

## Four Quarters

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## Four Quarters (Second Series): Spring 1991 Vol. 5, No. 1

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## Table of Contents

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### QUARTER NOTES

Tamara Cornelison, <i>A Place of One's Own</i>	3-7
John Keenan, <i>Richard Lautz</i>	7-9
Jerry Johnson, "An Argument with John Donne"	9
Kelly Cherry, "Nobody's Fool"	10
Raymond Pentzell, <i>Beware of Geeks Bearing Grants</i>	11-20
Jane Sather, "Something of a Ghost Story"	20
Elizabeth Berlot, <i>Common Ground</i> (short story)	21-23
Bruce Thomas Boehrer, "Help Me Help Me Rondeau"	24
Jack Hart, "Midterm"	24
Robert Freedman, "Sunday Barber"	25
John Drexel, "A Last Resort"	26
Michael C. White, <i>Three Whacks a Buck</i> (short story)	27-34
Peter Desy, "Like Some Rivers"	35
Daniel Daly, "Camping in Northern Woods"	36
Claude Koch, <i>Prophetic Vision and the Writer</i>	37-41
David Sumner, "Returned"	42
"Aspects of Death"	43
A.F. Moritz, "What Luck, You Said"	44

Daniel C. Jones, <i>Trampoline</i> , (short story)	45-51
Barbara Crooker, "Writers' Colony"	52
Madelene Carr, <i>Marriage</i> , (short story)	53-58
Marin Sorescu, "About You"	58

#### BOOK MARKS

Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz III, and I. Milo Shepherd, ed. <i>The Short Stories of Jack London, The Authorized One-Volume Edition</i> . Reviewed by Kevin J. Harty	59-60
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## Quarter Notes

TAMARA S. CORNELISON

### *A Place of One's Own*

My first apartment was a second floor rear clutch of rooms and halfrooms that I rented in Philadelphia's Germantown section in the summer of '72. I was twenty-two years old, had graduated from college, had spent four months backpacking through Europe, had found gainful employment as a clerk at John Wanamaker's center city store. There, from a tiny office located behind the pianos on the eighth floor, I spent most of my days like a twentieth century Bartleby, penciling in on neatly graphed charts numbers of towels, bras, Rubbermaid dish racks, and Lenox china pieces that had been sold in the branch stores and from these penciled fables calculating reorder needs.

I had been living comfortably enough with my comfortable middle class parents in a comfortable twin house, a conservative household in a conservative neighborhood unblemished by and generally unaware of America's growing pains. The sixties had passed by me or had passed me by; I was neither politically nor sexually revolutionized, I had participated in no orgies and had never been arrested for demonstrating against the war in Vietnam. My only drug highs had come from too much caffeine or too many over the counter keep-awake pills popped during finals' week.

Getting the apartment was, I suspect, an act of rebellious desperation. I wanted a piece of the action before it disappeared. The neighborhood fascinated and repelled at once. Cheltenham Avenue in those days was a busy main artery, always dusty and noisy, but already showing signs of a neighborhood going slowly but inexorably to seed. The neighborhood stores that had weathered decades of change looked it. They were owned and operated by old men and women with old world accents, catering with impartiality to elderly ladies in wrist-length gloves and ragtag counter-culture types in patched jeans. Newer stores tried gallantly to inject a bohemian flavor into the area by calling themselves shoppes and enticing customers with free coffee. They sold plants and avant-garde literature and exotic teas, and then folded after the first flush of novelty had worn off. The owners packed up and relocated to Chestnut Hill or Ardmore.

Catty-corner from the apartment building was an old Victorian mansion that had been appropriated by a group of Hare Krishnas who wandered in and out in saffron robed splendor. I remember best the shaved heads of the males of the group who seemed equally oblivious to summer heat and winter cold; the women I remember not at all. The house inspired some awe and some annoyance: the scent of burning incense was vaguely pleasing, the five A.M. chanting and the jangle of tambourines were intrusive. Some months after I moved in, the house burned to the ground and the



## Quarter Notes

Hare Krishnas dispersed. Arson was suspected.

Directly across the street from the apartment building stood an old fashioned movie theater that had once been the pride of the neighborhood, an elegant structure that years before had boasted first-run showings of Hollywood's best. In the early seventies, the building reflected the shabbiness of its surrounding. The Hollywood legends no longer played on the screen; they had been replaced by a nameless succession of naked men and women, who groped and fondled one another in a plotless haze while the soundtrack urged them on with heavy breathing and uninspired dialogue.

My landlord was a mild-mannered if misguided racist, an elderly man who answered telephone queries about vacant apartments by asking if the caller was white. The other tenants in the building later told me that this habit had caused him frequent unpleasant confrontations with the American Civil Liberties Union and the NAACP, and that these confrontations led to fines and court costs which he paid without comment and without any thought of amending his telephone interviews with potential tenants. He never accepted checks, but would drop by on the first of every month to collect the rent owed him in cash.

My monthly rent was eighty-two dollars; that covered not only the space, but the utilities. The apartment was at the top of a steep, badly lit staircase; a long and superfluous hallway stretched

from just inside the door to the large living room which doubled as a bedroom. My eighty-two dollars entitled me to a closet, a bathroom, and a surprisingly large kitchen with a gas refrigerator with a pilot light that blew out frequently and sometimes defied relighting. In the winter it was easy enough to store my perishables on the window sill; in the summer things spoiled.

The apartment, like the neighborhood, had seen better days and was much in need of cleansing and new paint. I learned the hard way that white does not cover muddy pink, that the nine layers of wallpaper in the kitchen, each thick with glue and grease, had to be removed singly, that cat hair would adhere to any freshly painted surface forever.

The furnishings helped hide the flaws. Aside from the bed and nightstand I had brought with me, I acquired a number of mismatched book cases, a badly scratched coffee table, and a small kitchen set. There was also an overstuffed and ratty love seat with wobbly legs that collapsed at will beneath its own weight. Nothing matched. I hung a fake oriental rug on one wall, on another a rather splendid gift from my father: a dark wooden rod from which were suspended strings of lacquered peach pits. A portable record player, pink, was given to me by a center city lawyer with whom I hitched a ride from work one day. He thought hitchhiking was dangerous and made a habit of cruising Broad Street about the time I left work to save me from myself. I tried keeping plants for a while, but my two



## Quarter Notes

cats chewed the leaves of some and the rest died from too much or too little water.

The first people I met in the building were Tom and Diane, who lived in the second floor front apartment. They were also the first interracial couple I had ever known, and being befriended by them made me feel very hip and very liberal. Tom was a photographer, Diane did some type of social work, they both loved to cook and frequently invited me to dinner. My culinary skills extended to hotdogs and spaghetti, but I sometimes had them over for pizza. They filled me in on the landlord's peculiarities and on the trash collection schedules. Sometimes the three of us went to see films at the Bandbox Theater, which specialized in artsy foreign things that could be discussed and analyzed at leisure in the theater's basement coffee house.

There was only one apartment on the third floor, occupied by a very fat woman named Linda and a very thin man named Jack. Jack was in methadone treatment to fight his heroin addiction and drank a lot. Linda seemed to do very little except wait for Jack to come home from work every night. He was never home when she expected him and the homecoming ritual was always a community event. Whenever Jack was more than fifteen minutes late, Linda would begin pacing in their apartment. Fifteen minutes later she would come tromping down to the front door, pause briefly, turn around, and tromp back up the stairs. This exercise, occasionally punctuated by swearing and sobbing and threats to commit

suicide or murder or both, was repeated until he appeared. The old building rattled in protest against this abuse; the rest of us learned to live with it. When Jack did come home, a split second of silence was followed by a loud and blubbery where-the-fuck-have-you-been? As this was almost a nightly occurrence, Tom and Diane and I would mouth the words along on cue, as if rehearsing a play.

The first floor front was occupied by a quiet young man named Dennis. No one ever saw him leave the building, but between ten and twenty times a day he opened the front door of his apartment to admit a procession of unfamiliar people who stayed only a moment. Some brought bags that might have been filled with food. We all wondered if he was dealing dope.

First floor rear was occupied by an indeterminate number of people, dogs and a lone gray cat named Fremont. They were a boisterous and happy crew for the most part; when they drank, furniture and curses flew. One of the permanent residents of the apartment was a young woman named Molly, a very pretty and very Irish girl with seven brothers who all had names like Patrick, Xavier, and Joseph, and who worried that their sister was keeping bad company. Molly and I became good friends; she was exactly a year older than I, both of us sharing Jefferson Davis's June third birth date. She was an English teacher; I wanted to be a writer. We had empathy and sympathy for one another and drank a lot of cheap white wine together. When she had an abortion, I went with her to the





## Quarter Notes

clinic; when the poet I was besotted with unexpectedly married a woman I found stupid and ugly, she held my hand and cried with me.

Molly had a fine mutt named Johnson who had been blinded by a rock thrown by one of the neighborhood kids. His injured eye had been sewn shut by a veterinarian who said the optic nerves in dogs were connected and any infection in the blind eye could damage the healthy eye irreparably. After the operation, Johnson couldn't walk a straight line.

One summer day the three of us set out to Margate where Molly's parents had a beach house. The car died somewhere in the middle of New Jersey and we decided to hitchhike the rest of the way, worrying how we would manage to keep Johnson from getting killed on the highway. We had not thought to bring a leash and there was nothing to use for rope, so we tied our bikini tops together and took turns hauling the dog in and out of strange cars most of the afternoon until we reached Margate. Years later she married and had a baby and made jewelry which she and her husband sold at craft shows. I was invited to the baby shower.

First floor rear was also home to two Bulgarians who had left their own country on a whim, walking to the border and then across into Yugoslavia, then to Italy where they joined a traveling circus to make some money to get to England and then America. Stefan was a metal worker and Kostia was a lens grinder; in the circus their job was to

clean the streets after the elephants had passed. They loved American football and were the only two people I knew in Germantown who had a television set.

There were other distractions. Everyone talked and wrote and read, some made babies and some made music, some baked bread and others baked marijuana brownies. On Sundays we would take the dogs for a run in Valley Green or drive out to an abandoned water-filled quarry to go skinny-dipping. No one really dated, but one winter Kostia invited me to his company Christmas party. It was a posh affair, men sporting dark suits or even tuxedos, women gleaming in sequined cocktail dresses and the unmistakable luster of hair-spray. Kostia wore jeans and a plaid flannel shirt; I wore something black with sandals. The lot attendant parked Kostia's pumpkin-colored station wagon between two sedate Cadillacs.

All the cars in our little community were old and usually badly in need of parts and repairs. My first car, for which I paid two hundred dollars shortly after moving to Germantown, was an enormous black '64 Chevy Impala that had a bashed in passenger side and was missing most of the original chrome work. The generator brushes had worn down almost completely, causing frequent stalling. Kostia told me to stuff matchbook covers into the part of the generator that housed the inadequate brushes; this was supposed to make something maintain contact with something else, and worked for months at a time.



## Quarter Notes

Once the car stalled out on Broad Street in front of a Mercedes-Benz dealership and seven mechanics ran out of the shop to help push it into the lot. They began to tinker with it, found the matchbooks, and laughed. One of them ran two blocks to an auto parts place and returned with new generator brushes for me. One winter, a leak developed in the radiator, the anti-freeze seeped out, and the engine block cracked. That year I moved to another apartment.

These days I don't think about Germantown often. I've become a better cook, but my house plants still die. I don't hitchhike anymore: I drive a reliable Chrysler and get embarrassed about the missing hubcap that I never seem to have time to replace. I live in the suburbs with a husband and a cat and an electric refrigerator that freezes celery stalks.

Some nights we sit up late and drink cheap white wine.




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*Richard Lautz*  
1935 - 1991

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Richard Lautz died on January 22, after a long illness, and poets and poetry students are poorer because he is no longer part of their world. They have lost something of inestimable value: a friendly, sympathetic, and enthusiastic reader.



*Enthusiastic.* That was Richard, whether he was reading poetry and whether he was teaching it to his classes. And it was the loss of that special personal quality that told us that the end was in sight.

Enthusiasm was a great part of what made Richard Richard. By last spring, it was gone. Richard, that devoted, dependable reader of poetry submissions, told us he could not read any more submissions; he did not have the strength. But his face said more: he did not have the interest. We knew some core vitality within him had already died, and it was only a matter of time till his body followed.

Although we are saddened by the loss of this remarkable colleague to whom *Four Quarters* owes so much, we want to use this space to celebrate and give thanks



## Quarter Notes

that we had him with us for years. We are joined in tribute by many of you, we feel certain, especially the poets among our readers who established a personal relationship with this caring editor. We are still receiving submissions of poems addressed personally to Richard, not to the magazine, because of the bridges he had built with contributors over the years. Young poets have written to thank Richard for encouraging them to write in the first place. There are cover letters in our files that talk about Richard as being the reason the poet kept writing.

Upon first hearing of his illness last year, poet Nancy Fox wrote to express concern for him: "He's been a very good friend to my work over the years—often he was my only encouragement— he is important to me, and you know he and I have never met! Yet he is the first person I name when people ask (as they often do), 'Why do you write poetry?' 'Because,' I say, 'an editor, Richard Lautz, told me I could.' It is true that teachers never know how profoundly they affect others."

Poet Joseph Meredith, who succeeded Richard as poetry editor, described the effect Richard had on him in these words: "When a poem of mine appeared in the *Threepenny Review*, Richard, who was a subscriber and had encouraged me to send it there, was as excited as if it had been his. That kind of enthusiasm and excitement, that kind of visceral connection with students and colleagues, with poets and friends, is what La Salle has lost with his passing. And every student writer from now on

will be impoverished without realizing it. That's the pity of Richard's passing—they won't know.

His words reminded me of some I had written in these pages in 1975, when Richard asked to be relieved of his post as poetry editor. As I read them over, they seem to have even more meaning to me now, and I would like to repeat some of them here again:

"For the most part, editors are invisible people. To the reader or to the hopeful writer, they are a name on the masthead or a necessary part of the address on a manuscript envelope. When they disappear from that masthead, the loss creates no more effect than that of a stone sinking below the surface of still waters. The waters, in Edwin Arlington Robinson's words, "Though ruffled once, would soon appear/The same as ever to the sight."

If an editor were just a name, all of this would be true, but behind that name on the masthead is a person, and in the case of Richard Lautz, that has made all the difference...This seems to be a good time to share with you a few impressions of Richard so that you will understand why I will miss him.

To a questioner who asked whether he was a publishing poet himself, Richard once said, with a smile not at all regretful, 'No, I'm just a groupie.' It was a typically direct answer for him, but I think it suggests some insight into why he was a good poetry editor. He enjoyed the role of reader. He never read submissions of poems with his own ego in-



# Quarter Notes

volved. Contributors were never competitors. More than anything, Richard played the indispensable role of audience—a discerning, sympathetic, sensitive reader. What more could any poet ask?

Richard [was] also an indefatigable reader, a valuable asset in an editor. [In many ways he could be considered] a poet's dream reader: open, attentive, knowledgeable, patient, and, most characteristic of him, enthusiastic.

His enthusiasm for teaching poetry helped him win an award for distinguished teaching. That same enthusiasm [took] him to poetry conferences, readings, workshops, anywhere he could be involved with poets and poetry.

I shall miss the quick smile and deep delight in his voice when he read an appealing manuscript, saying, "This is wonderful!" As a matter of fact, I may slip him a manuscript or two now and then just in hope of hearing it again."

As a matter of fact, *Four Quarters* continued to slip him manuscripts for the next 15 years, and he never said no. Until last year.

So in the name of all of us who have worked with him as editors, taught with him as colleagues, studied under him as students, or submitted our work to his honest and informed opinion—thanks, Richard. You made a difference.

JERRY JOHNSON

## *An Argument with John Donne*

*"All mankinde is of one Author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one Chapter is not torne out of the booke; but translated into a better language; and every Chapter must be so translated...but Gods hand is in every translation; and his hand shall binde up all our scattered leaves againe, for that Librarie where every booke shall lie open to one another..."*

*John Donne, Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, XVII*

And for those of us who can't read the translation

What is there but the chapter  
We can read but not understand.

Imperfect exegetes, we struggle with an end

That we did not want to see foreshadowed,  
Try to count the interrupted meter of his life.

And, at last, give up the close reading  
And rely on the hope that in the lines  
We cannot scan, Justice is poetic.

*For Richard Lutz, January 23, 1991*



KELLY CHERRY

## Nobody's Fool

Gazing down  
That dark well.  
A good-looking man pushed me—  
In I fell.

Walls of gloom,  
Stink of damp.  
Wish I'd brought  
My Coleman lamp.

Down I go,  
No moss on my back.  
*Will it never end?*  
*Will I ever get back?*

Wait, here's water,  
Black as a bruise.  
I may take  
A long cruise,

I just might choose  
To live here forever.  
You think I've got  
A head full of fever

But let me say this—  
Nobody fools  
A woman who's plumbed  
Her own depths, and hell's.

RAYMOND J. PENTZELL

## Beware of Geeks Bearing Grants

One of the few dividends of teaching drama at an urban, "open-admission" university, as I did for sixteen years, is the chance it offers to meet characters: odd standouts among the shoals of students washing in with each tide of registration. The handful who were actively psychopathic I'd just as soon not recall. But there were others, interesting, even admirable, "non-traditional" with a vengeance.

Like the tattoo artist. A tall, fat man, he sported dingy, matted hair down to his shoulders; colorful, crowded tattoos down to his waist; and a nasal drawl that bespoke his hills-of-West-Virginia origin. Like a latter-day Huck Finn, he had run away from his drunken "Pap" at thirteen. Instead of the Mississippi raft and the ultimate lighting-out-for-the-Territory, however, he had joined a carnival troupe that endlessly circuited county fairs in the Midwest and South. There he learned sword-swallowing, fire-eating, and the arcana of "The Human Blockhead," by which he could thrust Phillips screwdrivers straight into his nose. Clearly, these were skills with which I, as a good stage director of the 1970s, had ample cause to be delighted; he wasn't much of an actor, but he had no trouble getting roles. Tattooing he had learned in a long apprenticeship to a talented midget. He discovered in himself an artistic bent, and progressed to the level of replicating sections of the Sistine Chapel ceiling on the torsos of admiring customers. On settling down to his shop in the city, he passed a high-school equivalency test with record scores and promptly entered the university as an art major. And he did very well—having learned, after all, to *draw* rather than merely to "engage with color." Post-modernism was just coming in.

During rehearsals he often regaled his fellow actors and me with tales of his carnival years: adventures with the three-eyed man, how to climb the ladder of scimitars ("carefully"), and the hierarchy of status (Tom-Wolfean in observed nuance) operative among carny folks. In status, geeks came at the bottom; their subset, "glommin' geeks," were the very Untouchables. Geeks had no skills and were normally winos; that is why they prospered as Wild Men from Borneo, growling in a cage among offal and rags of fur. "Glommin' geeks" had so deadened their taste buds that the assignment to eat unplucked raw chickens, toads, and fish-heads offered them no particular disincentives. You can see why performers having the talent to lie on beds of nails would regard geeks with some condescension.

I have been thinking about geeks because, during most of 1990, I couldn't escape reading hysterical articles about the National Endowment for the Arts. By the end of October the hysteria slackened off. The U.S. Congress approved a joint, compromise bill to fund the NEA for three years. In awarding its grants, the NEA was henceforth directed to consider "general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American public," but it may no longer place prior restrictions on the content of an artwork to make

it eligible for funding. Nor will any recipient have to sign an anti-obscenity pledge, as the NEA had required since late in 1989. If a funded artwork is *subsequently* found to be obscene by the courts, the grant recipient would then have to pay back the grant money—if indeed the government can collect it after the artist has already spent it. And, to quote Chico Marx, “There ain’t no sanity clause.”

What in Sam Hill, it may be asked, was this brouhaha about, and what has it to do with carnival geeks? A couple of preliminary points. One is that the NEA grants include two categories: grants to institutions and companies (such as museums, symphony orchestras, and established theatre troupes) and grants to individual artists for specifically proposed projects. The first kind involves the most money, but it is the second kind that includes the *causes célèbres* that began all the controversy: the Mapplethorpe homoerotic photographs, the Serrano “Piss Christ,” and bouts of “performance art” by Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes, and Tim Miller. In what can loosely be called “theatre,” the two categories of grant recipient are enormously different—as one might expect, since theatre is normally a composite, cooperative, and collective art, and to that extent the product of a troupe, a company. NEA grants to theatre companies, barring the predictable exceptions, are “safe” grants; they go to viable, established, even prosperous civic institutions, which already have backing from individual and corporate donors as well as subscription lists of season-ticket holders. And recognition by the NEA further attracts new donors and new subscribers.

Individual grants in the arts, far from tending to reward established success, often go to loners who convince their recommenders, and ultimately the endowment committees, that what they propose to do is precisely *avant garde*: ahead of the pack, augured to bring something of artistic value newly into the world. For playwrights, the only theatre artists who normally work alone, this is a standard claim, and playwrights accordingly qualify for such grants just as novelists and poets do. But what of performers? Solo performers in the theatre have most often been mimes, or else impersonators of historical characters (Mark Twain, Harry Truman, Ben Franklin, et al.) performing one-man shows of their character’s wit and wisdom, or else storytellers, “bards” of some sort. Some can claim *avant-garde* status; most cannot.

There is one kind of solo performer, however, whose very *genre* began to burgeon and to define itself only since the NEA was first established by Congress. These are the people who call themselves, with noble simplicity, “performance artists.” It is tempting to think that the form itself, “performance art,” originated entirely as a response to the availability of government grants for individual artists—a sort of “supply-side” theory of artistic evolution. Nevertheless, NEA funds alone cannot account for the existence of “performance art”; the form’s ancestry goes back to the dadaists of the years immediately following World War I, or even further back, to certain kinds of “specialty act” in turn-of-the-century Parisian cabarets—for example, the Moulin Rouge’s renowned “Petomane,” Joseph Pujol. But one *can* say that the artistic pretensions of the form, and the notion that “performance art” is some sort of full-time profession rather than an occasional stunt by a wild art student, are both developments arising out of the late 1960s and growing apace with the endowment kitty.

What is a performance artist? Well, he or she is someone who gets up in front of an audience—usually a small audience, and sometimes an unsuspecting and unwilling audience who *thought* they were just a random gathering of passers-by in a hotel lobby or somewhere. In front of this audience, the performance artist—er—performs. Performs...something, presumably meaningful to the artist, but not readily classifiable as acting a role, dancing, singing, telling a story, or exhibiting a trained skill like juggling or tightrope walking. The performance artist just gets out there and goes to town on some kind of action, and the action is supposed not only to alarm the audience but also to convey symbolic or subrational meanings about Self, World, Society, and the Future of Humanity. As a rule, the performance artist's mother does not interrupt the event by telling the performance artist to "stop acting up."

The most notorious of the four "defunded" performance artists is Karen Finley, whose "performance" has the title, "We Keep Our Victims Ready." Here is *New York* magazine's sympathetic account of the most troublesome part of her act (Aug. 6, 1990):

...she strips to the skin to "strip" emotionally, baring the self-hate of the body-obsessed, bulimic woman. Slathered in chocolate, she cries, "My life is worth nothing but s[hit]."

Chocolate is a kind of blackface, linking her sympathetically with the underclass. It's the sort of odd dress-up game children play with lipstick and shaving cream. Chocolate is also food, the source of many desperate obsessions among women. Covered in her ceremonial body paint, Finley stirs a collective consciousness of women's shared life from childhood to girlhood and beyond. Gradually she sprinkles on red candies, white alfalfa sprouts, tinsel—until she's fully "clothed" in a perverse, tarty sort of seduction costume. She rages against the demand that a woman's value be measured by her attractiveness to men; yet she plays the game, as women do.

Now, I hope, one may see the beginnings of the connection I am trying to make with oldtime carnival geeks. Please note: only the beginnings. I don't expect Karen Finley simply to be *written off* as a geek, and for that matter I don't expect geeks themselves simply to be written off. I don't, in fact, think that "We Keep Our Victims Ready" (at least as I have learned of it both from the *New York* account and from the longer *apologia* that appeared in *American Theatre* magazine in September) is either obscene or nonsensical. After all, the best *drama* can be alarming, unsettling, threatening. The best *performers* can threaten to cross the line into personal jeopardy, personal disgrace, *self-exposure* rather than the exhibition of an enacted character. But notice: they *threaten*. There's a dialectic at work, a shifting tension between actual immediacy and fictional framing, between self and other, between the floodwaters of mere emotion and the sluiceway of communicable, intelligent artistry. A geek, rolling in his garbage and munching on some uncooked drumsticks, might show us something about what it *really* could mean to be the poor bare forked animal of King Lear's searing insight. But the geek can show us such things only by the purely negative virtue of his own tolerance



for debasing *himself*: He creates no character (it is he who truly swallows the raw meat) and he exhibits no skill, wit, or design. Thus the self-respecting sword-swallower holds him in contempt.

The most damning observation in the account of Karen Finley's performance is not "she strips" but "She rages." She, the performer, goes out of control; *her* emotions wash away the sluiceway. If these were the emotions of a character whom she played by *drawing upon* her own emotions, then the passion could be a part of the artistry, part of the significant form of the work. But no; Karen Finley's own feelings are the nerve-center (one cannot say "backbone") of her entire performance. Not only does her performance sound like a public tantrum, but the tantrum dimension also sheds light on the embarrassing stupidity of Finley's theme, her lack of dialectic, irony, or studied distance. It reveals the randomness of Finley's hodgepodge of visual symbols (if that's what they are): alfalfa sprouts right in there with confectioner's supplies. And it suggests why the whole of "We Keep Our Victims Ready," with its scenes preceding and following the one described, turns out to be such a haphazard parade of miscellaneous resentments.

Rage, stupidity, and miscellaneous resentments: These, in fact, emerge as the major motifs of the whole NEA squabble of the past year. They are the hallmarks not primarily of the Helms faction, who seem nothing worse than curmudgeonly and (arguably) wrongheaded, but of the hysteria-mongers, the "censorship" paranoids, the "arts advocates" whose forensic vocabulary seems limited to cries of "Fascist!" Herein lies the real self-degradation, the ultimate geekery—not in the onstage tantrums of a chocolate-coated woman, but in the debasement of public discourse by the intellectuals and critics who would defend her in this manner.

Perhaps the stupidity is the most ominous. The tone is set by Karen Finley herself, who was described by *American Theatre's* reporters as the performance artist "most distraught" by the NEA's "defunding." "I will always now be looked upon as the censored artist, the black-listed artist," she is quoted as saying. "I feel like I'm living under McCarthyism or Stalinism." The equation of censorship with defunding, i.e., the refusal to give out free government money, is dumb enough, even though we've heard it repeated *ad nauseam* not only by self-interested spokespersons for the "arts community" but also by their lawyers. But how, without gagging, can we swallow the implied equation between Joe McCarthy and Joe Stalin? Well, Ms. Finley is apparently too young to remember either of the Joes, either the minor and futile demagogue from Wisconsin or the murderer of millions; and we can't suppose that she has *read* much.

But listen to Peter Zeisler, who wrote a frenzied editorial in the same issue of *American Theatre*. Zeisler is the Executive Director of the Theatre Communications Group, the umbrella organization of most of the regional professional theatre companies across the nation, and the outfit that publishes *American Theatre*, a quite influential monthly. Can he really be so ignorant, so historically uninformed as to believe what he wrote?

Historically, art has always been funded by the government. Shakespeare, Moliere and Schiller were all supported by royal patronage. Throughout Europe, for generations, the only source of support for

artists and arts organizations were funds supplied by the government. The hidden whammy behind artists creating and producing work all America “likes” robs us of the primary purpose of art—to lead, rather than follow, a society; without that function, we are doomed to have only “official art”....

Not a single one of those five clauses is true; they are all grossly false historically and absurd critically. Mr. Zeisler, if he is actually that ignorant of the art his organization promotes, ought immediately to enroll in a remedial, undergraduate survey course in theatre history. On the other hand, he may merely have been lying, for argumentative effect. If so, what does that reveal about his intended *readers*, the members, supporters, and well-wishers of the Theatre Communications Group (among whom I *would* have wished to include myself)?

A debasement of discourse—the metastasis of rage, stupidity, and resentment into illogical self-righteousness and falsification of historical fact—can be an evil omen of the debasement of the *subject* of the discourse, in this case theatre itself. The NEA brawl, the pseudo-censorship flapdoodle—these do not augur well for the near future of America’s theatre.

Well, the NEA hysteria is behind us. Can we look to other auguries? What is there to see? Quite apart from the “performance artists,” we can see a theatre unable to escape from emotional egocentricity and the self-pitying rage of self-proclaimed victims. “We Keep Our Victims Ready” is a good omnibus title for much current drama, even if not for society as a whole. In most American theatres, the stage manager’s “ready” call is likely to unkennel any number of autobiographical martyrdoms out onto the stage: the poor-me plays, the life-is-unfair pageants, the look-what-society (or religion, or my family, or white-male-capitalists, or Western Civ)-has-done-to-us-innocents threnodies. This sort of theme isn’t new in American drama: Think of Sophie Treadwell’s 1928 *Machinal* recently revived in New York. By a hideous irony self-pity long ago became locked in as a model for every prentice playwright to imitate largely because of its monumental centrality to the work of America’s greatest modern dramatist, Eugene O’Neill. Playwright John Guare (who is one of my more *hopeful* auguries, for reasons I’ll get to shortly) wrote a delightfully macabre lampoon of this sort of thing back in 1976, in an unjustly forgotten play called *Rich and Famous*. The main character is a wretched playwright tormented by Broadway ambitions. Early on, he says,

You see I make up bad things about myself so I’ll be more interesting. I read about O’Neill and I think, Christ, I could have been a great playwright too if my mother was a junkie and my father was a miser who went around playing the Count of Monte Cristo all the time. So I write my autobiographical play, based on Dante’s *Inferno*, and it’s close enough to the way I’d like my life to be. With a few songs thrown in.

Now, no one (so far as I know) is claiming that the needed counterweight to our plethora of dismal, resentful plays is an equal-and-opposite plethora of sunny, upbeat, Rodgers-and-Hammerstein souffles. We are not, as Yale’s

Lloyd Richards would have it, "in danger of having a National Endowment for the Agreeable." The need is not to uphold or to condemn any particular range of moods. The need—the crying need—is to insist upon plain intelligence.

And intelligence, for a dramatist, rules out both self-justifying autobiography and the simplistic, mechanical process by which any and all human suffering gets forced, as if through a trash compacter, into replicated blocks of protest: the same old melodrama in which "we" are helpless victims and "they" are our oppressors. Intelligence, for a dramatist, requires a continual juggling of human varieties, the whirligig of surprising motives and contradictory sympathies, the good that surprises us in every villain, and the inner evil from which no saint or hero can suppose himself safe. And intelligence, for a dramatist in the modern era, nearly always presupposes an eye and an ear tuned to irony, to the distrust of any recipe, any preconception of form, whether it be the "form" of habituated sympathies or the very form of theatrical enactment. Distrust, of course, does not mean utter abandonment; thus the doublemindedness we call irony.

So where do we turn, we who still hope for a worthwhile American theatre? Well, not to *any* recipes, certainly. Still, as a historian of the theatre in particular and of our popular culture in general, I have over and over again come upon a phenomenon that I suspect will shed some light on our difficulty. It is this: that the educated culture, the "high" art of America's middle and upper classes, has rarely managed to escape from "genteelism."

"Genteel"?? Chocolate-covered tantrums, four-letter words, public announcements of the artist's ungoverned homosexuality (as in the "performance" pieces of Holly Hughes, John Fleck, and Tim Miller)? *This* he calls "genteel"?

Yes, in its historical origins at least, it deserves the label of "genteel." Ponder the paradox, that the limited perspectives of *both* Jesse Helms *and* Karen Finley descend from the same bourgeois taste that we can call "genteelism." I'd better explain what I mean right away. I mean the high premium placed on an individual's sensibilities—or, as we would say today, sensitivity. I mean the notion that a properly "refined" person is a person who is "easily hurt," quick to suffer emotionally from the purely psychological aggressions of others and even from being bluntly ignored. "Niceness"—supportive, considerate courtesy—is demanded of the world; when it is denied, one claims not only victim-status but also a solemn respect for the "pain" one is put through. The caricature of the Victorian lady who faints whenever some boor says "leg" rather than "limb," the middle-class modern who is infuriated when a performer uses "foul language" in "mixed company," and the radical feminist who raises hell in the form of ever-more-elaborate rules about (and penalties for) "gender-biased language" and "sexual harassment": all are cousins; all parade their wounded feelings like any Karen Finley; and all expect us to *care* that they are so offended. That's what I mean by "genteelism," and it will pay us to examine briefly how it has become a *given* for America's serious dramatists in this century, what worthwhile alternatives there are available, and what it might mean if these alternatives were paid some new attention.

Critics of American fiction have long used the cleft between the "genteel" tradition (of authors from Henry James through John Cheever) and the "vulgar" or "frontier" tradition (of Artemus Ward, Mark Twain, and, deriva-

tively, Ernest Hemingway and Norman Mailer) as a rough landmark in mapping out our post-Civil-War literary heritage. It is not, of course, an unbridgeable chasm. We hardly need reminding that Mark Twain wrote for respectable, middle-class readers and that Hemingway and Mailer were anything but uncouth frontiersmen; even when they *played* at the role, they did so with a certain self-conscious irony. But the polar terms are instructive, and especially so in summing up our traditions in playwriting. What stands out at once is that only *one* of the genres of stage writing that might fall on the "vulgar" side of the cleft actually came to influence twentieth-century dramatists who aspired to an "artistic" level of theatre: That genre is melodrama.

But melodrama itself was an upwardly mobile form in the first place, ready at all times to leave behind the crudities of black-mustachio'd landlords feeding farmers' daughters through the sawmill, and to substitute well-dressed capitalists feeding doctors' daughters through nightclubs. What makes melodrama melodrama is the moral simplicity of its characters and the suspenseful engineering of its plots. The genre may have counted its earliest successes among rural or immigrant audiences in converted barns and dime museums, but few of its features failed to make the transition to the gilt-and-plaster temples of Broadway. And it is a critical commonplace that Broadway's first serious modernist, Eugene O'Neill, seldom escaped influence from the techniques of the same sort of melodrama that made his father rich and Eugene scornful.

No other "vulgar" kind of American theatre made much of a continuing impact on modern playwrights, no matter how hostile they might be toward "genteelism" in its older manifestations or how scathingly they might damn the whole of "middle-class morality" itself. Not Toby shows, not minstrel shows, not the knockabout, brutal slapstick and the skeins of lunatic puns that characterized burlesque comedy, not the dramatized penny-dreadfuls that, like some sort of clumsy opera libretti without singing, captivated immigrant audiences in turn-of-the-century ghettos. Some of these forms survived, of course, or at least elements of them did, but only rarely and sporadically in our century's "legitimate" theatres. We know of them only from later vaudeville, from old film, from radio and early television, and from pre-Rodgers-and-Hammerstein musical comedy. In nearly all cases the cleft between popular entertainment and serious art has remained or widened. The exceptions are mostly a matter of encroachment from the *other* side; that is, instead of the traditionally "vulgar" entertainments providing grist for the mental mills of "artistic" writers, our TV shows and light movies become year by year ever more infected by the "genteelism" from which they once provided a lowbrow refuge.

This has not been the case in Europe. From the earliest days of this century European playwrights and their stage directors batted on figures, styles, and techniques drawn from folk and popular entertainments: farce, circus, *commedia dell'arte*, cabaret, pantomime, village mummings, puppet shows, and such penny-arcade amusements as magic-lantern slides and peepshow flipbooks. These forms were not simply reproduced, but rather absorbed and transmuted by artists with broader or more complex objectives than their popular sources alone would suggest. Nevertheless, in their plays we do not

find the “vulgar” elements disguised or gentrified: There *is* the slapstick, there *is* the doggerel, the dummies, the cartoon pictures, all present and accounted for. And thus, for the audience, the probability that a belly-laugh or a creepy chill is only a note in a larger symphony does not eliminate the laugh or the chill itself. Blok, Gémier, Evreinov, Meyerhold, Copeau, Ghéon, Piscator, Brecht, Pitoëff, Ghelderode, Capek—down to today’s Dario Fo: these leap out as the obvious names to drop.

What is more, the range of popular amusements that so fascinated these artists was not limited to *European* popular amusements; American ones were often envied and appropriated greedily. Brecht with his American pulp fiction and his taste for jazz; Ghelderode with his verbal arabesques that recast (in such plays as *Pantagleize* and *Christopher Columbus*) the silent-movie antics of Keaton and Chaplin...this at a time when avant-garde *American* playwrights were ignoring or condescendingly patronizing the stuff in their own nickelodeons and vaudeville houses, meanwhile trying to keep up, however belatedly, with the waves of the “new” that floated over from Europe! Of all of America’s now-classic modernists of the theatre, only Thornton Wilder has left behind any evidence of genuine *gusto* for popular American entertainment—and that probably has something to do with the fact that Wilder, of any American writer in his day, had the widest first-hand experience of watching both theatre and cabaret—in Europe!

Nowadays, of course, popular entertainment provides an accessible vocabulary of motifs for most competent American directors (we finally did get the idea from the Europeans) and a complete performance medium for such “new vaudeville” entertainers as the Flying Karamazov Brothers. But playwrights? Well, there’s John Guare and his taut ironies with honky-tonk singing and Broadway musicals, and I did say I thought him a hopeful augury—if you can call someone who’s been writing for a quarter of a century an “augury.” There are few others, fewer still with any insight or any staying power. An odd vacuum indeed.

But why all this fuss about old popular entertainment in the first place? All right, so it *isn’t* “genteel”; but what *is* it, and why is it somehow *preferable* to the emotionally egocentric *ethos* that I’ve labeled “genteelism”? These are questions quickly answered.

First, the oldtime popular entertainer was—and where he survives, is—keenly competitive for audience approval, simply measured at the box office. Even if such cash-on-the-barrelhead economic conditions have changed (and I am willing to believe they have), even if they are inadequate in themselves to support a mentally healthy “show-business,” such respect for the audience is still salutary. Respect for the audience makes it necessary for the artist to exhibit a real *skill*, even if it is only the skill to take clean pratfalls. It is by showing your spectators something that they admire, something that they don’t know how to do or write or say or think themselves, that you guarantee that they’ve “got their money’s worth.” Sheer craftsmanship helps to equalize the transaction between the “powerful” audience and the “helpless” performer.

Second, this transaction requires that an artist who wishes sympathy for himself, his character, or his point of view must *earn* it. An audience will not respect him as an artist—much less as a prophet or seer—until he proves his

artistry. "Conceptual art," the tentative performance that provokes the vague response, "This is an interesting basic approach, *but...*," will not be enough.

Now the popular entertainer's quest for sympathy may include a huge dollop of sentimentality, a tug at the heartstrings that serious art would more intelligently forego. But even the sentimental popular artist must ground his appeal in what the audience, not the artist himself, is willing to wax sentimental about. That is, he must grasp at the commonplaces of emotion, the assured generalities of sympathy, broad brush strokes sketching recognizable pictures of love, a happy home, wealth, security, danger, poverty. No finicky personal or political credo will work. What is more, we can see that the very predictability of the sentiment—its unavoidable element of cliché—usually "distances" or "frames" the audience's response even while it evokes a tear or a shiver: The spectators expect it and enjoy it, but they do not (unless they are *very* naive) confuse it with an original insight into unmediated reality. It is plainly a part of the received form of the entertainment, the kind of thing about which, afterward, a spectator will say, "Well, it's a *show*; they've got to put that in." It thus becomes available, so to speak, to be used as a fixed term in any irony or dialectic striven for by a more complex artist.

One of the most universal sympathies in popular entertainment is the sympathy for the little guy, the underdog. This is the populism of popcult, so ubiquitous that it is *subpolitical*. Chaplin's tramp, Keaton's misunderstood duffer, Gleason's low-paid busdriver—any of them could be taken up equally by the non-totalitarian leftism of a Brecht or a Dario Fo and the humane, religious kind of conservatism that a Ghéon or a Ghelderode espoused.

That brings us to a third point. In traditional popular entertainment, "social victims" do not receive sympathy automatically, because they are not guiltless *ipso facto*. The formative audiences of such entertainments were working class, immigrant, or rural. Such people may have striven for success or for social justice, but they certainly knew that they couldn't just *expect* either. Still less could they just *expect* that their "feelings" would not be abused every day of their lives, their social dignity valued at very little on the world's market. And since a performer can ingratiate himself or his character only by acknowledging his *inferiority of status* to the audience, he must not pretend to greater *privilege* than the audience—that is, the *privilege* of genteel expectations. Therefore the key performer often portrayed himself not only as an underdog but as a clown or a clod as well. He made himself the butt of superior laughter or pitying condescension by acting as peremptory and inconsiderate in a small way as the "bigshots" acted toward him. Think not only of the comic meanness of W.C. Fields and Jackie Gleason but also of the violent slapstick *initiated* by Chaplin and Keaton, and moreover of the troubles actually *caused* by the denseness or naiveté of sweet ingenues and two-fisted heroes. The audience is "on their side," but the audience will not be asked to "look up to them" indiscriminately. The people on stage do not presume categorical approval, do not expect to be either "adorable" or intrinsically important. Some degree of psychologically detachment, then, is built in to the fundamental dynamics of the relationship between performer and spectator.

And now my fourth and final observation: In traditional popular culture, exploration of subtle psychological states is considered to be a time-wasting luxury compared to the starkness of events themselves. This ought to be

self-evident in farce and "low comedy" and in barnstorming melodrama as well. Perhaps, in the most serious vein, the best examples may be drawn from traditional ballads, going back at least as far as the ballads called "Sir Patrick Spens" and "Lord Randal." But the same starkness, the same bald presentation of seeming "fact," remains evident in "John Henry," in "Frankie and Johnny," and in that utterly terrifying little ballad that has come down to us as "Black Girl," which has as its climatic stanza the unexplained lines

My husband was a railroadin' man.  
 He died 'bout a mile outside of town.  
 His head was found in the drivin' wheel,  
 And his body, it never was found.

Antonin Artaud, for his "theatre of *cruauté*" could have wished nothing more effective.

If our serious theatre artists, playwrights in particular, would more thoroughly absorb such principles of America's older popular culture, our theatre would be healthier for it. It would be at once more "American" *and* more universal or "multi-cultural" in its appeal. It is important to say "principles" here: general lessons to be derived from studying these entertainments, not the mere revival of the entertainments themselves; no nostalgic populism ought to blind us to the fact that such popular forms can no longer be called "popular" in our era of mass-marketed amusement. But just as there are negative lesson to be learned from the geeks, there are positive ones to be learned from their "betters" in the old kingdom of the carnival, the tent show, the nickelodeon, and the burley-cue.



JANE SATHER

## Something of a Ghost Story

No difference is discernible—  
 the moon, the flowering  
 breath of sleeping horses,  
 the wind, a ribbon worked  
 through mud-colored trees—  
 but the blind rush of footprints  
 still in fresh snow, stopped  
 in a blunder of snow-angels.

Here, then, the ending: predictable,  
 worn winter-smooth by telling,  
 and again we listen.

A Story by

ELIZABETH BERLOT

## *Common Ground*

The rain made Marian think of Vancouver, and for no reason that made her think of an empty block they had turned into a playground there. She had noticed lately that one thing often made her think of another and that was fine as long as she could remember the other. When she couldn't she was left with an anxious, uneasy feeling.

Since it was Saturday she had slipped downstairs to cook waffles and bacon and squeeze orange juice. To her annoyance, she found that now she was trying to remember where that empty block had been.

Derek and their two teenagers raced each other down the stairs. They were happy to see the waffles, but angry at the rain. They ate in silence, staring out at the sodden garden.

Marian toyed with her breakfast. "Derek, do you remember that empty lot we used to call The Common? Was it on Balsam or Vine?"

He looked at her blankly. "What are you talking about?"

"Don't you remember? Where we played so often?"

"In what town?"

"Vancouver, of course."

"No, I can't remember."

Her daughter feigned interest. "Was it like The Boston Common?"

"No, it was only a block square. Derek, try to remember. We used to have such fun there."

"I'm sorry, but remember, we moved to Los Angeles when I was twelve. I guess it's just slipped away."

They continued to eat in silence until Derek Jr. put down his orange juice. "I read that the weather's changing all over the world. Maybe the rain's heading this way."

"Great." His father got up and stared out at the uncut lawn. "Well, if I can't cut the grass, I'll go down and get the deadbolt."

Cynthia shuddered delicately. "I hate that word. Nobody's ever been robbed around here."

Her brother looked at her in disbelief but held his tongue. Marian ignored them, trying to remember where the square had been. But then she felt selfish and turned to her son.

"Only two more weeks, eh?"

"Till what?"

"Your concert, the one you've been saving for. The Grocers."

There was a pained silence. "You mean The Butchers, and yes, I'll have enough money." He pushed his chair back. "I think I'll go down to the hardware with you, Dad."

Her husband stooped to kiss her. "Take it easy, honey."



Cynthia shook her head in disapproval when they had gone. "It bugs him when you talk about rock. He knows you're not interested."

"But I am."

"No, you're not."

Marian sighed, rebuffed, unable to think of an answer. If she couldn't keep track of the past at least she wanted to stay close to the present.

"I was thinking of driving over to Fashion Square. Would you like to come with me?"

"Thanks, Mom, but not today. I promised I'd help Elaine with her perm." She was gone soon after in a flourish of scarlet cape and matching boots.

The house was cold and so was the coffee when she poured herself another cup. Why hadn't Derek tried harder to remember The Common? She could see it so clearly, with a hard narrow path running across it. Her Girl Scout troop had dug the ground on either side and planted flowers on either side as a beautification project. There was a little wooden bench too, and hopscotch squares, and her father had put up a swing under the weeping willow tree.

Why had they called it The Common, and where had it been? If only she could pick up the phone and ask a simple question.

"Mother, was that lot we used to play in on Balsam or Vine?"

There would be a slight pause. "I can't quite remember. Everything's built up now."

"Oh, Mother," she thought. "Oh, Mother." Though the funeral had been nine months ago she felt the same familiar stab of pain. She pushed back her chair and forced herself to begin the housework.

Upstairs she opened Cynthia's door and was struck as always by the neatness and self-sufficiency of her daughter. Even the bulletin board with its photographs, poems and bits of Cynthia's life was arranged like a graceful collage.

It was probably good to keep the past alive, but in the end what did it matter? She too had once had a diary and a photograph album, but where were they now? Or was she just not very good at hanging onto things?

She moved about, dusting, changing towels. Then she began to feel cold again and went down to heat what was left of the coffee. She wished she could stop thinking about The Common, but she couldn't. They had moved twice when she was a little girl; perhaps that was what was causing the mental block.

She remembered a boy who had lived across the street. One evening he had put his arm around her and pulled her down on the wooden bench. The other children had gone home, but they just sat there, not talking.

Then she had heard her mother's voice calling from the front porch. "Marian, it's nine o'clock."

Suddenly she began to cry. A feeling of immense loneliness gripped her as she let the tears roll down her cheeks. She had known six people intimately who could share her memories, but they were either dead or had moved out of her life.

Did it really matter if it had been on Vine or Balsam? Yes, today it did because she craved continuity. She wondered what had replaced it. Probably a large apartment house where the children had to play on the street, or on their school yard.

She thought of all the work it would have entailed. First the willow would have been dug up and its greenery carted away on a truck, or perhaps they had shredded it first. Then the little hill would have been leveled and the flowers thrown away. There had been rhododendrons and daffodils and crocus that refused to die. Finally they would have poured a great slab of concrete to seal the ground forever.

"Take it easy," Derek had said, and she tried. She sorted laundry and started the washing machine. But it was just that she was too young to be the only person in the world who remembered something, or cared.

She thought of her friend Kay, who had died of cancer, and of Joan, who had been killed in a car accident. They had shared confidences under that willow tree and made bold, fearless plans for the future. But no one had told them it would be like this, with the past disappearing as if it had never existed. And before long the present would disappear too, she supposed.

A car drove into the garage and she heard her husband and son talking as they came up the stairs. They had bought the deadbolt and soon would make the house secure. She watched them, her heart filled with pity.

Derek was all business. "Now I'm going to tackle that mess in the basement. Do you want to save the jars?"

She hesitated. "I thought the peach tree was dying."

"Well, we could buy fruit at a sale." He looked at her, sensing something wrong. "Don't bother, if it's too much trouble."

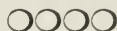
"No, I'd like to."

"Peach jam's still my favorite. Do you remember that place near Ladner that was so famous? What was its name?"

She looked at him from a great distance. "I don't remember."

"Aw, come on Marian, everybody from Vancouver knows that name." He looked disturbed at his lapse of memory.

"I don't remember. Are you sure there was such a place?" Then she relented. "Yes, I do know what you mean. The name's right on the tip of my tongue." She went over and put her arms around him.



BRUCE THOMAS BOEHRER

## Help Help Me Rondeau

I should have learned to play guitar;  
I'd do sets at a local bar  
and stay wired for days on end  
with my trashy blonde girlfriend.  
I'm cursed with being regular

but really could have been a star—  
even a sort of secular  
saint, with lots of money to spend.  
I should have learned.

I want to drive a Jaguar,  
hear strangers tell me that I'm far  
out. I know that with a Fend-  
er Stratocaster I could send  
young girls home weeping and depend  
on life being less familiar;  
I should have learned.

JACK HART

## Midterm

So many pretty girls—flowers  
To draw the bees,  
Though nature, were she justice blind,  
Might give them cees.

ROBERT FREEDMAN

## Sunday Barber

I was your furnace stoker,  
your shoveler, your gatherer of clinkers.  
You were my Sunday Barber, bringing  
with you the smell of lilac water  
and the leather strap—  
I would be neat and you would be warm.

Upstairs you sat, Blondie and Dagwood  
pressed to your nose, counting,  
I imagined, the number of shovels  
filled with coal and the sudden whoomp  
of flame that battered the floorboards.

When you came down the gritty, uneven  
stairs, too small for your feet  
you wobbled like Charlie Chaplin,  
the Sunday paper curled cane-like  
under your hairy arm.

Surrounded by scattered blank  
receipt books and the detritus of barbering,  
you wrapped a cloth  
around my neck, stroked my shoulder  
as was your custom,  
and moved the clipper on my neck.  
Your razor slapped against the strap,  
and while the coals sizzled  
in the cast iron furnace,  
you gave me my Sunday spin.  
And as my eyes met your moustached face  
each time I passed the cellar mirror,  
we had as long a look as we would ever.

JOHN DREXEL

## A Last Resort

After supper in the Chinese restaurant  
 (your husband elsewhere, absent)  
 we walk beneath the coloured lights  
 that string the promenade.  
 Ten o'clock, and the sun  
 still hugs the horizon  
 and the gulls have not done  
 gliding over the ocean.  
 We thrive on their cries  
 and the salt air.

We pass the steel pier, the leisure centre  
 promising silly mechanized forms of pleasure:  
 fruit machines, penny falls,  
 Shoot the Sheriff, Asteroids.  
 ENTER, the sign entices, warning  
 SHOES MUST BE WORN. NO ICES.  
 What penance must we do,  
 who practice other vices?

Caravans crowd the dunes  
 farther down the beach  
 where holidaymakers each  
 enjoy their home from home,  
 their personal carapace  
 or cosy portable womb  
 luxurious with children.

And we, who are fugitives from domesticity,  
 differently wedded, each to a sheltered past,  
 can only speculate what it would be  
 to winter here, what changes the sea makes  
 in the chemistry of marriage.

We gaze over the sea wall  
 towards another country:  
 yours, perhaps, or mine.  
 Be faithful, you whisper,  
 doubting the power of words  
 to enforce fidelity.  
 Your words are snatched by the wind,  
 become the sea, the speech of gulls—  
 our arms around each other,  
 stranded on the shoals of our desire.

A Story by

MICHAEL WHITE

## *Three Whacks A Buck*

**I**t was 1962: the autumn of the phony missiles, of threat and counterthreat, of Kennedy and Krushchev on our Philco. I was in sixth grade, and, as if we were practicing for a school play, it was a time of rehearsing for our own annihilation. Intoxicated by the prospect of sanctioned anarchy, we followed Miss Robleski's puffy brown ankles down into the grammar school's basement. Facing the wall to protect against flying glass, we hoped something, *anything*, would happen, that the entire business was more than just another pointless fire drill. Could doom *really* be a possibility? Would the brick walls crumble, books and rulers landing in a fiery heap? Secretly you wished the adults would quit their blustering and really go through with it, just once. But it was only talk, you grew to realize. The siren would fade to a ringing whisper and you'd sullenly back up to your classroom, and to the growing conviction it was all just a complex game played by bored adults. Even Miss Robleski, a grim failure of an ex-nun, seemed disappointed and irritable. She terrorized us afterwards, whacking her ruler on desks, shaking Auggie Fournier silly for launching paper ICBM's across the room.

But it was also the autumn of falling in love, and of recognizing that my parents had fallen out of it. Tony Falcone, a new boy in school, would stand next to me as we waited in the basement for bombs. He'd pass me notes which said, "Want some gum" or "Let's get a coke at Balf's after school," and I felt the first real tremors of passion rumbling in my stomach, a feeling similar to what you felt going fifty over the bump on Mullen Road. While at home that fall, I came to realize that my parents were two very unhappy people, the way America and Russia were unhappy and like them committed to harassing the other. I can't think of the missile crisis without picturing them: my mother with her sick headaches, my father at the kitchen table with a green bottle of Tanqueray. I can't watch old clips of that comic bear taking off his shoe and pounding it on the UN desk without seeing my father swinging that sledgehammer, or thinking of my mother's defeated face as she watched him.

Every year my parents took us girls—Peg, Wendy, and me—to the Eastern States Expo, a huge sprawling fair held each September in western Massachusetts. On a Saturday as broad and seamless as only childhood Saturdays can be, we'd spill out of the newly waxed Vista Cruiser, and my father would hand us each a single crisp dollar bill, its edge a razor-sharp metaphor of financial caution.

"Now try not to spend this on junk, ladies," he'd advise with that air of absurd formality he'd sometimes put on in front of our friends, to embarrass us we thought.

"Oh, Daddy," I'd say. After all, it was *exactly* our intention to trade in our perfect buck for some of the fair's high-priced junk. As we passed through the

gate, quickly getting beyond the dopey farm equipment and snowblowers, we greedily inhaled the aroma of cheap delights which canopied the fairgrounds. But after this bit of advice from my father, he'd leave the "ladies" alone and wander around by himself, looking at livestock and riding mowers and God knows what else. He'd dole out a five to my mother, and they'd arrange to "rendezvous"—a movie word that seemed odd coming from my father's throat—at the bandstand green. Like good soldiers, they even set their watches.

Before getting a chance to fritter away our dollar though, my mother would have her crack at trying to ruin the day. She'd drag us to free exhibits in the states' pavillions: a slide show, say, on the safe method of canning beans, or to a demo by a heavily jowled man who looked like Ed Sullivan of a new kitchen utensil which chopped potatoes ten different ways.

"Pay attention, girls. This is *your* future the man's talking about," she'd say. As if our future was a vegetable we had to prepare carefully or risk a case of botulism. To my mother, a sound marriage was based in no small measure on kitchen success. Things like Tupperware containers and egg dicers, food blenders and Teflon pans helped insure marital bliss.

"*Bor-ing*," Peg groaned as a blond woman petted a futuristic side-by-side Amana that spit out cupfuls of ice at the push of a button. "Can we go now, Ma?"

"Just a minute, young lady," she'd say, gazing at the fridge the way she would her wedding album. She'd stand there fondling an earlobe, a habit that showed a variety of emotions: anxiety if my father was late from work, nostalgia at weddings, a vague longing when she listened to Perry Como in the den and sipped a glass of Man O' Manoshevitz. It was longing now.

"Is it frost-free?" she might ask the woman.

"Of course," the woman replied. "No more chiseling ice," she said in an undertone, as if she'd just passed on a tip to a sister ice-ager.

"That would be nice," said my mother, already picturing it in place of the slump-shouldered, whirring Norge at home.

Finally, we might be able to pry her away from an upright Electrolux with a power nozzle and drag her off to the glittering midway. The tattooed hawkers and carnie men made us think of escaped convicts: dark, wild-eyed, scary-looking creatures, men who could've lived on the moon for all we had in common with them. More unfathomable even than those Russkies, with their itchy triggerfingers. Once, Peg and I let a man with a livid scar over his cheek try to guess our weight for a prize. My mother and Wendy were getting something to eat, and as he eyeballed Peg's scrawny frame, he said she had nice tits! Horrified, but also vaguely thrilled, we ran back to my mother but didn't dare tell her. These were men whose black and unknown emotions were closer to those of wild boars than they were, say, to my father's.

At around noon we'd meet at the green for lunch. We'd spread an army blanket on the grass near the bandstand, where they gave free concerts. The bands were never any good, just old men in Salvation Army-like uniforms, who played the sort of wedding music which made my mother rub her earlobe and look retarded. But she made wonderful chicken salad sandwiches, and we liked to take off our new school shoes and rub our toes in the grass. She'd

be handing out food, scolding Wendy for spilling her Kool Aid, and generally praising the day for its thoughtfulness.

"We always have such nice weather for the fair," she said to no one.

She used that word, *nice*, a lot. There were nice days, meals, trips, Christmasses, and, most certainly, girls. Things that moved her to comment were nice, unless of course they were not nice, like swearing and rapists and Tony Falcone's mother, who had several "men friends." My mother was a woman of no visible ambitions or daring passions, other than to make sure days like this were nice and ran without a hitch.

My father, who took a sort of distant and mostly financial interest in the family's affairs, was by all standards nice: a nice father, a nice neighbor, one who mowed his lawn twice a week in summer and helped people jump start their cars in winter, who belonged to the Rotary and the American Legion, who showed up for school plays and shaved every morning except Sunday. On the green near the bandstand, he'd lie on the blanket, his large stomach straining the shirt buttons my mother was forever sewing back on. He'd look up at the yellowing leaves overhead with an appraising eye, the way a botanist or a philosopher might.

"The jerks in personnel said I had only seven vacation days left," he said.

"Well, you should call them, dear," my mother said without looking at him. "You deserve it. Wendy, get over your napkin."

"Of course, I deserve it. That's not the point, Evelyn," he replied, still looking up at the leaves. "It's *their* job. Not mine. They're supposed to know. That's what they get paid for."

"Everybody makes mistakes."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Just that everybody makes mistakes. You want some more potato salad?"

"No, I *don't* want more potato salad," he replied crossly.

"Well, you don't have to get in a snit, for Pete's sake. Nobody's perfect. Let's not spoil the nice day with such silliness."

My father might snort, make a show of throwing the rest of his sandwich away. Then he'd proclaim, "What do you say? Let's get this show on the road." He often said that. After dinner out or at the end of vacation, he'd say, "Well, let's get this show on the road," as if we were a traveling roadshow.

After lunch, we'd wander around some more, this time with my father accompanying us, the comptroller of our funds the way he was for the machine tool company he worked for. We'd make a couple of quick passes through the horrid-smelling livestock buildings, to appease my father, who, though city-raised, liked farm things — tractors and Burpee's catalogs and livestock. When we'd complain, my mother would defend him (defending her husband was as much a part of her wifely duties as ironing his shirts) "Your father would *like* to see them. After the nice day he's treated us to, that's the least we can do."

"It's free, too," my father would add. "And you might learn something."

What he hoped the animals might teach us was never explained. They always looked stupid and somehow guilty of an offense, their heads bowed in mute shame as they waited for their sentence to be carried out. All except the pigs, whose jaunty ignorance was beyond shame. They'd stare out at us through remorseless eyes, slop dribbling from their blunt snouts, thoroughly enjoying what might be their last meal.



Later, we'd spend whatever money we had left (usually only Peg, the miser, had any) on trinkets or souvenirs. As evening collapsed like a tent, my parents would herd us slowly towards the gates. Before reaching them though, we'd beg my father for just one more ride. There'd be a brief lecture on how money didn't grow on trees, how he had to haul his carcass out of bed each and every morning, rain or shine. Then, feeling benevolent and generous, he'd finally hand us over for one last ride. We'd pick something memorable, something we'd still feel in the car on the way home: the double Ferris wheel or the Tilt-A-Whirl. Below, my parents gazed up into the sky—we could never be sure they saw us even though my mother waved. Their legs looked stumpy, like legs in the fun-house mirror, their heads too large. As I looked down, I might think something like "They'd be there to catch us" or "For their anniversary I'll get them something good. Maybe an electric can opener."

Then, our bellies full and our legs still jiggly from the ride, we'd pile into the Vista Cruiser, climbing into the way-back seat so you could face backwards. Watching the fair vanish into the night, we'd head towards our nice, snug ranchhouse, arrogantly confident in our happiness as only puppies and children can be.

There were of course clues that everything wasn't quite so nice. My father sitting at the kitchen table, long after supper, staring at the ice cubes in his scotch as if, in melting, they translated into some important message. Or my mother's sick headaches which didn't let her get out of bed all day—sometimes days. We'd have to tiptoe around the house and speak in sign language. She'd come shuffling out of her room, pale, her eyes narrow cuts, red and painful looking as fish gills. And there were the tight-lipped, guttural whisperings late at night in their bedroom—it sounded as if my parents were taking up Japanese and had to practice for some reason in their bedroom. There were never really full-blown fights in our house. My parents didn't usually swear in front of us, and if they did it came out sounding more like a cough than a curse. They weren't pan-throwers or door-slamers or breakers-of-things. In fact, they said or did little in front of us to make us question their happiness. And we didn't. Not even when I heard things late at night, after Peg and Wendy were asleep in their room.

My father, who often worked late, would bang around the house as if my mother had secretly rearranged the furniture after he'd left for work. He drank, but except for Christmas parties and summer barbecues, he never got drunk, never grew loud and obnoxious or lost control the way Trudy Borrup's father did. When my father was drunk his eyes would focus on your Adam's apple. His breath smelling like lighter fluid, he might tell me, "Bev, just remember one thing: you can always talk to the old man." We never talked.

One night I heard him come home. My mother, I knew, was sitting in the kitchen cutting out coupons from a magazine and arranging them by supermarket aisle in a metal box she had. For a long time neither spoke. Then my mother said, "What do you take me for?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Do you think I'm a fool?"

"I never said that. Don't put things in my mouth."

"How long?"

"What?"

"You heard me. How long?"

"Jesus Christ. You're a crazy bitch," he cried, louder than I'd ever heard him swear.

Right after that I heard something break, smash on the floor and the pieces scurry like frightened mice. Then a long silence. Later, I could hear my mother quietly sweeping up the fragments with the broom. The next day she drove into Hartford and went to G. Fox, a large department store, to replace the cup. It was part of a set she'd got for her wedding.

At school that year of the phony missiles, Tony Falcone joined our sixth grade class. He was stunted and cute in the way a bulldog puppy is, which means he would've made a fairly homely man, with sad, droopy eyes, a bluish shadow of beard across his cheek—and trouble tattooed across his forehead. Tony, or "Tone" or "The Falcon," as the other kids called him, had a special talent for getting into trouble. At least once a day Miss Robleski banished him to the corner, a place previously occupied by Auggie Fournier, or sent him to the principal's office. When we practiced our air raids, Tone often stood next to me and, for my sole benefit it seemed, wrote funny, sometimes obscene things in chalk on the brick walls. "Robleski has a fat ass," he wrote once. She caught him and screamed at him, "Do you think this is a *joke*, young man? This could be the *end* of the world. Are you ready to meet your Maker?" Miss Robleski liked the thought of apocalypse, of one last shot at sainthood.

Tone lived with his mother, a *divorcee*, a word which, in my mother's mouth, seemed to suggest something both distasteful and well deserved. As rumor had it, his father was either in prison, about to enter it, or just escaped from it. Despite all this, or possibly because of it, he was the first boy I had a crush on. He passed me love notes during lunch and wanted to go to the movies together. But when I asked my mother she cried, "Absolutely not! Good heavens, his father's a jailbird and his mother's...well...she's a *divorcee*."

We went to the fair as always that year. This day Peg and Wendy went with my mother while I decided to follow my father. At twelve, I was at the age where I wanted to separate myself from my younger sisters, from their childish and uncomplicated fun. I held back, aloof, at once cynical and a little confused by that cynicism. Peg said it was because I was in love with Tony the Hood, another name they hung on him. But for whatever reason, this day I didn't want to tag along with them so I went with my father, whose silent distance appealed to my own sudden need for privacy.

We wandered aimlessly around. We walked into exhibits neither of us cared to see. We listened vaguely to a Martian woman in an aluminum foil suit say what the clothes of the future would be like. We spent a quarter to take a look at Hitler's car, a sinister, gleaming black roadster that had a uniformed manikin in the back seat. You were supposed to know it was Hitler because of the moustache. As we looked at it my father said, "That's not Hitler's car. Who're they trying to kid?"

"It's not? How can you tell?" I asked, but he didn't answer, just left the trailer where the car was and moved on.

We sat at a picnic table under a big yellow tent and ate hot dogs for lunch.

"How's the hot dog?" my father asked and I told him it was good. He asked me if I wanted another and I told him no. After that we didn't have much to say.

Later we made our way over to the buildings where the livestock was kept. We walked from one squalid pen to another, looking at blue-ribboned pigs and cows whose defeated eyes looked like those of death row inmates we'd seen in movies. As we looked in at a bloated Hereford steer, my father said, "Next week the stupid bastard'll be hamburg." Then he smiled at me, his eyes sad and guilty-looking as those of the steer. "Its all a goddamned game, Bev. The whole business." I nodded, as though I understood, yet I felt terribly uncomfortable around him suddenly. I wanted to get back to the others, to have things be like they were.

It was later than usual when we rendezvoused with them. My mother said she had one of her headaches and wanted to head home a little early. Wendy threw a tantrum but my mother stood her ground. I didn't care.

We moved in the general direction of the gates. My mother in front, followed by a grumbling Peg and Wendy, then me, with my father bringing up the rear. As always, before we actually got to the gates, my sisters pleaded for one more ride.

"No, girls. My head is splitting," my mother said.

My father, however, was already taking out some money and handing it to Peg.

"Richard," she said sternly. "I *want* to go."

"One more ride's not going to break us. I'm the one who has to bust his tail to make it." Then he turned to me and asked, "What about you, Bev?"

I hesitated for a moment, then quickly decided to go too. We all got on and shot way up to the top, where we stopped to let other people on. Peg made our seat teeter so it scared Wendy.

"Cut it out, you jerk," Wendy said.

"Baby," teased Peg.

"Look," I said. "There they are."

"They don't see us," Wendy said.

"They're not even looking up."

They were standing off by themselves and they weren't looking at us. They were doing something in place of talking. My father was raising his arms up and down, flapping them like a thick-bodied, flightless bird. My mother gestured with one hand very close to his face, as if she were trying to hypnotize him.

"Hey!" Wendy called. "Up here! What's the matter with them?"

"They're both acting retardo," Peg said. "I betcha it's about Dad's job."

"How do you know?" Wendy asked.

"I don't know. What else can it be?"

I didn't say anything. I looked off in the distance and could see the sun, a fat blood blister about to rupture. I thought how the sky would look from up here if one of those bombs hit, the mushroom rising white, then red, then black into the sky. I thought of Tone, too. His pretty, doomed eyes. How he never seemed to care that he got in trouble, how he'd probably end up like one of those carnie men, or worse, like his father. And I thought, too, up there in the fragile seat, about the nature of love. I already knew enough about its

unpredictableness to realize things didn't always turn out right despite its presence, in fact, how things often went wrong exactly because of it. I pictured myself married to Tone Falcone and waiting for him to get out of prison, sending him loveletters, knitting him sweaters, going to visit him once a month. A martyr, I savored the sweetness of tragic love. At the top of that ferris wheel I saw all of that waiting for me, as if it'd all been decided and I only had to grow into it to fulfill it.

Then the ferris wheel started up again and spun us in a frantic circle. I felt my stomach drop out of me, the way it did when I thought of Tone. For long moments we couldn't even see them down below, just a blur of movement and color. I closed my eyes.

By the time we got off, my parents had stopped whatever it was they'd been talking about. My mother had the frustrated look of someone who has to sneeze and can't, while my father's face was flushed, like he'd just bent over to lace his shoes. We knew something was up. Without a word we headed towards the parking lot. When Wendy asked for some popcorn, I shot her a look and she quickly got the message too.

Near the gates was an open lot, trampled bare, dusty as the cattle drives in *Rawhide*. It was empty except for a single car. But it wasn't a regular car. It looked like a bomb had fallen on it, or actually, like it'd been used *as* a bomb, had been dropped from the sky. All the windows were shattered, the shards of glass strewn over the bare ground like green ice. The roof and hood and all the doors had been viciously caved in. You couldn't even tell what make it was anymore.

The oddest thing, though, was the small misshapen man who stood beside the car. He wasn't quite a dwarf, but he was very small with a large head and something terribly wrong with his back. Another carnie man, like the hawkers on the mid-way. He held a sledge hammer, and a sign nearby said, "Three Whacks A Buck."

We were passing the shattered car when my mother stopped and waited for my father to catch up.

"Why?" she asked when he got close. "I deserve that much at least."

"Not here, Evelyn. For Christ's sakes," my father replied.

"Yes, here. Right now."

"You're a fool. You know that?"

"A fool!" she cried. "For marrying a bastard like you, I am."

We stood and stared at them, amazed. It was the sort of quiet like after you've thrown a firecracker and you're waiting for it to go off, half-thinking it's only a dud but afraid to go near it. As they stood there it occurred to me exactly what was wrong, what had been wrong all along: they hated each other. Bitterly, passionately. It was as simple as that. I could only wonder why I hadn't noticed it before.

After a few seconds, my mother regained her composure. Turning to us she said, "All right, girls. Let's go. It's been a long day."

"What's the matter?" Peg asked.

"Nothing's the matter," my mother replied, gathering us together under her protective wing.

"Why's Daddy mad then?"

"Nobody's mad. We're all just a little tired. How about hamburgers and scalloped potatoes, for a special treat tonight?"

I'm sure my mother still wanted to believe we were all just a little tired. That a nice meal would fix everything. Then, incredibly, she turned to my father and, without a trace of anger or sarcasm, said, "Dear, we're ready."

My father glared at her for a moment, seemed about to go along with the game. But right then the little man with the crooked back called to him.

"Hey, buddy. Three whacks. Only a buck." The man winked and smiled lewdly at my father, conspiratorily. It was as if he were offering some unmentionable vice.

"Richard," my mother said, "we're going now."

But my father was walking towards the car, fishing in his pocket for one of those crisp, hard-earned bills. He paid the man, picked up the sledge hammer, and headed over to the car.

"Richard!" she called again, her voice full of fear, of desperation. "For heaven's sake. What *are* you doing?"

He didn't seem to hear her. He carefully looked the car over for an unblemished spot, one meant for him. He even touched the car with his hand, feeling for the right spot.

"Give 'er hell, buddy," the man goaded him on. "Get your weight behind it." He was making fun of my father but my father didn't seem to care.

He set his jaw and raised the hammer. He paused for a second—or at least it would always *seem* he paused, as if still contemplating not going through with it, still weighing the consequences. It'd be years before we learned, in bits and pieces, of his affair with a woman at the tool company, and years more before he actually left my mother, though not for the other woman. But it was in that brief moment of hesitation that he knew and we knew, and certainly my mother knew, that all was lost, that nothing would ever be the same again. Later, as I stood in the school basement waiting for a violence that would never happen, I'd remember *that* moment, and not the crash of the hammer hitting metal, the shattering of glass, the terrible, funny look on my father's face as he raised the hammer again and again, until the little man told him he only got three whacks.

A little before Christmas, Tone Falcone and his mother moved out of town. The story was they were moving back to live with his father, who, it turned out, wasn't in prison at all, but worked on an oil rig outside of a place called Pig Root, Wyoming. I remember the address because of the letters I sent there. Tone promised he would write. I wrote every week. I waited. He never wrote but I wasn't really surprised. I had already known that about love anyway.



PETER DESY

## Like Some Rivers

After the terrible winter  
froze the rose bushes in the yard  
so only two of eight survived,  
in the spring I thought of mountain sides  
where the earth thaws only feet  
below the surface. Scattered flowers bloom  
briefly, then the impenetrable ice returns.  
Here in Ohio the winter relaxed  
its stiff hold, as it always does; the bulbs  
fringing the house rose in soft profusion.

I don't know much about deserts  
or polar regions. I suppose  
they could be analogies of the human heart  
as some think of it. I don't believe  
in some great awakening of the human spirit  
or a joyous message from the cosmos.  
I would say we're more like some rivers  
that have still surfaces that harden easily,  
but miles away the source roils  
and is deeply moving.

DANIEL DALY

## Camping in Northern Woods

The woods in autumn bury us.  
They turn away from the sun  
as the north leans. Shadows  
disappear quickly and in rain  
the leaves are torn from trees.

This evening whorls of nervous birds  
assemble in perimeters of white oak.  
While the crows are driven inward  
towards a dark, seductive core.

I tell myself I'm listening  
for that small brown hunger  
who treks from deeper woods  
to rifle boxes and coolers,  
late at night, when I'm not,  
when I'm eavesdropping  
on the whispers of strangers  
half-in, half-out of firelight.

I could easily imagine the bear  
noising, juicing in the berries  
of bowing slender trees  
for food cradled between them,  
as he knows well its sweetness.  
I can spot him behind the bushes  
listening as logs chew on a fire,  
or a pick strums a sad song  
because he has to listen.

CLAUDE KOCH

## Prophetic Vision and The Writer

*Omnis Factura Tua Te Collaudet.*

Should a journeyman writer and teacher have anything at all to say about Sprophecy...or vision? There is the temptation to think I have—a mild pride; and the conviction that I have not—a mild despair. So I guess I stand in the normal human condition—half in and half out of Dante’s ante-room—half understanding and half-fumbling—and settling for some tentative observations that perhaps have questionable validity beyond my own experience.

I think, for instance: what may one discover—working from the practical, technical problems of writing—outward. May one discover *anything* that is pertinent to this topic? Does the secular labor, in itself, by the nature of the medium and the discipline, enlighten in a visionary sense? What might the Galilean fishermen as fishermen have known of *light* had they not been called? Is there vision in the fashioning and the repairing of the nets that escapes the secular? Is the medium itself matter as sacrament if it is understood and used selflessly by writer and reader?

These, to me, are practical questions—though, I suspect, of very limited general interest.

But they send me back to Flannery O’Connor’s letters, to some of her stories, and more casual prose. It is, quite frankly, humbling. *There* is ground, I think, few writers would have the audacity to dispute—the case being there proven that the exceptional writer may, at the very least, be an instrument through whose sensibility and embodied voice a vision, a revelation of what Christians have held to be true, may be majesterially unveiled. The poet found her voice, and the realities of her faith infused her art. In this sense Miss O’Connor helps one understand poetic vision. She certainly spoke for, revealed, bore witness to a truth beyond herself—and she dramatized distressing ambiguities *that* reality assured. Her *mode* is prophetic, though whether one would know that without knowledge of its theological and philosophical matrix is moot.

It would have been a shame if Flannery O’Connor’s stories had become simply another contribution to a growing exotic violence in our fiction. The spreading knowledge of the vision in terms of which she is to be read prevented this. That growing knowledge and suspension of disbelief certainly confirm the vision.

The poet has long been recognized as a vehicle—unfortunately, sometimes little more than a wind-tunnel. But if, as Flannery O’Connor said, “You do not write the best you can for the sake of art but for the sake of returning your best talent increased to the invisible God to use or not use as He sees fit,” certainly the writer—as poet (whether he works in prose or verse)—may be said to desire to “speak for” the Holy Spirit, at least wear Its livery. The poet always “speaks for” something. In that his speech reveals a truth that his faith



confirms he must, to the Christian of his sect, be speaking for the Holy Spirit. But how fortunate to be awakened, as Miss O'Connor was, to vision one's readings in philosophy and theology, and to have the skill to clothe the drama of the imagination that ensued in the rhetoric of illuminating action. I do not think that this sequence is a common experience today. Has someone said that Flannery O'Connor baptized the Gothic?

Having considered that, I sort through some ideas that emerge from 40-odd years of teaching literature and writing, and monitoring (for one cannot call it teaching) what we call "creative writing"—ideas concerning the discipline that must be engendered if a poem, a fiction, as vision is to found at all. The prophet may be illiterate and slovenly, but the poet who writes of him may not—and certainly the poet *as* prophet—if such a being exists—may not.

What of the application of these portentous terms (*prophecy* and *vision*) in the context of making imaginative literature today? One certainly must not play fast and loose with terms, nor can one find it easy to generalize on what a fiction should do or (aside from good making) should be. I know this: that the serious writer of fiction may pursue a story or a poem in progress with little clear perception of the mystery of its emergence.

Writers are unlikely to engage in unhealthy self-analysis because the act of making is of its nature neither therapy nor self-indulgence. They hope for a summoning and a finding that will be progressively rich in workable associations as it moves to its unanticipated end—its final form. They hope that the final form will be, to truth, at least what the shadow's shimmer in a pool is to the substance reflected.

The fiction, as it is summoned, may resist more and more the writer's desires—until he comes upon an unanticipated ordering of fictive elements before him. Frost said he discovered what he didn't know he knew—poem or story, it is quite the same. The finding of a story or a poem is like the entering of an unfamiliar and darkened room at first light. One knows it is a study or parlor, but the furniture in it, its style and placement, and the life in it, and spirit in the body of that life, reveal themselves very slowly as one stumbles about and as an unexpected lamp turns on (at whose behest?), or unexpected shades are unexpectedly opened, and the welcome windows are uncovered to the lucid morning.

If I could choose a god from the classic Pantheon as emblematic of the writer as *poet* it would not be Apollo, but Janus—god of highways, gates, and locks, god of beginnings—his youthful face turned to the past, his aged one to the future. I have been using the term *poet* here as Sir Philip Sidney did when that paragon of men wrote his *Defense* in the sixteenth century to order his own thought and to delight his friends. His poet is the *maker* (he preferred that term favored of the Greeks to the Roman's *finder* (though *our* practice, it seems, presses both upon us). His poet clothes the second nature he envisions in a rhetorical garment of many colors. Sidney's poet writes in verse or prose; what makes him a poet is the exercise of the imagination in the imitation of nature in the making of a fiction, and so I use the term. Miss O'Connor was a poet.

In my *emblem* I would see the wisdom that ages the face of Janus drawn primarily from that in the writer's craft that carries the weight of the past—the language, that repository of cultural and individual memories,—embodied in

images, analogies, and correspondences—functioning as elements in the verbal imagination—that, properly brought to bear on the present, unlock the gate of vision, or prophecy, in the natural order—an instrument of discovery, ordering, and expression for the poet as maker and finder.

Grace is the unearned gift of God, yet if the Holy Spirit is to speak through an artist *as artist*, poet *as poet*, it must be in terms of the discipline of the craft—and that one can help establish for the poet born. But I think now of prophecy in the natural order, and conditions that may encourage it.

Prophecy in the natural order—is that an idle dream, wishful thinking? Like Janus, those of us who are teachers or writers bear the past at our backs and look to the future; we are condemned to the virtue of hope. If there is in fiction such a thing as prophetic voice, there is a discipline that is its instrument—or (if one speaks in secular terms of what might be accomplished in the natural order) that may summon that voice. It is the latter aspect of the experience of writing that especially interests me. I use *prophetic* to mean simply “a speaking for,” and vision a “right seeing”—which is understanding. About prophecy in the theological sense I am not qualified to speak, though the temptation is great, and the arrogance such speech would imply on my part greater. About prophecy in what I take to be a root sense of the term (“a speaking for”) I think something may be said simply out of the practical experience of *making*—if only that it should hardly mean (as it sadly must for some contemporaries) a speaking *of oneself*.

**I**t is interesting to me at this moment in our shared pilgrimage when we are ridden by the illusion of detachment (the statistical knowledge of persons, of our society and its idiosyncracies), by a bloodless paradigm of aspects of our psychological and political nature drawn from polls and laboratories, couches and questionnaires, it is interesting to me, and illuminating that the dominant fictional mode is realism—because realistic fiction teaches detachment of another kind to find and shape the illusion of flesh and blood. In that fiction, now endangered by narcissism and voyeurism, lies a hope, desperately advanced by Christianity, for an art proclaiming that life makes sense, that causes and effects exist to be known, that a model, in little, of our pilgrimage is accessible to the craftsman with the discipline and humility to seek it out. I think this voice is endangered, and partly because not only the making of it, but the experience of it, requires a discipline fading in the schools, and becoming a matter of indifference in the general life—leaving us with the speech of narcissism in the prophetic mode.

School and family become more and more contented to *look*, but not *see*. The lazy teacher’s crutch in the classroom becomes the video experience. The parent, who once read to the child with a shared joy, now shares what we dare to call “quality time” before the television. The student does not learn to “hear.” The vagaries of the personal life are the fast food of knowledge on talk shows. God knows, unmonitored human nature never takes the reasonable way. “Right seeing” is not “looking.” “A speaking for” is not a glorification or exploitation of the self.

The right experience of serious realistic fiction (as of the poem in which the poet has achieved distance) recalls the *reader* to himself and requires of him

what it has required of the writer—a careful listening to words that are things themselves and symbols of things, that summon aspects of the reader's past as they have summoned the writer's, and direct a reordering of those aspects in terms that the detailed past has never before yielded to reader and writer—and so opens up to both a paradigm of meaning heretofore unexpected, a momentary assurance that the individual life has resources for yielding that unexpected coherence. As the words can mean for reader and writer only what the individual life permits them to mean, the fictional reordering becomes a reordering of one's own life under the hypnotic influence of the work that—while it is experienced and if it is wise enough in its beauty (the felicity of its form)—seems to be a climatic moment in the total life.

For the writer (who in the context of certainty in which Sir Philip Sidney wrote, need not—by definition—be more than *maker*) the discipline of his craft today imposes the obligation of *finding*, a kind of divination; the finding first of a fictional voice that will free him to discover (because the voice must not be that of his daily discourse with its conventional control of perceptions as he sees what he has been conditioned to observe and name); the finding, secondly, of a dramatic embodiment of that newly discovered voice that is the analogue for flesh and blood—particular, unique, as idiosyncratic as you and I, and as believable. It speaks for the pursuit of meaning that the Christian must believe is implicit in every moment of life. Through its discoveries, it proclaims the presence of that meaning, hard as it is to accept in the face of the "Shrieking voices/Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering" that, we have been reminded, always assail us.

Not only is the teacher's virtue hope, but also the poet's—whether he works in prose or verse. The search for a proclamation of understanding (Frost's "momentary stay against confusion") is fulfilled by good making. The promise is momentary peace, to be achieved by writer and reader—the peace that comes with a vision, lived through the medium of a heard language, creating an experience in time involving the sensibility, the total human being, in the pursuit of order. Here, in the natural order, is a revelation—and certainly what is "spoken for" is a persistent desire of the human spirit, momentarily confirmed.

**L**ast summer, I stood in the corner of a small room in the National Gallery in London. On a far wall there hung, side by side, two paintings by Robert Champin, done sometime in the early 15th century: the titles, AN UNKNOWN MAN; AN UNKNOWN WOMAN. I watched for about half an hour, thinking of the theme of prophecy and vision, while unknown 20th century men and women, to most of whom the painter's name probably meant nothing (he was the final unknown), paused and looked, and returned to look again—more frequently than before any other work in the room. What did they see? What drew them back? The colors were luminous, but not moreso than colors in paintings on either side of them; the faces in the two portraits had the inturning look of most faces in repose; there was nothing remarkable in the garments of these half-figures. The original vision was far away in time. Who was Champin "speaking for"? The sitters? An economic idea? Himself? An idealized conception of mankind? Flannery O'Connor said she found it

necessary to reconcile the eyes of the Church with her eyes. Is it the presence of an added dimension (not always determinable, but pervasive) that holds us? The four eyes of Janus? Perhaps that is the secret of contemporary realistic fiction, making it amendable to prophetic vision in the natural order: the disorder of life is explored, the theme of order remains (or, to paraphrase the noble and wise young Sidney: One holds up the shows of things to the desires of the mind, really concerned not with what is or can be but with what may and should be, though what is or can be supplies the flesh and blood). The detailed disorder of the mortal world becomes an instrument in the celebration of the ideal of order—though perhaps indirectly, in terms of form.

For the Roman, the poet was *Vates*, the diviner who had a sacred function—the finder. Perhaps he still has, potentially, that function—discovering paradigm after paradigm of order, implying in the realistic story (with its necessary and interlocking parts, and its totality more than the sum of them) that life makes sense in its details and that this sense may be discovered—as the Christian's faith, that is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,” discovers for him a “sense.”

The recurrent dream of order is, perhaps, in little, a dream of the City of God; and the earth in that dream is not simply, in the poet's eyes, symbolic but sacramental. Rightly seen, an instrument of grace.

The peacock that perches in the eaves of so many annunciations and nativities in the age of Robert Champin spread its hundred eyes for Flannery O'Connor, and she heard its wail in the darkness that was likened in the long tradition to the voices of Christians crying to God for help. The eyes of the peacock's splendid tail were the eyes of the all-seeing Church. Yet Miss O'Connor saw that it was a petulant bird, that it perched upon collapsing barns and outhouses; and when she painfully attended to its needs in that yard, she grasped the paradox in terms of which the contemporary Christian poet works—whose vision is the splendor of order that he must find and shadow forth out of air, thin air—in the reluctant and disordered images of mortal life. And if he is a chosen one (as perhaps Miss O'Connor was) possibly prophecy and vision in the theological sense may be granted—though he would never dare claim them through his own merits, being chastened by his labor in the recalcitrant earth of a mortal craft.



DAVID SUMNER

## Returned

We balanced in a cold canoe, and the angry sun spilled down on us like my mother's wrath. You caught two fish, and I sat for hours without a nibble, the lake as smooth as a beer can. A cedar branch floating by was the only thing disturbing the surface until my bobber lurched, bending toward the water. I pulled a small, brown trout into my world.

The sunlight reflected from his jeweled side while his gills worked in the wrong atmosphere. He was too small to eat but too handsome to give up right away. Holding it like a pet, I twisted the hook out of the mouth now torn by my devices. For a moment I felt remorse for the injured fish from the underworld, and then I returned it to the lake.

It was hotter at the dock when we shouldered the canoe, staggering up the steep steps. Suddenly my breath left my lungs, the scenery spun around me, a cable encircled my chest, and pulled me to the ground. The canoe fell beside me, pinning my brother beneath it. My leg was bent below me like a broken branch. Someone held me over the edge of something, then threw me back.

DAVID SUMNER

## Aspects of Death

The sky is shrouded, and death observes all the courtesies, phones long-distance to say he's dropped in on relatives, darkly hinting he would like to visit me. Playing dumb, I send flowers and make a small donation to cancer research.

Not easily put off, he mediates a peace between my brother and me. We haven't spoken in three years but now swap snapshots of our buried fears. No one could miss the family likeness.

Moved by death, someone offers to cut my grass, and most of my neighbors bring food—so much pastry and potato salad I can't eat it all before it spoils.

Finally, death persuades all my old lovers to write "Sorry to hear of your loss" on cards lightly scented where their perfumed wrists rest while composing thoughts of sorrow.

Released by death, this sympathy floats out of darkness, a beautiful moth beating the black air back—I hear it now, powdering the window as the telephone rings, bringing maybe a local call, death in town or down the block, but I can't answer for the life of me.

A. F. MORITZ

## What Luck, You Said

What luck, you said, looking at those old people.  
Were you thinking of all that did not happen to them,  
the things that had to let them pass  
unharméd, so they could be here now?

Those knobs of the twisted rhizome  
writhing back to Adam. Were you thinking of all  
the wizened turnings through the earth that their branch  
made:  
decisions like a snake's, to go this way or that, playing  
blindly through the baking grass? Each veering was  
necessary,  
that the pitiable worm-like creeper could trace  
a way where the spade never fell.

And so—as one does not ask when looking down  
at a complex vernal splendor from a hill, but then  
on a galling day one does ask: What  
cities, delicate species, burnt  
seas that once trembled here  
are missing from my eye; what died here  
before this moment's life, so that absence guts  
this scene painted by ignorance and desire  
as a perfect glory; what fallen  
rot here without even a widow wailing  
to remind us—

I had to wonder, looking at those old people.  
Were you, inside your helpless beauty,  
consuming your whole strength hoping for me  
to be with you still, many—a thousand—  
slow years from now, with eyes  
still sweet and hungry from everything they'd seen.

A Story by

DANIEL JONES

## Trampoline

Sunday, mid-morning, and some man who looked like my father was standing in our driveway with his arm on the open door of a brown station wagon. Inside, in the passenger seat, sat a small, dark-haired girl.

My mother and I had been sitting at our breakfast table eating blueberry pancakes—the same blueberry pancakes we ate almost every Sunday. Blueberry pancakes are fine, but there's a limit. On this particular Sunday, I was the one facing the window, and on first glimpse I'd thought the man out there was in fact my father. But something hadn't been quite right—the way he stretched his arms or something. "Who's that?" I said.

First my mother looked over her shoulder, then she stood up. "Let's find out."

Outside, halfway along the cement walk to our driveway, my mother stopped and put her hands on her hips. "Well," she said. She was still in her nightgown—I in my pajamas. It was cool out, but nicely so. My mother put her head down and shook it some, then continued walking towards the man.

"Hello, Jeanie," he called out, then ducked his head into the car. "Come on out, Sarah, honey," he said, loud enough for us to hear. "Meet some of your extended family."

The brown-haired girl opened her door, and in a flurry of movement she stepped out of the car and came quickly around to where the man was standing, grabbing onto his shirt and pressing her face against it. On the way I saw that she was a little Mongoloid girl. I had no idea how old she was. She could have been anywhere from eight years old to fifteen years old, or even more than that, I thought, her growth having been stunted. She wore a powder blue dress that was white and all lacy around the neck and at the cuffs of her sleeves, and she had on those shiny, black-soled, one-buckle shoes you might see a school girl wearing as part of a uniform. Her brown hair was in ponytails. It looked like she'd been dressed-up for the occasion. But the man sure didn't, whoever he was. He wore dirty workman's pants, leather boots, and a blue flannel shirt that was big on him and hung out of his pants in the back. He had thick, dark hair that was going every which way—most of it shooting straight over his forehead like the bill of a cap.

"Jeanie, you remember my daughter Sarah," he said.

"Of course I do. Hi, Sarah," my mother said to the Mongoloid girl. Then she turned to me. "You don't remember these people, do you, Stewart?"

"No," I said.

"I'm sure he was too young," the man said.

My mother looked at me and said, "This is your Uncle Bud. We once had Christmas with him in Oklahoma when you were little. I'm afraid it wasn't



much of a Christmas for you. You ate a walnut brownie and blew up like a balloon."

"I remember that," said Uncle Bud, smiling.

"Oh, it was awful," my mother said.

"We soaked you in the bathtub for hours," Bud said. "You had hives. And a fever too, if I remember correctly."

I knew what they were talking about, but I didn't have any memory of it. I must have been only four or five years old. It was the first time I'd ever eaten a walnut, or any nut—the discovery of my allergy. In fact, I tell people about that very incident whenever they ask, "What happens if...?" But that didn't change the fact that I still didn't know this Uncle Bud character. And his Mongoloid daughter was a total mystery.

While looking at Uncle Bud, my mother said to me, "We weren't expecting a visit from your Uncle Bud today. But here he is."

"Here I am," Bud said, pushing his hands deep into his pockets. It was quiet for a moment. Then Bud looked at me. "So how old are you now, Stewart?"

"Thirteen, sir."

Bud laughed. "You're in puberty."

Nobody said anything to that. I didn't know what could cause someone to make such a weird remark, but Bud didn't seem bothered about having made it. The morning sun was shining across his big chest and into his eyes, which made him squint so much that he smiled openly. "So are you bringing this boy up to be a Southern Gentleman?" he asked my mother. "Is that what this 'sir' stuff is all about?"

My mother didn't answer him, and I was glad for that. His saying those things was making me feel silly, and as a result I was starting to not like him. In the silence, he looked past the two of us at our big house and then let his eyes roam all around our property, out across our expanse of smoothly mown lawn and off into the grey woods beyond.

I began to wonder what Uncle Bud had come for. All I knew about my father's brothers and sisters, of which there were many, was that they lived mostly in Oklahoma and Kansas, and that, according to my mother, they often used to "come to us" for things. That didn't mean they'd visit us ever. It just meant they'd get in touch with my dad somehow—call him up or write—wanting something. In fact, I didn't know any of them, which I'd never felt one way or the other about. And I didn't know quite how to feel now about finally meeting my Uncle Bud, who stood in front of me, hands in his pockets, looking like my father at a costume party. He had my father's exact nose—the same nose I have, too—sort of long and sharp with a ridge to it.

"Well anyway," Bud said. "We've been doing our share of traveling, Sarah and me. We've been back and forth across this country more than once this year."

"I'm sure you have," my mother said.

"We have," Sarah said. They were the first words she'd spoken, and all of us looked at her. She buried her face again in her father's flannel shirt. I thought she was pretty cute for a Mongoloid girl. Then—and I don't know why—but right then is when it occurred to me for the first time that if Bud was my uncle, Sarah was my cousin. That scared me. In school we'd learned about genetics, and I couldn't help but wonder what genetics might mean in

this case. I remembered something I'd seen on TV about how nowadays you can test the mother to see if she's carrying a Mongoloid baby, and how if it turns out she is there are some painful choices to be made. I thought of Sarah's mother, and I wondered if her choice was to abandon ship. Thinking that way, I began to feel sorry for Bud.

My mother said to him, "So where are you off to now?"

"I've got a job waiting for me out in Alaska."

"Alaska," my mother said.

"On a fishing boat," Bud said. "You can earn thousands in a matter of months up there now. It's unbelievable."

"I want to go to Alaska sometime," I said. It was the truth. I wanted to travel far and wide in the course of my life. But I immediately regretted admitting such a thing to Bud. I didn't know what direction it might send him off in.

He brought his hands to his hips, giving me his full attention. "Do you? You ever worked on a fishing boat?"

I shook my head.

"Well, it's man's work all right," he said, thumbs cinched in his belt loops. "It's no place for children. You spend most of your time standing thigh-deep in salmon down in the hull of a fishing boat. How does that appeal to you?"

I tried to imagine Uncle Bud that way, down in the hull of a fishing boat. I saw him hunched over in a cramped, smelly, V-shaped place. He was working, moving his arms. Hundreds of cold, silver fish thrashed desperately against his rubber-booted legs. "It doesn't," I said.

Bud laughed a single laugh. "Don't tell me you're like your daddy," he said. "Afraid to get your hands dirty."

"Bud," my mother said.

At that, Bud smiled and stood silently for a moment, as if to withdraw what he'd said. He rolled his tongue along his lips. Then he said, "So where is that man anyway? Where is that brilliant brother of mine?"

"He went down to the university. He's at his office," my mother replied. And right after saying those words she gave me this quick, nervous look—a look that I took to mean, *Just go along with this, okay?* Because my father certainly wasn't down at the university—not at the University of Virginia or any other university. He hadn't set foot in a classroom in over two years, not since my parents got divorced. Now he was working for a chemical company down in Atlanta, over five hundred miles away, and living in this big, glassy, high-rise apartment he'd bought for himself. It's where I'd spent my past two Christmases—a clean, shag-carpeted place with no fireplace and always a fake Christmas tree that we'd stand up in pail of water anyway.

"Ah, yes," Bud said, nodding. "Of course."

I just looked at him. I may have even had my mouth open, I don't know. It amazed me that Uncle Bud wouldn't have known such a thing about his own brother. But I was even more surprised that my mother had lied to him about it. For a moment, I wondered if Bud really was my uncle like he said he was, or if that was just a lie too, about to roll itself up and change into something else.

Whatever the case, I decided, I didn't care about it. One way or another, none of this mattered much to me.

Right then Sarah began pulling on Bud's flannel shirt and pointing at something behind my mother and me. He leaned down, and she whispered something to him.

"Would you mind if Sarah jumped on that trampoline over there?" Bud said, standing upright again and pointing to the other side of our house at the walled-in garden where we had a trampoline set up. "Sarah loves trampolines."

"Stewart, would you please go along and supervise?" my mother said. "Make sure she uses it safely."

"Oh, she knows all of that," Bud said. "She gets along better than you'd expect. She's a pleasure, really."

Going along with Sarah was fine with me. I thought I'd have to lead her over to it, but she took off and ran pell mell—those black soles skipping along our walkway—to the other side of the house and out onto the lawn. Once there, she grabbed onto the springs of the trampoline and then just stood there, pushing on them. I came up behind her—the lawn of our walled-in garden dewy and cold under my bare feet.

"First you have to take your shoes off," I said.

"I know I have to take my shoes off," she said, sort of bubbling the words out, all of a sudden smiling like she couldn't stop smiling, and even drooling a little out of the side of her mouth. She took off her shoes like anyone would. I thought she was going to get up on the trampoline, but instead all she did was climb onto the steel frame, wrapping her arms and legs around it. She proceeded to hang there like a possum, horizontally, her white-socked feet hooked in among the springs.

"No, you need to get up on it," I said.

But she stayed put, giggling.

I wasn't sure I should touch her, but I didn't think it was right to let her simply hang there like that. "Here," I said. And I got my arms underneath her and rolled her up onto the thing, which wasn't so easy. I'm not the strongest person, and at first she had an iron grip on that frame. But then she loosened her grip, trusting me, and let me scoot her out beyond the springs towards the center of the trampoline.

"Be careful," I said as she got her footing and stood up. "You'll split your head open if you aren't careful."

She'd already begun with a little up and down motion, just getting the feel of things, arms out to the side, her feet not yet even leaving the webbed surface.

"That's it," I said. "Now start jumping."

As she jumped more and more, her feet began to clear the surface of the trampoline by a good ways, and her blue dress started to rise and billow to her knees. It billowed higher and higher, revealing her pale thighs and then her white underwear and eventually even the whiteness of her little fat belly. I saw all of this. I didn't care that much about it, though. She was so happy and funny I didn't even notice her in that way like I would've noticed had she been a cute, normal girl, who, come to think of it, wouldn't have been so happy in the first place from just jumping on a trampoline. Any normal girl of thirteen probably wouldn't even have gotten up on the thing, especially while wearing a dress, which I saw right then as being a stroke against them. But I didn't actually know if Sarah was around that age or not. It was weird. On one particular jump her dress went up so high I even saw that she wore a small,

white bra above her belly. I don't know why it surprised me so much that a Mongoloid girl would wear a bra, but it did.

Believe it or not, she then started doing all kinds of maneuvers. First she did a seat drop, her body jack-knifing against the mat before being flung back into the air. Another seat drop, followed by a full-body drop, her whole body popping back up again stiff as a board, arms reaching for the sky. They were all easy maneuvers. I'd done them myself with little practice. But I could also do some things she couldn't do, or wasn't doing yet anyway. A reverse seat drop, for instance. And flips, both front and back. Those maneuvers—the flips—would nearly give my mother a heart attack. "Stewart, what happens if you strike your head on this bar?" she'd say, her hands on the frame, as I went about my routine. "I won't!" She was spotting me, something she insisted upon. But the very fact that she was spotting me, and clearly worried, would make me all the more daring. I'd even attempt double flips, my body plummeting to the trampoline at odd, dangerous angles. "I'll sure be glad when the Qualbens come home and take this thing back," she'd say. The Qualbens, our neighbors, owned the trampoline. Their kids were gymnasts. In their backyard were also parallel bars and a high bar—all of it sunk in post holes of cement. And since they were gone for three weeks to visit their sick grandmother in Norway, we had the trampoline until their return. Which was soon, I think—within a few days.

I was happy they weren't home yet, though, because watching Sarah tossing herself around was something to behold. She started making this noise—"Ooooo, Ooooo"—like an owl, sort of, but real soft and drawn out like when you're trying to hold back a laugh. It was funny how she'd be flung into the air after each maneuver, making that noise, those ponytails of hers rising and falling against the sides of her head like the floppy ears of a dog. It certainly had me entertained. I started to smile and laugh watching her, even though I knew that wasn't polite under the circumstances. I couldn't help myself. Her socks even started to come off. The ends of them were empty and flopping around.

I was completely wrapped up in this, standing at the edge of the trampoline, when suddenly Sarah stopped jumping, head perked, legs absorbing the rebound.

"Sarah," her father called.

I hadn't even heard him call the first time, that's how wrapped up I'd been.

She crawled down from the trampoline and dashed off towards the driveway. I picked up her shoes and followed her, worried that at any moment she was going to trip on her floppy socks and bust her face open. But she made it fine. In the driveway, she ran into her father's arms, grabbing him around the waist. Her chest was heaving.

"Boy, she's great on the trampoline," I said as I approached, carrying her shoes. "I couldn't believe it."

Bud smiled at me. "She's an athlete, all right," he said. Then he put his hand on top of Sarah's head. "Well, we'd better get going, pumpkin," he said to her. "We've got a long ways to go tonight."

"I'm not staying here with Aunt Jeanie?" Sarah bubbled into his shirt.

"No, baby," Bud said. "Nope, that's not going to work out after all. I'm afraid plan 'A' is officially scrapped." He gave her a little one-armed hug. "But you're going to come along with me to Alaska instead. How does that sound?"

"I'm not staying with the trampoline?"

"There's plenty of trampolines in Alaska," Bud said.

I looked to my mother, wanting to know what was going on. But she had her eyes on Sarah, whose head was pressed sideways into her father's dirty shirt, tears on her cheeks, her chubby arms clamped around Bud's waist. Bud was now bent over trying to unclamp them, prying at his daughter's fingers while still smiling awkwardly at my mother and me.

"What's going on?" I said, even though I was already becoming pretty clear about it.

"Oh, it's just been a quick visit from your Uncle Bud," Bud said, smiling, working Sarah's hands apart. "I do this every so often."

"You've never done it," I said.

"Not with you guys, maybe." He stood upright, holding one of Sarah's hands in his. Then he looked at Sarah's shoes in my hands. "Are those Sarah's shoes you've got there?"

"Yes sir."

"I'll take them," he said, taking them. I thought about not giving them to him, but I didn't think about that until after he'd already taken them from me. Carrying the shoes, he led Sarah over to her side of the car and put her in. He fastened the seat belt around her, then closed her door and made his way back towards us. "Goodbye, Jeanie," he said to my mother, hugging her stiffly. "Thanks anyway." He reached out and shook my hand. "See you, Stewart. Avoid those walnuts, all right?" With that, he swung his big body down into the driver's seat and closed the door.

The station wagon backed into the street, Bud waving at us, Sarah strapped in beside him. And my mother and I watched them drive away, right on out of our neighborhood.

As soon as they were out of sight, I turned to my mother and said, "Why couldn't she stay?" I wanted to hear what she had to say about this.

"Because, Stewart," was all she said.

"Because why?"

But my mother wouldn't answer me further. She started walking quietly back towards the patio.

"Because why?" I was right at her heels, speaking loudly, but she just kept walking. "Tell me."

Finally, at the front door, she stood still. Her head was bowed down a little. Her hand was on the door, holding it open for herself, but she wasn't moving—not going inside or anywhere. She looked so weak that way. Like a weakling. That was the exact word in my head. My mother's a weakling, I thought, biting away on her lip like she was doing, and just standing there trying to hold herself together. And all of a sudden I hated her for being that.

"Oh, I don't know, Stewart," she said at long last, letting her breath out. "These things aren't as simple as you try to make them."

"I guess not," I snapped back. I stood with my hands solidly on my hips.

Ignoring me, she looked down at herself. "Will you look at me?" she said. "It's almost eleven o' clock and I'm still in my nightgown."

And I was still in my pajamas. But that didn't mean anything. "Who cares?" I blurted out. My mother looked at me, shocked. So I said it again, "Who cares?" I don't know how I expected her to respond. I wanted something out of her right then, but I didn't know what. "Who cares if you're still in your nightgown? It covers up your body like clothes are supposed to, doesn't it?"

My mother squinted at me. "Stewart," she said. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"I'm talking about the difference between clothes and nightgowns, which there isn't any." Though I wasn't sure what I was talking about either. I couldn't make sense of anything. But suddenly I felt the urge to do something drastic. So I reached down and yanked open the snaps of my pajama bottoms, letting them drop to the ground at my bare feet. As they fell, I felt air on myself. Then as my mother watched, horrified, I stepped out of where my pajama bottoms had bunched at my ankles and began to dance half-naked around our patio, my arms dangling freely from my body and my head rolling loosely on my shoulders. I danced from one end of that small patio to the other end, my feet pounding against the hard cement as I leapt to and fro. But I could hardly even feel my feet pounding. Mostly all I felt was the crisp, morning air as it rushed around my bare butt and legs.

"Dammit, Stewart. Stop behaving like an idiot!" my mother yelled as I continued my strange dance. "Stop it! Do you hear me?" Then, not yelling anymore, she said, "Are you only trying to make me feel bad? Because if that's your intent, I can assure you I feel bad enough already." Turning away with a flourish of her nightgown, she went back inside.

Once she'd closed the door, I stopped my dance and stood there, hands on my knees, trying to catch my breath. My heart was pounding. I looked down at myself—at my white, skinny legs just starting to sprout dark hair. Soon there would be dark hair all over my legs, and not long after that I would be an adult. As for now, though, I'd committed a wild, unexplainable act, and I knew my mother would be waiting inside, standing at the sink rinsing the soggy remains of our blueberry pancakes into the disposal, or just sitting at the breakfast table tugging at her lip—waiting, in either case, for me to come in and explain it.

But I didn't want to think about that. And I'd already started walking back to where my pajama bottoms lay in a heap on the patio when my mother reopened the door and whispered loudly out to me, "Stewart, would you please come inside this instant! Someone's going to see you!"

I didn't want anyone to see me. So I stepped into the leg holes, lifted the flannel pants to my waist, resnapped them. But I didn't go inside. Not right away. For a moment I just stood there looking at my mother—at her face pinched with worry, eyes wet, at the door she held open for me.



BARBARA CROOKER

## Writers' Colony

Here, we are sequestered, cloistered, nuns in their habits,  
walking down a narrow path hedged in by boxwood, walled  
off from the world.

Heads bowed in meditation, we process to our studios; a  
choir of crickets chants their orisons.

Ah, the contemplative life, floating through days without  
schedules, appointments, car pools,  
the grace of days to write in, time strung out like a rosary....

In a shining meadow of goldenrod, asters, grasses gone to  
seed,

a herd of cows appears, our bovine sisters, robed in sleek  
habits.

Their heavy molars click a slow cadence, sweet green breath  
steams in the air.

They have no responsibilities, financial worries, dinners to  
fix.

The grass is always there, and it is always green.

Here, there is no morning paper, no nightly news, no one  
knows

what day it is, the date, only the season, autumn, the woods  
just starting to flame....

Nights grow colder, we lie in our narrow cells, between  
chaste sheets.

We rise to work like prayer.

A Story by

MADELENE CARR

## Marriage

Already before they left the house Fergus had the sweet silly look brought on by too much drink taken in the afternoon. It was useless to try to talk seriously now. You'd get no sense out of him, no hold on him at all. He would put his arm around her and laugh and say kindly cruel things about her to Tanya.

The three of them boarded a bus for town. They always took guests in town for an evening of drinking with the lads, some of Fergus' fellow teachers and a few bachelors left over from the old days. It was the custom of the country, what everyone from home expected to do in Dublin, and Claire did not mind at all. She welcomed any break in the dull routine of her life, particularly an escape that brought back the ghost of happier times. One more day and Tanya would be off for the Continent which meant that this interlude would end and the dark days again close around her. Visits such as Tanya's were now her only diversion, stop-overs by old friends curious to see how she, the expatriate, lived. Claire listened to their talk of Paris, Rome, Athens, storing up crumbs of information she longed to use some day. Time was when she and Fergus planned to travel the world, but she had since learned that he had no real interest. He wanted only to stay in this city comfortable with his cronies, easy in his accustomed milieu.

On the bus he sat abstracted, smiling wryly to himself as though he had a secret, his beautiful eyes looking down into his beard with simulated wisdom. Tanya too was silent most of the way, obviously keeping her mind on Claire's remarks with difficulty. When the bus set them down in College Green she touched Claire's arm.

"I am embarrassed. I didn't like to say anything before we left, thought I'd be all right. D'you mind if I go back? I feel just rotten."

"Why, of course," said Claire. "It's not important. I'll go with you. We'll get a taxi. Fergus, get a cab. Tanya isn't feeling well."

Her mind was busy going over the meal she had served before they left. Had something disagreed with her friend? Fergus showed a proper concern and when he saw that Tanya could not be persuaded to go with them, he stepped off the curb to hail a cab.

"I'll go with her," said Claire.

"No, no, please. If I spoil your evening, I'll feel twice as bad. Please just let me catch a bus back by myself. All I need is a night's rest."

Claire thought of Fergus on his own for the evening. Inevitably he would drift off after the pubs closed to finish the night at someone's flat and toward morning fall in the dront door slushed. She could not bear Tanya to see how it was and besides since she was out, she might as well go on with it and



chance having a bit of enjoyment. Fergus had stopped a cab. He was going through his pockets.

"That's funny. I took out twenty quid before we left the house. Did I lose it?"

Her heart sank. He always rammed his notes willy-nilly into his pockets wadded up like discarded memos. Their life together was a long story of all the cash he lost. But there was more to it than carelessness. Standing there on the curb the suspicion came to Claire that here was another ploy to frustrate the system she had lately inaugurated to divide his pay when the check was cashed so that she would have a proper share for the house, not be without the price of a packet of tea or a loaf of bread. It must be that he resented any system. He always agreed to her plans but he always managed to cheat.

"If you lost it, what are we drinking on?" she said.

The old charm came up in his smile and he shrugged.

"It's nothing. You have a tenner. I'll pay you back."

"But that's my house money," she cried.

And then she realized that they were standing in the public street arguing in front of Tanya like a common lot. A bus pulled to the curb.

"I'm off," said Tanya. "I'll be fine as soon as I'm in bed. I'm just worn out. I'll see you in the morning. Drink one for me."

She jumped on the bus and was gone.

The following morning Claire set up a late breakfast. Fergus was on spring holidays from his school and Tanya would be leaving early the next day. The occasion called for sausages and rashers and grilled kidneys and eggs, brown bread and marmalade. Fergus, who had taken the child with him when he went to the shop for the morning paper, was delighted to smell the meat cooking and to see the table spread when the two of them returned. He rubbed his hands together and his eyes lit up. The child came to the table and took off some cutlery, pulling the cloth awry. Tanya ran to the rescue but Fergus laughed.

"The little man knows what he wants. I'd say if you go to the kitchen and give your mammy a bit of a push, we'll get started."

Claire came into the dining room laden with plates. Her blond hair, pulled severely back from her face in a knot, had escaped in strings and her expression was serious, preoccupied.

"You sit here, Tanya. I'll get Donal's bib."

She set down the plates and returned with the bib and handed it to Fergus. When he tried to tie it under the child's chin, the little one pulled away angrily.

"No? He doesn't want the bib, Claire."

"But he must have it. He'll spill egg down his clean pullover. Donal, let daddy tie on the bib."

Fergus made a second try but the child grabbed it and threw it on the floor. Fergus laughed heartily.

"Come then," he said.

He gave the child a sausage in his hand and let him walk away from the table leaving the bib underfoot. Claire picked him up and set him on a chair. The three adults settled themselves and Fergus glowed at the full table.

"It's lovely," he said.

After a little silence given to eating, Claire spoke to her husband.

"It's a beautiful morning. Will you be mending the rain gutter?"

Fergus made a deprecatory gesture.

"Ah, Claire, it doesn't seem like the day for that."

Claire laughed bitterly.

"If it's raining you can't do it and if it's fair there's not need," she said.

Fergus smiled between bites.

"It's such a little job," he said. "I can do it any time. Some evening, wouldn't you think?"

"But Dennis needs the ladder tomorrow."

"Ah well, we'll have it again later."

Suddenly his face lit up as if with inspiration.

"I'll borrow a ladder from Alex, from them next door. I'd say they have a ladder."

Claire laid down her fork and leaned toward him.

"Why can't you use the ladder you have while you have it and get the job done?"

He shrugged. "I could so. But actually I agreed to call around to McHugh. He'd like a game or two of tennis while the weather holds and we've to discuss arrangements for the trip we're taking with the Sixth next week."

After that they ate in silence except for a few words between Claire and Tanya. When the meal was finished, Fergus looked up with happy innocence.

"Will I wash up?" he said.

"I'll do it this time," said Tanya. "Claire hasn't let me turn my hand to help since I arrived."

"Then I'm off," said Fergus.

When the little boy saw him putting on his jacket, he ran to the door and cried to go with him. Fergus turned back. He smiled as though the situation wrung his heart.

"Not this time, little man. Claire, will you take him? He wants to go with his da, poor little fellow."

"Just go," she said and sat over her tea. When the door was shut and the child had subsided, she shook her head.

"He can't bear to refuse Donal. Of course it's hard to say no. He would rather I do it."

"You're too easy, Claire," said Tanya. "You're wearing yourself out. Both your guys look after number one and you let them get away with it."

"What can I do? I despise cunning. I won't stoop to scheming, and the only alternative would be constant battle that would accomplish nothing."

"I admit you'd be the last one to contrive," said Tanya, "but *honestly*, this house. How can he expect you to live in a place that's falling down around your ears? Why, the snow must drive into your kitchen in drifts in the winter."

Claire laughed.

"Actually we don't have much snow. Oh, I don't mind that so much."

"Don't *mind!*"

"It's the way the rain gushes out of that broken gutter and in under the door that I mind. And I don't particularly like cooking on a stove that has only two burners working, but he will never do anything in the house and you know how dear repair service is. There's never an extra quid for anything like that."

Tanya pulled down her mouth in disdain.

"Repair service! A man should do little things like that himself. He should be ashamed to look at this house."

"But he doesn't look at it. He's never here and when he is, he sees nothing. I don't honestly believe he would notice if he came home and every stick of furniture was gone."

The girls had a pleasant day. After they did up the house and changed the child, they walked in town, rummaged in book shops, and sat in the Green while Donal played around the fountain. Before they walked back they bought some special delicacies for their evening meal. Later in the afternoon they put Donal for a nap and called in a neighbor's little girl to watch him while they had a drink at the pub on the corner. When they returned, Claire set a coal fire in the grate and went out to the back with the scuttle.

"Oh god, no coal," she called. "He's forgotten to fetch it."

Tanya offered to go but Claire laughed and said it would be a fine sight to see an American lady lugging a bag of coal up the street. They had to make do with a small electric heater.

"I see the man going up and down with his horse and wagon ringing his bell," said Tanya. "Why don't you have the coal delivered?"

"Oh yes, well, he rang so often when I had no money to pay that it was simpler to stop him off," said Claire.

For supper they set the table for two and kept up a flow of light talk between them. Neither of them mentioned Fergus.

Sometime in the night he came to the front door and hammered. Claire knew she had lost his key. It was not an unusual occurrence. She would have left him to make what he could of his plight had she not been ashamed to let Tanya hear. She hurried down and opened and he came in and passed her without a word and she let him go up. She turned on a light downstairs and tried to read but her mind kept drifting away from the text. She went up and looked at him sprawled across the middle of the bed fully clothed, breathing through his open mouth. The stench was heavy.

She opened the top of the bedroom window and leaned out looking over the sleeping city. The spring air was soft and full of the fragrances of new foliage and blossoms and of smoke from dying fires beneath hundreds of chimney pots. She thought of her student days, of how she had fled from the shallow, glittery society of home, from the thorn hedge of fear that went with a girl walking home at night, from the pressures to succeed at things that were meaningless to her, from the silly status talk of her peers. When she arrived in this country, she had thought it was a place made only for her. It was like dropping into a haven where she was finally safe and at home. She listened enchanted to the soft talk, never offensive, always easy and full of subtle humor and magic turns of phrase. She was at home and welcome among them, and then one night the most provocative of them all, the embodiment of disdain for all she run from, came back to her flat with her to coax the smoky old chimney to draw.

Since that time most of their friends had gone questing after the new success. They lived in just-built houses in the suburbs and drove cars to reach them and talked about the expanding economy. She scorned their preoccupations.

pation with affluence as she had scorned the life styles of her friends at home, but—what now?

Poor Fergus. All he lived for was the figure he cut with his students and cronies. He had nothing left but his threadbare charm and the watch he kept to protect the little selfish privileges that allowed him to exercise it. And herself? Chronic resentment was making her old before she was thirty. Yet looking over the sleeping city she could still catch a whiff of those former days, the shared mockery of false values, the literary talk, the easy pace of life attuned to books and true communication.

Tanya was up early in the morning. When Claire came down, she was dressed for traveling and her luggage was standing at the front door.

"How do I call a cab?" she said.

"I'll run down to the phone box and ring for you if you wait until I throw on some clothes. Did you have your coffee?" said Claire.

The taxi had come and gone and Claire had bathed the child and fed him his porridge and set him to pouring water from one pot to another in the kitchen sink before she heard stirrings from above. As she put the kettle on to boil and milk to heat, Donal reached for a skillet and dragged the translucent tea cup she had taken out for Tanya, one of a set that had been given to her as a wedding gift, into the sink. She gathered up the fragments.

Would she never have anything nice? She looked at the stained back wall of their little garden plot. A steady rain was falling and already water had found its way through the leaky kitchen roof and was dripping on the floor around her. Going on this way she could easily slide down, down until she ended like the lumpy old women in the neighborhood hobbling on arthritic feet between their squalid homes and the corner shop. This was the last of Fergus' holidays. Now began another spell of loneliness filled only with dirty housework and her wretched failures to keep Donal amused.

She made two mugs of coffee with hot milk and carried them upstairs. While he dressed she sat on the bed and sipped her morning drink. She passed lightly over his rather shamefaced inquiries about Tanya, but when he asked, as he always did, whether she had plans for the day ahead, her tone changed.

"As a matter of fact I have," she said.

He looked at her in surprise.

"I promised Ann Quigley to meet her at the National Gallery. That exhibition of drawings is in its last week."

"Ah yes," he said. "Well, in that case—"

He wrinkled his forehead. She knew that he doubted she was telling the truth and that he was trying to figure a way for himself.

"It's the last day you have free," she said. "I expect you'll want to take Donal with you if you go out."

He made no answer.

"Oh and Fergus, you wouldn't have a spare fiver, would you? You know how the Quigleys did more than their share the time we went out with them. I'd want to ask her in somewhere."

She knew she had touched a tender spot. His pride would never let him refuse to stand their share of the entertainment. He hunted around and sure enough he rooted out a crumpled ten-pound note. He looked at it and shook his head regretfully.

"A pity. It's all I have, my last bit."

She shrugged and smiled sweetly as she reached out her hand and took it.

"I'll break it and take half," she said.

She zipped the note into her skirt pocket, thinking to herself, *And you can whistle for the other half. You've seen the back of this one for the last time, you have.*



MARIN SORESCU

## About You

I've seen my face before  
But can't remember where.

Are you by chance the one  
I laughed with  
In a former life,  
Gluing our noses to the world's soul  
Like a shop window?

You have a wrinkle on your forehead  
Which reminds me of history,  
Modern and contemporary.

If I'm not mistaken, I've seen these eyes  
Gazing at some usual things.  
At sadness, night and fright.

You have some relation, a hand, a thought,  
Some eyebrow, something like that,  
To the sun  
And the other falling stars?

I swear  
You're the one who fell in love forever  
With the girl  
Whose name always slips your mind.

Oh,  
Everything seems very familiar  
About you,  
Even the days that didn't happen  
But will.

*Translated, from the Romanian, by Adriana Varga and Stuart Friebert*



## Book Marks

Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz III,  
and I. Milo Shepard, editors.

### *The Short Stories of Jack London, The Authorized One-Volume Edition*

New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990, 780 pp., \$35.00.

Reviewed by  
KEVIN J. HARTY

Jack London has had a curious literary reputation. Prolific by any definition of the term—he wrote novels, plays, essays, and more than 200 short stories—he died at age 40 in 1916, the first American author to have earned \$1 million in his lifetime. His best known work, *The Call of the Wild*, was an instant success when it was first published in 1903 and has remained a best seller ever since. His works have been a favorite of filmmakers in search of cinematic sources from 1913 when the Balboa Amusement Company released a silent version of "A Piece of Steak," a story included in this edition, to earlier this year when Disney released the latest film version of *White Fang*.

Abroad, London has been even more immensely popular than he has been in America. He may well be *the* most translated American writer. The latest statistics available on translations from UNESCO show that worldwide in 1984 there were eighteen translations of works by Henry James, twenty-two translations of works by William Faulkner, fifty-four translations of

works by Ernest Hemingway, and ninety-three translations of works by London. Those translations were published in Argentina, Burma, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, East and West Germany, Finland, France, Hungary, India, Poland, Portugal, Romania, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the U.S.S.R., and Yugoslavia.

Yet for all this attention abroad and all the popular acclaim at home, London has failed to receive consideration as a serious writer by the academic literary establishment. No article on London has ever appeared, for instance, in the pages of *PMLA*, arguably the most prestigious American literary journal.

This new edition includes fifty stories by London, some longtime favorites, some never before collected, some out of print for over half a century. All, however, suggest the scope of London's subject matter and the range of his artistic ability. As the editors make clear in their introduction, London has too often been stereotyped as a "Kipling of the Klondike" or "poet of Darwinism" and subsequently dismissed by literary critics. While London was for a time a Darwinian, he was at other times a Marxist, a social democrat, a Spencerian, a Nietzschean, and in his final years a Jungian, and the big ideas associated with each of these philosophic and political systems found a ready home in London's short stories.

The stories here collected include London's first, "Story of a Typhoon off the Coast of Japan," and last, "The



# Book Marks

Water Baby," as well as two versions of "To Build a Fire," the first written in 1902 as a sermon to young men for *The Youth's Companion* and the second originally published in 1908 and probably the most widely reprinted short story in world literature. Other selections in this volume include the tall tale "A Relic of Pliocene," the underrated satire "Nam-Bok the Unveracious," the long out-of-print masterpiece "The Night-Born," and such all-time favorites as "The Law of Life," "Love of Life," "All Gold Canyon," "The Apostate," "Koolau the Leper," "Samuel," "War," and "The Red One."

In addition to the fifty London stories, this volume includes a detailed introduction for the general reader, a chronology, notes providing details about the publishing history of the individual stories, and a bibliography. The endpapers of the edition are facsimile reproductions of the autograph manuscript of the 1908 version of "To Build A Fire," now owned by the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

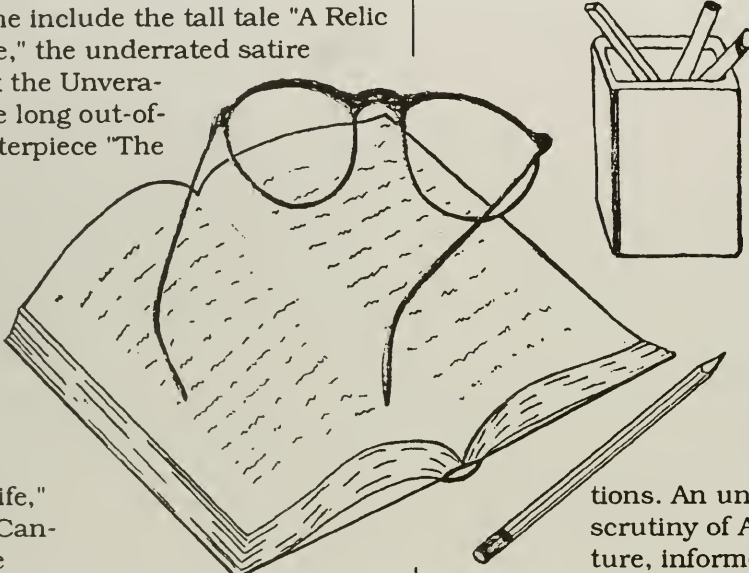
One of the most hotly debated literary issues in academe today is canonicity, the argument over which authors be-

long in the canon and are therefore taught in literature courses offered by colleges and universities. As a part of a narrow political agenda, canonicity can be a way of "evening up the score" by replacing works by a "bunch of dead white guys" with those by women and

minorities, both living and dead. On the other hand, as part of what should be an ongoing as-

essment of literature, canonicity can be a way of reexamining the works from all literary tradi-

tions. An unbiased, fresh scrutiny of American literature, informed by the stories here collected, might well conclude that London's place in the canon is long in need of reassessment and that his immense popularity does not preclude his genuine literary worth and significance.





# Contributors

ELIZABETH BERLOT began writing at the age of ten, when she won a children's literary contest. She earned a Master's Degree at U.S.C. and taught English in a suburban high school. She now writes full-time. Her stories have appeared in *American Accent* and *Modern Short Stories*.

BARBARA CROOKER has published over 400 poems in such journals as *Yankee*, *West Branch*, *The Pennsylvania Review*, and many others. Two new books, *Moving Poems* (Camel Press) and *Obbligato* (Linwood Publishing), are forthcoming.

KELLY CHERRY has just recently had her novel, *My Life and Dr. Joyce Brothers*, published by Algonquin Books. Her nonfiction book, *The Exiled Heart*, will appear shortly.

MADELENE CARR graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Michigan and has earned a Master's degree from Columbia University. She has published one novel, *Hanlon's Vision*. She and her husband now reside in Dalkey, a village south of Dublin, in Ireland.

TAMARA CORNELISON teaches freshman writing courses here, there, and elsewhere. Her articles on current events in the Ukraine appear regularly in the *Ukrainian Weekly*, semi-regularly in *Our Life Magazine*, and very irregularly in *Za Vilnu Ukrainu*, a non-party newspaper published in Lviv, Ukraine.

DANIEL DALY has had poems appear in *Poetry*, *Laurel Review*, and *Tar River*.

JOHN DREXEL's poems have appeared widely in magazines in Britain, Ireland and the United States, including *The Hudson Review*, *The New Criterion*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Salmagundi*, and *The Southern Review*. He has written on contemporary Irish poetry for *Partisan Review*, *The Literary Review*, *New England/Bread Loaf Quarterly*, and other journals. He is editor of *The Facts On File Encyclopedia of the 20th Century* (1991).

PETER DESY has had poems appear recently in *The Iowa Review*, *The Seattle Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, and *Nebo*. His poetry collection is due out in 1991 from Mellen Press.

ROBERT FREEDMAN lives and works in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. His poetry appeared in the Fall 1990 issue of *Four Quarters*. Last year the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts awarded him a fellowship.

JACK HART teaches English at Rio Grande College in southern Ohio. His work has appeared in the *Plains Poetry Review*, *The Lyric*, *Poem*, and previously in *Four Quarters*.

GERALD J. JOHNSON is Assistant to the Provost of La Salle University. His poems have appeared in the *Portland Review*, *Orphic Lute*, and in *Four Quarters*.

KEVIN J. HARTY is an Associate Professor of English at La Salle. His recent publications include a checklist of doctoral dissertations on Jack London.





# Contributors

DANIEL C. JONES recently graduated from the University of Arizona MFA program. His work has appeared in *New Times*.

CLAUDE KOCH helped found *Four Quarters* and has been its most frequent contributor. His forty-year writing career has produced four novels, many essays and short stories, and countless poems. Professor Emeritus at La Salle, he is currently visiting writer-in-residence at Camden County Community College.

JOHN KEENAN is Professor of English at La Salle and editor of *Four Quarters*. In 1968, he was a one-man hiring committee who interviewed Richard Lautz for a teaching position and subsequently invited him to *Four Quarters'* staff.

A. F. MORITZ lives in Toronto, Canada and studied writing under John Hollander. This is his first appearance in *Four Quarters*.

RAYMOND J. PENTZELL has appeared in *Four Quarters* on numerous occasions, in essays and a series of drawings known as "Man and Marsupials." He is a graduate of Yale Drama School and is Professor of Speech and Drama at Hillsdale College, Michigan.

DAVID SUMNER, a.k.a David Jones, was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He studied creative writing with John Gardner during his undergraduate studies at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and poetry writing with William Stafford at the Haystack Pro-

gram in Oregon. His work has appeared in *The Pacific Review*, *The Hawaiian Review*, and *The Mississippi Review*, among others. He lives in Aloha, Oregon.

MARIN SORESCU lives in Bucharest, edits *Ramuri*, Romania's leading literary journal, and has published many volumes of poems, plays, essays, translations, and children's stories over the years. ADRIANA VARGA, a native of Romania, is a recent graduate of Oberlin College. STUART FRIEBERT, director of the writing program at Oberlin, has published a dozen collection of poems and poems in translation. They are preparing a selection of Marin Sorescu's poems, *Hands Behind My Back*, for publication in the FIELD Translation Series.

This is JANE SATHER's third appearance in these pages. She lives in Southern California with her husband and daughter, where she continues to write poetry and work on a novel.

MICHAEL WHITE is founder and editor of the *American Fiction* series, published by Birch Lane Press. He teaches creative writing and Shakespeare at Springfield College. His work has appeared in numerous journals, including *Redbook*, *The Laurel Review*, and *Northeast Magazine*. His collection, *The Sick Brother*, was a finalist in the University of Missouri's Breakthru Competition.

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