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Deborah Kilcollins

Lucian Blaga

THE CHRONICLE AND SONG OF THE AGES

-fragments-

Village mine, whose name together ties
The sound of tears.
And the mummy cries—
I chose you that evening those many years
Long ago on the threshold of the skies—
On the path of your passion.
Someone showed you to me
From the inner depth of times past.
From inside you someone called to me,
Blessed be he,
Village of tears, forever last.*

Chapter V

-i-

I wouldn't say that folk tales flooded over my childhood, as out of a cornucopia. No. A thirst for folklore, because of my age, was satisfied intermittently, depending on outside influences and my soul's boredom. Yet, there was always Mama with a few stories of her own. Mama didn't know many, but played the role unmistakably with a magical world voice, so much so that her tone sounded from a fourth dimension. At my urging she frequently told a story called simply "Youth Without Age." The tale began in the real world, but little by little with small, imperceptible steps, she would lead it into another realm.

It was the story of a young man, good and kind, who lived in an unidentifiable village, not far from our own, but in a neighboring county. One day the boy's mother died. So the boy went to the cemetery to dig the grave. Hauling up the mud and rocks, he came upon a human skull. The hardy, young man, wiping his sweaty brow with a shirt sleeve, nudged the head to one side with his foot and said, "Hey, brother, wouldn't you like to come over to my house next Sunday?" The skull moved, nodding rigidly. Afraid, the young man ran home.

The next Sunday, a mysterious guest showed up in the doorway to his house. "I have come as you invited me." And the guest sat up to the table. They both stayed a long time and talked, exchanging thoughts and experiences. Afterward, our young man, carried away with magical promises, was guided by his guest to the Other World, where days are as our centuries.

In the Other World the boy saw an enchanted land, with sights and beings which were unknown to him and unimagined joys to the heart and the eye. After wandering for three days everywhere under the light of happiness, the young man remembered his own village and thought it was time to return. As an unspoken longing enveloped him, the boy retraced his steps.

Back in his village everything had changed. Other houses, other people. He no longer knew anyone. The boy, surprised at what he saw, went to the village priest to tell him about all the strange things he'd seen and the experiences he'd been through. The priest looked through birth and baptism records, he looked and looked, and after a while, found the boy's name, which had been

*NOTE: Blaga's village, Lančrăm, suggests *lacrimă*, the Romanian word for tears.

signed three-hundred years before. In the few days the young man had wandered through the Other World, three hundred years had flown by on earth. The priest told the boy to kneel down under the prayer shawl to receive absolution. When the prayer was over, the priest removed the shawl. Underneath, the boy had turned into a heap of ashes.

This story, which was frequently filled with the smallest detail, facts, and digressions, has now gone down the river of forgetfulness, that story that I have wanted time and again to hear from Mama's mouth. Each time, the story shook me profoundly. It moved me by the tone of sweet bitterness as she spoke of the light of happiness, even through that dizzying feeling that allowed me to gaze through the march of time that conquers the world from corner to corner.

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My village was for me an extraordinary, eclectic zone: here the reality, with its sound, palpable base, was introduced to a folkloric and biblical mythology. Angels and Tartarus of the devils, with their black cherubs, were for me, beings who lived in the village world. We lived, throbbing and breathless from excited wonder, sometimes from fear, in the center of life.

One Sunday afternoon, I stole into Vasile's room. It had a flooded-out look and some sort of finality of position. In a tone of voice used by peasants when speaking of the occult, he told me that his family had left the house, and that on their return, unclean things would happen. He wanted me to rediscover a certain clarity, his voice said. And with a furrowed brow, he sought out the details. Vasile showed me that in the entrance to their home a shadow had appeared, an unusual occurrence any other day. He allowed that the devil had been hiding in that room, driven away by Sunday's bells. We left together, carried off by fright in our loins, toward the courtyard with a mission, where we carefully gathered up twenty other children from the neighborhood. Each one grabbed whatever he could, and we all followed with hay forks, canes, kettles, pans, yoke fasteners to show solidarity in our march to Vasile's courtyard with the assault of an African forest tribe. Tens of arms raised up and struck with total strength on the door behind which we calculated the shadow could be hiding. The strokes were accompanied by inarticulate shrieks and a deafening metallic sound; the fearless demonic instrument was unseen, yet we felt it in our presence. All this was growing inside of us, like a magic fury, like a sacred frenzy, which

gave us unbelievable courage confronting the invisible, rushing us on to the denouement. The door gave way, breaking into splinters. In the entrance, there was nothing. Only a ray of light fell obliquely onto the wall, as a sign facing our fatigue, which of necessity caused us to fall, released.

-iii-

At about the same time I began remembering the days when I discovered the sky. Once, walking down the road with my eyes raised upward, I realized that it was following me. The zenith moved from its place, staying uninterrupted above my head! This was a completely new discovery, which I felt obligated to keep like a great secret in the farthest corner of my heart. I began to interpret the future in line with this dream of a discovery, so that for nothing in the world would I have dared mention it to anyone. Everyday I put the zenith to the test, to see if it followed my path or not: I would have been fatally disillusioned to find out that I was betrayed. And I continued to keep the secret under three locks and seven seals. Yet, once in the break at recess, I told Adam Vicu how I had been honored by the sky's power. All at once Adam raised his eyes to the sky—and trailed off. Then he turned to me and said, "The sky follows me, too!" I looked at him with a piteous smile, then doubtfully, and then uncomprehendingly. Adam emphasized what he said with "I swear to God," a popular oath in the village. "You swear to God, you're not lying?" I asked him again, with all that I knew the question was unnecessary. "I swear to God, I'm not lying," declared Adam again, with a certainty that made me blush. The formula was too sacred to have left any doubt. I was crushed to find out that I was not the only chosen one, but in the same instant a new idea headed me toward another tack.

"Listen, Adam," I said, "you go along the path leading up the hill, and I'll take it downhill. If the sky follows you, as you say, and it follows me also, as I say, then it will break in two and we'll see what's inside. Maybe we'll even see angels . . ." And so, Adam, persuaded by my logic, keyed up and ready to try it out, took the path up the hill, while I took the same path downhill. After going a hundred steps, without hearing so much as a clap of celestial thunder, we stopped. The expanse of blue had not split in half. Finally, we approached each other.

"Did the sky follow you?" I asked.

"It did," said Adam.

"And it followed me, too," I said, "so why didn't it

break in half?"

-iv-

Sometimes Father, with inspiration coming from within and a capricious clarity, remembered facts of husbandry, field work, sowing, reaping, drought, and predicted harvests yet to come. He liked to take me with him, especially when he had to supervise a particular task and encourage the laborers doing their work. One early morning in the spring—the world appearing as an immense explosion of light—we set out for the vineyard on the Coastă, where "our field hands" were hoeing. We were sure to take a sack lunch with us because we had planned to stay in the vineyard until evening. The grass was high and full of dew. The road held so much to the brow of the hill that the view opened everywhere, onto balls of liquid foam, white like spit, hanging from various blades of grass.

"What's that?" I asked Father.

"That's cuckoo spit!" he said.

"Come on; cuckoos spit?" I asked skeptically.

"Why shouldn't they spit," answered Father, "when they have nothing else to do? The cuckoo sings and spits, like boys when they don't have anything to do . . . sometimes they spit on children and the ones they hit don't grow any taller."

That was all I needed. It was a pleasant day, of envelop-

ing warmth, bright. But what use was all this if cuckoos were flying through the vineyard and overhead, over the fields and thickets, as though they were tempting fate, that slender thread stretching toward the future between east and west. In the vineyard, following the idea for a few hours, this care stood watch in the threshold of my heart. When it got on toward afternoon, we sat down, Father and I, in the shadow of a plum tree at one end of the vineyard. And we gobbled down what Mama had put in the sack. Then, Father stretched out to fall asleep. I, too, lay beside him but sleep did not come. I heard in the distance, beyond the vineyard—a cuckoo. It sang, "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" And in a few seconds, escaping through the quiet afternoon, another call from the other direction, "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" Yes, it was clear: they were coming closer. I followed the song of the frightened bird, scarcely breathing, this being that could stunt my growth and leave me a dwarf on life's path. From tree to tree the cuckoo came, burdened with that evil thought. Now it could be seen flying. My heart pounded in place without circulating the blood. A dry branch cracked just above us. And then all at once, "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" in our own tree. With a wild, frightened shriek, I threw myself on Father, "Wake up! The cuckoo's going to spit on me." Father awakened to my earth-shaking scream.

"What's the matter?" he asked, finding a way out from under his sleep. Then, comprehending the situation, he exploded into gasps of laughter. "Well, little boy, so you believed the whole story? That one was for bad children in the valley, not for smart ones on the hill."

Translated by Carol Telford

When Dorina first spoke of Lucian Blaga, her voice warned me that what she said was going to be important. I had met Dorina in her first year at the University of Bucharest studying philology in the fall of 1972. We were harvesting corn, which was compulsory work for students that year. In our brief conversation about Blaga, she told me that many of his works had been suppressed during the Stalinist years and after. Only recently had his works been revived for teaching purposes at the University.

Lucian Blaga was born in Lancrăm, Transylvania on May 9, 1895, to a landowning family. He was the last of nine children. His father was an Eastern Orthodox priest. Most of Blaga's formal education was in German, as Transylvania was still under Austro-Hungarian domination. Academically, he excelled, receiving his Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Vienna in 1920. He was a journalist, foreign correspondent, and diplomat until his death in 1961.

A prolific playwright and poet, his primary works include, *Zamolxe*, 1920, *Turburarea apelor* (Muddy Waters), 1923; *Poemele luminii* (Light poems), 1919; and *Laude somnului* (In Praise of Sleep), 1929.

The selection in translation is one chapter of Blaga's autobiography entitled *Hronicul si cîntecul vîstelor* (The Chronicle and Song of the Ages.)

C.T.

Julio Cortázar

RESTITUTION

If from your mouth I don't know more than the voice
and from your breasts only the green or orange of the blouses,
how can I boast of having from you
more than the kindness of a shadow that passes over the water.
In memory I carry gestures, the peevishness
that used to make me so happy, and that way
you have of remaining in yourself, with the curved
calm of an ivory statue.

It's not such a big thing—all this I've kept.
Besides opinions, angers, theories,
names of brothers and of sisters,
an address and a telephone number,
five photographs, a scent of hair,
a pressure of small hands in which no one could say
the world for me is hidden.

All this I carry without effort, losing it little by little.
I'll never invent the useless lie of perpetuity—
it's better to cross the bridges with hands full of you,
throwing away my cache of memories in little pieces
giving it to the pigeons, to the faithful
sparrows, that they may eat you
between songs, chirps and flutterings.

AFTER SUCH PLEASURES

Tonight, seeking your mouth in another mouth,
almost believing it, because so blind is this river
that pushes me into woman and lets me sink between her eyelids—
what sadness to swim finally to the shore of that drowsiness,
knowing that pleasure is an ignoble slave who accepts false coins, smilingly
spending them.

Forgotten purity, how I would like to redeem
that pain of Buenos Aires, that waiting without relief or hope.
Alone in my house open to the port,
starting to love you again,
meeting you again in the morning coffee
without the many unrenounceable things
that have happened.
And not to have to heed this forgetfulness that rises
for no reason, to erase from the blackboard your scribblings
and leave me only a window without stars.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Look, I don't ask a lot,
just your hand, to have it
like a tiny toad that sleeps contentedly.
I need that door you used to give me
to come into your world, that little piece
of green sugar, of happy roundness.
Won't you lend me your hand on this
New Year's Eve of raucous barn owls?
You can't for technical reasons. Then
I sketch it in the air, inventing each finger,
the palm a silky peach,
and the back, that country of blue trees.
This way I take it and I hold it, as
if on this would depend
most of the world,
the sequence of the four seasons,
the song of the roosters, the love of mankind.

GAINS AND LOSSES

I lie again with skill,
bending respectfully before the mirror
that reflects my collar and my tie.
I believe I am that gentleman who leaves
everyday at nine.
The gods, one after another, are dead in long rows
of paper and cardboard.
There's nothing I miss, not even you
I don't. I feel a hole, but it's easily
a drum: skin on both sides.
Sometimes you come back in the evening, when I read
quieting things: bulletins,
the dollar and the pound, the debates
at the United Nations. It seems to me
that your hand combs me. I don't miss you!
There are only little things that suddenly I lack
and I would like to search for them: the contentment,
and the smile, that furtive little animal
that doesn't live anymore between my lips.

COMMISSION

Don't give me respite, don't ever forgive me.
Harass me in my blood, so that each cruel thing would be you returning.
Don't let me sleep, don't give me peace!
Then I shall win my kingdom,
be born slowly.
Don't drop me like easy music, don't be a caress or a kid glove;
carve me like quartzite, undo me.
Keep your human love, your smile, your hair. Give them away.
Come to me with your dry anger of phosphorus and fish scales.
Scream. Vomit sand into my mouth, break my maw.
It's nothing to ignore you the whole day long,
knowing that you play your face openly to the sun and to man.
Share it.

I ask for the cruel beheading,
I ask for what no one asks: thorns
to the very bone. Wrest from me this vile face of mine,
force me finally to shout my true name.

*translated by Calvin Harlan,
Manuel Menán
and Beatriz Varela*

Ilse Aichinger

THE PRIVATE TUTOR

Father and Mother had gone. The little boy hung over the banister and gazed after them. He saw the bright hat of his mother and the dark hat of his father—deep down and still deeper—at last he saw nothing more. The corridor was green as the sea. You'd think Father and Mother had gone under. Their warnings had been so impressive, as though they had left him alone for more than just an hour. The little boy's head was buzzing: keep the chain on and don't open to anyone, only when the tutor came. He had been sick a long time, and since he was still weak, he took his lessons at home. His tutor was a student, a quiet young man, who usually bored him.

The boy walked through the empty house. It was quiet as the sea shell you could hold to your ear. He opened the door to the storeroom. All of these filled baskets and glasses belonged to him now: the goods of a foreign ship—the wide world. He took an apple from the basket, but just then the bell rang. He skulked out. In front of the door he held his breath and hesitated. Then he slipped the chain off and opened the door to a crack. Outside was the old beggar he knew before. "I don't have anything," the child said confused and gave him the apple he held in his hand. The beggar took it without thanking him.

"Bye," said the boy, but there was no answer.

He closed the door and tiptoed to his room. There he went to the table and sat perfectly still. He had looked forward to being alone, but now he was frightened. Frightened by the beggar and frightened by the empty rooms. Things got better when he heard the tutor ring. He ran out and opened the door.

"You should have looked through the peep hole!" said the tutor.

"I can't reach it!" replied the child.

He watched the young man go up the stairs, stop in front of the mirror, comb his hair once and pause a moment, as if he were listening.

They moved the table over to the window and began to read. "It - is - autumn," the little boy read hesitating, "the birds are flying

south." He raised his head and looked out.

"Where are they flying?" he asked.

"Read further!" the tutor said impatiently. And then, as if he had thought it over better: "They're already over the ocean!"

The boy read on. Of leaves that fell and of fruit harvested in great gardens. Of colorful vine leaves and of the sun that set earlier.

"Where?" he asked. "Where does it set?"

"Over there!" said the tutor indecisively.

Now they read about the sky and about the white clouds the wind pushed.

"Where?" the child cried again. But he got no answer. He raised his head and saw that the tutor was sitting quietly and looking at his knee. "Where does the wind push the clouds?" he said more urgent than before. The sky before the open window was cloudless and almost translucent. It was shortly before dusk set in.

"Do you hear something?" the tutor asked without raising his head.

"Hear?" said the boy. "No, I don't hear a thing!"

"Quiet!" said the tutor. "If you're completely quiet, you'll hear it!"

"Who?" asked the child.

"Listen!" cried the tutor.

"Who am I supposed to hear?" the child asked again.

"This voice," said the young man, "this voice!"

The boy left the page. He lowered his head and put his hands behind his ears; he heard nothing but the soft rushing that came from the door below and had changed the whole house into a sea shell as if by magic.

"Rustling?" said the child.

"No," the tutor answered. "Screaming!"

The boy began to laugh. He jumped up and clapped his hands.

"Is it a game?" he cried.

"Read on," said the tutor.

But hardly had they begun to read about the fog and about the long shadows, when he jumped up and tore open the door to the next room, as if he wanted to surprise someone. He went from there through the living room into the parents' bedroom, crossed the anteroom and came back again. The boy looked at him, astonished.

"There's someone in the house!" the tutor said. He asked whether there had been someone here before him.

"Yes," said the child, "a beggar."

"Did you latch the chain?"

"Yes."

The tutor lapsed into silence.

"Should I read on?"

"Listen!"

"Are we playing?" the child smiled unsure.

The young man looked him pensively in the face.

"Yes!" he said after a while. "Let's play as if there's someone in the house!"

"And who?" called the child cheerfully.

"Someone," said the tutor, "we're afraid of."

"The beggar?"

"Yes, the beggar. We want to go looking for him."

When the tutor put the boy's hand into his own the boy felt that it was cold and damp from sweat. They walked on tiptoes, opened the doors softly and looked in all corners. Outside the light was fading and in the rooms it was already beginning to darken. Only the picture frames on the walls glittered. In the living room the young man stopped, let the boy's hand fall, and placed his finger on his mouth.

"Where is he?" the boy cried. His cheeks glowed from eagerness.

"Don't you hear him?" whispered the tutor.

"Where?"

"In the next room!"

"What does he say?"

"He's threatening!"

The boy stormed out, tore his father's coat from the clothes rack and screamed, "I have him, I have him!" Then he slipped into the coat and dragged it behind him.

The tutor came out of the living room. He came quite slowly with small fearful steps toward the boy.

"We have him!" he cried once again. "We have him!"

"Oh," signed the tutor slowly, "it's you!"

They stood in front of the great mirror, and the boy saw how the tutor's image raised its fist against him. In the gathering darkness he saw this balled up fist and the pale, contorted face. He jumped up and laughed loud. The tutor had never been so funny! Now he heard the key rattle in the lock and recognized the faces of his parents. And he heard his mother scream.

But when the tutor, worn out and restrained by three men, was loaded into the rescue wagon with foam in his mouth, the little boy was still looking to fall in their arms.

"But we only wanted to play!"

And whenever his parents later said: "If we hadn't come then in the nick of time—," he angrily cut them short, "But we only wanted to play!"

And he distrusted grownups.

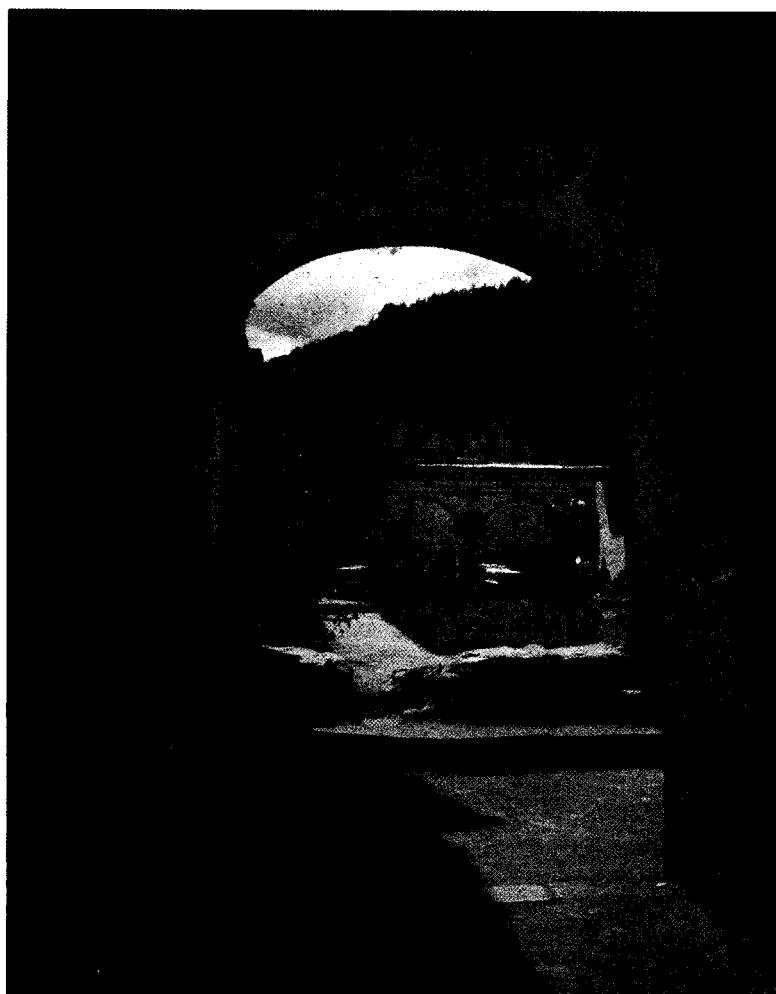
Translated by Ken Fontenot

Eugenio Montejo

NOCTURNE

Night of graceful geometry
where the echoes withdraw and resound
among upright buildings.
Somnambulistic steps cross
through streets that intersect
obliquely, in a mirror.
The remote taxis transport shadows.
Silent televisions emit a phosphorescent light.
The words that float on the air
at this hour are fishes
with brittle whispers.
They emerge from the dreams of women,
of bodies that extend outward
with fern-like foliage.
The rain urges them
through the prolonged floods
and they explode in the wind.

translated by Richard Chambers



Raymond E. McGowan

Pablo Neruda

from STONES OF THE SKY

IV

When everything was high,
height,
height,
the emerald cold waited there,
the emerald stare:
 it was an eye:
 it watched
 and was the center of the sky,
 center of empty space:
 the emerald
 watched:
unique, hard, immensely green
as if it were an eye
of the ocean,
fixed stare of water,
drop of God,
victory of the cold

green tower.

V

(What happened to me in Colombia, a country well known for its exquisite emeralds, is hard to say. It came about that there they looked for one for me, they found and cut it and the fingers of all the poets lifted it up to offer me, and at the very height of the hands of all the reunited poets, my heavenly stone, my emerald ascended, slipping up into the air during a storm that shook us with fear. Now in that country the butterflies, especially the ones from the province of Muzo, shine with indescribable brilliance, and on this occasion, after the emerald's ascension and the end of the storm, the space filled with shimmering blue butterflies, eclipsing the sun and wrapping it in huge branches of leaves, as though suddenly in the midst of us, the astonished poets, there had sprouted an enormous blue tree.

This event took place in Colombia, in the province of Charaquirá, in October of 194.... I never recovered the emerald.)

VIII

Long lips of marine agate,
mouths lined up, blown
kisses,
rivers that plucked their blue
waters from the steady stone song.

I know
the highway along
which one age passed into another,
until fire or plant or liquid
were transformed into a deep rose,
into a spring of dense droplets,
into the inheritance of fossils.

Sometimes I sleep, I go back
to the beginning, falling back in mid-air,
wafted along by my natural state
as the sleepy-head of nature
and in dreams I drift on,
waking at the feet of great stones.

XV

You should comb over the shore
of Lake Tragosoldo in Antiñana
early, when the dew's still
trembling on the hard cinnamon leaves,
and gather up the damp stones,
lakeside grapes of jasper
and blazing cobblestones,
little purple pebbles
or rock biscuits punched-out
by volcanoes or bad weather,
by the wind's snout.

Yes, the oblong chrysolite
or the Ethiopian basalt
or the massive map
of the granite
wait for you there, but no one comes
but the anonymous fisherman sunk
in his quivering trade.

Only I keep, sometimes
in the morning,
this appointment with slippery stones,
soaked, crystalline, ashen,
and with my hands full
of burnt-out fires,
of secret structures,

of clear almonds
I go back to my family,
to my obligations,
more ignorant than the day I was born
more simple each day,
each stone.

translated by James Nolan

James Ross

A HOUSE FOR SEÑORA LOPEZ

Señora Dolores Lopez sat stiffly between her daughters and the three of them wept silently, dignified in grief. Discreetly they kept their eyes lowered and did not turn their heads to observe the ever increasing crowd behind them.

She could account for the neighbors, and for Manuel's patients—although she had never expected so many. But the mayor, the council members, the *guardia civil* chief, the teachers from the medical school—they were hard to explain. She wondered during the funeral mass; she wondered as the important men and their wives offered condolences at the cemetery.

"It's because he was mayor, Mama," Dolores offered when it was over and they were home.

"But that was so long ago."

"You know he had more than he ever let us know, Mama," María said. "I'm not surprised."

"But he was not one to chase influence," Señora Lopez said. "We lived simply."

The daughters looked at each other, then began their campaign.

"You did without, Mama. All of us did."

"And there was no need," Dolores added. "But you are free to move now."

"Your father's practice was here," Señora Lopez said quietly. "And this is not a bad house. It is as good as those around it. It is good enough."

"Good enough!" María cried. "It is hateful! The rooms are so small and dark, the dampness is horrible."

"That is the way houses were built in those days," Señora Lopez said quietly.

Dolores turned to her husband José. He was a big real estate agent in Marbella catering to rich foreigners; he had never understood why a successful doctor would live the way his father-in-law had.

"You should buy a modern house Mama Lopez," José said. "I have several, with windows open to the sun and even central heating and air conditioning if you want. And the winters in Marbella are easier than they are here in Salamanca."

"And he can't stop you anymore," María said.

"He is barely in his grave," Señora Lopez said sternly. "You have no right to speak of him that way. He was a good husband and a good father. What do you know of his reasons for living the way he did?"

"Mama, I'm sorry. But there was never any need for us to do without. You know that."

"Yes, Dolores, yes, I know that. But I am going to my room now; it has been an exhausting day."

She did not sleep immediately, but lay in bed thinking of what Dolores had said. It made her feel vaguely disloyal whenever she thought about it, but it was true. Manuel had been wrong in many ways about many things over the years. He had been unfair.

She fell asleep as her daughters and sons-in-law made plans for her. Well let them, she thought as she drifted off. It helped them pass the time, and what problems could it cause?

2

Manuel had been out when the four men knocked on the door that night. They were in everyday clothes, but something about the way they stood told her they were soldiers.

"Is your husband in, Señora?" He spoke quietly and politely.

She had been frightened, had only managed to shake her head.

"Will he be back this evening?"

She had found her voice. "Yes. He should return soon." When they showed no signs of turning away, she asked, "Will you wait for him?"

"If you don't mind, Señora."

She had ushered them into the living room, set out brandy and four glasses, then managed to go outside and intercept Manuel.

She had held his arm tightly. "They look like soldiers."

"The war is over, Dolores. It is likely some friends."

"They did not tell me their names."

"Perhaps not. But do you think they would have let you out of the house to warn me if they were here for revenge? You go back in. I will come in five minutes."

When he came in the door, she at last relaxed. They welcomed him as if they were all old campaigners meeting after years of separation. At first their voices were loud, but after less than an hour the conversation was carried on in low, urgent tones. She dared not listen, but was still awake when they left near dawn.

"Some old friends," Manuel explained. "It was good to see them again."

3

She was surprised by Señor García's letter. It stated simply that he would like to discuss her husband's bequest with her, and asked her to make an appointment at her convenience. But Señor García was one of the most prominent lawyers in the province, and Dolores Lopez could not understand why he was handling Manuel's affairs. They had always used the local *gastor* for the everyday paperwork, and she thought their lawyer was Ricardo, an old schoolfriend of Manuel's.

She went to García's office in a taxi—an ostentation Manuel had never allowed, but which she now regularly enjoyed. García's office was a model of all the best that

money could provide, and she wondered why had Manuel chosen a man who so obviously enjoyed displaying wealth when he had been so insistent on hiding his own. The lawyer explained Manuel's will, which turned out to be simplicity itself, in spite of the large pile of papers García took from the files. Perhaps they did not all pertain to Manuel, she thought.

"It is all in cash, Señora. In this way, there are no complicated details for you to worry about. If you wish, your funds can be invested to provide a liberal income without seriously depleting the capital."

"I will need some time to think, Señor García. There is so much!"

"Of course. But you understand the bequest, Señora Lopez?"

She nodded.

He paused delicately. "You are pleased, Señora?"

"Yes."

"Is there something else I can do?"

She shook her head slightly. "No. There is more than I had imagined, that is all."

4

Señora Lopez was surprised when the posters announcing her husband's candidacy for mayor first appeared, but she at least knew when the decision had been made.

"You have no time for politics, Manuel," she had protested. "What about your practice? Is it not more important?"

"There is very little choice, Dolores."

"Surely, now that things have returned to normal you should take time to establish yourself."

"I will do that, too. But those men are powerful. I would be a fool to refuse whatever offers they make."

"Why did they choose you?"

"I saved some important lives during the fighting," he said quietly.

"But you saved the lives of some on the other side, too. You were a doctor, you did what you could. For both sides."

He nodded. "They know that, too, Dolores."

"Will you have a chance of being elected?"

"It is almost certain. That is why I was chosen."

She knew he would grow rich; it was almost inevitable.

"So you will be mayor."

He had nodded, and they had not spoken about it again.

She was surprised that Señor García found time to make an appointment almost the minute she phoned. She had expected, now that the business was done and the fee paid, that he would try to avoid her. But he agreed to see her at six that same afternoon.

"I hope there is no trouble, Señora Lopez."

"No, no. Of course not."

"Excellent." He leaned back behind his pile of papers and waited. When he saw that she was finding it difficult to state her business, he leaned forward with his best confidential manner. "Do you wish advice, Señora? I am not boasting when I say that my experience in these matters can help you."

"It is not that, Señor García. I am wondering how much control I have over the money, that is all."

"It depends on the type of investment you make, of course. And how much responsibility you delegate to an agent."

"I don't mean it in that way. Pardon me for being so vague, Señor, but as you might have guessed, Manuel always excluded me from these matters while he was alive. I must know, is the money in my hands? May I do with it whatever I wish?"

"I see. Yes. Your control is absolute."

"Thank you, Señor García. I will take up no more of your time."

She rose, and he ushered her to the door. "Perhaps we should discuss some suitable investments?" But she shook her head, then had a momentary urge to reassure him. He looked so worried, so concerned. But it would not be proper for her to do so. So, Manuel, she thought you have left me to do whatever I want after all these years. She wished there were some way of asking him why he could not have done it sooner, but she knew he would only shrug and avoid the topic.

The four men came often to the house during Manuel's term as mayor. They had no public faces. She sometimes saw them in the back row at ceremonies; more often they simply stood in the crowd itself. Manuel did not seem to cooperate out of fear; he appeared to enjoy his public life. He managed to establish a clinic and to build

a children's playground; he often commented that he was accomplishing a great deal.

All the same she was relieved when it was over. Dolores was born in the first year, and María in the fourth, and she found Manuel's hectic life almost too much for her. In addition to meetings, ceremonies, speeches, he had continued to build his practice, and to involve himself with the medical school at the university. All she remembered from those years was his face: tense, tired, drawn. It had been hard for her to reconcile the responsibility shown in the face with his age.

"Are you sorry it's over?" she had asked him one night, a few months after he had handed over his office to the new mayor.

He sat without answering. So long that she thought she should never have asked. Perhaps he had not wanted a return to private life; perhaps he had been forced. Frightened, she busied herself with clearing the table and organizing the kitchen. It was almost half an hour before she returned to where he was sitting with his drink.

"Manuel? I'm sorry, I shouldn't have asked."

He smiled then and shook his head slightly. "It's not that, Dolores. I—I'm still tired; I'm only now realizing how hard I have worked these last few years."

"You need a rest."

"I suppose so. It's partly that I can't believe my work is over once I've seen my patients. It seems that there should still be something left that must be done."

"Are you bored?"

"No. Not yet, at any rate. I'm still not used to the change, that's all. But you must find this too, Dolores. It hasn't been easy for you, with the children and no one to help."

"Both grandmothers have been wonderful, Manuel. And we've had enough money to get what we need. It's been better than the war, hasn't it? And if things get better, what right has anyone to complain?"

"Still, you've not had a great deal of pleasure."

"I enjoy the children. And now, it is wonderful to have you with us more often."

"Would you like a vacation?"

"Of course that would be wonderful. But there is the problem of money. Vacations are for the rich."

He nodded. "It's true, they are." Then he smiled. "But perhaps a simple doctor in a small provincial capital might be able to afford one if he were careful."

The holiday was not mentioned again. But she had come back from the market several weeks later to find Manuel waiting with their suitcases packed and her mother-in-law already looking after the children. She had changed her clothes; then they had caught the bus to the airport.

"Where are we going, Manuel?"

"Be patient, Dolores. Let me have my little secret."

They had flown to Paris and had taken a limousine to their hotel. For the next two weeks they lived in a way she never dreamed possible. On the return flight, Manuel said, "The diamond bracelet, Dolores. Keep it where it cannot be found. And don't tell anyone what we've done, let it be our secret."

At first it was not so bad, going back to the dark house, the constant demands of the children, the washing and the housework. But at last she had grown tired of it. They had money; there was no need to live like peasants. She requested a maid, but he refused. She was angry, then realized that their two-week vacation must have cost an enormous amount. Perhaps it was his way of repaying her for her devotion during the years he was mayor. How could she be angry with him? Even if it only happened once in a lifetime it was far more than anyone she knew had done. Do the best, just once, rather than eke out smaller pleasures over a longer time. Wasn't that enough?

But the vacations had not ended. There had been one every year, each one more elaborate, more expensive. Rome, London, Munich, Paris again, Stockholm, and once even far away, New York. It settled in her mind that Manuel needed this once a year taste of luxury, that the uncontrolled, whimsical spending habits of the very rich—if only for a week—relieved him from the daily parade of complaints, illnesses, and deaths he could not prevent.

It was not until the girls were older that she began to begrudge Manuel his two-week fantasy. Why, she began to ask herself, could they not spend some money to make her life easier? A maid, someone to clean once or twice a week, or some modern appliances? Why could they not move to a bigger house so that each girl could have her own room? Why could he not move the surgery someplace—nearby, yet not virtually in their laps—so there would be more room in the house they had?

The arguments were always the same.

"Manuel, the girls need new clothes. Manuel, the girls need desks, and better lights so they can study. Maria is unhappy; all her friends have them."

Always, he resisted. "I will not flaunt what money I have, Dolores. We have everything we need."

"Manuel, there is no need to live this way. This year, let's forget the holiday. Spend the same amount on the house. New carpet, new furniture."

"I need the holiday, Dolores."

"We'll go, but for a shorter time. It would make so much difference to the girls, Manuel."

"It's only two weeks out of a year. Why should we give it up?"

"Go by yourself, then. And give me the same amount as you'd spend on me to do what I want for the house and for the girls."

"No. It would not be the same, Dolores."

In the end, she always gave in. Not out of fear, nor because he had persuaded her he was right, but simply because she became too exhausted to argue any longer.

7

She had decided that she would build the house she had wanted ever since the girls were born. Once more, she approached Señor García.

"I would like you to manage the funds, Señor. But I would like them kept free until I have built a new house for myself. Then I will turn what is left over to you."

"A house, Señora? I hope I am not intruding, but would it not be simpler to purchase one? Your son-in-law is in real estate, is he not?"

"I do not wish to move to Malaga province, Señor García, I have lived in Salamanca all my life. So I will build."

"I can understand that," he agreed. Then he waited.

"A special house, Señor, worthy of Manuel's position in the community. I will need the services of an architect, a good builder, an interior decorator, and a landscape designer. I thought perhaps you would see fit to introduce me to the architect who designed your own house."

At first he had tried to dissuade her, but finally had yielded gracefully. "As you wish. But I warn you, he is very expensive, and he demands—how shall I phrase it—a certain freedom."

"I know what I have in mind. And if we cannot agree, then I will start with someone else. I would prefer to start as soon as possible."

When he had made an appointment, she rose. "Thank you, Señor García. I come to rely on you more as time goes on."

"It is nothing, I assure you. I am more than pleased that you have seen fit to continue your late husband's association with me, that is all."

She wanted no more time in conversation; there was much to do.

When it came time for Dolores to be married, Manuel insisted on doing things the traditional way. As the women worked on the elaborate wedding dress, the lace tablecloths, napkins, bedspreads, sheets, pillow cases, Señora Lopez almost cried.

Dolores had resisted. "Buy José and me an apartment, father. If you want to spend so much, do it in a way that will help us out. Girls today don't expect all this. And I will have no maids to do all the work for me." She had finally sworn that she would put everything in a cupboard and never use it, but Manuel had insisted all the same.

Señora Lopez could not bring herself to hate him, even then. She did not care that he drove his old cars, that her clothes were plain and simple, that her house was old and lacked modern conveniences. Nor even that he spent huge sums on equipment for his surgery. He had given up a great deal to become a doctor, why should he not have the best equipment to carry out his life's work?

When María got engaged, Manuel insisted that she receive exactly the same things as Dolores had, even though she too pleaded with him to spend the money in other ways.

The two weddings cost over eight hundred thousand pesetas. Señora Lopez could not resist making a list of all the little things the girls had ever wanted—teenage fads, a certain dress, things like that. Over the years it would not have come near that amount, and it could have made such a difference.

She made flight reservations, then phoned and told Dolores and María she was coming. "I will explain why when I arrive," she said. Four days at each place, she thought. Longer, and she would appear as an old woman relying on her daughters to help pass the time. And she did not want that.

Nine days later she returned with her lists. After their initial dismay the girls had been more than glad to indulge their dreams.

"If only I could have had that when I was thirteen, it would have been paradise," they said, as they named item after item that had eluded them when they were growing up.

She compiled her own lists—one for her, one for

Manuel, until she had covered several sheets of paper. She was charmed by Señor García's architect. And—she was surprised by this—he seemed to think that all of her ideas were sound and sensible.

Once the building had started she formed the habit of having a taxicab call every morning. It took her first to inspect the progress of her villa, then to the *mercado*, and occasionally to the office of Señor García or the architect. She said nothing to Dolores or María, nothing to her best friends and neighbors. She did not take a vacation that year. That part of their lives had been so private, so much their own, that she felt it was better to let it die with Manuel. She was content with her routine, and the villa was taking shape rapidly.

When at last it was finished—right down to the dishes in the cupboard, the linen in the closets, the curtains, the paintings framed and hung—Señora Lopez phoned her daughters and asked them to come.

She led Dolores and María through the living room, with its magnificent fireplace; through the dining room, with its large windows, its doors leading to the patio and the pool; through the kitchen, where every modern appliance available had been installed; then down the hall to the bedrooms.

"Oh, Mama, it's perfect," Dolores said. "If only I could have had a quarter as much when I was fifteen. Even a room all my own would have seemed like heaven in those days."

She sat at the desk, turned on the radio and the television, took her shoes off, wriggled her toes in the thick carpets, and then stretched out on the bed. "It's perfect, Mama, perfect."

María's reaction was the same.

She led them to the guest suite, to the master bedroom with its small patio, and at last to the surgery, with its ultramodern waiting room and a comfortable booklined office behind.

"He would have loved it; it's exactly right," María said.

"But the furniture would have terrified his patients, wouldn't it?" Dolores teased her. "They would be afraid to sit down it's so modern and shiny."

When they had seen everything, she made coffee in her new kitchen, then sat with them on the patio. "Do you think I was foolish to do all this?" she asked after a few minutes.

"Of course not, Mama. Not unless it cost you money that you'll need to live on."

"I have plenty left," she answered. "There was more than I thought possible."

"It is only sad that you had to wait so long," María said.

Señora Lopez smiled; she had known they would understand.

When Dolores had married, it had brought Señora Lopez and María closer than they had been before. They shared the tasks Dolores used to do and spent much time together talking—about Dolores and José, about the future, about marriage.

Dolores and José visited, but it was clear that Manuel did not enjoy the young man's company. José was charming because his profession was selling real estate—but Manuel distrusted him. Señora Lopez suspected it was because their young son-in-law was not shy about letting the world know he had money. He did not flaunt it or boast about it, but he made sure Dolores had everything she wanted. They lived in a newly popular area of the city; their car was modest but new; they obviously enjoyed their prosperity.

And Manuel did not approve.

Then Dolores and José moved to Malaga province because José spoke both English and French and could sell houses easily to the foreigners. And when María went to live with them, she met a young man from the South, then married him and moved to Marbella to be near Dolores, Señora Lopez blamed Manuel. She tried to tell herself that it was the modern way, that it was happening everywhere. But she missed the girls and even began to believe that Manuel had driven Dolores and María away. And she could not forgive her husband for making her lonely.

Dolores and María stayed for ten days and Señora Lopez almost asked them to bring their husbands to live in the house. It was all so pleasant. But she rejected the idea after a few moments' thought. It would not work,

she knew; it was not the modern way.

As soon as they left, she made an appointment to discuss her finances with Señor García. When he had finished explaining his investment plans and had closed the last file folder and replaced it in the cabinet, she raised her question.

"Could I trouble you to find me a reliable estate agent to handle the rental of my house, Señor García?"

He looked doubtful for a moment. "The area is not popular now, Señora Lopez, so you could not ask a high rent; people would not pay it. Besides, it is apartments or modern villas the young people want nowadays. Why not sell it? That would simplify things."

"I don't mean the old house, Señor."

He was silent for so long that she began to think he had not heard. Finally, he said, "I'm afraid I don't understand."

"I refer to the new house, the one I've just had built."

He did not ask any further questions. "Señor Martínez would be proud to handle that house," he said. "But it might take some time to find you suitable tenants. After all, a young doctor just starting out could hardly afford a house and a surgery like that. And an older one might be unwilling to give up an established practice to start over again in a new location."

"It need not be a doctor. A professor, perhaps, or some rich American businessman. I would ask the lowest possible rent and the tenant need not pay extra for the surgery, although I would be happy if it could be used."

Señor García relaxed and smiled. "In that case, it should not be too difficult. You must only sign the documents when everything is accomplished."

"There is nothing else for me to do, Señor García?"

"I will take care of everything."

Señora Lopez smiled.

"Is there anything else, Señora Lopez?"

Señora Lopez shook her head. "It is settled, thank you. Now, Señor García, if you will be kind enough to secure a taxi for me, I will go home."



Deborah Kilcollins

Giuseppe Gioachino Belli

THE BUILDERS

"How do we find out what's above the sun?"
All the people said. "How do we do it?"
"We have everything we need," said one,
"Let's build the Tower of Babel. There's nothing to it."

"Everything's here: cement, tile brick and lime ——"
"You're the superintendent, I'm top boss. ——"
"Let's go! We'll have it done in no time!"
They got the tower as high as Peter's cross

But God has ears; he split his sides at this.
And all of a sudden their tongues stuck, they stammered.
Instead of making a tower they made a mess.

Nobody knew Italian anymore.
When one of the men said, "Hand me a hammer,"
The other one handed him a two-by-four.

ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE

I The Bible, a kind of history, tells of the day — this was between the first and second ark —¹ when Abraham decided to make his way up Mt. Moriah like a good patriarch

and make an offering there. He found an ass calmly chomping away, without so much as a by-your-leave, at Abraham's own grass as if he were King of the Jews or some such.

Then he called Isaac. He said: "I want you to gather some wood and load the ass and go pack the meat cleaver and say bye to your mother.

and get the servant boy. We have some ground to cover, Son. The Lord wants us to make our sacrifice with no one else around."

ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE

II They had a little breakfast, and then all four started walking at daybreak. All of them prayed every step of the way and they went for more than a hundred miles when the old man stopped and said:

"We've got to where we're going. This is the place. Strap on the wood, Son." And then he turned to the servant boy: "I want you and the ass to wait here till the sacrifice is burned."

Halfway up the mountain, Isaac said:
"My father, where's the victim for the Lord?"
His father answered: "A little further ahead."

But when the climb was over and those two were standing alone at the top, Abraham roared:
"Your face on the ground, Son;² the victim is you."

ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE

III "Hold on there a second," Isaac said,
and dropped down and knelt upon a rock.
Then that headsman of a father drew back
and held the cleaver between the neck and head

of the poor kid. "Don't do it, Abraham!"
an angel screamed. "This is a sort of sieve:
God wanted to check you out. You can let the boy live."
Bah...bah..."What's that? Hey, it's a big ram!"

Friends, I'll make it short. I'm worn out
from telling you all the details. Here's how it ends:
The ram died. Isaac was saved and they went home.

And then there's that rock I told you about,
back there where the slaughter nearly begins.
They have it in a church,³ right here in Rome.

translated by Miller Williams

¹Between the ark of Noah and the Ark of the Covenant.

²This was the command of highwaymen to their victims, used both to intimidate them and to make it difficult for them to fight back.

³S. Giacomo Scossacavalli, called in Trastevere San Giachemo Scosciavalli. It's believed that the stone is kept there, as many such biblical relics are supposed to rest in various churches in Rome and throughout Italy.

Eugenio Montale

ALMOST A FANTASY

The dawn that wavers between day and night
presents the brightness of beaten
silver to the wall:
streaks the closed window with stains of light.
Again the event
the sun and the voices diffuse,
the usual noises are not apparent.

Why? I think of a day of magic
a carousel of hours
beyond my due. Time, my unconscious
magician, will explode with the force
of great events. Time will point out
and overthrow powerful houses, plunder avenues.

I will have instead a country of untouched snow
easy like a scene in a tapestry.
The slide of a late hook in the woolly locks of the sky.
The crowding of invisible light, wild and hilly
speaks to me the praise of the happy wavering.

Joyful I will read the black
signs of copper on white
like an essential alphabet.
All the past in one moment
before me.
Without trouble
this solitary cheerfulness.
There will ride in the air
or land on a post
some cock of March.

translated by Marsha Biguenet

Jean Simard

AN ARSONIST

Speaking plainly and not in parables—
we the pieces of the game Heaven plays—
we are being made fun of on the chessboard
of Existence—and then we return, one by
one, into the box of Nothingness.

Omar Khayyám

I couldn't stand my widowed mother any longer when I decided to leave St. Isidore to go and work in the city.

In the long run, as a matter of fact, doting parents produce bored children; you get sick of finding every evening, when you come back from school, a tearful mother who tells her beads, a cringing saint. Since she no longer had father around to nag, my mother fell back on me, getting on my nerves with advice, kindnesses, silly little attentions: "Put on your rubbers! Did you eat enough? Are you properly dressed?" I had to change my socks and underwear every other day, brush my teeth, go to mass—the whole bloody lot. Of course, the rooming house where I live now hardly sparkles; the kitchen is

filthy, there's always a grey ring, pubic hairs in the bathtub; but at least I got peace—blessed peace.

Not even news from home. Because we, my mother and I quarrelled when I decided to leave. So, we no longer write each other . . .

You shouldn't, however, therefore conclude that I'm a bad son. I love my mother and I respect her. But, oh, she can get on my nerves! Always these Mater Dolorosa appearances:

"Look here! Hello, Mrs. So-and-so. So, what are you doing?"

"Always the same. You know, with the children . . ."
Perhaps it's because, basically, I'm not sociable. Be-

sides, everybody says so:

“Adrien sure isn’t sociable!”

As if people were that interesting! It’s true, they think they do you a great favor by asking you to take part in a conversation. They don’t really understand that a guy might prefer to keep to himself, read, dream.

Or simply sleep, so what!

I’d like to talk a bit about my room.

I can say *my* room, because my mother is no longer always there, coming around to stick her nose into my affairs on the pretext of cleaning up! The owner, her kimono wide-open, sure tried to hang around me at first. But she gave it up. Now she sleeps with the Pakistani on the third floor. I wonder if he takes his turban off . . .

My room isn’t big, but it has a high ceiling. I like that: you can breathe. It’s furnished with an old bed which creaks at the least movement. The floor is covered with several layers of carpets, “Oriental” remnants from which an odour of rancid dust emanates. The rest of the furniture consists of a chest of drawers; a broken-down armchair; a chair and a table, at which I write this; a tiny sink from which a smell of urine rises as soon as you run the hot water. You can’t say it’s luxurious; but for nine bucks a week, including meals, you can’t expect to stay at the Ritz!

The only window opens out on an inner court. A kind of dark, smelly well. And the bare lightbulb, which hangs at the end of a wire right in the middle of the ceiling sure doesn’t improve things. Those who like to read in bed just have to live with it. At home I had a lamp by my bed, but my mother supervised my readings. Here, okay, I ruin my eyes—but all the same I read as much as I like—detective novels.

Some people think detective novels are silly. My mother, for example. She says they aren’t serious books. It’s true, she reads some of the works of Daniel Rop’s and of the guy who wrote *The Embassies*. That’s serious!

Besides, I know a lot of great men who like detective novels. Churchill, and then Anyway, others.

A lot, I tell you!

But let’s come back to what happened to me. I’d like to tell my story to try to understand something about it.

It’s queer, to write it down. You’re bubbling over with a subject with which you are obsessed. For days you mull it over in your head. Then, all of a sudden, it’s ready, and so you put it down on paper. That’s a relief . . .

That night, or to be more precise, in the wee hours of the morning, I headed for the toilet—well, so what!—when an acrid smell of smoke caught at my throat. I noticed that the long hallway to the W. C. was filled with a kind of fog that rose higher and higher up the stairwell.

“Damn it! Fire!” I thought right away.

No doubt about it, this poky place was ablaze! The urge to piss had left me, I swear! In no time at all I knocked on a number of adjacent doors, yelling “Fire! Fire!” and quickly went back to my room to put on some clothes.

Strange to say, I had recovered my composure. In fact, only in the afternoon of the next day—at exactly ten minutes after three by my watch—a violent, uncontrollable trembling shook me and my teeth began to chatter. Delayed jitters! But for the time being I was in control of myself. Even strangely excited. Curious as to the outcome of things. So I dressed without haste, with care: trousers, a sweater, woolen socks, my heaviest shoes: I had read somewhere that that’s best for walking on debris. I took the precaution of soaking a towel with water from the tap. I covered my face with it as I went downstairs; that too, I had read about! Before opening the door, I quickly looked my room over, asking myself if I was going to “save” something. I finally decided on a pile of manuscript papers which I slipped under my sweater, between the wool and my skin. A kind of poem which had come to me, just a few days ago, and with which I wasn’t displeased. The rest could burn—blazes!

The smoke on the stairs had thickened considerably, but the flames, which could be heard crackling in the basement, hadn’t entered it yet. Going down therefore was accomplished without hindrance. Preceded and followed by other fantoms, I got outdoors and found myself safe and sound on the sidewalk. Coughing and rubbing my eyes like the other boarders. Although less vigorously, I must admit, because of the wet towel.

The spectacle awaiting me in the street in itself was worth paying for.

Stepping over the snakes’ knots of hose, among the fire engines, the red firemen’s trucks, the Magyries ladders, all my fellow victims stood together on the sidewalk across the street. Shivering in the paraphernalia and equipped with accessories from another world! In their midst the landlady, “In plain magnificence of a beauty (a little worn) who has just been aroused from her sleep,” her Pakistani, draped like a Negro king in a flowered bedspread and with his turban on his head—so he does keep it on! The little old folks from the first floor with their parrot cage. The old maids from every floor, each of whom had rescued something: an embroidered cushion, a family popprait, an art trinket. The nervous ones, who didn’t take anything—not even the time to get dressed—and came down barefoot, in the snow. The prudent ones, who carefully locked the door of their room but left their keys inside. The know-it-alls who give advice to the firemen, inform the police, and explain the thing to the nosey. Those who remain still, petrified,

and silently worried.

Humanity, in short!

The blaze itself amounted to very little: a pile of boards and boxes, some cast-off furniture piled up in the basement, which had mysteriously caught fire about four o'clock in the morning.

The seat of the fire, right away confined, had been quickly controlled. So there remained in the basement only a puddle of dirty water on which charred debris floated. A lot of smoke and disturbance for nothing. The hose was rolled up again, the red trucks returned to their firehall and life went back to its normal rhythm—at least on the surface.

Something in the atmosphere had changed! A new, indefinable quality. Persistent like the smell of smoke which continued to waft through the building, haunting our thoughts and prolonging the memory of the fire.

There was a lot of talk at the boarding house, and for several weeks it became the main topic of conversation. At least it expanded and changed our eternal digressions about the weather and the cost of living! Everybody told about his own rescue, put forward his version of the mishap, and expressed his impressions and conclusions. We got lost in conjectures about the causes of the accident: some talked about spontaneous combustion; others about defects in the electrical system; some even, darkly, about criminal action . . .

Although most improbable, since this last hypothesis was by far the most romantic, most of the boarders were only too happy to come around to it and to speculate about it. I wasn't the only one to read detective novels! The commentaries went at a good pace; being corroborated, it's true, by the discovery of suspicious signs in the basement. For example, no one knew for sure whether the little door in the basement had been open or closed that night; an empty can, gasoline-soaked rugs; a suspicious pile of combustible material under the stairs. In short, the traces an arsonist usually leaves behind. On the other hand, the possibility of an "inside job" wasn't excluded; and it didn't escape anyone's notice that in that house each of the residents, and the landlady herself, could be suspected.

The insurance inspectors conscientiously led their enquiry, with outside help from the police who arrested, investigated and then for lack of proof freed again its regular assortment of drunks and perverts, known for similar exploits or appearing for different reasons in the police files. At the boarding-house our testimonies were collected, and one by one we were all subjected to thorough questioning. As I was the one who had given the alarm, I was questioned with special care, even a hint of hostility. What the hell was I doing in the halls anyway at

that hour?

"So, you haven't got the right to piss, do you?" I answered them in my usual abrupt manner, although it certainly didn't help me, under the circumstances, to make friends. Obviously they had it in for me. Moreover I antagonize most people . . . Nevertheless, they had to release me for the same reason they released the perverts. Of course a fellow has the right to piss—they can't take that away from us!

Since their investigation proved fruitless, they shelved the affair for the time being and we didn't hear any more talk about it. The landlady received an insurance cheque and immediately went ahead with improvements in the basement. As far as the boarders were concerned, they had exhausted the subject and discovered other things to occupy their minds. From now on they devoted their leisure time to Princess Grace or Princess Margaret, I don't remember anymore. The memory of the fire was fading away with the smell of the smoke that had infected the house.

Enough stench came up from the kitchen to drive the other away!

As far as I was concerned, my memories didn't disappear that easily.

Just like my fear which had overcome me only the day after the event—perhaps I was capable only of belated reactions? Anyhow, in the silence of my room I thought a great deal about the fire and continued to speculate on its causes, its author. I tried to imagine the stealthy wrongdoer, preparing his crime for a long time. Spying on the habits of the house; watching at night when someone would forget to lock the little door opening out on the alley; furtively entering the basement with the gasoline can hidden under his overcoat; quickly piling up some old boxes and old newspapers; splashing gasoline over it; throwing a match on it and fleeing as fast as possible, driven by an immense feat, bordering on orgasm.

A crazy pleasure, if you like. But a first-rate pleasure—and one which I could understand, going over the incident every day more fully by exploring all the possibilities. I became greatly intrigued with this affair: as in the case of a super detective film whose plot I had directed myself, being both the author and the interpreter of the scenario and responsible for all the developments.

So much so that at a given moment, I came to ask myself, identifying myself somehow with the Unidentified: "Would I myself be capable of such an act?" the famous "gratuitous act"—the Russian student who kills his landlady with an axe blow, out of simple curiosity.

Insidiously like invisible pollen that's carried by the wind and which proliferates monstrously in good soil—the idea germinated in me that perhaps I was actually

the criminal they looked for. If the inspectors' inquest had failed, wasn't it precisely because the really guilty person was here, under their nose; and because they hadn't seen anything. Look, I know stories about sleepwalkers: guys who walk around at night, on the edge of the roof, return quietly to lie down and who don't remember anything when they wake up. So, why not me? Who knows if, without knowing it, I didn't have deep-down a stubborn, unacknowledged grudge against humanity in general; and the idiots with whom I was forced to live in particular; the landlady, her little sham maternal attentions, her Pakistani, the boarding house itself with its poorly lit rooms, the grimy bathrooms? As a result my unconscious perhaps made me get up early in the morning and set the damn fire to the place . . .

The more I turned it over and over in my head, the more the idea elated me. "Why not me?" I repeated to myself. And that had the effect of a revelation on me. Without realizing it, I had stumbled on the truth. It was no longer an intellectual pastime, but a matter of fact, which should have been obvious to me. Everything fitted perfectly, every piece of the puzzle fell into place. I wanted to get out of my room, rush outside, and proclaim my discovery. To let everyone know . . .

Hey, hey! Wait a minute.

All this was fine and dandy, but wasn't it better to take every precaution; so that no indiscreet joy, the smart detective's vanity, would spell the downfall of the miscreant—who in my case, of course, could only be one and the same person. It's one thing to have found the solution to a problem, but quite another to pretend to be Raskolnikof! If I were to arouse suspicion with idle talk, soon they would have implicated me in the affair and incriminated me. I had to take precautions, hide my cards and keep quiet.

Since I don't think highly of my fellowmen—who moreover repay me a hundredfold—I don't make friends easily. It's unfortunate that my unsociability is out of proportion, complicated by quirks and idiosyncracies. Thus, I don't like looking straight at people, that's apparent. Perhaps it's because I'm shy. More than ever, every time I felt anybody at all was looking at me, I got upset and avoided looking at them. Now you know our opinion about people with "shifty eyes" . . . There's another thing. I've always suffered from what I consider the most humiliating handicap. I blush at the least pretext, and, usually, this is accompanied by a slight but irrepressible stutter. Oh well! For some time now, for the least little reason, the blood rushes to my cheeks in warm waves, my forehead is beaded with sweat and my ears light up like the back lights of a car, which is pitiful.

So much so that it's being noticed in my sur-

roundings. I feel I'm being observed with suspicion, which only serves to increase my embarrassment. So I literally lose my head, multiplying my stupid mistakes and silly behaviour: foolishly twisting and turning as soon as someone in my company speaks about a fire, even if it's in a most objective manner. Even worse, I bring the forbidden subject up for discussion on my own just to appear at ease—and then get tangled up like the biggest fool there ever was.

Until—what had to happen—did happen.

We were gathered together in the living room around the television set.

I had come down because of the news. We were now listening to the sports news, when I upset the general peace of mind with a "smart" remark, something like: "It's funny nobody thought of saving the T.V. the night of the fire!" or something to the effect. Nothing more was needed to prompt one of the boarders to say to me rather quietly:

"I must say! This fire sure seems to interest you!"

There was a deadly silence. All at once everybody's eyes fixed on me. I thought I'd die of shock. Terror-stricken, I hastily beat a retreat and went back into my den without waiting for anything else. I threw myself on my bed, biting the pillow and moaning with shame and helpless rage. "Oh, how mean!" I repeated endlessly, imagining the knowing looks and the bitter comments they'd inevitably make downstairs. "I'm not surprised. Me, I never found him candid . . . that guy!" and so on and on . . . I was in a cold sweat thinking about the telephone call, the anonymous letter that before long would certainly follow to alert the authorities.

Oh, I was in a fine mess—and I alone was responsible for it.

I should have controlled myself, demonstrated my coolheadedness, and kept quiet. Life is what it is. Above all, it is there: we didn't choose it, but it is there. You have to take life as it is, the whole lot, and make the best of it. But I just didn't know anymore! And even today I wouldn't be able to swear whether I *did* or *didn't* set the boardinghouse on fire. The fact is that I felt guilty. I have always felt guilty . . .

I was caught in a trap and I knew it. Trapped, tracked down, driven against the wall. I expected to be picked up and already saw myself handcuffed between two policemen.

It was much simpler.

After three days of endless waiting during which I thought several times I'd go mad, I got a letter from the neighboring police station asking me, dear sir, most politely to present myself at Inspector X's office at a given time on a given day to give additional testimony in con-

nection with the fire of the fourth of this month.

The die was cast, and so I felt a kind of relief.

Also, they addressed me politely. You can get anything you want from me provided you are polite. I presented myself therefore quite willingly on the appointed day at the place to which I was summoned. I pretty well thought at that time that it really was just a formality; a bit more patience and the whole affair would be settled.

I was kept waiting for quite a while with about half a dozen other people sitting on a wooden bench leaning against the wall of a long hallway which was filled with the coming and going of uniformed and plain-clothes policemen and the noise of typewriters. The longer it took the more insignificant I felt. My earlier optimism quickly vanished . . .

Detective Sergeant Gauvin, to whose office I was finally led had nothing of the cunning skill and especially nothing of the diabolical patience of a Porphyus. His attack was so direct and his simplicity so brutal, that I was immediately dumbfounded.

"Now my young man, you play with matches?"

He didn't play around, I'll hand you that! He was in a hurry: no annoying questions, no endless cat and mouse tricks—he cornered the mouse right away.

In the back of the room a policeman in shirt-sleeves, a cigarette butt stuck in the corner of his mouth, diligently typed my statement. Do note: I didn't say my confession! There couldn't be a question of confession since I didn't know anything definite. Some semi-confessions at best: under the circumstances the only honest way of answering the sergeant's questions. So, if he asked me: "Did you go down to the basement?"—he addressed me using the familiar "you," which I find very disagreeable—I was of course forced to answer "I don't think so . . . nevertheless it isn't altogether impossible." That's not a confession, you must admit; but I realize it doesn't constitute what you could call a "categorical denial," either.

Shouting, stirring up the neighborhood, protesting my innocence, how could I do it? I wasn't sure of anything...

"What were you doing in the hallway?"

"I was going to the john—I already told you."

"Yeah . . ."

"It's true, you know!"

"Good enough! Where did you come from then: from your room or from the basement?"

"From my room, probably . . ."

"Could you swear to that?"

"No."

"You didn't come from the basement instead?"

"I don't think so—but it's possible."

"How so, how is it possible?"

"I don't know . . ."

That's true, I didn't *know*. And then, how could this policeman have understood everything that went on in my head and how everything got muddled there? I was eager to get it over with, that's all. And because of that I was prepared to admit to anything they wanted. Peace, for heaven's sake! peace . . .

Besides, aren't we all guilty? So, if it is this crime or another, what difference does it make? Finally, worn out, I was the one who asked the last question:

"So, what are you waiting for to lock me up?"

"That's exactly what we're going to do," Sergeant Gauvin snapped back at me. "Unless you agree to pay bail of five hundred dollars . . ."

Momentarily I felt dizzy and strangely elated.

The "greatest possible misfortune" had just struck me! I was freed from my uncertainty. I knew my fate and could fall no lower. I therefore experienced this kind of mischievous joy that I never fail to get out of the irrevocable. A kind of bitter-sweet euphoria . . . Just like Mum. She's never really at her best except when catastrophe strikes. If one of our relatives has an accident or is seriously ill, or there occurs a death or a birth, Mum wakes up right away, parades around, shows off, sounds off, shines in all her glory, bright-eyed and with glowing cheeks. Intoxicated with devotion and the immediate reward inherent in virtue, she takes things into hand, organizes, orders, gives of herself unsparingly, submits to the most repugnant needs. Once the crisis is over, when things have returned to normal, she sinks back into a kind of apathy, the motor in neutral, and curls herself up to get back her strength, in anticipation of the next alarm—there are always daughters who give birth, friends who move, old people who die—and so she can once again shine magnificently.

Perhaps this trait is in me also. I find something exalting in adversity. A kind of saintliness—of heroic saintliness—you're going to laugh—a special calling to highest perfection.

When they locked the door of the cell on me, my face was flooded with tears—tears of joy.

At last I was *alone*, rejected by all! Absolutely forsaken. I relished this exhilarating draft. I proudly intoxicated myself with it. I have always sought out solitude, but never before had I experienced such complete solitude. I hate my family. I've hardly any luck with friendships. As far as love is concerned . . . like everybody, I sometimes think about the girls' warm thighs and their fiery sex, but up to now I had to content myself with dreaming. I'm accused of being a mass of complexes: I think I'm ugly, and I'm right—I really am ugly. Then I look at the world around me and ask myself: why all this?

I slept that night as soundly as a child. I hadn't known anything like it for months, for years. I think that's how the sailor who has reached port must rest . . .

A flood of insults woke me up next morning. Uttered by Sergeant Gauvin who had burst into my cell, beside himself with rage.

"You son of a bitch! Idiot, fool! So, what's all this about—this business of playing the criminal? You, an arsonist—haven't you looked at yourself!"

"But what did I do with the damn fellow? Get this! We caught the guy who's really guilty last night. And redhanded at that: just about to start another fire! He confessed everything, you realize? Everything—including *your* fire. But are you going to tell me what you told us? Ah! the gentleman probably wanted to make himself

interesting . . . Get out of here! Scram! I tell you! Out, and don't let us see you here again!"

I left, my tail between my legs, the laughing-stock of the whole police station, and went back home—that is, to the boarding house.

I moved that same day and I try not to think any more about these disagreeable things. I live from one day to the next, burdened with a freedom which I don't know what to make of.

And which from now on I can't regard as anything but temporary.

Translated by M. G. Hesse

Sarah Provost

RUMOR

I hear you've set out in a small boat,
stripped and greased in case you have to swim.
They say you passed the shoals two days ago;
I remember swimming in those shallows.

Here, the yellow leaves are rattling.
Your son plays step-over in red boots.
I hear the clouds out there have hardened,
and you almost lost your bearing in the wind.

Here, the flowers hunker down into roots.
They say you've sighted land,
that your arms are burned brown,
that your hands lie thick on the oar.

All summer in his sandbox, your son
built beaches for your return.

Eduardo Mitre

from LIFESPACE

Your heart pulses
Days and nights
Drumbeat of blood
Factory of good-byes

In the double
Foliage
Of your lungs
The same thread
Of air
That someone
Exhaled
Tonight

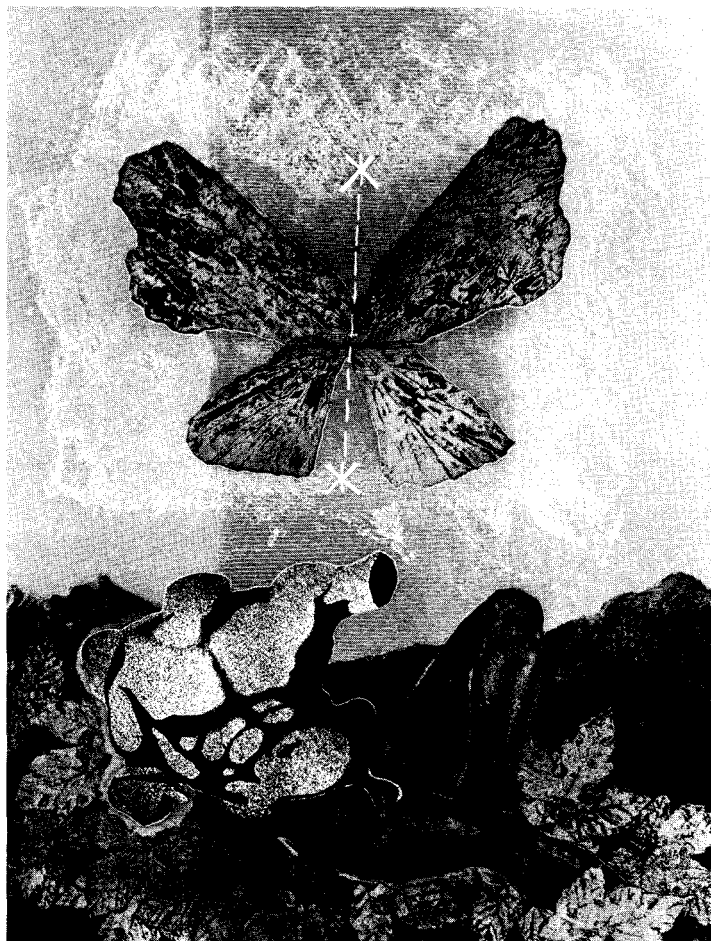
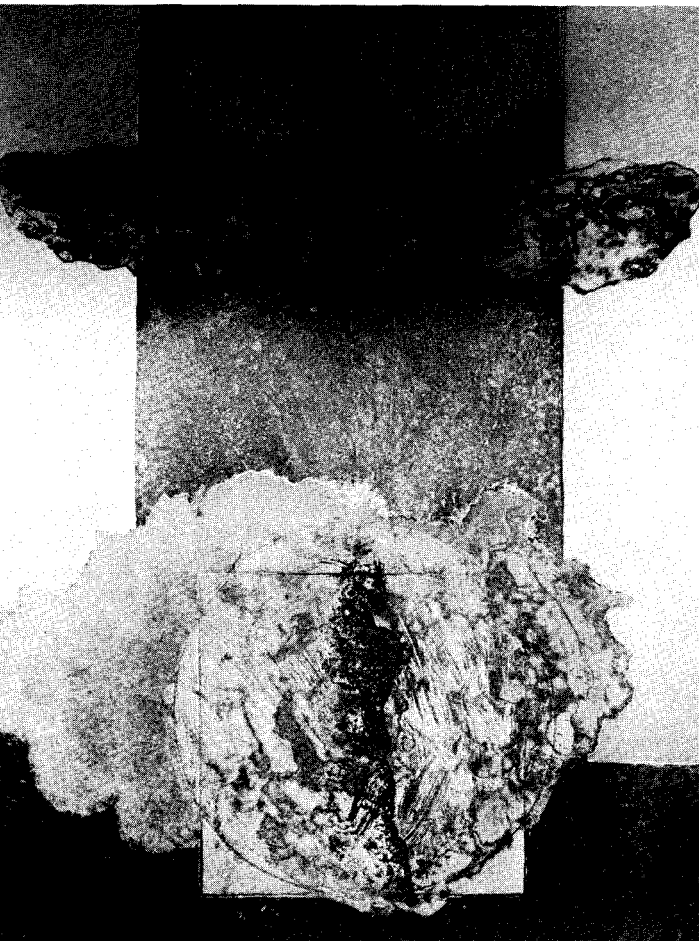
translated by Julie Hunt



MANUEL MENÁN
portfolio



"Portrait a la belle Inconnue," a series of three. Left, "Petit Portrait I"; above, "Petit Portrait II"; and above right, "Petit Portrait III." All are colored etchings, 15% x 19% inches.



Manuel Menán is one of the most gifted, inventive, and prolific graphic artists in Europe today. He does not hesitate to describe himself as a "graphic poet." He and his contemporaries—those for whom he feels a special affinity—are bringing to their work a kind of poetics that is remarkable enough in itself, but which is twice remarkable for its marriage to an inspired craftsmanship.

Among his contemporaries are Paul Wunderlich, Bruno Bruni, Peter Paul, Hans Bellmer, Jean Tremois and Anton Heyboer, all of whom he admires for their wide range of traditional and experimental procedures.

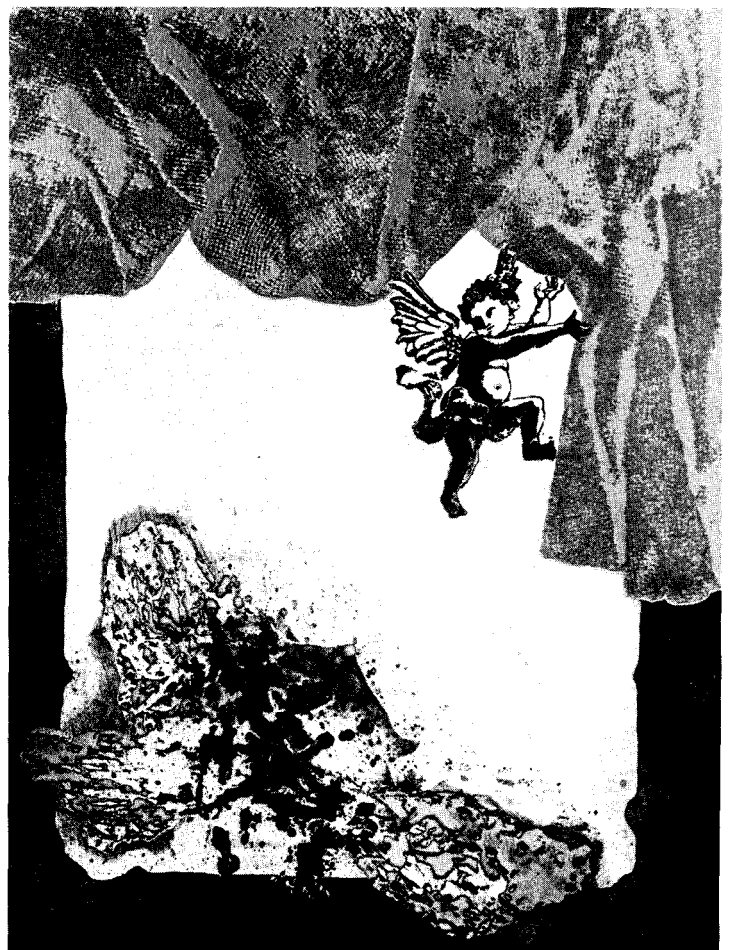
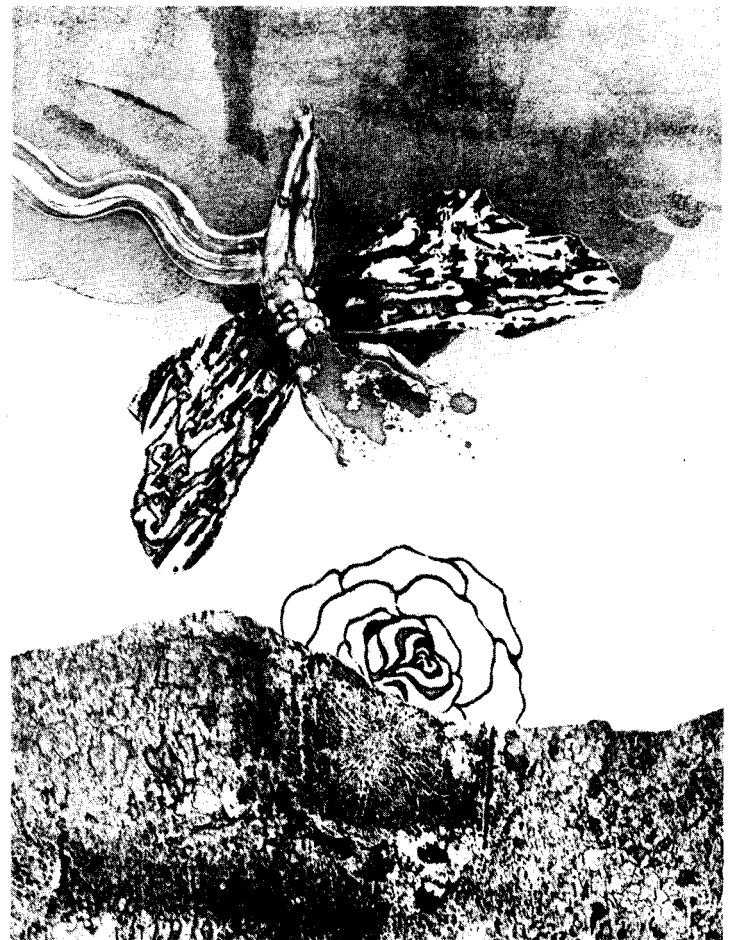
Quite a number of his heroes include artists of the near and distant past: Rouault, Daumier, and Goya—for their graphic prowess; Dürer—for his intensity and often irritatingly

personal eroticisms and neuroticisms; and Rembrandt—for the depth of his personality and his humanity.

Then there are the poets, Baudelaire and Rimbaud, especially; and, perhaps predictably, twentieth-century Spanish and Latin American poets—Lorca, Cernuda, Aleixandre, Neruda, and Borges—these and others for their strangeness and their uncanny grasp of sensual fact. They have taken the best from surrealism and have widened the opportunities for twentieth-century art.

Like those artists he admires, Manuel Menán has created a poetic chronicle of life in the twentieth century, a chronicle that extends the range of graphic arts.

CALVIN HARLAN

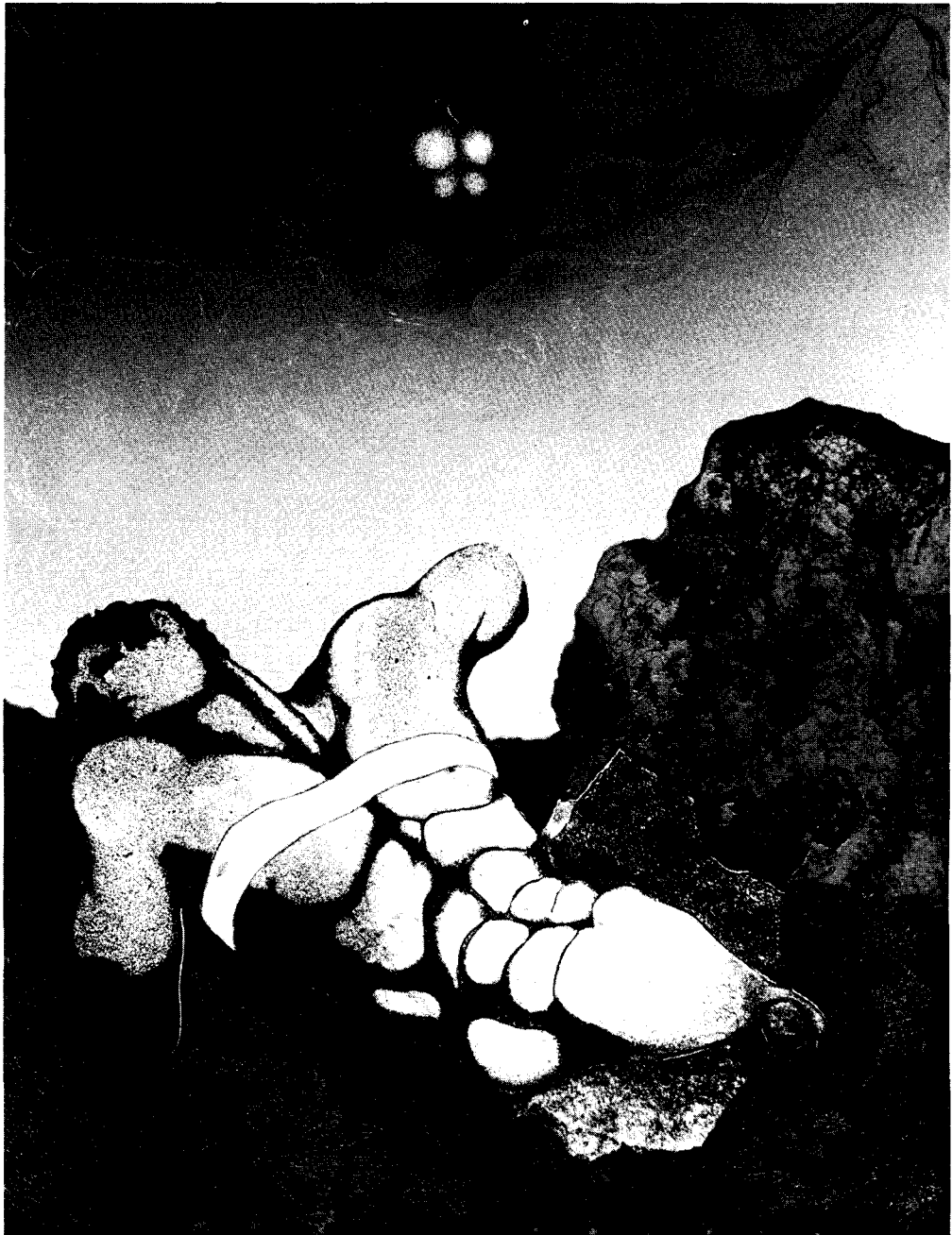


A series of five colored etchings entitled, "Ikarus." All are 19 x 25 inches.





From "The Four Elements," a series of four colored etchings. "Air" (above) and "Earth" (facing page) are both 19 x 25 inches.



"Still Raining, Still Shining, Prometheus," colored etching 19 x 25 inches.

Anna Akhmatova

TWO POEMS

I

A MYSTERIOUS non-meeting
Is a DESOLATE TRIUMPH:
UNSPOKEN PHRASES,
SILENT WORDS.
Un-meeting glances
NOT KNOWING WHERE TO REST,
AND ONLY TEARS - DELIGHTED
IN THEIR UNENDING FLOW
A WILD BUSH OF ROSES near MOSCOW
Alas, is STRANGELY PART OF THIS
WHICH WILL BE NAMED SOMEHOW
IMMORTAL love.

II

LET OTHER REMAIN BASKING
IN SOUTHERN PARADISE:
HERE IT IS NORTHERLY
AND AUTUMN I HAVE CHOSEN AS A FRIEND
THIS YEAR. HAVING BROUGHT PRECIOUS MEMORY
OF MY LAST non-meeting WITH YOU -
A FLAME, COLD, PURE, AND LIGHT -
THE TRIUMPH OF MY DESTINY.

translated by Marianne Andrea

Snippets From An Oxford Diary

by
C. J. McNaspy,
S. J.

While every university evokes a sense of continuity amid human flux few can rival Oxford for nostalgic intensity. Last summer, armed only with my 1947-1948 Pocket Diary, I returned to Oxford—physically that is—and tried to relive some of a wondrous postdoctoral year. At first everything seemed much the same as I turned right at the Carfax from St. Aldate's to the High, that "most beautiful street in the world," as Oxonians devoutly believe.

Only the people were gone. Not a single old friend or mentor could I find after thirty years, as Matthew Arnold's quip popped into mind: "Oxford, that home of lost causes and forsaken beliefs and unpopular names and impossible loyalties." Exhilaration was tempered with poignance.

In retrospect 1947-1948 seems to have been a particularly vital year at Oxford. The war was over, and while we felt the sting of rationing, the royal wedding in London stirred imaginations and other sparks of life were intermittently vivid.

New academic stars from the continent, such as E. D. M. Fraenkel, added notably to the galaxy of dons always present. While Fraenkel insisted that Greek was his "thing," his lectures on Roman poetry captured enthusiastic audiences. For the men rather than the subjects attracted. "Prolegomena to the Study of Medieval Poetry" is hardly the most enticing of course titles. But when one noted that C. S. Lewis was to be the lecturer, in all Oxford no college lecture room could accommodate the hundreds who thronged. We had to move to the vast hall reserved for final exams. This was so despite the fact that Lewis held no professorial or other title; he was a simple don, but word got around. The chair of English Language and Literature was held by a quiet, rather reserved scholar, then known only to the few but soon to be a household name: J. R. R. Tolkien. (I met Tolkien, but little suspected the existence of his special universe.)

At least as vital to Oxford life as lectures, the range of clubs available brought one into closer contact with interesting people. It was, in fact, through the Socratic Club that I came to know Lewis rather well—enough, at least, to be invited to tea at his digs and for him to accept a dinner invitation on several occasions. The Aquinas Society, under the aegis of E. L. Mascall, attracted equally interesting lecturers, such as Isaiah Berlin, Gabriel Marcel, and Fred Copleston.

These clubs (and others, like the Canning Club, where I learned to take snuff the elegant way and toast "King and Church" from a large silver goblet) were what today we should call "unstructured." Dues came to a half-crown (roughly half a dollar), but there was little other organization. We met either in a don's digs or in some senior common room in an atmosphere of warmth and egalitarianism. Informally but with obvious skill, the guest speaker would suggest the topic of conversation. In those days existentialism was in the air—logical positivism as well. It would be considered bad form to take over or pontificate. Understatement, rather, and the proper amount of academic stuttering suggested and maintained the proper tone. Meantime, a great deal of wisdom circulated, and one went home determined to read at least ten books on the subject. While only one club brandished the name "Socratic," all would equally well have done so.

The Opera Club brought E. J. Dent from Cambridge ("the other place") and led to pioneer performances of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in English and Mozart's *Idomeneo*—rarely heard anywhere three decades ago. I also belonged to two small madrigal groups, specializing in a revival of William Byrd's "Gradualia" for the first time since the Tudor age.

Tea, of course, is among the noblest of British traditions, not least at Oxford. My diary reminds me of a tea at our place (Campion Hall) hosting Evelyn Waugh, C. M. Bowra, and Lord Pakenham. It was only natural, when I was introduced as someone from New Orleans, that Lord Pakenham twitted me about what had happened to his ancestor at Chalmette. Evelyn Waugh then regaled us with what was to be a preview of *The Loved One*, an account of his bizarre experiences in Hollywood. Later that evening, he gave a full lecture on the subject to the Newman Association. As one bit of absurd Americana was piled upon another, I observed increasing rage on the part of some young Americans, much to the delight of their English peers. Waugh turned everything topsy-turvy, however, in his last sentence: "And just so none of my British compatriots should feel the least bit complacent about what I've said about America, let me just assure them that the only reason we don't do worse is that we've simply not got enough money!" At this the Americans cheered and the British balloon burst.

Tea at C. M. Bowra's some weeks later: "What an amiable big bear," my diary notes. I had attended his lectures on Heroic Poetry, convinced that he must be the most learned authority on poetry in the world (I've since found no reason to change my mind). One question I particularly wanted to put to him, but expressed some reluctance. "Out with it, my dear," he bellowed.

"Well, it has to do with the Homeric question."

Bowra laughed: "Oh, no problem at all. It's all very simple. The Iliad was written by one poet, and the Odyssey by one poet, and the two poets are the same poet. That's all there is to the Homeric question!"

Kenneth Clark (then simply "Sir") appears in my diary more than once. His occasional lectures in the Ashmolean brought young and old to hear the brilliant, youthful critic. I recall particularly his insights on Mantegna and Rafael, hardly suspecting that he would one day be a star of the newfangled gadget known as the "telly," which I had not yet seen in America. Sir Cyril Fox and Sir Leonard Wooley were also popular lecturers at the Ashmolean, fresh from their digs at Anglesey and Ur and communicating zest for all art, however old.

I find it hard to reconstruct, even with the aid of a diary, the excitement of almost every day. Only twice are there no entries: Jan. 18, the first day of Hilary Term, and Feb. 7. More typical are the following, taken almost at random.

Dec. 3, *Macbeth* done by Donald Wolfit; guest night with E. I. Watkin.

Jan. 19, show Rector of Heidelberg around Oxford; lecture by Thornton Wilder on omniscience in the novel.

Jan. 29, London Symphony; lecture by T. S. R. Bose on Fra Angelico.

Feb. 18, chat with Mrs. Graham Greene on *Brighton Rock*; hear Tom Corbishley on Hopkins.

Feb. 21, debate between Christopher Hollis and Callaghan; lecture on Spanish mysticism by Allison Peers.

March 9, interesting guest night with Martin D'Arcy, C.S. Lewis, Leslie Walker, Lord Cherwell arguing about swans, telepathy, ghosts, causality and the like.

May 11, meet Edmund Rubbra on the High; escorts me to rehearsal of his new *Festival Overture* by BBC Symphony; meet Vaughan Williams; they're doing his Sixth Symphony.

May 24, Ronald Knox visits us again; performance of *Edward II* in Oriel Quad, just under Edward's statue; he founded the college.

In retrospect some diary entries turn out to be far more significant than when they first appeared. October 29, for example, has the innocuous words: "Christopher Dawson." That evening, as I recall, I had the chance to hear in person an author whose books had long been among my favorites. I had heard about his quiet manner and was urged to sit on the very front row. Following his lecture (the subject of which I have no idea), I approached Mr. Dawson somewhat awed, told him I was from Louisiana, and that I had enjoyed his lecture.

"Oh, you're from Louisiana. Good. I've been wondering why it was that the see of the diocese moved from Natchitoches to Alexandria. Can you tell me?" I gulped, muttered something, admitted I didn't know, but thought it might be because Alexandria had become the larger city....What a lost opportunity, I felt.

Some days later, the Master of Campion Hall called me and told me Christopher Dawson would like to have someone to serve as tutor. Would I like it? Again I gulped, but managed a quick, "Yes, indeed!" This would involve a weekly meeting at the Dawson home just outside Oxford on Boar's Hill.

At the moment Dawson was working on the prestigious Gifford Lectures—the series to be titled *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*. He assigned me small tasks, initiated me into historical research, spent many an hour directing my reading. Since then I have tried to absorb all of Dawson's writings. I corresponded with him until his death, visited him when he was first Chauncey Stillman Professor at Harvard, even cajoled him into lecturing here at Loyola in 1960. Hardly a day goes by without my reading something from Dawson and never a semester without my using one or other of his books as a text. To me Oxford, more than anything else, means Christopher Dawson.

Yet, as I thumb back through my Pocket Diary, I realize that the glory of Oxford was not so much any single person as a live tradition—the living past, cheek-by-jowl with the newest thought, literally in the richest sense a university, a universe far removed from the trivial or merely fugitive.



Stephanie Naplachowski

BRONZED

I found you
quivering
on a snapped limb.
Icicles clenched
like parasites
around your numb fingers
and small waist.
I held you
like a prayer
between my palms.
Felt you slide
down my arm.
I closed my hands.

Ernest Ferlita

QUETZAL

I *Quetzalcoatl brings music to the earth.*

The god with his golden earplugs broods in obsidian silence,
Tezcatlipoca, Lord of the Night and the Smoking Mirror.

He cries out to the Wind his brother:

"The earth is sick with silence.

Look around you and see:

The man lies imprisoned in his dream,
the child groans in the woman's womb,
the bird sits broken on the branch.

Do something!"

O God, O God,

against the obsidian silence let something of your song prevail.

The Wind God, Quetzalcoatl, rises on a thousand wings,
his serpent's body caught in the swirl of an emerald's heart.

Shouting darkly, he climbs

the pyramid of space

to the temple of the living Sun

that sings with the blood of gods.

"Have you no song for the brooding earth?

No choir to light up the sky?

Say something!"

O God, O God,

against the obsidian silence let something of your song prevail.

The Wind God from his bottomless throat lets loose the thunder's roar
and besieges the house of the Sun till all his singers flee.

Gently he gathers them up

and bears them on his feathered back,

a tumult of melody

to fill the silent earth.

"To the dreamer, I say, Wake up!

To the child in the womb, Live! To the bird:

Sing something!"

O God, O God,

against the obsidian silence let something of your song remain.

II *Tezcatlipoca steals away the wife of Tlaloc the rain god.*

HE: I watch her unfold
like a favored flower
in the middle of the garden
after a sweet rain,
Xochiquetzal,
Tlaloc's wife,
petals of gold
plunging red
into a vase of gems.

How can I pluck the flower
and not see it wither in my hands?

SHE: I look up and see him
watching, watching,
his shining body
young and hard,
Tezcatlipoca,
the warrior god,
shielded fire
exploding into light
against the sky.

How can I pluck the flower
and not see it wither in my hands?

HE: I must have her,
not tomorrow but now,
not the next day but now,
now, yes now.
Like the reaching sun
that overtakes the flower,
he pervading,
she unfolding,
so must I take *her*.

How can I pluck the flower
and not see it wither in my hands?

III *Quetzalcoatl is driven into exile.*

Where shall I go? Who are my people?
How shall I sing my song in exile?

In Tula I have no rival, I, Quetzalcoatl.
So steep and narrow, in Tula, the many steps of my temple,
that even as he dares to pause a man is urged to climb higher.
I smile on my people and make them masters of every art.
Then my brother comes, Tezcatlipoca, in the guise of a priest.
"The heart of a child," he says, "I want the heart of a child.
Gather the people and make them face the obsidian sky,
then open the breast of the child, reach in and give me his heart!"
"No!" I cry. Great is my anger. "No and no and no!"
But the people grumble, and I know that now I have a rival.

Where shall I go? Who are my people?
How shall I sing my song in exile?

Once more, in the guise of a priest, comes Tezcatlipoca my brother.
In the palm of his hand he holds a child there ever dancing,
in feathered robes and turquoise mask. The child is me.
And the people come to see, walking, running, crowding,
piling like stones around the child forever dancing.
So great is the crush that hundreds perish in a single day.
"What's this?" the priest demands. A glass bead shivers on his lip.
"The child has bewitched you, the dancing child. Rise up and slay him!"
And they pull him down, the dancing child, and hurl themselves upon him,
When I see what they are doing I flee the city forever.

Where shall I go? Who are my people?
How shall I sing my song in exile?

IV *Quetzalcoatl becomes the morning star.*

Oh, if only one lived forever,
Oh, if only one never died!
 At the edge of the land,
 on the shore of the sea,
the bells on his thigh fall silent,
 Quetzalcoatl
 at the end of his flight.

Oh, if only one lived forever,
Oh, if only one never died!
 At the edge of the land,
 on the shore of the sea,
he looks back and remembers his people,
 Quetzalcoatl
 in his time of tears.

Oh, if only one lived forever,
Oh, if only one never died!
 At the edge of the land,
 on the shore of the sea,
he puts on his turquoise mask,
 Quetzalcoatl
 in his feathered robes.

Oh, if only one lived forever,
Oh, if only one never died!
 At the edge of the land,
 on the shore of the sea,
he sets himself afire,
 Quetzalcoatl
 in a nest of flames.

Oh, if only one lived forever,
Oh, if only one never died!
 At the edge of the land,
 on the shore of the sea,
his ashes begin to rise,
 Quetzalcoatl
 like a flock of birds.

Oh, if only one lived forever,
Oh, if only one never died!
 At the edge of the land,
 on the shore of the sea,
his heart ascends to heaven,
 Quetzalcoatl
 the morning star.

Manoj Das

THE BRIDGE IN THE MOONLIT NIGHT

At times the moon appeared so big and so close to Ashok's balcony that he thought he could hallo it and even reach it in a few bounds and shake hands with it. But since it had evidently no hands, he wondered if it would do to plant a kiss on it.

Relaxing in his easy chair Ashok loved to chitchat with the moon, particularly when it shone appreciably bright. He had just told it, "I crossed eighty some years ago. What about you?"

There were moments in such moonlit nights when he could see young fairies of both the sexes—he was surprised that they never aged—playing hide and seek amidst the milk-white clouds and atop the star-lit trees on the dusky horizon. He enjoyed their frolic to his heart's fill, but often dozed off in the process, and, what was intriguing, still continued to see them. The only problem before him was that, he could not say how much of those gamesome beings he saw while awake and how much in sleep.

He was aware of the fact that this queer brand of forgetfulness had slowly begun to cover his other activities too, even those purely physical in nature. For instance, this is what had happened that very evening: he had been delighted at the alluring colour of his cup of tea reflecting the sunset sky. He had had a warm sniff of its steam. But his happiness drove him into one of those sudden snoozes and he sipped the tea in dream. A little later, upon being reminded that his tea was growing cool, he felt amazed to find that his satisfaction at having drunk the tea in dream was not a whit less than the satisfaction he derived from truly drinking it.

But whatever the condition of his memory, he was proud of the fact that age had not dimmed his vision to any considerable extent. He attributed this to his drinking from his mother's breast till the age of five, being her last child.

He had however, suddenly developed doubts that the accuracy of his vision and that was a little while ago. The bridge on the small river two furlongs away where he often spent his evenings in the company of his friends was no longer visible to him. Every time he woke up, he rubbed his bleary eyes and tried to locate the old familiar bridge, but failed miserably. Was the moon playing a trick with him, withholding its beams? He glared at the moon. He then looked at the clump of bushy trees on the horizon where he was accustomed to see the silhouette of the Taj. He could see that all right. This was an annoying problem. He solved it by quickly dozing off.

But the footfalls dragging up the stairs were enough to rouse him. They were Sudhir's—as familiar to him as the thwacks of his own walking stick. Although younger to him by a decade, Sudhir gasped for breath while climbing. But to Ashok the feeling was hardly different from that of normal walking. Not only that, he had lately begun to have most unusual experiences while climbing the stairs, up or down. For example, on the last occasion he had fallen asleep midway up the stairs, although for not more than a minute. But that was sufficient for his mind to become devoid of the entire sequence of events. He had just returned after a delightful round by his son's car. But on reaching the balcony he had concluded

that he had just got down to the portico. He had looked for the car and had mistaken the grandfather clock as the chauffeur. However, he had succeeded in rapidly recovering the sense of the situation and complimented himself on that score. It was no hallucination of any formidable nature to mistake ascent for descent and vice versa—he assured himself.

"Come, Sudhir, shouldn't we go out for a stroll?" Ashok offered his hand for Sudhir to help him stand up.

"Where on earth to go? The bridge was the only place free from hullabaloo," Sudhir lamented looking in the accustomed direction.

"Yes, yes, the bridge. Let us go there."

"Look here, Ashok bhai, you must fight off this forgetfulness of yours—what they call amnesia. Where is the bridge? Why do you think we haven't gone out for a stroll since a month? They have pulled down each brick of the dear old bridge. They plan to erect a new one—a fashionable one with a number of jetties on both the sides for the taxpayers to enjoy their evenings around flower plants, cracking nuts and sucking ice cream sticks in the summer. In no time it will turn into a fish market, I bet," Sudhir spoke with anguish.

"Say that! The bridge is just not there! That explains why I cannot see it. No doubt my memory is playing tricks with me. Your case is different. You are young!" commented Ashok.

"Not as young as you think, Ashok bhai, I will be eighty in a year or two."

"Well, at your age I could . . ." Ashok's muttering grew feebler and he fell into his snooze halfway through his observation.

"You are under an exaggerated impression about your age, Ashok bhai. It is so common to read about centurions nowadays! What are you before them? A bare octogenarian! Ashok bhai, are you falling asleep?"

"Oh no, Sudhir, I must confess though that I doze off from time to time. But that keeps me fresh. Now, should we make a move—towards the bridge?"

"Ashok bhai, did I not tell you for the umpteenth time that the bridge had disappeared? You forget everything!" Sudhir sounded disappointed.

From the restless doddering of his limbs it was obvious that Ashok felt embarrassed. But he soon regained his composure and said, "You are right, Sudhir, I keep forgetting much of what people tell me. There was a time when it was necessary to forget a fat lot of things. But then the mind proved too diligent to let a single item slip from the memory. And now when it is imperative for you to remember at least a few things—who else would care to remember for you when you are old and out of

tune with the rest—the mind betrays you."

"But you lack no care, Ashok bhai. You are in fact placed amidst a host of kind souls who would remember on your behalf all you need to!"

"A host of kind but colourful souls. Despite all their goodwill for you, they must dab your affairs with their tint and tone, so much so that you will fail to recognize what was yours. No, Sudhir, others cannot remember for you, just as others cannot forget for you!"

"Ashok bhai, after a long time you are talking as sparkingly as you used to when you were our professor. What drama was there in your speech!"

"Drama, was there? I don't remember. And look here, Sudhir, on second thought, there is so much peace in forgetting things! I am in peace, believe me, with my—what do you call—amnesia. My instant snoozes of which you complain are nothing but a symptom of my peace. Would death prove gracious enough to close in on me while I was in one of those snoozes!"

Sudhir understood from the volume of Ashok's voice that he would not feel sleepy for some time to come. He dragged his chair closer to him, and after a little hemming, said, "Ashok bhai, I am trying over a long time to make a confession to you. No longer can I keep an anguish bottled up in my heart. Will you kindly bear with my babbling for a few minutes?"

"Go on, Sudhir."

Sudhir hemmed again and rolled up his sleeves and readjusted his position. He passed a few more seconds ensuring that there was nobody in the vicinity to overhear him but a cat on the sofa. He wagged his stick at it and it departed more in disgust than in fear.

"Ashok bhai, you remember Meera, don't you?"

There was no response from the listener.

"You remember her, don't you? Meera, my distant cousin, two or three years older than I, the beautiful Meera! Wasn't she a student when you were the star of our college—a young lecturer? Who could have outshone you in gait and style and that spick and span look you carried about yourself! But let me go back to Meera. We had put her up in our house. To cut the story short, I mean the very Meera you were in love with. Ashok bhai, you have not fallen asleep, I hope!"

"How can I, Sudhir? Go on."

"But will you first tell me whether you remember Meera or not?"

"Didn't you say that I loved her? How then do you ask such a question?"

"Thank God. Yes, Ashok bhai, you loved her and you grew thin yearning for her."

"And I never grew fat again!"

"But you fattened me—and I have remained fat all my life—feeding me like a pig because you used me as the courier of your love letters to her. And how wonderful those letters were! I have hardly ever come across such galvanizing sentiments in any fiction or even poetry!"

"Sudhir, don't you tell me that you were unkind enough to read my private letters to Meera!"

"Pardon this sinner, Ashok bhai. I did read them. I read not only your letters but also the one, the solitary one, she had written to you in reply. That was of course how I learned that she had come to set her heart upon you."

"No, Sudhir, she had not. And she never wrote to me."

"She did, Ashok bhai!"

Ashok sat silent without taking his eyes off the moon which had grown brighter emerging from a fragile scrap of cloud. The long Eucalyptus that stood touching the balcony persisted in its monologue in the steady breeze. The grandfather clock rang out a resonant half-past seven.

Ashok suddenly spoke out in a vibrant tone, "I am lucky. I don't care to call for any proof of the veracity of your statement, Sudhir, but I wish you had told me of her love for me earlier. I could have considered myself lucky over a longer period, that is all."

"There lies the knot, Ashok bhai! What do you think I am feeling so awfully guilty about? You certainly remember how shy Meera was. But she had at last yielded to your entreaties. She had written a small but sweet reply to your epic love letters. In fact, she had agreed to meet you at the bridge."

Sudhir paused for a moment and then continued, "And she had come, but had to go back feeling humiliated, for you did not turn up."

"How do you say so, Sudhir, I received no letter from her!" Ashok asserted in a trembling voice.

"How could you have received the letter, Ashok bhai?" Sudhir faltered and tried to clear his choking throat. "I was bringing that letter to you. But while I was crossing the bridge it flew away in a sudden gust of wind."

"Flew away? Let us go and look for it!" Ashok made an effort to get up.

"After sixty years?" Sudhir laughed nervously.

Ashok fell back in his chair and closed his eyes.

"Ashok bhai, I must confess that the letter flew away only after I read it and tore it to shreds. In fact, I let the pieces fly into the rolling flood of the monsoon under the bridge. I can still see them flying away like butterflies."

Ashok kept quiet.

Sudhir hung his head and muttered on: "I do not know

why I did such a thing. You will certainly agree that I was not a mischievous boy as such. No doubt, I had a deep affection for Meera. I could not have wished anything but her welfare. My affection for you was no less, but that was tinged with a sort of fear. I was perhaps afraid that Meera should be entirely lost to me, and to herself too, if she married you. Needless to say, that was nothing but sheer stupid apprehension. In any case, I was to lose all contact with her the moment she left our house, which she did before long, on the receipt of a message about her father's illness."

Sudhir played with his stick fidgetedly before resuming, "Ashok bhai, all this hardly mattered to me as long as I was engrossed in my vocation. But since retirement, whenever I have visited the bridge, the memory of my treachery has assumed a terrible dark form and has chased me like a ghost. For ten long years have I been plagued by it. I still feel puzzled whenever I try to hit upon some solid explanation of my conduct sixty years ago. Ashok bhai, will you pardon me? I wonder. But believe me, if I was a hypocrite, over the past years, by pretending to be good, I have become good."

Sudhir stopped. Someone was climbing the stairs. It was Mahindra, tired but excited. "Ashok Babu, if I am still capable of walking and even climbing, it is entirely due to the inspiration I draw from your example. Now, tell me, Ashok Babu, how on earth could you reach home so fast? I saw you from the other side of the demolished bridge. I called out to you. It appeared you were too engrossed in looking for something on the dry bed of the river to respond to my call. I just took a turn to avoid trudging through those heaps of bricks and came over to your side. Alas! You were gone. You will overtake a hurricane, Ashok Babu. Who will believe that you were older than me?" Mahindra observed, still panting.

"But Ashok bhai hasn't been out at all this evening. You must have seen someone else," said Sudhir.

"Ha! Can I ever mistake someone else for Ashok Babu? And in this bright moonlight? Well, Ashok Babu, you couldn't but have reached here only seconds before me, isn't that so?"

Mahindra waited for a minute for Ashok to reply and then observed, "Surely, he has fallen asleep!"

"But he never sleeps so deep at this hour! Ashok bhai, do you hear?" Sudhir called.

"Ashok Babu!" Mahindra joined.

"Ashok bhai!" Sudhir called louder and gave a shake to his old professor and friend. Next moment he screamed out, "Who is there? Phone up the doctor, quick! Where is the switch for the light, Mahindra? O God, I forget everything!"

Henri Michaux

HE WRITES

He writes . . .

The paper ceases to be paper, little by little becomes a long, long table on which arrives, directed, he knows it, he feels it, he suspects it, the still unknown victim, the remote victim which has fallen to him.

He writes

His fine, acute ear, his unique ear hears a wave which arrives, subtly, shrewdly, and a subsequent wave which will come from a distant time and space to direct, to lead the victim who must not resist.

His hand is ready.

An him? He watches things happen.

Knife from the top of the forehead to the core of himself, he stands watch, ready to intervene, ready to slice, to decapitate what isn't, what wouldn't be his, to slice in the carriage that the overflowing Universe pushes towards him what wouldn't be "his" victim . . .

He writes . . .

translated by Michelle Benoit and Tom Whalen

Karl Krolow

IN PEACETIME

I

Peace. The quiet ones
permit their hair to grow.

Their intimacy
with hindsightful prose.

The air sharpens
when an adolescent
pauses in the ruin of a barracks
to leak.

My blossom blooms
permanently.

Love thine enemies:
Have your indifference standardized.

Rural days everywhere,
guiltless as the haystacks of childhood.
Restif de la Bretonnes.

No big bells. Peace.

II

The gainless employment
of knowing.

Yes, the beautiful cement trucks
at the hem of the outskirts.

Hans with his destiny
tattooed on his chest.

The paratroops,
their positions overrun here:
Very dead now for a very long time.

The pastry-cook, my friend.

“Love remembers us
for our good breeding.”

The reckoned future
has occurred:
Bore.

III

To let go.

The state endures:
inside the selfish border of a postage stamp.
Only.

Depression advances
in diminutive marine hours
beneath slow, lazy fish.

Stunted fruit forms
as a tumor forms.

Victory of ellipse
over the dead.

To live there.

translated by J. Michael Yates

William Meissner

THE CONTORTIONIST

For him, any position is fine:
his heel resting casually on his shoulder, arms
twisted together like stretched bread dough.
He could even compress himself
into a 2 by 2 foot cardboard box
and still have room
to eat Shredded Wheat from a bowl, people
pointing and laughing above him
as he chews.

He has almost begun to enjoy arching his body
into an exact O, to feel
the breeze, the universe as it blows
through the open porthole of himself.
He knows this is his fate: to be loved,
to be remembered most
for becoming something he is not—
a chair, the entire alphabet, the ripples
on top of water.
Over the years, he has learned to erase
the wince, learned to relax
with his legs wrapped around his neck
like a thick noose.

For a final stunt, he bends
that same calm expression
backwards, flips pancakes
with his tongue,
listens to the floppy applause.

Alone in the dressing room
he sits naked on the floor.
Somehow he is nearly comfortable
as he wraps his whole body carefully
into a large, pink bow.
Yes, he thinks, this is his gift to himself.

Robert Bringhurst

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

after Supervielle

Starving giraffes, you
star-lickers. Steers
seeking the infinite in
a disturbance of the grass.

Greyhounds planning to catch it
on the run. Roots
that know that it is
hidden down there somewhere.

What have you turned
into to me now
that I'm only alive and my only
handhold the invisible sand?

The air contracts at time
toward taking form.
But what will happen not on
one but at once on both sides of the soul?

Terrestrial
recollections, what do you call
a tree, a sea-wave breaking
up, a sleeping child?

I only want
to pacify my long-faced
memory, I only want
to tell it a forbearing story.

A Conversation with Bertrand Tavernier

HISTORY WITH FEELING

Born in Lyons, France, in 1941, Bertrand Tavernier established himself while still in his twenties as a film critic and historian by writing three books on American film. He was employed by a film promotion company and as a press attaché, he worked with Claude Chabrol, Jean-Luc Godard, and Pierre Schoendoerffer. During this period he founded the Nickel-Odeon, which screened films rarely seen in France or the United States.

His latest film, *Des Enfants Gâtés* (*The Spoiled Children*), was completed in 1977 and opened the *Semaines Universitaires*, Loyola University's tenth annual festival of new French film. John Mosier, assisted by Sarah Elizabeth Spain, conversed with Tavernier in New Orleans on March 15, 1978, when the director attended the *Première* of *Enfants*.

NOR: One minute no one had ever heard of your work, and then it was one bombshell after the other: *The Clockmaker*, *Let Joy Reign Supreme*, and now *The Spoiled Children*

TAVERNIER: Yes, it was an accident. None of the films I made were for the U.S. They were all made for French audiences. I think—and this is my greatest belief—that film should be rooted in a national culture, a national context. I think that the worst thing about film now is when films do not seem to belong to any culture, to any country, to any society. *The Clockmaker* took me a year to make, and during that time one of the

arguments against it was that it would never sell in the U.S.

And I kept saying to them that I'd studied the U.S., that I wrote a book on American cinema, that I had been to the States several times. The films that work in the U.S.—at least they work in a few cities and in the universities—are not the films that French producers and directors make for the American public, which are imitations of American thrillers. The films that are successful are those like Jean Renoir's *Grand Illusion*, like the films of Truffaut, Rohmer, Chabrol. Those films that are very French are successful in the U.S. and if you look into it you see that films like Tachella's *Cousine Cousine* are like *The Clockmaker* in this respect. The Americans, the few Americans who are interested in foreign films don't want to see imitations of what they already have.

NOR: But you've taken that principle further than almost anyone because two of your films, *The Judge* and *the Assassin* and *Let Joy Reign Supreme*, are embedded in French History.

TAVERNIER: It's true. I adore history. Someone asked me—you always wanted to make a political film, a social film, why did you choose an historical film? Why didn't you make a film about today? And that puzzles me. Looking back at history, trying to understand what happened, is part of our culture, part of our education. Those actions in the past are closely related to the present. When people think they are making a modern film, a more personal film when they make a film about life today, they're crazy. Because what about the historian? What about, after all, Marx, Engels, Lenin? They wrote

about the past. They tried to think what had happened. I believe that if you can look at the past in a certain way, that past is always related to the moment when the audience is on jury duty in front of the film.

Of course that makes things difficult sometimes for foreigners, although in such cases it seems to me the critics should play an important part in explaining the film. But people, even in the colleges, do too little work in seeing a film. First, forget it if you don't know one date, one little historical detail. Forget it. Try to see the film as though it were a film about today. Try to see the emotions, because the emotions which are inside the people in that film are still modern. *Let Joy Reign Supreme* is the story of a man who is refusing power, the fight for freedom, for justice, the relationship between corruption and power, the moment, I mean. It's the story of a man who is against the church and wants to speak with the devil. The man wants to experience sexual freedom and at the same time he's killing himself. It's modern. I think that people should work from there and forget the history because I don't think that any French audience knew much more about the history than any foreign one. The regency is a period no one knows.

NOR: It's a fascinating period.

TAVERNIER: Yes, fascinating. It was like an explosion. People were researching in many ways. It was after twenty years of puritanism, and the end of Louis XIV. It was terrible then, so there was a kind of explosion, which went too far, but at least they tried. It's a pity. It's where the word "inflation" was invented, along with those notions about paper money and gold. But I think that people should forget history. They have to think with a feeling and later to work on the historical level. I hope that the film makes them want to read a book, or at least to ask questions. I hope it provokes curiosity. So I think even if you don't know the history very well you should at least be able to get the sense of the film as though it were a contemporary film, to feel the emotions, because the emotions that are inside are still modern. Then of course if you know the history, it will help you.

I don't think it's necessary to be very educated to understand the film. The problem is not in the film; it's in the people, in all of those people who when they suddenly see some dates, some costumes, some names, immediately have an inferiority complex. I discovered history through Dumas and Hugo as well as through classes and the cinema too, through Westerns even. To see *Broken Arrow* was a shock for me when I was very young, and I wanted to know more about the Indians and what happened in the West. And then I discovered genocide and all of that.

NOR: So the Westerns began to stimulate your interest?

TAVERNIER: Yes, and you know why? It's because the Western is the historical film which is not filmed by anyone in the world as an historical film. When people go to see one they never have the feeling that they're watching history.

NOR: The Western is timeless?

TAVERNIER: Yes, because the people, even if they don't know who Wyatt Earp is, or if they don't know the meaning of the cattle barons, can work on their feelings. They don't know that the hero of *Broken Arrow* is a real person who actually existed, and they don't feel inferior about the fact that they don't know. The problem with historical films is that some people, critics, teachers, despise them because of the distance, as though they're childish. Most of the time when you say historical film, people say, "Okay, it's Cecil B. DeMille." It's very difficult to work within that range and do a film that will not make an audience feel inferior and at the same time will not be despised by the critics.

NOR: Well obviously you've been able to do that. I can't think of anyone else in France, or in Europe for that matter who's attempted what you've done here. It's as though there are no previous models.

TAVERNIER: It's not fashionable. There's Rene Allio, but I think he's too cold. He wants to be too analytical. Some times he forgets that history is made of flesh and blood and people who behave accordingly. He wants to be Brechtian, but he forgets that Brecht used comedy—in *Galileo*, for instance. It has a lot of humor, it has guts, it's funny, it's wild even, and it's moving. So I think that notion of distance doesn't work too well for filmmakers.

And there were people who tried to do this before the war. Jean Renoir's *La Marseillaise* is an incredibly good film. And in theatre there were people who worked on plays by Moliere and Marivaux and suddenly those plays, which we had studied in class They put servants in and the people staging the play suddenly made Marivaux like a play of today.

NOR: And filming history as flesh and blood has really become one of your aims?

TAVERNIER: Yes, and Italian directors do it, people like Comencini, whose *Youth and Adolescence of Casanova* is a brilliant film.

NOR: But now after two films, you've moved away from history and made a contemporary film, like your first one, *The Clockmaker*.

TAVERNIER: Yes, but I think every film should be a challenge. The most terrible thing for me is routine, and the most terrible danger for a director is to be self-conscious about what he can do: then he will follow

the old paths to be safe. I want every film I make to be a new challenge, not only because I think that it's the only way to keep learning things, to keep learning my job, but because it's the only way my vision can become wider. I love to work on projects where after I've made the film, I think I've learned something. What I would like to get on the screen in two hours is something that would enable the audience to share the knowledge I gained, the anger I had, the fun I had during those nine months or a year or eighteen months when I was making the film. Not the same experience, but at least I concentrate in two hours what I have experienced during those months.

And for me it's always a kind of joke that I could stop making films and either do some lectures about the eighteenth century or the nineteenth century or about the problem of tenants. I'm an expert on rent control, and I was very good at knowing about all of the crime stories in Lyons in 1968. I think we work in a medium that allows us to see fascinating people, to learn interesting facts, to discuss problems with specialists—judges, lawyers, clockmakers, specialists on urbanization.

And now I'm working on a sociological science fiction film and I've already met people who are specialists in futuristics. I'm learning, and I want to learn, and I want to share with the audience the joy I had because I think that's the only way for me to show them that I treat them as equals. I'm not despising them, sending them some fast food on a tray and saying eat it—it's garbage, but you'll love it. I'm very happy when they laugh.

NOR: So your next film will put you in competition with some world class directors?

TAVERNIER: No, because I don't think it will look like Lucas or Spielberg. It will be without any special effects, and it will be shot in the streets, perhaps more like the style of Louis Malle in *Black Moon*, but certainly not like Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange*.

NOR: Because of Kubrick's distance from his characters?

Tavernier: Kubrick is cold. He's cynical. I like people more than he does. It's not a difference of quality, of someone being better.

NOR: No, but it's an attitude that certainly comes through with you: your characters feel like people I would like to have sitting in the room with me.

TAVERNIER: Yes, but I think that watching the death of Hal in *2001* is a moving experience, although it's ironic that the moment when Kubrick is really warm and moving and desperate is the death of a computer. (Laughter)

NOR: One thing that interests me is that you've mentioned Moliere as someone who seriously impressed you,

but I always associate a diamond-like quality with him; his characters seem to glitter; they're very hard and precise, and your vision of human beings is much more sympathetic.

TAVERNIER: Yes, although I think that *Tartuffe* or *Don Juan* can be very moving, even tragic. But I like to put the audience close to the character. I mean intimate, which doesn't mean that I want everything in the film to be explained by a character, by the psychology of characters. I think that what I'm trying to do is to relate the social and historical background, to explain how it sometimes motivates or gives a kind of reality to what characters do. But I want the audience to be intimate. I would love it if I were successful in giving the impression that the film had been filmed the year that it actually happened. I made *Let Joy Reign Supreme* as though the camera were invented in 1720.

Many historical films are made by people who made them with their cultural education of the present, which means that they shoot an actor near furniture, near a chair, and you feel that in that shot, there is the knowledge that the chair, the costume, is beautiful because it's part of history. It's rather a question of showing a chair in such a way that the director feels "Well look at that beautiful regency chair," but for the character it was not, it was only a chair.

NOR: But how did you accomplish that with the actors?

TAVERNIER: I took a long time with them. We read the screen play, and then we talked. I said I hope you will not only be very comfortable, but very close to the decor that is around you. I want you to feel at ease and to do exactly what you would do in a room in a Hilton—because you can do anything in a Hilton room, as we all know. When we went to try on wigs, Phillip said that they were heavy and hot. So I'm sure that as soon as a character was alone in a room he would take off his wig. I tried to do that. I tried to imagine that it was very cold, so where would they go—near the fire.

NOR: So you tried to give the feeling that this is where the people really live, it's not a set.

TAVERNIER: I tried to go even further. In *The Judge and the Assassin* I asked Noiret to pick all of his costumes, and the glasses he has in the movie are now his glasses in life. And I told Brialy that I wanted him to feel at ease in his flat. I didn't want an art director's flat. He had two days to work, to pick up everything and to put it where he wanted it.

NOR: When you got through, were you surprised by the acting?

TAVERNIER: I'm always surprised by the actors. I love them. But I want them to be relaxed, to be happy. I want them to bring me thousands of things and I will choose maybe one hundred only, to be as open minded as I am when I'm trying to discover something with the light.

In *The Judge and the Assassin* I was not happy with the light, so I said to my cameraman cut off all the light. I want the room lit by candles. We realized immediately a change: when Brialy was reading a paper by candlelight he spoke less loudly because it was darker. Jacques Tourneur told me that. He was fascinated by the fact that people were always speaking too loudly in film, and he always tried to capture the natural sounds of the voice, as if the actor were speaking to me. And immediately it's more subtle.

NOR: You've been talking about attention to detail, and also about how you simply enjoy making films and dealing with people. Your films have very clear views about man dealing with society, they seem to be extremely political

TAVERNIER: I feel they are, but I don't want them to be political in the way a politician speaks, I want them to be political in the way that Balzac is political or Dos Passos is political. They are political because they try to relate the life of the people, the experience of the people, to what's around them, the underlying reality. I try to build my film with a slow camera movement—a crane movement that starts on one fact, on one detail, and then goes backwards and you begin to see a pyramid, a view of society. *The Judge and the Assassin* was made like that. It was made starting out with a little cry, what Feiffer would call "Little Murders." Somebody shoots a girl whom he wanted to marry and could not. then from that point which we see—three lines in a paper—we try to see how the action of the character of the assassin is related to his time. Slowly we get a wider view, but slowly, which is why I always have problems with endings, because I'm trying not to end the camera movement on two or three characters, but on everything. That's why people sometimes feel that the end of *Let Joy Reign Supreme* is suddenly too political. They call it propaganda, but it's an attempt for me not to reduce a film to the main characters.

NOR: *The Judge and the Assassin* is political in the broadest sense, isn't it? It tells us what the dialectic of French society is.

TAVERNIER: I was very pleased by the reaction of the director Fernando Solanas, a political director whom I respect very much. I thought his film, *The Hour of the Furnaces*, was an analytical, but very passionate, moving,

exciting film, and when he saw my film, he told me that he was moved, that he felt he had seen a moment of reality, of history, and that he understood that moment.

NOR: Isn't that the moment that he was trying to capture for Argentina in *The Hour of the Furnaces*?

TAVERNIER: Yes, and that film made me think, but at the same time it was didactic, it was lyrical. Now it's true that a lot of people want so much to tell things, but sometimes they forget to be lyrical and moving and funny, and that's a danger when you deal with a subject. Dealing with it is to become rather too self-conscious or too pompous.

NOR: Yes, but you let your own characters do that. Solanas put slogans on the screen.

TAVERNIER: Yes, but it was different, I mean it was a different time. It's a different country. He had things which were really important to say at that time. You have to relate the director's work to the time and the audience it was trying to catch. And that film was very important for Argentina at that time. I read the screenplay he has done recently, and I think it's not at all the same. (*The Sons of Martin Fierro*, first shown in the Director's Fortnight at Cannes in 1978.)

NOR: *The Hour of the Furnaces* is very much a national film, a film that's firmly rooted in Argentina. The city of Buenos Aires is almost the main character.

TAVERNIER: Yes, we talked about that with Solanas. Maybe it was more important in this case in a South American country that has to deal with true American imperialism.

But when you get to Brazil or Cuba you see there are so many difficulties for those directors working there, and at the same time, television is full of American serials. The theatres are full of American films. And you begin to understand the people's anger, their fears. They feel that they are oppressed so that the only way is to fight, and at the same time I think it goes beyond that. I think there is a need now for everybody to look for what I would call his cultural identity, and in the films I made, the historical films that I made, I was trying to do that.

In the same way that Americans made a lot of films such as *Harlan County*, *Jeremiah Johnson*, or *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* or those films shot in the midwest, in the provinces, like *I Walk the Line* and *The Rain People*—all of these things are not an accident. You can see these kinds of films being made all over the world, Canada, Brazil, France, Switzerland.

NOR: But many people, many film theorists, would argue that film has to be, is, a universal language, one that instantly communicates, and here we are talking about the national origins, which you say gives cinema its strength.



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TAVERNIER: Yes, but one doesn't prevent the other, I think. It's like *The Grand Illusion*. It's one of the most French pictures ever made, and it's international. Look at literature, at music. What's the most national music? Jazz. There's nothing more national than "Black and Tan Fantasy" by Ellington, or Miles Davis, or Charlie Parker, but they become international. Everyone perceives them. I don't see why something, I mean a film, a play, or a piece of music, should not be national and international at the same time. What prevents us from seeing that is not the films, but the way they are released. What prevents a film from becoming international is television. It's almost impossible to see a foreign film on American television except on public television.

NOR: Yes, but it's more than that, even, because television is destroying national consciousness faster than filmmakers can create it. Certain directors—Solanas, whom we've mentioned, Glauber Rocha, Ruy Guerra—are all trying to find this national consciousness you've spoken of. But I get the feeling that much of the new French cinema is trying so hard to be international that we really can't identify with anything in it or any of the people.

TAVERNIER: Also two things: First, it is difficult to speak about the whole French cinema in general because I think it now has a very wide range. There are many talents going in many different directions. In a way, it's wider than at the time of the new wave.

NOR: Yes, in speaking about this before someone said it's as though we had a new new wave.

TAVERNIER: Yes, it's true—but try not to. I hope there will not be any label on it. You have people of different talents. Even though some of them are not my cup of tea, I respect their work: Duras, Bertuccelli, the man who did *The Red Poster*, Frank Cassenti, to Belmont to Girod. You have people like Chris Marker, who made a good, a very impressive four-hour documentary, a moving

film. It's about the part of the world that Marker knew after the Vietnam War, and it's about the deception with Castro, about Allende, about 1968 in France. It's full of questions. It's desperate. You leave the theatre and you feel like fighting, but I think it's very courageous. It's a film that tried to ask all of the right questions about the left wing in certain parts of the world, from Cuba to Czechoslovakia. He tries to see why things didn't work.

So, the second thing, I think it's true sometimes the films are too general. The answer to this is given to us filmmakers when we make films about precise things. Everybody told me that the rent problem would not be understood in the United States. I mean, it's a very precise problem. Many people said, "You are making a film about something too small, too precise." I think a filmmaker should do the thing he wants to do and forget about making a film for the American market, although it's true that we live in a world where the pressure of money and the pressure of the American system is very big. I mean we live with television contaminated by American programs, which in France doesn't buy one minute of French film. And that creates a problem, and we have to hope that we will be able to sell film because for us sometimes it's a question of recouping the money. Not for me, maybe, but for certain directors it's a matter of life and death. It's true, but normally I would say

NOR: To make the film that is in you

TAVERNIER: Yes, and forget everything else.

NOR: And there seem to be many films in you. You're interested in almost everything—rent control, the Regency, crime, the eighteenth century

TAVERNIER: All of those things are related I think—politically. They all make me angry. I read that someone asked John Ford in 1931, "Is it true that you make films when you are angry at certain things?" and he said, "Do you know a better reason?" I like that answer.



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NOR: But your films are also very objective.

TAVERNIER: I think they're a bit polemical sometimes, but I think these things are all related because they all deal with justice, the feel of justice. It was not conscious, but a lawyer told me that in each of my four films there is a trial that we never see—and it's an unfair trial. I don't know, it's unconscious, but it's true that I'm dealing with that, all of the time with the subject of people who make a desperate struggle to communicate, to try to contact, to touch, to express, who succeed sometimes or who are destroyed in trying to.

The Judge and the Assassin is about a cry for help. The man is crying, "Cure me, cure me. I'm sick. Help Me!" and they kill him. It's a paradox. It's why I think that in all of the films I've made, the words, the lines, the language are very important because it's difficult, this communication. And another thing, I think sometimes the scenes that are not shot are as important as the scenes that are shown. I want to leave the audience with some work to do. It's up to them to finish the film.

NOR: "The epilogue starts when the lights go on," as Silvio Back would say.

TAVERNIER: Yes, that's right. I never put the end on my films, never. I mean I refuse, because I don't think there should be an ending.

NOR: There should be a dialogue.

TAVERNIER: And the dialogue belongs to the film itself. It is part of the film.

NOR: If you're in Europe, maybe, but the disturbing thing here—and maybe the reason is television—is that the lights go on and the shutters go down on their eyes and they get up and walk out.

TAVERNIER: That's not completely true. I had a very good discussion in Los Angeles, and I had a very good discussion in San Francisco, and in Austin, too.

NOR: Mostly student audiences?

TAVERNIER: Mostly students. They were less aggressive

than in France. Maybe sometimes they react better in France, but they are so aggressive that they won't think. The first thing they have to do is to be superior to the film that they are seeing. They are so frightened to look unintelligent that they become completely aggressive and completely stupid. For example, someone asked Elia Kazin why did he sign his work. The questioner said that you have a kind of power. They see your name and they relate the film to your previous films. If you wanted to do really political films you should not sign them. I mean it's crazy. That's the bad thing of '68.

NOR: You talk about the failures of the left. That's one of them?

TAVERNIER: That's one of the failures. It succeeded in some way, but that's one of the failures.

NOR: You keep going back to things that make you angry, to analyses of failures, such as Marker's films, Solanas's work, Guzman's *The Battle of Chile*, but your own work has a sort of lucid compassion that's missing from all of these things you're so interested in.

TAVERNIER: I think that a director should be interested not only in what *he* tries to do. I mean sometimes I leave certain films, and I feel desperate, especially after certain documentaries. I would love to do documentaries. Maybe I will never do them. Maybe it's only a dream that I have. I know that there would be a moment where I would suffer. I would need to put in a little more irony or humor. But *The Sorrow and the Pity*, for instance, is a very warm film, don't you think?

NOR: You and Ophuls seem to share a sense of respect for the individual's integrity, even if you don't like him.

TAVERNIER: Yes, why despise your enemy? First, I think it's a practical mistake. I've just read *Rumor of War*, and it shows clearly and honestly that the first people in Vietnam thought they would win the war in three weeks . . . because they were right, because they were fighting poor peasants, and had helicopters, John Kennedy, we had

everything, the spirit, and were going to free the world. It's not only bad for artistic reasons, this non-knowledge of the enemy, it's a political failure. I even try to give people lines . . . in *The Judge and the Assassin* where the judge says to the girl, "But the people he killed, didn't they yell?" And he's right, he's right. It's not him that I'm criticizing. I'm criticizing beyond him to what he represents. It's too easy to deal with these things superficially.

Several months ago someone asked me why I chose to have the action of *Des Enfants Gâtés* set in the middle class and not the working class? I say, okay, if you have a rent strike in the working class buildings, everyone will be for them, but the middle class people are not politically minded, do not relate to politics at all. If they begin to be political something has happened. If it were the working class people, they would be more political. It's easier for them. But these people in the film are teachers, shop keepers, petite bourgeoisie; they have shops and things like that. If they begin to question the system

NOR: Yes, but that's like Pudovkin's *Mother*

TAVERNIER: Yes, I like that. One of the men whose influence I respect the most is George Orwell. He was always honest, as in his tribute *Homage to Catalonia*, and when he says the beginning of freedom and democracy starts with letting two and two equal four. Let two and two equal four, and the rest will follow. I always say, I'm trying to make films about people who go from A to B, while in most films they go from A to Z. But I think that going from A to B is sometimes the most difficult, and you have to appreciate that, to respect that goal. And it's a subject. Orwell was deeply into the period of Stalinism. He was attacked. He had to be pessimistic. I'm less pessimistic. I think people can move and I think you have to appreciate that move.

NOR: The hero?

TAVERNIER: The peasant, the people who build the carriage in *Let Joy Reign Supreme*, the unknown people, the clockmaker himself.

FILMOGRAPHY

Le Baisers (The Kisses). 1963. Tavernier was one of five young directors to participate in the shooting of this film. His section, "Baiser de Judas," was shot with Raoul Coutard, the favorite Nouvelle Vogue cameraman.

La Chance et L'Amour (Chance and Love). 1964. Tavernier directed one segment from this film entitled "Une Chance Explosive."

L'Horloger de Saint Paul (The Clockmaker). 1973. Tavernier's first feature film, which won the Prix Louis Delluc, centers on the paradoxical growth of a father and son relationship in which the father is left to carry out the political processes that the son has both initiated and been victimized by.

Que La Fete Commence (Released in the United States as *Let Joy Reign Supreme*). 1974. When Louis XIV died, Louis XV was five years old. Philippe, Duke of Orleans, assumed the role of regent until Louis came of age. *Que La Fete Commence* is an engrossing biography of this crucial period. The film swept the Cesars, French equivalents of the Oscar. It has become an historical classic, combining textbook knowledge of the 1720s with masterful performances by Philippe Noiret, Jean Rochefort, and Christine Pascal.

Le Juge et L'Assassin (The Judge and the Assassin). 1975. Set in the middle eighteenth century, the film contrasts the story of a mentally disturbed shepherd who is driven to murder with the life of a corrupt and implacable judge who is, in his own way, more dangerous to society than the murderer. Isabelle Huppert makes one of her first important screen appearances, and after playing only minor roles, Michel Galabru became the success story of the year in France when he won a Cesar for best actor as the psychotic shepherd.

Des Enfants Gâtés (The Spoiled Children). 1977. Tavernier's most recent film is about a contemporary Parisian filmmaker who moves into an apartment in order to get the peace and quiet he needs to work on his film. He becomes involved in the tenant's war against their landlord, and with one of the tenants, played by Christine Pascal. The film is not, however, just about the love affair between the older man (Michel Piccoli) and Pascal. In Tavernier's words, "I would like *Des Enfants Gâtés* to be a subtly political film, that . . . will . . . raise the question, 'what is it like to be a tenant in uncontrolled rent accommodation in 1976?' It may seem an odd question, but for me it's essential."

Ingeborg Bachmann

EVERY DAY

The war will not be declared
any more, but rather continued.
What is shocking has
become commonplace. The hero
stays away from the battles. The weak
have moved into the firing zone.
The uniform of the day is patience,
the decoration is the miserable star
of hope over the heart.

It is given
if nothing happens any more,
when the machine gun fire is silent,
when the enemy has become invisible,
and the shadow of eternal armor
covers the sky.

It is given
for deserting the colors,
for bravery before the ally,
for betrayal of unworthy secrets
and the disregarding
of every command.

translated by Ken Fontenot

André Pieyre de Mandiargues

WARTIME

In the dead of winter. A pit full of snow, beneath some burnt fir trees, and the day was setting fire to the waste in a small prism-blue corporal, vestige of the troop, for the people of war, like fantastic monsters, exhale smoke through their nostrils before they let themselves die. A black soldier, about to expose his wound to a kneeling girl, was unrolling with an ancient motion the bandage which the blood and cold had stiffened around his knee. The hoarfrost of the branches was flinging a wet fire at the virgin's brow and on the fingers of the African, who told how a woman red as clay, but of a totally inhuman splendor, was preventing anyone from sailing to the source of river which carried down gold nuggets, in his far-off country.

He had told many secrets, although he should have had nothing to say, in those times, under the white cloak of the helpful. But how can one say nothing, when the sun makes a clatter of drums and the frozen scab thuds hollow at the passing of the men and the iron?

THE FRIEND OF TREES

It was snowing. A shed, like empty covered-markets, rose in a clearing surrounded by fir trees, and maidens there were dancing between them under a great roof of lead. Their feet stirred up a dust which must have been left from the harvested hay, since it burned the throat and the eyes. I was in so much pain that I couldn't see. Then I felt that a mouth, which was hot despite the wind, kissed mine in an utterly new way; then there were outbursts of laughter around me, the sounds of whips and of the wheel, a last sneering laugh, already far-off.

Little by little, I recovered the use of my eyesight, but I have held those people in hatred. Only the murmur of the sap at winter's end is sweet, when the bark is against my face and a tree bends over me, its friend, its brother.

THE HEARTH

Once there was a flock of birds, perhaps white owls, but their wings were tinted when they crossed the beacon which warned pilots of the stones of Suzerain. A hearth was built on the small beach, between the ice and the granite. Three young girls, one crouching, the others standing, fed the fire so that it would entirely consume the cadaver of a little black goat, and it wasn't without affection that they shielded the flames or stirred the ashes.

The night framed the light, the wind sharpened the cold. One gains a subtle vision, at times, after he has walked a long while in winter, and the pensive reading of fragments from Heraclitus unlocks the door to singular images.

translated by John Biguenet

Michael André Bernstein

TO GO BEYOND

It is enough. The clarities
are not enlaced with any rare commands.
The mind, bright by a precision
in the scaffolding. The same ant crawls
across the courtyard to the halidom.

Among the cells we play at blue-coats
one-on-one until the light begins to fail.
I doubt I'll ever ride my freight-train
to their drinking holes again. Or have.
On the map a carmine dot
locates each border-town.

To go beyond, at night, without a guide
or papers is impossible. Abstractions
can be faced with more deceptive dignity.
You know the rest—

It is late
and the games transcended nothing
and we are content. The sound of that ant
returning home is not the token
of our outmost possibility. There are,
held in reserve, still more adroit
evasions. Like blackbirds, or hills,
or unencompassed loves. The ground
we judge already too indifferent
for lies.

Step softly,
there are ant-hills everywhere,
nearby.

Antonis Samarakis

MAMA

She was ironing his pants. The good ones. His Sunday pair. Just as she was about to skillfully finish the crease, the woman from the shop on the corner appeared, breathing hard.

"Have you heard? Something terrible has happened at the Kalogreza mine," the woman shouted to her from the street since she could see her ironing by the open window.

"No, I haven't heard a thing. What about my Yannis?"

"I don't know about Yannis. My sister-in-law just called and told me all about it. Supposedly all the workers in one tunnel were killed immediately by the explosion."

Upset by the news, she left the hot iron on the pants, even though she had been taking great pains to get the crease right since Yannis always complained, "Mama, how did you manage to mess up the crease again? When will I be able to congratulate you on a job well done?"

She dropped the iron and ran to the window.

"What other news? Tell me, I can't stand it!"

"I don't know anything else," the woman from the shop replied. "I only know what I heard on the phone. The 2-10 shift was blown sky high. The tunnel collapsed and crushed them. What shift does Yannis work?"

"2-10," she said in a trance.

Suddenly a voice called out from the corner shop that some customers were waiting.

"I have to go now," said the shopowner's wife. "Don't worry. He might have escaped."

She hurried to the iron and unplugged it. The cloth had been burnt through but what difference did it make now? The only thing that mattered was that Yannis—her Yannis, was on the 2-10 shift tonight, Saturday night.

She grabbed a shawl. She glanced at the photograph of Yannis's father; she paused a second—should she speak to him, tell him the news or should she keep silent? The father watched her calmly and with a smile as if nothing had happened. Calmly and with a smile just as he had been when he gazed at her when the Germans took him from the house in August, August 11, 1944. Yannis had begun to crawl; he couldn't say more than a few words like "dada" and "mama" and "bow wow". Then *their* Yannis became *her* Yannis: his father never again crossed the doorstep. He was lost, gone with the others to Germany, Buchenwald someone said. Dachau said another. It didn't really matter because as soon as people were snuffed out, they were snuffed out for all time.

She had to change twice to go from Perama to Kalogreza. She had to take the trolley from Perma to Piraeus, the metro from there to Omonia, and a bus from Omonia to Kalogreza.

Once before she had gone after Yannis, not because he was in any danger. It was a year and a half ago that Yannis's uncle—his father's first cousin—was passing through Piraeus. His uncle had lived for years in America, Detroit to be exact. She had rushed to tell Yannis that his uncle would be in Piraeus for only a few hours, so he should meet his uncle after work at the Hotel Macedonian, near the city clock, the second block on the left. Yannis should meet his uncle because he was Yannis's godfather and he was sure to have a special gift for him. It had been ten years since he had last visited Greece and even then he was in a hurry. The result was that Yannis knocked himself out to get to the Macedonian on time and his uncle presented him with a fancy bottle opener. Yannis had told her what it was called but she couldn't pronounce it because it was a tongue twister.

Now she was on her way to meet Yannis with a deep ache in her heart. She didn't know what to expect.

In her haste to leave, to reach him quickly, to arrive in time, in time for what?—she had to take a handkerchief. She needed it for her running nose, for her tears; she was deeply upset that she hadn't taken a handkerchief because it seemed to her that everyone on the trolley and metro was staring at her when she wiped her nose and eyes with the corner of her shawl from time to time.

"If I had wings like a turtledove..." She repeated over and over to herself these words from the song she had liked in her youth before there was a photo of her husband in the house, when her husband was there himself. She felt that time stood still and that she'd never reach that wretched Kalogreza. And as the metro passed Monasteraki headed for Omonia, she absent mindedly called out, "If I had wings like a turtledove."

"Come on lady, save your love songs for the bedroom!" commented the fellow next to her who wore a bow tie and clutched a stuffed black bag as if it were a baby.

After that she became silent, but she was so disturbed by the man's remark that she failed to realize the metro had passed Omonia and the next stop. She finally got off at Attiki.

She came out onto Patisson Street stopping often to catch her breath because she had suffered shortness of breath for years. But she had to find Yannis as soon as possible. He was waiting for her.

She counted the change in her pocketbook to see if she had enough for a taxi. 11.60 drachmas in all.

There was a taxi stand at Platea Amerikis so she asked how much the fare cost to Kalogreza.

"I've got eleven and a half drachmas," she whispered

to the taxi driver as if she were doing something wrong. He told her it was impossible; it was a double rate to go so far.

She stood there trying to decide what to do.

"Alright, what if we go ahead and my Yannis pays?"

"Yannis?" said the driver.

"My son!" she replied as if it were very strange that anyone would not know Yannis.

"In that case it's okay," agreed the driver and opened the door for her.

She was ready to step in when she stopped.

"If my Yannis...?" she asked herself speaking her thoughts as she left the taxi wrapping her shawl around herself more tightly.

At the thought "If my Yannis...," she felt a chill through her chest and down to her feet. "Never mind. I'll go by bus," she said and walked into the night.

It was so peaceful when she arrived at the lignite mine that for a moment she thought she had made a mistake, that the phone call might have been about something else, not about an accident at Kalogreza where everything was so quiet and glistening with the frost of a winter night. But inside the grounds, she saw many people including police discussing in front of the guardhouse, and she saw cars with flashing red lights, and she saw women and children. How did it happen she had not seen them at first?

She walked closer, her heart becoming a tight knot.

She stood near a badly wounded worker whose wife embraced him while he tried to explain everything.

"My Yannis?" she asked, stepping between a sergeant and someone in a business suit who smoked continuously.

They asked her for his last name. There were five Yannis'es on the 2-10 shift. When she told them his name, they did not answer. They, all those strangers, only turned and stared at her while she watched the wife of the worker who had escaped embrace her husband even more tightly.

"My Yannis...?" she asked again and fortunately the sergeant grabbed her in time before she collapsed.

No, she could not stand to spend the night without her Yannis. Her hope now, her only hope was to meet him at the morgue. If she were lucky, she would meet him there, she would embrace him, rock him in her arms, keep him warm, just as the wounded worker's wife was doing.

When they told her that Yannis might have gone there, that they might have taken him there, her heart sank.

If only there had been a miracle and her Yannis had

escaped from the depths of the cold earth! If only the earth had not devoured him, so alone, unmourned, uncombed, unblest. If only she could find him there to take him home and wash him, change him, dress him up in his Sunday best, in the grey-green checked jacket and the pants she had just ironed with the crease done just right for the first time. As for the burned spot, she knew how to mend it, to fix it as good as new so that nothing showed. Then she would take him tomorrow, Sunday afternoon, dressed in his Sunday best, just as he had dressed as a boy when they took him for a walk on Sunday afternoons. This time she would again take him for a walk; this time, however, she would return home alone. Tomorrow, Sunday, at nightfall, alone, so alone, tomorrow and the next day, alone forever.

He wasn't in the first group, her Yannis wasn't among the eight survivors. They had written down the names of the eight. The sergeant had the list and he read it to her, giving the names one by one, clearly, as if it were a rollcall. There were ten more on the shift, eighteen altogether. Of the ten who had not escaped, four were already at the morgue. The remaining six were at the end of the tunnel bound up in the womb of the earth like embryos without life and without a future.

"It's obvious that your son isn't among the living. He's among the...among the others. You should see if he's one of the four at the morgue. You see, they hauled them away so quickly that I didn't have time to jot down their names. If he's not among the four, it goes without saying that he's among the six down below buried when the tunnel caved in. Who knows how many days it will take us to get the bodies out; three? five? ten? Perhaps never."

"From Kalogreza?" asked one of the two guards at the morgue, the tall one who was searching for a station on a small transistor. "We have them over there. Second hall on the right, first door on your left."

She stood staring at him, and then at the other as if she was waiting to be shown the way since she had never been in a morgue before.

"Go by yourself!" said the tall one. "Why do you look at me that way? We're going our job; we took care of each of them, covered them all with sheets. That's more than enough if you ask me, considering the rotten pay we get from city hall. They pay us only enough to cover them, not to uncover them as well."

Worked up about his salary, he turned his transistor up full blast and ear splitting rock music echoed in the empty room.

"Turn it down," complained his partner.

"What for? Do you think we're disturbing the

customers?" He then tried to finish with her: "As for you and me, we've said all we have to say. Second hall to your right, first door on your left."

She went on alone. She felt completely empty inside.

"Hey, lady!" shouted the tall one to her as she was entering the central hall. "Open the door and go right in. Don't bother to knock. Got me?"

She opened the door the guard had told her about, second hall on the right, first door on the left.

She waited for the door to creak—surely the doors of the morgue would creak like all others. But the door opened softly, without a single noise.

There were many tables in the room. High, long, narrow tables. Only the four from Kalogreza were laid out on them.

They must be uncomfortable," she thought. A miserable room with yellow light, dull yellow.

She went forward. Which one should she look at first? She paused as if deciding by lot. Finally she went to the one near the wall.

No, the first one was not her Yannis. Slowly, as if she were ashamed, she drew back the sheet, uncovering the head. She didn't need to see his face; the hair was enough. Blond, almost bleach blond. Her Yannis had dark brown hair.

No, the second one was not her Yannis. He had a moustache, whereas Yannis had none.

The third? He resembled Yannis, but the face was badly mutilated; she couldn't say yes or no. The body was the same height as Yannis. She left the head and went to the feet. She pulled away the sheet and grabbed the left shoe—they all wore the same type of boot. She pulled hard, but it wouldn't come off. It finally came off; she used all her strength almost falling over backwards with the effort. Then she took off the sock. No, not her Yannis. Yannis was missing his middle toe, damaged when he was ten by a firecracker on Easter Saturday.

She didn't have to spend much time on the fourth corpse; he too had a moustache.

Then her knees began to give way but there were no chairs in the room. With difficulty she managed to get onto the fourth man's table and sat by his feet. Just as she was comfortable, she saw the third man's foot which she had left bare.

"He'll catch a cold," she reasoned, and slid down from the table and went to put the sock and shoe back on and pulled up the sheet nicely as well.

She heard a clock strike...from a nearby church? She counted the strokes; one, two, three...ten, eleven, twelve..."Midnight," she thought, but at that instant she heard the thirteenth.

"I didn't know clocks struck thirteen," she said out-loud. "When did they make the change? Ah! Things are changing too quickly in our little Greece!"

She sneezed and said, "Please excuse me!"

She was used to saying this when she sneezed with others around. Now she had others around her in the room; she had the four miners stretched out on those long, narrow tables. There were no others, no other corpses in the room. Only the four from Kalogreza.

No, her Yannis was not among the four. She had uncovered each of them. She had examined each carefully since the light was bad. Yannis didn't happen to be among the four; he remained trapped in the earth. Her Yannis, a piece of coal in a coal bed.

She didn't know how long she had been in the room with the bodies. Half an hour? Maybe longer?

She mounted the third man's table. Strange, she could no longer cry. She had run out of tears, only a running nose—but she did not have a handkerchief with her. She started to wipe her nose with her shawl but felt ashamed. She felt all four were watching her since she had left their faces uncovered. She lifted the sheet, searched his pockets and found a handkerchief, dirty and mended in two spots.

"His mother must have mended it," she said to herself. She blew her nose and put the handkerchief in the pocket of her daygown. Oh! How she had worked to wash, iron, and mend Yannis's handkerchieves! His mama... Their mama.

The longer she remained with the four men, the closer she felt to them, continually closer. They had no one else there. Their mothers weren't with them. Or were they...?

At first it seemed like a dream with many people surrounding her writing continuously in notebooks. But

it wasn't a dream at all. When she opened her eyes—she had fallen asleep on the table—she saw a group of men, six or seven, coming towards her with notebooks.

She slid down from the table almost ripping her gown on a nail.

"Anybody here?" one of the group said loudly.

"I'm here."

Then they gathered around.

"We're reporters," one said. "We're here about the Kalogreza disaster," said another. "What are you doing here?"

"Me? I'm their mama."

"Their mama?"

"Yes, their mama."

"Do you mean they're all your sons?"

"They're all my boys."

The reporters wrote hurriedly: "Unprecedented tragedy. Mother loses all four sons."

"Their names?" asked a reporter.

She pulled her shawl around her shoulders; she went to the first of the four bodies and stared into his eyes.

"My Yannis," she said.

"The next?"

She went to the second corpse and caressed his brow.

"My Yannis," she said.

She moved on to the third and lifted up his right hand, which had slipped off the table.

"My Yannis," she said.

Then she brushed aside the hair of the fourth young man which had fallen across his eyes.

"My Yannis."

Translated by Andrew Horton



Mark W. Flynn

Betsy Sholl

URGENCY

*I'm not ready, I shout.
You smile, eyes trailing off behind me.
See, you're detaching yourself already.*

I drive across the city on errands.
Weakening now, you stay behind to rest,
to write notes that will encourage me.
The bed is covered with small packages
you are wrapping to leave for the children.

On the beltway I realize I will never see you again—
I'll be widowed like my mother, staring out the window
at dusk, my children searching each car.

It's spring. I'm cluttered with details.
I am missing your last hours, the final calm
when the house falls silent and your face
turns ethereal.

I push the accelerator to the floor.
A scent of flowers enters the car. It's dark.
The children croon soft, repetitious songs
in the back seat.

The car slows. The headlights go out.
Trees hang like shadows across the road
scratching the doors as we pass. I see your face
on all the mirrors.

Like a boat moving through weeds, the car glides
silently to a stop. Thick flowers and leaves
cover the hood. *O my husband, what is this
strange land I have no desire to explore?*

HOW DREAMS COME TRUE

Sometimes at night
you do things while I am sleeping.

You signed a lease once
moving us down the block
into the projects—
one room, no heat.

You said to your friends
"We won't need her typewriter.
You can take it away."

Another time you went to court
testifying against me, listing
my emotions, my height, my ignorance
of motors and waves.

When I looked across the table
you raised one eyebrow then turned
back to the judge explaining
I should not be allowed
to speak or move as I please.

Each time this happens
I turn and accuse you.
You claim to be sleeping,
insist you'd never do such things.
You twine your legs through mine
as a pledge of honor.

Once at my mother's
we fought all night
till our mouths collapsed
against the pillows.

The next morning I stayed in bed
reading. I imagined you walking in
snatching the books from my hands.

When I told you this, you said
No, you'd never do it. You shouted
sick, paranoid, bitch—
It's these books, these books
waving them in the air.

Paula Rankin

SOMETHING GOOD ON THE HEELS OF SOMETHING BAD

When things get too bad, as they usually do,
I try to remember the friend who told me
"Troubles are money in the bank."
She should have known,
and if I go outside
it is not to run from a pack of dogs,
breaking my leg on the ice;
it is not to crunch through the snow
to Broad Street and talk again to the man
who wheels himself into the bar
at the end of each day; it is not to hear him
say, "tomorrow's take will be better";
it is not to watch the bartender extend his credit.

I do not go out
to run into the ghost of my grandmother,
wringing her pale hands, asking
why I am all that is left
of her green chromosomes, complaining
or insufficient compensation.

There are authentic accounts
of reversals: last week I met a man
who'd lost his job, his wife, his children
and just when he'd given up hope,
he won the lottery,
his father left him a farm in Minnesota,
and a woman he liked even better showed up.

Look out, my friend said,
if nothing's missing,
if everyone you love has all his parts.
Look out if sky floats full of cumulus.
And sometimes, she said, when things are bad
they have to get worse, much worse,
before sorrow is torn into scraps of redeemable paper.

I am going out in this blizzard
to track the bright sides of drifts,
of wheels spun loose into ditches.
I am going out to listen for the beast
that comes sniffing at the heels of bad news.
I have to believe he's out there, that
he's already picked up the scent
of crushed will, heartsblood, that any moment
I will hear him eating the awful evidence.

Susan Bartels Ludvigson

ENEMY

When he came to power I went
to the back bedroom
to stay. Nearly forty years,
only my wife and children know
I live. I can see hills in the distance,
my wife's three goats,
but the olive tree outside this window
is all I can touch
of the land. Since the first,
I have slept alone, fearing
the evidence of babies. Now
I am old, accustomed
to a narrow bed.
Birds make wide arcs through the sky,
calling and calling. I listen,
remembering how long they float
on the blue air.

Ivan Bunin

TWO STORIES

THE ROSE OF JERICO

In the East, in times of old, a Rose of Jerico was placed in coffins and graves as a token of faith in eternal life and resurrection.

Strange that they called it a rose, and a Rose of Jerico at that, this tangle of dry, thorny stalks, so like our tumbleweed, this stiff desert verdure, that one finds only in rocky sands below the Dead Sea in the uninhabited Sinai hills. But there is a legend that it was named by Saint Savva himself, having selected the terrible fiery desert, this naked, dead ravine in the Judean desert. He adorned the symbol of resurrection, given to him in the form of a wild growth laurel, with the sweetest earthly comparison known to him.

For it is truly wonderful, this laurel. Torn and carried by a wanderer for thousands of *vyorsty* away from its natural habitat, it may lie dry, grey, and dead for many years. But, as soon as it is put in water, it immediately begins to blossom out, giving way to small, little blades and a pink hue.

And the poor human heart is gladdened, consoled; death exists no more; whatever was, that by which once one lived, cannot be destroyed! There are no more partings, no more losses, as long as my soul is alive, my Love, Memory!

So do I console myself, resurrecting in myself those enlightening ancient lands, where once upon a time my foot stepped too, those blessed days when at midday stood the sun of my life, when, in the flower of my strength and hopes, hand in hand with her, whom God bequeathed to be my fellow traveler till death, I completed my first far away wandering, my honeymoon which was at once a pilgrimage into the Holy Land of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Her Palestine—the Galilean dales, the Judean hills, the salt and spiritual splendor of Jerusalem were lying before us in the great serenity of eternal silence.

But it was spring, and along all our paths bloomed gaily and peacefully the very same anemones and poppies that bloomed when Rachel walked there; the same lillies of the field stood in splendor, while the very same heavenly birds sang in a blessed lightheartedness taught by the evangelist parable.

The Rose of Jerico. I plunge the roots and stalks of my past into the pure moisture of love, into the living waters of the heart—and again, again my cherished bush is amazingly chilled. Away, you inevitable hour, when this essence will run dry, when the impoverished heart will wither—and forever will the ashes of forgetfulness cover the Rose of Jerico.

PARIS, 1921

Ionesco in Paris: 1977-78

Le Roi Se Meurt (Exit the King) by Eugène Ionesco. Directed by Jorge Lavelli. Sets and costumes by Max Aignens. Michel Aumont as Berenger. At the Comedie Francaise.

I had fears of the Comedie's being entrenched in stale interpretations of the classics, but tonight's experience was living theater. The style of production is focussed on the virtuoso acting of the central figure—a marvelous actor (Michel Aumont) who combines the middle-class realism of Berenger with the mimic qualities of the pathetic clown. The other actors work around him in a stylized, quasi-absurd mode that seems to have evolved out of improvisation exercises and careful exploitation of comic variety. It has the "distorted" realism of extreme poses and movements that characterize the modern French theater.

The French theater is primarily one of language and—in this modern period—of the *reductio ad absurdum* in action, so that the activity expresses the persistent pursuit of a single idea to its absurd conclusion, examining every side of the single question. In *Exit the King*, the question is "death," the death of the common king, everyman, and the analysis is presented from every variety of posture, emotion, and physical gesture to illuminate this "discussion through action." A new, clearer and also sympathetic expression of the universal moral idea emerges, displaced from romantic, "realistic" cliches. The drama becomes not sentimental but shocking, not the stained-glass window of death on the church wall, but the agony of consciousness in forms that emerge from within, no longer disguised by the comfortable images of our daily, civilized lives. The death of the King is the death of everyman placed in absurd surroundings that are unidentified with any external world and are therefore expressions of the inner anguish only.

Death is the final confrontation of man with his nature: the thrust upward and outward to life and the corresponding constricting, repressive call downward to the grave. The play expresses both parts of this cycle in the two wives, Marie and Marguerite. The first personifies the eros/love, the sensuous flow of sap, the fullness of the blossom—unreasonable, spontaneous, sympathetic. The other is the consciousness that all must pass, must decay, the sad reasonableness of things. Berenger is trapped—as the middle-class, non-transcendent man is trapped—in the desire to possess the first forever. In the long run, his love of Marie is a self-love, not "Je t'aime," but "je m'aime." Thus he is like the little cat whom he

coddled out of savagery into a little pet; this "love," this Marie, becomes the monster Marguerite. The inevitable confrontation that reason imposes is that I must die.

Berenger is the non-religious, non-transcending man, whose nature is the vehicle of self-love, the man who cannot, like Christ, give his life for the other. He cannot grasp a supernatural reality and is caught in the antipodal demands of his time-bound nature. He is the modern middle-class king. In this, Berenger evokes and demand our sympathy—if not for him, then for this reality in all of us. The play is instructive, a morality play.

The staging is brilliant: a very spacious, high and dirty room with clearly canvas walls and solid doors. At the end, the walls slowly collapse, the doors sink into the stage. The stage itself begins to collapse. Trap doors open and the actors "sink" into them.

A favorite scene': The rule is that when an actor is about to give a speech, he must so disguise it that the audience does not realize a long talk is to follow. Aumont did this brilliantly. After his first line, "I once had a cat," it seemed that was all he was going to say. But the staging undercuts this impression. The chair is placed down center in the spotlight, facing the audience. The actors retire to the four corners of the stage, as if resigned to hearing another boring speech by the dying man. This creates an ironic perspective. On the stage we have a theatrical scene: the actors retiring to hear this man who must die at the end of the play. The audience sees him as "real," but through the theatrical prism created by the other actors a form of alienation takes place, not a Brechtian alienation, but a non-purposive one, purely theatrical and part of the rhetoric and poetry of theater.

Tuer sans Gages (Killer without Wages) of Eugène Ionesco. At the tiny box Theatre du Marais—a room smaller than the average classroom, with the audience seated on steeply rising steps. Mauclair, who is one of the definitive interpreters of Ionesco and who created Berenger for several plays, was the lead.

No "miraculous cures" could be the central dramatic motif of this play. To the middle-class Berenger, *la cité radieuse*, with its promise of suburban paradise not unlike our condominium tracts for the affluent, is "a miracle." To the architect, servant of modern technology, it is simply a "marvel." Even in the great new city there are death and murder—calmly accepted, one might add. Ionesco is again treating how we face death, try to talk it away, appeal to it with every concept our reason and emotions supply: humanity, charity, self-concern, interest, religion.

most commercial and glamorous of film festivals. In the last decade it has emerged as the pre-eminent festival, with an undeserved reputation for excess and spectacle. In reality, composed of five independent but closely related exhibitions, Cannes is the most serious and comprehensive film exhibition in the world.

The official Cannes *Un Certain Regard* is a competitive section presided over by an international jury and a non-competitive sidebar of films chosen by the festival management. Then there are two parallel unofficial events: the *Semaine de la Critique* is an exhibition sponsored by the Association of French Film Critics and the *Quinzaine des Réalistes* sponsored by the Société des Réalistes. The fourth component is an unofficial series devoted to French Cinema: the *Perspectives du Cinéma Français*. Lastly in the *Marche* there are hundreds of films shown for sale and information.

In the 1978 official competition, there were some poor films (the Russian Lotianou's *A Hunting Accident*), some decent commercial films (Mazursky's *An Unmarried Woman*), some controversial ones (Malle's *Pretty Baby*), and some significant ones (Zanussi's *Spirale*). The Jury gave the Palm D'Or to a non-commercial work, Ermanno Olmi's *L'Albero degli Zoccoli*. Their choice illustrates why Cannes is so successful: not only is there a wide range of films, but the Jury usually makes an award that reveals aesthetic sensitivity and integrity.

The most critically prestigious series at Cannes is the *Semaine*, now in its seventeenth year. In 1978 there were only eight films shown, but they were probably the best single group exhibited. The quality of the *Semaine* was amply demonstrated when two of the three finalists judged by a special international jury for the Camera D'Or were from the *Semaine*. The winner was the American *Alambrista*, one of the *Semaine's* eight films.

Rivalling the *Semaine* in prestige—and showing many more films—is the *Quinzaine*, often called the "Director's Fortnight." Roughly speaking, the *Quinzaine* is the counterpart to the *Semaine*. The former is made up of films chosen by and for directors; the latter, by and for critics. Although approximate, the distinction may account for the quality of the *Quinzaine's* programming, which included the uncut version of Dylan's *Reynaldo and Clara* as well as Claudia Weill's *Girlfriends*, probably the best American film at the festival, a strong Israeli film, *Rocking-horse*, and an engrossing Spanish adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*.

The fourth event, the *Perspectives du Cinéma Français*, is devoted exclusively to young French filmmakers. The sad truth is that film production in France simply does not justify the series. Also, French films are usually featured in the other events. The

ostensible importance of the *Perspectives* is that it is an outlet for the serious and noncommercial in an overly commercial festival. This may have been true in 1968, when Cannes, like much of France, was completely disrupted. But it is scarcely true today.

I have suggested that neither the prizes nor the diversity of films shown in the four major exhibitions support the contention that Cannes is primarily a commercial marketplace. Consequently the need for the *Perspectives* has diminished. The *Semaine* is for the serious critic, the *Quinzaine* for the devoted buff, and the *Perspectives* for the rapidly aging French left. The *Marche*, or market, is for everyone. It has always dominated opinions of Cannes and deserves special attention as a result.

The Market and the People

The *Marche* is far and above the largest exhibition of Cannes, showing eighty percent of the films and attracting ninety percent of the people. The original reason for this was that one took one's films to the market, rented a place to show them, and tried to attract buyers. How much marketing was done at Cannes in 1978 is questionable. The outgoing head of the Swedish Film Institute claimed that there was very little. Most commercial films were presold; most non-commercial films were unsold. On the other hand, there is certainly some selling going on, to say the least. Producers are after profits, which is particularly the case with smaller countries. People are also selling their talents to producers and directors. But one suspects that if all of these people were to disappear, along with all of the invited guests and properly accredited press, there would still be at least twenty thousand visitors milling around in the streets, which is the basic problem of Cannes. Roughly four-thousand people are participating in a festival designed for half that number while another thirty thousand stand around to watch. The *Marche*, then, is a marketplace just like the one in Selznick's *Garden of Allah*.

In fact, Cannes is a microcosm of cinema: a pyramidal structure consisting of an immense base of commerce surrounded by hordes of people, the base supporting constantly diminishing numbers of filmmakers and critics who are engaged in the art of film as opposed to the business of it.

The Art of Cannes

The Palm D'Or for 1978 went to an excellent, non-commercial film, Ermanno Olmi's *L'Albero degli Zoccoli*. Olmi's subject is the ordinary life of nineteenth-century peasants in the Bergamasque region of Italy. Four or five peasant families live together on an estate. The film condenses the process of their lives into a three-hour period: births, deaths, and fates worse than death, such as the expulsion from the

estate for cutting down an elm tree to make shoes (the film's title). The reasons that a long movie featuring real people, lacking any sort of plot, and having no suspense could be truly excellent are that Olmi has managed to focus on a harsh reality while at the same time to catch the natural beauty and dignity of life. He always records and refuses to judge: *L'Albero* dramatizes the complex interplay of the family, the feudal estates, the government, and the church that defined so much of Italian life in the last century. Also—as if this weren't enough—*L'Albero* is, like nineteenth-century novels, full of great treatises on everything in life, from how to slaughter pigs to the best way to grow tomatoes and how the Church places orphans.

Also of substantial length, but less documentary is Miguel Littin's *Discourse on the Method*, a Cuban-French-Mexican production based on the novel of the same title by Alejo Carpentier. *El Recurso* is the story of a mythical dictator. The film begins with him at the height of his powers before WWI takes him through a series of governmental crises in which he usually manages to triumph, and ends in a final catastrophe when the population rises up against his government. What is noteworthy about the film is its recurring emphasis on the power and prestige of a culture resting so precariously amid the isolation and natural splendor of the New World.

Littin's film is interesting because it is the first big budget film done in Latin America and it reveals an intellectual contrariness that alternately irritates and fascinates European critics. Walter Lima, Jr., had argued, even before seeing the film, that what really differentiates European from American films is the interest in the large and spectacular, a peculiar sort of visual rhythm that North and South Americans share, but Europeans don't. Critics had trouble in seeing this American characteristic, he felt, because of the financial constraints on South American directors. Littin's emphasis on something peculiarly of the New World both confirmed Lima's thesis and made for an intriguing film.

Like Littin, Krzysztof Zanussi has rapidly established himself in recent years as a significant new director. *Spirale*, his latest film, continues the trend. It is even better than *Camouflage* and *Illuminations*, although it continues his interest in portraying Poland as a tightly controlled hospital or university or resort. Zanussi, like his Bulgarian colleagues Zhelyazkova, Piskov, and Dyulgerov, continues to accept basic Marxist philosophy while lambasting the failure of the New Society. He remains the most well known and probably the most accessible of this group, whose major theme is the way in which alienation not only exists but dominates life in the socialist countries.

Zanussi, Littin, and Olmi aside, most of the interesting films at Cannes in 1978 were by younger and

unknown directors. Although there were films from established American directors in considerable numbers, the two best American films—Robert Young's *Alambrista* and Claudia Weill's *Girlfriends*—were by young independents.

Alambrista won the Camera D'Or for best first feature film. It concerns the life of a poor Mexican who treks illegally into and across the United States. Young wrote, photographed, and directed the film. "This film is about the people who pick the fruits and vegetables we eat, but they are always moving, don't have time to ripen themselves," he observed. "Moving like that gives you the illusion of freedom." Although *Alambrista* comes dangerously close to being merely polemical, it reveals so much control over the subject that it finally brings to the screen an impressive delineation of a major American problem.

Alambrista is never going to be popular in Hollywood because Young's vision of California as a large lettuce factory that draws its wealth from a sophisticated version of feudalism not only offends state chauvinism but also has some subversive analogies to the way movies are made in Hollywood.

Claudia Weill's *Girlfriends*, on the other hand, is a thoroughly conventional film about two college roommates. Hefty and sensitive, one wants to be a photographer; the other, blonde and attractive, a writer. The sensitive roommate makes it and turns out to be an accomplished human being in the process. Her girlfriend is more problematical, having sacrificed whatever talent she had for children and marriage. The heroines are believable people with real problems. In contrast, in Karen Arthur's *Mafu Cage*, the woman scientist wandered aimlessly around her office, which existed like a *Vogue* setting rather than a place to work. Eventually, I suppose, someone had to make a film about young women growing up in which the women were neither crazy nor completely atypical of humankind, and it is nice to see the first American effort work so well.

At the other end of the spectrum were two excellent pieces of genuinely experimental filmmaking: Michell Deville's *Le Dossier 51* and Mimi Perlini's *Grand Hotel of the Palms*. Both films are experiments—Deville's in the use of video and stills, Perlini's in the "new" surrealism. Deville's film is a political piece about the compilation of a dossier on a man known simply as "51" who has come into a position of some importance in UNESCO. Various intelligence agencies are interested in getting enough material on him to blackmail him when the need arises. Although the film rests on some typically French but entirely too simplistic psychological assumptions, it is a remarkable film. We never see "51" directly, only images of him on tape or stills. By the end of the film, however, we know everything there is to know.

Deville has been one of the most underrated of French filmmakers. His excellence as a master of cinematic rhythm, particularly through framing and editing, has always been unexcelled. He has always confined himself to films that have a slightly whimsical or absurdist air. *Dossier 51* is Deville without his humor, his fondness for classical scores and beautiful women; the result is a peculiar tour de force of compilation and editing, a film that evokes a genuine sense of *le chagrin et la pitié* without any dramatics.

Perlini's film is also peculiar, and it, too, is a tour de force of sorts, but a much more infuriating one. The ostensible subject is the death of Raymond Roussel under mysterious circumstances at the Grand Hotel in Palermo in Fascist Italy. But Perlini's hotel is rather strange. Roussel's room is actually a marble quarry about five-hundred meters across, with a bed and dressers set in the corners. It is both a real stone quarry with abandoned equipment and a room in the hotel, which has, one hastens to add, many rooms with equally spectacular views. Roussel's death has many forms, causes, and effects.

Perlini is not, of course, the first director to argue that only surrealistic techniques can get to the heart of Fascism, but he is the first to do it so demoniacally. *Grand Hotel of the Palms* is too complex to describe adequately, too firmly rooted in its own politics and aesthetics to be criticized adequately, too irritating to be likeable, and too important for anyone seriously concerned with cinema to ignore. As such it stands as a perfect emblem of Cannes itself.

JOHN MOSIER

The Mountaintop Film Festival:

Telluride 1978

Since 1974, on Labor Day weekend, Telluride, Colorado, has hosted an annual non-competitive film festival. In the past, the screenings have included retrospectives and tributes, as well as recent American and foreign films. During last year's festival, the American film industry was represented only retrospectively, whereas emphasis was on outstanding foreign films, primarily festival award winners. Some noteworthy examples included Shepitko's intricate Marxist film *The Ascent* and Schlöndorff's *Coup de Grace*. There was also an outstanding effort to expose Festival-goers to the Australian film industry through screenings of Kotcheff's *Out Back*, shown in the original uncut version entitled *Wake and Fright*, and Joan Long's *Picture Show Man*. In essence, the acclaimed Telluride Film Festival has provided for the American film intellectual a significant

exposure to current film trends, both American and foreign.

Perhaps working under a tight budget or a lack of imagination, this year's festival, dedicated to Ben Carre, had little new to offer other than the commercial. There was a Disney film by Bruce Bilson called *North Avenue Irregulars*, which has some hysterically funny chase scenes that come close to matching the classic in *What's Up Doc?*. The new film by Ray and Joan Silver *On the Yard* turned out to be a bloody, redundant, and pointless story about prison inmates. *China 9, Liberty 37*, directed by Monte Hellman, was a sentimental Western love story with an Italian hero—an enjoyable, but mindless, cliché.

Retrospectives were abundant. Many were impressive, particularly a collection shown in conjunction with a tribute to the "Czech New Wave." Ivan Passer's experimental documentary *The Audition*, a political statement about socialist realism, was shown together with the artistic, existential *Intimate Lighting*, a film about finding meaning in life. *Case for a New Hangman*, Pavel Juracek's bizarre satire based on the third book of *Gulliver's Travels*, was a significant premiere for the festival. The film depicts a Malle-like journey into an *Alice in Wonderland* city of political control and oppression where the realities of non-conformity in a socialist society are exposed.

The first part of Jan Nemeč's defense of shy love, *A Junior Clerk's Temptation*, opened the tribute to the "New Wave." It was followed by Juracek's *Josef Killian*, an intriguing film that is essentially a satire on bureaucracy. The tribute closed with the screening of Jires's brilliant and sensitive post-"New Wave" film *My Love to the Swallows*, (1972), the diary of a woman's commitment to the anti-Nazi underground and her courage in the face of Fascist terror. (Each of the Czech directors was present at the tribute and later participated in a seminar on "New Wave" and post-"New Wave" cinema.)

Krzysztof Zanussi was present for the screening of his brilliant film *Camouflage*, which strikes at the core of the Polish political system and ironically exposes the socialist structure at work in a typical Polish university on which the film centers.

Retrospectives were shown in tribute to Hal Roach and Sterling Hayden. These were nothing more than late-night television. The younger generation in Telluride received a treat while celebrating the Golden Anniversary of Mickey Mouse, complete with screenings of several Mickey Mouse films and a cake and champagne birthday party.

Although new films were significantly lacking, the festival managed to retain some of its attraction. Bringing together the leading directors of the "Czech New Wave" was indeed a milestone and a credit to the festival. Werner Herzog was no longer

in evidence, but Jan Nemeč's presence was felt as he spent two days of his stay making a film. The use of Festival guests and Telluride residents in his film proved that the close proximity within the festival is still and will remain an asset.

SARAH E. SPAIN

Story

About a month ago, I received a call from Jane Goldstein. Her father, Albert Goldstein, had died in June and in going through his papers, she found copies of *Story* dated the 1930s and 1940s. She wondered if Loyola wanted the magazines. I did, indeed, want them for our library. So here I was on a Sunday afternoon, feeling like Oedipa Maas in *The Crying of Lot 49* as, in a spirit of intrigue, I approached a large house.

When the owner answered the door, suddenly the memory of a journalism class at LSU in the late '50s rushed out. I remembered two people in that class: Jane Goldstein (who did not remember me) and Rex Reed (before he was "The" and who probably does not remember me either). Suspecting that I was a participant in an imminent revelation, I listened to Jane explain that her father had been one of the founders of the *Double Dealer*. My suspicion and memory were cul-de-sacs into the past about which I could do nothing but marvel. *Story* was different.

I did not understand how different, however, as we heaved a large box of the magazines into my car trunk. Saying goodbye and thanks and it was good to see you after nearly twenty years, I drove off. As I listened to the box sliding around in my trunk, I began to wonder just what was the history of this magazine with the names of Carson McCullers, J.D. Salinger, William Faulkner and many other familiar authors on its covers.

It began in Vienna in 1931 as the creation of Martha Foley and Whit Burnett who were married then and who were correspondents for the *New York Sun*. The goal of their magazine of original short fiction was to serve as proof that stories of exceptional merit were being written. In volume 1, number 1, the editors state their desire to provide a medium for writers whose manuscripts lay unpublished, rejected by "the article-ridden magazines of America."

Whit Burnett describes the production of the first volume in his book *The Literary Life and the Hell With It* (1939):

What happened was a syvan spring went by with us bent double over a *Rothary-Apparat*, while other international journalists were on junkets to

Jugoslavia or tramping in the Weinerwald, while those remaining behind stared at us queerly out of the corner of their eyes as if to determine whether or not we were grinding out propaganda for what Central European Power; and when the finished edition of about 67 or 68 copies came off the *Rothary-Apparat*, and we had to spend a week of nights after work at home in Poetzleinsdorferstrasse 16 with all the windows shut trying to assemble all these pages into magazines before the spring winds scattered the pages throughout Vienna, we found the total cost had been about a dollar a copy, although the price of those we thought we might dispose of retail was plainly mimeod as *Fifty Cents oder Drei Schilling Fünfzig...* (pp. 109-10)

And, so, inauspiciously began *Story*, which was to boast in April 1933 that from that first issue, Edward J. O'Brien reprinted four stories in the annual *Best Short Stories*. In 1932, Mr. O'Brien reprinted eight. (When Edward O'Brien died in 1941, Martha Foley replaced him, as the editor of *The Best American Short Stories*.)

The April 1933 issue also announced that the editors (who were now parents of a young son, David), after having published the magazine in Vienna and then Palma de Majorca, were now returning to the United States. Their reason was simple: "while they feel they have clearly demonstrated the artistic validity of their basic idea, they realize the magazine must also have an economic validity. In a word, it must have faithful readers as well as writers." They tell us that although *Story* had acquired an international reputation, its circulation had never exceeded 600 copies. In 1933, Random House under Bennett Cerf became the manager of *Story*, retaining Martha Foley and Whit Burnett as editors. Circulation increased to 30,000; however, the magazine made no profit and in 1935, *Time* (August 26 issue) announced the sale of *Story* to Dr. Kurt Max Oswald Simon (Burnett's *Literary Life* says "Semon").

From 1932 to 1948 the magazine lived. Looking over the contributors for 1931-32, one finds Kay Boyle, twenty-seven-year old James T. Farrell, Robert Musil (described as "a former Austrian army officer" who "lives in Vienna"), and Erskine Caldwell. In 1934 appears "the latest, hitherto untranslated work of Ivan Bunin, the Russian writer who has just won the 1933 Nobel Prize for Literature" and stories by William Faulkner ("Elly") and William Saroyan ("The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze" and "Seventy Thousand Assyrians"). And on and on the years record early, and sometimes first, publications of famous writers: Graham Greene, Sean O'Faolain, eighteen-year-old Norman Mailer, Ignazio Silone, Jesse Stuart, Sherwood Anderson, Dorothy Canfield, and William Faulkner again ("Delta Autumn" in 1942). And for all those well known writers, there are even more about whose names we ask, "Who?"

To Ray B. West, Jr. (June 6, 1953, *Saturday Review*) and other writers in the 1930s and '40s, *Story* "seemed the stronghold of a new integrity" and gave "the sense of participating in a great crusade . . ." (p.17). In the 1950s when *Story* became a twice yearly book, West said that "the excitement is gone, and now this collection of stories, far from seeming revolutionary, exhudes an atmosphere of conformity."

No matter. Those books that jounced around in my car trunk will remain an exciting trail into the past. And although I can browse through the crisp newness of the Kraus Reprints of *Story* (1931-1948) I prefer the musty spell from those unbound magazines that Albert Goldstein collected and read.

DAWSON GAILLARD

Ernesto Cardenal

*It sounds like a revolution:
it's only the Tyrant's birthday*

It is an ironic coincidence that during the same troubled year in which the American public finally became aware of the Nicaraguan dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza, another Nicaraguan named Ernesto Cardenal gained prominence in this country.

One of Nicaragua's finest living poets, he is a Trappist monk and a Marxist who has been an unyielding opponent of the Somoza dictatorship. Born in 1925 in Granada, Ernesto Cardenal earned a degree in philosophy and letters in Mexico in 1947 and then did graduate work at Columbia University in New York until 1949. Five years later, having returned to Nicaragua, he was involved in an abortive plot in which most of the leaders were captured, savagely tortured, and executed. Cardenal was one of the few who escaped. In 1956, the father of the present dictator was assassinated; the next year Ernesto Cardenal entered the Cistercian monastery at Gethsemani, Kentucky, where he was a novice under Thomas Merton. Because of ill health, he moved to the Benedictine priory at Cuernavaca in 1959 and eventually completed his study for the priesthood at the seminary of La Ceja in Columbia in 1965.

Since his ordination, he has headed a contemplative group ("more of a commune, really, but *communa* wasn't yet a current word in American Spanish," according to Fr. Cardenal) on the remote tropical island of Mancarrón in Lake Nicaragua. Called Our Lady of Solentiname after the Solentiname Archipelago of which Mancarrón is part, the community is made up of Nicaraguan *compesinos* who follow no formal rule. The revolutionary Christianity taught by the Trappist poet forms a part of the general

movement of *concientización*, i.e., the promotion of socioreligious awareness throughout society from the grassroots up. The discussion of the social relevance of Scripture, in which the whole community participates, is considered by Cardenal to be the most important part of his religious mission. (A selection of these discussions is available in *The Gospel in Solentiname*, edited by Cardenal and translated by Donald D. Walsh [Orbis Books, 1976].)

Because of his Marxism and his opposition to the Somoza government, little of his work has been published in Nicaragua. His poetry is clearly *engagé*, which Sartre explains as simply "knowing what one wants to write about." What Cardenal has wanted to write about has not changed much in the last thirty years although he has found new metaphors with which to elaborate his ideas on human happiness in society. What is remarkable about his poetry is the unity of his vision. As the following epigram written in the early '50s shows, Cardenal does not distinguish between love and politics; they are kindred designs in a single fabric.

Maybe we'll get married this year,
my love, and we'll have a little house.
And maybe my book'll get published,
or we'll both go abroad.
Maybe Somoza will fall, my love.

His work on epigrams is a direct result of the influence of Ezra Pound. In admiration of Pound's translations, he began in 1954 to render the works of the Latin epigrammatists into Spanish. Encouraged by the inclusiveness of Pound's *Cantos*, he began to write long "documentary" poems at the same time.

Cardenal is not unique among his contemporaries in his debt to North American writers. Nicaraguan poetry has been heavily influenced by American poetry thanks to the translations of Pound, Eliot, Williams, Jeffers, Frost, and others by José Coronel Urtecho. In the 1950s, Cardenal helped enlarge his *Panorama y antología de la poesía norteamericana* to include Ginsberg, Rexroth, Jarrell, Merton, Lowell, Ferlinghetti, Everson, Levertov, Ashbery, Snyder, and other young American poets. Their influences are visible in his own poetry of the late '50s and the '60s. "Managua 6:30 P.M." shows the Beat influence.

There is something mystical about the red tail-lights of cars.

The neon lights are gentle in the twilight and the mercury lamps are pale and beautiful . . . And the red star of a radio tower is as lovely as Venus in Managua in the evening sky and an Esso advertisement is like the moon.

Donald Junkins, in *The Contemporary World Poets*, says that for Cardenal "the whole world and all of history are crucial." Like many Utopians, Cardenal has an intense interest in history. Many of his poems have historical sources. The Amerindian past, in particular, represents for him better times when militarists and politicians were not heroes.

In their temples and palaces and pyramids and in their calendars and chronicles and codices there is not one name of a leader or chief or emperor or priest or politician or commander or governor; nor did they record political events on monuments, nor administrations, nor dynasties, nor ruling families, nor political parties. In centuries, not one glyph recording a man's name: the archaeologists still do not know how they were governed.

"The Lost Cities"

His vision is unyielding. In reworking fragments from Scripture, he often takes on the tone of a prophet.

In respect of riches, then, just or unjust,
of goods be they ill-gotten or well-gotten:
All riches are unjust.
All goods,
ill-gotten.
If not by you, by others.
Your title deeds may be in order. But

did you buy your land from its true owner?
And he from its true owner? And the latter...?
Though your title go back to the grant of a king
was
the land ever the king's?
Has no one ever been deprived of it?

"Unrighteous Mammon (Luke 16:9)"

New Directions has recently published a collection of Cardenal's poetry, *Apocalypse and Other Poems*. With fine translations by Thomas Merton and others, and with an excellent introduction by Robert Pring-Mill (from which much of the information in this article is taken), it is a good introduction to the work of this important poet, priest and revolutionary. *In Cuba*, also available from New Directions, is a well written account of his visit to Cuba in 1970. Another volume of verse, *Zero Hour and Other Documentary Poems*, is in preparation.

I believe Ernesto Cardenal's boast in another of his epigrams is justified:

Our poems can't be published yet.
They circulate from hand to hand, in manuscript
or mimeograph. But one day
people will forget the name of the dictator
against whom they were written
but they'll go on reading them.

JOHN BIGUENET

REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS

Captain Pantoja and the Special Service, by Mario Vargas Llosa, tr. by Gregory Kolovakos and Ronald Christ, Harper and Row, 1978, 244 pp., \$10.95.

The Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa stands among the three or four most lauded novelists of the "Boom" in Latin American fiction. At the age of forty-two, he has to his credit a formidable array of novels, short stories, and criticism, including *The Time of the Hero*, which created such a scandal in Peru that it was publicly burned at the military academy in Lima that the author attended (1962), *The Green House* (1968), *Conversation in the Cathedral* (1974), *Gabriel García Márquez: Historia de un Deicidio* (1971), and *La Orgia Perpetua: Flaubert and Madame Bovary* (1975). In his previous works of fiction, Vargas Llosa eschewed the use of humor; now, with *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service*, he has written one of the funniest novels to emerge in the Americas in recent years.

Pantaleón Pantoja, an ambitious young career officer whose first love is the military and whose forte is organization, is given a delicate assignment. In the remote Amazon region of Peru, the citizenry has

become outraged over repeated sexual assaults committed by recruits starved for female company. The military authorities decide that the only way to combat this outbreak is to provide a suitable sexual outlet for the soldiers in the form of a unit of peripetetic "lady visitors" who will satisfy their minimum sexual needs. Because of his genius for administration, Captain Pantoja is chosen to put together this special, and very secret, service. With this intention, the sober-minded, rather prudish Pantoja, along with his wife and mother, installs himself in the Peruvian Outback. Soon the Special Service is humming along, but the officials have now become alarmed by another cause of unrest. Brother Francis, a religious fanatic who advocates crucifixion as a means to achieve sanctity, is gaining converts at a brisk rate, converts who have a weakness for sanctifying their neighbors by force. Once events are set in motion, the outcome is as inevitable as it is hilarious.

Vargas Llosa writes that what really appeals to him in a novel is "a skillful admixture of rebellion, violence, melodrama and sex, combined in a tight plot." Yet, if he is traditional in his fondness for a good story, he is experimental in elaborating the structure to accommodate

those stories. In his earlier novels, the time scheme is jumbled so that past, present, and future fuse into an indeterminate gray zone, whose effect is to deny progress.

On the surface, *Captain Pantoja* appears to be straightforward in its use of time: it follows a strict chronological order. Like all Llosa's novels, however, it circles back on itself. The richness of incident and the meticulous dating of sequences give only an illusion of development; there is no real change. Its end very clearly lies in its beginning.

On the other hand, there is no lack of movement in space—movement, that is, between narrators. The characters are legion, and most of them comment on the events at hand. Vargas Llosa has always deployed a variety of perspectives, frequently presented through dialogue. Here, he pulls out all the stops. In addition to the dialogue, he resorts to military communiqués, letters—public and private, sequences, radio programs and newspaper articles, all executed with exuberance and a feeling of authenticity. (His version of military jargon and the melodramatic language of the popular media are wonderful.)

There is, of course, a reason for this proliferation of perspectives and media. In itself, it gives us an impression of totality, of having the whole story. But, further, in the disjunction between the official view of the female contingent with its pompous title (Special Service for Garrisons, Frontier and Related Installations) and the service's actual function, between Pantoja's impersonal, highly correct memos to his superiors and his nightmare descents into eroticism and guilt, we find one of Vargas Llosa's most persistent themes: the disparity between the official version and the real event, between the outer and the inner man.

In Pantoja's case, the inner man is very limited. If as pop psychology would have it, he "discovers his own sexuality," the discovery takes him nowhere. Ultimately, as the use of time suggests, he learns nothing from the experience. Vargas Llosa has said that *Captain Pantoja* is a "parable about the bureaucratic spirit itself," embodied in Pantoja, "the intermediary man [who] is capable of taking the trees for the forest." It is also, I think, a joke on the subject of *machismo*. No one questions the soldiers' urgent need for the Special Service, least of all the whores themselves, who take some pride, as they put it in their anthem, in

Serving, serving, serving
The Army of the Nation,
Serving, serving, serving
With great dedication.

It is not the method of the novel openly to question these values, whether sexual or military. Vargas Llosa simply presents the evidence, as deadpan as Twain or Faulkner can be, and lets us draw our own conclusions. The process is a source of delight.

Reviewed by Julie Jones

The House of Alarcon, by Joseph Dispenza, Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1978, 283 pp., \$9.95.

The House of Alarcon came into my hands while I was still trying to get through *Mortal Friends*, a "big" novel by James Carroll. I put down *Friends* and started into *House*. I found myself led from chapter to chapter, back and forth in time, as if from room to room in a house filled with old things and new. When I finished Dispenza's

novel I took up Carroll's again, got through a few more chapters, then gave up in exasperation.

Where *Mortal Friends* tells its story by fits and starts, *The House of Alarcon* generates its own momentum. Where the former sews fictional patches onto history, the latter skillfully weaves. Where the former serves up sex like so much buttered corn, the latter plants it first in the mind where it learns both hope and despair.

The House of Alarcon is principally the story of Juan Mateo Alarcon who owns a ranch near Taos, New Mexico, built on a tract of land granted to the family 400 years ago. The history of that family is the other story, beginning with Sebastian Alarcon, a member of Coronado's expedition in 1540. One story alternates with the other; one is continuous, dealing with the present generation, the other episodic dealing with successive generations, both converging in Juan Mateo. The device is, in the main, successful. Only the penultimate chapter of the book struck me as somewhat forced, almost as if the author were more intent on genealogy than on story.

Juan Mateo Alarcon is desperate for a son, but his wife Carmela has withdrawn into the sterility of her sexual fantasies. The ranch has fallen into disuse, and already the land developers are hovering like hawks. The end of the house of Alarcon is at hand. But his hopes revive when a young man named Chandler Kendrick arrives at the ranch. Chandler's initial interest in the land turns into love, and Juan Mateo makes him his heir. The biggest hawk, however, is Chandler's brother Walker. The two brothers fight over the inheritance, and here the first story resonates against the second, where fraternal rivalries, like those in the Bible, escalate to a point of no return.

Dispenza has said in an interview that the story of the Alarcon family is a microcosm of what happened in the Southwest over the last five centuries. It is the story of a man and a people who have lost their kingdom. At the end, when all his hopes have collapsed, Juan Mateo cries out: "We bloomed for a moment, like a flower. Five centuries. Five centuries have been like one fleeting moment." And later: "The land swallows up everything—even death." But is this the cry of a whole people? When hopes collapse, hope is born—a fundamental hope that asserts itself over against the logic of despair. It has to do not with what a people *have* but with what they *are*. No such hope is born in Juan Mateo. Must we say the same of the people?

A good first novel, at times reminiscent of Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which also describes the arc of a tribe descending.

Reviewed by Ernest Ferlita, S. J.

The Literary Politicians, by Mitchell S. Ross, Doubleday, 1977, 372 pp., \$10.00.

Traditionally America has been unkind to intellectuals and American politics even unkind. A distinction needs to be made here: men and women who attain high political office are often exceptionally intelligent, but they rarely support themselves by marketing their creative insights. Ross has addressed himself to the relatively modern (for the United States) phenomenon of those who stand astride political commitment and literary enterprise. The handful he has chosen he admits to be somewhat arbitrary. William F. Buckley, Jr., Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., John Kenneth Galbraith, Norman Mailer, Robert Lowell, Gore Vidal, and Henry Kissinger, in order of appearance, might well have been joined by others, such as Eldridge Cleaver, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Betty Friedan. With one important exception, the common characteristic each of his selections has, however, is a lifetime

amounts to a new language. This ancient and yet new belief system supplements the Christian concepts of good and evil with fate. The concepts of good and evil reappear as the stupendous, the marvelous, the awesome through which the dangerous is interwoven. Good is the Beauty of the Universe; Evil, its negation, nonexistence, Death. Death, the Master Adviser, who sits an arm's length away to our left, is the master program by which don Juan "burns away" the "energy draining" programs. Our nonessential programs are consciously defused and the energy rerouted into more vital "life" programs. The difference between sorcery and religion is that in religion man petitions the gods and hopes they will accede to his wishes. With sorcery, provided he follows the ritual without the slightest error, man can compel the action he wants.

The Second Ring of Power is brilliant. It is interesting. It is sad and humorous and well written. In this fifth book Castaneda tells us what happened after he leaped off the cliff at the end of *Tales of Power* and relates new tales of his battles of power and his encounters with inexplicable forces while he visits a community of sorcerers. It is one of the most thrilling books I've read and one of the most serious.

Reviewed by John Joerg

The Shroud of Turin, by Ian Wilson, Doubleday, 1977, 272 pp., \$10.00.

Back in 1945, when I first wrote on the Shroud of Turin (*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, April, pp. 144-64), more than 3,500 articles and books had already appeared on the controversial subject. Since then, a cataract of publications makes it impossible for any but a professional sintonologist to keep on top of the subject. (*Sindon* is, of course, the Greek for "fine cloth," but in Italian *sindone* is pretty much reserved to the Shroud of Turin.) In the past year or so, two serious volumes have appeared in English: the present one and that by Robert K. Wilcox, titled simply *Shroud* and published by Macmillan. Since I have reviewed the latter volume elsewhere, I shall mention only that Wilcox, like Wilson, began his research as a skeptic and concludes that the Shroud is indeed that of Jesus Christ.

As this review is being written, the Shroud is actually on public exhibit in Turin. Normally it is kept enclosed in a silver reliquary, the property of the royal house of Savoy, in a chapel of the Turin cathedral. Popular newspaper articles and occasional television shows have made the general public, especially in Europe, at least dimly aware of the mysterious object's existence. Quite often, however, casual reading, and sometimes casual writing, fail to stress the startling fact about the images that appear on the Shroud: that they are, in fact, equivalent to photographic negatives; the pictures seen in the press are negatives of negatives, thus giving the positive impression.

So it was that before 1898, when the Shroud was first photographed, hardly any scholar treated the matter seriously. Even a decade later, in his article in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Vol. 13, p. 763), Herbert Thurston, S.J., judged that the Shroud was a pious forgery. The later photography of Giuseppe Enrie and other professionals and serious studies by doctors and professors of legal medicine (some of them avowed agnostics) have given the subject respectability as an object of research. Also, journals with no religious preoccupations, such as *Scientific American* and *Science* magazine, have published articles favoring the Shroud's authenticity.

Why then is the matter debated? Not least among the reasons, I

suspect, is the fact that the Shroud seems to be Christ's. While one may remain an agnostic (like Drs. Yves Delage and Henri Terquem) and yet hold that the Shroud of Turin contains an image of Jesus, this opinion must at least be troubling. Often, in fact, magazines with a dogmatic bent toward atheism, like *The Humanist*, will publish articles that completely bypass the arguments in favor of the Shroud. Were the images those of, say, Julius Caesar or Trajan or Cicero, the subject would hardly stir passions either for or against.

Another cause of debate or uncertainty is the fact that we cannot ascertain the date of the cloth. Careful microscopic and other tests have demonstrated that the cloth could be 1,900 years old, but not that it definitely is so old. Carbon-14 tests have not yet (as I write this) been performed, and, in any case, they would be of dubious help regarding so recent an object. Until we are able to date the cloth with reasonable precision, I suspect that despite all arguments, a soupçon of doubt will inevitably linger.

At the same time, I find it hard logically to escape the following argument. If the Shroud is not that of Christ it is either a very skillful forgery or the shroud of someone else. Neither option seems to withstand a convergence of improbabilities. The Shroud clearly goes back at least to the Middle Ages; would anyone be so gifted as a forger and seer to create something that would prove impressive only six centuries later, after the discovery of photography? Further, would such a forger not have given people what they wanted—showing the five wounds, the crown of thorns, and nails according to popular belief? The improbabilities could be multiplied.

Against the possibility of its being the shroud of someone other than Christ, one thinks of the following: why a criminal buried in an expensive cloth, buried for only a short time before decomposition could take place, with the extraordinary concatenation of coincidences (helmet of thorns, scourging, side pierced presumably with a lance)? No wonder that Herbert Thurston, who long ago wrote against the Shroud, admitted: "If this is not the impression of the Body of Christ, it was designed as a counterfeit of that impression. In no other personage since the world began could these details be verified."

This line of argumentation can now be found in a dozen books and hundreds of articles. Where Ian Wilson makes a unique contribution is in his attempt to trace the Shroud back beyond the Middle Ages to the first Easter Sunday. As an Oxford-trained historian he is not on unfamiliar ground. He shows, with considerable sophistication, that the Shroud could well be the object venerated as Christ's in Constantinople and then stolen from the imperial treasury by the ruffians associated with the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Before it was brought to Constantinople on August 15, 944, Wilson believes it was in the Christian Syrian capital of Edessa, where it was venerated as the sacred Mandyllion. He traces the Byzantine iconic tradition (which accounts for the image on the Shroud seeming vaguely familiar as that of Christ) to details seen on the Shroud as it appears to the eye, not to photographic negatives such as we can now see. He finds it mentioned in desultory accounts all the way back to primitive Christianity.

Even after years of research, Wilson admits that "frustratingly, the Shroud has not yet fully proven itself to us...But one cannot help feeling that it has its role to play, and that its hour is imminent." On March 23, 1977, at Albuquerque, more than twenty "active and highly qualified scientists" met to study and evaluate recent findings. One can only favor continued research. For the Shroud, if genuine, is endlessly rich in implications.

Reviewed by C. J. McNaspy

Southwest: A Contemporary Anthology, ed. by Karl and Jane Kopp and Bart Lanier Stafford III, Red Earth Press, 1977, 418 pp., \$6.95.

In the past few years a new regionalism has become important on the American literary scene: regional magazines and anthologies, state writers' associations and their cooperative presses. One factor may be the decline of serious publishing in New York as the conglomerates take over and their cost accountants note the low returns from poetry and first novels. But there are other factors. As the editors of *Southwest* point out, many writers are troubled by the rootlessness of American life and desire a sense of place. The 154 writers in this collection have a strong sense of place—the Southwest, which is characterized by a landscape that still dwarfs human beings.

This volume contains contributions from Chicano, American Indian, and Asian American writers along with the Anglos. It is divided into six sections: Western Arkansas/Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico/Southern Colorado, Arizona/Southern Utah, Los Angeles and the desert, and a 'Coda,' of selections transcending geography. Each of the geographical divisions is introduced by a writer familiar with the area. The geographical sections often cut across state lines, a blending that is all to the good. Regions don't always coincide with man-made boundaries. The inclusion of Los Angeles is surprising, however. The city shares a dry climate with the other areas, but its massive population and its share in the California ethos make it hard for me to think of it as Southwestern.

The Coda contains a few works that fall outside the geographical limits of the anthology. The editors justify this as "a natural opening-out from an ancient part of earth that knows no rigid boundaries..." The section is less an opening-out than a loss of focus. The reader suspects that the editors received some material that didn't quite fit their rubrics but was too good to leave out. The regionalist should, after all, stretch his regional criteria in the service of excellence. The Coda does remind us that there are good writers with a sense of place on the Great Plains and in the far West.

The volume ends with bio-bibliographical notes to guide anyone who wants to read more by the authors, and the general merit of the selections should encourage such interest. The book is elegantly designed and the texts are occasionally supplemented by drawings and photographs. Anyone who wants to sample the potential of the new regionalism will find this anthology illuminating. It would also serve as a good model for other compilers.

Reviewed by Bert Almon

Set in Motion, by Valerie Martin, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978, 210 pp., \$8.95.

Set in Motion is a philosophical novel in the tradition of European and American authors who write about protagonists seeking a foothold in a seemingly disintegrating culture. Helene Thatcher suffers the despair, the anomie, characteristic of protagonists created by Kafka, Graham Greene, Albert Camus, John Updike, and Walker Percy—to name but a few. The horrors, physical and emotional, that beset her in her personal life and in her job have reduced her to the kind of spiritual stasis that James Joyce and William Faulkner, among others, portray as a deadening aspect of the modern age. Helene's problem, however, is not that she is immobilized in the present because of a devotion to or obsession with the past, but that she is part of a world that suffers from frenzied movement on the one hand and the paralyzing loss of values that give

meaning to human mobility on the other.

In one of the most significant passages of the novel, Helene's words suggest the thematic significance of the title. Walking through the exit door of a hospital, having left her lover who has almost died from an overdose of drugs, she observes herself mirrored as

A woman, nearly thirty, small, tense, about to attack the step in front of her, about to decline to make that step, about to turn and run, about, always about to make a dangerous decision. I didn't feel, had never felt, that I was a beautiful woman. My face is ordinarily pleasant, my body is strong enough, healthy, not quite thin, but I knew, had always known, that I could have power over a certain kind of man if I wanted it. The power of weakness, the possibility of that indecision hides a variety of strength.

She is conscious, then, as a Kierkegaardian hero would be, must be, and is, that to be alive is to be aware of constantly confronting choices. Recognizing that choices exist, she perhaps identifies with being in motion, for as above she equates her power over some men with the "indecision" that may hide "a variety of strength," in a subsequent passage she sees her beauty as being linked with motion itself:

What I liked best was to be in transit, as I was then, to go from a lover to a lover, to a room, across a room, to close one door, moving to open another door, being in motion. Motion gave me all the beauty I might be said to possess. I felt this on the landing; the rest of the steps were an exquisite pain, like watching wings unfurl into flight

Obviously, motion in order to be meaningful, must be directed, and the protagonist must find and choose that direction (or a direction), one of the desired effects of the experiences Helene undergoes.

Many of those experiences are Gothic, "Gothic" in the sense that the works of Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers, and Cormac McCarthy are Gothic. The horrors here are all the more frightening for being not supernatural or fantasized but cut from the fabric of everyday life in the modern world. The mysteriously appearing and disappearing woman, the amputated and preserved toe, the severed head, the insanity—all are integral and plausible elements of the protagonist's life in the 1970s.

As a result of her human condition, Helene is terrified by nameless spectres and horrors; her fear latches onto a variety of physical manifestations as though subconsciously she desires to justify and balance her fright. She is haunted, for example, by the story of an escaped mental patient who has decapitated a local woman and is at large for several days. Martin's vivid and even painful portrayal of this fear along with despair is, I believe, one of the greatest strengths of the novel. There is a terrifying scene in Alan Paton's *Too Late the Phalarope* in which the white South African protagonist who has been carrying on an illegal affair with a black woman returns from a clandestine meeting with her to find in his door an anonymous note, left as a joke by a friend who does not know of the affair: "I saw what you did," the note states, or words to that effect. The result is electrifying, for protagonist and reader, and Valerie Martin is able to achieve a similar effect, intense and nerve shattering.

This is also a novel about a woman who works, and as Walker Percy says in a jacket blurb, the protagonist's work "illuminates her and the novel." For some reason, a great many novels suffer from a kind of schizophrenia between the main character's personal life and occupation. It's an old problem: David Copperfield writes for a living but we read none of his fiction. Henry James often solved the problem—or perhaps side-stepped it—by making his heroes and heroines financially

independent and therefore no more troubled with work any more than with religion. Ideally in fiction the character's occupation should reflect and alter other segments of his life, as it does in reality, even when a man or woman endeavors always to escape from the burdens of occupation. Helena Thatcher is a welfare worker in New Orleans and her job, her day-by-day encounters with food stamp applicants, pathetic and confused and angry, is an essential element of her life and her story. Perhaps no problem is more acute in our age or more symptomatic of that age than the pathetic mess the welfare system has become; and Helene is caught in the middle of this maze of need, greed, despair, graft, and corruption. The job is at once painfully real and symbolic of her dilemma.

It is significant as well that Helene works in New Orleans, an impoverished city in which the problems of welfare are magnified to gargantuan proportions. (One is reminded of Eudora Welty's cryptic comment in "No Place For You, My Love" that New Orleans is the home of "ready-made victims.") This is for the most part not a *Southern* novel, but it is decidedly a New Orleans novel, not solely because of its setting but because the social elements and the atmosphere of the city serve—once again to use Percy's felicitous phrase—"to illumine" character and plot. The New Orleans elements—a late night visit to the Cathedral, scenes set in other identifiably local sites, and brief portraits of local characters, fictional and historical—contribute markedly to the Gothic quality of the narrative.

Finally, what all of these elements amount to is a well made novel of considerable power. *Set in Motion* is an exciting first novel that bodes well for Ms. Martin's future as a writer and, one hopes, for the future of the novel in general.

Reviewed by W. Kenneth Holditch

The Compass Flower, by W. S. Merwin, Atheneum, 1977, 94 pp., \$4.95. **Houses and Travellers**, by W. S. Merwin, Atheneum, 1977, 213 pp., \$6.95.

W. S. Merwin publishes too much. His twenty-seven volumes are beginning to look ostentatious on the M shelf in bookstores, especially because twelve of them have appeared since 1970. Many of these books, it is true, are translations. But just as many are Merwin's own poetry, and the unevenness, the amount of inferior material in his work, leads one to wonder if Merwin is not doing himself a disservice. Apparently the heart of the problem is his admirable reluctance to teach, preferring the perils of the literary marketplace to pedagogy. No need to get mired down amid tacky academics when you can whip off a poem a week for the *New Yorker*. While such prowess is heroic, prolificness may ultimately be a greater foe.

Merwin is nevertheless, a fine poet, a craftsman, and each volume he publishes deserves at least close scrutiny. Assured, aristocratic, aloof, and precise, his verse and technique are also protean. Each of his experiments in prosody and form, since *A Mask for Janus* (1952) and *The Dancing Bears* (1954), has occupied a pair of books. *The Compass Flower*, which Atheneum bills as "his first book of poems in four years," is the complement to *Writings to an Unfinished Accompaniment* (1973). The latter, appearing to explore less than promising veins, attracted scant attention. Hopefully *The Compass Flower* marks the end of an unsatisfying exploration.

The most powerful poems in the book resemble Merwin's past work. In such poems as "Encampment at Morning" and "A Contemporary," one recognizes Merwin's motifs: the lonely road, anabasis, the journey, the prodigal son. Though nowhere explicit, his concern with the figure of Odysseus as a metaphor for modern unrest peeks out

everywhere. Ships, ports, enchanted isles, and navigators provide subjects. Land is, after all, only a "stone boat." It is worth referring to one of those older poems, "Odysseus," to illustrate the direction of this volume.

Always the setting forth was the same,
Same sea, same dangers waiting for him
As though he had got nowhere but older.
Behind him on the receding shore
The identical reproaches, and somewhere
Out before him, the unravelling patience
He was wedded to. There were the islands
Each with its woman and twining welcome
To be navigated, and one to call "home."
The knowledge of all that he betrayed
Grew till it was the same whether he stayed
Or went. Therefore he went. And what wonder
If sometimes he could not remember
Which was the one who wished on his departure
Perils that he could never sail through,
And which, improbable, remote and true
Was the one he kept sailing home to?

Another distinct feature of Merwin's poetry, continued in the present volume, is what Stephen Spender called his "animistic tendency": "In a dead tree / there is the ghost of a horse." And that is not the worst of it. Stones are moved to utter pained thoughts, disembodied eyes wander forests, and robins invent day and night. What was once a finely honed tool for exploring the penumbra of experience has degenerated into an indulgent habit.

Although the poems are divided into numbered sections emphasizing respectively the country, the city, and love (with a final potpourri), no grouping develops a theme or shares a poetic focus. The love poems are mediocre. The longest of them, "Kore," which features a stanza for every letter of the Greek alphabet, has a few nice passages, but is marred by lines such as "The candles flutter in the stairs of your voice." They become so tendentious that one is lucky to get past "O." The best of them, however, "Islands" resembles Merwin's older poems.

Several of the city poems are distinct and interesting. "St. Vincent's," which first appeared in the *New Yorker*, explores the tension between sight and comprehension. The casual tone, the manner in which detail randomly evokes detail, breaks with Merwin's usual mode of concentrated, sequential perception.

The most heartening aspect of the book is its understated humor. "The Wine," "The Fountain," and "Numbered Apartment," which concerns a man whose life is inextricably snared by rubber bands, are superior light poems. "The Wine" begins,

With what joy I am carrying
a case of wine up a mountain
far behind me others
are being given their burdens
but I could not even wait for them.

For the most part, however, the new paths explored by Merwin in the poetry of *The Compass Flower* are unpromising.

If this collection seems disappointing, perhaps it is because *Houses and Travellers*, the more recent collection of prose poems, fables, and parables, is such an ambitious, energetic undertaking. Many of these pieces will be familiar; thirty of the seventy-eight items first appeared in the *New Yorker*.

This book, again, makes a pair, continuing the direction of *The Miner's Pale Children* (1970). Merwin here pursues the creation of a new landscape, an almost medieval locale where castles, fields of

grain, lonely roads, reapers, peddlers, and beggars predominate. Men travel on foot or on mule. The distinctive qualities of work, love, and journey are uncompromised by civilization. The inhabitants discover their fates in a limitless petri dish.

It is clear that Merwin, working this field, has his own ambivalent relationship with the masters, Borges and Kafka. The former, particularly, seems to have discovered and staked out the best ground. Fortunately Merwin seems to have staked out his own turf well. It is not clear, however, that he has created a viable manner of telling the story, as both Borges and Kafka did, illustrated in the prose poem "A Tree":

A tree has been torn out and the blind voices are bleeding through the earth. Wherever the roots tentatively learned, the voices flow for the first time, knowing. They have no color, except as voices have colors. They do not even have sounds. They are not looking for one. They come together like fingers. They flow out. They explode slowly to where the branches were, and the leaves. And then the silence of the whole sky is the echo of their outcry.

As I was a child I heard the voices rising. I sat by a wall. It was afternoon already, facing west, near a tree, and I had heard them before. All the roots of the earth reach blindly toward mouths that are waiting to say them.

These secret operations of the world, often command our total attention—but to no end. As a protest against the complete distraction of the real world, they are certainly valid in and of themselves. But as part of a greater territory, a realm of mythic import, they fail. Perhaps a third of the pieces in the book escape this defect of animism altogether: "The Taste," "At One of the Ends of the World," "The Reaper," and "The Fugitive."

There are, in sum, many good poems in both new books. The best refine the desert mirages, castaways, drowned men, and impending catastrophes that Merwin presented in 1955 and 1960. But there are an inexcusable number of bad poems. It should be whispered to the poet, so subtle, so delicate, so attuned to nuances in his own work, that he is being indiscriminately prolific.

Reviewed by William Marling

CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

Ilse Aichinger, born in Vienna in 1921, has written short stories, a novel, and several radio plays. She has won the Austrian State Prize for Literature and the "Group 47" prize.

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