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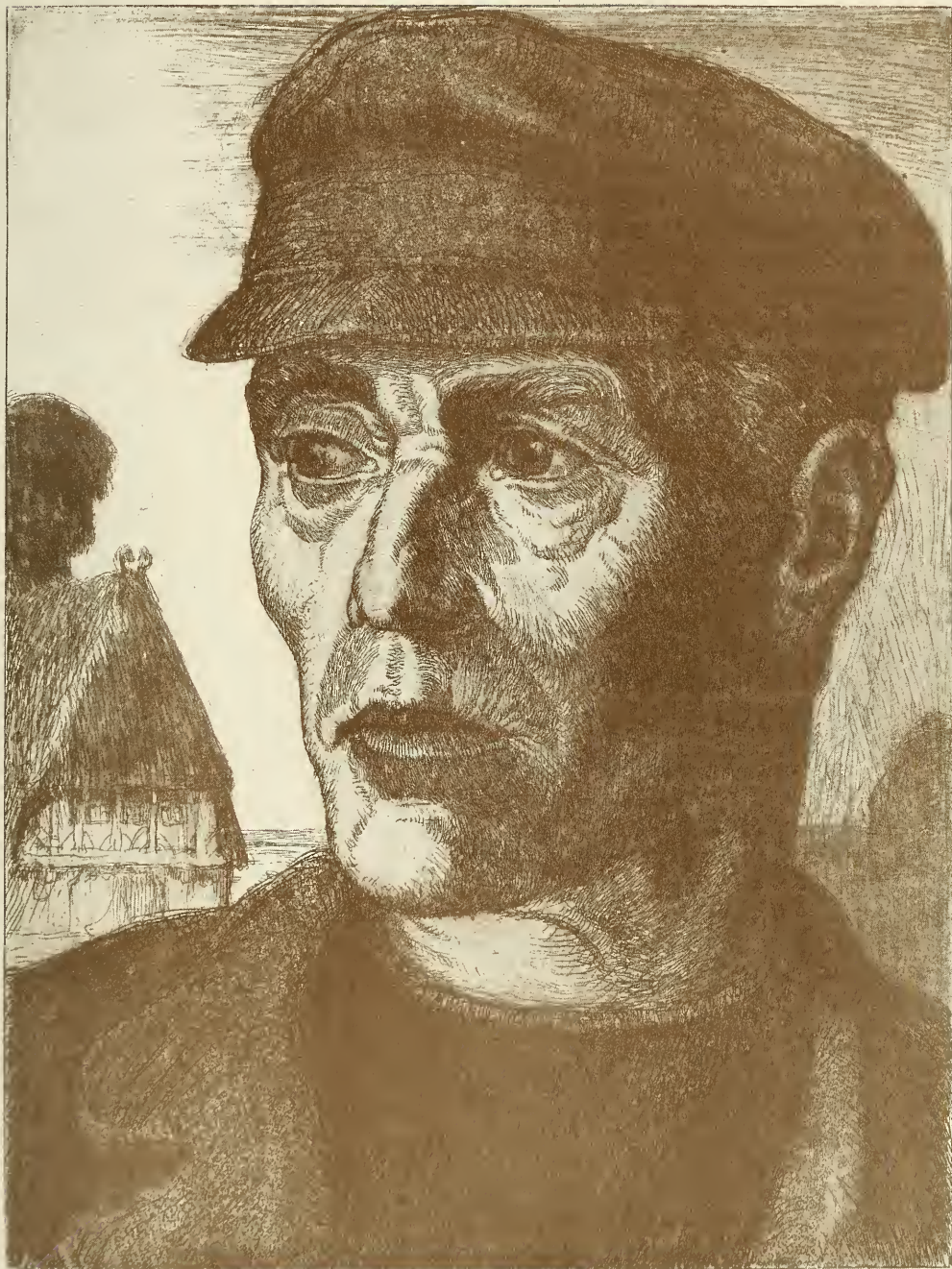
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VOL. XXVIII
NO. 2
WINTER, 1979
ONE DOLLAR

Four
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Quarters





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Four Quarters

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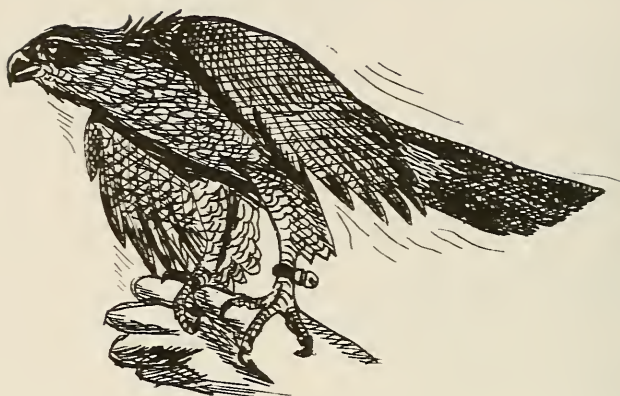
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CATBIRD



SEAT

The dictionary defines "catbird seat" as "a position of great prominence or advantage." Both components of that definition apply to me as the new editor of Four Quarters, I suppose. Whatever megalomaniacal tendencies I have surely been boosted by the recognition and support accorded me by my colleagues since I took over the editorship. But much more important to me is the "advantage" part. Having to read and judge the profferings of our large and (almost without exception) talented body of contributors has already given me new perspectives on writing, both contemporary and classical, which are of inestimable value to me.

Take the matter of genre, for example. As a teacher I've had a good number of years to form my prejudices against certain types of story and content. Until last September, I'd never read a story about American Indians I liked; the ones I'd encountered struck me as naive, condescending, sentimental, or a combination of the three. But then along came Charles Brashers's "Betjegen," and away went that prejudice: we ran it proudly in our Autumn issue. Similarly, surrealism never much appealed to me; but Leslie

(continued on page 34)

Poems For The Season

Weeding in January

LOUIS DANIEL BRODSKY

The sky is haywire alive with fire
At the wrong time; even spiders
Awaken from dazed slumbers, stumble
On weak legs to a sunned spot
On barn siding, or holly leaf
From which to suspend their disbeliefs.

Curious, I stray from a heated house
Outdoors, with light coat, gloves,
And begin pulling clumped weeds
From a garden whose soggy, unturned soil
Lets them loose easily as worms
Freed from hard earth by the rain.

I am piqued to complete the immediate task
Of eradication before Winter
Remembers itself, or sees me playing
Behind its back as though no tomorrows
Stood between April planting
And January's coldest hours at hand.

A chill cast by afternoon shadows
Presses against my sweaty neck,
Stifles all inclination to continue,
Forces me inside just as the door
Between death's edge and rebirth shuts,
And snow clouds begin to form.

Honor Thy Child: The Sin of the Fathers in “Ghosts”

ELLEN DOWLING

GHOSTS WAS “not a book to have around the house.” In 1881, this opinion was voiced by numerous critics who, as Michael Meyer reports, were so shocked by the play that they raised an uproar which surpassed even Henrik Ibsen’s estimations of the play’s effect. Indeed, the ensuing scandal was so great that people were actually afraid to read a play which “attacked some of the most sacred principles of the age, such as . . . the duty of a son to honour his father.”¹

Unfortunately, these outraged critics and frightened readers overlooked the significance of the subtitle—“A Family Drama”—which focuses attention on the various parent/child relationships in the play.² By attacking the “duty of a son to honour his father,” the play illustrates the disastrous results of a rigid, inflexible interpretation of the Fourth Commandment: “Honor thy father and thy mother.” On the contrary, Ibsen suggests, the *reverse* of the Fourth Commandment—“Honor thy child”—is the key to a healthy parent/child relationship.

The structure of the play illustrates the movement from the old commandment to the new. In the first act of *Ghosts*, the emphasis is on filial duty: what a child must do to honor his parents. By the end of the play, however, the emphasis has shifted to the reverse: what the parent must do to honor her child. The change in

¹ Michael Meyer, *Ibsen*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1971), p. 484.

² In “Archetypal Repetition in *Ghosts*,” Brian Johnston points out the irony of the subtitle: “The somewhat dreadful nature of Ibsen’s humor can be gauged from the play’s subtitle, A Family Drama. It suggests the familiar nineteenth-century phrase ‘family novel’ or ‘family play’—that which is fit to be enjoyed by the entire family. Its subject is, of course, the family, and the central metaphor, syphilis, demolishes the generative source of all families.” See *Scandinavian Studies*, 41 (1969), 103-04.

emphasis is brought about through Mrs. Alving's gradual realization that the ideal parent must honor his child and that the failure to obey this commandment is the most serious sin of the fathers.

The ideal of parental duty is exemplified in the story of the Prodigal Son. In the play, Oswald refers to himself as the Prodigal Son, but he immediately qualifies this remark by saying, "Well, the son, anyway."³ This qualification is significant because it indicates that the parable is not being used merely to illustrate Oswald's character (indeed, he is not the Prodigal Son at all), but to remind the reader of the *father's* role in the Biblical story. Oswald did not claim his inheritance and leave for a faraway country under his own volition. On the contrary, he was denied his inheritance, and sent away to France by his mother (acting as his father at this time). In *Ghosts*, therefore, the significance of the parable lies in the fact that the Prodigal Son's father represents the ideal parent, one who gives all to his children (honors them) and asks nothing in return. The Biblical father makes no demands on his son when he asks for his inheritance, nor does he guide his son in any way; rather, he allows the son to choose his own path. When the Prodigal Son returns, the father again asks nothing from his son, not even an apology. The Biblical father loves and honors his son unconditionally.

IN *GHOSTS*, IBSEN presents three alternative "fathers" whose actions are markedly contrasted to the actions of the father in the parable. The first father, Jacob Engstrand, represents the kind of parent who asks for a materialistic return from his child. He demands that Regina pay him back for being her father by working in his brothel (the home for sailors). The second father, Pastor Manders, demands that his children follow his guidance at all times. His concept of filial duty is based on an insistence that the child blindly obey his father. Mrs. Alving, who has been a surrogate "father," illustrates a more admirable, but nonetheless sinful concept of filial duty by demanding unconditional love from her child. All three demands—financial profit, blind obedience and love—are the results of varying interpretations of the Fourth Commandment. Engstrand's wish for monetary gain shows how far he has perverted the idea of the child's duty to its father, while Mander's and Mrs. Alving's ideas about filial obedience and devotion reveal a similar, though less despicable, rigid adherence to the moral and social demand that the father be honored.

³ *Ghosts and Three Other Plays*, trans. Michael Meyer, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1966), p. 144. All quotations in the text are taken from this edition.

The ideal father in the parable of the Prodigal Son is a combination of the heavenly father, his spiritual surrogate on earth (the priest or minister), and the human, biological father. Jacob Engstrand is the satanic antithesis of this figure.⁴ He constantly perverts the heavenly father image by spouting Biblical platitudes to further his own selfish, materialistic goals. (It is no coincidence that Engstrand uses more religious phrases in his speeches than Pastor Manders does.) Engstrand is shown to be a perverted Christ-figure throughout the entire play. He claims that he took the blame on himself for Joanna's "sin" of pregnancy and asserts that when she came to him "amid weeping and gnashing of teeth" he took pity on her and "raised her up and made an honest woman out of her . . ." (p. 168). The allusion to Christ's rescue of Mary Magdalene is convincing only to Pastor Manders; we know that Engstrand married Joanna for the "considerable sum of money" (p. 159) given to her by Mrs. Alving.

The same financial motivation lies behind Engstrand's adoption of Regina. In the first scene of the play, Engstrand asks her, "What should a father want from his only child?" (p. 132). In Engstrand's case, of course, the answer is money. He wants neither her respect nor her filial devotion, but is interested only in what profits her body can bring him. He literally wants her to pay him back for being her father.

Engstrand illustrates the ultimate antithesis of the ideal father in Act II when he convinces Pastor Manders of the Reverend's own culpability in the destruction of the Orphanage. Referring to himself as an "angel of deliverance," he declares that he will take the Pastor's guilt on his own shoulders, comparing himself to Christ: "someone who's taken the blame for another man's wickedness" (p. 186). His heavenly father pose works; Pastor Manders pledges his support to the Home for sailors. Engstrand has quite a few "children" in the play: Joanna, Regina, the workers at the Orphanage (for whom he conducts religious services), and even Pastor Manders, who begs Engstrand's forgiveness for ever doubting his "christian" motives for his marriage to Joanna.

Jacob Engstrand, the satanic version of the ideal father, introduces the second father, Pastor Manders. At the beginning of Act I, Engstrand tells Regina that Pastor Manders will tell her "what a child's duty is to its father" (p. 134). And that is precisely what Manders proceeds to do. In his mind, the duty of the child is blind, unquestioning obedience. The father, he insists, guides the child, morally and spiritually, and the child must obey. The em-

⁴ For a more comprehensive examination of Engstrand's satanic qualities, see Brian Johnston, "Archetypal Repetition in *Ghosts*," op. cit., 108-09.

phasis on paternal guidance is clearly brought out when Manders tells Regina that Engstrand "badly needs a hand to guide him" (p. 136), paralleling Engstrand's earlier remark to Regina: "You need a hand to guide you" (p. 133).

The key to Manders' paternal role is this concept of guidance. He guides Regina, telling her that she must obey her father no matter what he asks her to do, or what her natural inclinations are. He has guided Mrs. Alving in the past, forcing her to return to her unhappy marriage in spite of all her feelings to the contrary. His philosophy is explained when he tells Mrs. Alving: "There are many occasions in life when one must rely on the judgement of others. That is the way things are and it is good that it should be so. If it were not, what would become of society?" (p. 139).

Like Engstrand, Manders has many children. He expects filial duty from all of them: Regina must go with her father; Mrs. Alving must stay with her husband; Oswald must return home because "he knows his filial duty" (p. 138). He is pleased when Engstrand confesses his weaknesses to him, and happily describes him as one who is "conscious of his need to have someone who can restrain him when temptation presents itself. That is what is so lovable about Jakob Engstrand, that he comes to one like a child and accuses himself and admits his weakness" (pp. 143-44). Manders rejoices in the confession alone; the father in the parable ignores his son's confession, rejoicing only in the fact that the son has returned.

Manders has insisted on blind obedience to and a strict interpretation of the Fourth Commandment for quite some time. He will not change his beliefs for anyone. ("I am the same as I always was," he says.) He refuses to spend a single night in Mrs. Alving's home, afraid of the "occasion of sin" such an action would encourage, and he persists in guiding her treatment of her son, exactly as he guided her when she left her husband: "I stand before you as your priest, as I did at that moment when you had strayed so far" (p. 150). The distinction between Pastor Manders and the father in the parable is quite clear: the ideal father does not accuse his child of straying nor does he pass judgments on his actions. He is a passive figure, patient and understanding. Pastor Manders, on the other hand, actively seeks to control his "child," Mrs. Alving: "I was able to dissuade you from your frenzied intentions and . . . it was granted to me to lead you back on to the path of duty and home to your lawful husband" (p. 151).

IT IS MANDERS who reminds Mrs. Alving of the Fourth Commandment: "Have you forgotten that a child shall love and honor its father and mother?" (p. 161). In his opinion, the parent's

only duty is to see to it that the child obeys that law unconditionally. By not carrying out that duty, he asserts, Mrs. Alving has "sinned greatly." He doesn't realize it, of course, but he, too, has sinned against his children by misguiding them. He has consistently refused to honor his children.

Pastor Manders is right about one thing, however; Mrs. Alving has indeed sinned against her child by denying him his inheritance and by demanding that he pay her back with love for being his mother. However, it is Mrs. Alving's great strength that she, unlike Engstrand and Manders, progresses towards the ideal of the father in the parable. Her movement towards self-awareness also leads to her realization of what the ideal parent's duty should be to her child. At the end of the play, she is able to understand her sin and embrace the attributes of the ideal parent. It is her tragedy that her awareness of the situation arrives too late to alter the consequences of her early sin.

Mrs. Alving's rigid interpretation of the Fourth Commandment is the product of her own parents' interpretations. She herself was a dutiful child. She honored her mother and aunts by marrying Captain Alving—a good catch—even though she knew she was disobeying her own inclinations. "I didn't follow my own counsel" she later admits, overriding Pastor Manders' support for her action: "You obeyed your nearest relatives. Your mother and your two aunts. As was your duty" (p. 160). She also felt it was her duty to hide the truth about his real father from Oswald. As the play progresses, she comes to realize that her true duty as a parent was to give her son his inheritance without demanding any justification and without guiding him by means of paternal platitudes and demands of filial obedience. She is the only "father" in the play who comes to understand this fact: that the most important duty of the father is merely to love his child, with no strings attached. But the process is a painful one.

Step by step, Mrs. Alving comes closer to the ideal of the Biblical father. When she learns about Oswald's relationship with Regina, she wishes she could say to him "marry her, or make what arrangements you please. As long as you're honest and open about it" (p. 162), but she admits that she is still an "abject coward." Later, Oswald complains that there is no "light" in his home and he has been unable to work. His mother tells him "Perhaps you shouldn't have come home . . . I'd ten times rather sacrifice the happiness of having you with me than that you should—" (p. 172). "Be unhappy" is obviously the end of her statement. She is beginning to realize just how difficult it can be to sustain an ideal, unselfish parental role.

When Mrs. Alving learns of Oswald's sickness, she tells him, "My poor, dear Oswald! How could I deny you anything now?" (p. 176). In other words, now that her son has returned, she would like to kill the fatted calf and rejoice. But it is too late; the "joy of life" (p. 179), as illustrated in the parable, should ideally be found in one's home. Instead, the Alving family has been like the pig-sty where the Prodigal Son found only darkness and loneliness, "and no man gave unto him." Oswald has found the joy of life in the far country, instead of in his home. At the end of Act II, Mrs. Alving realizes this fact. But, at the same moment, the Orphanage burns to the ground, paralleling Oswald's irreversible "burning" (p. 187) and signifying that she will never be able to rejoice over her son's return. She can be forgiven for her sin, but she cannot erase its tragic consequences.

The last act of the play charts the course of Mrs. Alving's progress towards final attainment of the role of the ideal parent. She begins by giving Oswald his inheritance. She declares that she will tell him the truth about his father, and then he can deal with it as he pleases. ("Now, my boy, you shall know everything. And then you can choose" p. 181.) She describes her husband as "a happy, carefree child—for he was like a child, then—" (p.189) and confesses to her son that she tried to force her husband to live up to her own ideas about what a father should be. Captain Alving's inability to conform to her standards results in the perversion of his original "joy of life" and produces Oswald's sickness and Regina's illegitimacy. Mrs. Alving is indeed the Prodigal Mother who has wasted not only her own life, but her husband's and her son's as well.

As a result of this confession, Mrs. Alving reveals a new patience and understanding towards the other characters in the play. In Act II, she had planned to guide Regina and force her to do her filial duty by getting married. She had asked Pastor Manders, "Don't you think it would be best if we could get her taken care of? I mean—well, decently married" (p. 164). Now, in Act III, she realizes that the child must be given only love and freedom. She tells Regina, "Of course, you must do as you please" and assures her, "If ever you need a home, Regina, come to me" (p. 191). Like the ideal father, Mrs. Alving no longer condemns her own children, or demands that they follow her advice unconditionally.

THE FINAL STEP in Mrs. Alving's progress towards the ideal is her understanding of her own interpretation of the Fourth Commandment. This is made clear when Oswald tells her that the only thing he remembers about his real father is that once Captain Alving made him physically ill. Mrs. Alving protests, "But surely a child ought to love its father whatever may happen?" Oswald

challenges this belief: "Even when a child has nothing to thank its father for?" (p. 192). When Mrs. Alving cries "Then you don't love me either!" she is on the threshold of discovering that the ideal parent cannot even demand love from his child. When she cries, "I, who gave you life!" and Oswald replies "I didn't ask you for life," she realizes that the mere fact of the child's birth does not automatically necessitate that the parent should be paid back with love. When she accepts this—that she can *ask* nothing of her son—then, and only then, can she finally *give* him anything, unconditionally, like the father in the parable.

But it is too late. Oswald asks only two things of his mother: the "joy of life" (symbolized by the sun) and death. In an ironic reversal of the happy ending of the parable, Ibsen places Mrs. Alving, now the ideal father, in the position where the fatted calf she must slaughter is her own son. Can she maintain the role of the ideal father at the end of the play? Is she indeed strong enough to ask nothing of her child, not even the babbling idiot's mere presence which would enable her to assuage her guilty conscience by taking care of him for the rest of his life? Or are the ghosts of filial duty still with her, overshadowing her newly-realized understanding of true parental duty?

There is no answer to that, but there is an answer to the question: what is the true duty of a parent towards his child? The results of a misguided adherence to the concept of filial duty are all too apparent in Oswald's physical and Regina's moral degeneration. But the play also shows the positive effects of attempting to overthrow these ghosts by becoming aware of the parent's ultimate duty: to simply honor the child with unconditional love and understanding. *Ghosts: A Family Drama* is thus a most beneficial book to have around the house. Its theme of the value of renouncing filial duty in the name of parental love indicates that the play should be included among the "new books" in Mrs. Alving's home, for, as she herself says, "There really isn't anything new in these books—there's nothing in them that most people haven't already thought for themselves. It's only that most people either haven't fully realized it, or they won't admit it" (p. 139).

The Fallen Woman

(Presented at the Yeats Festival, Sligo, 1978)

ELEANOR SHIEL ZITO

Thor Ballylee's gray parapet . . .
Brown stream beneath churns into mud.
"Like coffee," says a passerby,
I say, "Like blood . . ."
A blood-dimmed tide to take me down
And turn the smile inside to frown.

Better not write that letter yet,
A wifely note to knot the tie,
The bow blown loose before I left—
Rebellion high.
Who's hubby telling me not to go
Northward to pray for Ireland's woe?

Two a.m. . . . heart missing beats,
Lone harpie, I go seek a phone,
Fare out on foot in Belfast streets
To call back home.
Damn Yanks, we shared no goodbye kiss.
How dare I then come sue for peace?

Europa's open, grand hotel—
Over the transatlantic wire,
"Sorry," I grieve and "Love you," tell
My heart's desire.
Relieved, in the security shed
I wait a taxi back to bed.

A North of Irelander sits across,
Cuchulain's soulful eyes flash out—
Blue flares—they leave me at a loss.
Fifty or not,
Payne's gray my hair and gaunt from fast,
Our looks embrace: "We meet at last!"

He'll share my taxi, goodly squire—
I half expected such a tryst—
Bold walk through purgatorial fire,

My guide . . . ? Sweet Christ,
His fingers seek my hand. "You're cold . . .
Shy, love?" What gallant eyes! I'm sold!

He hardly knows I've been to phone
In the Europa, two a.m.
And am no harlot, lightly borne,
The bull's fair game.
He stops the cab, *he* pays the pence,
Bright ferryman, to bear me hence.

There on the street he kisses me,
Heaven comes surging in his kiss.
Behold the door . . . this knock will be
Short cut to bliss,
Though closer walks I've known before,
Philadelphia Museum and Jersey shore.

He holds me helpless, fire on fire;
Wild swans flutter against my thighs.
"Come with me, love, come on love, higher."
O yes—to Paradise!
"I'm married . . ." I manage to stutter that—
His wife and kiddies are in his flat.

What now, Ariadne? Forsake the fold
To follow anew the passionate floss?
Around my neck a medal of gold,
A silver cross—
Multiple amulets to guide me through
The Second Coming, a scapular too.

Hand in my pocket, O God, the choice!
Quit the brawling, the useless toil?
"Renounce . . ." seduces that angel voice,
"The marriage coil . . ."
A snatch of prayer roils up in me,
"Lord Jesus, help!" and I find my key!

Inside, I suck on my stinging lip.
He touched me . . . tested me, fool, I'd said,
"I've loved you always." God, what a slip!
My face blood red
That rested upon, I thought, Christ's breast
But scraped, instead, on the rough beast.

Home

MARGARET RANDALL

All those years gone finding myself
off season
outspread fingers before me
a napkin ring and whittled wood
that secret place beneath the stairs
immense time as they picked their teams
and I stood standing, waiting,
uncertain mirror coming at me, coming at me and me and me
and finally we
and finally we all around us
and we a part of that us
and no more linen napkins
no more paper napkins
but plates of people's food
the greenest trees against the bluest skies
the man with her body
—whose body?—
the certain mirror coming at my body
becoming our great extraordinary body
the tops of the trees depending on his pain
her small hands
his confidence
their bare feet and anger

anger

rage that joins us
carrying us far beyond the pounding in the chest
eyes in all directions
the laws of history and the struggles of human beings:
I want to go home
but my house is everywhere.

(Havana, August 1977)

The Sorcerer's Apprentice

JONATHAN CARROLL

“**I** SAY TO YOU NOW, TULLY, rise up to us here in the LAND OF THE LIVING! Rise up out of there from the LAND OF THE HEREAFTER!”

“Ain’t nothin’ movin’ yet, Suede.”

“I can see for myself. You don’t have to tell me that. I can see for myself.”

“But you told me you was goin’ to rise him up for sure. You said that if I gave you the money you was goin’ to rise him up again!”

“Don’t get me mad now, boy. You get me angry and all my powers will just march right up out of me and then we’ll never be able to get even the dirt to rise, much less your Daddy with it!”

“Yeah, but you said—”

“Watch it now, just watch it. You say another word and there’ll be no power left, no matter *how* much I try to keep ‘em in!”

“But then what about my dollar? What’re you goin’ to do if you *can’t* rise him up? I already know you spent my dollar payment.”

Suede didn’t know what he was going to do if he couldn’t raise Tully Cort up from the LAND OF THE DEAD. He charged the dollar, fifty cents over his normal raise-up fee, because Sonny Cort’s father had been dead more than two years which meant Suede would have to use all the powers he had to get the spirits stirring in a man dead this long.

“You’d better be tellin’ the truth ‘bout bein’ able to rise him up, Suede McCullough. You just damned well better be able to do what you said you could do!” Sonny was wiping the tears of anger and frustration from his eyes. All the time he had been out in the fields working to save up the dollar, he had dreamed of this day, when he could afford having Suede McCullough by his father’s grave, the two of them watching while the ground cracked and his father’s bald head came breaking through from below like a chicken from the egg. That’s how Sonny always envisioned it as he worked through those hot summer afternoons—like a chick crackin’ through the shell of an egg.

“He’s been dead a long time, Sonny. I can’t help that. I just got

to put out more powers on him is all. Stand back and let me use *this* one."

Suede didn't have any more chants or prayers or curses left, but he knew that Sonny would want his moneysworth whether he knew or not what was going on.

"LORD OF THE LANDS BELOW, GIVE US BACK THE BODY AND SOUL OF OUR BROTHER TULLY CORT WHO CAME TO LIVE WITH YOU DOWN THERE ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO. I HAVE CRACKED THE MAGIC EGGS, DRANK THE SACRED JUICES, AND SAID ALL THE MAGIC CURSES YOU DOWN THERE REQUIRE. I HAVE DONE MY PART IN THE BARGAIN AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR YOU DOWN THERE TO DO YOURS!"

"But you said that one, or one just like it before. About those eggs and things!"

"No, no, stupid. That was just my preparation for this one that I just did. This one was the all-out one that you do after all the other prayers haven't done nothin'. This one was the THUNDER CURSE."

And even now, even when he thoroughly doubted Suede's powers, Sonny inadvertently looked up at the sky, cowering, fearful that a bolt would follow the imprecation.

"Repeat after me, Sonny Cort. 'Fire and Lightning!'"

"Fire and Lightning!"

"Moon, sun and stars!"

"Moon, sun and stars!"

"Bring us our friend from the Lands of the Far!"

"Bring us our friend from the Lands of the Far!"

Nothing.

"It don't work. It don't work. You didn't do it. I want my dollar back!"

Suede had spent the dollar a week ago, as Sonny already knew. He had brought two chickens, some sorghum, and smoking tobacco. Even then the bill came to \$1.08.

"I'm sorry, Sonny, but I don't have your money anymore. You know I already spent it last week after you gave it to me."

"I don't care what you did. I want my dollar back!"

A little angry now at the boy's resistance to the facts, Suede shrugged and began taking off his robes.

"If you don't give me my dollar back . . . If you don't give me my dollar . . . then I want those robes of yours 'til you do!"

EVEN SONNY WAS SURPRISED at this demand, but on second thought he liked the idea. Naturally, Suede was horrified. Without his robes he was just like anyone else. The robes

had brought him to the position of prominence he now held in the community, and it had taken three years of hard work in the fields for him to save up enough money to finally go back to the store in Atlanta where he had originally seen and fallen in love with the robes.

"Don't be stupid, Sonny. Nobody can wear these robes but me." He thought that a little terror added to the argument wouldn't hurt.

"Anyway, anyone who puts these robes on without knowing what he's doing is in for the curses and pains of hell!"

But Sonny was unmoved.

"I ain't scared of them. They can't have that many powers if they couldn't bring my Daddy back up! You'd better give me them robes or I'll tell the Sheriff on you and then he'll throw you in jail! I'll tell him that you said you'd rise my Daddy for a dollar but you didn't and then you went and spent the money anyways. I'll tell, Suede, I swear to God I will!"

Suede hated the thought of going to jail even more than he did giving up the robes for a while. He could always get them back from the kid for a measly dollar, but if his clients were to find out that he was in jail, he'd never be able to hold his head up in town again. He looked at Sonny with defeat in his eyes, especially when he saw the look of conquest in the little boy's. There was nothing else he could do.

"All right, Pint-Size, I'll give you the robes, but you got to give 'em back to me as soon as I get your freakin' dollar, right?"

"W-e-l-l, *maybe* I will . . ."

Suede grabbed the boy by the back of the neck and squeezed hard.

"Yeeeee, Suede, I'll do it! I'll do it! Let go!"

Suede let go and then started taking off the robes.

"And another thing you can't do—if you tell anybody how you got these, meaning the fact that I didn't come through with your Daddy's raising up, if you ever tell anybody that, I'll kick your ass good. You understand? You'd better!"

"Why shouldn't I? Now you're going to start cheating other people out of *their* money by telling them the same thing you told me you were going to do with my Daddy. Why shouldn't I warn them that you don't have the power to do that?"

"I'm just taking the item off my list. Does that satisfy you now, Stupid? I ain't going to try anymore raisin' ups after this, alright? So just don't tell anyone about it and we'll forget the whole thing."

"Don't forget my dollar!"

"No, dummy, I won't forget your dollar. You think I'd let you keep hold of my robes for a stinkin' *dollar*?"

Why the hell had he ever taken on the job? He knew from the be-

ginning that he'd never be able to do it. Pride, he had to say. After counselling so many people on their marriages, giving tonics of water, salt, vinegar and tannis root that always seemed to work on people's aches, and bringing animals back from near-dead, in a fit of jealousy he had added the "Raise-Up" item to his list several weeks before. People weren't really surprised by it. Most of them had enough confidence in Suede to believe that he could do almost anything, including resurrecting. No one died between the time he added the item to his list and the arrival of Sonny Cort, so there had been no problem. More than anything else, Suede liked having the item on his list just because it was a good draw. He felt that anyone who had something as strong as that on his list of cures had to be either damned good or crazy. And that was exactly how most of the other people felt about it. Whenever they'd come to Suede for a cure from the arthritis all they'd have to do would be to take a look at the list, see that one at the top, and even before he had given them anything for a cure, they'd feel better already. What was a little pain in the hands as compared to needing help because you were dead?

That plus Suede's previous record of successes made them feel more often than not that they were in good hands.

HOUND DOG LUKES was the first to see the Cort boy when he came walking into town. He jumped down from his rocking chair and ran inside to tell his wife.

"Justine? Justine, I told you it would happen one of these days. That black magic Suede McCullough's been practicing's went and backfired on him. I just saw him walkin' down the street, robes and all, except now he's done changed into Tully Cort's boy!"

Justine came running out of the kitchen, still drying her hands from the breakfast dishes. Pushing a curtain aside, she just caught the rear end of the robed boy as he walked past their house towards town.

"Get down on your knees, Lester. Get down on your knees and pray to God that He don't burn our eyes out for having seen such a terrible sight! Oh God, it's just like in *The Exorcist!*"

The same thing happened in almost every house Sonny Cort passed on his way to town. Fortunately none of the people went out of their minds or killed themselves, but some came close.

Sonny only became aware of it when he got into town and saw that nobody was there to ask him how he had gotten hold of Suede McCullough's robes. He looked for his gang in the alleys where they always hung out, but today no one was there. When he walked up the stairs to the stationery store where he could always find somebody hanging around, reading a magazine or having a soda,

he heard a voice from inside scream out "STAY AWAY FROM HERE, DEVIL! WE ALL LOVE GOD IN HERE!"

He recognized the voice as Mr. Yancey's, the store's owner.

"Mr. Yancey? It's me, Sonny Cort!"

"I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, SUEDE! GET THE HELL AWAY!"

"No, not Suede; me, Sonny Cort!"

"Get out!"

Bewildered and a little frightened, Sonny ran out in the street, tripping once over the robes. The first thing he focused on once he got there was the hardware store. He started walking towards it, but was greeted with almost the same reception as he'd gotten from Mr. Yancey, only this time he was threatened with the front end of a shotgun barrel sticking out one corner of the door to show him that those inside meant business.

"Go away, Suede Mc Cullough! You done enough damage!"

As he went from store to store, things got worse. He tried again and again to explain what had happened, but no one would believe him. They were all sure that Suede, by changing into the boy, had brought the change on by some kind of deal with the devil. No one was about to take chances now. Sonny was petrified. He wanted to go home but he knew that his mother, who didn't like him very much in the first place, now had the perfect reason for keeping him out of her house for good. That was why he wanted to bring his father back in the first place. He was really the only person who had ever been truly nice to Sonny.

In desperation, he stood in the middle of Main Street now and started screaming as loudly as he could "IT'S ME IN THESE ROBES, SONNY CORT! I AM NOT SUEDE MC CULLOUGH! HE JUST GAVE ME THESE ROBES 'TIL HE COULD GET ME BACK MY DOLLAR 'CAUSE HE COULDN'T RAISE MY DADDY UP FROM THE DEAD, THAT'S ALL. IT'S ME, SONNY, UNDER THESE THINGS!"

The only answer he got was a shotgun blast over his head and a chorus of "GO AWAY!" so he knew the only thing he could do now was to go back to Suede and tell him everything, with the hope that he might know some way to take care of the mess.

Suede was sitting on a log in his underpants, thinking, when he heard the boy's sobs. Looking up, he saw him running, then tripping, getting up, running, and then tripping again. He was amazed at Sonny's endurance: he counted his falls at thirteen between the time he first looked up and when the boy was actually standing in front of him.

"Suede, what am I going to *do*?" Sonny demanded, the tears running down his cheeks as he told Suede the whole story. But as it

unfolded, Suede smiled more and more. Before Sonny finished, he had a plan, which, if it worked, would not only get him his robes back in grand style, but would also make business boom afterwards.

FOR THE SECOND TIME THAT DAY, Hound Dog Lukes jumped out of his chair and was yelling before he got into the house.

"He's back, Justine! He's back only this time he's ten feet tall!"

Sonny was heavy on Suede's shoulders, but the only thing he was worried about was whether or not the robes were long enough to cover both him and the boy completely.

"Walk slower, "Sonny whispered down into the robes, "I think I'm goin' to fall!"

"I'll bust your ass personally if you fall, kid. You better do *this* one right or they'll never let you back into town!" Suede whispered savagely.

They wobbled down the street while all eyes watched their every move.

"Here, Sonny, I'm goin' to stop here."

"Okay, Suede, I'm ready."

And because Suede had prepared him, Sonny didn't weave too much when his lower half stopped moving. They stood stock-still for several seconds, and then Suede bent at the knees and both he and Sonny collapsed onto the ground with a whoosh of the billowing robes. At Suede's signal, both of them started throwing their bodies around and screaming as hard as they could.

"Let go of him, Devil!"

"I don't think it's loud enough, Suede!"

"LET GO OF HIM DEVIL! LET GO OF HIM, I TELL YOU!"

"Lord, Suede McCullough's wrestlin' with the devil!"

"God bless him. God bless Suede McCullough!"

"LET LOOSE OF THAT BOY, SATAN!"

Locked in each other's arms so they wouldn't flap the robes up in the air so much, Suede and Sonny knew they had it made now. But with the sounds of their bodies flopping around and their shouts and curses—Suede had Sonny yell for his soul after they had paused for a minute—neither of them heard the sound of the afternoon Greyhound bus coming through town on its way to Decatur. The driver saw the moving pile and thought there was a bunch of cats going at it underneath.

"Goddamn cats. I *hate* them damn things!" he said as he veered to run over the writhing pile.

As one, the townspeople gasped again when they saw slow movements under the now tire-marked pile. Finally emerging, Suede, still in his underpants, half-staggered, fell, and then

crawled the rest of the way to the curb. Several seconds later, Sonny started wailing as soon as he realized that he wasn't dead. Then he threw off the robes with a violent toss, as if they were on fire, and scrambled as fast as he could towards the curb and Suede.

The people started coming out of their stores and houses in droves. Having just witnessed two consecutive miracles, they wanted a close-up view of the participants. On their way over, someone picked up the robes and held them reverently to his chest. Then he walked over to Suede and placed them gently on his lap.

He looked down at the robes and then at the boy who, though still red-faced, had stopped crying now and was looking at them too.

"Jesus Christ," Suede mumbled to himself, disgustedly.

"A—men!" someone said.

Hold Your Fire

BENJY GRIFFITH

On Friday afternoons they meet
in the parking lot of Yancey's Bar and Grill,
lean against 4-wheel-drive pick-ups,
squeeze fists full of soft tin,
wag cigarettes from the corner of lips
curled like the lids of sardine cans.

They huddle around the punch line
like well-bred cousins,
shuffle backwards to howl
and grab their crotches as if
mama had warned them that Sherman or his blood
might be back for those, too.

With fish-colored eyes,
they squint glances at passing cars,
sight suspicious colors of license plates,
clear the depths of their throats,
and hold the spit on the tips of their tongues
until they see the whites of their eyes.

Introduction

TOM OTT

Leaning back from your beer and sausage,
mustard breath hot as your fat cigar,
you gauged my length and squinted satisfaction.

So we put on the pillow-sized gloves,
legged over the low back fence,
me first,
and prepared to dance in the alleyway.

I was light, quick, sharp with the season's sass;
bobbing, jabbing, rolling my head,
making windmills with outstretched arms like
flashy club fighters of church halls.

You stood with arms folded,
the gloves like two balloons on your chest.

I would be careful, though, remembering
how always my neck arched when we spoke;
how your quick laughter broke all over me as
one big hand squeezed roughly at my shoulder.
How at McGinty's taproom you winked my mother to
the Lady's Entrance and pulled me with you
through the black-hinged door, sat me on a wooden stool
and told stories how your brother never bought
a beer but won 'em all at the dart board—
"That curly haired bastard was the best," you said,
"it all came to him like honey from the pot"—
and then bought a round for all the nodding heads.
"And this 'eres Tom's boy," you said,
"spit right from 'is mouth."
Old keeper, even as you hauled me by the jacket back
from the street corner I thought to own,
your mouth set hard against my puppet strut,
I dreamed the day our eyes would meet level.

Slowly I circled to your weak right hand,
just as you had taught me; held ready my jab
and went up on my toes, prepared
to slip under a looping left.
What surprise as you took one flat step
drilled home the news and a bloody nose.

About War

EVE DAVIS

HALFWAY THROUGH LUNCH Richard began his lecture again.

"Anyone who goes to Europe this summer is crazy," he said, his eyes accusing her behind their glasses. "Anyone who goes to Germany this summer is aiding their war effort. How can you?"

Kathy wished that Jay were there to answer that question. He had been invited, but he declined, saying he had too much to do before they caught the boat.

And now Richard was spoiling her lunch, joggling her conscience, trying to make her feel guilty. He'd been reading, she thought resignedly, those articles on Nazi Germany again, devouring the newsreels, listening to lectures and here he was, condemning her because she wanted to see Europe, just once, before it went up in flames. Richard's phrase, not hers. She admitted to herself the remote possibility that it might go up in flames (she wasn't *that* blind) but what on earth was wrong with her wanting to see it before it was lost forever?

Perhaps it was time to remind him that once he had been in love with her, and maybe still was. "You want too much of me. You always did," she said, and gave him a lovely smile, hoping to lure him from what, she thought, was fast becoming an obsession.

But Richard was not to be lured. "No. No, I don't. Only to realize . . . to care. Is that asking too much of you, of any of us, safe here, out of danger?"

She let resentment erase the lovely smile. "I care as much as anyone. But until . . . until . . . Well, Jay and I have planned this trip for a long time. Afterwards . . ."

She did not say what she intended to do afterwards, but it would be, she was convinced, as compassionate as even Richard himself could wish. Meanwhile, this conversation was verging on a quarrel, and Kathy never quarrelled with anyone, certainly not with the men who paid her the compliment of falling in love with her. Escape was the answer. Before her marriage she had always resorted to escape if a quarrel with a man in her life seemed imminent. So now she settled her hat more firmly on her head, dipping a corner of it over one eye and thereby shutting one half of

Richard out of her vision, gathered up her gloves and purse and prepared to escape.

This time escape was harder what with Richard not three feet away from her, hammering away, nailing her with accusing eyes. She tried not to get angry with his neat omniscience. A year or so ago, he'd predicted Franco's victory even as he berated himself for not joining the Loyalists. If he felt that strongly about it, why hadn't he gone? And here he was again, Cassandra on the walls, wringing his hands and foretelling war and heaven knows what else. But, she told herself, he couldn't be right *all* the time.

"I just don't think there's going to be a war. Jay doesn't either. Can't we go and *see*? What harm is there in that? We're not going to spend much money in Germany. Well, maybe," she looked down at her plate, "enough for them to buy a bolt or a screw for one of their planes. I can't see our going is worth all this talk."

Richard looked aghast, no doubt, she thought, multiplying one bolt by ten thousand tourists and coming up with one complete plane, but all he said was: "You're riding straight into the eye of the hurricane. You're aiding a criminal regime. Your going to Germany is criminal," he finished, sorrowfully triumphant tying it all into a neat package.

"Oh Richard," Kathy said and stood up, dying to end this melodramatic conversation and get back to Jay.

TROUBLED, UNEASY, she told him what Richard had said, but Jay only laughed and said that he himself lacked the imagination to care about a squabble three thousand miles away. "Richard's an alarmist," he assured her.

"It's only a squabble?" she asked but knew as she asked that it was more, much more.

They finished packing that night. Exhausted, Kathy lay back on the bed and twirled a large pink felt hat on her finger, wondering whether to take it on the trip, knowing it was wildly impractical, unable to resist it. She put off the decision and let her eyes rest on Jay, thinking, not for the first time, how lucky she was, following as she had some blind instinct for doing what was right, to have married Jay who could have been her twin, they looked so much alike. It was almost as though she had fallen in love with herself. They were good-looking people, she and Jay, with the careless sure manner that handsome people assume, sometimes, from birth. Only, and she did not begrudge him the edge, Jay was, perhaps, a shade more handsome; the nose, thin, arched, ascetic, that became a man so well, was a trifle large for a woman's face. Kathy was amusedly aware of her one questionable attribute, but she was also aware of her other attributes that more than compensated for the

nose. If she thought about her looks, which to be fair, she seldom did, she rather cherished her nose, much as she might have been fond of a lop-sided smile or a slightly crooked eyebrow. It lent piquancy and interest to what otherwise could have been boring perfection.

And, as if such a remarkable resemblance were not enough, Kathy believed that she and Jay shared the same attributes and reactions and feelings. He said once, although Kathy might easily have said it, "I suppose we're superficial," and laughed. Kathy, laughing back, agreed, although she didn't particularly like hearing the word spoken aloud and no, she wouldn't have said it. It had such a naked, selfish sound.

Say, rather, that they had a talent for optimism, for treading warily around unpleasant situations, for expecting the best to happen. So far, it always had. They denied shadows and their philosophy worked. There was no reason that it should keep working. Although things, quite terrible things, kept happening to their friends—Leukemia, the amputation of a leg, suicide—these misfortunes raged around them like a tempest. Once, discussing their miraculous immunity, Jay said, "You remember that picture in your mother's living room . . . the one of the lovers fleeing before the storm? We're like that."

Kathy thought of the impossibly pretty couple, poised on tip-toe, with the storm clouds at their backs, keeping a discreet distance. The girl was wearing some kind of a diaphanous night-gown, Kathy remembered. Irritated, she answered: "Don't compare us to those two. It's such bad art. Besides, I've got a better figure."

Jay had only smiled.

Now, plopping the pink hat on her head, she asked in a spurt anxiety, "Tell me the truth. There won't be a war, will there?"

Jay looked at her pleading eyes. "Absolutely not," he said. He paused. "And if there is, we'll beat it home. Like the lovers."

He made it sound like an agreement with fate, and so they went. Richard did not come to New York to see them off on the boat.

THE BREMEN DOCKED AT BREMERHAVEN, and Kathy stepped on German soil sturdily determined to be enchanted with her first foreign land. But when the customs man passed them through with a pleasant smile and said "Heil Hitler," pawing the air, she froze and stared at him with disbelief. Then, "Good morning," she said firmly, looking him square in the eye; behind her, she heard Jay chuckle.

"Why are you so outraged?" he asked. "Richard told you. You've read about it. You knew it existed."

She did not answer. Even to her, the answer would have sounded childish.

Kathy wrote to her mother that she and Jay liked Germany. "We don't see any signs of war. I just don't think there's going to be one," she wrote, neglecting to mention that they had just arrived in Nuremberg two days after a gigantic political rally, where the reviewing stands had not yet been taken down, where the Nazi banners still moved in the breeze. "And the speeches, they were wonderful," said their waiter in his careful English. No, they saw nothing to disturb them (one soon became used to the prevalence of uniforms, of troop trains sidetracking passenger trains for hours at a time). No, not on the wide boulevards of Berlin, nor in Dresden where they went to the opera, nor in Munich where they drank beer in the Hofbrauhaus. But one night Kathy confessed she was disappointed in Germany and wanted to leave before they completed their itinerary there.

"Is it because of what Richard said?" Jay asked, and Kathy admitted that perhaps he had spoiled it for her. Or maybe those children had. She and Jay had been walking down a little obscure street in Berlin, one morning, half-lost but unworried, when a crowd of little boys passed them, stopped and clapped their hands over their noses. One screamed, "*Jude, Jude,*" and then they all laughed and ran away. Did her nose appear larger since she had stopped wearing lipstick?, she wondered. German women, as far as she could see, did not wear it, and they stared at her when she did. Or maybe they were staring at her nose. Or was it because there were not many American tourists in Germany that summer? Whatever the reason, she wanted to leave. She had developed a . . . not a pain, precisely . . . but a feeling in her back. Perhaps it was a cold. For she hadn't liked the feeling of being smothered in the down-filled quilts that the little hotels offered; she slept on top of them . . . and, yes, it was a cold in the small of her back. A cold that felt exactly like a firm hand pushing her, pushing them out of Germany and into Budapest.

KATHY LOST HER HEARING on the flight, and for the first half hour in the airport in Budapest she could not hear a word. Isolated by her deafness, she stood off from the bustle and studied the uniforms of the officials who mouthed silent smiling words at her, falling in love with all of them because their uniforms were so scarlet and happy and relaxed. In Budapest it appeared that the man held up the uniform, not the uniform the man. Jay busied himself with the luggage, and since she could be of no help, she considered uniforms and recalled the blond young

German lieutenant whom she and Jay had observed in the dining car of the train that carried them to Munich. Encased in two shades of gray, he had sat stiffly, erectly, in his seat by the window, and where the uniform began and the man ended, Kathy could not have said. They were one, with the uniform slightly predominant. Precise and incredibly dexterous, the man (or the uniform) had peeled an orange with a knife and fork. Not once did his fingers touch the orange. The sight unnerved and worried her and she didn't know why. "Perhaps," she whispered to Jay, "it's his self-confidence. Do you realize that half the dining car is looking at him, if not full on, at least sideways? I'm praying the orange will hop off the plate and land on the floor. It would for me."

"Forget it," Jay said.

Now, in Budapest, he shouted in Kathy's ear, "It looks like a wonderful city. I'll bet there's no war talk here."

There wasn't, and Count Totossy, the owner of the *pension* where they were to live looked amazed that anyone should bother to mention it. "War?" Of course, no war. Unless," he looked merry and plump and arch, "you consider the changing of the guard at the War Ministry. That is all the war we have. You will let me escort you there tomorrow, please? Also," he threw an appreciative glance at Kathy, "we will dance tonight on St. Margaret's Island."

"He goes too fast for me," Kathy complained in the privacy of their room. "I don't want to spend all our time here with him and his crowd. Besides, what's a count doing, running this little hotel?" Kathy had never met a count before and took it for granted that they all owned feudal estates with private art galleries and herds of deer flashing through the woods.

"Snob," Jay said, amused. "Even counts may fall on hard times. Other people do, you know."

And Kathy, suddenly reminded that she and Jay were exempt from disaster, capitulated and said that of course they would go dancing with the count and anyone else he chose to invite.

St. Margaret's Island floated on the river between the two cities, festooned with lights, linked by bridges. They met the count's friends on the terrace of the hotel where they were to dance, and it seemed to Kathy and Jay that they had stepped into a fairy tale. Stars glittered in a black sky, the gypsy orchestra played, everyone danced. There was not much conversation. There couldn't be . . . the Count spoke only a little English, his friends none at all, and Jay's French was rudimentary. As for Kathy . . . what beautiful woman needed to talk?, the count asked fatuously. He and his friends were content to admire her, to dance with her, to pelt her with compliments she couldn't understand. And everyone drank wine and danced until morning.

They stayed in Budapest a week. Kathy said she could stay forever and why not, she asked, with dancing every evening, swimming every afternoon and not a hint of war? Sometimes they visited museums or castles, but always the day ended with dancing on the terrace and wine and laughter. The cold in Kathy's back had disappeared altogether.

"Perhaps I should have been born a Hungarian," she said to Pam, an English girl married to a Hungarian, the only person Kathy had been able to talk with all that week.

"Hungarian?" Pam repeated with a vicious snap to the word. "Are you joking? They're impossible. I married one, and I can tell you . . ." She broke off, shrugged and lapsed into silence. "But I do know this," she went on after a moment, "if there's a war, I'm going home to England."

There it was, the word that had disappeared for a whole week. Kathy could have sworn that neither she nor Jay had thought about it, nor, he said when Kathy questioned him that night, did any of the men in Count Totossy's crowd mention it.

Jay's French had been growing steadily better. He was rather smug about it. ("Can I help it if I'm a natural born linguist?")

"What *do* you talk about with them?" Kathy asked, curiously.

"Tonight, about some festival in the country. The peasants are bringing in the harvest now, and it's quite a sight. They want us to go with them. Shall we?"

He was deferring to her, but he wanted to go. She could tell. But suddenly she went to the clothes closet and took out a suitcase. "It's time," she said. "Let's pack tonight." The pressure, like a hand, was on her back again.

They decided to travel by bus so that they could see, close up, the countryside, and all their new friends appeared, sorrowing and bewildered at their abrupt departure, at the bus station. They came, bearing small bottles of Tokay and magazines in Hungarian and bouquets of flowers that soon drooped and were tossed to staring peasants along the roadside.

"But you'll come back?" cried Count Totossy and all the others.

"We'll be back!" But the odds were, and everyone knew it, they would never come back.

THEY ARRIVED IN PARIS and Jay decreed that the first thing they had to see were the stained glass windows of the Sainte-Chapelle. But when they arrived at the chapel workmen were taking the stained glass out of the windows and packing it away in boxes. "They're afraid of bombs," Jay reported to Kathy after he had talked to one of the men. They looked at the empty windows for a moment and then went back to the Left Bank where

they had found a room. But they lived, really, in a sidewalk cafe, leaving it only to snatch briefly a cathedral, the opera, the book-stalls. They were, they told each other, tired of sight-seeing. And so they sat outside the *Café Flore* with a ring of newly acquired friends, all Americans, drinking beer and arguing loudly, far into the night, while the traffic of the city rumbled by them. Kathy called it "being American tourists" when their voices grew too loud and people stared at them. Everyone talked war. There was no escaping it, and Kathy became inured to the sound of the word and could even nod enthusiastically when someone said that the French soldiers had *élan* which, of course, would insure their winning the war that was coming fast.

Then, when the talk died down, when dawn was near, they left the cafe, the last to go, and tumbled back to their hotel, just around the corner, to sleep late into the morning. As the days passed, they slept later and later, arising sometimes in the late afternoon, going to the cafe immediately and staying until it closed. Their ring of friends was growing smaller. They were going home, and they all had good excuses for leaving: classes were starting, money was getting low, or, it was just time, that was all.

"How about us?" Jay asked.

The pressure on Kathy's back had become constant and painful, but she turned stubborn and said, "We planned to stay a month . . . we're going to stay a month."

Then came a certain night in August and Kathy, studying the quiet street from their table, asked a question. "What's become of all the taxicabs?" How long had they been gone? Why hadn't she noticed before?

The instructor from Rutgers answered, "Didn't you know? They've all been commandeered for the Maginot Line."

Everyone laughed, but Kathy's eyes sought Jay's. "It's time," she said. They got up from the table and with casual goodbyes that held no hint of finality they left the cafe to go back to their room and pack. Jay protested a little. "That happened in World War I," he said. "It won't happen again."

Kathy said that it might be a strange reason for leaving, but it was time for them to go. She felt it in her bones, she said, and smiled but there was a twinge of frenzy in the way she threw dirty shirts in with the clean ones, in the way she discarded maps and brochures that ordinarily she would have insisted on keeping as souvenirs.

SO, THEN, ENGLAND and they had two unwanted weeks to kill before they could sail for home, two weeks to ignore the barrage balloons floating over their heads. The trick was to spend

that time not looking up, the trick was to spend that time, to cram it, with sightseeing, but sometimes it seemed to Kathy that there was no one but themselves examining the pictures in the galleries, or floating down to Hampton Court or walking along the Embankment. They were alone, encapsulated to their aloneness. "Where," Kathy asked one day, "are the people?"

They found them one afternoon, a large portion of them, at least, standing in silence outside the Houses of Parliament, waiting. Kathy and Jay joined them, but they were not really part of the crowd; they were observers, detached, eager to desert as soon as those two interminable weeks had been accomplished. Whether or not Germany marched into Poland was none of their affair.

One week left to go. On one of the last mornings Jay left Kathy alone while he did some errands. When he had not returned by noon she decided to go for a walk. But in a few minutes, dazed and incredulous, she was back in their room, a newspaper in her hand. She sat on the edge of the bed reading the headlines over and over. Then she lay back, still in her hat and coat, to stare at the ceiling and whisper, "I want to go home. I want to go home." It was an incantation, repeated over and over; it finally sent her into a nightmarish doze and when she awakened from it fifteen minutes later it was to see Jay standing by the bed looking down at her.

She sat up, holding out her arms to him, and let the pink felt hat fall from her head. "The Admiralty's taken over our ship for a troop ship. We can't go home. Oh, Jay," she said with a wavering smile, "we didn't flee fast enough. We cut it too fine. What shall we do?"

He managed a firmer smile. "Find another ship as fast as we can and get out of this . . . this . . ." his hand consigned all of Europe to the fate he had denied until now.

And their fabulous luck held fast.

ALMOST IMMEDIATELY they found passage on a ship leaving from Liverpool the next afternoon. That evening found them boarding a train in the company, it seemed, of half the children of England, who were being herded to safety in the countryside. But it was not the faces of the children that Kathy searched. She found herself scanning the adults who led them, the men and women who held them firmly together in compact groups.

"I think . . . you won't believe this . . . but I think I saw Richard, there, leading some of the children," Kathy said, tugging at Jay's sleeve.

"You're dreaming," he answered, harassed, laden down with their luggage, trying to move forward in a sea of people.

He was right, of course, but might that not be Richard, that

soldier disappearing into the train, his face half turned away, a pack on his narrow shoulders?

"Richard!" she screamed, but the name was lost amidst other voices calling names, too, in escaping steam and the clangor of bells.

Jay said only, "Oh, for God's sake," and they pushed on.

The next morning, walking up the gangplank of their ship, she noticed that the pain in her back had disappeared entirely. Since Paris it had been her constant companion, her familiar, clawing the space between her shoulders, gnawing, digging deeply, as though an untamed ravenous animal were intent on reaching her breastbone or her heart. Now it was gone, leaving her in such ecstatic absence of pain that she didn't even mind, not too much, when Jay told her that they had been assigned to different cabins, he to bunk with a group of men, she to cabin with women and children. The ship was overloaded. People would sleep where they could.

"It's all right, it's all right," she said impatiently. What did it matter where they slept if they were safe and going home? Ah, if they would only pull up the gangplank and start, start, start.

But they *were* safe. "Oh, look," she said, smiling, and pointed towards a group of little girls who had found a quiet place on deck and were skipping rope. What a normal sane thing to do amidst such chaos, she thought, and what were they chanting? She strained to hear.

*Charlie Chaplin went to France
To teach the ladies how to dance.
Right foot first and a jump between,
Turn and bow to the submarine.*

"Submarine" she questioned. "Submarine?" In protest, in terror, she cried out, "But how can they know about submarines? The word can't be in their vocabularies. It's barely in mine. How do they *know*?"

Jay said he couldn't imagine and what did it matter and he'd better find his cabin and grab a bunk before they were all taken. She stood alone and barely noticed his going. The pain had come back. For a few blessed moments she had been free of it, but now, having clawed its way to its goal, it subsided into a poignant ache which could be endured but from which, she knew, she would never be free. The ache, she thought, analyzing it, recognizing it, was an instructor, directing her eyes to certain groups of people, like the children skipping rope, like that crowd of women huddled together on a hatch cover, shawls covering their heads, lumpy sacks at their feet. They might easily have been the peasant

women to whom she had thrown flowers in Hungary. Now one of them lifted her head to look at Kathy, and slowly, languorously, her arm reached out in silent appeal, like that of a drowning woman; then it drifted down into her lap, and her head drooped, but not before Kathy's arm, drowning, too, extended an answer.

The Story of Coal

JEFF SCHIFF

I could begin
the story of wood, here,
trying to build a tree.
But the leaves would ignore it.
Make from the ash-trunk,
a boat. And the sea
swelling upon its prow
would declare hardship.

Maybe, as wood goes,
we will all be stone.
And any time the heart
sets out for water,
the phosphor tide,
a wave of lignite
would become our brow.

Yes, I could
begin the story of diamond, now,
pick-axe in hand.
But the dust-coal, lusterless,
would burn a different answer
lucid into night.

The Fireworks

KATHY MANGAN

*I hope they don't go boom
right where my heart is.*

—Andrea

Here on the Northern bank
of the Ohio River I look up
and see you under constellations
of stringed lights in Mexico.

Missing you is like waiting
for explosions. My blood
runs its nervous loops: a fuse
burns back to my heart.

The crowd sends up a sigh
as sparks shower down like
chips of ice, then suddenly
black out over the water.

Perhaps you are alone, or not
alone; my hands are empty,
full only of the hands
of two borrowed children.

These children quiver
at my thighs, making their fear
a ritual, just as I make
a ceremony of my longing.

I live this wide season
without you, and remain
at the edge of dark water, under
a spray of false stars.

Garrett's "Faustus the Monster" (Autumn) dispelled my bias there. In this issue, Jonathan Carroll's story is the tall story in regional idiom I thought could no longer be written in our day. The healthier one's sense that a good story is a good story, the greater the advantage—and I'm grateful to the writer who makes me expand my horizons. Maybe someday I'll read the jogging-as-metaphor story that works. (God knows I see enough in that genre!)

Equally broadening for me is how reading our submissions makes my literary sense work backwards as well as forwards. Stories seem to come in batches, historically speaking: "Flannery O'Connor" stories, "Fitzgerald" stories, "Cheever" stories. These masters of our time have their followers. As is inevitable: how could anyone today with ambitions as a writer not practically feel them in his bones? It must even be discouraging at times to know that one is competing with such people, in some sense.

In one way, it's an advantage for an editor/teacher to see just who of the masters of the past is riding high on the literary stock market. But that advantage does have its limits; and trying to state those limits may perhaps in turn be of advantage to writers. A good story, I think, takes note—consciously—of its ancestry. It is what in terms of the personal and contemporary the authors adds to his source that is of value and makes or breaks a story's effectiveness. It's easy to locate extreme examples of the unconscious absorption of sources. An acquaintance of mine, an aspiring screenwriter, keeps coming up with ideas that have already been done and doesn't even see that he has to at least add something in style or substance. Recently I read a story that was a step-by-step condensation of a famous novel by a practically inimitable writer (Vladimir Nabokov). I'm certainly not saying that such cases are commonplace. And no one expects writers to be critics or literary historians. But I do think that more consciousness of where a literary tradition or influence ends and where one's own gifts and perceptions begin is necessary for effective writing. Too many writers make the mistake of, to use a colleague's term, "reinventing the McCormick Reaper"—and do so quite unconsciously. When I have to reject a story because it has not faced the problem of expressing an idea in its appropriate form and instead has fallen back on an accepted form, I feel particularly disadvantaged, despite the intellectual dividend of knowing Who's on Top.

Of course this problem isn't unique to contributors to *Four Quarters*, writers for literary magazines, or even writers in the '70s. The whole post-war literary scene suffers from it, and I feel particular sympathy for serious writers of this era. It's a measure of our problems these days that I feel embarrassed even to mention our ailments: the "Me generation," the information explosion, the emergence of the writer as public performer, the ever-increasing tide

of fads and manias that engulfs us. We all know about these things, but somehow our knowledge of these truths binds us rather than sets us free.

Paradoxes abound. We're told to express ourselves. And we sure do express. But is it ourselves we're giving voice to? How can we know when we're inundated with styles, both literary and social? As I mentioned, I've been knee-deep in running stories of late. Everyone is convinced that running is a metaphor for something—but nobody seems to know what for. (So far—knock wood, on the whole, I'm sure—I've been spared the disco story. But what's "Saturday Night Fever" if not Clifford Odets warmed over with blinking lights, that is, a perfect example of our current inability to separate old ideas from new?). Television and paperback books are spreading trends and styles like wildfire. But maybe as writers and lovers of writing we're getting burned. I'm sure writers are having more and more difficulty isolating, savoring, and consciously and deliberately selecting what they find of advantage in other writers to blend with what they have. None of us these days has a lot of perspective on what's going on inside or outside ourselves. The more we know, the less able we seem to use it.

*So a lot of us fall back on style. After all, we've certainly been schooled in it over the last couple of generations. And not just by popular culture. Twenty years separate two vastly overrated novels I've looked at lately. When James Gould Cozzens's *By Love Possessed* was published in 1957 it was regarded by many as the last work in artistry and disinterested reflection on the condition of American Society. Stylistically and technically it still comes across as the work of a meticulous craftsman. But that's all it is: not far under the prose style, symbols, etc. lie all too obviously the clichés of middle class America—the anti-Semitism, the condescension toward blacks, the supremacy of property, etc. The Jamesian sentence structure is ultimately revealed as ludicrously inappropriate to the stereotypes Cozzens so unquestioningly accepts. The author who stakes too much on style always ends up revealing his inferior substance—or sometimes even the lack of substance. The chips ultimately come down.*

*In the '60s a far different set of accepted ideas did little or nothing to slow the displacement of substance by style. (Did anyone finish John Barth's *Giles Goat Boy*? *Catch 22* has literally no substance at all). In 1978 Mary Gordon's *Final Payments* is a routine rehash of women's themes and Catholic guilt; the sprightly, contrastive style Gordon writes in at the outset turns out to be inappropriate to her unthought-out ideas; even she has to abandon it after a while. But not before we've seen through it.*

Still, despite the tendency of many writers to think they're say-

ing something just by mentioning Adidas shoes or English products (what a world of flummery "Upstairs, Downstairs" has created!), there's hope. A writer like Toni Morrison achieves an impressive fusion of style and substance in A Song of Solomon; John Cheever's collected stories (the book of this and many years) bears eloquent testimony to the ability of a post-war writer to transform the local into the universal, with perfect appropriateness of expression.

And I see the hope in a lot of what I get in the mail: the output of men and women with visions of their own, indebted perhaps to the writers of the past and the atmosphere of the day, but never utterly dependent on them. It's interesting that many of these writers come from the academy. As the mentality of the commercial writer recedes into the self-conscious and the precious—formerly the (supposed) realm of the academic story-writer—the academic has in the last few years emerged from this hot-house world to meet the real world. Perhaps it's these who have the critical awareness of the kind I've been talking about. Wherever they come from, these writers who are really trying to merge style and content in a meaningful way provide the great advantage to the one who sits in the Catbird Seat.

JCK

Contributors

A familiar contributor, L.D. BRODSKY has published a new volume of poems called *Stranded in the Land of Transients*. JONATHAN CARROLL lives in Vienna and is working on a novel about "puppets, children's books, Bull Terriers, and Hollywood." EVE DAVIS, who enjoys meeting editors, lives in Boalsburg, Pa. ELLEN DOWLING teaches at Texas A&M; she's been active in acting and directing as well as drama scholarship. Her special interest is Tennessee Williams. BENJY GRIFFITH is a Ph.D. candidate at Florida State University; his field is Southern Culture. Having published widely in periodicals, KATHY MANGAN has a chapbook forthcoming: *Ragged Alphabet* (Rook Press). MARGARET RANDALL, another representative from foreign parts, lives in Havana; she's an authority on women in Cuba, as well as a poet and translator. TOM OTT has published in several journals and teaches at the Community College of Philadelphia. A high school teacher in Davenport, Iowa, TERRY SAVOIE conducts a poetry workshop at Marycrest College and recently took first place in the Mississippi Valley Poetry Contest. JEFF SCHIFF is in the English Department at the University of Texas, El Paso. ELEANOR SHIEL ZITO won the La Salle Poetry Medal for her elegy for Pier Paolo Pasolini, which appeared here Spring, 1977.

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