

1956

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The image features a complex, abstract geometric pattern of white lines on a black background. The lines are thick and form various irregular, overlapping shapes, including triangles, quadrilaterals, and polygons. Some lines are straight, while others are slightly curved or jagged. The overall effect is a dense, dynamic composition of sharp angles and intersecting paths. At the bottom of the image, the word "FIORRETTI" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font, spanning across the width of the page. The letters are slightly shadowed, giving them a three-dimensional appearance as if they are floating above or attached to the pattern.

**FIORRETTI**

# THE FIORETTI

VOLUME XIV  
NUMBER 2  
Indianapolis, Indiana  
1956-1957

AN ANTHOLOGY OF  
MARIAN COLLEGE  
PROSE AND VERSE

## THE STAFF

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Mary Byer, '58

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Philip Doherty, '59

Miriam Gannon, '59

Joseph Hertz, '60

Judy Hirn, '59

Joan Peternel, '58

### Art Editor

Marianne Peternel, '57

### Illustrators

MARIANNE PERNEL FOR COVER DESIGN

MARIANNE PERNEL FOR "JAMES"

FRANCES PERREAULT FOR

"ON PICASSO'S GUITARIST"

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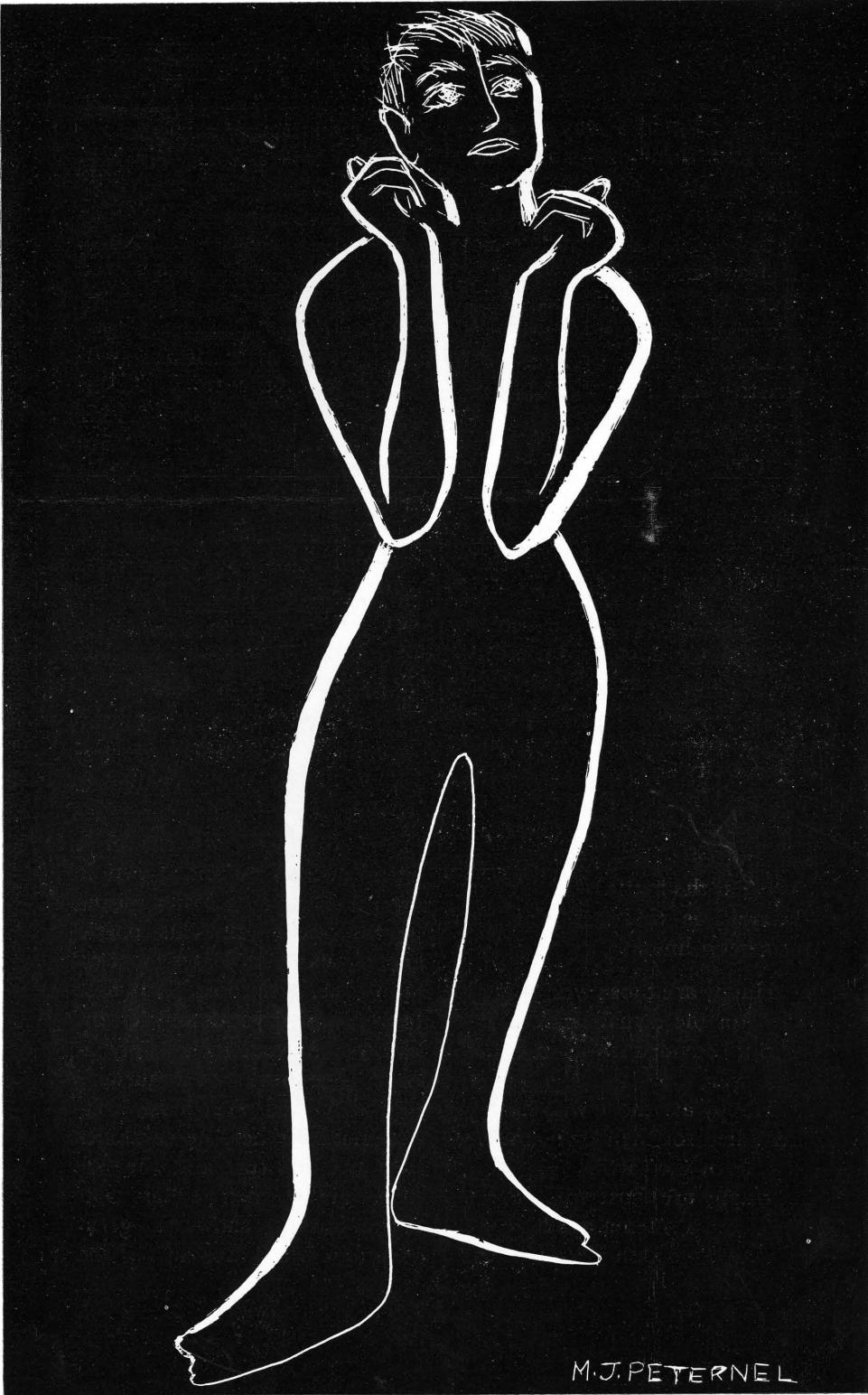
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M. J. PETERNEL

# JAMES

JOAN PETERNEL, '58

Well, he's not here in his room," Charles said, "He must have just cleaned it; it looks pretty neat for a change." He glanced at the orderly desk; the typewriter set straight like an altar. The bed was made, the few pieces of furniture dusted, the El Greco prints less crooked on the walls.

Charles frowned at J. J. "I wish I knew what's the matter with that kid. I know something's eating him. He's so restless." J. J. squinted and nodded. "He told me yesterday he thinks he's going to die soon." Charles sniffed nervous-

ly, and moved around the room, touching things absently.

"Ahh . . . you know how nervous and excitable Jamesy is. He thinks he's getting brain fever if he's got a headache. He's been obsessed with the idea of death before—maybe that's a sign of genius. Remember he thought he was gonna die two years ago when we were sophomores? He'd drive that rich kid's sport car up and down Lake Shore Drive on gloomy days, looking at the lake."

"Yeah." Charles looked moody. "Well, he can't help it. He's different. Poor guy never seems to have much fun raising hell as any of the rest of us. He's too—too *feverish* about things. Maybe all writers are like that." They turned their heads and stared at the empty typewriter.

"He's a fanatic, all right," J. J. mused dreamily, "he's always roaring around with his eyes shadowy and his high-strung temperament sticking out all over him. Looks like the ghost of Hamlet. Last week he took the El around the Loop four times in a row—'getting impressions' he said, his eyes blazing away."

"Mmmph! He was so quiet yesterday."

"Oh, he's always quiet." J. J.

walked around the room, restlessly. "With people he doesn't know real well, anyway. Some of the kids at school think he's a silent, morose genius. The girls do, anyway."

"Yeah," Charles laughed shortly. He frowned. "It's just that he likes to watch and listen rather than talk." He tried to look nonchalant. "Read yesterday in the *Trib*—some critic said Jamesy's poetry and some of his short stories look like the work of a potential literary genius. Something like that."

"No kidding!" J.J. exclaimed.

"Uh huh."

"Boy . . ." J.J. breathed. Charles sniffed, allowing himself a happy smile.

"Uh huh," he said.

"Well . . . think we oughta go out and look for him? It's foggy out and it's gonna get dark pretty soon." J.J. looked out the window; not to see anything, just to look.

"Okay, maybe he's down at the University bar. This melancholy mood of his worries me. It's up to us to take care of him, you know." J.J. nodded, biting his lower lip. They left.

A moment later James banged into the room at high speed breathing hard. He was dressed

the same as his friends—black leather jacket on grey flannel trousers. But he looked different: not tall but sturdy; flushed cheeks and bright blue eyes streaked underneath with staying-up-late; tousled, curling, dark-blond hair. He looked angelic . . . in a sensuous way. And he always gave the impression of being lost.

He went to the almost-clean window and gazed out at his departing friends; the fog glided in behind them. He sighed and slid his nervous fingers into his tousled hair and rubbed his head . . . shifted restlessly and stroked the short, straight bridge of his nose with his index finger. Then he leaned his elbows on the window sill, and rested his mouth on his clasped hands; moodily, suspiciously, watching the fog grey the city. *There go my friends. Let them go.*

*This place is dark  
With foolish, bewildered fog  
And I seem a part of the fog,  
A ghost.  
The sky is mottled and stirred,  
The winds are stirred,  
Death is out, seeking . . .  
Me?*

Who would care if I *did* die, he thought, Charles and J.J. and Virge. The father had forgotten him. James tried to re-



member his mother—she had always had an odor of kleenex and good cologne about her. Her nostrils would become white and pinched before she laughed or cried, both of which she did often. But . . . the father had forgotten him.

Charles and J.J. tramped along the street gathering anger as they went, because it was cold, and James — where was he? Fog clung heavily to the street lamps and buildings, like bayou moss.

“I give up!” Charles said. He motioned with his chin, “Here’s the University bar. Let’s have a beer, I’m thirsty.”

“Okay.”

James whipped around from the window and stood in the middle of the room, his arms crossed angrily, his face dark with thought. He felt that death was on his heels.

*But the world is my lover.*

His mouth opened to smile and he ran his tongue over his lips. He frowned: he was thinking of all the people he had not loved, had not spoken to, had not looked at. He tried to effect a sudden recklessness and carelessness, but his eyes clouded wistfully, almost tearfully.

*Please, God, not yet!*

Virge concentrated on combing her hair. “You know,” she

said to the glassy-eyed teddy-bear on the bed, “I’m thinking about Jimbo. But you know what he’d call it? He’d probably say the delicate machinery in my head is clicking away. Or something like that. He’s a real genius. The critics think he is, anyway. And he thinks so. But Genius hasn’t been around for two weeks.” She pouted.

“He likes to stroke my hair—he thinks I look like Rita Hayworth,” her voice softened. “He’s so mmmmm. Oh, I broke my comb.”

She looked ruefully at the two pieces of comb, put them down, and glanced out the window at the grey wilderness of fog. She sighed and smoothed her trim black sheath, looking back at the mirror and shaking her head to see the long dangle-earrings jump.

“I don’t know why I like Jimbo so much. I guess I love him. I’m really only going out with this other character to make him jealous. I don’t know *why* I love him. He really doesn’t have very good manners—he’s so moody. And he never seems to have much money. And he gets fresh. But he’s *sweet*. And he’s Catholic, too—I might marry him.”

She smiled happily, turned around, and walked toward the

bed. She picked up the teddy bear, an old toy, a relic of childhood; she hugged it. "I want to be his slave!" she whispered fiercely, her eyes shut. The teddy bear stared blankly and was hugged tighter.

In his darkening room, James prowled around like an angry animal in a cage, rubbing his eyes. Probably read too much, he thought, but stopped short, remembering.

*I have to write more.*

*Have to create more—*

*Not create, but . . .*

*Writing is finding truth and beauty*

*And gracefully pointing it out to others.*

*Writing is loving people enough To do that for them.*

He bent his tousled head and thought about Virge. He could never figure her out. Sometimes he was tender to her, sometimes *deliciously* cruel. But she seemed to like him anyway. He shrugged.

"I'll go out," he muttered, his eyes tortured. He started for the door and realized that he had not taken off his jacket. He clapped his hand to his head and made a face. He laughed—a low, quick, nervous laugh. He left his room, almost running.

Charles and J.J. had finished their beers and stood in front

of the bar, looking around aimlessly.

"He's not anywhere," Charles said, "What *is* he, a ghost?"

"Hey! Here he comes now!" J.J. tried not to smile, but did anyway.

"At a slow trot," Charles laughed. "Jamesy, you exasperate me! Who's chasing you?"

James stopped, smiling uncertainly. "I—I—"

*Thrilling:*

*An end, an end to this chilling Fear that disgusts me.*

"You what?"

"Huh?" He seemed surprised to see someone there. "Oh, uh . . . I don't know," he laughed, looking from one friend to another, hopefully, scratching his neck nervously. They laughed and shook their heads. Charles pushed him around roughly in the hope that no one would see how much he loved him.

"What you been doing with yourself, anyway?" J.J. asked.

"Well . . .," James smiled, considering, "Well, I've been struggling against the world, the flesh, and the devil, I guess."

"Yeah?" Charles smiled insinuatingly. James' eyelids dropped.

"How do you struggle against the world, Jamesy?" J.J. asked.

"Oh . . .," James glanced up at the sky, "I guess I struggle—against all the people who say there's nothing to life. The devil's out because," he shook his head and waved his hand, "I've always hated the devil and so I don't have anything to do with him."

"So these are your latest profound thoughts, huh?" Charles said. "Gonna put them in your writing?"

"Oh, I don't think when I write, Charlie," James said earnestly, "I feel. I mean, I write by instinct. I'm an intuitional writer. What I say when I write comes from deep within where thought is, at the most dreamy. . ."

"Oh, oh, he's on his soap-box again," Charles said ruefully, "Hire a hall."

"No, I'm interested," J.J. protested. "What exactly *does* writing do for you, Jamsey?"

"Well," James fidgeted, licking his lips, "it—it makes me a whole man. It makes me," he emphasized his words with his right hand, "unconscious of ordinary things. Makes me feel—like a fire burning all alone except for the sky and the wind." He realized that his eyes were blazing, sniffed and looked at his friends sheepishly. "Hell, I don't know."

Charles laughed. "So . . . where would you like to be right now?"

"Ohh, I don't know," James said, stretching sensuously. "Uhh . . . up in the star."

"The stars aren't out, yet. Come on, let's have another beer."

"Okay," J.J. said, "How about you, Jamesy?"

"Nah. I'll wait out here. I want to watch the people for a while."

They left him and went inside. He waited silently, hunched a little to keep warm, tapping a foot rhythmically. He noticed a young very good-looking boy walking past, straight and tall, a proud smirk on his face. Narcissus type, James smiled cynically. Walks like a ram-rod, though.

*Poets are always somewhat bent  
As inspiration is a weighty  
thing.*

His eyes jerked to the right, where an elderly, sour-looking man was entering his sights. James recognized him as a professor he had had for a poetry course in some past semester at the university.

"Hello, sir," James mumbled. What's he doing here.

The old man stopped and stared bleakly at him. "I know you," he said shortly, "You're

the one getting the good reviews on your writing—while you're still in school!"

James looked at him curiously.

"I always say what I think," the professor snapped, "I'm an extremely honest man. I think these people who are making such a fuss over you are premature and ridiculous. You're too young to be a successful writer. It's unheard of. One must work for years . . . and even then," he looked away, "even then, sometimes, you don't make it."

James looked at him, wide-eyed, his lips parted .

"And your so-called angelic charm is wasted on me," the old man said, peevishly.

James frowned. "Oh, let me alone," he muttered, hardly moving his lips.

"You're angry with me?" The old man moved closer, his eyes dead. "Listen to me . . . you young would-be writers think that because you string some impressive-sounding words along a sheet and are published once or twice—you think you're—are a genius?"

James felt dizzy.

"Are you that unknown, the born poet who feels love and life and death as the vibrations of music are felt by the deaf?"

"Death?"

"Ha! You would be better to forget poetry—leave it to the real genius." He left quickly, as if ashamed, and was caught up by the snake-like fog.

James snapped out of his dizziness and glared after the old professor, wrathfully. He felt that he had been scolded—which always made him furious and rebellious. He organized his thoughts and calmly and silently swore at the professor for a moment.

He forgot the professor and gazed dreamily at the neon and the blackening sky. Virge almost walked past him; when she saw him she stopped, awkwardly, and stood near, watching him nervously.

"H-Hi, Virge," he said softly, noticing her. He smiled faintly, glancing warmly at her face and at the rest of her.

"Why didn't you come to see me for so long?" she said, accusingly. She looked at him from the corner of her eye, clasping her hands together.

"I-I was busy," he murmured soothingly. He moved closer to her, slipping his hand inside his jacket, Napoleon-like. She turned a little, away from him. "Don't do that," he pleaded, his heart aching, "Don't do that."

"Well, I have to meet someone else now, anyway. Another

man. You wouldn't know him. He—you wouldn't know him." She turned her head, watching him closely, and lifted an eyebrow in pleasure when she saw his face crumble. He began to burn with anger.

He tried to appear calm. "Well, what are you waiting for. Bitch."

"*Jimbo,*" she pleaded, adoring him with her eyes.

"Go on, get the hell out of here." He started to light a cigarette, but gave it up because he was ashamed of his shaking hands. Virge walked unsteadily down the street and around the corner.

"I'm sorry," he said, his face haggard. "I didn't mean it." He looked at the empty street, lifted his eyebrows and sighed. The neon was brighter and disturbed him. He began to wander around, exhausted by sadness.

*No one loves me tonight.*

*Death seems close.*

*In the stroke of the church*

*Bells.*

He found himself standing in front of a church, his arms hanging limply at his sides, his shadowy face upturned. He went up the stairs and inside, make a quick sign of the cross, and sat in the last pew. He stared toward the front of the dimly-lit church where the little

red lamp flickered. He bit his lower lip, his eyes bright and interested. He was alone, watching. The red jumping light flashed long, leaping shadows on the walls.

His eyes became bewildered . . . his face lit up . . . he cocked his head to one side. "It's not *death* that's hounding me," he said aloud, wondering. He sat for a moment longer, then left the church and wandered again, slowly, thoughtfully.

He sat down on a curb, carelessly, his tousled head in his hands, his eyes lost in dark, dreamy wistfulness. It was very dark, but the fog had lifted, leaving the night clear.

He stood up, suddenly, his eyes tortured. He had to write. It was in him. He searched his pockets feverishly, madly. No pencil. No paper. His body began to shake and he clenched his fists in front of himself.

"Power!" the word was wrenched from him and thrown up into the face of the night sky. "Power of creation . . . within me," half muttered, half moaned. "*Why do you torment me!*" he screamed.

His anguished voice echoed down the streets. But his eyes were triumphant—he shook a fist at something and laughed, burning with joy.

## SILENCE UNDEFINED

Earth's dome enveloped in velvet blue  
and studded with shining stars  
Spread heaven's celestial rapture  
at a child's predestined birth  
And then there was SILENCE.

Earth's dome enveloped in crimson hue  
reflected the redemptive oblation,  
Which announced to all the funereal day  
of a God-Man crucified  
And then there was SILENCE.

RUTH RAMSDELL, '59

## FORETASTE

Wrested by desire,  
Writhed by separation,  
Welcome, Death, if you are  
The plan for souls ascent  
To inebriation.

Weariness waning,  
Waiting waylaid,  
The ravishments now forbidden  
Will be stolen from child faces  
Purely displayed.

LOUISE DIVER, '59

# Sold!

# American!

I watched this man, Mr. Smoothe, when I was a little boy, and he came to our town with the Medicine Show. In those days, the Medicine Show was a highlight in the lives of little boys. A clown, a banjo player, a salesman (this was Mr. Smoothe) and two or three characters in a short skit made up the troupe. They opened on the vacant lot nearest to the downtown stores and closed their show on Saturday night after the shoppers went home. Attracted by the ringing "Camptown Races" of the banjo, we surrounded a wobbly little stage onto which Mr. Smoothe made a flashy entry.

I remember him well: gray

spats, a narrow black string tie with ends falling down to the second button on his white shirt, an almost log-type, gold watch chain pulled from side to side of his vest, a gray cutaway coat with black trousers. He waved a tall, black hat toward a curious audience as his resonant voice enveloped us in our own Medicine Show Outdoor Theater.

"LADEES AND GENTLEMINN," the very trees at the sides of the theater stayed motionless. "LADEES AND GENTLEMINN," Mr. Smoothe knew we were captive. "If you gentleminn think that YOU can do nothing about that receding forehead, that slipping

hair, about that bald, shiny spot on the top of YOUR head, if you ladees think that YOUR husband looks like YOUR father, if YOUR husband is getting old before he should, then YOU want to know what I have right here with me tonight. This, LADEES AND GENTLEMINN, is a bottle of Dr. John's Hair Tonic, the most unusual hair grower ever discovered."

Mr. Mea, the town's grocer, was obviously interested, and Mrs. Mea's, "Go on, John, try a bottle," only seconded his decision. After all, did a balding man, a man as young as Mr. Mea, have a choice? Besides, Mr. Smoothe had convinced Mrs. Mea about Dr. John's. John Mea lurched his suit coat forward by a shrug of the shoulders, gave it a smart tug in front, and went home that evening carrying 14 ounces of Dr. John's Hair Tonic.

Mr. Smoothe had not changed much at all, not even much of his dapper ensemble, when I saw his picture several years later.

I was sitting in the barber shop next to our town's young attorney, B. T. Thay. As Thay busily leafed a soiled copy of *Fleet*, I caught sight of a familiar face in a full page ad.

B. T. Thay was attracted to the ad, but I doubt that he recognized the face I did, that of Mr. Smoothe. The picture showed Smoothe leaning against a fireplace in an exquisitely-appointed library and was captioned, "THOSE WHO CARE, DRINK OLD MELLOW." In small print, it lied further identification: "Brig. Gen. Benj. Harrell Townley, USA, Ret." After Mr. Thay got a shave, I took the high seat, and I watched him as he strode out of the shop, crossed the corridor and went in Tom's Place. His eyes scanned the top shelf, moved down and back across the next shelf and then stopped. About the middle of the shelf, he pointed, "Give me a fifth of Old Mellow." Tom took down the bottle and inserted it into a tall paper bag for B. T. Thay. I never saw Thay again, but Smoothe kept turning up.

A picture here, a radio commercial there, this fellow Smoothe would endorse anything. His experience served him well when television came into focus, for when I watched TV the first time, the animating voice was as familiar-sounding as falling rain. Mr. Smoothe was not now calling the worth of Dr. John nor Old Mellow. Mr. Smoothe's new business



was selling Plords, . . . "the only car on the road that can give you extra mileage, more comfort, prestige, safety, and social position at a price you CAN afford. Yes, with the money you save, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN," Smoothe had refined his speech a bit, "you CAN afford to have all the other conveniences drivers of Plords should have!" When I saw Mr. Allovus driving a Custom-green, and clean-white Plord the next week, I remembered that he had viewed Plord's Variety Show with me the week before.

I didn't think any more about Mr. Smoothe for a good while. I guess you could say that I just took him "for granted." When I went back home for the dedication of the new school last week, I recalled that this building was on that hallowed spot where the old Medicine Show used to play. And I even remembered what Smoothe had said about Dr. John's Hair Tonic when I saw sitting in front of me, balder than a kitchen crock, Mr. Mea.

After the ceremonies, I saw Thay's wife. At least I thought it was Mrs. Thay, so I leaned over to Aunt Alice to get an infallible verification. "Oh, yes, that's B. T. Thay's wife. My,

but she's aged since he left. You know B. T.'s taking the cure, really was hitting the bottle before she packed him off to Ruma."

We edged away from the crowd of old friends just as a flash of chrome passed the curb, and I caught the rear view of a Kimpsler Special. Aunt Alice volunteered, "Hmmp, he'd do well to pay part of his bills and paint that shabby old place of his instead of borrowing money every season for a new car." I think the whole town knew that Mr. Allovus was barely able to keep his family fed. It was not until then that the whole thing struck me, the whole crazy picture of Mr. Smoothe I mean.

I don't know where he is right now, but I'm looking for him to have the choice commercial on that new FLITETIME TV Show. Smoothe would find no inconsistency, I am sure, in now saying that Kimpslers are THE BEST cars on the road. At any rate, wherever he is and whatever he is doing, I would be willing to bet my toupee, a pint of Old Mellow, and my '45 Plord, that Smoothe still has a head of thick, black hair, a cabinet of well-mellowed Old Mellow, a Ritz Model Plord, a bank account, and the ability to influence!

## THE FREE

His soul was a wide-eyed mute in chains  
Enslaved by other slaves . . .  
But one dark empty moment came  
A blaze of burning thought  
*Borrowed from a free man.*

He woke from dreams of nothing  
Stretched and felt the power within . . .  
*The birth of genius is slow and languid.*

He broke the chains with fiery eyes  
He broke them suffering wretched . . .  
*The chained envy the chain-breakers.*

His senses burned  
His soul yearned  
He found himself  
Discovered thunder  
Inside his soul . . .  
With fierce eyes  
With wistful eyes  
He whispers :  
*I will be a great poet.*  
*I will be.*  
*I will.*

JOAN PETERNEL, '58

# The Children Do Not Play

JOSEPH HERTZ, '60

It was midday as the Merchant Marine transport, the *USS Marine Adder*, churned slowly through the calm, brown waters of Inchon Harbor. The picturesque scene confronting two thousand American soldiers was seemingly torn from the pages of a South Sea adventure story: that of cruising into a peaceful harbor on a sunny and cloudless day; the swells created by the ship gently rolling the clumsy dugouts manned by natives; and a dark and forbidding backdrop of green-foliaged mountains. A seeming paradise indeed.

Now, having glided to a stop some one hundred yards from shore to await debarkation rituals, the awkward native boats came closer to our great, grey ship. To the surprise of all aboard, we found they were manned, not by adults, but by children, scarcely a dozen years

in age. Their shouts to the GI's in an incoherent tongue was to no avail, but the outstretched hands spoke of universal begging. So the men of the *Adder* obliged by tossing candy and coins overboard. True to their eager pleas, these dark-skinned youngsters of South Korea began diving deep into the murky waters of the bay and returning triumphantly to the surface with the justly earned booty in hand.

However, after landing craft had deposited the two thousand strong on the shores of this "fairy land," the serene enchantment transformed as swiftly as the turbulent blue waters of the Yellow Sea had changed upon entering the mouth of the harbor. A closer inspection revealed the country as she really was—a war ravaged land suffering untold agonies within her borders. It

didn't take long to realize that those "happy-go-lucky" children in the bay had no intentions of making our cruise as scenic as possible, but were diving for candy out of sheer hunger. And it didn't take long to notice that the luring backdrop of emerald mountains was now disfigured by trenches, sandbags, and gun emplacements with ugly snouts of anti-aircraft muzzles pointing skyward. Reality had brought wandering minds back to the present.

Then boarding an antiquated poor-excuse-for-a-train, which was comparable in comfort to a nineteenth century "Fargo Express" stagecoach, the two thousand strong steamed North—North to the "dragon's lair." And as each clicking section of rail took us closer to the front, it also gave us a closer look at the pathetic sights of war's deadly trail, her victims. The distant sounds of hard working artillery merely added to the uneasiness of seeing God's creatures living like dogs.

Our route of travel seemed to be that of a "milk-run"—a full-fledged fifteen-minute stop for every fifteen minutes of motion. And at each stop, children by the hundreds would crowd the sides of the tracks voicing those now familiar cries for food;

using those same tiny outstretched begging hands and looking with those same pleading eyes.

This is the way they survived. This was their daily life. Month after month, the crippled led the blind and the whole-bodied cared for the aged. The torn and tattered clothes worn under the seething rays of the summer sun had to suffice for the sub-zero temperatures of the winter. Bare feet, bare arms, bare heads and empty stomachs amounted to the survival of the fittest. Thousands of orphaned children joined the wolfpacks of all ages to run the gauntlet of war. What couldn't be begged would be stolen. In the eyes of American citizens, these children were hardened criminals at the age of three. Brother and sister would roam the country, hand in hand, looking for anything that might be loose, for anything that could be pried loose, for anything that could be sold on the black market in exchange for today's rations. Tomorrow was another day. First, they had to survive the present twenty-four hours.

So, as our "streamliner" rattled on through the countryside, the shell-crated villages and makeshift huts were left behind and the snarling, frightening

and nerve wracking echoes of war told us our destination was near. In spite of knowing that our own tests of survival were at hand, the visions of a sick people still rang clear in our minds. The despair seen on the faces of ancient ones too old to start anew remained. The minds and hearts of homeless babies crying for parental love and security far exceeded the screaming of shot and shell.

The army manuals are most thorough when it comes to aiding in a military vein, but they haven't written a line on how to tell a little girl of four that you can't give her food to eat, a place to sleep, or clothing to keep her warm at night, in spite of her pleas.

The mighty warriors have come to "slay the dragon," but the rescued are not living happily ever after.

## FROM AFAR

I see him running across the lawn  
as a boy on a bright spring day.

I see his cheeks grow pink with warmth  
as the soft breeze brushes his face.

I hear his gay laughter of happiness  
as it sails into the soothing wind.

I hear his smooth-sounding voice  
as it flows into the spring air.

But he sees and hears nothing of me  
as I stand in this lonely place.

ANITA ALTER, '60

# The Situation

JOAN PETERNEL, '59

Let's talk about young contemporary authors today.

Fine. I'd like to address a question to the entire group; do you think there's a definite trend toward writing about a character searching for individual freedom?

I do. Françoise Sagon—who is the outstanding young French writer, I think—does this in *Bonjour Tristesse*. A young French girl is afraid her blase, indulgent widower-father will marry a conservative, reforming woman, and so end the free-wheeling existence father and daughter are enjoying. By some rather vulgar plotting, the girl indirectly drives the older woman to suicide.

And saves her freedom.

No. In destroying another person, she says hello to sorrow, "*bonjour tristesse*," and has to live with guilt the rest of her life; therefore, she is never again free.

Then Sagon isn't an Existentialist.

If she is, she's a borderline one. The book is morally good, not morbid or pessimistic. Sagon hasn't got much style, but then she's young; besides, the story is always more important than the style.

Well, what about *A Certain Smile*, Sagon's second book? I don't think it's at all moral. The main character is Dominique, a student at the Sorbonne who's having an affair with another student, and who then has an affair with his uncle.

Yes, but Dominique says that passion is her enemy and that she's really looking for love. And it ends with her being punished by having the older man discard her. Actually, I thought the book was ridiculous, but childishly appealing.

Sagon's honest, anyway. She's cynical, rebellious — I don't think she really likes the

fast society she lives in. She's a good example of Expressionism which has succeeded Realism. She finds the world in chaos and wants to build a new one. This is *really* far from the cynical, flippant, old Hemingway school.

Well, what about Truman Capote? He's one of the most outstanding young American authors, I'd say. I think he's a deeper thinker than Sagon; harder to read; more interesting.

It all depends on what you like. Capote stresses psychological effect, such as dreams, abnormal people and so on.

Yes, psychological realism. That's a sign of Expressionism, too. He's Expressionistic in that he expresses the soul, his own probably—its deepest, most secret life.

Capote's work is intuitional. The meaning pops up into the consciousness sometimes an hour after you read the story.

His story *Miriam* is about a widow of sixty who lives a very pat life. She meets an odd little girl, Miriam, who astonishingly comes to live in her apartment without waiting for an invitation. The widow is horribly afraid of Miriam, but can't say why. That's the end. Miriam has taken over.

I think Miriam was a symbol of insanity. The widow lived a very lonely life; she had had a dream of Miriam leading her down a mountain path to an unknown destination. I think the story expresses a soul's fear of insanity.

The *Headless Hawk* is one of Capote's best stories. Vincent, who works in an art gallery, is followed home one day by a strange girl. The following winter she comes to the art gallery and gives him a weird painting she's done. She gives her name as D. J.—and disappears. He meets her again in the spring, asks her to come home and live with him—which she does. He finds she's suffering from a persecution complex; when she tries to kill a stranger, he kicks her out. But she still follows him all over.

I think Vincent felt that he'd lived a dull life. He was frustrated because he'd never done anything *real*. Also, he has dreams which reveal his guilt because of sex relations he had had with his cousin, a boy who later killed himself, a deaf girl, et cetera.

I think D.J. had been an unbalanced child who had run away from home and been supported by various men who picked her up.

How does the story end?

I have it right here in my notes. Vincent's walking home from the gallery, stops under a street lamp, even though a summer storm's breaking. Uh . . . it starts to rain but he's still there. Here's the last sentence: "Presently with slow scraping steps, she came below the lamp to stand beside him, and it was as if the sky were a thunder-cracked mirror, for the rain fell between them like a curtain of splintered glass."

But what happened?

I really don't know. It seems they went back together again. I really don't know.

Hmmmm!

What about the Englishman, Colin Wilson? With *The Outsider*, he's leading the trend toward serious thought about the search for individual freedom.

What exactly *is* an Outsider?

An Outsider doesn't take life as it comes; he's interested in extremes — high speed, pressures; feels a power within; is religious . . . or imaginative; has an appetite for purpose and direction.

T. E. Lawrence was an intellectual Outsider; he was an English writer. He was brilliant. Van Gogh was an emotional Outsider—had a "mystical love for nature" which is

reflected in his work—emotional, sensitive, searching, experimental.

I think the Outsider is tormented—almost all men have the herd instinct, thinking that what the majority does must be right. The Outsider is lost. He's always looking for something . . . a home.

What does the Outsider want?

I think he wants to understand the human soul and . . . he wants to know how to express himself.

The Outsider doesn't have to be an artist, though. I guess he'd have to have an imagination.

Van Gogh committed suicide and T. E. Lawrence was killed in an accident with his motorcycle; he loved speed—it seemed to release him from the strain of over-intellectuality.

Can't an Outsider ever solve his problems in a more peaceful way?

Sure. Wilson says that an Outsider can solve his problems pretty well by seeing himself as a predestined poet or world-betterer. The way lies forward, Wilson says, into more life, into acceptance of the ordeal of life.

Do you think Jimmy Dean was an Outsider?

Maybe.



## THE LOSS

Life was the Night Sky  
Filled with stars—  
Each twinkling orb, a delightful experience,  
Waiting to be examined and fondled  
By eager, baby hands—  
An endless walk into day.

Life is the Midday  
With glowing sun—  
The golden beams urging activity  
While the stars are unfelt  
By hurried, groping hands  
Striving to hold back the coming dark.

MARGARET WINSOR, '57

## On Picasso's Guitarist

Ancient man, in sombre blueness,  
Why cling so to a shape of wood?  
Is it life-giving?  
Does it comfort? console?  
Can there be a song so  
worth the singing,  
that you clutch your guitar  
Even at this weary moment!

Old man, teach me this song  
Place my hands on the strings:  
Youth needs a hymn to chant,  
A creed to believe.  
Die content, weary one,  
Your music lives.

EMILIE C. MURRAY, '57



# A Sister

PEGGY DELANEY, '60

Jackie is her name and rock and roll is the stage. She has one of those new Italian hair-cuts and while it is too early to tell if she'll ever be one of those real "glamorous" brunettes, when her blue eyes begin to sparkle, I groan for all the poor boys she'll meet and charm.

A typical "just-turned" teenager, she is of the "borrowing" variety. When the bedroom looks as though a small tornado struck it and your best pink sweater seems to have disappeared, it's a pretty safe guess that "Sis" is out.

Jackie possesses the usual growing pains. Her legs are finally being co-ordinated with the rest of her body but they still have a way of tangling at the wrong times. Her body, once all angles and planes, is

slowly taking on some soft curves. Like all teen-agers, tragedy dogs her footsteps. When "HE" calls, she is out. If she walks to the store in blue-jeans and an old jacket, she runs into a boy she knows and almost dies of embarrassment. She is constantly outgrowing her clothes and has freckles which she is sure disfigure her face beyond repair.

Whenever I had a party at Jackie's age, it was a quiet little thing. It came and went without much trouble. When the "Brunette Bombshell," the family name for my sister, throws a party, the whole town trembles in anticipation. Because invitations are "archaic" the phone is tied up for a week before the gala occasion. It isn't that it takes a week to call everybody. It's just the "backwash" on the inviting that takes so long. By the time each of the six or seven girls invites a date and reports who it is to be to Jackie and by the time she calls the other girls and tells them, well, you have quite a good deal of time spent and some angry people who also like to use the phone occasionally. The day before the party is always reserved for "What are you going to wear?" calls.

Of course, the family has been briefed beforehand on

their conduct. We all get scripts which read, "Enter with a plate of sandwiches," or "Exit, with empty Coke bottles."

The first and last of my sister's parties that I attended left me thoroughly shaken, friendless, and confused beyond all normality. I stayed home that fateful night to help Mother, having been assured most warmly, if somewhat absently, that I would be more than welcome at the party. After serving some Cokes to the guests who were engaged in all manner of odd dancing to the tune of even odder music, I sat down in the living room.

Trying to make conversation with one very shy girl, I noticed that she wore braces. "Don't worry," I told her confidently, "Jackie had them, too."

At this the girl's mouth hung open with surprise. The very thought of my beautiful, pixie-like sister having braces was incredible to her.

"Come on," I said, rashly thinking I was helping things, "I'll show you." Taking the poor frightened wren into the dining room, I proceeded to drag out one after another of the family photo albums. The pictures of Jackie and me as children weren't very flattering to say the least, but they were

funny. The picture of Jackie with her braces and her straggly hair was just so funny that we got to laughing and then, all at once, the whole party, minus my sister, was staring over my shoulder.

I say minus my sister because she was in the bathroom trying to decide whether to leave town in a boxcar or have hysterics. Since the party was still on and she was the hostess, she contented herself with sending me murderous glances, interspersed with a look strangely reminiscent of a dying cocker spaniel.

Because our family burial lot does not contain a headstone inscribed, "Miss Jacqueline Delaney," you are safe in assuming that she survived. Do you see the things that can happen to a present day, rock and roll-struck teen-ager without deadly damage?

Jackie is as gay and as full of fun, as restless and as unpredictable, as the parties she gives. Everything is important to her. Everything matters and matters terribly. I like to think of her as the typical teen-ager. She doesn't make the headlines for anything more spectacular than recovering a lost billfold. She is as changeable as the weather and as normal as the sunrise. She contains a promise

of womanhood that will channel her energy into actively serving her community. Her tastes and ideas will change but basically she will be the same person.

And that basic person is good and wholesome. Sister, you drive me crazy at times but, to borrow a very trite expression, "You're the greatest."

Come  
with me  
to the land of the  
free love and nickel beer  
(a four cent sale if you have an I.D.).  
Come to college.  
Shout the password  
Blast! Chum -p.  
Get off my back, you Pie-Eyed Piper.  
If this is a rat race  
count me out.  
I'm not afraid to stand  
alone?

ORIENTATION :

## Saga of The Unknown Student

	Look out, cruel World, you can't change me into one of your puppets.
	I am an individual, I am free — I am free — I am!
ACCOUNT :	Rushed to classes. Forgot to study. Hurry. Worry.
Dear Mom & Dad :	I am a freshman. I'll tell the World.
ACCOUNT :	Cut boring classes. Could not study. Cram. Damn.
Dear Anybody :	I am a sophomore. Get that into your thick head.
ACCOUNT :	Slept through classes. Did not like prof. Snore. Abhor.
Dear Diary :	I am a junior. Don't you forget it.
ACCOUNT :	Daydreamed in classes. Thoughts far off. Confusion. Disillusion.
Dear God :	I am a senior. Remember me?

CARYLOU SIEDLING, '57

# HOW LIKE THE WIND

The World is so like the wind  
and I am afraid of the wind.  
Sometimes it is with me;  
Sometimes it is against me.

There is so much I want to tell you  
so much I dare not say.  
The wind has a way  
of twisting itself about my words  
squeezing and choking and crushing  
all the love I had enclosed  
until there remains  
nothing  
but the empty, dry, meaningless hollows.



Will you not also believe  
the unheard to be sweeter than the heard?  
Then help me. Please!  
I need the sound of your voice  
to give me assurance;  
I need the strength of your hand  
to lend me endurance.  
Then I shall not be afraid—ever.  
Tell me  
you want me  
you need me  
you love me  
not for what I could be  
nor for what I should be  
but for what I am.

You are the stronger  
yet I cannot tell you.  
You would laugh  
and believe me to be playing a game.  
And so my thoughts are soundless;  
I am still.  
And you shall never know  
how I had wished  
and hoped  
and prayed  
you would choose to be with me.  
God love you,  
for you are an Insider.

CARYLOU SIEDLING, '57

Ellen's face was hidden by her handkerchief as the old Dodge backed away from the tottering garage and onto the street. After gaining turning space, Mr. O'Hara pulled away along the curve of Shade Drive. He was watching the street ahead, but he was seeing only the black-headed slip of a girl beside him and hearing only the quick-caught, half-sobs she could not silence. He wished that he could turn back, drive up by the finger-printed side door of 2406 and call to Kevin, Dolores, Paul, Timmy and the twins, "She's come back. She's changed her mind and come back to stay. Ellen wants to stay and never leave us. Isn't that wonderful? Give her a big kiss, Liddie and Liz! Oh, boy, she's going to stay!" Instead, he swallowed once more and in a voice ever so consciously made to sound as if nothing had happened remarked, "These houses have all been built since I bought our place."

The conversation went on surfacely. As their destination neared, Ellen Mahony's life at the O'Haras' dropped to the background of experience. It was only five weeks ago that she had seen 2406 Shade Drive the first time.

She could never forget those

## SYMBOLS ARE REAL

LOUISE DIVER, '59

first hours that sunny autumn afternoon she arrived. Mrs. O'Hara was still there, but the house was empty and quiet. The older children were not yet home from school, and the twins were playing outside. They had been too busy playing in a dilapidated sandbox to notice Ellen's coming. Ellen's suitcase had been left in the tiny, front room at the top of the stairs when she returned to the kitchen. Mrs. O'Hara sat, both elbows on the table, a cigarette dangling from her ringed left hand, her right fingering a cup of cooled coffee. They were in contrast: Ellen, the plainest of the plain, wore a full cotton skirt and white shirt, sensible shoes. Powder, mascara, rouge and lipstick failed miserably to hide the lines of Mrs. O'Hara's unhappy features. A black jersey blouse, jeweled with a few low, "V," "a black velvet skirt gray and white sequins at its

and high-heeled, strip shoes completed her going-away ensemble.

Ellen rinsed a cup of its dregs and poured herself some warm coffee. "Warm mine up, will you?" Mrs. O'Hara pushed her cup forward. Ellen obliged.

"Maybe you'd better tell me about the children's schedules before you leave," Ellen was more than a bit frightened to be replacing their mother.

"Well, Kevin is the first one who has to leave—about eight. You know he catches a special bus to get to McPhearson. You'll have to watch him closely too because he don't like to dress warm, even when it's zero. On those coldest days last winter, I'd look out and see him coming home many a day without his coat or cap. There wasn't a week went by that I didn't have to buy him a new cap, and he even lost a good suede jacket Don bought him."

"Does he know where to catch his bus?" Ellen had been warned that Kevin, the eight-year old, was mentally not quite right. She didn't know exactly how much she would have to do for him.

"Oh, yes, he goes to the stop alone, but don't let him leave before five of eight or else he gets into trouble with the kids

at the corner." A final long exhalation and a crumpling of her cigarette finished directions for Kevin's dispatch to school. Three younger than Kevin had also to be seen off to school.

"Do you fix their lunches?" Ellen's questioning continued. She wanted so much to be a good mother to these children. A whole barrage of queries tumbled out spontaneously: "What do you usually give them? What time do they come home? What time do you eat supper?" . . . She had better jot down some of these ideas before it all became jumbled. "What time does Mr. O'Hara usually get home?"

"Well, that just depends. Sometimes he came right home; other times, he used to drive by the shop to pick up orders for the next day." Ellen noted the past tense: "he *came* home . . . he *used* to." "He'll be good to help you. Don usually did the laundry and evening dishes for me."

"Couldn't you, don't you want to, somehow patch up things between you? Oh, I don't want to mind your business, but it seems such a shame, not so much for you and Mr. O'Hara as for the children. Surely there isn't anything so serious that it can't be worked out. Maybe if

you talked . . .” Ellen’s plea was stopped.

“Look, we tried that, and I’d still try if Don would. But he don’t want to. Now I need to rest and get away from it all. I need a complete change. It’s time for that. God knows I tried a long time ago, and . . .,” she lighted another cigarette and tossed the match past the ash tray. “See that mess over there above the stove?” She pointed to a big grease stain on the wall, an axle design with spokes emanating from a solid spot. “That’s where he threw spaghetti in one of his rages. And look at this,” she almost toppled from her chair reaching for a pan from the stove drawer. “See this dent? And that ain’t the only one. That’s from hitting them on the stove when he was mad.”

Ellen’s eye caught the thickness of the pan. It was no thirty-nine cent tin. Mr. O’Hara must be powerful to bend the side of stainless steel utensils.

“And I’ve seen him take Kevin,” the tirade continued. Ellen wasn’t hearing. She really was frightened, now not so much of her inadequacy as mother of a family, but of Mr. O’Hara. After all, she had met him only once. Maybe her acceptance had been hasty, may-

be Mamma and Papa had been right, and Aunt Cissie, and the “gang.” Perhaps it would have been best if she had spent these last precious weeks with her own. Maybe, maybe. . .

The atmosphere seemed strained when Mr. O’Hara came home, and Ellen, feeling very much out of place, made a sudden disappearance upstairs as a last attempt to leave man and wife alone to effect a reconciliation. The hope was faint, and when angry words became audibly clear, she knew that even this little hope was wasted. She returned to the kitchen, bade Mrs. O’Hara good-bye and wished her the best of luck. What could she say to a woman who, leaving home, a husband and six children, went dry-eyed unconcernedly to load her shabby luggage into another man’s car? Was Ellen’s, “Give us a call,” superfluous?

Mrs. O’Hara rode away without even caressing the jabbering Liddie, who by then was trailing to and fro with “Where are you goin’? Where are you goin’, Mommie? Can I go, Mommie?” Liddie was first to seize Ellen’s heart. How could any mother leave *her*?” Liddie saw and seemed to sense something of Ellen’s feelings as

the deserter rode away, waving gaily to the older children coming toward home.

"What a life! What a woman! Or is she?" Ellen mused.

Whatever musing Ellen did those next weeks was done as everything else was—on the double. The tall frame house was in need of attention, outside and inside.

Exteriorly, 2406 was a new neighborhood's eyesore lifted high on the side of a hill at the curve of Shade Drive so, it seemed to Ellen, as to be seen by all. A symbol of rack and ruin, the marriage gone skidding, the home destroyed. Its east yard washed down to a twenty-foot ravine which had served as a dumping ground. This accounted for the old tires, bottles, deflated football, oil-soaked boards, and even less attractive items which the O'Hara children had dragged into the yard. Is there a child who doesn't love dumps? Mr. and Mrs. O'Hara's six were normal in this respect at least: they appreciated selecting their own toys. Kevin enjoyed it to the full—full pockets, full dresser drawers, boxes full in the buffet, bottom of the ice box, even his pillowcase full.

The chaotic first evening came to a close after Dolores,

the six year old daughter, reluctantly dried supper dishes and six children rebelled at what was obviously unique in their lives—baths.

Ellen was tiredly reflective as she pushed herself up the dusty stairs, opened the door to her room and began undressing. "What," she asked herself, "have I gotten into?" She reached for a hanger. There were no hangers in the closet, only an old violin, an empty gin bottle, a GI canteen, a half box of matches, a souvenir sombrero from some carnival. "I wonder if I shall ever get this place straightened up." Ellen was pessimistic as she draped skirt and blouse over the bed. The soiled bedcoverings repulsed her. She turned them, found the cleaner sides and folded them where they would be next to her body. The routine of retiring barely interrupted Ellen's thoughts.

And all these things Mrs. O'Hara had said about her husband. Was he really like that? He does look powerful and could, Ellen thought, without much trouble, bend a heavy skillet. Everything about him is big, big shoulders, big feet, hands, large facial features. Even his voice boomed when he sang Timmy a lullaby, "My son,

Tim, goes to bed with his shirt-tail in . . ." Mrs. O'Hara had said that he was cruel; Ellen had seen only patience and the love of a father in Don O'Hara. She liked him, but the doubts had been sown in her mind.

"Here am I, miles from anyone I know, stranded from safety, in a strange city, on an unknown street, in an unfamiliar house with six children and a man I do not know. Of all the queer situations I've been in," Ellen's sense of humor came through, "this is tops." Good sense would not fail her. She would take the precaution of locking her door. There was no key. As she pulled the knob to look on the other side, the knob came out. "Fine, fine." Another thought came as she reinserted the knob and succeeded in opening the door. She would remove the doorknob on the hall side so that access to her room could not be easily had. There would be at least the warning of some noise to awaken her. She checked the window's height from the front yard and considered that if worse came to worst, it would be possible to crawl onto the porch roof and drop to safety. A last shudder expressed Ellen's feelings as she stretched weary legs and pulled the covers about

her shoulders. Thoughts of prayer and unsorted, mixed-up, observations of her new family soon found a sound sleeper.

It was 5:30 when a heavy knock on the door and a deep voiced, "Ellen, it's time to get up," brought consciousness. Mr. O'Hara walked downstairs to make coffee.

All the days began at 5:30 when Don called Ellen, made the coffee, took Ellen to St. Therese's for Mass and went on to his job. Each ended with Ellen's, "Goodnight, Mr. O'Hara," as she trudged upstairs. But between these hours Ellen saw the ugly results of a selfish woman's failure to be a woman, to be a devoted mother, to be a loving spouse. It was a month's meditation on fidelity or, perhaps, infidelity.

The evidence for such a charge had come quickly. A close look at the ears and heels of Paul had shocked Ellen's sensibilities a bit; but before the first week's end, she knew that these were only surface neglects. By then, she knew the signs of malnutrition, the treatment for worms and how to poultice a boil. She learned more; a mother must be a teacher, a story-spinner, nurse, doctor, song-singer, joke-teller, cook, artist, seamstress and

laundress. And while a mother is being these, she must be in love with God, with husband, with her children. Certainly loving these children was easy for her.

All the baby prattle, the boils, the affection of Liz and Liddie, Kevin's unpredictable outbursts, Mr. O'Hara's kindness were now part of Ellen's past. Did she regret her stay? No, Ellen was grateful for all she had been taught, and she could well put her knowledge into practice. Forget them ever? Never!

A full view of the station opened ahead on Market Street. The conversation had lagged as if both Don and Ellen were mutually, though silently, agreed that its superficiality could not be sustained.

"Ellen, if there were any way . . .," the words were not new to Ellen and Don knew it. He glanced apologetically, "If this thing doesn't work, you know how I'd feel about your coming back. The children just love you. I've never seen them so happy, and I've never been happier in my whole life than since you came to stay with us."

"I'm sure that the new girl will take over where I left off. She seems like a wonderful girl, and I think it will be like home to her. You know her parents

are dead."

What Mr. O'Hara had to say, he would say, and Ellen's turn of converse would not stop him. "I don't know why you've helped me through this rough spot. I just know it's been wonderful. I can never repay you, and I know you wouldn't take anything if I could. Maybe sometime I can do something for you." Time was running out; a profusion of heart-thanks spilled forth as Don walked along the long platform, handed the suitcase to the conductor, and stood looking down at her. He thought she looked more like a little girl than ever. She held out her hand for good-bye, but he, taking it, put his other hand under her chin and lifted her face so that their eyes met, said only, "Goodbye, Ellen honey." He had strode almost out of sight before Ellen turned to give the conductor her ticket.

"This is the train to Glen Falls?"

A broad-mouthed conductor grinned yes, "But you want East Glen Falls stop," and looking at the black suitcase, "It's Maryknoll Novitiate you want, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's it. Will you be sure to let me know when we get there?"

## OBJECTIVE CASE

Why me?  
Why should I  
climb so very high  
and never quite  
reach the top?

Then, too,  
why should I  
have that something  
worthy of beginning?

Dear God!

Never mind.  
I see Your point of view.

CARYLOU SIEDLING, '57



# "FRANCE—PAGAN?"

Contemporary literature is the most individual literature of any literary period. "Schools" of thought are no longer important to the development of the writer. Emphasis is frequently placed only on the basic ideas expressed and style is a personal concern so long as the style fits the thought. Thus to group several contemporary authors is a difficult task at times. However, in France there has occurred what critics have called a Catholic Renaissance. The importance of Catholic beliefs in the writings of several of the most important writers

in France cannot be underestimated. Writers who by temperament would not create similar works have a recognizable thread of thought in common.

The prevailing idea is that of redemption through suffering. The suffering is primarily psychological and spiritual, and the principal characters usually have to resolve a conflict of their desires and the moral law. Frequently too, the characters are in a distinctly Catholic setting with a problem that is basic to human nature but intensified by the character's knowledge of the Church.

It should be noted that this Catholic literature of France is far superior to that which we have known. This is not the sugarcoated, preachy and sentimental variety to which we are subjected in the name of Catholicism. This is Catholicism as it affects individuals, Catholicism as it should be lived—vigorous, intense and leading to sanctity. American literature has not yet produced a Catholic literature of this caliber; England has only Evelyn Waugh and the controversial Graham Greene.

This group of writers in France uses realism, symbolism, descriptions that border on naturalism and any other current in literature that will serve the purpose of Catholicism. Presented here are five of the authors who have been most frequently translated and have thus attained the most widespread reputation. They have been chosen on the basis of this availability to the student plus the fact that these are the recognized authors of France both by their own countrymen and by readers of perception around the world.

It is, no doubt, only just that the nation that has given us both rationalism and naturalism should also have the honor of

presenting us with the most important Catholic writing of the past few centuries. Several works of the last decade have been written on the deplorable moral standards of France, styled the “eldest daughter of the Church.” But the literature coming from this country denies that Catholicism is dying in France. And as in all good families the right of the eldest daughter to speak and be heard cannot be denied.

E.M., '57

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## Leon Bloy

Léon Bloy has written few books, but the vividness of his presentation and the strength of his ideas make these few memorable. His works are often classified with the social novels but his ideas go beyond that of the average social critic. In his novels one finds all the elements of social criticism—the satiric portraits, the accurate description of ways of life, the pitiful conditions that are due to the inequality of distribution of wealth and a consideration of these evils as they affect men's destinies. In Bloy, however, there is another strain that is

stronger than any of the common elements of social criticism—a deeply felt hatred of mediocrity. Self-satisfaction, the bourgeois sin that most appalls him, is shown as an actual social evil, not merely a personal fault.

There are two principal novels of Bloy that the student could find both interesting and profitable. *Le Désespéré* (The desperate or homeless one) and *The Woman Who Was Poor* are related insofar as they both present the person of Marchenoir, the artist who cannot find happiness in this life but can give much to his friends because of his penetration of life's meaning. *Le Désespéré* first presents this character as the one of principal importance. By many critics Marchenoir is considered to be a self-portrait of the author, and the most important ideas and the most original thoughts are usually to be found in his conversations.

*The Woman Who Was Poor* is the more popular of the two books, partly because of its more interesting story and because it fulfills the standards of the art of the novel more completely. The book begins with a description of a Paris slum that is so exact in its picturing of filth, poverty and human misery

that one is almost disgusted with the picture. It has all the ingredients of the best naturalistic writings and it is difficult to see how such a story could be uplifting. But the story of Clothilde's battle against not just poverty but the impossible moral conditions that poverty, extreme poverty, is responsible for is a spiritual experience. Somehow in the uncommon filth of Bloy's gutters one is washed of false ideals and complacency.

Clothilde is rescued from her unfortunate existence at home and brought into a society where money is used to improve the human mind, to uplift the spirit. But the society of Marchenoir and his friends also reveals the pseudo-intellectual and false artiste to her. Later during her married life one learns of the hardships that poverty can bring—sickness, blindness and death. The bourgeois gossips also receive sharp treatment from Bloy as he shows their unreasonable efforts to hurt her life. It is a tribute to the author that this story does not become melodrama but retains the restraint of genuine tragic writing. One experiences the emotion of Clothilde but still is unprepared for her final glorious statement that there is

only one sadness, not to be a saint.

Bloy did not appreciate the artist who wrote only of earth. Rather he felt that all that did not worship the Absolute was useless. Besides his novels, some eight volumes of journals have been published. *Pilgrim of the Absolute* quite clearly shows him as a social reformer who was interested in conforming man's habits with his ultimate goal. For him, like others of this period, the theme of redemption through suffering was ever present. The beauty of his books is in this combination of the urgent reforming attitude with a unique and impressing style.

EMILIE MURRAY, '57

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## Paul Claudel

The dramas of Paul Claudel are unlike anything in the tradition of the French theatre. They follow none of the conventions of classical tragedy, romantic drama, or realism. They were composed in isolation, far from Paris, and in a seeming opposition to the taste

of the day. Claudel created a dramatic form which is unique in French literature and which somewhat resembles the dramas of Shakespeare and Lope de Vega rather than the tragedies and comedies of his own country, which so closely followed the classical models. Claudel's drama is not a combination of the comic and the tragic. His work is simultaneously dramatic speech and poetry.

The characters in his drama speak like real men and women who feel that humanity forms one body and that each man is responsible at every moment of his existence for all other men. In all his plays Claudel shows us one of the most difficult and mystical of all dogmatic teachings, the communion of saints. For Claudel the universe is *one* at every moment of man's existence. He has spoken of the "passion of the universe" which he feels, and of the exaltation derived from contemplating the millions of things which exist at the same time.

The most constant theme of all of Claudel's dramas is the role of love—both material and supernatural—in life. His heroines are all remote, mysterious, unknowable, fascinating, standing between man and his God. For Claudel the relationship be-

tween man and woman, and between man and God, is an eternal relationship. If salvation is the goal of each human existence, love is the means to attain that salvation. He represents human love (*Le soulier de Satin, Partage de Midi*) at times so total as to exclude love of God, but he also shows how erotic passion, as it grows in intensity, must end in the frustrating realization of its inability to completely satisfy the human heart.

Claudél calls woman the promise which cannot be kept. She is finite, while man's desires and longings are infinite. This need for the infinite, which is the basis of all love, is constantly disappointed in the limitations of human love.

The role of woman in Claudél's dramas is that of leading man towards God. Her mission in the work of salvation is to incarnate divine tenderness and divine solicitude in the world. Throughout his drama Claudél is saying that love of man for woman is love of an illusion, love of something which only seems to exist. The Romantics had preached that love is God; Claudél reverses this phrase through the example of his passionately human characters to

bring the Scriptural message that God is love.

ISABEL HERNANDO, '58

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### Charles Peguy

Charles Péguy had a message for the world and he delivered it fearlessly through his prose and poetry. It is impossible to interpret his works apart from himself for "he thought his life and lived his thought." His personality is apparent in all he wrote. He himself says that he does not need to sign his name, as it is indelibly written on every line of his poetry and prose.

Péguy was born of humble parents in Orleans on January 7, 1873. His father died before his birth so he grew up under the care of two women, his grandmother, who did not know how to read but who was a good story teller, and his mother, who recaned chairs at the cathedral. He was a serious child, an excellent student, a genius, but he was a solitary. He had been baptized and brought up a Catholic, but he lost his faith during his years at the lyceums under the influence of atheistic professors.

Péguy's first work, *Jeanne d'Arc*, which is reminiscent of the medieval mystery plays, was written before his "conversion." The pulse of the whole work is the idea of suffering. It begins and ends in pain, both natural and supernatural. The idea of damnation, the perpetuation of human suffering, which at the beginning and end of *Jeanne d'Arc* forms a perspective of the Hundred Years War extending into eternity, was for the youthful and compassionate Péguy the great obstacle to belief. He remained a poet of suffering, and it was in suffering that he felt most joined to the Church. Few poets, even Christian poets, can have laid "such stress on pain or have accepted it with such ardor, as of free choice." He not only felt that man on earth was by nature inevitably unhappy, but he discerned in himself a natural vocation to suffering. In his beautiful poem, *Prière de confiance*, which he made at the time of his pilgrimage to Chartres (1913), Péguy speaks of his great temptation, and he explains his resistance and his renunciation.

This implacable need for suffering did not lead Péguy to despair or stoicism, but on the contrary to a religion of hope.

It is the need to hope joined to the need to suffer which formed the basis of his Catholicism. The starting point of hope for Péguy is the point of greatest suffering and despair—the cry of Christ on the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In both *Jeanne d'Arc* and later in *Le Mystère de la Charité de Jeanne d'Arc*, the nun Mme Gervaise refers to these words in her attempt to lift Joan of Arc from her state of despair.

In *Le Mystère de la Charité de Jeanne d'Arc*, one expects a drama on the life of Joan herself and her interior martyrdom before those judges and accusers who represented the Church; this was the most sublime secret and the heroic test of her sanctity; it was not the subject Péguy had treated. One sees more than Joan of Arc in the "mystery" of her charity—one sees Péguy himself in the mystery of his renewed or refound faith. This faith so new, so fresh, so simple in its piety—Péguy was happy to allow it to speak for itself, to tell its story. He reveals the substance of his faith, and the love that animated it; without seeming to do so he instructs the potential disciples and believers who made up the readers of the *Cahiers*.

He thus found a way of relating, first through Jeanne, then through Mme Gervaise, the whole story of Christ, from His birth to His death, the Passion of Jesus and the compassion of Mary, the Apostles' vocation and their greatness, the inexhaustible source of grace and sanctity that is in Christ.

This simple account — unadorned, unified, yet filled with love, adoration and anguish — flows, almost without any interruption of the dialogue, throughout the book.

At first, Péguy's concept of charity was noble and unselfish but entirely human. Later, however, it caught the spark of the Divine and led him back to Catholicity. He was never "converted" in the usual sense of the word but rather he returned to himself. In 1941, he was killed at the battle of the Marne leaving us these stirring and prophetic lines:

Happy are those who died  
for the carnal earth,  
But provided it was in a just  
war,  
Happy are those who have  
died for their own corners  
of the earth,  
Happy are those who have  
died a solemn death.

MARIA LAGADON, '57

## Francois Mauriac

François Mauriac, born in 1885 at Bordeaux, was raised by an austere Catholic mother and grandmother. He emerged as one of the most controversial writers of the century. As in the works of Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, it is Mauriac's treatment of characters and situations as a Catholic, rather than as a literary man, that concerns those of the same faith. Granted that he has recognized mastery of style, it is his solution of moral cases that either prejudices this public for or against him.

A prominent French critic, Charles du Bos, has divided Mauriac's career into three periods. Although Mauriac first wrote poetry, he abandoned it for the novel as a better means of expression. But his poetic genius, which saturates most of his works, is not lost. This first period, one of youth and fervor, reaches a devout melancholy in 1922. The works of Mauriac's second period are most controversial for here he combines both the spiritual and the natural, giving them equal footing. Mauriac shows a great adeptness in treating sins of the

flesh in the light of the suffering Christian. In a seemingly impossible battle the characters are apparently forced by the violence of passion to act against their conscience. In fact, redemption has a jansenistic flavor. A special intervention of God is about the only way out. In Mauriac's treatment of sin the question arises whether he considers virtue too difficult to treat artistically, thus creating a wrong impression; or, whether he fully believes in the moral helplessness of his characters.

Since 1928, Mauriac has gradually let grace play a more effective role. Some maintain that it only looks that way. Regardless, he has an even greater penetration of the psychology of sinners, especially in sins of sensuality. Sins of the flesh are treated with a feeling of abhorrence; yet, blindly and futilely grasped at as a means of procuring at least some happiness in this vale of tears.

*Therese Desqueyroux*, a good example of Mauriac's works, is a great psychological novel of the cunning of a murderess of the same name. Here is a woman thrown into surroundings distasteful to her femininity, that of a highly domineering bourgeois family in a typical small town. She tries escape by

poisoning her husband through a series of small doses of arsenic. Being apprehended, she is declared innocent by a court bribed by her relatives. Their reason for saving her was to save the family name. Therese is doomed to the custody of these people until she escapes to Paris. Therese's escapades in Paris are treated in another novel, *The End of The Night*. In this novel she becomes a degraded victim of lust and one fated to make her own daughter's life miserable. These novels are certainly composites of the psychological understanding of which Mauriac seems to have an endless amount.

JOSEPH R. TURK, '57

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## George Bernanos

The striking personality of George Bernanos is still living today. One of this century's foremost French novelists, he exerted a strong influence in exemplifying the need for Christianity. The enduring appeal of his works is due largely to his extraordinary visionary power and remarkably intense gift of presentation.



Being a Frenchman, his compositions often go unnoticed by the average English-speaking reader. However, it seems quite probable that such would not be the case if people were more familiar with the man himself, with the type of writing he does, and likewise, aware of the many translations easily accessible. Therefore, I should like to point out just some of the outstanding characteristics of his works.

Born in a small province in northern France, the background of most of his novels, Bernanos was content to spend the majority of his time there. He concerned himself primarily with contemporary problems, endeavoring to spread his message of integrity through his works which express many profound comments on the social problems posed by poverty, riches, sin, and suffering.

Excellent characterization is the distinctive mark of his novels, many of which are polemic in nature. As a result we are given a keen insight into the many controversies taking place in France in the 19 century. A mystic, Bernanos is frequently preoccupied with the forces of good and evil working against each other, the struggle between human passion and the grace of

God in the souls of his characters. His puissant use of descriptive detail to note the transforming effect of vice and virtue upon individuals, whether it be a priest, or an unscrupulous sinner, is a point of continuing interest in his inspiring stories.

For Bernanos the necessity of penance, humility and particularly, prayer, plays an important role. His gift for warm expression combined with a deep admiration for Christianity gives his novels a universal appeal which proves the timeless and living value of the author.

The literary genius of George Bernanos is brilliantly portrayed in such novels as *The Diary of a Country Priest* and *Under the Sun of Satan*. In both works he plunges into the depths of the human soul, analyzing the drama of the struggle for its possession between God and the devil. The realistic sketches of the sordid as well as the pleasant pictures of life give his works power and pathos in the presentation of the ultimate of good and evil. He might be considered as one of the few who successfully attempted to express the need for faith in and love of God.

BARBARA HERTEL, '57

## CONTEMPLATION

Men plan in men.

They plant dreams in this material ground,  
And upon harvest is found  
A stalk that bears not fruit.

Yet what fools we are.

Are minds of men sound?  
Again they sow in the past year's ground  
To reap once more the hollow seed.

Awaken dreamers!

Happiness knows not birth  
In such empty, barren earth.  
Plant not your life in dust!

Remember man, that you are mortal —

The dreams you realize today  
Tomorrow in the grave decay  
And man again is dust.

PHILIP H. ALLEN, '60