

OWERS



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Tom Bojeski: 1946-1974

The poem by Tom Bojeski on the facing page originally appeared in the Spring, 1967 issue of Towers Magazine.

## The Idiot

The images of this brown room are lost  
To us. The table, carven oak, is full  
Of flowers. Light is the cold tone of frost  
Beating around the room. The mirror, tall

As late sunflowers, shows the curtained bed  
And pitcher, nothing more remarkable  
Than sunlight. In the wicker chair outside  
The room, the boy whose skull is small

As noon light on the shrinking beach  
Regards the waves with placid eyes. The poem  
Of the half eaten orange just out of reach  
Scrapes like a cricket. Shadows fill the room,

Light veins the broken orange at his feet.  
Waves push against his eyelids. In the thick  
Of noon, past swans, the ever present heat  
Of flame and flesh must meet, uncoil, and break.

The sandcrab, fiddling on the empty shore,  
Is part of the dry landscape of his head  
Where nothing moves but sunlight in a clear  
Image of morning. Junebug mount and ride

The warm lake wind, the thick catalpa tree  
Spreads branches overhead. His fingers reach  
And touch the fallen orange. Suddenly  
A ferryboat is crossing the blue stretch

Of lake: the room is full of images,  
The orange is eaten. Now a thin boy leans  
Into straw colored summerlight and sees  
The subtle fire of the coupled swans.

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By Jane Trucksis

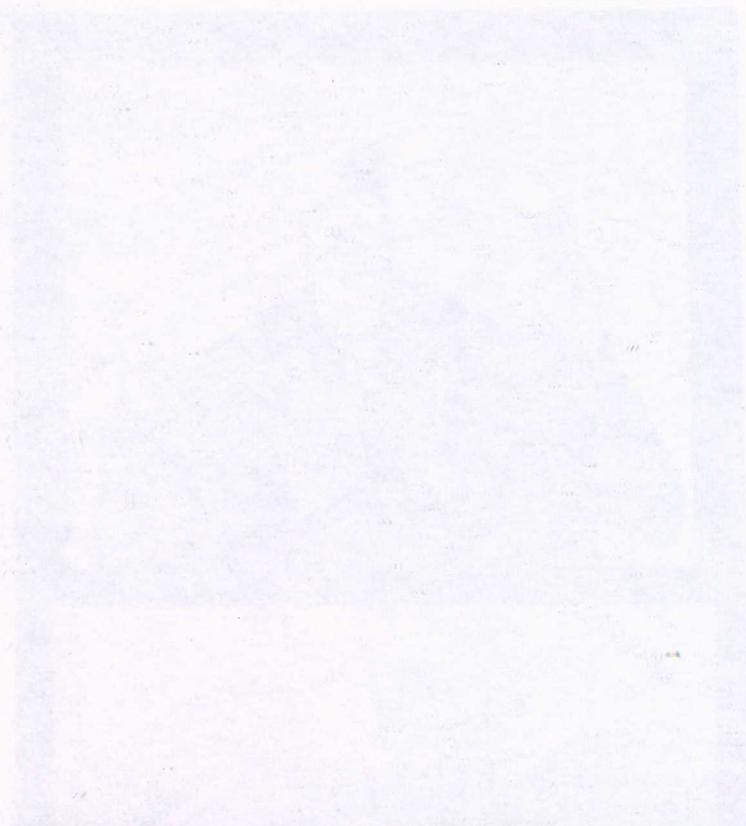
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On my honor,  
I will do my best,  
To do my duty  
to God and country  
and to obey the scout law  
To Help other people  
at all times. To keep  
myself physically strong,  
mentally awake +  
morally straight.

Illustration

Randy Capp



Photograph

William Takatsuki

## Drought

He--staring out across the wasted land, motionless:

"Beth, if only it'd rain, I swear,  
it'd water my very soul."

She--hands plunged deep in harsh waters:

"The dragons come down from the hills,  
great mounds crawling in the moonlight,  
come to drink the waters,  
black and vile,  
from the holes along the creek bed."

He leans his chair against the wall,

"Never saw it this hot!"

She stands before the blazing oven:

"They crawl behind my eyes,  
suck the fluids hidden there,  
in recesses too evil for the light of day."

He stretches his feet across the galley,

"Sure hope it rains."

"The evening sun is blood red,

as big as the sky.

See the great flocks cawing menace,  
sail huge and black across its face."

Only his staccato snores answer.

Standing in the cool musk-scented glade,  
arms raised in praise as the faded, red muslin cloth  
slips like a million claws down her body,  
a livid puddle at her feet.

"Beth!"

Startled, staring into the encircling gloom,  
hearing only the plunging rush of dragons  
in the creek bed.

## Prism Reflection:

### *Baudelaire Through Four Pairs of Eyes*

By Jane Trucksis

Vital heat often cools down in translations: When a translator can render the vital heat of the original, then his translation should be consummate . . . I have always tried to put some of my life-blood into my Translations.<sup>1</sup>

Arthur Symons, who has translated the works of Baudelaire and other French poets into English, here identifies both the goal and the difficulty of translation. Poetry — a literary form more subjective, and, at the same time, more structured than prose — is particularly challenging to the translator. "Rendering the vital heat" implies submission to the poet's intentions on the part of the translator, but often, in order to retain the mood and pace of the original, the translator must revise vocabulary, phrasing, and poetic form. (This sometimes results in a translation all but unrecognizable when compared to the original work.) And then, the translator being just as much a stylistic artist as the poet, his personal interpretation of the poem will be reflected in the elements he stresses and those he omits. The power of the translator is immense. His inclinations and judgments may determine a nation's impression of the poet whose works he translates. And whether the translator aims for nothing more than a literal transcription of verse, or attempts to create a new work of art based on an original, his passions are usually rather apparent.

#### Meditation

Be wise, O my Sorrow, be calmer.	9
You implored the evening; it falls; here it is:	11
A dusky air surrounds the town,	8
Bringing peace to some, worry to others.	10
Whilst the worthless crowd of humanity,	10
Lashed by Pleasure, that merciless torturer,	11
Go to gather* in slavish rejoicing, *( <i>"gather remorse in . . ."</i> )	12
Give me your hand, my Sorrow; come with me,	10
Far from them. See the dead years leaning,	9
In worn-out clothing, on the balconies of the skies;	13
See how Regret, grinning, rises from the deep waters;	13
The dying sun goes to sleep in an archway,	11
And, like a long shroud dragging from the East,	10
Hear, O my dear one, hear the soft night coming. <sup>2</sup>	11

—translated by Geoffrey Wagner

Original		Meditation	
A	A	Calm down, my Sorrow, we must movē with care.	10
B	B	You called for evening; it descends; it's here.	10
A	B	The town is confined in its atmosphere,	10
B	A	bringing relief to some, to others care.	10
A	A	Now while the common multitude strips bare,	10
B	C	feels pleasure's cat o' nine tails on its back,	10
A	A	and fights off anguish at the great bazaar,	10
B	C	give me your hand, my Sorrow. Let's stand back;	10
C	D	back from these people! Look, the dead years dressed	10
C	E	in old clothes crowd the balconies of the sky.	11
D	F	Regret emerges smiling from the sea,	10
E	G	the sick sun slumbers underneath an arch,	10
D	D	and like a shroud strung out from east to west,	10
E	G	listen, my Dearest, hear the sweet night march! <sup>3</sup>	10

—translated by Robert Lowell

As an example of these two goals in translation, the versions of Charles Baudelaire's "Recueillement" by Geoffrey Wagner and by Robert Lowell can be contrasted. Wagner's translation is the more literal, and Lowell's the more innovative version. To begin with an assessment of form, the original can be summarized as a sonnet with a definite rhyme scheme and lines of twelve syllables each. This twelve-syllable line — the alexandrine — is one of the most common rhythmic forms in French poetry. Interestingly, Lowell maintains a strict rhythm, but he gives each line only ten syllables. Such a change in form is also a step toward anglicizing the poem: iambic pentameter is more common in English poetry than the alexandrine. Wagner, on the other hand, doesn't exploit rhythm for its effect on the character of the poem. He merely adheres as closely as possible to the rhythm of the original. The rhythm he achieves is imperfect and loose, and makes no statement in itself.

In the same way, Wagner abandons rhyme, and concentrates entirely on the clear transmission of idea through word-for-word literal translation. The rhyme scheme around which Lowell organizes the poem is as elaborate as Baudelaire's (indicated to the left of Lowell's rhyme scheme), but far from identical to it. Still, the sound of the original remains, because the arrangement of the rhymes within the quatrains and tercets follow common patterns in French poetry. The first quatrain, for example, is in "rime embrassee" (ABBA — the A's "embrace" the B's), and the second is an example of "rime croisee" (ABAB — the A's and B's alternate, or "cross"). If the rhyme scheme of the sonnet is intended to produce a certain mood, Lowell's rhyme in his translation effectively achieves it.

It is in word choice, however, that various translations differ most greatly, and in which the orientations of the translators become most obvious. The first remarkable contrast in translations is seen in stanza one, line two. Wagner uses the more formal "implored" where Lowell's "Sorrow . . . /called for evening." It may be that Wagner was simply approximating the French "implorait" rather than attempting a formal tone by his word scheme. If Lowell's word choice is consistently more modern, it could be attributed to the fact that his translations were done in 1958, whereas Wagner's date back to 1946. But in the next phrase, the pattern is reversed, and Lowell uses the more formal and literal "descends," while Wagner chooses the more casual "falls." I can think of no explanation of this seeming contradiction but the unpredictable preferences of the translators.

The third line of the first stanza in the original ("Une atmosphere obscure enveloppe la ville") is beautifully evocative of mood in French, but difficult to convey in English. The flattest translation possible — "An obscure atmosphere envelops the city" — shows how Wagner and Lowell tried to recapture the mood that is lost in translation. Wagner's "A dusky air surrounds the town" is only slightly less banal. But Lowell's rendering of the line is almost perfect in the mood it establishes, while retaining much of the original vocabulary. His use of "coffined" as an adjective is even more effective in clarifying tone than Baudelaire's "enveloppe". And as it foreshadows the death imagery in the last stanza, it becomes even more appropriate. Lowell's ability to "render the vital heat" may be due to an affinity he feels with Baudelaire, but, since I am only slightly familiar with Lowell's poetry, this is merely conjecture.

Again, in the second stanza, Lowell demonstrates how a wide departure from the original can sharpen the image in the translation. Wagner's translation is literally accurate, phrase by phrase, but what he says in three lines is imparted in two in Lowell's translation. Lowell presents a definite image of masochism by adding the metaphor, (the) "multitude strips bare/feels pleasure's cat o' nine tails on its back." The image is entirely Lowell's, but though less true to the original, it conveys the idea of masochism that Baudelaire only hinted at. The third line of Wagner's translation — "Go to gather remorse in slavish rejoicing" — suggests it, but with considerably less force and effectiveness. Lowell's talent of improving abstract metaphor by applying clear image makes creative, original works of his translations.

Word choice is the only significant differentiating factor between the translations of the tercets. In stanza three, line three, Wagner has Regret rise "grinning . . . from the deep water." Lowell's Regret, however, emerges "smiling from the sea." Neither diverges greatly from the original, but the slight difference reveals the concerns of the translators. Wagner seems more interested here in descriptive adjectives as a means of creating image and intimating mood. A grin is more specific than a smile, and deep water describes the sea. Lowell's use of less colorful words may be an attempt to suggest the insidious quiet with which "Regret emerges," but a simpler interpretation would be that he is stressing the sibilance of the alliterated s's. (Sounds of letters can evoke mood, also.) Since he continues with the s alliteration in stanza four, line one — "The sick sun slumbers" — this remains the most plausible explanation. And yet, despite Wagner's clumsy translation of "The dying sun goes to sleep," its very straightforward simplicity heightens its power to evoke mood. Baudelaire

frequently uses the expression "goes to sleep" in his poetry, and it suggests gradual, but certain death better than "slumbers," which lacks the implication of irreversibility. The last line of the poem differs considerably between translations. Surprisingly, it is Wagner who uses a sound device this time: his "*Hear, O my dear one, hear*" is more rhythmic and assonant than Lowell's "Listen, my Dearest, hear." Lowell does use the word "march," though, as a translation of the French "marche" ("to walk"), for its sound value. The English connotation of "march" is quite removed from the concept of walking, so here again, Lowell sacrifices meaning for poetic device. "March," with its single, soft syllable, is a more agreeable word with which to close a poem than "coming," and is closer to the hushed sound image that Baudelaire was attempting to project. The last interesting divergence in translation concerns the French word, "douce," translated variously as "soft, sweet, mild, gentle, smooth, pleasant."<sup>4</sup> For a language supposedly as rich as French, in which so many more words are needed to express an equivalent thought in English, the word "douce" carries so many meanings that it is often vague. This word poses a particular problem for the translator, as he almost has to guess which meaning the poet intended by interpreting it within the context of the line. Wagner chose "soft" and Lowell chose "sweet." As both are appropriate to the noun they modify, neither can be criticized. The translator can only hope that the word he chooses imparts to his readers the mood that he intends.

In view of these two translations, it can be summarized that Geoffrey Wagner translated "Meditation" in order to render the imagery and mood of Baudelaire's poem to those not literate in French. He subordinates rhythm, rhyme, and poetic devices in general to the strict translation of Baudelaire's ideas and images. Robert Lowell's translations are means of self-expression for him. He uses the French original as a guide, but edits and adds to it freely for purposes of poetic style, clarity of image, or transmission of idea from one culture to another. Whether or not one approves of Lowell's liberties in translation, his "versions of poems by Baudelaire" are individual, as well as adapted, works of art.

Original	" "	La Vie Anterieure	
A	I have dwelt under the reign of Dynasties		11
B	Where the seas cast under the sunsets flames and fires,		12
B	I have seen the Nile yellowing its moods and mires,		12
A	And, under the Pyramids, Idolatries.		11
B	The surges, mirroring the images of the Skies,		13
A	Mixed in a fashion mystical with the choirs		11
A	Of the powerful accents of music richer than lyres		14
B	The sunset colours reflected in mine eyes.		11
C	It is there that I have lived in Sensuality,		13
D	In the midst of the waves and the splendours and the events		14
D	Of the naked slave girls, impregnated with strong scents,		13
C	Who refreshed with their waving fans my Luxury,		12
E	And whose only trouble was to investigate		12
E	The sorrowful secret of my languishing Fate.		12

—translated by Arthur Symons

Prior to this Lifetime

For a long time, I lived beneath vast verandas	12
Bleached white by the fires of oceanic suns,	11
And whose great pillars, tall and majestic,	10
Made them seem, in the evening, like basaltic caves.	12
The swells of the sea, swirling images of sky	12
Mingled, in a solemn and mystical way,	11
The full harmonies of their rich music	10
With the colors of the sunset, reflected by my eyes.	14
It is there that I lived in voluptuous calm,	12
In the midst of the azure, the waves, the splendors	12
And the naked slaves, trailing hot, erotic scents,	12
Who refreshed my feverish forehead with their palms,	12
And whose only care was to discover	10
The mournful secret that made me languish.	10

—J. T.

The different goals of the translators of "La Vie Anterieure" account for the wide divergence in style between the two translations, as was the case with Wagner's and Lowell's translations of "Meditation." In this case, date of translation explains much of the variety. Arthur Symons, whose translations are well-known and often consulted, translated "La Vie Anterieure" no later than 1925. Certainly, the concern with morality was no more prevalent then than now, but its blatant expression in works of art was more tolerated at that time. For example, a current anti-war poem is not likely to capitalize such concepts as Peace, Anguish, Enemy, etc. Then, too, the moral issue that Symons brings up in his translation — the futility of salvation by Sensuality — is not very pressing today. In Symons' translation, an adventure is recalled in which the persona transgressed conventional morality, but found no solution to the questions of life in Luxury. Before I read Symons' translation, this interpretation hadn't occurred to me, and I didn't perceive the theme to be so somber. My translation, then, grows out of a different concern. For the most part, it is no more ambitious than Wagner's translation of "Meditation." I hoped to be as faithful to Baudelaire's intentions as possible, and yet, to recreate the mood often lost in translation, by means of a slight rhythm and, more important, vivid imagery. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact element of

Baudelaire's poetry that gives it its luscious fullness, but imagery definitely plays a great role in its creation. Since images are easier to translate than pure rhyme or rhythm, I subordinated poetic devices to the evocation of atmosphere by imagery. The guiding principle behind my translation was to establish the mood of "volupte calme," or "voluptuous calm," that is a frequently encountered concept in Baudelaire's poetry. He often describes himself as akin to the eye of a hurricane — a quiescent, clairvoyant observer of the orgies which surround him. There is no orgiastic frenzy in this poem, but the contrast between the erotic promise of the setting and the listless daze of the persona creates an excitement that stems from the subdued passion in each line. Needless to say, the contrast that builds to this effect is more striking in the French original, so I took liberties with words when the sense of "voluptuouse calm" could be better conveyed by a freer translation.

The greatest contrast in form is in respect to rhyme. Symons' near-perfect rhyme (differing from the original only in the second stanza) harmonizes with the formal structure of his translation, and is as impressive as Lowell's rhyme in "Meditation." His steady rhyme helps to maintain the "sound" of the sonnet. The rhythm is less exact, though, and diverges from the twelve-syllable line frequently, as does my translation. And, as I indicated above, I have abandoned rhyme, as it would have necessitated less precise imagery. Symons' failure to translate the title is another stylistic trait of his. I felt that the title should be translated, to make the poem as accessible to the English reader as possible. A literal translation, though: "Past Life," or "Former Life," creates a static mood inappropriate to the slow, swaying motion of the poem. To remedy this, I used a more active phrase which conveys the same idea, but which implies more potential movement. The title is meant to carry the reader into the poem.

The first two stanzas are so dissimilar that it hardly seems possible that they are both translations of a common original. It is here that Symons is loosest in translating. He used four capitalized terms — Dynasties, Nile, Pyramids, and Idolatries — that Baudelaire didn't allude to in any way. Strangely, Symons doesn't seem to use these terms to stress the moral question of the poem. Perhaps he uses these proper names as a means of evoking the visual imagery and mood that they are often associated with. Only "Idolatries" has any clear moral implication. My translation centers around the single image of the "verandas," or "portiques" in French. In addition to this contrast between image evoked by reference to exotic locales and pure image, a distinctly different mood is evoked in each. Symons' translation conveys a sense of antiquity; of remoteness in time as well as in place. However, knowing that this poem is thought to be a memory from Baudelaire's own life,<sup>6</sup> I chose to keep time ambiguous, so that it could be believed that the experience actually took place in the persona's own life, and was more than a dream. There isn't much color imagery in either translation, but the contrast between Symons' "Nile yellowing" and my "verandas/Bleached white" further suggests the contrast between antiquity and newness. Finally, the parallel "I have" beginning of the first and third lines of Symons' translations succeed, by their repetition, in establishing a slow movement within the stanza, appropriate to the mood of the rest of the poem.

The similarities between the two translations are more numerous than the differences from the second stanza to the end, but slight variations in word choice can greatly alter both mood and meaning. This

isn't the case in the first line of the second stanza, though. Although Symons says "surges" and I say "swells," and Symon says "mirroring" where I use "swirling," the meaning that emerges is much the same. Considerations of alliteration were instrumental in my word choice here. One the differences in the second line can again be explained by the dates of translation. Symons' use of the word "fashion" to indicate "method," or "way," was more common at the time he translated it than today. And yet, my "mingled" is rather more archaic than Symons' "mixed." Also, Symon adds the image of "choirs" in this line, most probably as a means of facilitating his careful rhyme, for he also adds "lyres" in the third line. In this next line, a somewhat different tone is implied by "powerful accents" rather than by "full harmonies." In consulting the original, it will be found that Baudelaire spoke of "powerful harmonies." I substituted "full" for "powerful," as the concept of a powerful harmony seemed jarring and unstable to me. Perhaps this is also why Symons replaced "harmonies" with "accents" — to keep the tone consistent. Although Symons' image upsets the previously projected tranquility of mood, it has a delightful sexual suggestion that neither Baudelaire nor I provided. The fourth lines of the stanzas are almost identical, but that Symons' is closer to the ideal twelve-syllable line rhythm of the original than my fourteen syllable line.

It is with the third stanzas that the contrasting goals of the translations become most apparent. The first lines are identical except for Symons' "Sensuality" with a capital S, and my (and Baudelaire's) "voluptuous calm." If Symons' moral tone can be faulted for overstatement, he is at least consistent, and conveys his statement clearly to the end of the poem. The second lines, too, are almost alike, with the exception of Symons' "events" for "azure." (It was "azur" in the original). I retained the color image, even though it isn't as common a word in English as it is in French, because Baudelaire usually stresses color imagery, and I would assume that Symons substitutes "events" to rhyme with "scents" in the next line, as he seems to value rhyme over image. In the third line, Symons specifies the slaves as girls, the sex of whom Baudelaire leaves to the imagination. Because Symons repressed much of the sexuality in other poems of Baudelaire's that he has translated, his mention of "naked slave girls" stresses the debauchery he means to depict, rather than celebrating the joy of sexuality. His use of the word "impregnated" is a literal translation from the original "impregnes." Somehow, this word doesn't have as wide an application in English as it does in French. I think that Baudelaire meant it to convey the sensation of fullness to overflowing, rather than the state of pregnancy. So, in this case, I settled for "trailing," a considerable departure from the original. Baudelaire didn't modify "scents" as Symons and I do. Symons' "strong" upsets his rhythm, but power imagery is rather plentiful in his translations, which may account for his insistence on the word "strong." I needed more syllables for the line, so chose "hot, erotic" to describe the scents. Admittedly, it is awfully blatant in establishing an exotic sexual mood, but I also like the two "ah" sounds, and feel that they contribute to the aural beauty of the poem, which is the first beauty lost in translation.

In the fourth stanza, Symons presents "Luxury" as a kind of state of the soul. The image of "fans waving my Luxury," is somewhat difficult to grasp, but it must be recalled that precise imagery is only a

secondary concern of Symons'. My "feverish forehead" is a much less demanding image; it is more concrete, and suggests less of the abstract. Symons' "fans" is less ambiguous than my "palms," but in this instance, the ambiguity was intended. I hope to suggest either, and possibly both, the concepts of palm-leaves and the palm of the hand, since both could be used to cool a feverish forehead. In the next line, Symons' choice of the words "trouble" and "investigate" establish a much too ominous tone for the overall mood of the poem. Hopefully, my "care" and "discover" are less distressing in their implications. And finally, the last line reveals similar differences. Symons' "sorrowful secret" is alliterative where my "mournful" isn't, but "mournful" seems to be a less overworked word than "sorrowful." Then, Symons includes the idea of "Fate," to underline the question of the virtue of immorality as a means to spiritual transcendence. The sad conclusion of the original suits his purposes, and the statement he makes is that one risks his future, soul, or fate, by deviating from the path of good for the sake of new insight, experience, or sensation. I still see Baudelaire's question, though, as one of the search for a sublime antidote to "l'Ennui," or boredom — the deadening force that he warns of in "To the Reader," the introductory poem to "The Flowers of Evil." I will not deny that Baudelaire finally tired of his quest for the ultimate ecstasy, and many of his later poems reveal a strict moral tone. But this poem, if only a remembrance, is of the days before his change of heart.<sup>7</sup> For Baudelaire lived most of his life as a dandy, dressing outrageously and taking opium; taking any route he could "to plunge to the depths of the pit, Hell, or Heaven, who cares?/To the heart of the unknown to find something new!" ("The Voyage").

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal, Petits Poemes en Prose, Les Paradis Artificiels*. Translated by Arthur Symons (London: The Cassanova Society, 1925), preface.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Poems*. Translated by Geoffrey Wagner (London: The Falcon Press Limited, 1946), p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Lowell, *The Voyage and other versions of poems by Baudelaire* (New York: Strauss and Giroux, 1958), p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Urwin, *Langenscheidt Standard Dictionary of the French and English Languages* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969), p. 167.

<sup>5</sup> Symons, p. 114.

<sup>6</sup> "At Mauritius, he (Baudelaire) met literary people and fell, youthfully, in love with the wife of his host. He spent many happy days with his friends in the exotic scenery, filling his mind and imagination with dreams and images from which he was later to draw. It is this trip which made of him a poet and gave his poetry that peculiar nostalgic quality which we find in "La Vie Anterieure," "L'Invitation Au Voyage," "A Une Dame Creole," and other similar poems." — Enid Starkie in introduction to *Selected Poems*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

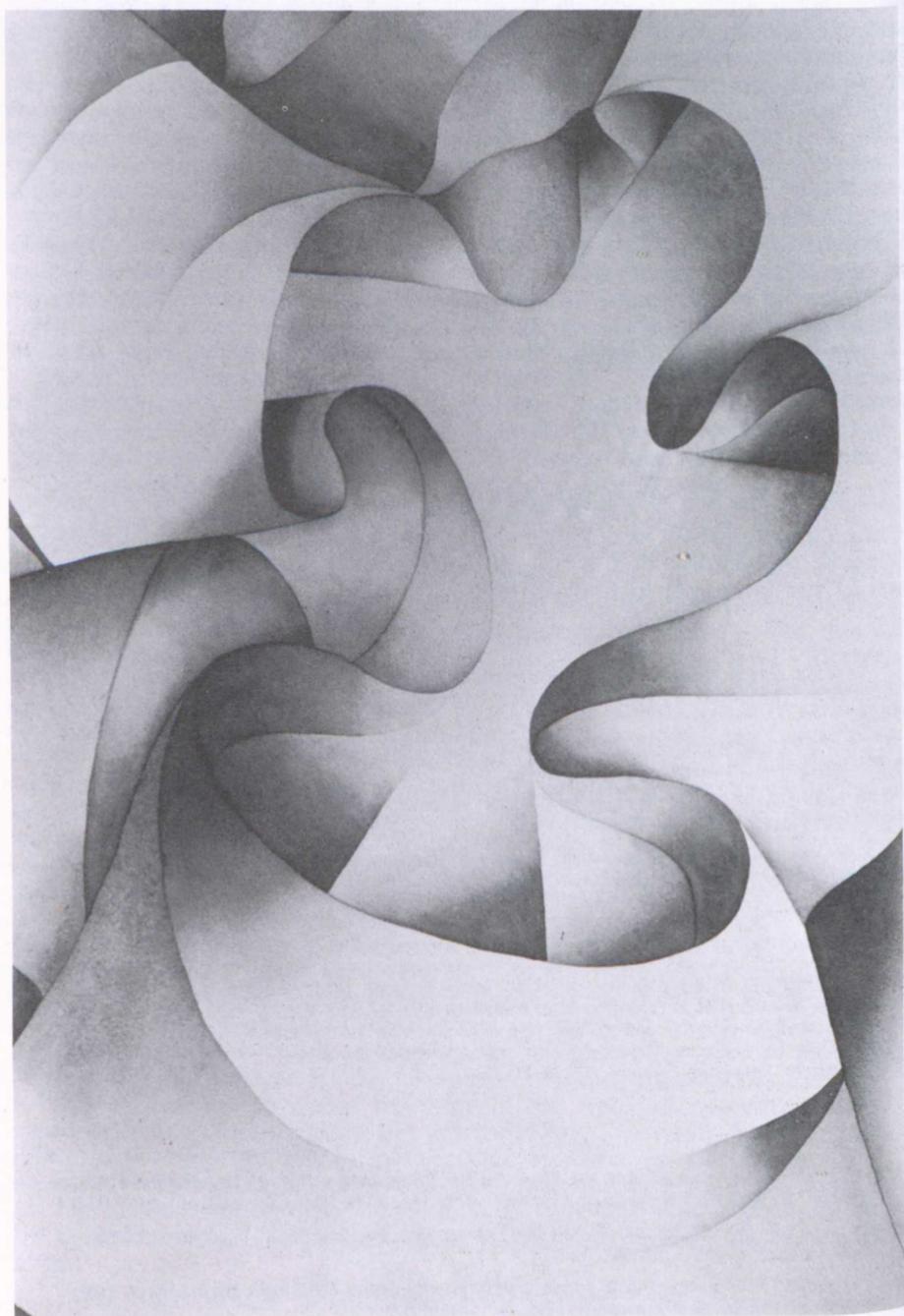
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Watercolor

Virginia Kondziolka

## A Renoir Woman

Her voice skates  
as if the cold  
of ice inhabits  
it, and a belly,  
round for birth,  
molds the cast about  
her flesh, undivorced,  
for she is  
intrinsic as sea,  
and I bathe in her,  
to be the indolent child  
rescued by the  
intimacy  
of her humanity.

Thomas Sanfilip

## Etienne and Marie Goujon Paris, 1885

Shy gusts of laughter  
bubbling through years of silence,  
bridging wastelands,  
oceans, ideologies.

The rustle of organdy  
crackling in the pale garden,  
muted blues melting into  
lush mid-summer greens.

The gentle haze  
born of brush and palette  
clothes them in eternal  
innocence.

Forever young,  
their impatience  
to get on with the game,  
held in a drop of amber.

Philip M. Rubens



Photograph

Don Evans

**The Gulf Stream**  
By Edward Chupack

*The Meeting of Anthony and Cleopatra* hung in the master bedroom. A series of Henri Rousseau prints covered most of the available space on the den wall, along with several paint-by-numbers. *Enthroned Madonna and Child* hung temporarily over a hole in the bathroom wall. Giant reproductions of Degas's *On the Stage* and Homer's *The Gulf Stream* hung alongside each other in the living room. *Dance of the Nymphs* was bought for \$5.00; the gold-painted frame, which was extra, cost \$2.00; the painting stood on top of the washing machine and leaned against the wall, falling everytime the rinse cycle came on. Stacked in the garage was: *The Transformed Dream* by Giorgio de Chirico, *The Big Apples* by Paul Cezanne, *The Mother* by Pieter de Hooch, and *The Ship of Fools* by Hieronymus Bosch.

A corruption of a famous poem, held up by five small blue rectangular magnets that stuck to the refrigerator, delivered a rhyming sermon against gluttony. The stair carpeting was red. A huge crystal chandelier, slightly discolored, hung in the lower hallway, at the front entrance. An old bedspread covered the new living room couch. The bar in the den was imported from Europe; over it hung a bottle opener; on the opener was the word, TOKYO, in large, gold outstanding letters. The den panelling was called Authentic Oblund German Wood. The potholders in the kitchen had pictures of Amy Vanderbilt, Mr. Magoo, and *Christ Healing the Sick* by Rembrandt reproduced on the insulated cloth covers. The towels that were crumpled in a pile on the floors of several rooms read like an extensive list of roadside motels. A green and pink ashtray made in third grade by the

breadwinner of the house glared from a corner, from the living room shelves. Water dripped from Cupid's nose, in the front yard.

Mrs. Hugh Brown, the former Mary Bloundo, checked her horoscope, cha-cha'd over to the oven, and commenced to defrost the Chop Suey, which her family would, she hoped, devour for lunch. Mr. Hugh Brown was at the office. Little Dicky was watching King Cosmos on television. Fanny Faith Brown was watching Saint Peter Chicken on a children's religious show in another room.

The pattern had been basically the same for the last five years since the Browns moved to Providence, Illinois, and had sought paradise on Milton Avenue. So it was, Mary Brown felt quite safe in calling the man who was to sing at the women's organization to which she belonged, who was to sing old and favorite show tunes this coming Saturday. Mary Brown call Noah Lincoln Paris.

"Hello. Hello? Noah? Please, is Mr. Paris home? Hello. Hello? Noah? This is Mary...Mrs. Brown. How *are* you? This is Mrs. Hugh Brown. How *are* you? You know you're singing for my club this Saturday. That's right...at, um, um, four! Yes. Four in the afternoon. Yes. Four. Oh! I just can't *believe* you don't remember me. I met you at my sister's house last month. I told you I loved, *loved* your outfit. You had on a green suit and a gold tie. That's right! I remember! Oh, and you had...white patent leather shoes. You don't remember? Well I'm a little insulted, you know. Say! Let's get together and, um...Mr. Paris! I *simply* wish to work-out the details of your engagement for my group. Three this afternoon? Fine. Oh..at your place? Fine. Fine"

"How nice to see you. Are you sure you don't remember me?" Mary said as she raised her eyebrows and her glass of dark, red wine.

"I'm so sorry Mrs. Brown. I don't wish to offend you, but I'm sure, yes, um...sure that I don't remember you," Noah spoke quietly but firmly.

"Well...never mind *that*," she said.

"Mrs. Brown--"

"Now. Let's work out the details. What do you charge an hour?" she asked as she rubbed the stained rim of the wine glass against her lips.

"That quite depends on where I'm singing," he politely returned.

"Oh..."

"That quite depends on who I'm singing for," he restated.

Mary Brown walked to a corner of the room, slowly turned around, then, rushed at Noah Lincoln Paris like a fish rushing towards a warm spot of water, as naturally as a drop of water falling over a dam; and she held out her arms and pointed her fingers at him as determinedly as a last drowning survivor spreads her arms and gropes at the sky.

"Do you watch television, Mr. Paris?" she spit out.

"What? Now look--" was all he had time to counter with.

"Do you think the governor is guilty?" she screamed.

"Mrs. Brown...good-bye, Mrs. Brown," he sentenced her.

"I have children, you know," she gasped.

"How wonderful. Good--"

"Prices are so high!" she interjected.

"Look. What do you want?" he asked.

"Everything," she said. "I was poor, you know. I know what it is to be poor. I--"

She fell on the Persian rug like a piece of wood dropping from the rotted

mast of a sinking ship.

"Mrs. Brown! Are you well? *Please get up! What do you want?*" he commanded and pleaded and coaxed and cried.

She smoothed out the wrinkles on her flowery dress at the point where the pattern changed somewhat and the blue flowers turned to red and pink leaves that fell over her dusty skin and covered her sweating body.

"Mr. Paris, Noah. Do you think, I mean, would you bet all your money on it, I mean would you spend all your money betting on it? Would you believe, would you ever think that the Sanders are getting divorced? They were just in a movie together," she said very slowly, very carefully.

"I know," was all he said, was all he could say.

"Look at me," she said.

"I'm looking," he said.

"Come closer," she demanded.

"Sure," he said.

"Noah?" she didn't quite ask, but rather stated.

"Yeah," he said, he confirmed.

"Take me away," she said.

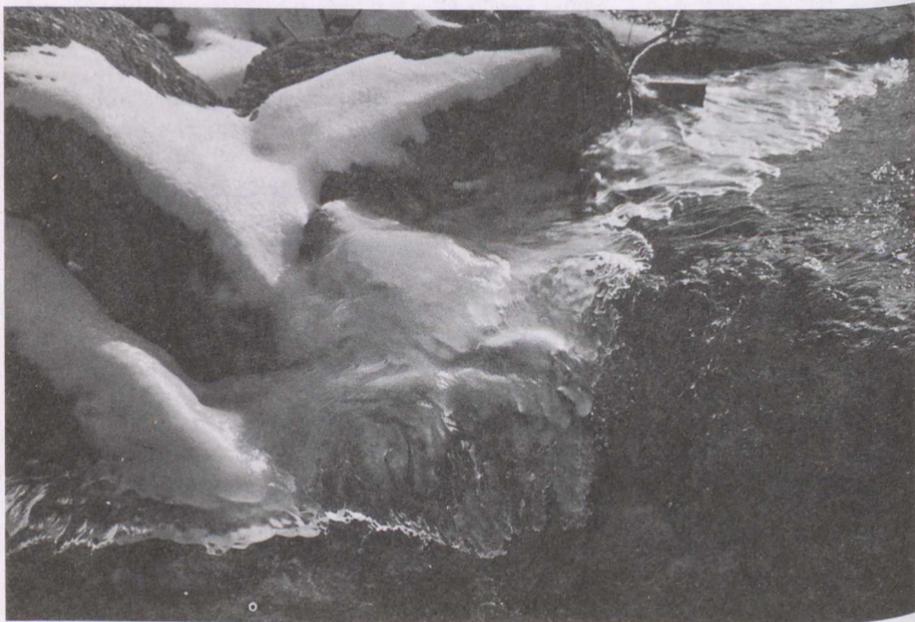
"Why?" he asked.

"Take me away," she said.

"Why?" he asked her again.

Then she answered him. She answered him as best she could.

"Take me away," she answered him. "Take me away. Take me away from all this. Take me away. Hello. Hello?"



Photograph

William Takatsuki

This Piece Goes Two Months  
Without A Title And Then  
We Have Our Drapes Cleaned  
And My Wife Says She Doesn't  
Like It, That It's Like Living  
In A Fish Bowl.

apartment, compartment--  
what difference?  
across the way  
a toy boat  
floats on the asphalt,  
little props  
and little doll people.

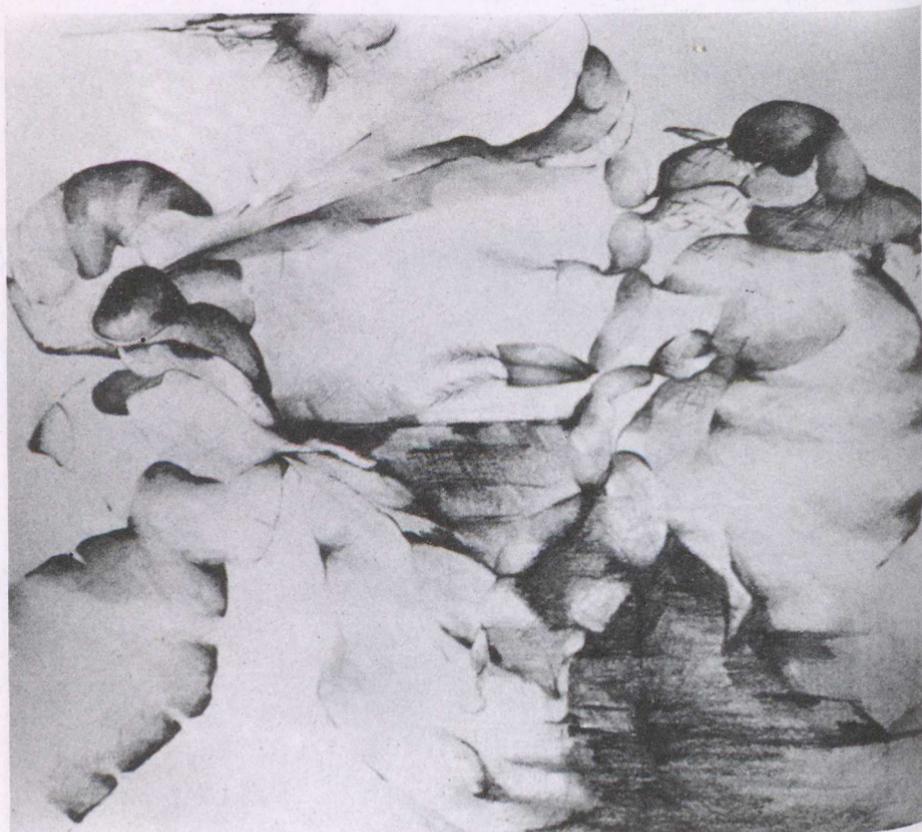
what acts unimaginable  
performed in these waters!

binoculars  
lie like hollow sockets  
in stuffed closets.

who needs them?  
my naked eye turns in shame  
meeting another naked eye.

and then, certain I  
want off this dumb game,  
comes the one real interlude:

blue wrapping paper  
flaps through  
our sea of gray,  
a wayward manta ray.



Drawing

Patrice Murtha

## Lightning Bug Hunting with My Niece on Her Grandfather's Farm

Town beyond the fields  
Like embers of a charred log,  
Your grandmother's mason jar,  
Holes for air,  
A firefly  
You, Andrea, and I  
Are all we need.

Lying in the barnyard grass,  
You whisper I must whisper too.  
What shall I say?  
I think only what I see:  
Your hair from birth,  
Three years long, more blond  
Than the technicolor moon  
And a splinter of that moon  
Magnified in the two  
Blue flames of your face  
As you spy the first flash.

"Gen-tle-ly," I admonish.  
"Gently," you unknowingly mock  
But somehow err  
As pasted on the glass  
Are the glowing guts of the bug  
And more in your palm, face up,  
Dumbly wondering what has gone wrong.

"Poor bug" is the only remorse  
You can muster or should.  
The murder of the firefly  
Is the idea of the jar,  
A lantern that doesn't die,  
A bug I put in your head.

Fearing you are about to cry,  
I whisper, "Let's catch stars instead,"  
And for a moment you're willing,  
Perched on my shoulder, reaching  
Beyond your reach.

But it's a game,  
The lightning bug is real,  
And we're off for the corn to capture  
Another, a grown man and a little girl  
With a kiss for me the instant we reach the fence  
As if now you realize the damned difference.

Karl Elder

## Pink Lady

By Christopher D. Guerin

Roosevelt's smelled ugly. The air tasted unhealthy wet. Clothing stuck to skin as to a wet sucker. Cigar and cigarette smoke was to blame. That, and an old grey humidifier, dripping; placed unceremoniously in the ceiling center like a flea-market chandelier. Yet no one seemed to care much anyway. The smoke glowed firelight with the penetration of afternoon sun through dim, dusty windows. A shallow galvanized bucket caught the drips from the humidifier. Incoming customers, oblivious, often nudged the bucket aside or kicked it over completely, swearing as if betrayed, as the water spread beneath chairs and tables. A festal gathering of denimed and work-shirted factory laborers, corraled in a corner, hoarding a table laden with dozens of empty beer bottles, howled and howled over a fifty cent pool they'd created as to when and how often the bucket would get tipped and who, the bartender or his wife, would be obliged to mop up the mess. Periodically, they traded seats with other friends to shoot a turn at the pool table in the back. Interest in the pool flared each time a loser from the table returned and asked of the outcome. The walls of the corner behind them, formed by a partition separating the main room from the back, showed a few small signs of neglected vomit from days and weeks before.

The bar was nearly half full, which was pretty good for a Thursday afternoon. The barkeep's wife, a wrinkled, paraffin skinned woman, remarked at this "windfall of a crowd" each time she waited a table of new arrivals. Tomorrow was Labor Day, they explained, and they were celebrating early. Of course, she said each time, I completely forgot.

Present were other women too, barhags mostly, wives of alcoholics, alcoholics themselves; boisterous females many of them, with dirty mouths, large breasts, pocked noses and cheeks, cigarettes perpetually clenched between lips and fingers. A good-looking guss for a whore sat at the bar near a television, ignored, absorbed. Clicks of billiard balls, soft chatter pierced with laughs and louder talk, the scrape of chairs and squeak of stools accompanied the action of the ball game she watched, volume turned low.

Near the workers, at the opposite end of the bar sat another young woman. She could hear the row they were making but the reason why didn't interest her much. Atop her barstool she sat like a flagpole acrobat. "I don't want to be here, damn him!" she growled softly.

From behind the bar a long mirror gave her to question how angry she really was. No, she would be angry, mirror or no. One of the workers turned an obscene country song called "Wood Pecker" on the jukebox and with the punchline of every verse he and his cronies exploded uproariously like jester starved emperors. The angry young woman had to smile too.

Many eyed her. No one advanced. Despite her dress she looked much like a woman waiting for someone *e/se*. New black denim stretched on the curves of her buttocks and thighs. Pantlegs dropped below the heels of cherry-red sandals. She often told girlfriends that halters made her breasts ache. The cream one she wore was worse with near belly-button cleavage. She looked gorgeous and knew so but didn't preen. Then was for hardups and whores. The one watching television struck her as an amateur, or off duty. She couldn't figure why she didn't even eye the other men. Even if just for later reference.

Waiting wasted her promise, and the store of inside words she'd piled up in anticipation. "Where is the bastard?" she thought in addition. "He would have left the office an hour ago." She could have wanted to go home, but there was the air. Roosevelt's was pleasant enough. Always had been. But the air outside had been so hot and clear, such air clarity. Sometimes the weather so excited her. Cold days had their appeals; clouds muted the sense, but cold clear days held strong attractions. Clear hot days, like this one, (dry with just hints of a distant rain, a conceivably cloudless rain) she never took as mere empty flirtations either. She sought solitude in such weather, loved the solitude in which she'd make love to the air. "Goddamnit", she'd said three, he'd said sure; now four, and she could stand him up, "not he her!" "Thirty minutes and that's it," she murmured as a cat momentarily purrs and subsides.

In her hand a funnel shaped glass, containing a pink lady, accrued moisture on smooth rounded sides. Sly, sliding fingers wiped at the condensation.

Two years ago and always before she'd detested the bars and their aura of strained vociferousness and sad loneliness. Now, on chill grey days especially, she frequented the musty air, enjoyed company, laughed. A benign mystique had grown to full proportions about the bars she patronized of late. Things had acquired meaning. The bottles, tall with thin sloping necks, (labelless here, for the bartender steamed them off, knew their contents by their shape) arranged in even, intended rows, were not only intriguing to look at, but challenging. In two years she'd attempted nearly all of them, always returning to sip and finger a tiny glass of that pink, foaming fluid.

The bartop, buffed to a gleam, showed a myriad chain links of rings. She often fancied the vision of some untiring geometrician on the pitted mahogany surface, drunk on the job, all sense of mathematics and symmetry distorted. It was thoughts as that, caused in some ways by the liquor, and the atmosphere, that caused her to seek such places.

The bartender, owner of Roosevelt's (though that wasn't his name) was a dark and grungey old bouncer. Thick curly black hair protruded from his collar, nose appeared broken, and hands were a pink and delicate contrast. He drank from a highball glass of tomato juice and vodka. He'd always appeared to her more as some refugee from a depression mission house than a proprietor, and she wouldn't be surprised

to find his liquor was illegal. He paced the narrow space behind the bar back and forth like a lone Midway duck, at intervals shot to a halt and turned by another order for refill. The customers paid from piles of bills and change in readiness on the bartop, before them, depleting.

Mirrors were silver. Of that she was convinced. Mirrors were in all actuality silver, untainted by reflection, pure silver painted glass. The huge, sectioned mirror, filled to capacity with another reflected bar-room, before her, taught the same lesson as hundreds had before: to look at herself and know that either she was silver, or . . . She didn't like that part of it, and then too she loved the question of it. Her cheeks blushed, delicate, back. She knew the efficacy of that suffused cheek, thought it made *her* blush even. Unadorned, unmade, burning peach, naked, that blush she loved next to her breasts, and those not supreme. Yet in the mirror all, and the blush was silver. The strangeness of the notion only served to enrich its beauty in her thoughts.

"Want another," the dark barkeep asked, smiling, stepping up too much in front of her.

She stared, unsmiling, blush gone. He was not offended, smiled on as she tried his bloodshot brown eyes for a mirror. She liked that and returned a wide show of glittering teeth.

"Sure, mistah barkeep," she drawled, "'nother shot a pink eye, if ya pleez" — and she pushed her empty glass into his soft, enclosing hand.

He didn't laugh, smiling still.

She frowned as he turned away. They always laughed at that one.

The noise level was sustained, almost oblivious to any cause. Bodies and liquor moved, the music and sound did not. The pool was liquidated again as a broad man in farm clothes kicked the bucket, rolling in curves, under tables. The barkeep's wife cleaned it up. She was a good bet for that.

Regret rekindled each time she studied her movements on the other side of the second bar. All that beautiful halter top, those faint shadows on rounded chest, gone to waste. She'd hoped he might prove more "permanent" than the others. Her thoughts skipped a beat when for a second she mistook a man for the other. Looking forward she could see behind her a tall, passably handsome young man. She'd noticed him before this, but a sudden gesture, familiar to her, had caught her senses off guard. There was no important similarity that she could discern, and she returned to her drink. Whether he'd noticed her eyeing him, or for some other reason, he took the next stool.

He was attractive enough, with red hair and flushed cheeks, but he couldn't have been over twenty. She watched him when the angles of his attention moved away from the mirror. Hair straight, long, eyes bright blue, he could never pass for legal age but for his unshaved face. The stubble on his chin and jaw would have ruined him for her had not his cheeks, fleshy padded, been tanned and holding a simple innocence of their own. She had a theory about unkept chins and jaws: they implied a flippant, even wanton character, a brand of experience, usually of the overt and pushy type, hence boring, unless the cheek, tanned maybe, smiling unaided by the lips. All this a sigh of innocence. An intriguing quality, not to be overlooked. She studied him more closely, covertly. A truth touched her: she was there waiting for the only razor careless, smile cheeked man to ever prove false her theory.

The barkeep brought her pink lady.

The boy ordered a manhattan. She watched his every movement. How with a subtle temerity he extracted a few dollar bills from his wallet and laid them crumpled on the bar-top. How he looked about as if expecting someone to immediately recognize him and charge up, slapping him on the back. And the strained buisnessman aspect he assumed as he paid for the drink.

The manhattan looked delicious; brown clearness of bourbon muting pale red of vermouth. The last one she'd sipped had caused her a sputtering fit. She turned to him and asked if he wanted the two cherries in her drink. Her eyes, meeting his, unveiled like clouds disperse around bright stars.

"I'm afraid so," he said, grinning, hesitant, turning in his glass the little plastic sword, cherry shishkabob, "You see, it's impossible to drink this vile mixture without the demurring taste of maraschino."

Obviously surprised at himself, his grin widened, but he aimed it straight ahead. She couldn't resist.

"You talk like you've been to bars before."

"Remarkable, isn't it," he answered, then breathed deep, let go, "but I haven't."

"I *knew* that," she poked, chuckling.

He turned enough to let her see direct that his amusement matched her own. She liked this one.

Pulling the shishkabob from his glass he stuck it in his mouth, slid the sword from the cherries, and proceeded to pierce the cherries numerous times as he rotated them with his tongue. Making an awkward movement with his puffed out cheeks he skewered the cherries at a single stroke, took them from his mouth, mangled but intact and plunged them again into the drink.

"It's like tequila, a fruit is needed so to savor the liquor. I stab the cherries so they'll release more juice.

"I see," she said softly with a lift to her voice. She wondered if she might be wrong about him too.

In the meantime the crowd had slightly begun to thin. There weren't really fewer people, but many of the factory men had finished their beers and gone home to their wives. The bar was quieter. Those workers remaining had settled into some discussion of sports or politics, she couldn't tell which. The pool has dissolved completely and the table in the back was entertainment for different men. A soft love song rose a little too loud from the jukebox speaker. Another young man was talking softly and watching television with the whore. They appeared to be friends.

The promised half-hour had passed and there was no longer a doubt about the date waited for. Pensive, she took larger sips from her drink.

"What's your name?"

"Harry."

"That's not too good."

"Oh? Why?"

"My ex-husband's name is Harry."

"Yes, I see, you sure wouldn't want to chance another Harry."

"But that's not - -"

"I know, sorry, just kidding," he blurted quickly, looking vexed at himself.

"He's smart," she mouthed, noislessly.

"He divorced me for going to bars alone," she began again, feigning dejection.

"You didn't have to tell me that."

"So."

"What's your name?"

"Can't tell you."

"Ah, first a plea for sympathy, now the woman of mystery."

"You're not very nice."

"Give me a good reason then."

"My first name is Harrietta."

"You're kidding!"

"Quick kid."

"You're not very nice either."

"I know, but don't tell the barkeep. I buy these things with food stamps," she said, lifting her near empty glass, eyes alight, "He's really very nice himself."

He looked at her square, with puzzled mien.

"You look like you work for a living," he said, tinging the statement with a question.

"I do. I'm a secretary, and pretty damn good at that."

"But the food stamps?"

This startled her.

"Hey, you are young!"

"I'm twenty," he defended.

"Work?"

"College student."

"One of them free thinkers huh?"

"Not so free."

"Why not?" she pried quickly, interest leaping.

"Two reasons. It takes money," — he tries a wink — "and I have to drive twelve miles to get a drink. The damn campus is dry as chalk."

"There must be compensations," she said, trying a return of the wink, unable, batting both eyes.

"Of course," he said, assuming a mock pedant's tone, "I can't drink that often, but when I do, it's so much easier to forget how free I am."

They both laughed. Unexpectedly enjoying herself, forgetting her appointment completely, she spun around the barstool, tracing a circle with her smile, catching a spinning glance of herself in the mirror.

"Having fun?" Harry said, laughter subsiding, looking pleasantly confused.

"Yes, yes, yes," she said, spun again, then stopped, called for the barkeep, "I need another of these, please." Watching him make the drink, watching the boy too, she said, "I'll tell you my name —"

"Uh huh?"

The barkeep stood the glass next to her hands. She picked it up,

looked through it for the mirror, smiled, dipped her forefinger in the pink liquid, withdrew it and watched the droplets fall back into the glass. Quickly then, sucking the wet from her finger, she proceeded —

"If you'll answer a question first."

He nodded. She took a sip.

"What's the question?"

"What's your age, . . . and when was the last time you slept with someone?" She didn't blush.

"That's two questions," he said.

"Then answer one."

Smiling — "I'm a virgin," he replied, unflinching.

She blushed, but couldn't yet be sure.

"Very good, very good. Harrietta Wonan's my name."

"Unfair, unfair!"

"Truly, that's my name. Don't you believe me?"

He paused, then with a shrug she couldn't decipher — "I suppose so."

"That answers my first question. You sir, win the prize. You get to take me to dinner tonight, if you want to," she said, cheeks aflare.

"I, I'm sorry," the young man said, embarrassed. He shuffled on his stool, tipped up his glass, finished the drink, "I can't."

A pause happened between them.

"Don't you want to?"

"No, it's not that."

While she stared on, quizzically, he shoved hand into pocket and brought out a silver band, bright, white silver, light catching and sending, with a small, but visible crack in it. He held it out to her in his palm.

Slowly — "This has to go to a jeweler," she said quietly, not touching it. Then, looking up, forcing a wan smile — "No chance anyway?"

"No," he said, avoiding her eyes by looking over them, "it wouldn't be fair."

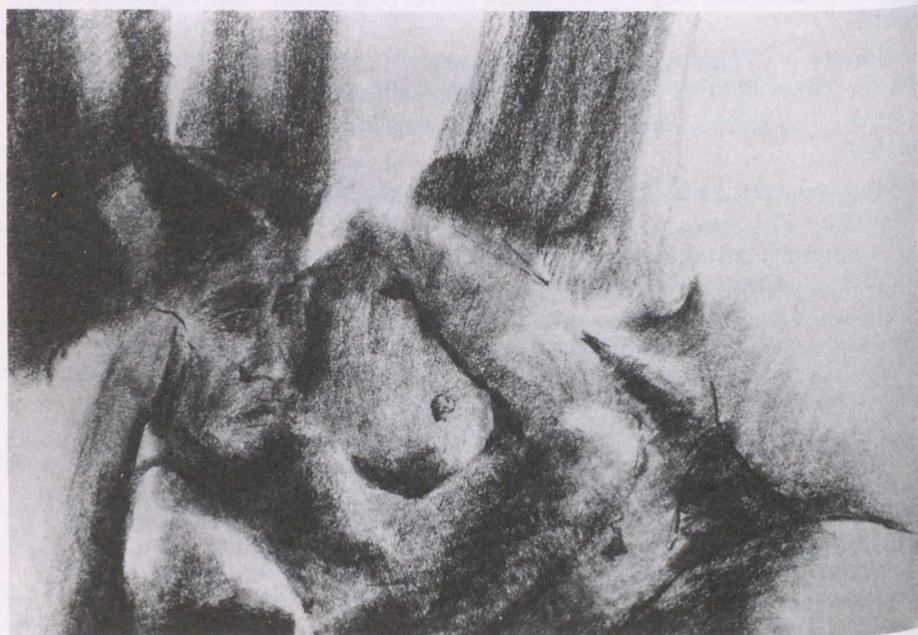
Nothing was said for a moment. She waited, growing cooler each second.

"I thought all that was just kidding," he said, rising. "Maybe I shouldn't come to these places alone."

He repocketed the ring, said goodbye and began walking quickly to the door. His shoe caught the lip of the galvanized bucket and sent it clattering across the floor. The door, banging, muffled the barkeep's swearing about the mess. He yelled for his wife.

She relaxed totally, frowned at her image in the mirror, chiding it. Cheeks, colorless but shiny, beamed back. The glass in her hand was nearly full. She killed it in one long throat pulsing draught. Touching down the glass on the bar-top she noticed all the new made rings she'd left that afternoon. "It's like setting down the glass and trying not to stain the wood," she thought, and thought of having another drink, (this bartender did make a good pink lady) then thought of outside.

She left the bar as the old woman came clammering up with bucket and mop.



Drawing

Patrice Murtha

## My Sweetest Lesbia

By Chris Okon

The office was a vast cemetery of file cabinets, and all of us workers shared the daily monotony of filing endless papers and records into their proper drawers. Although the others welcomed me as the new office help, there still existed between us a comfortable yet curious distance I did not expect to close. I was, in a word, white.

An hour of the first day sifted by and I worked alone, wincing at the sharp staples that pricked my fingers as I tucked papers away into drawers, and longing for the end of summer, when I would leave.

"Hmm, mm swee-eet Jesus, he is my Lord." Someone was moved by her own song. I walked to the end of the aisle and watched her, her face glowing as she sorted mail patiently. "Hmm-mm," she went on, her heavy body clothed neatly in a violet velveteen suit. Hot pink earrings peeked out from the tight black curls brushed off her round face. She stopped singing and looked up at me.

"You have a beautiful voice," I said. "I was just listening to you."

The girl smiled. "Why, thank you," she said in a voice with the same lilt as her song. "I've never seen you around here before. You must be new. Where do you live?"

"South Side. All my life." For some reason I felt shy. "You really do have a beautiful voice, though."

"Why, girl, that's the same thing Lennard told me. He said, 'My dear Lady Kat,' (that's me), 'you have a voice that ranks with the bells of heaven and mythical sirens.' He told me that. My, but that boy can be strange

sometimes--nice one minute, meaner than hell the next." Kat shook her head slowly.

Lennard--the name sounded like "regard." I shrugged and went back to my filing. Time passed quickly if I daydreamed, but that too turned to routine.

"Miss! Oh, miss!" I heard a voice call like a snake's. Looking down I saw him crouched by a bottom drawer. He beckoned to me with his little finger, and as I approached, he pursed his lips and smooched at me. Seeing my annoyance, he rolled his eyes back and laughed like someone under gas. I stalked away like a mother superior who had just discovered on her veil an obscene word written in chalk.

"Don't you walk away from me," he shouted, grabbing my arm. His grip tightened. I looked into his eyes, brown, frightening, nearly luminous behind safety lenses, the kind the army issues. He released his hold. "You scared?" he sneered at me, "Yeah. Dig that. Dig that!" he laughed.

Kat came over. "Lennard, can't you be nice for a change?" she pleaded.

Lennard glared at her. "My dear woman, why do you always deem it to be your caustic responsibility to rectify matters thusly?" He went back to his work as if nothing had happened.

"Who's that--Yul Brynner?" I asked Kat, wondering why Lennard was entirely bald.

"Strange dude, that Lennard," commented Kat, "he don't get along with nobody, and nobody does nothing right by him."

The next day Higgins told me I would start working with Lennard. "You poor kid," some other girls joked. "Yeah. Why me?" I complained, although I was brimming with curiosity. It was break time, and Lennard was sitting at a table, poring over a book. He saw me watching him so he began to read aloud in a falsetto voice a poem by Catullus. "Odi et Amo, by Catullus. Ahem. 'I hate and love, nor can the reason tell; But that I love and hate I know too well.' He stopped to take a sip from a juice bottle full of murky brown liquid. "Hello, miss," he said to me.

"Did you know I'm supposed to work with you today, Lennard?" I asked cautiously. He continued reading. "What's that in the bottle?"

"Baby formula. Made from real babies." He glanced up, his face was somber. "Are you stupid?" he asked me simply.

"What do you mean by that?" I felt a twinge inside. "Of course not," I answered.

"Of course not," he mimicked sarcastically. "Miss, you're a sad case." It was time to return to work, so I didn't answer. "What do you want me to do?" I asked, trying to sound impersonal.

"You can't do anything. Just watch me," he said without looking at me or the others who were still prolonging their break. "You can't do anything," he repeated, glaring at me when I tried to help. I had to follow him up and down the aisles as he filed what must have been hundreds of record folders. Finally he spoke. "If you're so smart, why did you quit school to work here?"

"I could ask the same of you, Lennard."

"No, you couldn't," he answered angrily. "I keep my mind busy. I read a book every day. Every day I leave work and take the el to the library downtown. What do you do, miss? You can't do anything."

I felt my throat tighten. "You have no right to say that," I said as calmly as I could, "you don't know me."

"Then what do you do?" Lennard demanded.

"Why should I tell you?"

"Ooh, miss. You are an idiot," He shook his head as if being sympathetic.

"Have you ever been in love? I doubt it, miss, I doubt it."

"Look, Lennard, it's none of your business." I resented his probing and insidious questions.

"I bet you can't even love, just like the other morons around here. One cannot transcend the mediocrity of existence with platitudes of passivity, unless he wants to causate internal damage. Do you understand?" Lennard was gazing at me. I wondered if he ever heard how he sounded. I decided that if I didn't show anger it would irk him. "Of course I understand you, Lennard," I smiled.

Lennard let out a low chuckle. "Too much! Too much!" Kat came over to see what Lennard was laughing about. "I don't know why," I told her.

"Don't let him get to you," Kat explained, "he's nuts."

"I'm beginning to see that," I agreed, "don't worry, I think I know his game." Kat shrugged her shoulders and went back to her desk. "How dare he try to upset me with his strange thoughts; how can he be so annoying and fascinating at the same time? There he is, talking to himself," I pondered, watching Lennard reciting to himself as he worked, entertained by his own rhetoric, like a genius gone beserk in a realm of stupidity. I turned away.

"Get out of here!" Lennard was screaming at one of the younger workers.

"Look, Lennard. Keep cool. I was only kidding," said the boy, smiling to survive the surprise attack. He smirked at me. "How can you stand this guy?" he laughed. Lennard grabbed him and pinned him against the cabinet.

"Your insignificance makes me vomit. Get out!" Lennard's screams brought the other workers near. Higgins, the boss, charged down the aisle like an enraged bullfrog. "Jones!" he snapped at Lennard, "you cause any more trouble and I'll report you." Lennard's face tightened into a grimace-smile. His orange-brown skin was moist. Lennard glared at Higgins. "Listen, man. If you can't make your employees work for you then you have no business being here." Lennard's eyes narrowed. "I'm the only one who does a decent job around here. I'm trying to teach this young miss here, and all your muthafuckin idiots do around here is everything but their muthafuckin jobs!" Higgins was trying to placate Lennard, who turned and went back to his work without a word, angrily opening drawers and slamming them again. "See what I told you about that dude," said Stevie. I walked silently toward Lennard, who ignored me as he worked. Finally he looked at me. "Ooh, miss! The hate in your eyes!" he said with mock surprise.

"I don't hate you, Lennard. I wouldn't give you that satisfaction," I said, feeling my face twist inadvertently into a sneer, as if mirroring Lennard's expression. He turned away from my gaze. "I want to show you something later," he muttered under his breath.

At lunch break I remained upstairs. Lennard sat by his desk alone, reading, and drinking the murky liquid from a bottle. Reaching into a leather shopping bag, he took out some dandelions and began to chew them.

"What is it you wanted to show me?" I asked. Without saying a word he handed me a black sketchbook. The pages were covered with minute

Sanskrit-like scrawlings of poems and other comments interspersed with drawings. Strange oriental-looking women or womanly men crowded the pages. They were of soft luminous tones which reminded me of illustrations from *The Rubaiyat* or a *Hare Krishna* pamphlet.

"They're very interesting. Who are these ladies, Lennard?"

"Either earth mothers or whores," he answered contemptuously. "I would like to draw you, even if you are ugly. You are ugly, miss. Has anyone ever told you you were beautiful?"

I refused to get angry. "Well, I never won any contests. But what do you mean by 'ugly'?" Lennard did not answer. Finally he muttered, "Meet me in the picnic area for lunch tomorrow. I'll bring my pencils."

The next day at lunch I did not eat with Kat or any of the others. I found my way to the outdoor picnic area, where Lennard was waiting for me, reading and sipping tea from a bottle. "Why are you late?" he asked without looking up. I sat down across from him and took out my lunch of a hard-boiled egg.

"You on a diet?" Lennard asked sarcastically. "You need it. Just look at you. I bet you don't even exercise."

"You say the sweetest things," I mocked, refusing to give in.

"Except for your body, you look like Michelangelo's 'David.' Why don't you get your hair cut?" he said earnestly. "Sit here so I can draw you." He began to sketch. "Damn, but you're hard to draw. Don't move." Lennard gripped the pencil tightly. "How come you don't talk?" he asked.

"Because I know it bothers you."

"Tell me about your lovers, real and imaginary," he scoffed.

"Right now I'm going with a musician, and we--"

"Do you love him?" Lennard interrupted.

"Why should you know that?"

"I said do you love him?"

"Does he comfort you when you cry?" Lennard persisted, continuing his sketching. "Don't bite your lip. I told you not to move."

"We communicate pretty well," I faltered, trying to explain to Lennard, "I suppose I do love him, and--" I saw that Lennard was paying no attention. He was getting ready to leave, quickly packing his pencils and paper. "Miss, you've got that musician pegged," he said. I told myself not to feel upset as I walked back to work. Higgins barked, "You're three minutes late." Kat wanted to know where I was for lunch but I didn't answer. "Hmmm, girl! What are you getting yourself into?" she wondered out loud.

The sun filtered in, and the grey cabinets threw afternoon shadows on the floor. Lennard was explaining the work to me, warning me not to waste time "like the other idiots."

Suddenly his voice took on a tone as bitter as wild roots. "Do you know, miss," he said, "you have it easy with your soft white skin." I felt uneasy. "What about you, Lennard?" I kidded.

"Miss, I have no background, no roots. I come from a race of nomads," he said quickly. "Have you ever been to New York? I used to live there. I worked in the library and was the baddest dude around. The chicks fell all over me!"

"Sure, Lennard," I teased, to relieve tension.

"No, really!" he protested, "I had an afro and a big black handlebar moustache. I used to dress like Rudolph Valentino before I found out he was gay. A lot of those silent actors were. Can you dig that, miss?"

I looked at Lennard, bald and dressed like a Harvard yachtsman. "What happened?" I wanted to know.

"I changed gigs, miss. I had to come back to Chicago," he said, sounding upset.

"I have relatives in New York," I offered, but Lennard was not listening. "Tomorrow night I'm going to the Grant Park concert," I said to change the subject.

"With the musician?" Lennard scoffed. "Maybe you and I could go sometime. Or is it too safe with the musician?"

I did not understand why I was so easily frightened and so much perplexed by Lennard. His questions were like iodine on open cuts. "Tomorrow at lunch, miss," Lennard said and walked away.

The next day I waited at the table for twenty minutes before Lennard appeared. I said nothing as he sat down and prepared to draw me.

"You have a ridiculous mouth," he said, frowning at his sketch. I touched my lip as if for protection. "So what?"

"Why do you always dress grubby?" he complained, "look at you--why don't you take care of yourself?"

I was amazed more than insulted at his attacks of disgust. He was hawking me and I felt I could not retaliate. I was speechless and could not argue.

"So you're going with the musician tonight," he commented.

"No, he can't come." I didn't want the musician to come. "I just may go alone," I said bluntly.

"I'll see you there," Lennard said matter-of-factly, "you bring some grub, and I'll bring the juice."

"I don't know," I said, resenting Lennard's assumptions. I knew I would see him at the park. As soon as I got home from work I searched for "grub"--messy tuna sandwiches, a few apples, some graham crackers. I wondered if Lennard would eat anything that banal, unlike dandelions or baby formula. My mother asked me where I was going. "To meet some friends downtown," I told her.

As if in a daze I boarded the expressway train that would rush me to the Loop. Even when strange men eyed me on the el I was never afraid to ride it. Why was I so concerned with being on time tonight, to meet the person who was a barb to my ego? I closed my eyes and leaned against the window. The rhythmic clatter of wheels over tracks lulled my thoughts. I realized I was acting on impulse but I had no control, and that upset me. I got off at Adams and wandered toward Grant Park. In the distance the lake shone like blue marble in the evening sun. Lovers and old winos strolled among the trees and paths. I neared Buckingham fountain and saw a slim figure sitting on a bench, reading a book. Next to him was a pile of books and a leather bag. Lennard looked up from his reading and walked over to me. "Oh, man--why are you dressed grubby again?" he complained, sneering at my jeans. I raised my shoulders and smiled. "Here." He handed me some carnations dyed red. "The woman wanted wanted a dollar for them, but I got her to lower the price to fifty cents. I told her I was friend of St. Anthony's, and she believed me," he went on breathlessly, "What did you bring for grub?"

"Tuna and other goodies. I hope they're edible to you," I chided.

"Miss!" he exclaimed in mock exasperation, "when one is starving, one will eat anything." He pulled out a bottle of Richard's "Wild Irish Rose."

"Here's the juice," he said almost proudly. We began to walk toward the bandshell. Lennard seemed obsessed with chatter.

"I loved a girl once," he began, "she was a cripple, so I had to carry her everywhere in my arms. I told her how I cared for her, and, alas, she cried, and ran away with a crippled guy."

"How could she run away if she were crippled?" I asked with pretended-seriousness.

"He bought her an electric wheelchair. Those things are damned expensive!" Lennard cried.

We reached the bandshell area. People were filling up the benches. "Let's sit over here." Lennard cocked his head toward a point to the side of the benches. He threw two cushions on the ground. "Sit down."

The orchestra began to tune up with a cacaphony of wailing violins and tympani thuds. Lennard held up a toy English foxhunt horn and blew on it three times. People turned around to look; he blew on it again and put it away. I chuckled. "You're not supposed to laugh," he said, "You're a deaf-mute, remember?" I waved my arms in violent protest. "You see?" he laughed, and began to rifle through my knapsack for the food.

The sky greyed with the dusk, and the bandshell glowed like a visiting starship. The symphony crackled through the speakers like an old RCA recording, and Lennard tried to outdo the musicians with endless chattering, flecked with "muthafuckin" this, or "dig that!" I pretended to listen to the music, taking swigs of Richard's and hearing Lennard's laughter that seemed to verge on tears of despair. Suddenly I felt as if I were watching a film, or observing one of my own dreams. I gazed at the skyline of black monoliths dotted with neon flickers. Lennard was saying something to me.

"What?" I asked sleepily.

"I said that I don't think you can love, miss." He was staring into my eyes as I tried to focus. "I know what's wrong with you, miss. Do you?" His bitter tone upset me as I tried to comprehend his words. I did not want to listen, and looked away.

"You have cancer of the soul," he said viciously, making me face him. "You are diseased and are incapable of love." He leaned closer. I felt my blood thicken, pressuring my head for release. The people, the stars, Lennard's sneer all blurred into liquid. I tried to swallow but began to choke and sob. "No," I wept in confusion.

I tried to find footing on the slippery night grass. Cars streaked by on Lake Shore Drive and I ran toward them as if in pain. Lennard was stalking after me. I was afraid to run.

He grabbed my shoulders and glared at me, his eyes luminous and piercing. He spoke breathlessly, "Listen, little white girl, you have something I may want, but also fear. You are never wrong, so I can't be right. If all I want is a piece, you know what I'd do." I struggled to move away. "Not talk. You'd be dragged into an alley. Some call it rape." His eyes narrowed; I was immobile with terror and bewilderment.

"I've decided to leave you alone," he continued, his voice calmly sarcastic, "You cannot see beyond yourself or your parents. You are safe because you revolve in your own world, and see no chance of collision with other worlds. I'll leave you alone to do what lesser kinds of people expect you to do."

"What do you want?" I asked him, with the detachment of pity. "What

do you want from me, Lennard!"

"Miss," he explained, "for all practical purposes, I am as capable as a Ken Doll." He began to laugh insanely, and I left before he started crying. I felt nauseated, like the time I saw a crippled man fall, when I was a little girl.

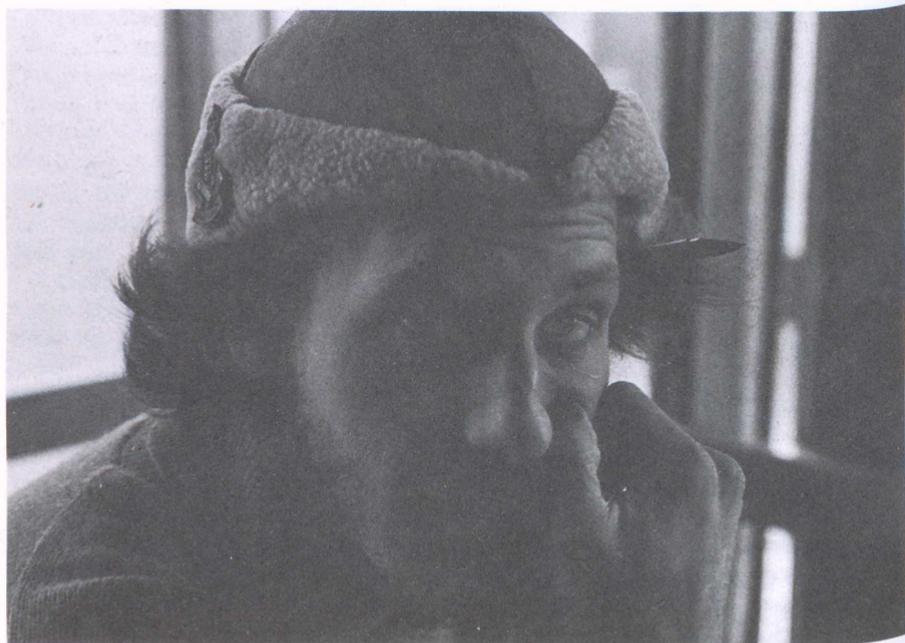
From the el platform I watched the figure weaving back and forth on the sidewalk, scattering debris and laughing morbidly to himself. I huddled next to the window on the train and shut my eyes until my stop was called.

The next day at work I found a thin piece of paper lying face down on my desk. Lennard had left the unfinished portrait he had drawn of me. I stroked the smooth blending of skin tones and delicate lines. I did not like it. "It looks like you," said Kat admiringly, "except for the eyes. They look so sad." She handed it back to me, and I stared at it. "It shows so much feeling," she repeated, and went back to her work.

### Object D'

Into the crowd  
she steered her brother  
flailing in a wheelchair  
like some cubistic creature  
lolling and singing a bluish gasp  
in spite of  
uneasy stares  
that fell like quick  
brush strokes attacking  
a crumpled canvas.

Chris Okon



Photograph

Don Evans

## This Little Light of Mine

By L. Lynn Wasz

I'm going to have to decide soon. I thought when I came to Aaron I could rest for a generation, thought that maybe he wouldn't be using me at all. Oh, I gave him a few glimpses over the years, I had to get *some* exercise, but now he really knows for sure that I'm here, and he isn't going to let me rest anymore. Shall I stay, or shall I go? He's different now than he was when we first started together, but, I think, so am I.

When I found Aaron he was awfully young. I was alone then, without anyone. I had been careless with my last host, went too far, played with him too long, and by the time I realized what he was going to do (I had gotten lazy and hadn't paid much attention to anything he did, hadn't spoken to him or let him touch me in, well, I guess it must have been years), it was too late. I saw what was happening and tried to strike the fire in him then, but he had eaten away almost his whole mind looking for me. There was just nothing there, I couldn't stop him, so when he kicked out the chair, out I went too.

Aaron (his real name is John Miller, but he thinks of himself as Aaron, so that's what I call him), Aaron was only about ten years old. It was a Saturday night and the whole family had gone to pick up the new car. He was the youngest and this was the first new car within his remembering so he was pretty excited. How impatient he had been as his father signed all the papers in a little glass office like the sound-proof booths on T.V. where you could see their lips moving but couldn't hear what they said.

"John, *will* you stop jumping!" His mother gave him a shake. "I swear,

that boy's all arms, legs, and nerves," she said, smiling, to a salesman in a checkered suit who stood with his hands in his pockets nodding sympathetically.

At last Aaron was allowed in the brand new car.

"Watch that your feet don't have dirt on them!" The windows all worked perfectly, the upholstery was so smooth (there were ashtrays in the back too!), and there was the grand smell of new car. Ah, what a night! He had prayed so long for the new car to come that he could hardly bear to leave it in the garage. But his father had already driven around the block four times, it was almost 9:00 and there was Sunday School tomorrow (Aaron had won a ribbon for perfect attendance), so he had to go in. He was happy and thought how wonderful everything was and wondered if it was O.K. to feel this good.

Later, the phone rang.

"John, it's for you," his mother called in where he was watching a T.V. program in his pajamas (he remembers all of this, almost word for word. I must say, he does have a terrific memory. That makes it a lot easier for me sometimes.) When he got to the phone, it wasn't Tom about the game after church tomorrow like he thought.

"Hello, Jonathan?" The voice sounded like soft old women smell with the floating odor of perfume, but musty underneath. And Aaron knew that the honeyed voice on the phone could forget its softness and raise to a screech.

"This is Mrs. Binder." He waited politely, playing with a hole in the knees of his pajamas.

"I just wanted to remind you to be sure and remember to bring your entry for the Missionary Essay Contest to Sunday School with you."

His mind froze. He had forgotten it entirely! Then his head reeled, swimming with fear and guilt. He could see her on the other end, waiting for him to say something, eyes blinking, mouth half open in a smile, leaning forward in her chair with her good ear cocked like she did when he was reciting a verse.

"Oh, oh yes." His were shut tightly.

"Now don't forget. I know you've got it all written, you're such a good boy, but I wanted to make sure you didn't forget it at home. Goodnight now, Johathan. We'll see you tomorrow."

He was a real wreck when I found him. Fears, guilt, emotion, all the materials I'd ever need to work with were ripping through his head. Normally I wouldn't consider someone so young, but Aaron was such an awfully sensitive kid. I could tell that right away from the way his whole psyche was churning over this essay thing. And besides, I was pretty rusty myself. Better to start small and work back into shape gradually.

So I went in and calmed him down, tidied things up a bit, rearranged here and there and got him started. Aaron was a smart kid too, so the words were all already there. I didn't want to startle him into a young Milton or anything, so I only helped a little. Religion is always easy to work with. You've got everything you need right there, it's all a matter of channeling. A cousin of mine helped with the Bible. Said it was a snap.

So that's how I met Aaron. He worked hard on that Essay once he sensed me there he instinctively knew how to use me. Almost half the night he worked.

But when he turned it in, along with all the other boys, each, as he filed in, handing his paper to Mrs. Binder who stood waiting just inside the door of the tiny classroom at the back of the church, as soon as he had put it in her powdery hands and she had given him a Gold-Star nod, the guilt and anxiety and worry flew right out of his mind, and along with it all thought of that essay. He couldn't have cared less after that moment what happened to his paper. That's what made me think it was going to be an easy time.

Even when the next Sunday on the back of the program, "Why We Should Give Missionaries In The Foreign Field" by John Miller, Missionary Essay Contest, "1st Place Winner" was printed in big letters above his essay (reprinted in its entirety), he was excited, and proud that his mother sent copies away to all the relatives and kept ten more to be put in the drawer, but the farthest thing from his mind was to sit down and write some more.

Oh, Oh, he didn't let me sit still all that time. He got some big emotions rolling and made me get on the bandwagon again along about eighth grade. Patriotism that time. Mrs. Gates, his eighth-grade teacher, a huge-bosomed, motherly woman with a voice that fluttered, read to the class that all eighth-grade students throughout the county would have a chance to show their appreciation for the great land they lived in by writing a paper on, "What Patriotism Means to Me." When she asked who would like to enter, Aaron's hand shot up so fast it startled even me. His mind positively beamed when Mrs. Gates turned her madonna smile on him and said, "Why thank you, John. You must truly love your country." So he fired me up with God and Country and President and Liberty, he almost had the Star Spangled Banner rolling through his head, and we made an honorable mention for his district.

He left me pretty much alone in high school. All his adolescent energies flowed out into baseball and the hockey team and decorations for the junior prom. Once in a while some old lady teacher would strike a chord somewhere and he'd wake me up to write a paper or he'd be itchy and I'd be in the mood and we'd sit down and write something, but still I wasn't overworked by any means. He kept a diary for awhile, but there were too many times when I didn't feel like working and he'd get bored doing it without me.

So we lived along together. I helped him get good grades, work out something special, like a poem on Mother's Day when he needed it, and everything was fine.

His first year of college looked like it was going to be the same way. He wasn't worried about an occupation, not even what his major would be. He's young, let him play, his parents said.

But at the end of his second year and into his third, I could see that things were changing. He went to fewer and fewer parties, rarely got drunk, and even quit the baseball team. He was moody for long periods of time and things he saw people doing began to hurt him again like they had when he was very young.

Then he met Sarah. I don't know if it began happening right away, but something trembled through him from the first time he saw her. I felt it, it stirred me a little, but I thought it was just the usual palpitation of maleness throbbing again. That happened all the time.

She was sitting at one end of a long couch. It was the first party Aaron

had been to in months. He saw her as soon as he walked in. She didn't have a beer in her hand, she was just sitting watching the people with large dark unblinking eyes.

Aaron's a good looking fellow, always was, though his mother made sure he didn't know it *too* much, and he always had the use of all the words, even without me, so he had the confidence, even for the quiet beauty on the couch.

"Do you know Tom Farrell?" he asked her. Aaron didn't know Tom Farrell, but he knew that he lived here and that it was his party.

"Oh, please, let's not play what's-your-major-do-you-come-here-often," the dark-haired girl said. Aaron was startled and a little hurt, but excited somehow that she had not said, yes, he's in my 206 class. Then she said, "I'm Sarah, who are you?"

He looked at her. She hadn't smiled yet but he thought maybe she wanted to.

"John," he said, sitting down, thinking what to say, knowing that he should *not* offer her a beer. He can do that, know people, but it only happens when there's something in a person to know. That's why he was so frustrated when he came to this particular party. He hadn't known anyone in a long time. In the last few days I'd been feeling him getting ready to write a tirade against something.

"No...I don't think so," Sarah with the dark eyes said to Aaron. "You're not a John."

"And you're not a bathtub. Thanks a lot." She laughed, shaking her head.

"No, you know what I mean. You look like you ought to have a Sir in front of your name."

Aaron sat there looking at her, feeling her eyes shine on him and thinking how, when she smiled, her mouth turned up at one corner just like his mother's did when she was happy. He remembered when a bunch of wildflowers picked from the vacant lot brought that smile. Sitting there, looking at Sarah that way, things began to swirl around in Aaron. She *was* beautiful. Her eyes were round and dark, and the skin of her face, framed by long, shining black hair, was pale and smooth, and as they talked, a flush of color rose to her cheeks. They talked, sitting there on the couch, she gesturing with her hands, eyebrows furrowing and tears rising to her eyes when something was very important, until almost everyone had left. By the time he took her home, his head was so full of thoughts and feelings, even I was dizzy.

I thought it would pass. There had been a girl when he was in high school he'd made me write a poem for. She'd shown it to all her friends on the pom-pom squad and Aaron didn't write again for quite a while after that.

But it didn't pass. As he saw her more, things surged faster and faster. Soon his emotions were churning so madly that even when he did try to get me to work, things were whirling by so quickly I couldn't grab hold of anything long enough to get anything down. The morning after the first time they made love I thought he'd drive us both crazy.

Then, little by little, I felt something else inside besides just those wild emotions. *She* was there. It was as if she had put her hand right into his mind with her words and petted those flailing feelings into a smooth warm flow that circled around his mind, between the two of them, into hers, and

then back into him. I've never felt anything like it before.

He had me working as soon as things calmed down. He seemed to have a new grip on me, too, and together we began to work as we never had. At first, everything was to her, songs, poems, stories, full of dark-haired Sarahs. She would listen and read and shine her smile on him. Sometimes she would channel words or phrases back through us and they would come out again different, better.

Then she began to turn him outward, onto things besides herself, and he began to see the world the way he sees her. Guilt and fear no longer drive him, but excitement and joy.

And now I see that it won't ever go back to the easy way it used to be. We have been one, he's felt it, and he'll always want it again, he'll always want to make me work through him. I can still leave him and find another host. Or, I can hide from him deep, deep in his mind where he'll never find me again... But it's not so very hard. I like Aaron. It's warm here. And Sarah, ah, she's so beautiful.

## The Wise

Children believe,  
On seeing the wind blow  
upstream,  
The river has reversed  
its flow.

Its surface nap displays  
a deeper change.  
Unlike petting a cat's fur  
against the grain.  
The waterhairs, in their minds,  
rearrange.

Too, they never see  
Willows on the bank  
bobbing,  
As old tousled heads  
On a crumbling park bench,  
in agreement.

Christopher D. Guerin



Photograph

Tom Posteck

## The Great Indian Textile Revolution

*And please watch over Uncle Leon  
and  
Aunt Zophie especially...*

"Listen.

He was crazy

and

bothered people

and

was a lot of

trouble

to Aunt Zophie,

especially to your

poor

AUNT ZOPHIE.

He threw a cupcake at the rabbi  
when he was  
thirteen,  
already a young man:

He  
got  
beat  
up everyday walking home from  
school  
because  
he was already  
fat.

He has a history.

Listen,  
You know Leon, your Uncle Leon  
has always been a little  
shaky  
too.

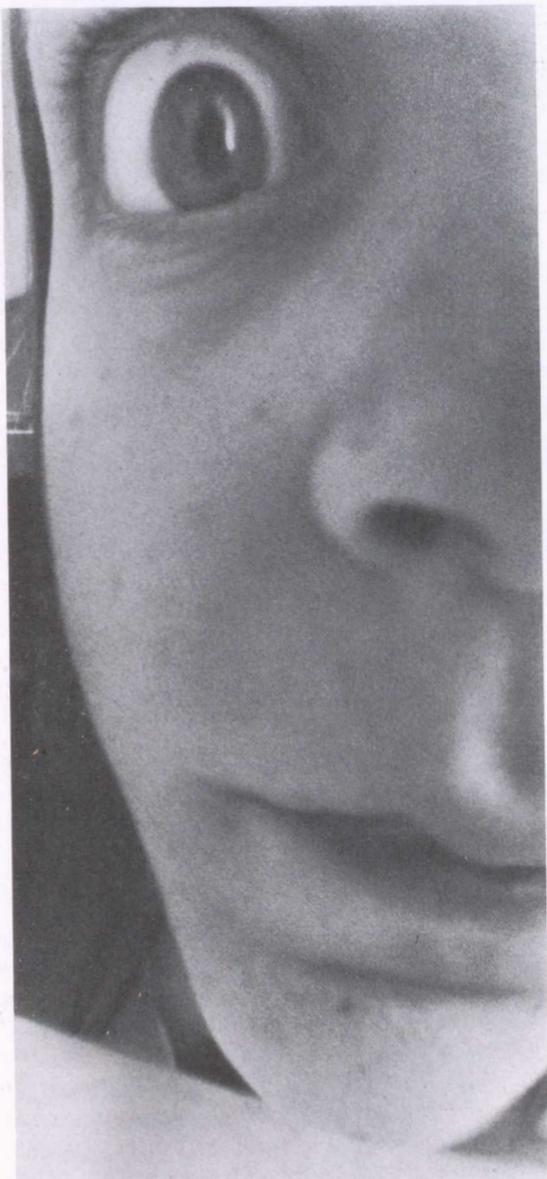
He limped when he had  
two  
good  
legs."

*...And cousin Ernis who was on the  
debate  
team in 1933 and  
argued,*

*"Shall the Indian textile industry surpass England?"  
Cousin Ernis, your mind snapped in 1939  
from a variety of  
diseases.*

*Aunt Zophie,  
you shouldn't have no, no  
shouldn't have, na, na na, oh no  
played the trumpet  
at your  
deaf*

*young son  
when he was  
learning guitar and  
dissecting England  
in the basement.*



Photograph

Katharine Wolff

