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XXV Towers XXV

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Volume XXXI

January, 1969

AWARDS

Towers Award for Poetry

John Vranicar • Nuages

Judges

Arra Garab — Gloria Golec

J. Hal Connor Award for Creative Prose

John Stobart • The Flying Red Horse

Judges

James Mellard — Carol Mulligan

E. Ruth Taylor Award for Critical Writing

Timothy E. Hunt • Irving, James and "The Birthplace": A Literary Debt?

Judges

Gustaaf Van Cromphout — Charles Schroeck

Maude Uhland Award for Freshman Writing

Lynn Edgar • Awakening:

Nilo Manfredini • Woman

Judges

Steven May — Kermit Lambert — Mirta Pagnucci

Towers Art Award

Terry Speer • The Hero

Judge

Joshua Kind • Critic—Writer—Historian

Art Institute of Chicago

Illinois Institute of Technology

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POETRY

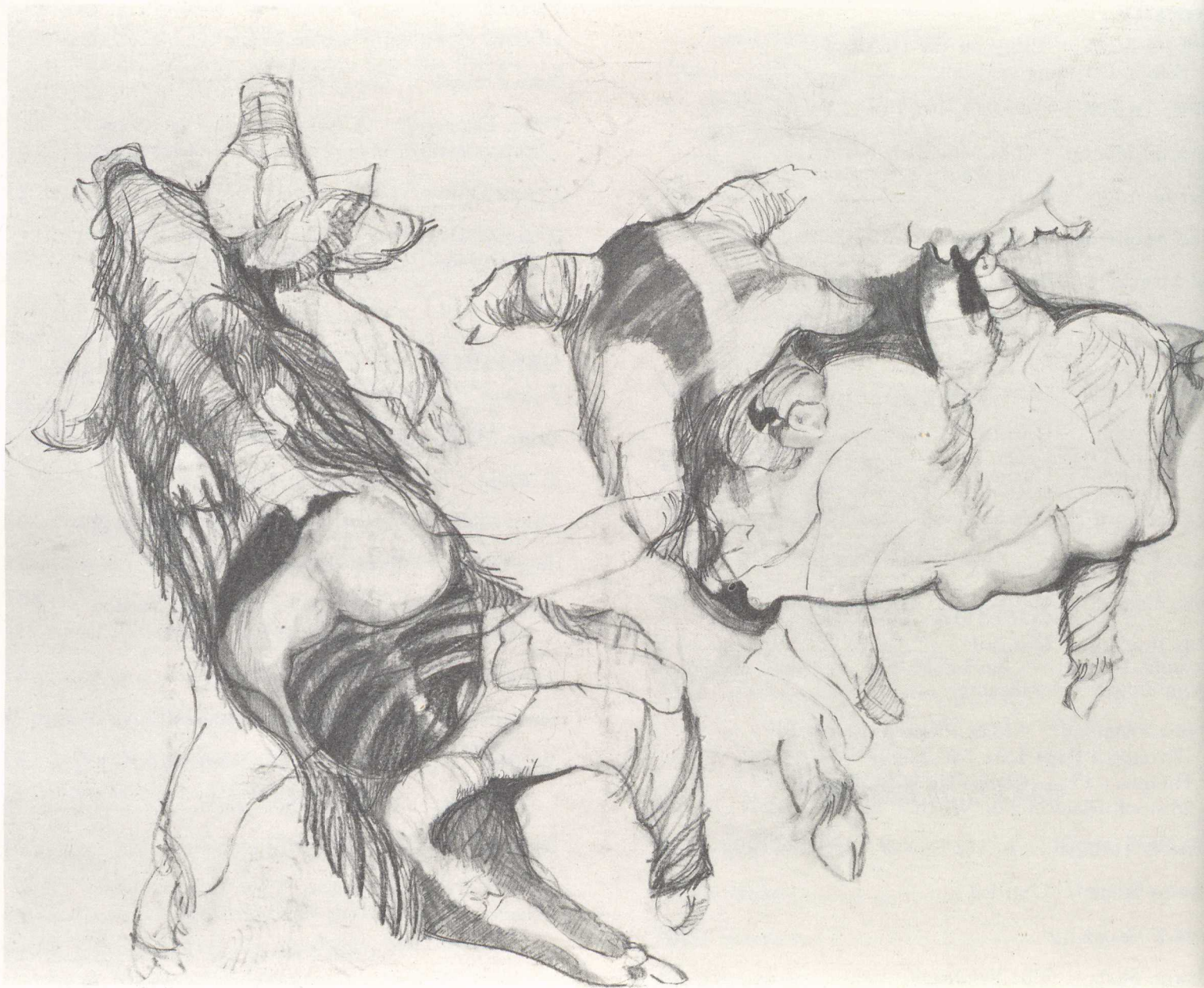
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ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF MILTON DOWNING

An elegy
Unrequested
Undesired I have no doubt
But strangely moved
To perpetuate
The memory of one
A poet
To whose person
And whose verses
I am cold
I write coldly
Having been reminded that
 Procris pierced by a lover's dart
 has fallen too
The bleeding harte of Cephalus' shaft
 Was found
The blue wind that blows in ribbon drifts
 Around the world
 That loops
 And knots
 To fix
 The firmament
Has strangled mighty Titan standing high
Caught up in a breath of its swirling swell
 And slung between
 The earth
 And sky
 And Hell
Slowly with the wind waft does
 Heavily
As from the rafter hung
Milt Downing in the morning was
 At the end
 Of his
 Rope.

Richard Steele

LOUIE, LOUIE

by Leonard Hoffnung

It wasn't until after three o'clock in the afternoon that he decided what he knew he would decide all the time, or rather he recognized what his preconsciousness had established as necessary and preclusive prior to his own self-awareness and indeed prior possibly to when Aunt Wistaria (who was neither his aunt nor Goally's, and in fact was not anyone's aunt until forty-three years later, forty-three summers after she had stopped having any connection, even remote, to primogeniture or its cousin or nephew) Aunt Wistaria, who told him a few minutes ago — or was it several avatars ago? — that he should go to Eisners and get what he knew now and probably knew then, although he could not possibly know now, he could not possibly know then and even now he was slightly dizzy and notpristine about the manifestation of what he encountered and established not by himself, but in conjunction with forces which he knew himself were not in part dissimilar to the slow and ponderous burning of rubber which Charon endured. But whatever her reason for choosing him — and he did not doubt for a miniscule adumbration the timeless manifestation to him, timeless because he believed his memory before he could remember that he knew, and timely for the same reason — that it was she and only she who could have asked him and only him: he thought this prior to when he decided what he knew now he would decide all the time — or rather, he thought this prior to when he recognized what his preconsciousness had established as necessary and preclusive — and all the time the thought inane unnamed and magnificent possessing all the grandeur of the scatology of the South, *Things go better with Coke* running through his mind, running faster than even Charon, the secondhand Harleydavidson which Shrivel had stolen or lost (he forgot which) could decelerate. *Things go better with Coke with Coke, with Coke, with Coke*; as before, during and after Aunt Wistaria, she who was neither his aunt nor his nephew, asked or rather inquired whether he would do a small errand for her. He complied later thinking, later and perhaps even before he was born, thinking *Things go better with Coke*, he who had never had anything but Dr. Pepper on the scuppernong arbor with Aunt Wistaria at least a dozen times (Goally was always there too) and had seen

her there a hundred times; but had said at most fifty words to her in his whole life — he who was thinking nothing or rather something about nothing which he knew even before he could presuppose that he knew just as he knew that the sartorius muscle is the largest muscle in the human body. So the old dame must have known or at least suspected this all the time; that in counterjuxtaposition to his pervasive notthought should be, would be expecting, anticipating the irrelevancy only as a woman who suspected the duration of the sartorius muscle, just as she recognized and understood the prolixity of Faulkner. Thus, you see, it was Aunt Wistaria who knew even before she asked him who didn't yet know that he would decide what he knew he would decide all the time; and then when this self-discovery was made he questioned whether there was ever any doubt, thinking again as he had thought since that moment when she (Aunt Wistaria) beckoned him *Things go better with Coke. Things go better with Coke*. That was all. He rode up the drive to Eisners and into our lives and left no ripple save those instantaneous and unwept tears, running out of Eisners, you see, before he got off the bike, before in fact, before he got up that morning. Doubtless only his sister, Goally, knew for sure how he went straight to where the beverages were kept although he had never been there in his life, how he had known where the building was although he had had neither reason nor manner of knowing where the beverages were kept; she who knew better than anyone, except perhaps Aunt Wistaria that he would refuse the lie that he was an octoroon and that he did not, no and never did contemplate an incestuous miscegenation, while he, no longer aware of anything but *Things go better with Coke, with Coke, with Coke*. So when he pulled up in front of Aunt Wistaria's garden it had something of the arrogant decorum of a procession behind a catafalque, he carrying not what he expected Aunt Wistaria didn't expect him to be carrying, but rather a sixpack of Coke, not even noticing, not even trying to notice that his sister was also there, but thinking still — *things go better with Coke, with Coke, with Coke*.

....'.,'“(.)”.....--””

JUNE 4, 1968

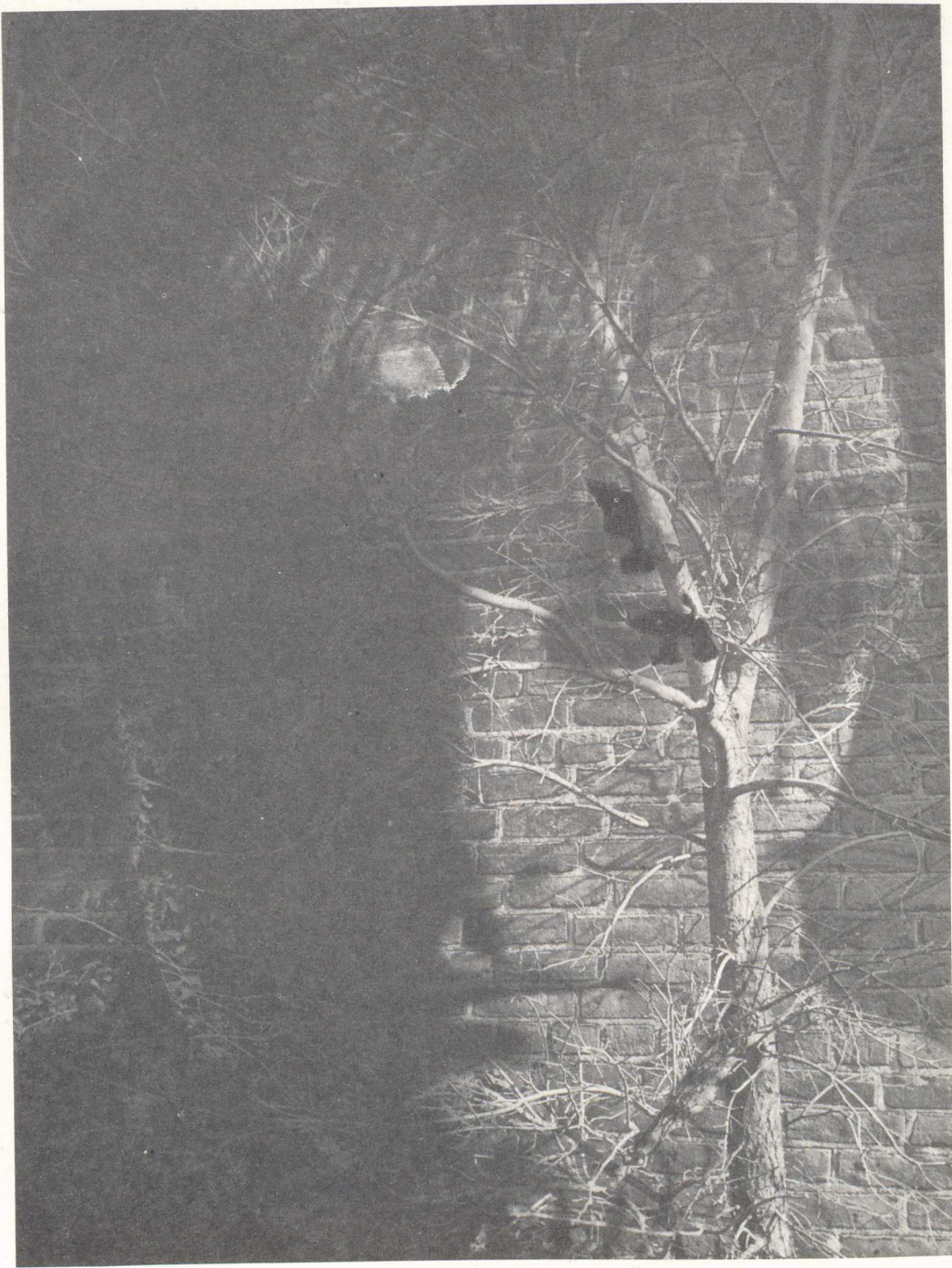
I am young
but want
a rocking chair.
I wonder where
I can find
a rocking chair.
The old lady
who lives with
the Negro maid
has one hid
in her attic room.
I'll go steal it.
Today he was hit
right in the head.
No more tears to shed,
No use to protest
Just give me a chair,
a rocking chair
a place to rest,
a place to rest
and sneer at the rest —
the students and all.

Olivia Diamond

THE MOUNTAIN NIGHT

The mountain night
radiates a special rainbow,
charming our shielded minds
into
tasting
her fresh ancient way of life.
The webbed screen
that pollutes and clouds
our imagination and dreams
is pushed away
by her arms of Sincere Quiet
into the open darkness.
Leaning back
onto the cushioned "Linus" earth
and looking up,
we can peek over
if we try,
to that other side of the horizon
which was once
too far away
for such drifting thoughts.
Right now,
every thought is held out
and suspended
from the battering club of Orion,
lasting
a number of light years.
They fall aside
one by one,
building a path
as
we make our way,
Boulder-hopping
across the stars.

Howard Hunter



THE FLYING RED HORSE

by John Stobart

My father's names were Francis and Irwin, family names. His father saw to it that Francis got a high school education so that he wouldn't have to go to Wassom, the subterranean coal field that gave our town its name, our countryside its slagheaps and elevator shafts, and my grandfather his spotty lungs.

Everyone called my father Fritz. He was a bankteller until the depression closed the 1st National. Then he borrowed enough money from his father-in-law to lease a filling station across the street from the bank. His father was indignant but three years later mellowed — when Fritz was able to buy him the mortgage on a little farm.

I heard all this over and over from my mother — in a dozen different variations and with hundreds of details. She talked about nothing else with such enthusiasm. We were living at her mother's house then. I was the oldest son. Everyone but my grandfather said I looked like my father. My grandfather wouldn't talk about it.

My father had been killed in an auto accident when I was four. That was kind of funny considering he worked with autos. I remembered him mostly in a greasy, navy-blue jacket with a flying red horse stitched across the back. He had taught me that big boys don't cry, so I wouldn't. I kept going up to people and saying, "Everyone else cried the night my daddy died, but I didn't." They sent my little brother and me to stay with some aunt whose name I didn't know and who kept giving me fruitcake until I got sick.

Anyway, that was when everyone started calling me Fritz. The name stuck with me until my mother married again when I was ten and we moved to Chicago. My step-father explained to me then — very gently — that Fritz had become a bad name because of the war with Germany. I agreed about my nickname but wouldn't give up on my family name when he wanted to adopt me two years later. It wasn't that I didn't like my step-father. It just didn't seem right.

After the funeral we moved into my grandmother's house. She was very rich, I thought. She kept a companion, Lena, who was "part of the family." Every afternoon Lena walked me up to the Washington County Court House. We walked

right between the Flying Red Horse Filling Station and the 1st National Bank Building, eleven stories of dark-red brick topped by a big radio tower visible for over ten miles when lighted at night. Lena's father, Uncle Charlie, was always sitting somewhere on the concrete wall surrounding the Court House. Everyone called him Uncle Charlie, even Lena. He was toothless, and ninety-three years old, a former drummer boy for the North in the Civil War. I didn't understand that. We lived in *Southern* Illinois. He always called the area Little Egypt, though. I guess because he was always telling me about the "flood of '37 when yer daddy saved you from the Mississip. Made Ripley's *Believe It Or Not*, right on the back page of the funny papers. Said, 'river backs up twenty-three miles to flood town under fifteen foot of water.' That's when they built the levee, you know," he would always add, referring to the thirty-five foot cement wall surrounding the township and holding the waters back every spring. Uncle Charlie died right before Thanksgiving. Lena and I started playing Old Maid with my little brother in the afternoons.

My mother and brother were both short and fat with dark brown eyes and chestnut hair. I am a tow-head and muscular and have light-green eyes, hazel — mother always said. Her mother was also short and fat, but her eyes and hair were blue. My mother said she had been a blond before the graying started. The blue came from her rinses. Her husband died the year of the big flood, but his photograph was on the mantel. He too was short and brown-eyed with chestnut hair, but his face was baggy like a bulldog's and very sad. My father's photo was on mother's dresser. He was dressed a lot like Uncle Charlie in the very brown old photo on Lena's bed, both in dark uniforms with lots of brass buttons down the jackets. But father had a sash and a sword and a funny hat, like the ones you make out of paper at parties — but with a big plume sticking out. Mother said it was a Mason's uniform. Father had brown eyes and hair and looked very serious.

My mother had three brothers who were always visiting grandmother, all short, fat, and brown. One of them was even named Frank, like my brother. Uncle Frank, he was, Frank Pryor, Jr. His son, my cousin Buddy, was Frank Pryor the 3rd. My brother Frank was just plain Frank. I didn't understand.

John and Francis are my real names, the same as my grandfather. But, I'm not a junior! My mother had insisted because she detested Frank Jr. Anyway, my grandfather was short and fat but had blue eyes and huge ears. His wife was short and skinny and had blue eyes, but I found out she shouldn't be a concern because my real grandmother had died before I was born. Mother said I had her eyes! Also I was supposed to call grandpa's wife Aunt Winnie because she wanted it that way since she had real grandchildren of her own she didn't wish to confuse.

Two other relatives lived across the street from my grandmother. The one in the wheelchair was my real great grandmother. She was to be called Granny, and I was taken to see her every Sunday. She'd be sitting behind a desk at the end of a long, gloomy room with brown waterstains on the wallpaper. Her faded afghan gathered round her shoulders, she'd shake from the effort to see or hear as she sucked the snuff rolled in her lower lip. We were supposed to take turns going up to the desk and shouting our names so that she could hear us. If she understood she gave you a nickel. Once I said my "John Francis" and she didn't hear. Mother said for me to try Fritz. I did and added mother's name, "I'm Fritz, Granny, Carrie Dora's boy!" She took two nickels from her little coin purse and shoved them at me, saying, "Such a sweet, little girl!" She squinted too much for me to see her eyes in the dark room, so I just took one nickel, but she didn't notice. Frank took the extra one.

Next door to Granny lived Great Aunt Dick, who wasn't really my aunt. She had married my Great Uncle, Thomas Richard Sherman Reynolds — known as Dick. His wife stayed around after he died, so the family called her Aunt Dick. One of my real Uncles had the names Thomas, Richard, Sherman, and Reynolds too. He was my real Uncle Dick and a much-loved doctor who caught hepatitis from a patient and died. My mother's third brother was my real Uncle Charley, not to be confused with Lena's father or my Great Uncle Charley, the dentist — or his son, also a dentist and called Cousin Charles — or his son, a boy my age, who was Cousin Charley.

All these pudgy-brown faces came to my grandmother's on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Her house was like a church; everything was special and had to be just so. A pastel blue

carpet with a floral design ran from the front door, through the hall, and into an enormous, long room with two bow windows on the right, both so big I could stand in the middle and couldn't touch any of the gauzy curtains. At Thanksgiving the banquet table seen from the opposite end of the room reminded me of the picture of The Last Supper. Grandmother had so much fine china (Haviland, Mother always called it) that the older children got to eat from it. Even the little kids got their water in big salmon-colored goblets.

Frank and I weren't allowed in her part of the house, but once I sneaked in a friend and showed off the splendor. I plugged in the electric logs stacked in the white brick fireplace and indicated the gold-plated tea service with a nonchalant waggle of my fingers.

Our part of the house was at the back, like the top line on a T. Mother's bedroom had a door leading into Grandmother's, but the door was kept locked. Mother had a separate entrance made with the insurance money from father's accident. The entire section had been empty for years. There were big squares where rugs had been, so Mother had an orangish linoleum laid over all the floors, even on the kitchen floor in the basement. She said that she didn't have time or energy to worry about floors now that she was working.

The man who put the linoleum down was a sailor on leave. He was Bang's friend. She was the woman who worked behind the fountain with Mother at Grandmother's drugstore. They both wore green dresses with white collars. Bang was a great kidder who sort of scared me because she talked so deep in her throat and was always squinting her eyes to keep out the smoke from her cigarette. She taught my mother how to smoke too, but mother didn't squint so much and never smoked around the house. She had me promise not to tell grandmother. Bang let me call her by her nickname but didn't want me to call her Aunt Bang. "Don't you dare, kiddo." That's what she said, and mother thought it was funny, so I laughed too.

The drugstore was exactly in the center of town. Grandmother was proud of that, "Directly in front of the Court House," she used to say, "that's why they built it there." Her blue eyes would twinkle and she'd wait expectantly. If a person didn't bite, she'd get upset, "Well, don't you want

to know *which it* I mean?" Everyone called it The Store. I heard grandmother say it killed her husband before his time. I began worrying about what I'd be when I grew up. I knew I'd be great at it — whatever it was — but the whole prospect was scary. I asked my mother if I could be a drummer boy in the army, but she said they'd gone out of style.

My brother is eleven months younger than me, so grandmother always dressed us alike for the evening trip to The Store. Secretly I kind of liked this idea, but to keep up appearances, I said scornfully that Frank and I looked like Mutt and Jeff. She argued cleverly that we looked as much alike as Tom and Jerry, Uncle Dick's two boys, and that they dressed alike to go downtown. She knew we admired these cousins because they were older. Besides, it was a family joke that *we* were straight out of the comic strips and *they* were both "stars of the silver screen." Every evening Grandmother would take each of us in hand and walk us to The Store, two sets of brown corduroys, striped polo shirts, and brown beanies linked together by one short, fat matron. We went to watch mother.

Grandmother was Worthy Grand Matron of the Eastern Star. Mother was second in command and due to take over the next year. Daughter had never before succeeded Mother in the history of the chapter. All the worthy women attended Grandmother at The Store. She had a special chair hidden away in the stacks of drugs. It had a big red pillow tied to the seat. I was in charge of getting the chair and putting it back. When grandmother saw that mother wasn't busy, I was sent to fetch her. She had to practice the secret words she had to memorize to be Worthy. Mother had a hard time remembering. I knew how hard it was to memorize because my Sunday School Class at Main Street Methodist was taking instructions on becoming full-fledged Christians. We had to answer all the questions just so — word for word — and I couldn't do it — so I knew I couldn't become a member. I didn't want to anger God by pretending, so I told my teacher I'd have to do it next year. She said not to worry about it, that God would know but that I shouldn't tell the other kids because they knew even less than I and would feel bad and quit trying. I figured Grandmother must have told mother something like that too because, whenever mother hesitated, Grandmother said, "Don't stop, no matter what—keep up the beat — mumble in a sing-songy way."

Mother's chanting always reminded me of the bald colored man who shined shoes at the barber's. He was supposed to have been in the Shelton Gang and to have murdered one of Charley Birger's bodyguards. He'd massage the polish into your shoes real hard, squeezing your toes and looking up at you all the time without any expression on his face. All the time he grunted and groaned in a rhythmic way. Once he told me he'd already told ten lies and the eleventh would send him straight to Hell. He hoped he would die before the eleventh slipped out. Counting up as hopefully as I could, I figured I had two to go.

Grandmother always made me handpack a quart of ice-cream to take home. The more I could pack down into the paper bucket, the better man I'd be. Plunging down into ice cream wells made great red welts on my stomach because my toes just barely stayed on the floor. Little Frank (as everyone else called him) would urge me to scrape harder to get it out and pack harder, pack harder to get more for his pudgy tummy. At first I got blisters from scraping and packing.

We walked home about seven o'clock, always crossing the street before we got to the brightly lit Flying Red Horse. I got the impression Grandmother blamed the horse for father's death. I heard her say she had been upset at my mother's marrying a coalminer instead of going to some finishing school in Knoxville as Grandmother had planned.

The man who ran the station now had worked there when my father owned it. His name was Fred, and he frightened me. Maybe it was his gray-stubbled chin, or his funny smell — something more sour than gas or oil. Maybe it had to do with the batch of dead quail he threw on our porch one day. Sometimes, Frank and I sneaked up to the station because Fred gave us candy. Frank wanted to go all the time. When Fred saw us coming, he'd start singing "Frankie and Johnny," a song that enraged me. He'd talk the phrases and make jokes, like "Hi, lovers, why'd you do her wrong, Johnny?" or "Which one of you is the girl?" Once I hit him in the stomach, ran out into the drive, and started bawling and screaming, "Damn you, Fred. You stink—and you always need a shave too, and, uh, and you're just a big, dumb tease."

Mother pulled down my pants, leaned me across the end of my bed, and whacked me with the bristly side of a hair-

brush, crying much louder than I all the while. I'd taunted her that her hand-spanking didn't hurt. She said that hitting an adult or calling him names were terrible sins, worse even than lying. I collected all the hairbrushes in our part of the house and buried them in the muddy ground behind the evergreens.

On Sunday I repented. Usually I just doodled on the back of the program during Church, but my nine lies, Fred, and the hairbrushes combined to make me receptive to Christ's cleansing my soul. A visiting preacher called for sinners to come forth, so I popped out of my place at the end of the pew and trudged down to the altar. All the other kids in that row, my Sunday School Class, thought they were supposed to follow, so I led a procession.

Kneeling on the maroon carpet, my head on my forearms and hanging on to the communion rail with both hands, I was startled by the rustle of clothes quite near me. A bare arm was thrown around my neck and I smelled Fred's terrible smell. It was Bang and my mother. I noticed Bang's eyes were green when she didn't squint. "Isn't he a doll?"

"No," mother whispered, "he's my little Fritz."

I was astride the Flying Red Horse, clinging to his mane and crying for all I was worth. We were spiraling around the 1st National Bank, floor by floor by floor until the red neon tower came into sight. It went up and up into the rushing menace of slate-colored storm clouds in the night sky. The Red Horse plunged on and I clung tighter, on—up—through the clouds until I saw my father beckoning me with his sword and swinging round and round the tower, his plume pink and waving to and fro as it twined down the tower, like the vines on Jack's Bean Stalk. He was out of phase with the storm clouds blowing by. He'd throw his feet out and spin round the tower, bending it like a bow but turning in slow motion with the wind blowing furiously at his back and whipping the red mane in my face. He sheathed his sword and cupped his mouth in one hand, Captain Hornblower from the poop deck, "Don't cry . . . Don't cry . . . Don't cryeee . . ." The wind stretched out the word and plunged the Red Horse deep into an icecream well. I was drowning and there were shouts all around me, "He's the one, that's him, he took his finger out of the hole in the levee. He freed the flood. Go to hell, you! GO GO . . ."

A shaft of light was shining on me. It came from the partly opened door to mother's room. There were loud voices in Grandmother's house. Suddenly the door swung open and mother backed into the room in her underwear, her hands crossed in front of her face. Grandmother followed her, almost pushing her, then stopped. "You bitch!" Grandmother hissed, "You have *too* been drinking whiskey. You're drunk. You're a stinking, drunken bitch!" Grandmother lunged and slapped mother hard! Then again! I sat up and cried out but Grandmother kept slapping and mother just stood there bawling, not dodging or anything. I ran to them and Grandmother stopped. She looked stunned, like she didn't know me. She took a few steps into the room, then, circled out stiffly, like a German tank I'd seen in a movie.

I ran back to bed and turned away from the light. Mother kept sobbing and then came over and crawled into bed with me. She put her arm over my shoulder and pulled up against me, sniveling. I turned to kiss her and got the full, rank blast of her breath!

I turned away fast, thinking furiously. Absently I said, "Don't cry, mommy. Don't cry." I felt terrible. Drinking whiskey was so very bad! The church, the Eastern Star, Grandmother — just everyone knew that. A Bitch. My mommy's a Bitch. I must be a Son of A Bitch, then, like I'd heard people say so often. I moved mother's arm off me and she started to sob again but quieted when I stroked her hair, "Don't cry, mommy. Nitey-nite?" I waited for her standard response of "Sleep-tite, little Fritz!" She was asleep. Soon she was groaning, snoring, and talking in snatches. "Ride high! Ride high, Red Horse, ride . . . my dearest . . . my lover . . . so sorry . . . hurt so . . . need you . . ."

As I lay there listening, I got warm and sleepy but lay awake for a long time. It was like being under a metal lawn chair in a heavy rain safe and dry but scary. Grandmother and Fred were alike. They weren't all bad, but they didn't really care about things. Nobody really cared if you tried. They just wanted to boss you. Mother and I were alike, even if she was fat and brown-eyed. We were alike in our dreams.



WOMAN

Soft and white with silken hair
And goodness in her soul;
Kind and sweet and innocent,
She makes a man a whole.
Out pours her life unto her man
Living for him all she can.
Being for his every word.
Doing what from him she's heard.
Sincerity her essence.
Her love it cannot quit.
I'm sure by now you realize
It's all a crock of shit!

Nilo Manfredini

DALI

I had wanted to give this world a picture of my soul
all the hair on my heart smoothed neatly in place
my eyes adjusted in their sockets like tender plums
my arms and legs loosely jostling with the atmosphere
the stance of acceptance and surrender

but a small
elderly woman
of college age
and before
the white hovel of dawn
the dance of ideas and attitudes
the faces of the dreams of clay men

saw the motion of sorrow birds
and crucified rain
jumbling in my unheard voice.

Martin Addis

SESTINA: THE SOMA RITUAL

India, around 850 B.C.

1.

May we master the wave made of honey
that rose within the stalk of Soma
to clarify the secret name of Ghee,
navel of immortality, tongue of gods.
We celebrate that amber wave
sustained by our praise in this sacrifice.

2.

Lead to the gods this our sacrifice.
The flowing Ghee is clarified like honey
when it is pressed — the mighty wave
of whirlpools, current of Soma.
It was in the primordial Cow the gods
discovered the glorious ritual Ghee.

3.

We proclaim the name of the ritual Ghee
and sprinkle the Fire smiling sacrifice.
The flames like beautiful women of gods
caress each wave of honey
surrounding the golden phallus of Soma.
Fixed on the internal ocean is the wave!

4.

Into the land of mortals roars the wave.
I ardently contemplate this clear Ghee
who wields the thunder when sacrifice
bends round my heart this frenzied Soma
and all borne up am I by draughts of honey.
Lead this our sacrifice to the gods!

5.

These fruits of Ghee swell from the gods
like the shells of wild nuts on a wave:
through thought is clarified their honey,
abundant in the heart, the youth of Ghee.
Thus joyously prepare our sacrifice,
In Their presence mixing water with Soma.

6.

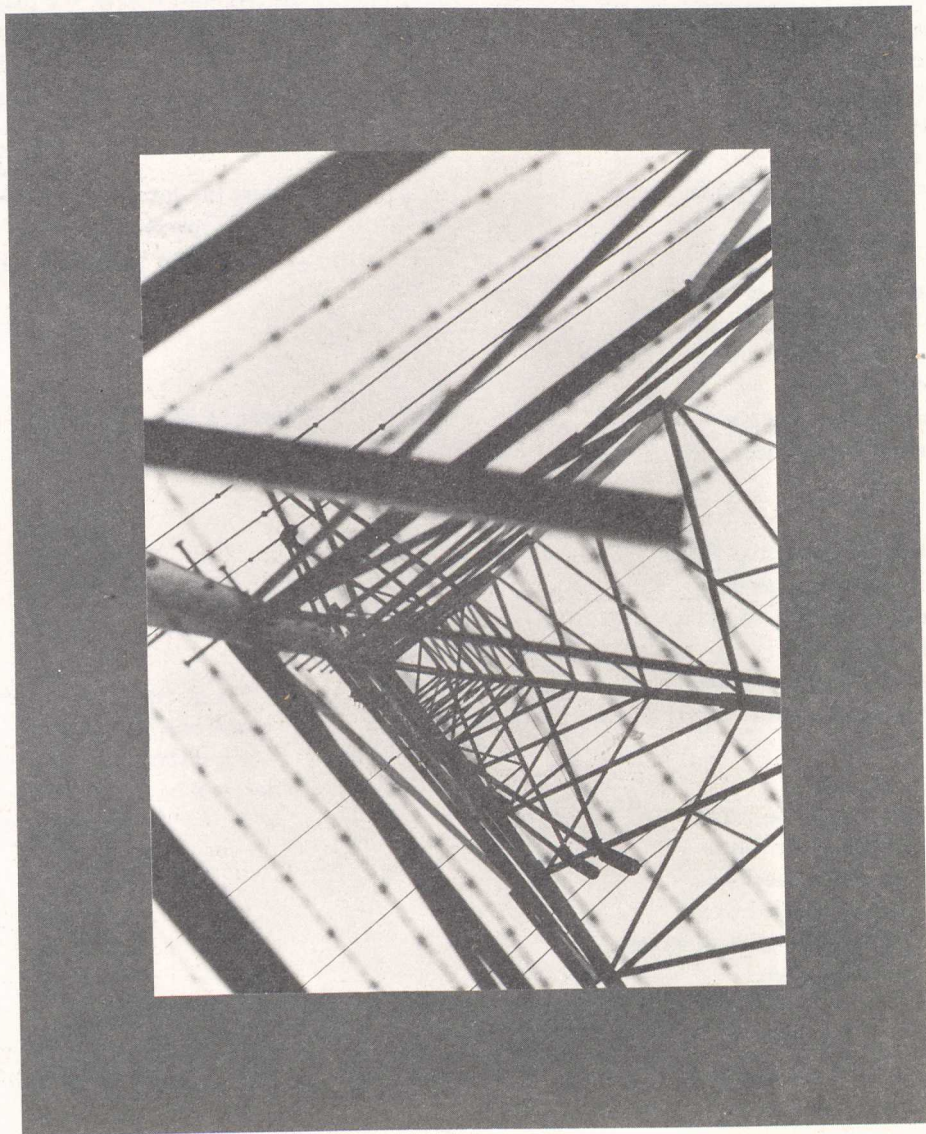
And may we attain to the immortal Soma
and through Him conjoin with the high gods.
Let the universe be the place of sacrifice
as we seek with gazelle-speed the wave:
to be clarified outpours the Ghee
with the sum of life-breaths in its honey!

7.

Fix on the internal gods O Soma!
May we master your wave made of honey!
The five skies praise the sacrifice of Ghee!

(Soma: a drink producing ecstasy; deified. Adapted
from *Rig-Veda* IV, 58.)

Ed Manual



A NEW CRITICISM: NOTES ON DOSTOEVESKY'S

NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

by *Olivia Diamond*

The couple lived rather casually in a perfectly off-hand, by-the-way manner in some out-of-the-way district of the city. The apartment, a plain old three-story brick building was owned by some hard-working Pole who knew how to make things better for himself. It was just the place they were looking for: \$70.00 a month rent, one bedroom, a living room, kitchen with a pantry, and a small bath. The furniture was second-hand. Nothing matched. On one maple end table, there was a lamp with a white shade. On the walnut end table was a lamp with a striped shade, dust collecting on the cellophane still covering it. In one corner was a heavy, black leather easy chair with red tape patching up a hole in the seat. What appeared to be the man of the place lounged on a large, sagging green sofa with a leaf motif pattern; his shoes propped up on the coffee table. His face was covered by the Sunday paper. He folded up the paper, jumbling sections badly together, threw them on the floor, and squashed his cigarette in the coffee cup on the table. His wife who had been sitting across from him in an early American rocking chair — probably the most valuable piece in the whole apartment — put her book down and mocking softly in an over-sweet manner, asked him,

"Why don't you quit smoking, my love? You burned a hole in my dress, and your breath smells, dear. I can't bear to kiss you."

"I know better than anyone that by all this I am only injuring myself and no one else. But still, if I don't consult a doctor it is from spite. My breath is bad, well — let it get worse."

"Worse, dear."

"And to spite you, my dear, I'm going to live to seventy, eighty, and die with a cigarette in my mouth . . . and furthermore, you'll be lighting it."

"Will you get your damned feet off the coffee table! I bought that almost new. And get that snide look off your face, too!"

"Oh, my dear, you give me no end of mirth. You fill my days with joy. If it were not for you, I would have nothing to write about. Nothing. But now I have *nothing* to write

about. You are the woman behind my genius, my inspiration, my dark lady. Here I sit, a struggling author in this stinking apartment with my fair cabbage-leaf bride. You really reaffirm my faith in mankind. You are the living testament of my belief in ungrateful, bilious, unregenerate humanity. Come here and let me smother thee with kisses, my fat hen."

"Can't you be serious, Fyodor. You can't even seriously make love. For your next book, why don't you write, *How To Make Love With Sarcasm?* Now, that I think about it, I think I'll write one too: *How It Feels To Be Married To a Babbling Brook*. All's he does is prattle on and on; I swear he's enchanted by the sound of his own voice."

"I didn't want to kiss you anyhow. I only wanted to plug up your mouth. So there . . ." he said sticking out his tongue. "Go back to peeling your potatoes or whatever you do, my chickadee."

Giving up the verbal battle with her husband that she invariably lost anyhow, she picked up the ashtray and dumped its contents upon his unsuspecting head. Wiping her hands clean of the matter, she turned up her nose and stuck her tongue out.

"Bravo, dear, bravo. Aha, you are a great social reformer, great. Absolutely marvelous. I shower thee with kisses and you crown me with ashes. Now, scurry on to your cell meeting. The working man of the world is waiting for you with his arms outstretched. You will cut his work day from 8 to 2 hours a day, giving him time for rest and relaxation, culture, music, literature, arts and crafts, and of course, he will want to avail himself accordingly of all these fine things."

"If you knew what was good for you, you'd get up off your fat ass and do something. You get one thing published and you fancy yourself a writer, grow a beard, and then you think it's all the more genuine and Bohemian, because we happen to live in this lousy apartment, and our bedroom window has a view of the el."

The conversation, unfortunately, is interrupted at this point, because an el happened to thunder past, which it did more or less regularly at fifteen minute intervals. I must take this opportunity to tell you that they really don't hate each other, although you might have hastily and most rashly assumed that they were hopelessly at odds with each other. Oh, no! They are merely perverse. Perversity is their spe-

cialty and they practice their perversity on one another. They are well-matched perverts. See, Fyodor believes in being perverse. It is his whole life. He derives great strength in perversity from his wife, who is faithful to him. She, on the other hand, derives great perversity from him in proving his perversity is all wrong. Are you following me? No matter. She plans to do this through society, having given up on him. By the way, she is a Marxist-socialist.

See, Fyodor had just published a book, *Notes from the Underground*, which was inspired by his wife, who had on numerous occasions questioned his masculinity by calling him a mouse. He had recommended that she read it, being a Marxist-socialist, but, as yet, she hadn't read it. Actually she was just too busy herself writing articles for *The Worker*.

At this point the noise from the elevated train subsided and Fyodor with an impish smile said,

"My absurd little goose, but I do *not* know what is good for me."

She shakes her head in despair with an expression that seems to say, here we go again — Lecture number 5, Series 1.

He leans back, assuming a philosophical pose, his arm bent expressively at the elbow, gently launching into his explication.

"Your very life is the epitome of what I have been telling you. That your indomitable will triumphs over my insufferable caprice. No matter, how I tell you what is good for you, you still do it your own way. And I, know that you have ideas about what is good for me, too. We're really quite well-matched. We shall continue the way we are now, forever lashing half-heartedly at each others structure. But do you think either will come tumbling down? I doubt it. But you are more deeply miserable than I am. You go off trying to tell the working man what's good for him. It wouldn't be so bad if you just left it at me. But no. Even if you were able to persuade the working man that he must search, look beyond the nose on his face, love art and beauty, and discover that these things are good for him, and he firmly believes you with all his mind, and he is thoroughly convinced that these things you tell him are right and good and must be done, I guarantee he will find something to throw a monkey wrench in the whole scheme. He will put bubble gum in the works. Tacks in the cake. Only so that there will be sur-

prises. He is even more mischievous than I am. The working class are like children. Are we not all? We behave like children, who put mice on the teacher's chair.

She had been listening only half-hearing through his diatribe, but something struck her ear, and she began to brighten perceptibly as if this time the great bearded law-giver had finally spoken some wisdom, which she quickly caught, until she burst out, saying,

"Yes, let's all go through life making plans for everyone else, and putting pins in other men's balloons. Yahoo! I'll drink to that one!"

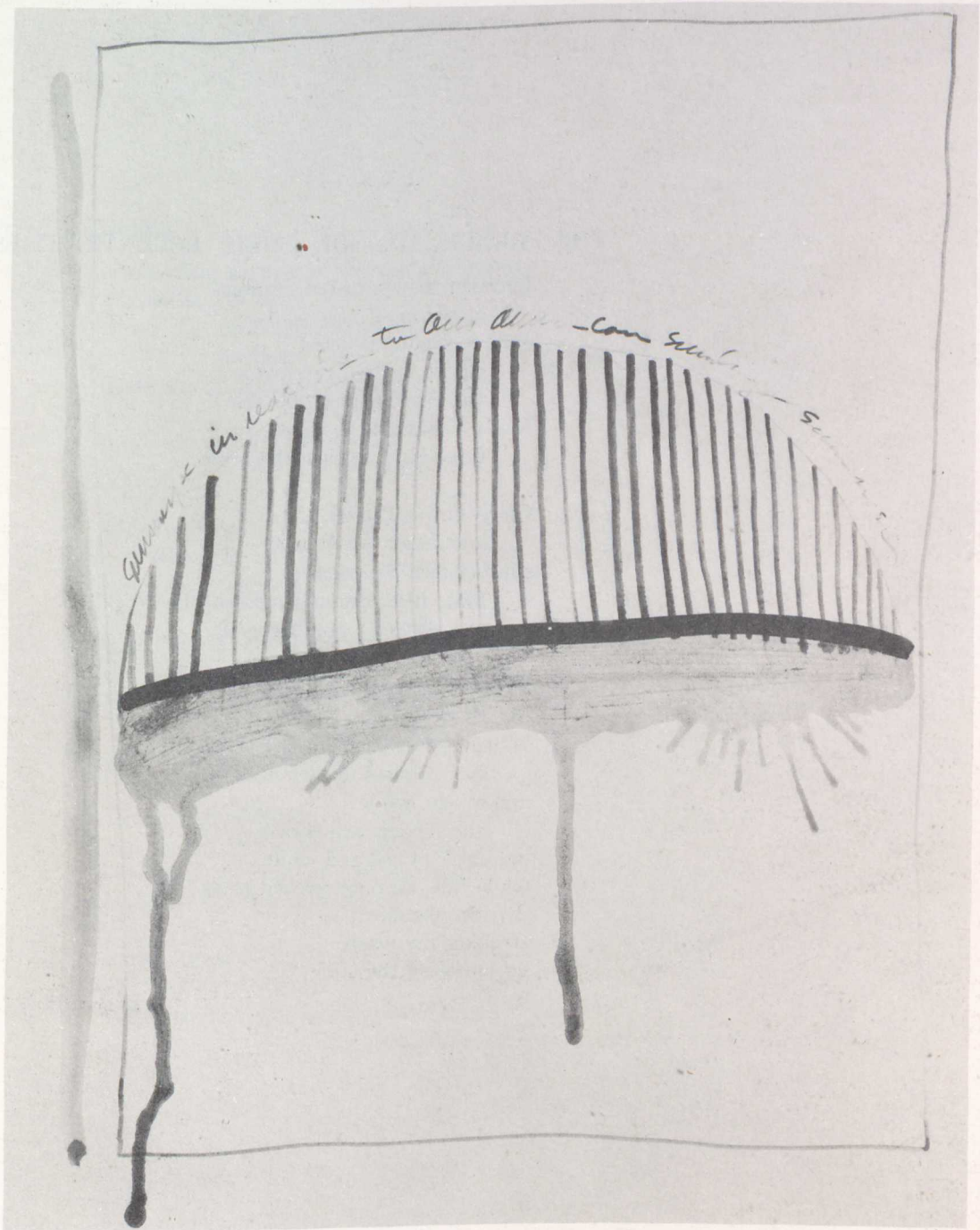
She walked over to the unfinished plywood bar at one corner of the room — a feeble effort at carpentry on Fyodor's part, and mixed herself a Black Russian.

"You know what? I'm going to even make the plot even more interesting. I'm going to tell the socialists what's good for them. I'm going to tell them that their best plans are bound to fail, and I plan to tell them that it would be in their best interests not to tell other people what their best interests are. I shall save the party from itself. Oh, that's a beautiful thought," she purred, caressing the glass.

Fyodor, peaceful and contented, threw his arm across the back of the sofa. He leaned his head back and in a thoughtful manner as if he really didn't much care, said.

"Dear, you really must read my book someday."

"Oh, no, my dear. I just haven't the time. Especially with my new project."



THE FRENCH, 1431: ON THEIR ECCENTRICITIES

Between the mortared crannies
of the ages' vast walls,
guilt creeps undetected
 whose loved greenness
 (a thorn against the skin)
bends abrupt to the ear-twists
 fitted tight against the brain.

Come down, Daniel,
and listen for the cue —
slip between the ashes
that, held chained against the brick,
are slashed upon the wall.

Taste, I pray, the curdled flesh
of noon
Which, envisioned by the lark,
lies helpless on her neck;
and all the while
 the throng will thrash
her cloak of red and white,
while She, an outstretched hand
 droops down —
stroking the wasp,
encouraging the sting.

Bruce Burg



END OF THE ROPE

by *Dennis Dillow*

Sergeant Vincent Pallis was sprawled on his back in a shallow shell pit, paralyzed from neck to feet. A burly lump of a man lying with knees apart, one arm flung out, the other next to his side.

The Allied Command had seriously underestimated the Japanese strength of Minsantu, a strategically located ten square miles of jungle, rock and sand in the upper Ratak Chain of the Marshalls. The reconnaissance photographs had revealed only minor enemy build up. One battalion of American Marines was sent ashore to "wipe up" in preparation of the construction of an important air strip which was to serve as a refueling and layover station for long bombing runs. It was essential to secure Minsantu before the rainy season moved in on the Philippines and bogged things to a standstill.

Within an hour of the battalion's landing, Sergeant Pallis and most of his platoon had reached the middle of Minsantu, encountering very strange light resistance. His orders had been to reconnoiter the prospective air strip sight and hold until further notice. He waved for Wasson, the radioman.

Get Captain Jeffries at the beach, Pallis had told him.

The radioman cranked the generator, repeated the call-code and received no acknowledgement. Again, and no answer from the beach.

Pallis and his two dozen men waited. For thirty minutes. At the base of a limestone ridge, they squatted in the thicket of needle weed and coconut palms, listening to cannon and machine gun fire a mile to the rear.

Sergeant Pallis could not throw off the feeling that his platoon had been allowed their present position through some plan of the enemy's. He and his men had easily "stormed" through equal or superior numbers almost as if the Japanese had been ordered to lay low and let them pass. Pallis looked at his watch, and then a full hundred Japs were swarming over the top of the limestone ridge and charging down behind blazing rifles and wild shouts. Grenades exploding in the needle weed and startled Marines riddled with shrapnel. Pallis frozen in a fit of indecision as he looked to Wasson who was hit in the same instant with a slug slightly below the rim of his helmet. The radioman suspended momentarily on his feet, turning with his eyes rolled up,

turning and collapsing, the back of his head a pulp of shredded red cabbage. Pallis's heart up in his throat, somebody screaming to fall back, fall back, and Pallis's voice saying fall back, and Pallis's feet scudding over the broken ground of the clearing, and Pallis's eyes wide open. His men scattering, running — some helmetless, some rifleless — all running without looking back. Two hundred yards ahead was the jungle. But bearing down on them from behind were the clattering machine guns and cracking rifles. Marines dropping and writhing to the sand at every second. Namura, the Hopi Indian, racing alongside Pallis and a step in front, got hit in the back of the neck, and Pallis could see the flesh and spray of blood burst from Namura's throat, and an impression of the Indian's knees buckling.

It had happened right after Namura went down. The mortar shell exploded. Not more than ten feet behind Pallis. The deafening thunderclap, an avalanche in his ears, his eyes almost starting from their sockets, the dull pressure of the concussion . . .

Sergeant Pallis and two of his men had thrown open the big double doors of the white stucco church on New Caledonia that one time, and had strutted down the carpeted aisle in their muddy boots, whistling the sermon to silence, the congregation of French villagers turning surprised and indignant.

Okay, Mac, Pallis had said to the frail minister in the blue marseilles robe as they neared the pulpit. I'm afraid you're gonna have to cut your bull session a little short today. Our yellow pals from *Japon* are on their way to do a little bombing. You and your people here's gotta clear out. *Tout de suite*. Now. Unless you all want to get blown to hell. Ain't got time to argue, Mac. Just clear 'em out. That's all. You people start moving out. Come on now —

But few knew English, and when Pallis's orders did not take effect, he turned angrily on the frail old man.

Now listen, goddamn you, I know *you* can understand me so start tellin' them to get going.

Then the frail man spoke to the congregation calmly and they were quickly on their feet and shuffling toward the open double doors.

Okay, Shorty, said Sergeant Pallis, you too. Come on, come on, out to the bomb shelter. It's *my* ass if anybody's in here when the bombs hit, so let's hustle it up . . .

Sergeant Pallis felt the heat of the sun on his face. He opened his eyes. To the blinding flash of sunlight. He squinted, turned his face slowly to the left, to the right. He saw that he had been thrown into a circular hole, a shelling hole a ten-inch gun might have blown out, a hole about three feet deep with sloping sides. He tried to sit up and a warm sick pain touched the base of his brain. And he blinked in the sun and blacked out.

When he was six and still the only child in his family, Vince and his parents had lived in a nice neighborhood outside of Huntington, West Virginia. He used to throw green apples at Mrs. Yeager's cocker spaniel, Penny, a rusty colored timid animal which Mrs. Yeager tied to the box elder tree on nice days during the summer, and he would throw lots of green apples and have Penny dodging and skittering in circles around the box elder until she had used up all her chain. When the dog finally ended up helpless and immobile and shivering with her nose to the tree, Vince would get her good then. Thunk! Right in the nose. Oooh, in the ear. Pop! And an apple ricocheted off her head. But when Mrs. Yeager inquired about the apples in her yard and when his mother asked him if he'd been throwing at poor old Penny, he would let his mouth drop open and look from one woman to the other as if he couldn't believe he was being suspected. Not me, he would tell them, but I'll bet it was that darn kid, Donnie Paul Stringer, cause I know he sneaks into our yard and throws apples and then sneaks off home. Tries to make it look like I did it, see. I'll bet it was Donnie Paul Stringer, the rat.

That was a good line for a while. Until his mother caught him throwing one afternoon. She screamed from the door, Vincent Joseph Pallis! She had startled him as he was pulling his arm back to let one fly, and he brought the apple up to his mouth and took a bite. What? he said. To punish him she knotted a length of rope around his wrist and the other end to the wire clothesline. He would run from one end of the clothesline at full speed, mad and baring his teeth, reach the end of his rope and jerk himself down. Up, crying and madder, and run to the other end and jerk himself down.

Sergeant Pallis woke in the dark to the *hoop-hoop* of the roul-roul birds off in the jungle and the screeching of tarsiers and whines of the catlike tangalung as they scabbled in the

underbrush. The night sounds of the rodents, insects and birds, intermeshed shrill and hollow.

He lay quietly on his back with his eyes open and realized for the first time with a shock in his heart that he could move neither his hands, arms, feet or legs, that he was paralyzed from his neck down. It was as if the presence of the rest of body had evacuated to his head and everything below was not attached.

Sergeant Pallis squeezed his eyelids shut, pressed his lips together, and tried to suppress a shudder of panic.

Oh, Je-esus Christ. Goddamn, am I in a mess this time. Jesus. Vinny . . .

He raised his head to look down at himself and a fleeting pain sliced across the nape of his neck and through his skull. He dropped his head back.

Oooh — damn. Now, I gotta keep cool about this thing. No call getting excited and shook. Everything'll work out. Just take it easy, Vinny, sit tight.

Again he tried to move his legs, his arms. Nothing. He blinked and swallowed. His throat was dry and he felt as though he had to cough but he kept breathing and breathing, slowly and automatically, and he knew his heart was beating somewhere down there just as measured and automatic.

He started thinking, eyes open, about what he might do if the Japs found him like this. Play dead? How could he if he couldn't even hold his damn breath? Apparently he hadn't lost much blood — if any — for he didn't feel weak, and if the Japs didn't see a wound or any blood they might take a closer look and —. No. He wouldn't think about it any more. In a day or two at the most the boys would try again and this time there would be more than a damned shore party, by God. This time they would push those yellow gooks right into the Pacific. Yes, in a day or two. They would surely try again. The Japs must have been hiding in caves — probably a whole damn regiment of them hiding in caves, waiting to swarm in on us. They'd let us through and then after they forced Jeffries and the rest of the battalion back, they came down on us.

Pallis saw Wasson, the radioman, shot through the forehead, spinning crazily on his feet. Namura's throat exploding. A blast and hammer of pressure from behind.

That was all over now, though, and the guys would try again soon, but now he wouldn't think about it.

But if some animal came nosing around and smelled him, deciding he was dead. There weren't any lions or tigers. Crocodiles — but they usually stayed out of the hot sun, so they wouldn't bother him. Maybe rats. Oh, Christ, rats. Skinned gray tails sticking out when they walked, pointed faces with those wirey whiskers and eyes like little red beads. My God, those rats get big on these islands. He'd seen them around the latrines on Guadalcanal, two feet long. And stories where twenty or thirty of them would attack supply mules, swarm all over. What the hell was he doing letting his imagination run away like that? Jesus, Vinny, get a hold of yourself. Close your eyes and don't think about it, close your eyes and hold on, honey. Listen to them sweet birds and little monkeys back there in the trees, and think about how it'll be when you're fixed up and walking again. Swimming and tom-cattin'. Shootin' the breeze with the boys back home at Scutty's over a beer or two, telling them how it was . . .

Vince's brother, Lonnie, was only four or five then, and he himself was almost thirteen when his dad had shown them where he used to swim when he was a boy. They drove down to Mill Creek in the '23 pickup. Had to blaze a path through what seemed a hundred miles of briars and smartweed and sticktights. Climb over rusted barbed wire fences. Their dad said the barbed wire was to keep the cattle from stumbling into the gulleys and washes, that if a cow ever got down into a gully she couldn't get out by herself. When they got to the muddy swimming hole, Vince and his brother stripped down to their briefs and waded out a few feet as their dad sat on a stump and smoked a cigarette and looked into the woods like he was trying to remember something. But Vince could go further out than his brother who was just a little short kid then, and the brown water was up to Lonnie's armpits when he took one more step and went down into a hole and disappeared. Under that brown water. There were a few bubbles, little ones, at first, then a big blubbing one. Vince stood there in the creek with the water up around his waist, watching the bubbles boiling and bursting on the surface. Then his dad was bounding down into the water with his shoes and clothes and everything on, right into the water and he reached down below the bubbles and jerked Lonnie

up by one arm. Pulled him up and slogged heavily back to the bank where his big hand was slapping the tiny boy on the back. Knocking the water right out of him, and Lonnie coughing and sputtering and his eyelashes stuck together and water running out of his nose, coughing and wheezing for a long time, while Vince stood there in the creek with the water up to his waist, trying to hold back the laughter. Their dad didn't even get mad about having ruined his shoes.

When Sergeant Pallis woke, the sun was already even with the rim of the shell pit. His eyelids were so puffed with mosquito bites that he could only manage to peer through thin slits. He moved his head to the right and was able to see the top of the limestone ridge; to the left was sky and the morning sun, and if he raised his head he saw the top of his chest and the toes of his boots.

What a bitch of a fix you have yourself in this time, Vincent.

His throat was so dry it ached and his tongue felt thick, almost as if he had been drunk on whiskey when his tongue had a mind of its own and got in the way when he talked. He swallowed the sticky spit in his mouth and licked his lips, looked again to the limestone ridge, expecting to see the boys come over it any minute.

Lips parted, eyes closed, sweat trickling down his temples into his black curly hair, Sergeant Pallis thought about the woman in the A.&P. parking lot in the middle of July with her two grocery sacks overfilled and a carton of eggs ripping out and crashing down to the cement where two eggs rolled from the split carton and broke open and fried themselves on that hot cement parking lot sunny-side-up. Or did they? And he knew that if a dog ever got the taste of raw eggs and started raiding the chicken coop and sucking eggs you'd just as well shoot him because he could never be broke. Or if your retriever suddenly became gun shy you would have to ditch him in the country or knock him in the head because he would never be any good for hunting, bolting at every shot with his tail tucked up between his legs. And he realized how peculiar it was that all young animals could swim without being taught, right off by instinct, they'd just start paddling with their noses out of the water, swimming around without being taught, and it was so damned strange because if you ever threw a *human* baby into the drink he would drown sure as hell.

His throat was very tight and his breath came in regular, even rasps. Sergeant Pallis blinked his pink rimmed eyes in the white sun as pearls of sweat ran down into them.

You're as helpless as a baby, Vinny. You get out of this one with your ass and you'll be one lucky fella. Man, a nice cool beer wouldn't be bad at all right now. Or a nice cool dip in the pool. Oh, honey, to be sittin' back in Scuttie's, the big fan blowin' from behind the bar, sipping on an ice-cold Bud, listenin' to Benny on the radio. Not a worry in the world, lettin' that old Bud soak in so smooth, ah: Swimming free-style around in the pool at the Rancho, eyeing those broads all stretched out on those reclining lawn chairs and under those red and white striped umbrellas, me swimming the backstroke and slicing through the blue pool water without a splash. And later, on the Fourth, the fireworks in the park and the bursting turquoise and gold and bright green high in the cool sky and stars. Sitting on the porch of the old grade school, me and Lonnie, talking about his two kids, listening to the popping of the fireworks . . .

The second invasion of Minsantu had begun early in the morning and Sergeant Pallis could hear the distant explosions that rumbled and echoed through the heavy air like thunder. The Navy was shelling the island before the forces hit the beach.

Sit tight, Vince, baby! You're almost home. Hotdamn, I knew it. Just a matter of time before them guys came back. This time they'll be ten thousand strong for sure.

He watched several squads of Japanese soldiers dig in at the top of the ridge in anticipation of the oncoming Americans. They dug in among the palms and brush, jabbering to one another.

Clouds had moved in from the east slowly, a big bank of thick grey heavy clouds, moving high in the blue sky toward the limestone ridge. By noon, several hours into the battle, Sergeant Pallis knew it wouldn't be long now for he could hear the rifle and machine gun fire quite distinctly as the GI's pushed closer and closer to the middle of the island. Pallis smiled.

I'm laying right in the middle of what'll be that damned air strip. Maybe they'll mark this spot with a plaque after the field's all asphalted and lighted. To Sergeant Vincent J. Pallis, Company A, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, who for several days endured the rigors of tropical . . .

He viewed the battle of the ridge while a light, cool, invigorating rain fell from the grey sky. Tiny droplets of water misted in the stubble of his three-day old beard and dampened his cracked lips as a smile played across them.

Can see them crisp clean sheets and sexy little nurses now. Better take a good look around so you'll remember what it all looked like. You'll wanna have it all down pat so you can tell all them dudes from the press. All your old buddies, how you laid there temporarily paralyzed, baking like a potato for three days — no, for a week, rats chewing on your toes, bugs in your nose and Japs spitting on you. They'll want to know it all.

By evening the Japanese soldiers on the limestone ridge had fallen back and were racing for the jungle where they would have to be rooted out and shot like rats in a hayrack, probably during the next couple days. Sergeant Pallis watched with narrowed eyes and tense jaws as they ran by him kicking sand.

Run, you bastards, you —

One shirtless soldier stumbled near the shell pit and went down to his hands and knees, glared for an instant down at the prostrate American, then regained his feet and was off running again.

An hour later as darkness was closing over the island, a young Marine private was walking wairly with ten or twelve other Marines toward the perimeter of the jungle, making sure the Japs had all retreated there so they could be dealt with later. Private Harris stopped short of the shell pit and stared down at the man. Lying with knees apart, one arm flung out, the other next to his side.

"Hey, Collins," said Private Harris to a second private. "Look, a sergeant."

"He dead?"

The two men peered down at Pallis for a few seconds and Harris got to his knees for a closer look and saw through the drizzling mist and darkness that the man on his back was sporting a wide grin.

"He's alive! Hey, serg, how's it going? Are you hurt? Where are you hurt?"

Pallis screwed up his face and winked at the young Marine. The sergeant moved his lips to the words, I can't talk. I'm paralyzed.

"I think he's paralyzed," Harris said to Collins.

"Better not try moving him then. His back might be broken or something. Come on, the squads starting to move back for the night. We don't want to be left behind for snipers."

"Listen, serg," Harris said, unscrewing the lid of his canteen and tripping the silver can to the injured man's lips. "We'll be back tomorrow morning with a medic and a stretcher to carry you out of here. We'd better leave you like you are until a doc can take a look at you, but first thing tomorrow, okay? You be all right?"

"Come on, man," said Collins. "We're gonna get left behind. Them Japs could be drawing a bead on us right now."

"You be okay, sergeant?" asked Harris, looking into Pallis's eyes.

Pallis winked, smiled, nodded.

The two young Marines disappeared into the darkness and Pallis could hear their footfalls in the wet sand.

Thank God for that. Just a little faith, man, 's all it takes. A little faith in yourself. Ah, that rain feels great. Ten days roasting in the sun, tortured by the Japs as they flicked cigarette butts down on my face and those damned rats chewing away at my ear lobes, I tell you, boys, it was quite an experience.

While Sergeant Pallis was smiling and thinking about how he was going to tell it to the reporters from *Life* and *Saturday Evening Post*, the rain started coming down in sheets, beating low the yellow ferns and jungle undergrowth and drumming against Pallis's body so that he had to close his eyes against it. And the rain was splashing around him, and the water in the hole was up around his cheeks before he realized exactly what was hapening.

It rained all night and all day the next day.

The concepts of the old man with many legs,
revolving like the wheels of walking sticks
and the air where DeKalb is born on Sundays
in the middle of rain and obsolescence
after the pilgrimage of cream cheese
and chaos, have the seeds
of no books and

intelligent arthritis.

Martin Addis

It was the hot, damp night
in a ho-hum town
when Jim and Marge had company for bridge
that a soul was scared
from its hiding place
by a piece of steel
and got lost in the night
and couldn't come back
because God forgot to plug the stars in.
Wet clay on the morning pavement
and an empty wallet.

A. L. Fulton



THIS MORNING: JOHN IDRIS JONES

I thought of your melody
spoken many worlds ago.
Spring in an alien country for you
was reflected in eyes of gray blue oceans
and heathered hills.

The last snow whined
into whisps across sidewalks.
Your smiled words
curled in the cold air.

A blue-green Welsh life
was created in midwest whiteness
as Dylan Thomas
spoke
for your loneliness and
aging meter of broken images.

Your heather life is
remembered this morning.
Perhaps, John Idris Jones, time has left us
something of your song.

Pauline Ford

BLOOD IN THE DUST

I.

The priest crows
wire-sitter
bursts and floats,
gravel settles
through hot scented waves
to pick last rites
for the tire-tracked
road meat.

There is blood
in the dust.

A car,
feather thump,
and a mutilated
priest:

There is blood
in the dust.

II.

In the country
cemetery off a
coughing dust road,
(There is blood
in the dust.)

In the noon sun
funeral scent
of mourning farmers and stone,

A crow priest caws,
"ashes to ashes,
dust to dust . . ."

But caws for neither
the ashes,
nor the dust,

But for the tears
of the farmers,

And the blood
in the dust.

Robert Gundelach

smiling tears and apple cider sauce
all around elvira wishy-wash laughing at the moon
dogfaced pirates
oh for the jolly roger — oh
away, away in a childhood balloon
warm, spinning sun
faster, freer, new
diamonds sparkle, turn and blink
black white black white orange
and purple lime glowing away and up
up high down low
circle somewhere —
stars and grabbing hands
all fall down.

Julia Cannell



Health is the crown
on the servant's head
and the king
is sick with power
and all of us kids
raised on Humpty's pieces
better get our heads together.
the wall is falling.

Dale Royalty

AWAKENING:

Young-mouthed baby
vestal child —
was it the dandelion
seed of some wanton
wanderer
who planted you,
wailing,
inside of her,
the springtime
virgin?
Sunday's child —
she waits on you
to hold you like
a tiny buttercup
beneath her naked
chin.

Little bud of hope —
harvest of love's
first triumph
sown in sorrow,
reaped in joy
flesh from flesh
so quietly new.
She waits on you
to look into your eyes
searching the fresh
green stem, the
deceptive blossom
of the flowering
dandelion.

Lynn Edgar



**“MAN PLEADS INNOCENT IN ATTEMPTED RAPE
LATE SAT. NIGHT ON HIGHWAY 45 — CLAIMS
HE IS INCUBUS — MISTOOK PLAINTIFF
FOR WITCH.”**

Morning mist and mown hay
And warmth wrapped me,
Incubus that I was
I sucked it up
Gluttonously
The headlights dipping into it
Piercing the puffs of white
That circled, hovering.
A climax of gauzes
Weaving in dips and hollows
Lingering in shadows
Canopied by trees.

And the swish of the car
Whipping the air
Entering the swirls
Fingering the stillness of 2 a.m.
The red rime of morning
Scratching the horizon
Desiring the day
And hating the half-baked moon
That all too soon would bemoan
Itself, drifting and alone
Consumed by clouds
As now the mist absorbs me
Incubus that I am.

Olivia Diamond

"I came at night like a broken king"

the villages where there are the young
and where the innocent sit in corners
at night with crickets and with themselves
and solitary people are in great demand
behind the kitchen stove and in the cellar
and the sheep are all alike
lonely for *real* shepherds
and music is only heard
under cornfield and day to day thinking —

"I remember a crown once."

Martin Addis

AT THE END OF TIME

Streaks of lightning
scratching across the clouds . . .
like Satan's fingers
frantic!!
on the smouldering door from hell
at the end of time.

Gary O. Holland



KITES

One day in the park I saw
Babies flying in the air
By umbilical cords
Slackened and jerked by
Parents running across a field
Pink and brown, yellow and red
Against the blue-white spotted sky
Like children they shout
"Mine's better see how high
High in the sky it flies . . ."

Suddenly the cords snap
Babies fly wildly away
Holding hands with eyes aiming
Beyond the sky.

Don Fink

THE SYNDROME

Spiders
Spin intricate webs of guilt
In my mind.
Dust settles
And my thoughts roam
Blindly
In search of people past knowing.
Groping amidst sticky ruins
Their horror turns to anger
But even this leaves spiders unimpressed.

Sharon Skala

PRACTICE TEACHING: CIRCLES AND SQUARES

The round sun rises
from atop my box I submerge
and scissor from my box
to brief freedom beneath sky whales

Enter box and release young minds
to discover and create
while I guide and innovate
to scissor back in freedom's joy
into my square with oblong door
(no box on wheels contains me, yet)

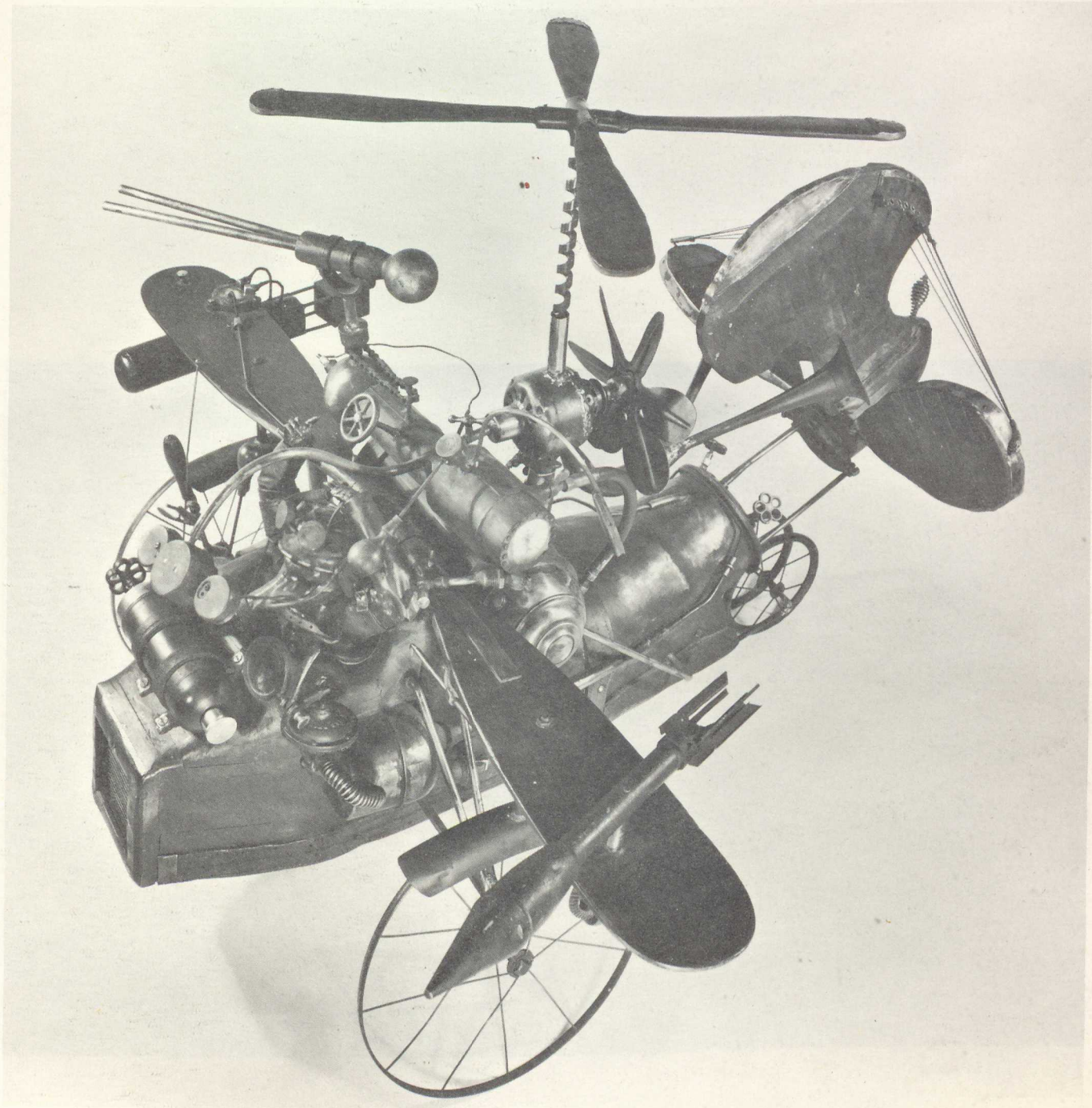
Rebel for freedom
scissors into the square with oblong door
to nourish my body
to oblong cover that feeds my mind
and frees my soul.

employ: release

and sleep till round sun rises
continuing till the oblong box
contains my sleep forever

while round sun rises.

Olive Chitty





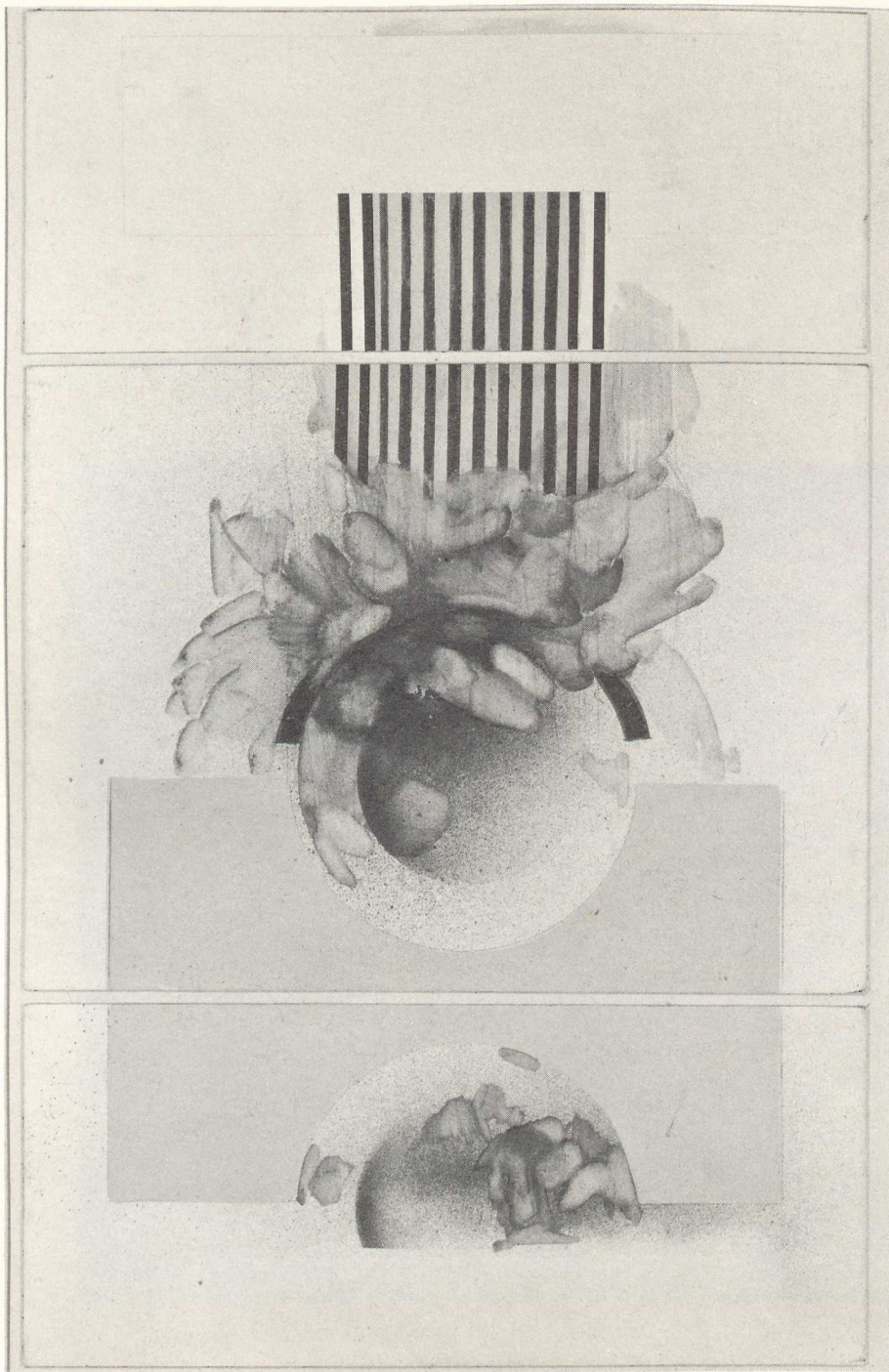
NUAGES

Violoncello sighs.
Murmurs of promises
Sweetly indiscreet,
Gentle billowing,
Breathless, fragile
Passion.

Shimmering veils
Dimly floating
Out of reach.
Weightless between
Fleeting fingers
Filmy
Through quiet gazes.

Whole-tones, silhouettes
The sleepy pulse,
The measured step
Pianissimo.

John Vranicar



IRVING, JAMES AND "THE BIRTHPLACE":

A LITERARY DEBT?

by Timothy E. Hunt

It is best to be conservative when it comes to the questions of source studies. Too often critics have been duped by similarities which are more archetypal than specific. We are infinitely more comfortable when literary debts can be conclusively proved by an author's admissions or by some obviously remaining hint to a source which an author may leave within a finished work. At times, though, internal evidence is all that is left us and the mere fact that such evidence is less reliable than actual notation by a creative artist is no reason critics should ignore it. To be sure, such internal debts often give us clues as to an author's attitudes toward a predecessor. Internal evidence is all that we have to help us in Henry James's "The Birthplace" and yet it is almost conclusive; for James was developing a theme which Washington Irving introduced years earlier in "Stratford-on-Avon" from *The Sketch Book*. To suggest that James was not aware of his borrowings from Irving is to argue against all the circumstantial evidence which we have at hand as I shall show later in this paper.

There are obvious similarities between the two accounts which should be mentioned but which we shall not dwell upon. First, both Irving and James used "the birthplace" to denote Shakespeare's earliest home. Secondly, neither author was content with second-hand information about Stratford-on-Avon and each visited the home and took the customary tours. Neither of these similarities is very significant, however, since many Americans went to England in the nineteenth century and since many tourists called the attraction "the birthplace"; in the context of the 1800's, there was apparently little need to be more specific in terminology and there is no evidence that anyone misunderstood the more cryptic James who never even mentioned Shakespeare by name.

More importantly, James and Irving perceived the handling of tours, tourists, and lecture material in remarkably similar ways. We recall James's very sympathetic treatment of Morris Gedge's attempt to be honest to "them", the tourists. Gedge at first tried to relate only the well-substantiated facts about Shakespeare's birth and early years. His attitude was at first contrary to the tendencies of his wife and of Miss Putchin,

both of whom wove mysterious stories about the poet, stories which were seldom based in fact but which were always received favorably by the fact-seeking tourists. Morris lectured on reliable but dry, honest but not artistic principles. James built the entire story around Gedge's transformation from a reluctant tour leader, preoccupied with veracity, to a great artist, a man whose creative talents are enhanced, not obliterated, by a mundane employment. Gedge eventually learned the same lesson as did the artist in James's "The Real Thing", that the great artist is in some measure not at all an honest man.

Gedge, we recall, came to realize that his honesty was costing him dearly; Grant-Jackson considers firing him. But Gedge cannot risk his wife's starvation and comes to relinquish his claims on honesty in favor of the demands of a pseudo-fact-seeking society. It may at first seem that Henry James had to modify his own conception of art, which leaned heavily toward realism, in order to accommodate Morris Gedge's inaccuracies about Shakespeare's biography. But in a larger sense, Gedge retained all the qualities which James admired in art. James has Gedge say, "The look of it [truth] . . . is what I give".¹

Washington Irving, a romantic, expressed essentially the same attitudes as James toward the obviously unsubstantiated facts presented in the tours which he took. He wrote, concerning Shakespeare's chair, one of the least authentic relics in "the birthplace", the following:

I am always of easy faith in such matters and am very willing to be deceived where the deceit is pleasant and costs nothing. I am therefore a ready believer in relics, legends, and local anecdotes of goblins and great men; and would advise all travellers who travel for their gratification to be the same. What is it to us whether these stories be true or false so long as we can persuade ourselves into the belief of them and enjoy all the charm of the reality? There is nothing like resolute good humored credulity in these matters; and on this occasion I went even so far as willingly to believe the claims of mine hostess to a lineal descent from the poet.²

Irving, then, was willing to believe the half-truths which Morris Gedge-like guides are prone to offer as fact. His

guide happened to be a "garrulous old lady, in a frosty red face, lighted by a cold blue anxious eye and garnished with artificial locks of hair, curling from under an exceedingly dirty cap".³ Irving's "garrulous old lady", I would submit, could easily have been the Miss Putchin James invented.

For although the physical descriptions of the two female guides do not match well, as we would expect, their styles are unmistakably the same. Gedge's first knowledge of Miss Putchin, whom he later thought of as "the black silk lady" and "the priestess in black silk", was that she had "found, though extremely mature, an opportunity for marriage." Although not as old as Irving's guide, Miss Putchin, James leads us to believe, would have wasted away at "the birthplace" had this engagement not been offered her.

There is a profound irony implicit in Miss Putchin; supposedly an expert on the greatest English writer, she makes a serious grammatical error which Mrs. Gedge immediately notices. Her "me and mother" forces James's readers to feel that Miss Putchin's position as guide, black silk uniform of authority, and pseudo-knowledge of Shakespeare, are as artificial as the "locks of hair" which Irving describes in connection with his guide. In addition, Miss Putchin is every bit as garrulous as Irving's guide, but in a more refined way. Irving's guide through "the birthplace" and Miss Putchin, James's invention, are thus inseparably allied not only by their positions but also by their inner characteristics and styles.

There are several other very important similarities between the two literary pieces in addition to the descriptions of the guides and of the tours. While wandering about Stratford-on-Avon, Irving becomes enthralled with the landscape and with the buildings which Shakespeare had seen two centuries earlier. Irving wrote, "There are other monuments around, but the mind refuses to dwell on anything that is not connected with Shakespeare. His idea pervades the place . . . The feelings, no longer thwarted by doubt, here indulge in perfect confidence."⁴ Gedge sought, we recall, this same spirit, "the Presence", as he called it, which Irving claims he found. James writes about Gedge's early days at the shrine:

He could scarce go to bed at night and even during the first week rose more than once in the small hours to move about, up and down, with his lamp

—standing, sitting, listening, wondering, in the stillness, as if positively to recover some echo, to surprise some secret, of the *genius loci*. He couldn't have explained it — and didn't in fact need to explain it, at least to himself, since the impulse held him and shook him; but the time after closing, the time above all after the people — Them, as he felt himself on the way to habitually put it, predominant, insistent, all in the foreground — brought him, he seemed to see, nearer to the enshrined Presence, enlarging the opportunity for communion and intensifying the sense of it.⁵

Had Gedge found "the Presence", James would have had to change his story radically. Gedge never does find the spirit and actually says, "My prowls . . . are what I most enjoy. They're the only time, as I've told you before, that I'm really with him. Then I don't see the place. He isn't the place."⁶ Gedge indicates, then, that to find the spirit is to overcome the dictates and impressions of "the birthplace". That is, the spirit of Shakespeare might be found anywhere in the world. Irving and Gedge both searched for the same spirit, each at first assuming that it must be at "the birthplace". In effect, the two come to the same conclusion, that the spirit is at "the birthplace" only if one thinks it is; the only major difference between the two perceptions of reality is that Irving seems more cognizant of the paradox than does the simple-minded Gedge.

Even more important than such similarities is the view taken by both Irving and James of the manner in which the memory of a deceased, great literary artist should be kept alive. Gedge, before his transformation, expresses his idea of how the memory should be treated:

"That's just what They won't do — nor let me do. It's all I want — to let the author alone. Practically." — He felt himself getting the last of his chance — "there is no author; that is for us to deal with. There are all the immortal people — *in the work*; but there's nobody else."⁷

What Gedge here states is perhaps the essence of the New Criticism, that we should discuss writing as it stands, without consulting such externals as biography, history, and psychology. Eventually Gedge rejects his own view, however, and comes to understand that Shakespeare's biography, if

handled artistically, can "renew so the interest" in the artist. Gedge finds that truth may not be the only standard of evaluation for people of his calling. He finds that an artistic handling of the memory of Shakespeare can create another artist, the tour guide himself.

Irving, of course, did not develop his theme as fully as did James. James explored the psychological balance of each character in "The Birthplace" as part of his fundamental purpose. Irving's writing, on the other hand, is merely a light impressionism. The point is that Irving, and what else could we expect from the author of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow", is willing to accept as valid a guided tour which freely combines fact and fiction, a tour which is at the very heart of Morris Gedge's transformation. This is to be expected, as I have suggested, since the nature of Irving's art, the romantic mixture of fact and fiction, was identical to the nature of Gedge's art. Morris Gedge is a Washington Irving of England and James must have known this and understood it; James further suggests the similarity by reporting that Gedge's fame had spread beyond the ocean, just as Irving's had.

James, though himself a realist, writes this story about a romantic, an artist, Morris Gedge. James seems to have identified many Irving-like qualities with the artists about whom he wrote; this theory is demonstrated in many of the stories concerning the artist and society.

We thus arrive at the final question; is a specific literary debt to Irving thus implied? We know that Henry James met Irving while very young. As he grew up, he was exposed to many close friends and sympathetic critics of Irving. Although there seems to be no absolute proof that James read *The Sketch Book*, Irving was one of James's favorite authors and it seems very unlikely that this famous volume was omitted from his reading list. We must then recall James's writings on style in which he stated that a story originates from a "windblown particle". There is no reason why the "windblown particle" which was the basis for "The Birthplace" could not have been Irving's account.

But James's specific and literal debt to Irving is not nearly so important as the less measurable debt, the sowing of literary fields by Irving. James often complained of a lack of tradition which made writing so very difficult in America. Without Irving, the romantic, to change the stereotyped ideas

about literature in America, James might have been thwarted even more often than he claimed he was. Without Irving to show that veracity in a tour guide was perhaps not the only criterion to be used in the evaluation of such people, James might have been coldly received when he wrote of his own tour guide, Morris Gedge. Without Irving's work, James's entire collection of stories and novels about the international theme might have been lost to us. James surely understood this and it is perhaps possible that "The Birthplace" is a tacit monument to the memory of Irving.

This study demonstrates once again the tendencies of literature to overlap literary distinctions. In this paper I have explored a literary debt of Henry James to Washington Irving in order to show that American literature, at least these two pieces of important American literature, is tightly interrelated and defies pigeon-holing. Perhaps James was a psychological realist and Washington Irving a romantic; nevertheless they held similar beliefs in their interpretations of what was happening at "the birthplace", and handled these beliefs in remarkably similar ways. There is here implied not merely the debt of one American realist to one American romantic, but a debt of one literary movement to another, a debt which has previously gone unnoticed.

NOTES

¹Henry James, "The Birthplace," *The New York Edition of Henry James* (New York, 1909), p. 206.

²Washington Irving, "Stratford-on-Avon," *The Sketch Book* (New York, n. d.), p. 196.

³*Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁴Irving, p. 199.

⁵James, p. 151.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 180.



