental production. The experiment, to my mind, was both lively and rewarding, and particularly effective in clarifying *Hamlet* for those with little prior knowledge of the play.

For purposes chiefly of familiarization, let us direct our attention to the original plays, outlining first two of his short plays.<sup>28</sup> Although Max Gorelik wryly calls himself a budding dramatist at eighty-three, he began writing short plays early in his career. One of the later short plays is *The Big Day*, published in the 1977 volume of *The Best Short Plays* series.<sup>29</sup> The action occurs in the present in an independent machine shop. A merger has taken place with a large conglomerate which dispatches its own hirelings to spy out any resistance to the authority of the new front office. A chief target is a veteran shop superintendent who momentarily defies his new bosses by refusing to fire a capable union machinist branded as a troublemaker by the management. When the supervisor realizes that his own position will be seriously threatened, he reluctantly compromises and discharges the machinist, who has never been afraid to risk his security for his convictions. Despite an ambitious number of characters and issues to be developed in a short play, the drama holds our attention through its richly detailed environment and its interesting central character.

An earlier short play is *Paul Thompson Forever*, published in 1950.<sup>30</sup> In this fantasy, a hard-boiled foreman (the title character) returns abruptly after death to an astounded wife and daughter, accompanied by an Interrogator from the Beyond charged with investigating the foreman's soul to determine his position in the Afterlife. The decision, based on whether the man has been beneficent to family and mankind or selfish, is resolved affirmatively with the aid of the wife's protective evasions and lies. The play is significant because it foreshadows the author's full-length play *Rainbow Terrace* and thus provides us with a transition point to move to the latter play and other long plays.

*Rainbow Terrace* is the name of a limbo-like suburb of the Afterlife whose inhabitants are not permitted money, alcohol, or disobedience to the rules at risk of being literally disintegrated in the public square.<sup>31</sup> Citizens are urged to contemplate their past lives in a school called the Process. Rankled by the proscriptive regulations and the blandness of this Afterlife society is an aggressive and self-made businessman named Falkimer (like Paul Thompson an entity unto himself) who lives with his wife and son and visits his girlfriend on the side. The restlessly energetic Falkimer



Gorelik set design for Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* (1952)

flaunts the rules by making and marketing to his neighbors an alcoholic tonic, using paper IOUs as currency. This illegal activity frightens his family, angers the authorities, and causes dissension among his neighbors, particularly when he demands a transfer to heaven, not believing that a God who let him succeed in business (by selling a bogus tonic to the unsuspecting) would not have intended him for Afterlife's highest realm. His activity is halted, however. Falkimer is then tried and convicted by a tribunal of angels and sentenced to public disintegration just as an antiestablishment conspiracy by rebellious angels is squelched. Falkimer is not an admirable hero but his energy and the question he poses is compelling. The author's theme, which came from a boyhood conversation with his father about the Hereafter,<sup>32</sup> posits a reaction to the biblical quotation appearing on the frontpiece of the playscript: "Woe unto him who strives with his Maker, an earthen vessel with the potter! Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, what makest thou?" (Isiah, 45:9). "The vessel," remarked actor Morris Carnovsky in a letter to Gorelik after reading the play and commending it for stimulating his thinking, "will demand of its maker the reason for its being."<sup>33</sup> The drama is a modern morality play with a question in place of a moral. Its concept and theme are intriguing and it raises important questions.

*Rainbow Terrace* was well received and proved playable when premiered in 1966 at Southern Illinois University in a production designed and directed by the author.<sup>34</sup> It stirred controversy, as Max Gorelik's work usually does.

Not in the Hereafter but in a Northern Irish town in 1971 is a second long play, *The Feast of Unreason*.<sup>35</sup> An unwedded woman in her thirties is assigned a new municipal cottage because her father is a Protestant councilman and policeman. A moderate Catholic seminarian housing officer peacefully protests the assignment while unknown to him his assistant, a girl recruited by the IRA, initiates militant action by moving a coarse but needy Catholic slum family into the same cottage. Although the councilman's daughter is much put upon by the family of intruders, who refuse to leave, she begins to have some compassion for their plight. When a Protestant mob attacks the Catholics in her housing development, a bloody melee ensues and innocent people are killed. The Protestant woman loses her father and her complacency and becomes socially aware of the problems of her place and time. The author does not take sides; his point and the play's action resemble those of O'Casey in *The Plough and the Stars*: violence and the inability to consider rational compromise lead to self-destruction. Loosely based on an actual incident in 1968, the script demonstrates well-detailed research, its author's good ear for Irish idiom, and a good hand at drawing some lively characters.



Moving from the economic-religious war in Northern Ireland, Gorelik mirrors the opposition of scientific and religious faith in *Andrus, or the Vision*.<sup>36</sup> Premiered in 1977 at Kansas State University and later produced at East Central University in Oklahoma, the drama, set in thirteenth-century Europe, introduces a demon of secular knowledge and unbelief named Belial who has inherited Andrus, the son of an alchemist, for a promise to keep him from being "entrapped by the faith in God." When grown, however, Andrus becomes a coal-miner who is devoutly Christian. To wrest Andrus out of his religious belief, Belial sends him visions of a future man-created paradise—air travel is one such vision—which Andrus' fellow miners hail as a sign of Jesus' second coming to free Christianity from a Roman pope. The Inquisition becomes alarmed and orders Andrus to renounce his visions or be burned at the stake. Andrus remains unrepentant until a final vision, predicting the atomic age and the destruction made possible by modern warfare and developed scientific thought, horrifies Andrus and he recants. Sentenced to life imprisonment, he is freed when the miners, armed by Belial, revolt. Yet the demon finds Andrus hopelessly stuck in his faith so he removes the miner's gift of vision and leaves him to the comfort of "orthodox superstitions."

Thematically the drama proclaims for science and for man's freedom to think against the strictures of religious conformatism and dogma. From a questioning of the religious establishment "truisms" and proscriptions in *Rainbow Terrace*, we come to a central character taking an opposing stand who finds it more comfortable to accept orthodox beliefs. A staged reading of the play (in an abridged version) for a Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship<sup>37</sup> provoked lively discussion and persuaded me of the drama's particular appeal for liberal religious groups.

Of another stamp and somewhat reminiscent of the didactic drama of the thirties is a fourth long play, *United We Stand*.<sup>38</sup> The author takes us to a bricklayers' local during the Joseph McCarthy era. In the midst of a mismanaged wildcat strike, the AFL union local is torn by internal dissension, fueled by a Red witch-hunt surreptitiously manipulated by the local's veteran secretary, a strong-willed woman. Good men and a vigorous young leader are maligned and expelled and stooges assume their places, stifling constructive action. When the International Brotherhood of AFL demands that good leadership be reinstated and that the abortive strike be settled, the union rank and file restore their former young leader and, with that act, begin to win back the earlier unity they enjoyed. The scheming machinations of the power-hungry secretary are brought to light and she is expelled.

Containing a rich amount of detail about union activities, the drama's action, while rendered somewhat diffuse by the welter of characters and complications, trenchantly demonstrates the destructive effect of the Red-

baiting atmosphere of the McCarthy period and a manipulative opportunist on a local union of workers. With *The Big Day, United We Stand* richly details the environment of the blue collar worker's world, a world the author apparently knows well.

*Yes and No* (originally entitled *Meegan's Son*) is the final full-length play to be mentioned here and will be described only briefly.<sup>39</sup> Set in a seaside community of 1971 during the Vietnam War, the drama introduces a small-time lawyer and his wife, both former radicals, who are upset when their eighteen-year-old son Larry joins a local commune in producing a "peace ballet." The aging liberal, a pole apart from the fervor of his son's generation and concerned with holding on to a conservative client not sympathetic to antiwar protests, has become estranged from his son. When the latter and his pacifist friends are threatened by "patriotic" community forces of the right including several establishment hooligans imbued with the My Lai mentality, a physical clash occurs which brings father and son closer together. "The play's theme," noted the author, "is that My Lai exposed a national moral decay."<sup>40</sup> The drama perceptively portrays the conflict between the generations and that between dove and hawk, obliquely reflecting in the latter the polarization caused by the Vietnam war.

In conclusion it can be observed that the plays of Max Gorelik represent a vitally energetic aspect of his creative career as writer and artist, and also bear out a lifelong dedication to drama of social engagement. He has been, and continues to be, a writer and artist of commitment who indeed "addresses humanity."

The closing words of *New Theatres for Old* have not lost their strength today nor has their speaker:

The storm is now upon us. The atmosphere of thought grows constricted; people throw away their minds and begin to shout the slogans of the market place. And what will happen to our theatre? Part of it, no doubt, will join the hue and cry, and cry louder than any. Another part will turn completely escapist. But the rest will go courageously through all that lies ahead. It will build the foundations of a future theatre worthy of a democratic American people.<sup>41</sup>

Max Gorelik, gifted artist and eloquent gadfly, distinguished critic and dedicated citizen of the world, is the tireless champion of that theatre and that dream.

## Notes

1. Mordecai Gorelik, "Designing the Play," in *Producing the Play*, ed. John Gassner, rev. ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1953), pp. 301-54.
2. Mordecai Gorelik, *New Theatres for Old* (New York: Samuel French, 1940).

3. These views of Gorelik on the American theatre also are reflected in the following articles: "Toward a Larger Theatre," *Contact*, 1, No. 2 (1959), 47-56; "The Theatre of Sad Amusement: A Rejoinder," *Drama Survey*, 2 (Fall 1962), 175-77; "Legacy of the New Deal Drama," *Drama Survey*, 4 (Spring 1965), 38-43; "American Drama at Dead End," *Contact*, 4, No. 3 (1964), 62-64; "Root-Freeze of American Drama," *Meanjin Quarterly*, 28 (Autumn 1969), 90-95.

4. Mordecai Gorelik, "I Design for the Group Theatre," *Theatre Arts*, 23 (Mar. 1939), 180-86.

5. It now becomes clear that the art of the stage setting, enriched by its experience with the reminiscent, introspective form, is turning from the technique of illusion and of static mood, toward the technique of an immediate ritual in the theatre. It seeks to create a current, not a remembered, emotion in the spectator, making him react objectively to the play of action, color and light which is taking place before his eyes. It is proper to say that the new settings seek a cubism of experience, translating into stage terms the phenomena of the outer-world, just as the cubist and post-cubist painter translates the world into a pattern of paint on canvas. This throws some light on what may be described as the slogan of Gordon Craig: "Toward a theatrical theatre!" To be sure, Craig advanced this slogan on a purely aesthetic basis which did not explain itself and which sometimes led him to absurd conclusions. But his intuition was correct: the modern theatre as it passes out of its introverted, "atmospheric" period, moves toward the basic stage form of theatrical ceremony.

Mordecai Gorelik, "The Conquest of Stage Space," *Theatre Arts*, 18 (Mar. 1934), 215-17.

6. Mordecai Gorelik, "Some Observations on the New Stagecraft," *Arts*, 9 (Apr. 1926), 193-97.

7. Mordecai Gorelik, "Theatre is a Weapon," *Theatre Arts*, 18 (June 1934), 420-33.

8. Theatre is entering on a long struggle to maintain its integrity and freedom of thought, to hold on to its sacred duty of clarifying life. In the effort to remain clear in judgment, it will reach its greatest moral sensitivity, its most stirring imagination. It will rally around it devoted audiences who will share with it the most sublime of all experiences—that of learning truly from life.

Gorelik, *New Theatres for Old*, p. 471.

9. *Theatre Arts*, 41 (Mar. 1957), 72-73, 86-87.

10. *Tulane Drama Review*, 4 (Autumn 1959), 90-95.

11. *Theatre Arts*, 43 (Oct. 1959), 75-80.

12. *Saturday Review of Literature*, 23 (8 Feb. 1941), 12.

13. *Books*, 9 Feb. 1941, p. 12.

14. "Mordecai Gorelik," *High School Thespian*, 13 (Nov. 1941), 6.

15. *New Theatres for Old*, p. 471.

16. Gorelik later restates this concept:

Conventional staging accepts as basic the idea that a performance is a ceremony in which actors and audience take part. The stage is a platform, the settings are scenic structures, and the actors, wearing stage costumes, are obviously representing personages other than themselves. Illusory staging, on the contrary, seeks to wipe out of the mind of the spectator the consciousness that he is sitting in a theatre. Instead of a platform, the stage seems to be a peep-box framed by a proscenium. . . . Scenically, the avowed ideal of this type of staging is a *trompe l'oeil*, a simulation of real places and a lifelike imitation of the effects of nature.

"Theatre," *Encyclopedia Americana* (1962), XXVI, 492.

17. "The Scenic Imagination: Still Evolving," *Players Magazine*, 43 (Oct.-Nov. 1967), 24.

18. "Root-Freeze of American Drama," p. 91.

19. "Root-Freeze of American Drama," p. 95.

20. "Theatre of Sad Amusement: A Rejoinder," p. 175.

21. Theater is a special, remarkable form of social communication, one that, when it is healthy, celebrates the highest aspiration and deepest wisdom of its communicants. Therefore the apologists of absurdism are correct when they say that the absurdist dramas (or non-dramas) describe non-communication. Not only do these plays describe it, but they also form part of it themselves.

Mordecai Gorelik, "The Absurd Absurdist," *New York Times*, 8 Aug. 1965, Sec. II, p. 1.

One defender of Absurdism taking exception to Gorelik's views was Martin Esslin; see his, "The Theatre of the Absurd Isn't Absurd at All," *New York Times*, 29 Aug. 1965, Sec. II, pp. 1, 3.

22. "Legacy of the New Deal Drama," p. 38.

23. A scenic artist with a real sense of drama will always be a slave of the playwright. If that realization galls the ambitious designer and he still wants a high place in the theatre he appears to have no alternative but to write his own scripts—not mediocre ones either but good ones. The dramatist's insight into problems of situation and character and the actor's assumption of the dramatic story are the things the theatre lives by; beside these things the turmoil over lights and paints, color schemes, revolving stages, circus auditoriums and constructivist scaffolding, is of no consequence.

Program, *Nirvana*, Greenwich Village Theatre, 3 March 1926. Quoted in James C. Palmer, Jr. "Mordecai Gorelik's Theory of the Theatre" (PhD dissertation, Southern Illinois Univ., 1967), p. 69.

24. In *Masters of Modern Drama*, ed. Haskell M. Block and Robert G. Shedd (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 1162-84.

25. Program, *Herr Biedermann and the Firebugs*, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, 1965.

26. Mordecai Gorelik, *The Annotated Hamlet* (manuscript in Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois Univ.).

27. Robert Hethmon, "The Annotated Hamlet," *Drama Survey*, 2 (Spring 1962), 80-93.

28. The following short plays are not treated in this paper. For their descriptions, originally provided by the playwright, to my knowledge, I am indebted to an informational brochure entitled "Mordecai Gorelik" prepared for the 1982 convention of the American Theatre Association by Professor Marilyn Hyland of the University of Baltimore (manuscript in Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois Univ.).

*Off Duty* (Cast: 2 men, 2 women. Setting: a commonplace sitting room). A young reporter, who understands political crises and natural disasters better than he understands women, is fascinated by a romantic young lady who is mortally insulted when he expects her to lie down. The young lady's fiance gives him a black eye and bloody nose, and a woman reporter adds some crisp advice. Undaunted, the reporter is about to make another date when a phone call orders him back on duty at once to cover a major news break. The woman reporter is assigned to go with him.

*Saturday* (Cast: 2 men, 3 women. Setting: an office). A young businessman, about to be married the next day to a sweet and sensible girl, is waylaid by two other types of females before he gets back to normal.

*Song of the Whippoorwill* (Cast: 3 men, 2 women. Setting: a kitchen in an old farm house). A young actress is spending the summer interlude as a maid-of-a-work on a farm occupied by a commercial artist and his teenage nephew. All three have no work and no prospects. Weekend visitors, a man and wife, arrive in their car and are conned into buying a month's groceries. The wife wants to hear the song of the whippoorwill while the husband tries to proposition the actress. "As evening draws nigh," all go back to the city and the farm is left to the hooting of the whippoorwill.

*About a Cat* (Cast: 2 men, 2 women. Setting: a Greenwich Village living room). The languorous wife of a popular novelist goes to a bohemian party, where she allures a brash neighbor-

hood youth. Next morning, when the youth comes to claim her, he is given a brush-off. After he leaves, however, the wife changes her mind about him—only to find he has been appropriated by her maid.

*Mrs. Disaster* (Cast: 2 men, 1 woman, a boy 10, a girl 8. Setting: a living room). The owner of a struggling new ad agency, returning from an unsuccessful business trip, takes out his bad temper on his family.

29. Mordecai Gorelik, *The Big Day*, in *Best Short Plays 1977*, ed. Stanley Richards (Radnor, PA: Chilton, 1977), pp. 304-33.

30. (Boston: Walter H. Baker, 1950).

31. Mordecai Gorelik, *Rainbow Terrace* (manuscript in Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois Univ.).

32. Quoted in the preface to *Rainbow Terrace*.

33. Mordecai Gorelik, introduction to "Toward a Larger Theatre" (manuscript in possession of Gorelik). In this introduction to his collection of plays planned for publication, Gorelik cites the conversation held when a boy with his father. Prior to publication of "Toward a Larger Theatre," he reserves this story for his own use.

34. In a staged reading of the play held at Southern Illinois University well in advance of its actual production, the role of the central character Falkimer was ably interpreted by the late Harry T. Moore, noted D. H. Lawrence scholar and then Research Professor in the Department of English at the University. On stage the role was lustily portrayed by professional actor Paul Mann.

35. Mordecai Gorelik, *Feast of Unreason* (manuscript in possession of Gorelik).

36. Mordecai Gorelik, *Andrus, or the Vision* (manuscript in Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois Univ.).

37. Directed by Christian H. Moe, Carbondale, Illinois, on 30 April 1978.

38. Mordecai Gorelik, *United We Stand* (manuscript in possession of Gorelik).

39. Mordecai Gorelik, *Yes and No* (manuscript in Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois Univ.).

40. Letter to writer from Mordecai Gorelik, 10 February 1976.

41. Gorelik, *New Theatres for Old*, p. 472.

## Mordecai Gorelik's Scenic Imagination Antecedents and Consequences

by Marie J. Kilker

More than six decades ago, a young man, fresh out of high school in New York City, enrolled at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn with hopes of becoming an illustrator. What changed that original Mordecai Gorelik design were some ideas: first, from a friend who suggested he might like to do theatrical work instead; then, through backstage experiences in theatres where he could help create "living illustration"; and, most importantly, ideas of mentors like Robert Edmond Jones, Serge Soudeikine, Norman Bel Geddes, and later Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht, who challenged him to achieve even more. So, following them, Max Gorelik combined his talents as an artist with an insatiable taste for ideas.

Gorelik as illustrator we lost forever; the Gorelik we got instead is a stage designer-director-playwright-scholar-educator. Starring in any or all of these roles is Gorelik as illuminator.<sup>1</sup>

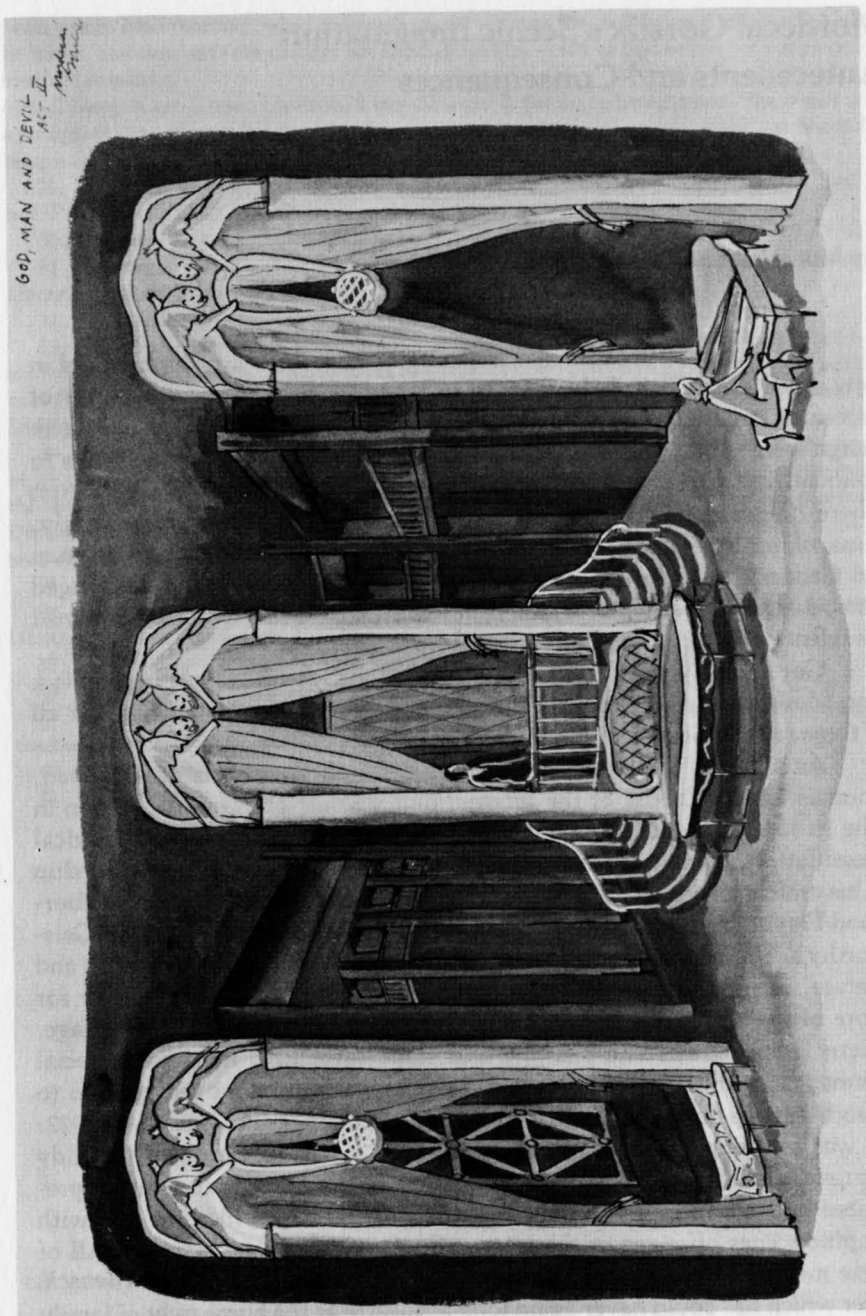
As a result of the illuminations for which Gorelik is most famed, Thomas Quinn Curtiss of the *International Herald Tribune* placed him in "the group of scenic designers who revolutionized American theatrical presentation."<sup>2</sup> For Gorelik, the revolution began with an apprenticeship in his craft, starting in 1920 when he assisted the designer at the Neighborhood Playhouse (Grand Street, New York) during rehearsals of John Galsworthy's *The Mob*. That experience with drama both issue-oriented and literate, as well as with actors of similar persuasion, sent him hungry for more of the same (and better) to the Provincetown Players in the Village. There, laboring at scene painting and stage carpentry, he savored social dramas from the likes of O'Neill and Dreiser. When he moved uptown to design settings for Mrs. Clare Tree Major's School of the Theatre in 1922, he was scraping together scant resources for a trip to Germany to study expressionist staging. The brief realization of his plans that summer presented him not merely with ample servings of scenographics but also with graphic scenes off-stage of the aftermath of war and class struggle. All of these meshed in a Volksbühne production of Ernst Toller's *Masse-Mensch*, after which he "could never again look at theatre as the home only of family problems."<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, home again, Gorelik continued to ply his craft while learning his art. He gained experience doing scenery for vaudeville and burlesque until, in 1925, a significant opportunity arose. The Theatre Guild was about to stage *Processional*, John Howard Lawson's jazzy fantasy of Americana, scoring social ills in a burlesque framework. Lee Simonson, the Guild artist slated as its designer, fell ill, and Gorelik, like the fabled understudy waiting in the wings, filled in and won acclaim. After his now-famous curtain for *Processional* went down, he was destined to design more than fifty professional productions, over a dozen in universities, and several films, in addition to working throughout the years on numerous projects not realized on stage or screen but well worth exploring in his personal archives and those in Morris Library of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.<sup>4</sup>

Following *Processional*, Gorelik designed for three different theatres—the Schildkraut, the Garrick, and the Yiddish Art Theatre. Yet, as he has admitted in a draft of his "Scenic Imagination" textbook, he had begun to realize that he must find an "effective approach to designing" dramatic atmosphere outside the realm of his experience.<sup>5</sup> For he had been forced to turn down a job on a play with such a setting. Hard work would become the most obvious facet of his developmental approach to design. A passion for ideas embodied in the concrete was another. What remained to be found and refined was a method of inducing inspiration, which became critical analysis, most importantly of playscripts but also of whatever proposed theatrical event was to surround them.

Landmarks on his journey to discovery included designs for Lawson's *Loud Speaker* for the New Playwrights in 1927; for *The Final Balance* at the Provincetown Playhouse in 1928; for *God, Man and the Devil*, 1928, and *Uncle Moses*, 1930, both at New York's Yiddish Art Theatre. He was simultaneously teaching at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, New York.

In the 1930s he reached a high point in the practice of his art and toward its theoretical underpinnings. Admitted to the advisory board of the newly formed Group Theatre, he became its de facto principal scenic artist, commencing with its second presentation, 1931, in the year of that title. By February of 1940, he had designed most of the Group's productions, notably Lawson's *Success Story* (which was one); Kingsley's *Men in White*, equally important as a dramatic and a social document; and a stunning *Golden Boy* by Odets, with whose work—like Lawson's—he became closely identified through subsequent Group portrayals of *Rocket to the Moon* and *Night Music*, then much later (1954) on Broadway via *The Flowering Peach*. At a time when, as Gorelik maintains, the Group "was the only place in America where there was organic theatre created,"<sup>6</sup> he contributed a vital force. In his own words:



Act II set for Jacob Gordin's *God, Man, and Devil*, Yiddish Art Theater (1928)

My designs for the Group were never just added to the play. . . . I got the scripts very early and worked with the director analyzing. . . . The whole production of *Golden Boy* was based on the metaphor of the prize fight ring which I used. The floor plan was a diamond shape which I derived from the ring, but it was angled as though one saw the square ring from a dynamic corner view. . . . The floor plan was the most important aspect of this production as it was in many of the Group shows because they were primarily an acting company and the sets were meant for the actors to live in.<sup>7</sup>

His "actors' environments," each grounded in a scenic metaphor for the play's action, embodied Gorelik's discoveries of how to stimulate creative juices and keep them in a contained flow. As the actress Ruth Nelson has commented:

He made the most marvelous sets because he worked with such simplicity. He never tried to show Max Gorelik. He showed the play. He made it so nice for the actors to work in. . . . His sets spoke the very sense and feeling we had of our work.<sup>8</sup>

The sense and feeling for which playwrights, too, strove never escaped Gorelik's probing. Remembering that Robert Ardrey had first intended *Thunder Rock* to be called *Tower of Light* Gorelik in his research for the play's setting "came across a picture of a lighthouse casting its beams into a storm at night." He used the lantern, not focused outside where no action existed, but to spill light "as though through an opened door, when the ghosts made their entrances." He also used color symbolism: green for the sea and grayish brown for rocks.<sup>9</sup>

During the years Gorelik worked with the Group, he also produced designs at other theatres (*Little Ol' Boy* at the Playhouse, 1933; *Gentlewoman* at the Cort, 1934; *The Young Go First* at the Park, 1935; *Tortilla Flat* at Henry Miller's, 1938; *The Quiet City* at the Belasco, 1939) and for other companies, notably the Theatre Union. This association led to his first meeting with Brecht, who—though he found fault with Gorelik's sets for the "learning-play" *Mother*—acquired in him a student, explicator, advocate, colleague, and life-long friend.

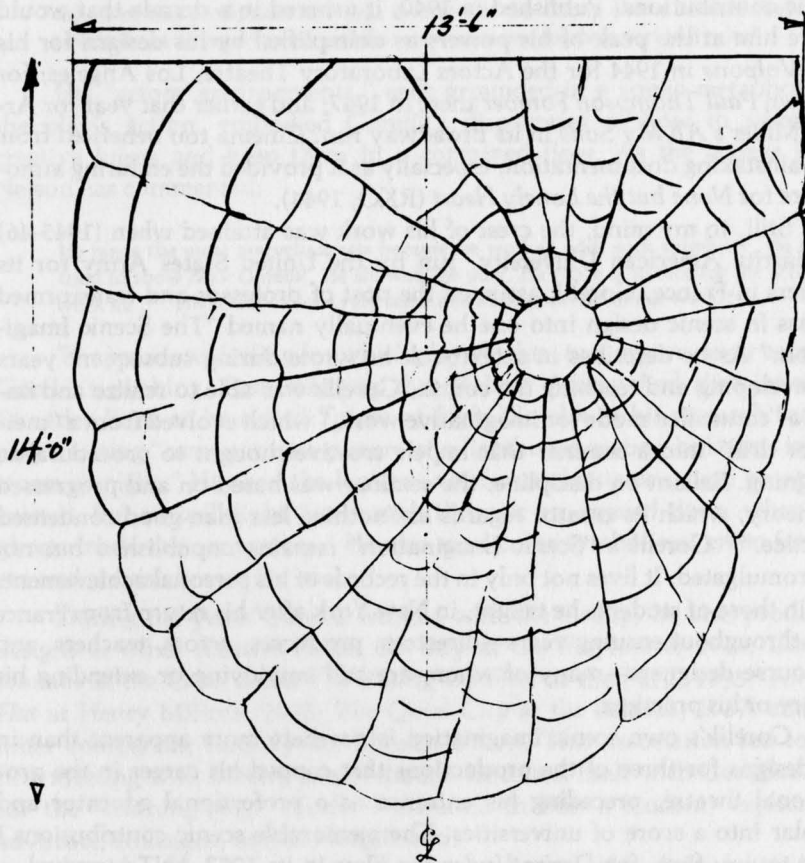
Brecht's theories, which encompassed everything dramatic from theatre space to script to philosophy through direction and performance, constantly drew Gorelik into argument,<sup>10</sup> and I mean that word not solely in the sense of "debate" but, as well, of "discourse based on reason." Designs by Gorelik, I believe, were as much visualized arguments as plays may be written ones. Furthermore, at the time Brecht came into his life, Gorelik was preparing an argument for the very history of the theatre. His relationship with Brecht aided him to steer a logical course—to Epic style and staging—that could bring to modern theatre "a penetrating observation of life" through a scientific method "deliberately experimental, unprejudiced and precise."<sup>11</sup>

Can anyone who has read *New Theatres for Old* doubt that, besides being a classic of historical scholarship, criticism, and theory, that book—by virtue of the vitality of its language, vividness of its evocations, depth of its thought, and proportion in its organization—is also one of Gorelik's scenic contributions? Published in 1940, it ushered in a decade that would prove him at the peak of his powers as exemplified by his designs for his first *Volpone* in 1944 for the Actors Laboratory Theatre, Los Angeles; for his own *Paul Thompson Forever* there in 1947; and earlier that year for Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* in its Broadway run. Cinema too benefited from his painstaking documentation, especially as it provided the enduring atmosphere for *None but the Lonely Heart* (RKO, 1944).

Still, to my mind, the crest of his work was attained when (1945-46) at Biarritz American University, run by the United States Army for its soldiers in France, Gorelik assumed the post of professor and transformed a class in scenic design into one he eventually named "The Scenic Imagination." As he describes in a textbook he wrote during subsequent years of developing and teaching the course, Gorelik was able to realize and impart a "controlled mode for imaginative work," which evolved from a "metaphor drill" into a seminar that impels creative thought to proceduralize designing. Reliant on discipline, the seminar was based on and progressed as theory, which its creator regards as "nothing less than good condensed practice."<sup>12</sup> Gorelik's "Scenic Imagination" remains unpublished but not unpromulgated. It lives not only in the records of his personal achievements but in those of students he taught, in New York after his return from France and throughout ensuing years—directors, producers, actors, teachers, and of course designers—many of whom are still employing or extending his theory or his practices.

Gorelik's own scenic imagination is nowhere more apparent than in his designs for three of the productions that capped his career in the professional theatre, preceding his entrance as a professional educator and scholar into a score of universities. The memorable scenic contributions I refer to are: first, for *Desire Under the Elms* in its 1952 ANTA revival, a setting based on O'Neill's own metaphor of the elms "stretching their great arms both menacingly and protectingly over the farmhouse";<sup>13</sup> second, for a tour of Shaw's *St. Joan* (1954), capturing the immensity of the epic struggle behind the personal struggle of a peasant girl compelled to be a warrior-saint; lastly, for one of Gorelik's final Broadway shows, *A Hatful of Rain* (1955), laid in an apartment shown, as John Gassner said, "held as if in a vise."<sup>14</sup>

Gorelik has supervised scenery for American visits by the Old Vic Company and the Comédie Française (1956), studied postwar developments in European theatre on a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation (1949-51), and examined theatre in Australia on a Fulbright Fellowship (1967). His

VOLPONE

## SPIDER'S WEB

CONSTRUCTION: USE LIGHT GAUZE FOR  
WHOLE AREA. GLUE STRINGS ON GAUZE.  
EDGE MAY NEED WIRE. DO NOT PAINT  
UNTIL SUPERVISED BY DESIGNER.

*Andrei Gorelik*  
Nov. 22, 1969

Fourteen-foot spider web design for Gorelik production of *Volpone* (1969)

written account of the German, Polish, and British theatres (1949-54), called *Europe Onstage*,<sup>15</sup> contains valuable scholarly contributions on scenic design practice. Further, his translation of *Herr Biedermann and the Firebugs* by Max Frisch is scenically vivid, as he proved in designing and directing it at California State University, Los Angeles, in 1964 and later at Southern Illinois. In fact, everything he has directed and designed at universities has been stamped by the quality of its visual appeal and its projection of ideas.

Gorelik's longest tenure in an academic milieu was as Research Professor in Theatre (1960-72) at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. There, in 1970, was the first time I witnessed live a "Gorelik production" (a phrase I use advisedly, as I shall explain). It was his fourth job with *Volpone* in the Zweig-Carnovsky version. In addition to conducting off-stage his celebrated seminar (of which I was a member), Gorelik had become for his staging a veritable *homme-orchestre*. Besides directing the play, he consulted on the lighting and makeup, designed the costumes, drew up the publicity posters, planned the layout of the programs, was responsible for major props, and—yes—even created the settings.

One of the seminar students, having slipped into a final rehearsal, came much earlier than the start of class the next day, complaining to those of us he found waiting about what he had seen. As he had experienced a hard time pinpointing and winning approval for a scenic metaphor for his own project play, he indignantly claimed that our professor had permitted *himself* an easy metaphorical choice while denying *us* such stale ones as thunderclouds, shadows in a mist, and flowers about to burst into bloom. Gorelik, it appears, had blatantly used a simply drawn, supposedly undistinguished *spider web*. Well, even if appropriate for a drama in which a fly catches a fox and then gets caught in his own trap, wasn't that gauzy network a major cliché? I contributed no comments, preferring, as my teacher might have applauded, to see for myself.

I did, on *Volpone's* opening night, when I walked into the theatre. I did not have to search. The metaphor was there all right. At the very top of the proscenium arch, Gorelik had placed a seemingly beribboned, blaring spider web: a cliché, it's true, but one he was kidding the dust off of! Though the ideas in that memorable production had escaped my fellow student, they issued forth with freshness through the pace and acting and through the *real* visual metaphors the designer had embedded in every scene. The audience, enmeshed as he had intended, highly acclaimed that show, which raised such box office demand that an additional performance was scheduled, while requests to tour had to be turned down. A tribute, of course, to Gorelik the illuminator.

## Notes

1. Sources of the biographical information presented here include *Notable Names in the American Theatre*, *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who of the American Theatre*, and Gorelik himself.
2. Thomas Quinn Curtiss, "At 80, Gorelik Changes His Act," *International Herald Tribune*, 13-14 July 1980.
3. Mordecai Gorelik, "Toward a Larger Theatre," Typescript, 1982, pp. 1-3. A limited edition of this work is projected for publication by the author in 1985.
4. Mordecai Gorelik, *New Theatres for Old* (New York: Samuel French, 1940), between pp. 428-29, provides a sample of one of his unrealized projects, a 1938 plan for a mural for the Courtroom in John Wexley's *They Shall Not Die*; original design is in Morris Library's Gorelik collection.
5. Mordecai Gorelik, "The Scenic Imagination," TS, an irregularly paged and "dynamic" text distributed until 1972 to students in Gorelik's seminars of the same name.
6. Mordecai Gorelik, interviewed by Helen Krich Chinoy, "Reunion: A Self Portrait of the Group Theatre," *Educational Theatre Journal*, 28 (December 1976), 543.
7. Gorelik, "Reunion," p. 543.
8. Ruth Nelson, interviewed by Helen Krich Chinoy, "Reunion," p. 530. The scenic "rightness" that Nelson describes was always, in Gorelik's practice, built on a metaphorical relation of settings to scripts. It is a poetic process made visual, as in *Golden Boy* a tenement flat became like a prize fight ring.
9. Gorelik, "Scenic Imagination."
10. See James K. Lyon, *Bertolt Brecht in America* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 12-14, 90-91, 164, 236-37.
11. Gorelik, *New Theatres for Old*, p. 430.
12. Gorelik, "Scenic Imagination."
13. Gorelik, "Scenic Imagination."
14. Quoted in Gorelik, "Scenic Imagination."
15. Recently accepted for publication under the sponsorship of the American Theatre Association.

## Jean Cocteau's "Doodling"

by Geneviève Frémont and David L. Gobert

The "doodling" or *griffonnage* of French writer Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) shows many of the characteristics and ideas of his literary works. The example shown here is an undated doodling from SIU Special Collections.

What is most striking about the anarchic Cocteau is the versatility of his talent, leading some to see him merely as a dilettante. Although his artistic production included poetry, theatre, novels, illustrative art and sketches, film scenarios, essays, journalism, choreography for the ballet, and poetry set to music by Les Six (Honegger, Tailleferre, Auric, Durey, Milhaud, Poulenc), he saw himself first as a poet and even qualified many of the genres he practiced by the word *poésie* (i.e., *poésie graphique*, *poésie cinématographique*, *poésie dramatique*, *poésie du roman*, etc.).

Cocteau was at the same time the most adulated and denounced poet of his day. He held to the aristocratic view of the poet as a privileged and solitary being who plays the role of seer, guardian, and moral prophet of society. He created poetic visions, illusions of truth, which remind us of the need for imagination and poetry in an increasingly materialistic and technological world which threatens to depersonalize and mechanize man, stifling those childlike qualities necessary for man's moral and psychological well-being. The writing of poetry for Cocteau involved first the rejection of the conventional view of reality, then the magical transformation of everyday objects and events into a poetic reality characterized by a higher, more intimate equilibrium. In so doing, he did not hesitate to have recourse to magic, the supernatural, dreams, myths, and paradox.

Cocteau believed that in order to tap his special powers, the poet had to reach a symbolic "death to the world." He attempted to find this state of being by embracing in turn dadaism, then surrealism, Catholicism, and even opium.

Cocteau led a flamboyant, scandalous life and delighted in shocking his contemporaries; he openly flaunted his homosexual relationships, for example. Finally admitted to the illustrious *Académie Française*, he appeared in a blue costume instead of the customary green. He was elected to the Berlin, Belgium, and American academies, but he was always sensitive to the lack of understanding which he inspired.

His works most appreciated by the public and critics were the novel *Les Enfants terribles* (1929), the plays *La Machine infernale* (Oedipus theme; 1934) and *Les Parents terribles* (1938), and the film *La Belle et la Bête* (1946), awarded the Prix Louis-Delluc.

Cocteau's *griffonnages* are difficult to decipher since they were intended only for himself. There are words crossed out, omissions of letters, incomplete sentences. Some words in our example are undecipherable. The main recurring idea of the verbal doodlings relates to the process by which the author creates a work of art. Cocteau writes of the method of transforming raw reality into poetic truth. This idea is first expressed by "a realistic documentary drawn out in an unreal way." Thus, a plot (documentary) also has a symbolic interpretation. "A rich archetypal style" underlines the fact that Cocteau often retold classical myths in modern dress as being expressive of modern problems. His fascination with myth is expressed in his famous self-description: "I am a lie who always tells the truth."

"Chance occurrences, meetings, circumstances" speak to the unforeseen, the unexpected and spontaneous happenings occurring to his imagination but also transformed by his artistic intention. The accumulation of expressive verbs which follows evokes the concrete way in which Cocteau describes the artist's task of transforming events and characters. The result: "that which is blended acts as a frame in its own way (as it pleases) for noises and silences," that is, it results in a poetic statement, events (noises) and description (silences) being contained within a nuanced narrative framework.

The drawings from top left to right, then to the bottom left to right of the page attest first to Cocteau's artistic ability (ten volumes of his sketches have been published) and are reminiscent of other themes in his works. Sketching was an important pursuit in the artistic life of Cocteau. First of all, the starfish is his signature, his symbol, and it represents for him the cosmos, the center of things. The word "bow" (he used English occasionally) is found within a stylized bow with an arrow; it is an instrument of death (which is the fate of many of his characters, and reflects the figurative "poet's death to the world"), or it suggests the "winged Cocteau" in flight, as he saw himself, the soaring poet.

The object in the middle top could well be a theatre stage, seen in three dimensions. This idea is reinforced by the hand manipulating the masked character. This, of course, could be the playwright who pulls the characters' strings. However, the hand is severed (a typical cinematographic image of Cocteau), and this fact could turn the sketch into a poetic image suggesting an unknown force (satanic, psychological) motivating the masked character. The latter's mask is that of a monster with a protruding tooth. Such characters appear literally (sphinx and Anubis in *La Machine*

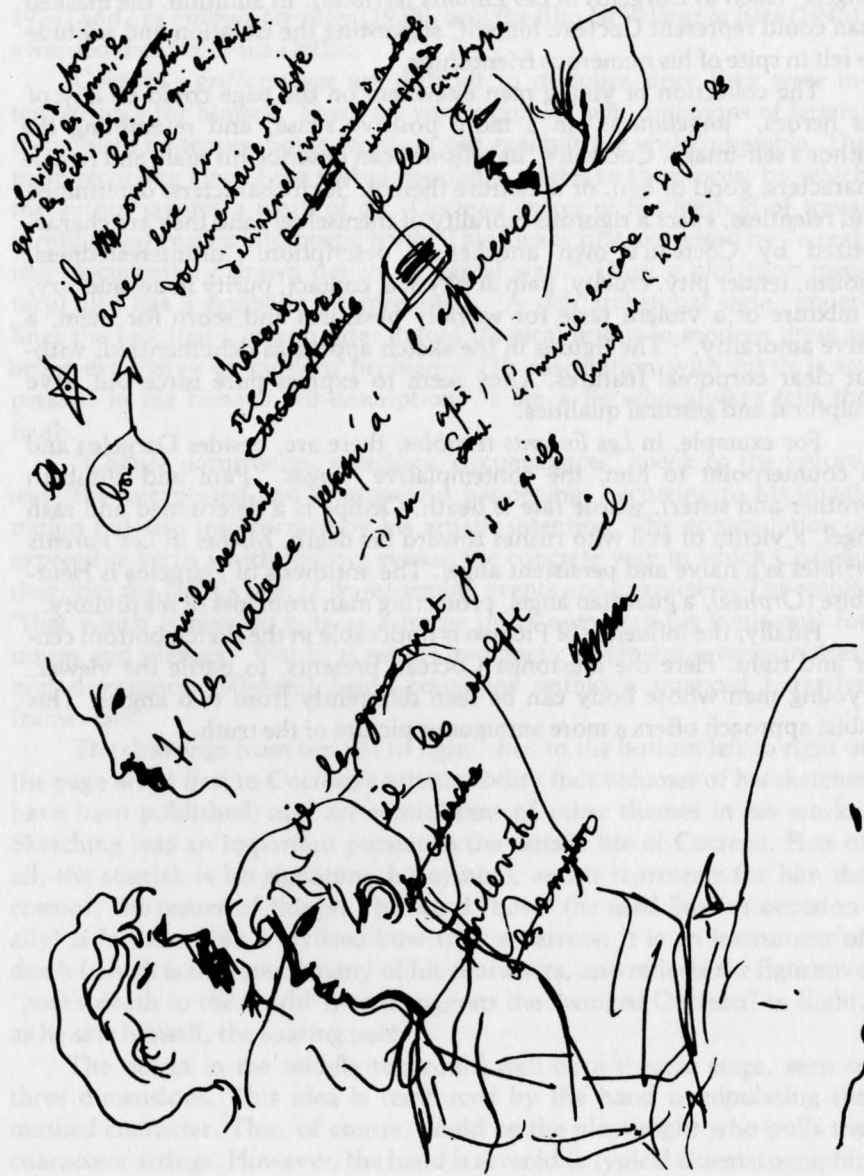
*infernale*) or figuratively in the form of the young men illustrative of evil "angels" (such as Dargelos in *Les Enfants terribles*). In addition, the masked man could represent Cocteau himself, suggesting the isolation and solitude he felt in spite of his numerous friendships.

The collection of young men elsewhere on the page could be any of his heroes, "angéliques," in a more positive sense, and resembling the author's self-image. Cocteau's "angélisme" can describe his male and female characters, good or evil, or a mixture thereof. Such characters, determined and relentless, exact a rigorous morality of themselves, and they are characterized by Cocteau's own antithetical description: "disinterestedness, egoism, tender pity, cruelty, pain at physical contact, purity in debauchery, a mixture of a violent taste for worldly pleasures and scorn for them, a naive amorality."<sup>1</sup> The figures in the sketch appear as dehumanized, without clear corporeal features. They seem to express pure force but have sculptural and gestural qualities.

For example, in *Les Enfants terribles*, there are, besides Dargelos and in counterpoint to him, the contemplative "anges," Paul and Elisabeth (brother and sister), whose fate is death. Oedipe is a determined and rash angel, a victim of evil who rushes toward his death. Michel in *Les Parents terribles* is a naive and persistent angel. The antithesis of Dargelos is Heurbise (*Orphée*), a guardian angel, protecting man from loss of his divinity.

Finally, the influence of Picasso is noticeable in the sketch bottom center and right. Here the illusionist Cocteau presents, to baffle the viewer, a young man whose body can be seen differently from two angles. This cubist approach offers a more ambiguous picture of the truth.





Cocteau's "griffonnages" help provide insights to the poet/artist

Free to choose the faces, forms,  
 gestures, acts, [?]  
 the places which please him

he composes with them a realistic documentary  
 stretched (drawn out) in an unreal way

[?]  
 a rich archetypal style

Bow  
 chance occurrences  
 meetings  
 circumstances  
 he/she

which serve him  
 he kneads them finally into their appearances  
 [?]  
 afterwards, that which is blended (shaded) acts  
 as a frame as it pleases (in its own way)  
 for noises and silences

he governs them until they . . .  
 he sculpts them  
 searches for it  
 jumbles (tangles up)  
 he uses them  
 he

Notes

1. Quoted in Roger Lannes, *Jean Cocteau*, new ed., *Poètes d'aujourd'hui*, 4 (Paris: Éditions Pierre Séghers, 1962), p. 38 (translation ours).



Geoffrey Molyneux Palmer, Joyce's favorite composer of Chamber Music settings

## Chamber Music: Words by Joyce, Music by Molyneux Palmer

by Myra Russel

Geoffrey Molyneux Palmer—James Joyce's favorite among all the composers who set his poems to music—was born in 1882, the same year as Joyce, a coincidence which would have pleased Joyce. This story of Palmer begins, however, not in England where he was born and educated, nor in Ireland where he lived and worked for the rest of his life, but in and around Carbondale, Illinois, after his death in 1957. His story might never have come to light had it not been for the vigilance of Professor Michael O'Neill and his wife Delia in St. Louis, who saw Palmer's obituary notice in the Irish press and sent the clipping to their friend Dr. Harley Croessmann, whose Joyce collection would later come to SIU.

Who was Geoffrey Molyneux Palmer, and why would a Joyce collector be interested in him? Readers of Joyce's letters would know that Palmer was one of the earliest composers to write for permission to set the *Chamber Music* poems to music, just two months after that small volume appeared in 1907. These same readers would also know that while Joyce was pleased with Palmer's first five settings, he liked the second group of three even better. These three songs—"Donnycarney," "At that hour," and "Gentle lady"—remained Joyce's favorites throughout his life. Many years later, in 1934, Joyce wrote to his son Giorgio that of the thirty to forty composers who had set his poems to music thus far, Palmer was still "the best."<sup>1</sup> In one letter Joyce calls the music "very elegant" (*Letters*, I, 70), and in another he refers to a new copy of "3 settings of my verses by Palmer, made about 25 years ago but better than any of the subsequent ones" (*Letters*, III, 348).

Dr. Croessmann wrote to Palmer's sisters immediately upon receipt of the O'Neills' letter. He addressed his first letter to Eileen, expressing condolences on her brother's death. But the reply came from the eldest sister, Gladys, who informed him that Eileen had died nine years earlier, after "devoted attention" to their brother. In the ensuing correspondence, both of the surviving sisters, Gladys and Phyllis, often sound unworldly, even helpless, despite the fact that both had been highly successful professional educators until their retirement.<sup>2</sup> Certainly they wanted to promote their

brother's music as well as his reputation, but they had only vague notions of how this could be done.

Croessmann's first letter asked politely for any

. . . of Joyce's letters, inscribed copies of his books—perhaps manuscripts of your brother's musical settings of Joyce's poems referred to; portraits of Joyce or any other 'souvenirs' connected with Joyce . . . however trifling. (15 January 1958)<sup>3</sup>

Palmer had been a victim of multiple sclerosis, confined to a wheelchair from about the age of forty, and Gladys's reply to Croessmann a week later explains the nature of Geoffrey's illness. She then goes on to say:

My sister and I gave up our profession (by means of which we had supported our brother) and on a retiring income were able to nurse him until his peaceful death. . . .

Her response to Croessmann's query about Joyce material was to offer photostatic copies of letters from Joyce which Palmer had sold to Dr. Hayes, the curator of the National Library of Ireland, in 1949. But Croessmann, interested only in originals, began to press:

May I know if there are other souvenirs of Joyce among your brother's possessions, even if ever so trifling? (3 March 1958)

and again in June:

May I urge you to go through your brother's papers, books, etc., to try to discover other things pertaining to James Joyce. I reason that Joyce sent him inscribed presentation copies of at least some of his books. . . .

Dr. Croessmann's impatience is understandable; there *should* have been more. Although Palmer's own copy of *Chamber Music* had been a gift from his mother,<sup>4</sup> he had indeed received various items from Joyce during the nearly twenty-five years of their correspondence. In one letter (16 June 1909) Palmer thanks Joyce for an article on Oscar Wilde, in Italian, sent on the assumption that a musician was likely to know that language; in another (20 August 1913) he thanks Joyce for sending "that pamphlet about your book, *Dubliners*."<sup>5</sup> It is also highly probable that Joyce would have sent the composer a copy of *Pomes Penyeach*. However, most of these had come to Palmer long ago, and there had been many moves in his life before he settled into the Cottage on Marine Parade in Sandycove with his sisters.

If Gladys and Phyllis often sound vague and apologetic, one explanation may be old age and frail health. Perhaps they felt that Croessmann's pressing inquiries were an invasion of their privacy; only a few months had elapsed since their brother's death. In any event, when they located their brother's setting of *Chamber Music*, neither sister had any idea

what price to put on the songs when Croessmann inquired, and there was even confusion about how many there were in the two bound volumes which they found. Joyce's letters contain references to ten or twelve *Chamber Music* songs, Palmer's sisters referred to twenty-seven, but actually there were thirty-two in all. Gladys wrote to ask Croessmann if he would

. . . be agreeable if we went to the length of sending you one volume under registered post . . . for your inspection? We would do this if you would authorize us to do so. Naturally, you would want to see the songs before making an offer. (27 Feb. 1958)

She had written to the Performing Rights Society in London but had not yet received a reply. Croessmann, however, was quite prompt. As soon as the volume arrived on March 31, he wrote:

As you wanted an offer for the MSS, I offer £10 per volume (\$28.00), in other words £20 for the two volumes (\$56.00). This first volume contains 12 songs and so I am supposing that the second contains 15, your letter of the 27 Feb. stating that there were 27.<sup>6</sup>

I thought it would be better to make this offer immediately on receipt of the MSS so that you might know they arrived safely.

The offer is predicated on the MSS becoming my property entirely. Of course, if the original letters that Joyce wrote to your brother had been included, they would be worth much more. But you have told me that they were already sold to the National Library of Ireland.

This time Gladys waited several weeks before answering. On May 1 she replied:

We, like you, are puzzled as to what we should do. . . . We have been in touch with the Performing Rights Society London, and the branch in Dublin, and they have put us in touch with their legal adviser, Mr. D. H. Charles.

But the solicitor made no attempt to raise the price. Did he know that G. Molyneux Palmer had merited inclusion in two editions of Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and in the *International Who's Who in Music*; that he had published two operas, two cantatas, instrumental music, and many part-songs (twenty-four can be found in the Music Room of the British Library); that he had won several prizes at the Feis Ceoil, Dublin's annual music contest? Had Mr. Charles any awareness that songs to the poems of James Joyce—a not inconsequential figure by 1958—might be valuable? Evidently he did not, since his letter of June 1 simply stated that the Palmer sisters had agreed to sell their rights to the two volumes of songs for £20; should the songs ever be published they were to receive fifty percent of any profits. The lawyer did ask for a further sum of £5 for his "trouble of negotiation," which Croessmann paid, but not without remarking that the bill rightly belonged to the sisters.

**XXIII Gentle Lady**  
*Molto andante* ♩ = 15R

Gentle lady, do not sing

Sad songs a-bout the end of love. Lay a-side

Sad songs a-bout the end of love. Lay a-side

obscure and sing How time that pass-es is e-vening

obscure and sing How time that pass-es is e-vening

"Gentle lady, do not sing . . .

Sing a-bout the

Sing a-bout the

*rall.* *a tempo*

long, deep sleep of lovers that our soul,

and how for the grave all love shall sleep,

Love is a weary row.

*dim.*

. . . Sad songs about the end of love"

In December Croessmann wrote to the sisters again, this time to ask permission to publish a facsimile setting of "Strings in the earth" in the second *James Joyce Miscellany*,<sup>7</sup> a publication from which no profits were anticipated. The sisters agreed, and the final letter, written by Phyllis and dated January 7, 1959, thanks him for sending a copy of the *Miscellany*. Although she too had been ill, she mentions that her sister Gladys was "always far from strong and depends a good deal on me."<sup>8</sup>

Except for a few sentences about Geoffrey's illness, the letters from the two sisters reveal virtually nothing about themselves or their brother, nor did Croessmann inquire. But in many respects they were an interesting family. The earliest recorded ancestor was the Rev. Thomas Palmer of Kenmare, County Kerry, who was born in 1669. Twenty years later, during Ireland's civil war, he took part in the defense of the Fort of Killowen for the Protestants. (Joyce wrote in a letter to Geoffrey Palmer in 1910, "I gather from your name that you are a protestant" *Letters*, I, 69.) Rev. Palmer was forced to capitulate and flee to England, although in due course he returned, was granted lands, and spent the rest of his life in Kenmare.

Seven generations later came the Rev. Abram Smythe Palmer—father of Geoffrey and his four sisters—also a divine, with degrees from Trinity College, Dublin, where he had the distinction of taking a quintuple first. After his ordination, he spent six years as curate of the Church of Ireland at Enniskerry, County Wicklow. By 1880 he had married Frances Molyneux (pronounced Mullinucks), great granddaughter of Nathaniel Hone, former Lord Mayor of Dublin. The couple moved to England where he served as vicar of South Woodford, as well as several other parishes in and around London: Battersea, Norwood, Staines (where Geoffrey was born), Wanstead, and St. Albans. His major interest seems to have been philology, on which subject he exchanged spirited letters with some Oxford dons.<sup>9</sup> He was also the author of several treatises on English and folk etymology, a book entitled *The Ideal of a Gentleman*, a few pamphlets on Biblical topics, as well as a contributor to Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* and editor of Archbishop Trench's *Proverbs and Their Lessons* and *A Select Glossary of English Words*. His wife Frances wrote books too—mainly stories for boys with such titles as *Dogged Jack* and *True under Trial*, published around the turn of the century. In 1914, now 70 years old, the Rev. Dr. Palmer decided to return to "the land of his fathers" and, with his wife and youngest daughter, Eileen, he settled in Ireland, probably Dalkey, until his death a few years later.

All five Palmer children were educated in England; Geoffrey took his music baccalaureate at Oxford at the age of 19, thus gaining the distinction of being the youngest recipient of that degree in the school's history. There is evidence that symptoms of multiple sclerosis had begun during his last year there, 1901. Instead of going directly on to the Royal College of Music

in London as he had intended, Palmer returned to South Woodford as organist and choirmaster in his father's church. During this five-year interval, he also taught music at a boys' school near Eastbourne, where the family spent its holidays.

By 1906 Palmer was evidently well enough to attend the Royal College of Music, where he studied for the next three years with the noted composer Charles Villiers Stanhope. Among the promising fellow students at RCM were three who would also set the poems of James Joyce to music: Arthur Bliss, Frank Bridge, and Eugène Goossens. It was during these years that Palmer initiated the correspondence with Joyce—in 1907 when he first wrote for permission to set the poems, and in 1909 when he sent the first five songs, followed a few months later by the three which became Joyce's favorites.

On March 25, 1909, Palmer also wrote to Joyce, "I am an Irishman myself, though I have lived nearly all my life in England." But the balance was soon to shift, and Palmer would spend nearly fifty years in Ireland. In anticipation of his move, Palmer turned to Joyce in 1910 for advice on Ireland, asking, "Do you happen to know the north-west of Ireland, anywhere near Donegal Bay?"; and "It struck me that you might know of some people who have a room to let" (13 May 1910). Although Joyce replied that he was unfamiliar with the north of Ireland, he offered to write to W. B. Reynolds, Belfast music critic and another of the early composers of *Chamber Music* songs, whom he had once visited. In response to Palmer's statement that he could only afford to pay £1 a week for a room, Joyce advised him to place an ad in the Derry paper for board at that figure, which "should get plenty of answers." Joyce's final and very practical suggestion was that Palmer, being Protestant and having qualifications which "are surely *too good*," should offer his services directly to the Irish Church in Dublin (*Letters*, I, 69).

Precisely how and when Palmer settled in Ireland is not known, but his next letter to Joyce was written in August, 1913:

Since writing last I have become organist at the Protestant church at Mallow, Co. Cork—you may be interested to hear this—and I do not forget how kind you were in advising me when I wanted to stay in the North of Ireland.

Evidently it had been a very happy year for him in Mallow. He liked the people there, especially his rector, and he had published a cantata, *The Man from Galway*, several songs, and a cello piece based on an Irish air. Some of his songs written to Irish words won a prize at the Feis Ceoil. How long Palmer kept this post is also unknown, for he did not write again until 1919, this time from Bray, Co. Wicklow. He asked Joyce to use the Feis Ceoil as an address since he expected to be moving about. In this letter of July 14,

# XXXI

O, it was out by Donnycarney

*Andante*  
*Molto*  $\text{♩} = 76$   
*molto*

O it was out by Donny-car-ney, when the

bat flew from tree to tree. My love and I did

walk together and sweeten the words she said to me.

"O, it was out by Donnycarney . . ."

fly with us the roundest most man-ly-ing

hap-pi-ly! But when the bat flew from tree to tree

Was the kiss she gave to me

. . . When the bat flew from tree to tree"

1919 (the last one extant), Palmer mentions his illness for the first and only time, saying, "My leg makes me quite a cripple now."

Evidently the illness became more acute during the next few years, because in the early 1920s Geoffrey moved into the house in Sandycove which Gladys bought for him, their mother, and the youngest sister, Eileen, who would take care of him for many years. Later, when he was totally confined to a wheelchair, Gladys designed and had built for his use a second and smaller house, on one level, in back of the big house (the Cottage), called the Bungalow. Both houses are still there, although the small one has been added on to. What is striking about the location is its proximity to Joyce's Martello Tower, which is literally just around the bend of Dublin Bay, the equivalent of two or three short blocks. The Cottage fronts both the road and the bay, with a clear view of the Tower. Did Joyce—who loved coincidences—know about this one? Unquestionably he did, for while no further letters from Palmer are extant, Joyce wrote a series of notes and cards to him at this address in 1927-28.

Before he became a total invalid, Palmer had contact with people active in the intellectual life of Ireland. The manuscript room of the National Library of Ireland contains many letters to him from a variety of people: Douglas Hyde, Patrick Tuohy, the sister of Conor Cruise O'Brien, Alfred Graves of the Gaelic Society, Mrs. William Allingham, widow of the poet for whom Palmer had also written settings, and several musicians. The music historian Grattan Flood, author of the brief sketch of Palmer in Grove's *Dictionary*, wrote to inform him in 1918 that he was listed in that monumental work: "You are embalmed now among the immortals! So am I!"

The most frequent correspondent, and apparently a close friend, was Father Tom O'Kelly of Galway, who wrote the librettos for Palmer's two operas, *The Sea of Moyle* and *Diarmuid and Grainne*. Yet only once during their five-year correspondence was there any reference to Palmer's illness:

I am sorry to hear that your health is not improving. Cheer up. I am sure the opera will make you jump.

On the whole, Palmer bore his tribulations without complaint. One letter from Sir Hamilton Harty, best known as conductor of the Manchester Symphony Orchestra, comes as something of a surprise:

I was distressed and sorry to read your letter of 18 May [1925]. I had no idea you were so much troubled in your life—and I ask you to accept from me very simple and sincere sympathy. I felt that your cheerful acceptance of ill-fortune was a very fine thing . . . I hope you will allow me the privilege of writing to you sometimes, and telling you any news of interest musically.

Another thing—quite apart from what I have been talking about, may I say that I have a great respect for your musical gifts, and will be happy if I could find a work of yours suitable for production here. (11 June 1925)

From this point on, virtually nothing is known about Palmer's life. Clearly he was confined—to the wheelchair, to the Cottage, and then to the Bungalow. An elderly neighbor around the corner recalls that he was often wheeled to People's Park in Dunleary where he played games with the local children, with whom he was very popular. A Trinity professor of music who had once met Palmer retains an impression of "a proper English gentleman." Rhoda Coghill, for many years a professional pianist for Radio/Telefis Eireann and long-standing friend of the Palmer sisters as well as of Geoffrey (whose music she sometimes played), describes him as kind, pleasant, and cheerful, with a sense of humor and discrimination. His nephew remembers him as charming, quite paralyzed, and very Irish. Evidently his right hand and arm were unaffected by the illness, because he continued to write and publish songs and piano music during these years. He may have composed many of his settings for *Chamber Music*—the ones Joyce never saw—in the thirties or forties. Unfortunately Palmer never dated any of his Joyce manuscripts.

As for the thirty-two songs, varied and variable as they are, it is impossible to pass any uniform judgment on all of them. Composers of today, or even yesterday, would label the music traditional, and in many ways it is. Yet compared to Palmer's part-songs—all very traditional and often sentimental—the *Chamber Music* songs seem free and imaginative, even innovative. A few simply do not succeed, either musically or as compatible interpretations for the poems. The good ones, nevertheless, are very very good, some of them gems. However traditional the music, however simple the melody, the rhythm, or the piano accompaniment, these songs possess a charm which increases with each hearing. Joyce's three favorites are indeed extraordinary: "Donnycarney" with its haunting flavor, its dramatic leap, its lovely modulations; "Gentle lady" and "At that hour" with their captivating lyricism. Hardly more than a breath behind are Palmer's original five songs, particularly "Strings in the earth and air" and "I would in that sweet bosom be," which enchant the ear with their sweet-sounding melodies. Wit and humor also permeate the settings of those very brief poems, "Goldenhair"—which takes precisely two minutes to perform—and "Winds of May," both of which are delightfully enhanced by the playful music.

Palmer's respect for Joyce's words, his insistence on being true to each line, is evident in every setting. In "Donnycarney," for example, the second line is musically dramatic and arresting, thus expressing and augmenting the words:

O, it was out by Donnycarney  
When the bat flew from tree to tree.

But the corresponding line of the second stanza requires a benign or gentle mood:

Along with the summer wind  
Went murmuring—O happily!

which the composer provides. However we may want and expect to hear that wonderful leap again, we recognize that the words will not permit it. Unquestionably Palmer genuinely loved the *Chamber Music* poems and made every effort to express the mood and spirit of each poem in his settings, with palpable success. In his last letter to Joyce, the composer concludes with the hope that Joyce will write more "songs," and then he adds, with a wistful note, "I liked *Chamber Music* the best of your books."

The question of why Palmer's settings were never published is complex and tantalizing; even today it remains essentially a mystery. Certainly Palmer was no novice to the world of publishing, having seen other works in print as early as 1904 and continuing up until 1953. From the beginning, Joyce wanted the songs to be "brought out," and he directed the composer to send them to Plunket Greene, a well-known baritone in Dublin and London, and later to John McCormack. Assuming that Palmer, too, wanted to see the songs in print, Joyce tried in diverse ways to aid and expedite the process. He personally spoke to the secretary of the Feis Ceoil about eight songs which he then urged the composer to send; he also recommended the music to the manager of Maunsel publishers. Somehow Joyce learned that the proprietor, Maunsel Hone, was related to the Palmer family, whereupon he suggested that the composer try that approach. For the most part, Palmer seems to have done nothing, but even when he responded directly, his words were strangely evasive: Plunket Greene had seen his songs, had liked them, but didn't want to sing them. Or else he might comment that his Joyce songs were "not likely to have a popular appeal" (2 February 1909) or that they were not the sort of songs a publisher "will speculate on, these commercial days" (20 August 1913). Clearly Palmer made a sharp distinction between his *Chamber Music* settings and his other published works, one of which he referred to as "a frank pot-boiler!"

Yet none of these comments explains Palmer's resistance to Joyce's many attempts to get the songs published. Is it possible that the composer regarded them as too personal and private for public scrutiny? After all, his sisters seemed to have been unaware of their existence until after his death, and Rhoda Coghill, friend and fellow musician to whom he had given many of his pieces, was surprised to hear that he had set Joyce's poems. Or could money have been the obstacle? Palmer had very little and would

have had to pay 10/6 for the use of each poem (14 July 1919). Still, some of his printed songs involved other poems, so presumably he had coped with that necessity before.

Far from shedding light on his motivation, Palmer's letters are puzzling, even inconsistent. On August 20, 1913, he wrote to Joyce: "I intend to publish (at my expense) one or two of my 'ChM' set." He even asked which ones Joyce considered best "from the popular point of view—as well as your personal view." Six years later he wrote that the songs had not yet been printed, that he was waiting for "brighter days." Still to come was the most dramatic and revealing episode. Late in 1927 Joyce captured the interest of a Polish impresario, Jan Slivinski, who was agreeable to the idea of publishing the songs. The full extent of Joyce's concern and expectation becomes apparent in a series of five postcards or notes which he sent Palmer during the short period from November 29, 1927, to January 17, 1928. (Only the first of these was published in *Letters*; the others can be seen in the National Library in Dublin.) In an increasingly urgent tone, Joyce requested that the manuscripts be sent to Slivinski and a list of songs to himself so that a Zurich printing might also be arranged. Palmer did send the songs. Slivinski approved, and all that remained was a financial agreement. Joyce then relayed the information that the price for Palmer would be 2800 francs (£22). A week later, however, the amount was reduced substantially: "You may count out my fees," wrote Joyce, and only 900 francs would be necessary since he and Slivinski would "go thirds." Palmer's failure to respond meant that the project had to be dropped. It also ended the correspondence, except for a brief exchange in 1931 when Joyce, responding to a request from Palmer, wrote with great simplicity: "It is a great pity you were not able to proceed with the publication I had arranged with Slivinski in Paris some years ago" (*Letters*, I, 304).

When those postcards arrived, Palmer was living in the house where his sisters would support him for the rest of his life, so money might have been a consideration. However, there is another possible theory to explain the composer's unwillingness to publish, which seems to me the most likely, despite a lack of clear evidence. Palmer's sisters earned their livelihood as headmistress and teacher at a very proper, very conservative British-style school for girls; doubtless the sisters were also highly respectable and proper. However much Palmer loved Joyce's poems and setting them to music, he evidently did so in secret. After all, the works for which Joyce was famous were nothing like the poems and had caused shock and controversy. Two former students of the Palmer sisters, who had known them well, expressed great surprise to me that *any* Palmer had had *any* connection with James Joyce! Thus caution and respectability, essential to the reputation of his sisters—and possibly to his own sense of propriety—might



have precluded any public association with a figure as controversial as James Joyce.

What matters now is that, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Harley Croessmann, thirty-two songs by Geoffrey Molyneux Palmer to the *Chamber Music* poems by James Joyce—some of which Joyce considered elegant and finer than any other settings—have been preserved. Musicians, singers (preferably tenors), Joyceans, and other scholars will find them richly rewarding.<sup>10</sup>

## Notes

1. *Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Richard Ellmann (N.Y.: Viking, 1966), III, 338. (Vol. I of this edition was originally edited by Stuart Gilbert in 1957 and revised by Ellmann for the 1966 collection). Hereafter cited in the text.

2. Originally a teacher at Cheltenham Ladies' College in England, Gladys crossed the sea to Ireland in 1919, by invitation, to found a private British-style girls' school in Glenageary, just south of Dublin. She served as headmistress for thirty years, during which time the school flourished. Phyllis followed soon after her sister to become the math and physics teacher. Both were highly regarded, and a new auditorium was named after them.

3. The correspondence between Harley K. Croessmann and the Palmer sisters is in Special Collections, Collection 73, box 21, folder 7.

4. Palmer mentions this in a letter to Patricia Hutchins, written in 1951, now in the manuscript room of the library at Trinity College, Dublin.

5. Eight letters from Palmer to Joyce are in the Rare Books department of Cornell University Library.

6. Vol. II contained twenty songs, not fifteen, making a total of thirty-two.

7. 2nd. ser., ed. Marvin Magalaner (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Pr., 1959), between pp. 208-9.

8. According to retired Brigadier Richard Lydekker, nephew and only living relative of the Palmers, along with his wife and daughter, Gladys had always been "the frail one," although she outlived all her younger siblings. The Brigadier, who was kind enough to supply me with information about the family, was the only child of a fourth sister, Sylvia, who married and remained in England. He recalls annual visits with his mother to the "Irish aunts" and Uncle Geoffrey.

9. These letters were donated by his son to the library of Trinity College.

10. Six songs, including Joyce's favorites, were performed at Elizabeth Seton College in Yonkers on March 25, 1982, as part of a centennial celebration of both Joyce and Palmer. A tape of the songs was played in Dublin, as part of the Centennial Joyce Symposium, and again in Cork where the reception was overwhelmingly enthusiastic.

## "Son of a Burke": The Hugh Dalziel Duncan Collection at Morris Library

by Charles Elkins

Born in Bo'ness, Scotland, on October 6, 1909, and moving to Chicago with his parents when he was six years old, Hugh Dalziel Duncan described himself as "a homespun product of the Middle West, and particularly of Chicago."<sup>1</sup> The connotations of "homespun"—plain, unpolished, simple—are not totally inappropriate; those who were acquainted with the direct, earthy, and often ribald side of Hugh Duncan's character would agree with his self-estimation. Yet even the most cursory examination of the 46 boxes of the Hugh Dalziel Duncan Papers in the University Archives at Morris Library would reveal that "homespun" describes only one aspect of an extremely complex man, a man who was described at the time of his death in 1970 as a "scholar in many fields, one of the few Renaissance men any of us has ever known,"<sup>2</sup> a man described by some sociologists as author of "the most sophisticated book on social theory in print today."<sup>3</sup> Like his two heroes, Abraham Lincoln and Mark Twain—also products of the Midwest—Duncan's common touch could scarcely disguise an intricate personality compounded of profound intelligence, sensitivity, and imagination.

His father was in the grocery business, and Duncan grew up in what he describes as "a good representation of any average American family—a homogenous group living together in a comfortable enough house located in a fair-sized middle western city."<sup>4</sup> In one letter, Duncan describes himself as a "self made" scholar. Of his father, he writes:

It never occurs to him to take literature seriously and since he never reads what is called "literature" he has no opinions about books as art. For him the printed page is merely a receptacle for factual information.<sup>5</sup>

An average student in high school, Duncan attended Drake University—his family had by this time moved to Iowa—majored in philosophy, graduated cum laude with honors in English, German, and philosophy, and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Somewhat surprised by this first sign of his academic prowess, Duncan notes: "I managed to stand up to this discovery with a certain amount of sanity and I was even a bit self-conscious about the honor because I had never been what is called a serious student. I was, I think, a fairly well rounded person, liking to swim, golf, and walk, about as much as I liked to read, listen to music or to talk."<sup>6</sup>

It was at Drake, "in conversations with teachers and students," that Duncan began to develop what was to be his lifelong intellectual passion—his concern about the relationship between art and society. Duncan recalls that in the late 1920s, such modernists as T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound promulgated an "art for art's sake" aestheticism as the "prevailing dogma":

Art, students were assured, had nothing to do with morals, nor with knowledge. It could not be explained by anything but itself. A great deal was said about "significant form," and "art for art's sake." . . . I could understand easily enough the dangers to art of subordinating it to religion, or to the state, but the question of what art was for (or as we say now, its function in society) must be answered in terms of some kind of social experience. So too with the question of the origins of art. For if art did not originate in society, where did it originate?<sup>7</sup>

Duncan spent the rest of his intellectual life struggling to answer these questions and confronting his uneasiness with statements asserting the total autonomy of art and social theories ignoring the role of art as a social institution or relegating it to a subordinate status within society.

Duncan's undergraduate years were not without their problems. His always rather distant relationship with his father began to decline further. There were more frequent quarrels, often about money. As Duncan saw it, his father was not convinced of the value of a college education:

Father believed in the gospel of work (studying or reading books was not considered work). He wanted me to work part time, not because he felt that "I did not have enough to do." Which, I felt with a good deal of irritation, was his way of telling me that he did not attach any great importance to what I was doing. . . . Toward the end of my college days our relationship degenerated from a healthy casual acceptance of each other to an almost neurotic prying into each other's affairs. Such an unhealthy state brought about its usual result—we ended up by thinking that we disliked each other.<sup>8</sup>

In time, he and his father reconciled, but Duncan never forgot his struggle against his father's anti-intellectualism. In his written work and in his teaching he was forever exhorting his readers and students to defend "the life of the mind" against those who either misunderstood the role of the intellectual or who denigrated intellectual work by making it sheer labor.

Now that his son was a college graduate, the father believed that it was time for Hugh to "settle down." But not in the grocery business. Instead, Duncan was taken to Chicago by his older brother to work in an advertising agency. He wrote copy for a grocery store account. Still determined to pursue his education, in 1932 Duncan enrolled at the University of Chicago for graduate study in English. He wrote his master's thesis, "Contemporary French Criticism of Carlyle," under the direction of Robert Morss Lovett and received his MA in English in 1933. Yet he was not comfortable with the way in which literature was being taught in academe;

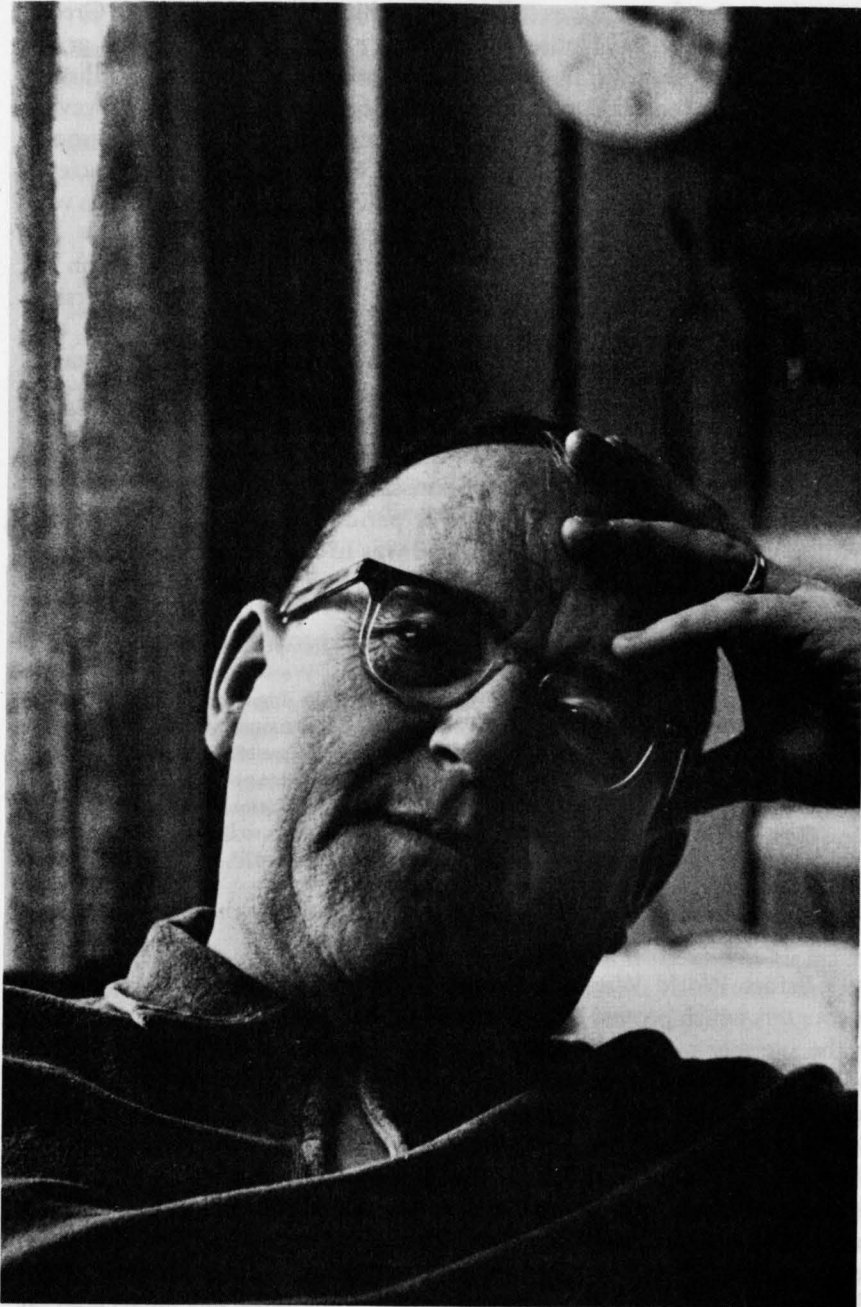
the art-for-art's sake issue was still troubling him. He married Minna Green, a social worker at Hull House, and with her left Chicago to teach grade school in Des Moines. While there, Duncan tried to conceptualize a theory of culture which took into account the function of art in society. However, he was hampered in this effort by his lack of formal training in the social sciences. "I soon discovered," he wrote, "I knew nothing about society. To overcome this I began to read in the social sciences, and to write, as well as I could, about the function of art in American culture."<sup>9</sup>

In 1936, Duncan reentered the University of Chicago to work on his doctorate in sociology. These were exciting days at the university, especially in the social sciences. Sociologists like Ogburn, Wirth, and Blumer and anthropologists such as Redfield and Warner were engaged in crucial debates concerning the methods of the social sciences, in trying to answer the question, "How do you know what you say you know?" This was a formative period in Duncan's intellectual development, for in one sense he was always to consider himself a methodologist. But his most important intellectual adventure in this period was the discovery of the writings of George Herbert Mead. Mead was to have a profound effect on Duncan's thinking. Reading Mead's *Mind, Self and Society*, he remembers:

I found, for the first time in the social sciences, an attempt to develop a statement of how symbolic interchange determined social relations. We were taught . . . that society was "determined" by communication. But when even the simplest questions about communication were asked—such as: *Who* determined communication? *What* was the specific sociological content of symbolization? *How* do we study symbolic action as human interaction, and not simply as motion?—there were no answers. And finally, if we say society arises in, and exists through communication (which is what Park, Simmel, Dewey, and Cooley, and Mead said), then why was so little written and taught about art, the social institution in which symbols were created?<sup>10</sup>

Duncan was to spend the rest of his life trying to answer those questions.

Before World War II interrupted his studies, Duncan had another encounter, which proved to be the decisive intellectual experience of his life: in the summer of 1938 he met Kenneth Burke. Aided by a Marshall Field Fellowship and working with his thesis director, Louis Wirth, Duncan enrolled in "The Psychology of Poetic Form," a course being taught by Burke under the auspices of the English Department. Louis Wirth knew of Burke's work. In 1935, reviewing Burke's *Permanence and Change* for the *American Journal of Sociology*, Wirth argues that while Burke was not a sociologist, the author of *Permanence and Change* knew as much as most social psychologists and, furthermore, wrote about their concerns more clearly and more interestingly than anyone thus far. Duncan recalls, "It was a fateful day for me, for at last I found the teacher I needed to help me



Hugh Dalziel Duncan (ca. 1962)

formulate my ideas on communication. Burke *began* where others *stopped*. He did not keep repeating that society existed in communication, but tried to show *how* it did."<sup>11</sup> Thus began a friendship that was to last for more than thirty years. After the student-teacher period, the two became colleagues, exchanging ideas, criticizing each other's work, and trying to work out and clarify some of the fundamental assumptions about the relationships between art and society. Burke becomes the teacher-father that Duncan needed.

From the beginning, the relationship was one of give and take. As a student in Burke's class, Duncan was able to provide Burke with useful information in the social sciences, which helped Burke formulate his ideas. In 1951, Burke wrote to Duncan recalling their first meeting:

Many years back, when I was at Chicago the first time, you (As my "Star Pupii") taught me lesson no. 1. (And you, remembering the sishaysh, you will know that there is no bulshido in what I am saying to you.) I had been talking to some group or other. They had piled in. I had to turn around to answer some questions. You had walked home with me before, and per tradish you walked home with me that day too. And baybay, that day you *educated me essentially*. How? I came way, thinking I was the cat's meow. Did you fall into line? YOU DID NOT. You began telling me, as though talking to yourself, about Academic Stupidity. You talked about this loathesome putting-on-dog. Even as you spoke, I could see myself turning my head *with authority*. This poor diplomaless baystard (and, in the last analysis, every one is sans diploma, for, to believe in that rackett, you'd hage [sic] to get a new diploma every day, with all the blowings of horn), he was to-b4 [sic] - consulted. Psst! You know, and I know, that he had no jobs to parcel out. That stinkeroo, Burke, Ink.<sup>12</sup>

A few months before the war, Duncan and his wife decided to "live in the country." "Close enough," he recalls, "to the University [of Chicago] so I could go on with my work, and yet get enough employment to support myself. So we built a house in what was then open country [Homewood, Illinois] and I tried to finish the house before I went into the army."<sup>13</sup> In April 1942 Duncan entered the army as a private. Completing basic training, he was sent to the Officer's Training Corps at Ft. Benning, Georgia, and was commissioned a second lieutenant in November 1942. He spent most of the war years in Newport News, Virginia, coordinating the economic, political, and military intelligence being gathered from returning American personnel, prisoners of war, the Merchant Marine, and civilians. He left the army a captain.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that his experiences in the army produced in Duncan his abiding faith in democracy and his fear and hatred of totalitarianism. In book after book he expresses his conviction that unless we understand the functions of symbols and art in society, we too may fall victim to a Stalin, Mussolini, or Hitler.

Discharged from the army in 1946, Duncan returned home with the aim of finishing his doctorate and with the desire "to teach with all the love and concern I could."<sup>14</sup> But Duncan found the going tough. He soon realized that his work on symbols and communication was not considered "research" in the orthodox sense and that he was out of the mainstream of sociological thinking current at the time. He writes:

And since I was considered more of a "humanist" than a "scientist," the only interest in my work was among the small (but hardy!) band of social thinkers who were trying to break sociology away from biology, physics, and economics. In short, I was not "kosher," and the faithful were seldom remiss about reminding me of my desertion of the faith. There seemed to be no place for me in the American sociological bureaucracy.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, while he supported himself by teaching nights at some of the local colleges, Duncan found that his research and writing were taking up more and more of his time and that he was unable to give as much attention to his students as he felt he should. He decided to give up teaching, as he recalls, "to devote myself to writing for a few years, to give the best form I could to my ideas, and then to see if I could combine a life of scholarship and teaching."<sup>16</sup> Duncan completed his PhD thesis, which focuses on the growth of Chicago as literary center, and was awarded the doctorate in 1948.<sup>17</sup> Then, to provide for himself and his wife while writing—"research grants for such a maverick as myself were out of the question, as I soon found out"—Duncan went into the real estate business. He remembers, "I learned how to subdivide property and to sell lots. Then I borrowed heavily and formed a land syndicate. The gods smiled on the innocence of a scholar who would be a business man, I made money, and was able to buy a good working library, add a study to my house, and get my books under way."<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, the gods were kind. Not only did his business make him financially independent, but his real estate experience sensitized him to the cultural heritage embodied in the urban architecture of this great midwestern city. Duncan founded the Chicago Landmarks Commission, which attempted to save some of the more famous buildings. His work to preserve these architectural monuments is documented in letters to architects, businessmen, and civic leaders as well as an unpublished paper, "A Five Minute Talk on the Garrick Theatre," and a sixteen millimeter filmed talk in which he argues for preserving the architectural heritage. The pioneering work of the Chicago Landmarks Commission in establishing criteria was accepted by the federal government as a base for all such landmark commissions. Moreover, his thinking on the role of architecture in American life resulted in his 1964 book entitled *Culture and Democracy: The Struggle for Form in Society and Architecture in Chicago and the Middle West during the Life*

and Times of Louis H. Sullivan.<sup>19</sup> Duncan observes, "that in its architecture lies the history of the struggle for the form of a new civilization, the civilization of America which emerged after the Civil War."<sup>20</sup>

Though he was a successful businessman, Duncan's intellectual work was undertaken in isolation. From the late 1940s until the early 1960s, he had little contact with the academic world. In his letters to Kenneth Burke one gets a picture of an ambitious but frustrated thinker who is suspicious of academic compartmentalization and despairing of the "academic fools" who are blind to the importance of the role of art in society and to the significance of Burke's work.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Burke becomes more than his teacher; he becomes Duncan's friend, his critic, his confidant, his father-figure—one of the few with whom Duncan can share his hopes and fears. And Burke responds, not merely to encourage Duncan in his work but to use Duncan as a sounding board for his own ideas. In 1951, in one of the more than 150 letters in the archives from Burke to Duncan, Burke says, "And I know that, every now and then, as we swing around in the blue, your orbit and my orbit get within the range of communication—and I say, that sort of thing is civilisaysh. And so be it."<sup>22</sup>

In the late 1950s, when Duncan attempts to find a permanent university teaching position, Burke writes letters of recommendation for him to the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, to Bennington, and to Rice University, where he finally gets an appointment. When Duncan complains about his situation at Rice, Burke scolds him like a father and exhorts him, "Holy smokes, snap out of it!" He gives Duncan advice on pedagogy and explains some tricks that he might try in class to improve his teaching. When Duncan persists in his complaints, Burke sternly admonishes him:

Really, Hugh, I must heckle you on this point. You know that I am all for you. So you know that I am to be listened to. Don't get too godam great too godam soon. When it's a reasonable job, stick to it, not just enough, but more than the contract calls for. To the extent that you don't, you're a fart. (And also, to the extent that you don't, you're a fart that I backed for the job.)

Come on, poopneck, shake out of it. Do the work, *right there*.<sup>23</sup>

When Duncan leaves Rice in 1964 and comes to Carbondale, Burke writes about Southern Illinois University. "That seems to be quite a lively place. Schools ebb and flow—and that one would seem to be in a rising phase."<sup>24</sup> Duncan had finally found a home in academe, and when he writes Burke about his plans to build a home in Anna, Illinois, Burke seems relieved that Duncan is finally "ground-in this time."<sup>25</sup>

In the 1950s and 1960s Duncan wrote several books, including *Language and Literature in Society* (1953; rpt. New York: Bedminster, 1961),



Kenneth Burke with his wife Libby (ca. 1946)

*Communication and Social Order* (1962; rpt. New York: Galaxy, 1968), *The Rise of Chicago as a Literary Center* (New York: Bedminster, 1964), *Culture and Democracy* (New York: Bedminster, 1965), *Symbols in Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), and *Symbols and Social Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969). In addition he published numerous articles and reviews and worked on a number of manuscripts that were never published.<sup>26</sup>

Throughout this period Burke was his constant correspondent. Indeed, no matter what each was writing—and they were always working on something—he would send the manuscript to the other for comments and suggestions. For example, in his discussion of what was to be Duncan's *Language and Literature in Society*, Burke offers the following observation on that part of the essay dealing with "Literature as Make-Believe":

Last paragraph of essay offers another way to state *our* point [emphasis mine]: Symbolic action is not just "make-believe" in the sense of imitation of "real life." As I am trying to show in my essay on Aristotle and "imitation," the full meaning of the term has been partially obscured by our shift from dramatist to scientist principles of thinking. "Symbolic action" also involves "make-believe" of a different sort, thus: There are the resources of symbols, to be exploited *in and for themselves* (by man as an organism specifically given to symbol-using, and in love with the differentia that defines his biological species). In exploiting such possibilities, he turns to "make-believe": that is, he tries to make his artistic adventure as "life-like" as he can, since it is thereby made more appealing. In the course of such activities, he does indeed, at every turn, become involved in the sociological considerations you correctly point out. But these are like a "fall from the state of formal grace," so far as the "principle of perfection" is concerned (that is, the principle of the imaginative enterprise of freely exploiting its possibilities, following it to the end of the line in ways that would be "irresponsible," so far as social considerations alone are concerned, but are wholly responsible as regards the "morality of production" alone).<sup>27</sup>

In *Language and Literature in Society*, Duncan is exploring the connections between symbols—especially as these symbols are created in literary forms—and authority and how symbols are used to produce and maintain social order. In *Communication and Social Order*, considered by many to be his most important book, Duncan attempts to place his theory of symbols within the framework of mainstream American sociological theory and to set forth a series of propositions conceptualizing the social function of art and its relationship to social order. In contrast to Burke, who emphasizes the social function of ritual and tragedy, Duncan concentrates on comedy and the role of comic art. In reading this manuscript, Burke offers Duncan the most extended piece of criticism that he was to write for Duncan; the letter runs to more than 20 typed, single-spaced pages and covers everything from mechanical and factual corrections to suggestions for stylistic improvement to elaborations on and disagreements

over substantive issues in Duncan's exposition. A few examples will communicate the flavor of Burke's comments:

63mdl. "as sociologists of art, it is the specific aesthetic quality of art experience which must concern us." This is the problem, in essence. And we keep coming upon it in various ways. You are putting two realms together, and for the very reason that they are separate (separate not in the ontological sense that the work of art is double, but in the methodological sense that sociology and aesthetics are by definition different approaches to the subject . . .

footnote, 218-222. Am happy to see you going after the neo-behaviorists here in a sustained way. But I question the rhetorical zeal of your identifying them with Hitlerism, etc. Isn't it sufficient merely to bop them methodologically? . . .

267 . . . You are always at your best in stuff on comedy.

317tm. "in what Cooley, Mead, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and now Burke call a dramatic form." Irony indeed. I made up that word as a deliberate trade-name for my particular wares. But lo it has thus disappeared, it has flooded the coop of my possession, somewhat as when the trade name "frigidaire" came to apply not just to one company's product but to the similar products of all the rival operators, too. But your comment here is the most unkindest cut of all. This haint just sociology, bejeez, it's socialization!<sup>28</sup>

Burke criticizes Duncan for "surveyitis" and for "scolding" his readers and says: "Unless your colleagues are more masochistic than all hell, you're just going to lose readers by the barrelful. Nor do I consider the scolding of a very high order (not like Veblen's kind of academic entertainment, for instance)."<sup>29</sup> And he advises Duncan to cut and condense, "for the book as it stands is too scattered." Burke concludes his 25-page critique by saying, "And here's hoping, above all, that you'll forgive me if here and there, in the haste of my utterance, I may have spoken too bluntly."<sup>30</sup> Burke added that kind of postscript to his letters to Duncan if he thought he had been too harsh in his comments on Duncan's work. But it was not necessary. Duncan understood that real friends could be perfectly honest with each other and that the bluntness and honesty was a measure of their friendship. Duncan was later to say that no writer had a better reader-critic than Burke.<sup>31</sup>

Also in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Duncan was hard at work on his book on Chicago architecture and the legacy of Louis Sullivan. In this work and in the ones which follow, one can see Duncan attempting to gain some autonomy from Burke's powerful conceptual scheme by adapting Burke's ideas to his own more sociological concerns. At one point in his work on *Culture and Democracy*, Duncan writes to Burke, ". . . here my problem is to say something that does more than repeat what you have said, or at least if I do repeat, make clear that such repetition is necessary to a systematic development of a sociological point of view."<sup>32</sup> And in 1965 when the book finally comes out, both men seem to realize that Duncan was carving out his own territory. Burke had nothing but praise for *Culture*

and *Democracy* and playfully asks, "Am I but to be an Albert to thy Aquinas?" Then he quickly adds, "In any case, I congratulate you on having shaken free of that guy Burke. Having lived with him for a long time, 25 hours a day, I'm pretty sick of him, e'en though I must admit that he's also what I'm fated to die of."<sup>33</sup>

By 1968, with the publication of his *Symbols in Society*, it is clear that Duncan is going his own way. Burke writes a review of the book for the Book Find Club. At the same time, he says to Duncan, "My major reservation is one that I always have with regard to your sociology: it goes too far out of its road to avoid Marxism."<sup>34</sup> Burke concludes this letter by remarking, ". . . though I'd be delighted to be dedicated at<sup>35</sup> unless you are so vexed by this letter that you'd rather dedicate to Marshall McLues [Marshall McLuhan], I think that there's still plenty of room for someone else to do the book you set out to do. But be that as it may, it's a vigorous performance and vigorously in the right direction."<sup>36</sup> Yet the matter does not end here. Three weeks later Burke writes these poignant lines to Duncan:

It isn't fair, I suppose to address you from the bowing-out side, when you are obviously still steamed up to go. But if you want to give me a piece of your lip, I'll set and listen, not only respectfully but also affectionately, every step of the way. Hugh, we are in a tangle beyond your wholesome ability to imagine.

Maybe we (this is a different we) should have haggled a bit along the way, instead of your simply springing the fait accompli. In my septuagenarian meanness I but hit what your Index [in *Symbols in Society*] says and doesn't. Namely: There is an entry under "propriety," but none under "Property" [a reference to Duncan's failure to confront Marx]. Jeezoos Keerist, I could have admonished you so quick and persuasively. And I could so easily have admonished you to build after the fashion of Spinoza's *Ethics*, as regards methodology. You shouldn't have sprung all this, all done, on a guy who is so much for you. . . . In any case, I hope your volume sees gongingly, I certainly do. But naturally I remain furious that at no extra charge, you could have let me help you do an even better job than you did do.<sup>37</sup>

It is hard to judge the effect of this letter. Its tone may have been acerbated by Burke's despair over his wife's terminal illness. In any case, for the next two years before Duncan's death, there are no letters in the Archives commenting on Duncan's final book, *Symbols and Social Theory*. One thing is clear: Duncan never forgot the debt he owed to Kenneth Burke. In the archives there is a handwritten note by Duncan which sums up his estimation of Burke's importance:

I owe so much to Burke that I read what I write with the guilty sense of a thief. I don't think I have said much that B. hasn't said, and painfully to speak bluntly, said better. Burke is the great master in our time of symbolic interpretation. In another generation or so he will be "discovered" long after the creaking voices of our academic pundits and the barbarous jargon of our "behavioral[ists]" die away the voice of Burke will ring out or, perhaps we should say, the many voices, for B. plays many roles.<sup>38</sup>

Duncan's estimate of Burke's importance for his work has been seconded by everyone who has seriously studied the evolution and significance of Duncan's work. William Rueckert, Burke's most perceptive critic, writes, "Hugh Duncan has simply ingested Burke and taken him into his own system, organically. He illustrates a kind of total beneficent reception of Burke that would be hard to find elsewhere."<sup>39</sup>

In all of his writing, Duncan is wrestling with one central problem: Is it possible to create a sociological theory which explains the function of symbols in society? In a paper read at an American Sociological Association meeting but left unpublished, Duncan observes that "sociologists concerned with how the self arises in, and exists through, communication of significant symbols, face many difficulties. We do not have a sociological concept of the act which relates function to structure in the same terms." While the writings of George Herbert Mead emphasize function and the works of Max Weber and Talcott Parsons underscore structure, "in neither do we have a definition of structure or function in terms of each other, or where we do, of a structure of the act which is a structure determined by the communication of significant symbols." Sociology (including Marxian theory) and anthropology allocate a "residual" function to symbols, but Duncan asks:

... any empirical study of society must deal with the data of communication, and this can be done only if we deal directly with expressive symbols as both function and structure in the act. We cannot have a mechanical social structure, which yet functions dramatically. For if man in society is determined by "forces" whose laws can be "discovered" as we discover the "laws of motion," and symbols, like ducts or mirrors, transmit or reflect social meaning, how do we get to a reality which is beyond symbols, and yet is experienced only through them? And, finally, how do we face the fact that however we know social reality, we must report our knowledge by symbols which we have already said can only reflect, record, or signal, social realities which are non-symbolic?<sup>40</sup>

Duncan was considerably troubled with the mechanical (i.e., space-time-motion-energy), scientific models that classical and contemporary social theorists used to explain social interaction and social order. For him, quantitative methods, questionnaires, terms such as "social forces," "social equilibrium," "class mobility," etc., simply did not get to the root of the problems involved in explaining how real, concrete individuals relate to one another in society. In a published letter to Hans L. Zetterberg, one of the editors at Bedminster Press, Duncan says:

What I was seeking as a student, and am still seeking as a scholar, are abstractions about man as an actor in relationships with other actors. I think about roles, and concrete individuals, whose social bond arises and continues to exist in their attempt through communication, to achieve common purposes. I simply do not understand a

system like that of Parsons, or Freud, in which the social bond is not symbolic . . . I do not say this lightly, and there have been times when I doubted my ability to think, because I think so poorly, and with great difficulty, in any kind of mechanical imagery.

... I simply do not have the kind of mind that moves easily or well among processes, gearing, feedback, tracks, transactions, etc. For me such mechanics are celestial mechanics, a kind of mystical union with a cosmological machine. For me the world is really a stage upon which we play our roles in hate, love, and indifference, among equals, superiors, and inferiors.

... And always, *always* I think of role enactment as dramatic enactment, an address of one actor to another, and the response of the other.<sup>41</sup>

How successful Duncan was in solving what he believed to be the fundamental dilemma in sociological theory remains an open question. Certainly he had his detractors.<sup>42</sup> In relation to his contemporaries in the discipline of sociology, Duncan always saw himself as a "maverick," and his constant scolding of his colleagues for their failures probably did little to endear him to them. Duncan clearly fits the role—defined by Irving Louis Horowitz—of the "anti-sociologist," an individual who "owes a functional allegiance to a source of authority, or a set of ideas which is outside the control system of sociology [and who] often adopts a critique of sociology from the point of view of consciously applied literary technique."<sup>43</sup> Overington writes:

It was his roots in rhetoric and literary criticism, the mark on him of the "anti-sociologist," which led to his difficulties in communicating the sociological intent of his writing. That intention is obscured, for a "mainline" sociologist, by the rhetorical and literary cast to his concepts, style and examples. Thus, while there are exceptions, it is no exaggeration to say that favorable notice of Duncan's work has come mainly from outside sociology.<sup>44</sup>

Overington's observation is substantially correct; his evaluation of Duncan's work concludes, "For all of the faults that his work exhibits, when one applies the criteria employed by Robert Nisbet to locate members of that tradition [i.e., the "classical" tradition in sociological theory], Hugh Duncan stands in the company of Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Alexis de Tocqueville, and other figures amongst the conservatives who founded sociology. . . . For it is my belief that Hugh Duncan's major sociological contribution is in providing amplification and elaboration to the *critical theory* that has always been locked up in symbolic interactionism's vision of the human person as self-creative."<sup>45</sup> Valerie Ann Malhotra, another sociologist and a perceptive critic of Duncan's work, writes:

Hugh Dalziel Duncan has contributed to both sociological theory and communications theory by showing their logical inseparability. He has developed a theory of symbolic communication which provides for fruitful analysis of social interaction from the level of face-to-face encounters to large scale structures of social order. Like the

classical theorists Mead, Simmel, Veblen, Marx, and Weber, Duncan was concerned with questions of the nature of social order and social change. Especially in view of the twentieth century crisis, such as World War II and the Nazi Holocaust, Duncan felt that an understanding of how men lead each other and are led was an urgent necessity. Duncan searched for a model of dramatic action where social order could be maintained without reoccurring victimage. . . . Especially in the manuscripts left unpublished at his death, Duncan examined processes of conscious democratic rule-making as a way of ordering without the need for violent purgation.

In the process of this worthy intellectual quest, Duncan developed numerous concepts which serve as useful analytical tools in a communication theory of society.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, reviewing Duncan's *Communication and Social Order in Scientific American*, the noted economist Kenneth Boulding writes, "Duncan's discussion of the nature of social equality indeed impresses me as being the most profound body of insight into this subject I have ever read. . . . It is the great virtue of Duncan's work that he has enriched the agenda of the study of social systems and therefore has contributed to opening a way toward a much deeper social science than we now possess."<sup>47</sup>

I am convinced that it is Duncan's ties with Kenneth Burke's thought which remain the crucial element in establishing his reputation. As Burke's stock continues to rise so will Duncan's. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly clear that Burke is one of the seminal thinkers of the twentieth century. His influence in such diverse areas as rhetorical theory, literary criticism, political theory, symbolic anthropology, and the school of thought in sociology known as symbolic interactionism or dramatism is incalculable. If there were a category within the Nobel Committee for sheer influence, Burke would win the prize hands down. In addition, as social theorists manage to integrate Burke with Marxism, the major weakness in Duncan's work—his functionalism—will be taken into account (or "discounted" as Burke would say), and his significant contributions to social theory will be recognized.

In 1960, Duncan wrote to his publisher:

It may be that my work will make it easier for younger sociologists to develop a sociological theory and methodology based on communication. But whether this comes to pass through my work or not is not the issue. It will come about because human motives, determined as they are in so many ways, are determined as human motives by the use of symbols. When we recognize this we will be on our way to a science of human conduct, and if we have not yet produced our Marx, Darwin, Freud, or Einstein, we will have opened the path for his arrival, at least.<sup>48</sup>

Mead, Simmel, Veblen, Durkheim, de Tocqueville, and Marx—not bad company for "a homespun product of the Middle West."

## Notes

1. "A Letter from Hugh Duncan," *Bedminster Letter on the Social Sciences*, No. 2 (January 1963), 3.
2. John F. Hayward, mimeographed comments distributed at the Hugh Duncan Memorial Service, Tuesday, 13 October 1970, at the Lutheran Student Center, Carbondale, Illinois.
3. R. P. Cuzzort and E. W. King, *Humanity and Modern Social Thought*, 2nd ed. (Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden Press, 1976), note no. 4.
4. Unpublished autobiographical narrative, p. 1.
5. *Bedminster Letter*, p. 3.
6. Autobiographical narrative, pp. 2, 4.
7. *Bedminster Letter*, p. 4.
8. Autobiographical narrative, p. 5.
9. *Bedminster Letter*, p. 4.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
12. Burke to Duncan, 18 February 1951; unless otherwise indicated, all references to and quotes from the Duncan - Kenneth Burke correspondence are taken from the letters in the Duncan papers in Special Collections, Morris Library. Thanks are due Kenneth Burke for permission to quote from his letters.
13. Draft, "Letter to Mr. Entenza," 9 June 1965.
14. *Bedminster Letter*, p. 7.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. The thesis was later published as *The Rise of Chicago as a Literary Center from 1885-1920: A Sociological Essay in American Culture* (Totowa, N.J.: Bedminster Press, 1964).
18. *Bedminster Letter*, p. 7.
19. Totowa, N.J.: Bedminster Press, 1965.
20. *Culture and Democracy*, p. xiii.
21. See especially Duncan's letters to Kenneth Burke, 21 October 1946 and 14 April 1947.
22. Burke to Duncan, 18 February 1951.
23. Burke to Duncan, 7 January 1963.
24. Burke to Duncan, 14 April 1965.
25. Burke to Duncan, 2 August 1965.
26. Some of the more important unpublished manuscripts in the archives include: (1) "Rules: A Sociological Inquiry on the Function of Rules in Society"; (2) "Social Courtship: The Social Drama of Hierarchy"; (3) "The Study of Society: A System of Sociology Based on the Proposition That How We Communicate Determines How We Relate as Human Beings"; (4) "The Social Function of Imagery Within the Act"; (5) "The Maxims and Reflections of the Duc de La Rochefoucauld"; (6) "The History of Sociology of Art, Music, and Literature Since World War I to 1954."
27. Burke to Duncan, 2 January 1952.
28. Burke to Duncan, 27-28 August 1955.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. As a reader for the University of California Press, Burke recommended *Communication and Social Order* for publication, providing that it went through one more "revision."
32. Duncan to Burke, 1 December 1959.
33. Burke to Duncan, 25 December 1965.



34. Burke to Duncan, 25 August 1968. Burke's criticism here is telling. Duncan's failure to confront Marxism head-on has been repeatedly pointed out by Duncan's most effective critics.
35. Duncan dedicates *Symbols in Society* "To Kenneth Burke, Master Symbolist of Our Time, and George Herbert Mead, Founder of the Chicago Tradition in Symbolic Analysis."
36. Burke to Duncan, 25 August 1968.
37. Burke to Duncan, 13 September 1968.
38. Duncan papers, Box 20, folder 12.
39. William H. Rueckert, ed., *Critical Responses to Kenneth Burke, 1924-1966* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), p. 357. See also Michael A. Overington, "The Sociological Rhetoric of Hugh Dalziel Duncan: A Burkean Account of Social Order as Symbolic Interaction," Diss. University of Wisconsin, 1974.
40. "The Genesis of Self in Society: The Dialogue Between Individual and Social Selves in the Work of La Rochefoucauld" (Paper given at the 54th annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, New York, 31 August 1960), pp. 1-5; Box 12, folder 9.
41. *Bedminster Letter*, p. 5.
42. For an example of the kind of treatment he received from "mainstream" sociologists, see Don Martindale's slashing review of *Symbols and Social Theory*, *American Journal of Sociology*, 76 (September 1970), 359-61.
43. Irving Louis Horowitz, "Mainliners and Marginals: The Human Shape of Sociological Theory," in *Sociological Theory: Inquiries and Paradigms*, ed., Llewellyn Gross (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 358-83; quoted in Overington, p. 25.
44. Overington, p. 3.
45. Overington, p. 376.
46. Valerie Ann Malhotra, "Communication and Social Order in the Sociological Theory of Hugh Dalziel Duncan," unpublished manuscript, p. 25. Professor Malhotra, as a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, studied with Duncan. She is now with the Department of Sociology and Social Work, Texas Woman's University. Her descriptive inventory of the Hugh Duncan Papers in the Archives of the Southern Illinois University Library made my research much easier.
47. *Scientific American*, 208 (January 1963), 158, 160.
48. *Bedminster Letter*, p. 7.

## Passages in the Life of Reginald Hunter

by Kenneth Hopkins

Maurice Reginald Hunter was born at Southbrooke, New Zealand, in 1889, and died at Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1960. The five books he published during his life made little impact then, and may be said to be forgotten now. Accordingly, a writer preparing to present an account of this author to the readers of an American journal might have some doubts about his chances of getting it published, one would think. But, "I have an answer to all this," as St. Dunstan said to the Devil. It was a pair of red hot tongs to apply to the Devil's nose. My own answer I hope will be less violent, but no less persuasive.

For there is indeed a good deal more to Reginald Hunter than the two-sentence summary with which this paper begins; and in particular there is much which may be of interest to readers in the United States.

Let me start by calling him Rex, for this is the name he used normally as a writer, and it is the name he was known by among his friends. I shall outline his early years briefly, to set the scene, and treat his life in the United States rather more in depth, adding as much about his writings as may serve, I hope, to send at least some readers in search of them.

Southbrooke is a small town in the south island of New Zealand, a few miles north of the capital city, Christchurch. Rex's father was Thomas Hunter, who was an early immigrant to New Zealand, arriving there from his native Scotland at the age of twenty, in 1864. He was a carpenter by trade, but in 1868 he set up as a storekeeper in Christchurch, removing later to Southbrooke. In 1868 he married Jane Berry, an English girl, by whom he had three children, and after she died in 1875 he married again (1877), this time choosing an Irish girl, Bella Kane, by whom he had five children. The fourth of these was Rex, born on January 5, 1889.

Rex was educated at the local school, going on (he tells us) to university; but no university has yet come forward to confirm this, and when Rex was of university age we find him already working in journalism, which was his principal job for the rest of his life. Exact dates, so dear to the scholarly biographer, are hard to come by in Rex's life, but he cannot have been more than twenty when he arrived in Australia with some journalistic experience behind him, and an introduction to the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* in his hand. Events move fast in the Antipodes, and before very long we find him appointed "Assistant Shipping Reporter at two pounds a week." Rex's reaction as recorded in his autobiography is exactly a boy's:

I was now a "journalist." I imagined people pointing me out in restaurants and theatres and exclaiming in awed accents, "That's Hunter of the *Daily Telegraph*." I saw myself as a member of a small privileged group who had the entree everywhere, from the Governor's mansion to thieves' kitchens.<sup>1</sup>

This is just what I did when I first arrived in London, shuffling along in the gutter wondering how many people said to one another, "There goes the poet Hopkins!" I dare say Rex and I were both disappointed, and he was further disappointed by his work, which consisted in copying down off a board at the docks the names of all the ships that arrived and departed. But he was luckier than I, for he met a lady who edited a theatrical weekly, and she printed some of his poems—copies of which I am still looking for.

For several years Rex worked in Australia in several cities on several newspapers, and he certainly got a splendid grounding in every element of journalism; but the main part of the early chapters in his autobiography concerns his social life and the friendships he made with a variety of young people all trying to break into one profession or another—acting, painting, journalism, and so on. And very lively reading it all is, but for the present you must take my word for that; I am seeking a publisher for it, but these things take time. I can record in passing that he published a song called "When the Wattle Blooms Again" which was sung by the lady whose picture appears with Rex's on the cover, amid universal approbation—or so I gather. She must have had a magnificent voice, for the words are horrid.

About 1914 Rex's father died, and just before or just after that occurred, Rex returned to New Zealand, where he remained for some time, working at one point on the *Christchurch Press*, the paper which a lifetime earlier had published the articles by Samuel Butler which were the germs of *Erewhon*. Rex also worked in Auckland, and then at no certain date, but about 1917, he packed up again and took off for the United States (his ultimate destination) by way of a leisurely progression from New Zealand to Australia, Fiji, Hawaii, and so to San Francisco. He made the best living he could by taking any job that was offered—in Fiji, for example, he was employed to count bananas (even less exciting, one feels, than writing down the names of ships) and in Honolulu he had a job taking down evidence at Courts-Martial, which must have been fairly irregular. But everywhere he managed at last to get into journalism even if it was sometimes only for a short while. Finally, he arrived at San Francisco.

At this point I venture to interrupt the biographical narrative to explain how it happens that I am interested in Rex Hunter, and interested in interesting others. I had been aware of him and of his work for some forty years, because of his connection with the Powys brothers, but a year or two ago when I undertook some work in assessing the life and writings of Gamel Woolsey I was obliged to look at Rex more closely—for she was his wife. I learned that almost all of his papers that are known to survive are in the

Alexander Turnbull Library at Wellington, New Zealand, and I thought that if I could examine them I would learn something about his wife. I made my way to Wellington, and learned precisely nothing; her name scarcely occurs among them. But I learned a good deal about Rex, some of which is here set down; and what is more, I began to be interested in his life and work for their own sakes. Being on the spot, I decided to find out what sort of reputation this New Zealand writer has on his native heath, and to this end I talked with a number of professors of English at several universities. The sum total of this research was that one professor believed he had seen one, or perhaps two of Rex Hunter's poems in an anthology of New Zealand verse, and the rest was silence. None of Hunter's five books was published in New Zealand, and his name is virtually unknown in academic critical circles. In order to remedy this I was asked to write a paper for publication in a Wellington scholarly journal—but "Vain are the hopes of man," as Dr. Johnson remarked, no doubt throwing up his hands—the paper was rejected as insufficiently scholarly. So Rex Hunter remains unknown in New Zealand. And let me say that that paper is not this paper, which is newly written and even less scholarly.

So, having set out for New Zealand to research on one book, I returned with the prospect of saddling myself with another. Perhaps when Rex set out for the United States he had no better idea of what he was taking on.

Once he had landed in America the same slow odyssey began. He would stay a few months in San Francisco, Denver, Kansas City, but all the time he kept his face to the east, and at last arrived in Chicago, about 1918, I think.

Here Rex worked for some time on the *Daily News*, where his colleagues included Ben Hecht, who afterwards made a great reputation in the theatre, and Carl Sandburg, who held the oddly-named office of Labor Editor. Hunter sketches an endearing portrait of Sandburg in his novel "Henry Whitaker" which also for the present is unpublished.

Chicago was of course always full of writers, some visiting, others living and working in the city, and Rex soon had a wide circle of friends and resumed the way of life he had enjoyed in Sydney. Whether the city of Chicago was ever "very heaven" may be debatable, but young Rex seems to have found it so. Besides his day-to-day circle of friends, he met many celebrated writers, such as Lord Dunsany, W. B. Yeats, John Masfield, and John Cowper Powys. That period was the heyday of public lecturing in America, and after speaking of lectures by Conrad Aiken, Max Bodenheimer, and others, Rex Hunter goes on in his autobiography to remark that these were writers first and lecturers after, but (he says):

I was shortly to hear a man who was primarily a lecturer, and of whom others in the field might have said in the words of John the Baptist "There cometh one mightier than I am, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." This was John Cowper Powys, "sometime" scholar of Cambridge University, who discoursed chiefly on literary giants of the past, though occasionally dealing with contemporary figures such as his admired friends Masters and Dreiser. When I first heard him, in a room of that same Fine Arts Building, his subject was Dostoevsky. He was introduced by Llewelyn Jones, who in honour of the occasion wore a black cutaway coat. It was odd to see the casual Llewelyn in such formal attire . . .

. . . "Lecture" was much too academic a word for one of Powys's inspired discourses; the ordinary lecturer by contrast appeared as a heavy-headed, droning pedant. In speaking of Dostoevsky he appeared to crawl into the skin of the great Russian—novelist of supreme penetration, epileptic and gambler. He gradually lifted himself into a Dionysiac frenzy, and the most astonishing thing was to see the staid audience catch the infection and go careering along after the wine-god. Here lay Powys's greatness as a lecturer: his power to communicate his own mood and enthusiasms. No comparable performance had been witnessed since Dickens gave his mesmeric readings.

Emerging with the other members of the audience as if still under the influence of a drug, and reluctantly returning to the mundane, I did not dream that Powys was to become, years later, one of my closest friends.<sup>2</sup>

In 1919 Rex Hunter published his first book, with the rather unattractive title, *Stuff o' Dreams*. This contained four one-act plays, all of which were performed at various times in Chicago and New York, and occasionally elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Hunter says he liked *The Wild Goose* best, but none of them represents any sort of permanent contribution to English literature, in my view—however, I am not a critic of the drama. These are plays for three or four characters, using a simple set, and are very much the sort of thing we see (or try to avoid seeing) performed in church halls by amateur dramatic societies. Rex had some inclination to perform himself, and he gives an account of the Chicago theatre groups of the time, and describes several plays in which he appeared.

At the end of the autobiography as we have it, Rex Hunter was still in Chicago, and a brief epitome of the second volume, a single page of typescript, suggests that it would have opened with his advent in New York, which I think took place a year or so before Gamel Woolsey arrived there, perhaps about 1921. Hunter's first meeting with her may well have been at Woodstock, New York, where they both did some acting; and there is a photograph of them together in costume for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Gamel and Rex were married at City Hall, New York, on April 23, 1923, and lived together for about three or three and a half years. Nothing much came of their acting hopes, and I suppose it was easy enough for Gamel to turn to writing, with a writer already in the family. There is a poem of hers, the earliest I have seen in print, in the *New York Evening Post* of June 3, 1922, signed "E. G. Woolsey," and the next that I have seen is in the Los Angeles magazine *Caprice* of May, 1923, where she signs

her name "Gamel Woolsey." The New York representative of this magazine is listed as Rex Hunter, at 74 Macdougall Street, and it is reasonable to suppose that when they were first married Gamel and Rex lived there. The narrator in Hunter's novel *Porlock* gives this address for himself in the opening chapter. Also in *Porlock* the narrator has one or two brief references to "Elizabeth" (Gamel's full name was Elizabeth Gammell Woolsey) including a few words concerning his marriage to her: "One afternoon we went down to City Hall and submitted to a ceremony hurriedly mumbled over us by an Irish-American official with a bristling moustache and pudgy hands."<sup>4</sup> In this account the newly-weds install themselves in an apartment in Sullivan Street, but writing to Alyse Gregory some thirty years later Gamel says, "We took the elevator to City Hall and were married with two loafers as witnesses. And then we walked all the way back to Patchin Place laughing and talking all the way. We were not marrying the right people, of course . . ."<sup>5</sup>

Some time in 1923 Rex Hunter finished his first book of poems, *And Tomorrow Comes*, with the dedication "To Elsa." This was Gamel, whom he always called Elsa as her own family did. She is "Aunt Elsa" to this day to the various Woolsey nephews and nieces whom I have had the pleasure of meeting in the United States—just as Rex is "Uncle Reg" to his nephews and nieces in New Zealand, some of whom I have also made friends with. I owe much to these Woolseys and Hunters for the help they have given me in my research.

*And Tomorrow Comes* is a collection of thirty-four short pieces, among which are several about the character Sinclair, whom Rex identified with himself. The poems are inclined to the gloomy and are pictures and incidents of city life, in the main, such poems as were being written in those years by poets like Lola Ridge, Edna Millay in her early lyrics ("Macdougall Street"), Boyne Grainger, and Horace Gregory. Here is Hunter's title poem:

Sinclair went through the blue dusk dreaming,  
Came to the house and climbed the stair,  
Entered the room and called a greeting  
To the passionate dreamers gathered there.

The high talk hurled against the ceiling,  
Strange dreams blossomed like golden moans,  
Coloured words went dancing, reeling,  
To the clink and clash of coffee spoons.

They left the room for a place of dancing;  
Revellers whirled in a pale green light.  
Breasts and eyes threw gleams entrancing.  
Revel was master of the night.

The pale dawn crept through the sad drab windows.  
 Sinclair woke with a heavy frown.  
 Tomorrow came like a huntress stalking . . .  
 Sinclair's dream went crumbling down.

There is little in Hunter's published poetry that would seem to refer directly to Gamel, and except for the holograph poem in Rex's copy of her *Middle Earth* (published after they had parted) the same may be said of Gamel's writings, with the exception of her unpublished novel, "One Way of Love," which is a direct account of their marriage, from her viewpoint. What sort of relationship there was between them after they separated is hard to know, for none of Rex's letters to Gamel have come to my notice, and it seems he was not a very ready letter writer, anyway. I have seen only two letters from Gamel to Rex, both of which are among her papers, which suggests that she didn't post them. Not posting letters was a life-long habit of Gamel's, and so was not dating them. The other few glimpses we get of Rex in Gamel's letters are in her correspondence with Alyse Gregory and Phyllis Playter, and they are often but a few words, often wistful words. What news Rex and Gamel had of one another over the later years was almost all at second hand. John Cowper Powys's letters to Rex give a number of snippets of news of Gamel, and Gamel hears of Rex from Alyse, and perhaps from Phyllis Playter—but her letters to Gamel I have not studied.

After Gamel and Rex separated and Gamel went to England, and thereafter to Spain, they never met; and when Rex died, Gamel did not hear of his death, and so far as I know she never knew of it. She herself died eight years later.

When Gamel had left him Rex continued to live mainly in New York, where he now had a good connection with newspapers, although he probably no longer held a full-time job with any of them. He wrote extensively on matters having to do with Australia and New Zealand; he wrote feature articles and essays, gossip column material, book reviews, and leaders for several papers in New York and as far away as Boston.

Rex lived in various parts of Greenwich Village, and for a long time in Patchin Place, where he was John Cowper Powys's neighbor, and somewhat later he was the neighbor of E.E. Cummings, who was still in Patchin Place when I first visited New York in 1961—but I hesitated at his door, as Samuel Rogers had hesitated outside the door of Dr. Johnson, and like Rogers before me I eyed the knocker and feared to strike it. By that time most of the former glory of Patchin Place had departed, for me: no chance of meeting Llewelyn Powys, or Alyse Gregory, or Edna St. Vincent Millay, or John Cowper Powys, or Dreiser come calling, or Clarence Darrow leaving . . .

Hunter's next book was *The Saga of Sinclair*, published at Woodstock, New York, in 1927. It is a long autobiographical poem, consisting of twenty-three short pieces tracing his life from childhood to the time of writing, and of course highly selective, for the poem has only a few hundred lines. It is a study of character rather than of events, but it has many vignettes of the scenes in which that character was formed—the coming of a circus to a small New Zealand town, Fiji seen from a ship's porthole, Broadway, Piccadilly, a cottage and a stray dog in upper New York State. The last little poem sums everything up:

O do you seek some secret word from Sinclair -  
 Some strange bright word to set the crooked straight?  
 Alas! Sinclair like you is but a wanderer,  
 Coming at dusk to a mysterious gate  
 That opens on a silent unknown garden,  
 And knowing that its voice will soon be mute  
 Sinclair plays softly for you on his flute.

For the next twenty years Rex Hunter lived in Greenwich Village and never moved far away for long; he had taken a trip to England with his wife when they were first married, and I think he was there again for a few months around 1928, but I have not confirmed this. It is certain that he contributed to a number of English magazines and newspapers at this time, but that cannot be taken as evidence that he was in the country. It seems that he now became to some extent dissatisfied with journalism and wanted to do something of more permanent value, if he could. There are the poems, but they are hardly above the average of the poetry which was then current in the magazines, and very likely Hunter knew this. He began to write novels, probably as early as 1930 or thereabouts (just when Gamel Woolsey was beginning to do the same). It was another ten years before Hunter's only published novel, *Porlock*, came out, and it seems that he had a hard time so far as eating and paying the rent were concerned, in those years of the depression. There are two extant letters addressed to Llewelyn Powys which afford some insight into Hunter's life and interests during these years, and they may be found a place here:

4 Patchin Place  
 Feb. 28/34

My dear Llewelyn Powys,

Paul Johnston, who is printing the JCP bibliography prefaced by the mid-Western "Ralph Waldo," also puts out a periodical for bibliophiles called "The Book Collector's Packet." In the next issue he proposes to run a bibliographical & appreciative article on yourself to accompany a checklist of your books prepared by the same Siberell. He recently wrote me asking me to do this article, but I nominated Miss Gregory for the task. I presume that she has received my letter suggesting that she write the letter & send it to me. If she doesn't wish to do it, or hasn't the time, I will write it myself, unless you prefer that no such article should appear. I suppose that the biographical details in "Who's Who" are correct.

One Huw Ney (you will not fail to notice the suggestion of "looney" contained in this unfortunate name!), who runs a Village journal called "The Latin Quarter-ly," is on your side regarding my attack on the poetasters. He conceded that it was "nearly true" but added "It's too bitter." Whereas my neighbor E.E. Cummings congratulated me on finding the bull's-eye with my arrow, & an "Outrider" subscriber in the hinterland averred that the article was "great." You say, "Better false poetry than no poetry," whereas I say "Better no poetry than false poetry." You see, what I object to in these blighters is that they make bloody clowns of themselves in order to extract a few dollars from the pockets of the Philistines. If they were honestly trying to produce poetry I'd let them alone even though the attempt were a failure.

I really think that you underestimate the market value of your original scripts, & believe that Siberell could sell some of them for you if you put them into his hands.

I have two of Louis Marlow's novels, "The Lion Took Fright" and "Mr. Amberthwaite," the former dedicated to TFP. Both are full of what the late Arnold Bennett aptly called "quite lethal satire." I will look out for "Swan's Milk" with interest, intensified by the fact that you appear as the hero. I suppose there will be an American edition.<sup>6</sup>

Covici-Friede reported to my energetic American agent on *Porlock* and *The Gull*: "The two Hunter books are very well done, but they are of an unsaleable kind that we are trying to avoid." Scribner's Magazine reported: "Reginald Hunter's 'Porlock' is charming, but it does not compel us to take it." So it goes.

JCP's "Weymouth Sands" has got off to a good start, at any rate in the N.Y. "Times" and "Herald-Tribune."

How is your health? Have you glimpsed the sea again?

Yours,  
Rex Hunter.

This may call for some comments. Paul Johnston ran the Ailanthus Press in Cincinnati, where Lloyd Emerson Siberell lived at that time. He published Siberell's *Bibliography* of John Cowper Powys in 1934, and presumably at that time was publishing the *Book Collector's Packet*. My own file of that journal begins with the issue of April 1938, when it was edited by Irvin Haas and published by Norman Fogue at the Black Cat Press, Chicago. Siberell's checklist of Llewelyn Powys appeared, with Alyse Gregory's "Prefatory Word," in the issue of March 1939.

A word may be said for Lloyd Emerson Siberell, who was an official of the Norfolk and Western Railroad, an indefatigable booklover who did a good deal to popularize the work of the Powys brothers. He knew and corresponded with many writers and printers and publishers (it was he who arranged for Hal W. Trovillion of Herrin, Illinois, to publish Llewelyn Powys's book, *A Baker's Dozen*, which appeared posthumously). Siberell took over editing the *Book Collector's Packet* in 1945, and also had a similar journal of his own, *Imprimatur*, which appeared irregularly between 1941 and 1947. It is sufficiently clear why Hunter called him "Ralph Waldo."

The article on poetasters I have not seen in print, but it would seem to have been published in *Outrider*, if a subscriber to that journal described it

as "great." There is in the Turnbull Library among the Hunter Papers a long letter from Pearson about a proposed monograph on poetry which Hunter had in mind, and a holograph of Hunter's reply, and this may have been the basis for the piece on poetasters, or that article may have arisen out of the deliberations. Pearson seems to have had no other name that anybody used (and it is the only name by which this letter is signed). He was well known in Greenwich Village at that time, and is the hero of the novel *Porlock* (which was originally called *Pearson*). If any reader of this paper can give me further information about him, I shall be very grateful.

Hunter's references to *Porlock* and *The Gull* are interesting as indicating the difficulty he had in getting them published. This letter is dated 1934, and it was not until 1940 that *Porlock* was finally published. *The Gull* is mentioned from time to time, but no copy of the typescript seems to have survived. There is a long series of letters from Hunter's literary agent, Harvey Taylor, concerning these other writings, and also a number of letters addressed to John Cowper Powys from various publishers, praising *Porlock* and refusing to publish it.

I now come to the second of Hunter's letters to Llewelyn Powys:

4 Patchin Place  
April 3/34

My dear Llewelyn Powys,

I write to thank you for your essays which you very thoughtfully had your publishers send me & which now has a place of honour among my books. I am not given to strewing adjectives about in the manner of "Ralph Waldo" Siberell, but be assured that I have found the essays profoundly moving & that I am capable of appreciating the purity of the style. I read "A Struggle for Life" sitting on the roof in the long delayed spring sunshine, & in this there seemed something curiously fitting since in the essay you voice your love for the roofs of New York; & moreover when I glanced up from the book I could glimpse faces moving behind the barred windows of the Gaol for women across the way. The inmates are largely professional votaries of Venus whose activities have been interrupted by arrest, and their flitting faces seemed a projection of those of the light women who watched you on your balcony when you were so ill in Italy. Your phrase in the following essay about the poor hen-partridge, "the hyena physiognomy of a dunhill rat," I will always think of when I see a certain bail-bond runner who makes a living out of the misfortunes of the creatures who appear daily at the Jefferson Market Court House. I have long loathed his cruel inhuman visage.

I sent Miss Gregory a post card to tell her that Paul Johnston, the man who edits "The Book Collector's Packet," had promised to send her without fail a copy of the issue containing her article on your life & books.

Well, you will soon see JCP in the flesh. He writes that he has sold "Phudd Bottom" to a young couple named Devoe' & that he & Phyllis will sail for England in June. As JCP says, they are extraordinarily lucky to find a buyer in view of the fact that economic depression continues unabated here (despite occasional statements to the con-

rary by determined optimists). I am glad that they have had their wish, but sad at the prospect of the Atlantic rolling between us. My loss is your gain.

Sincerely,  
Rex Hunter

P.S. Since writing the above I have read "A House of Correction," & though I dislike dogs in general my heart bled over poor Tinker. What you say at the beginning of that essay is profoundly true.

Again, a few notes may be added to this letter. The first thought that occurs is that Hunter was generous in his appreciation of Llewelyn Powys, for several years before this Llewelyn had made Gamel his mistress, and although Rex and Gamel were separated, they were still married, and indeed they were never divorced; and Hunter must also have noted that *Earth Memories*, the book Llewelyn Powys had sent him, was dedicated to Gerald Brenan - itself a magnanimous gesture, for Gerald had taken Gamel from Llewelyn in his turn.

In the matter of Rex's feelings about Gamel it would seem that these did not change over the years. A correspondent in New Zealand who knew Rex Hunter well in his last years tells me he "was extremely reserved about his wife, whom he spoke of as Elsa. He obviously had very deep feelings for her." Gamel herself had feelings of guilt about leaving him, as she said more than once in her letters to Alyse Gregory, and the copy of her poems, *Middle Earth*, which she sent to Rex has a charming poem on the fly leaf. Here it is:

First there is the formal inscription presenting the book "To M.R. Hunter from Gamel Woolsey," then the poem under the title "To M.R.H."

A timeless wind blew on his head  
And he was always young  
Well I remember what was said  
And what old songs were sung.

Some said the fairies came by night  
And took the days away  
Some said that on that golden head  
White age could never stay.

But I think the strange thoughts he had  
And wild songs he had sung  
Swept like fierce birds about his head  
To keep him fair and young.

Rex

with love

from Elsa

January 1931.

It would be pleasant to see what Rex wrote in Gamel's copy of the book he dedicated to her, but that I have not yet traced.

One or two of Gamel's New York poems can be associated with him. The lines beginning "Lying beside him in the night" in her book *The Weight of Human Hours* certainly refer to Rex, and in a letter to Alyse Gregory Gamel speaks of her poem "The Pigeon Scarers," which is in *The Last Leaf Falls*, and says she and Rex used to hear the pigeon scarers while lying in bed in the early morning in Greenwich Village.

The letters of John Cowper Powys to Rex Hunter as they are known at present are only eleven in number, and cover only the years 1950-55. There must have been many more, for these two were friends for forty years, and Powys's letters to Hunter are lengthy and highly characteristic. His regard for Hunter can be seen in the Preface he wrote for *Porlock* and (to give but one example) in his references to Hunter in the letters to Hal W. Trovillion now in the Morris Library at S.I.U. Carbondale.

In 1940 *Porlock* appeared at last, with John Cowper Powys's preface and drawings by William O'Brien, attractively printed by the Caxton Printers of Idaho. It was well received and extensively reviewed—there is a big file of reviews in the Hunter Papers. The story is a character sketch of *Porlock*, a remarkable Village personality, who shuffles through these pages looking fearfully from side to side and muttering erudite tags in various dead languages. As a picture of the lusty, idiosyncratic and crowded life of Greenwich Village in the early twenties it is a small classic, and would well repay reprinting.

The last book of Hunter's poems was published by Lloyd Emerson Siberell in 1946. It has an appreciative preface by Siberell which is only accurate here and there (he has Hunter born in Australia, for example) and a drawing by Constance Joan Naar. The book contains fifty-four poems, including four from *And Tomorrow Comes*. Hunter's poems are all of a kind, and over the thirty-odd years in which they were appearing in print there is no marked increase in excellence. He must be set down as an occasional poet, and as Dr. Johnson remarked, "Occasional poetry must be content with occasional praise."<sup>8</sup> All the same, Hunter is a respectable poet among those of his time with whom he may be rated—below the major figures, but not to be despised. Perhaps in this poem, "Disillusion," we may fancy he was thinking of his wife, Gamel:

Climbing the dark stairs slowly Sinclair thought:  
How darkened is her image in my heart!  
Why did I see her as a rose, a moon,  
This skeleton clothed with frailty of flesh?  
So intent was I to keep the bright illusion  
I feigned I could not hear insidious whispers

Of "Sinclair, see how the fair face is flawed  
 A little, here and here; see how the smiling mouth  
 Becomes a sullen line when you oppose  
 Some casual whim. As for the secret thoughts  
 That you long hoarded like a miser's coins  
 Before you spent them prodigally for her—  
 Oh, Sinclair, Sinclair, observe her wandering eyes  
 When you speak out your secret cherished thoughts!  
 Ears quick to catch the drum-beat of the world,  
 Hands quick to seize the tinsel of the world,  
 Feet that were made to join the great procession  
 Marching the beaten highways of the world—  
 Observe them, Sinclair!" Yet still I would not see  
 Until today, and then some word she said,  
 Some way she looked, shattered the illusion  
 Suddenly as a flung stone shatters glass.  
 And there's a world of sorrow in the change,  
 The darkening of the image, Sinclair thought,  
 Slowly turning the key within his door.

In 1949 Rex returned to New Zealand, where it seems the first attention he required was the assistance of Alcoholics Anonymous. His brothers helped him, William, the Judge, who lived in Wellington and had a habit of locking up his bottles, and Eric in Christchurch who managed to get him a job on the *Timaru Herald*, a hundred miles or so further south. Here Rex worked for a number of years, and finally retired further south still, to Dunedin, where he died on February 18, 1960. It may seem a sad story, as summarized here. A wandering, rootless life, a broken marriage, a dusty room with a girl on the one hand and a bottle in the other. Lonely years, with no wide recognition for work he had put his heart into; and afterwards, not even a local reputation in his own country.

But this is to misunderstand the temperament of the bohemian spirit. Everyone has dark passages in his life, but Rex Hunter enjoyed most of his days, as the autobiography shows. He had many friends, some of them men whose friendship the world might well envy him—Sandburg, Cummings, Hemingway, Powys. He travelled widely and enjoyed every minute of it. He had no difficulty in publishing his day-to-day writings, and the books he published found at least some fit readers. I have no doubt his unpublished books will in the end be put into print, those that we have; and if more manuscripts are found, those too.

For New Zealand is a small country in terms of population—some sixty-three million, but sixty million of those are sheep. In the nature of things, therefore, it has a relatively slight literature: the one internationally known New Zealand writer is Katherine Mansfield. One ought to notice also the successful crime novelist Ngaio Marsh, and a few poets are known, without, perhaps, being thought of as natives of New Zealand—Count

Potocki, D'Arcy Cresswell, Fairburn. There is room in this literature for Rex Hunter, and I am sure he will be given room, when the critics in New Zealand become aware of him.

Meanwhile, these few pages may serve to invite American readers and students to seek out one who made their country his home for most of his working life, and wrote kindly and well about the places, adventures and people he encountered.

## Notes

1. "Odyssey of an Antipodean" by Reginald Hunter. Unpublished typescript, c. 1950, in The Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
2. "Odyssey of an Antipodean." I cannot give the page references as the only copy of the book I have is at present under consideration by an American publisher.
3. For example, there is among the Hunter Papers a letter of 1920 from the Secretary of the Dramatic Club at Lake Forest College, Illinois, asking for permission to produce *The Romany Road*.
4. *Porlock* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1940), p. 68.
5. Unpublished letter, undated, Gamel Woolsey to Alyse Gregory, c. 1945.
6. *Swan's Milk*, by "Louis Marlow" (Louis Wilkinson) (London: Faber & Faber, 1934) is an autobiographical novel in which many characters appear under their real names—Maurice Browne, Theodore Dreiser, Aleister Crowley, the Powys brothers, and so on; but Llewelyn Powys was not the hero—that was Louis Wilkinson. "TFP" a few lines above in this letter was T. F. Powys.
7. Phudd Bottom was John Cowper Powys's house at Hillsdale, New York, in which he wrote a number of his most celebrated books, including *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Autobiography*. It was bought by Alan Devoe, the naturalist, who published *Phudd Hill* (1937).
8. Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*; if I do not give a page number the reader verifying this quotation may have the pleasure of reading the whole book.

## Bibliography

### Reginald Hunter

1. Maurice Reginald Hunter Papers, in The Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, whence most of my information comes.
2. "Odyssey of an Antipodean," unpublished typescript, c. 1950, in the Hunter Papers.
3. "Henry Whitaker," unpublished typescript, c. 1940, in the Hunter Papers.

## Reginald Hunter

4. *Stuff o' Dreams and Other Plays* (Chicago: T.S. Denison Company, 1919). Contains *The Wild Goose*, *Stuff o' Dreams*, *Hands and the Man*, *The Romany Road*.
5. *And Tomorrow Comes* (Copenhagen & Chicago: Steen Henrichsen, 1924).
6. *The Saga of Sinclair* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Maverick Press, 1927). These two books of poems first published in England in 1982 and 1981 respectively, by Warren House Press, North Walsham, Norfolk.
7. *Porlock, a Portrait*, preface by John Cowper Powys, drawings by William O'Brien (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1940).
8. *Call Out of Darkness*, preface by Lloyd Emerson Siberell, drawing of the author by C. J. Naar (Cincinnati: The Auburncrest Library, 1946).

### Other sources

9. Unpublished letters of Gamel Woolsey to Alyse Gregory in the possession of Kenneth Hopkins, and to Phyllis Playter in the National Library of Wales.
10. Unpublished letters of John Cowper Powys to Rex Hunter, in the Hunter Papers.

Private information communicated by Mr. Allan Hunter, Mr. Peter Powys Grey, and Mr. Charles S. Woolsey.

Note: Gamel Woolsey's book of poems *Middle Earth* (London: Grant Richards, 1931; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1932) has been reissued (1979) by Warren House Press, North Walsham, Norfolk, which also publishes four previously unpublished collections of her poems.

## Contributors

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