

Towers

Spring 1975



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Towers XLIV
Northern Illinois University

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T.V. Times

Times Square is gray and pulses rancid,
swarms with drunkenness and toasts
to yet another: Happy New Year!

But we are wormy in our twin Lazy-Boy-Loungers,
my mate spins her cigarette signals,
lips thrusting smokily to the chant

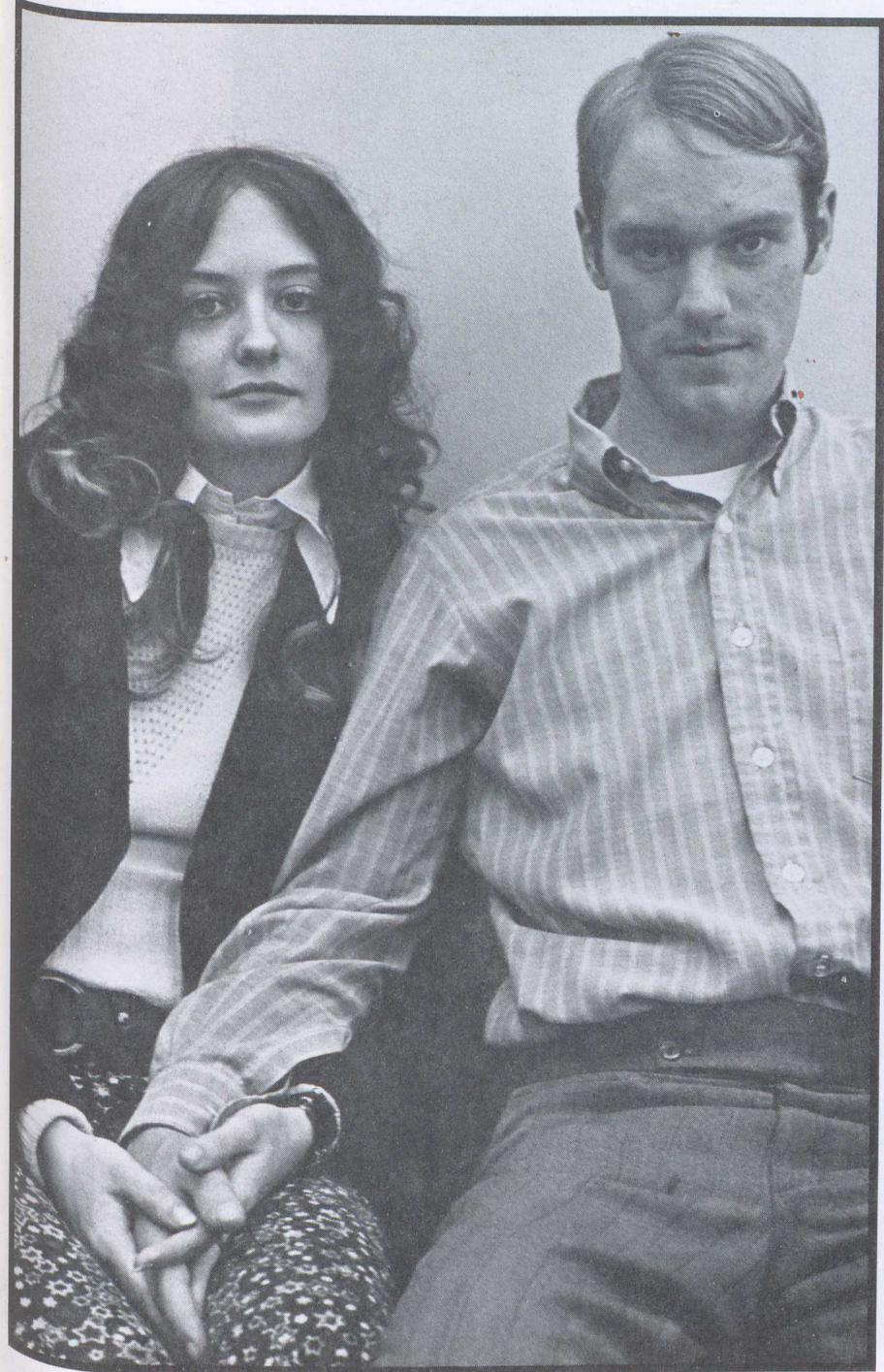
that traps us in a tunnel of dark enthusiasm,
the light at the end sparks me,

"Is this the birth of a new or of an old year?
and what of the tradition . . . ?" she shushes me,

sliding closer to the edge of her chair.
I slide too and in the last spasmotic seconds
we struggle, linking two years at midnight.

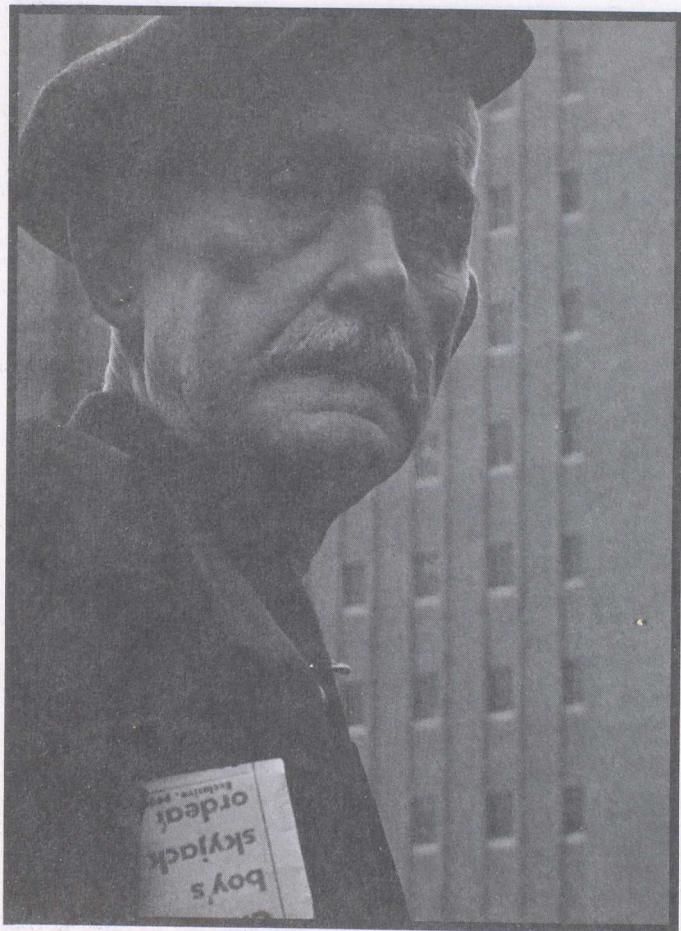
We separate with her first innocent words, "I'm tired."
She puffs and the old year miscarries,
curling away in smoke.

Mark Guerin



Photograph

William Takatsuki



Photograph

Peter Herdklotz

Chicago Autumn

twilight indictments tremble
under disdainful stars
flowers embrace themselves against the dark
music winces on the air
while along the edges
frayed gilt of a timeless missal
gentle aging little men teeter into alleys
torch-lit tunnels under a sere moon

Patricia Everitt

Frankenstein

the monster lurks
behind the wall
he does it by standing
next to the wall
on the other side

Michael Summers



Photograph

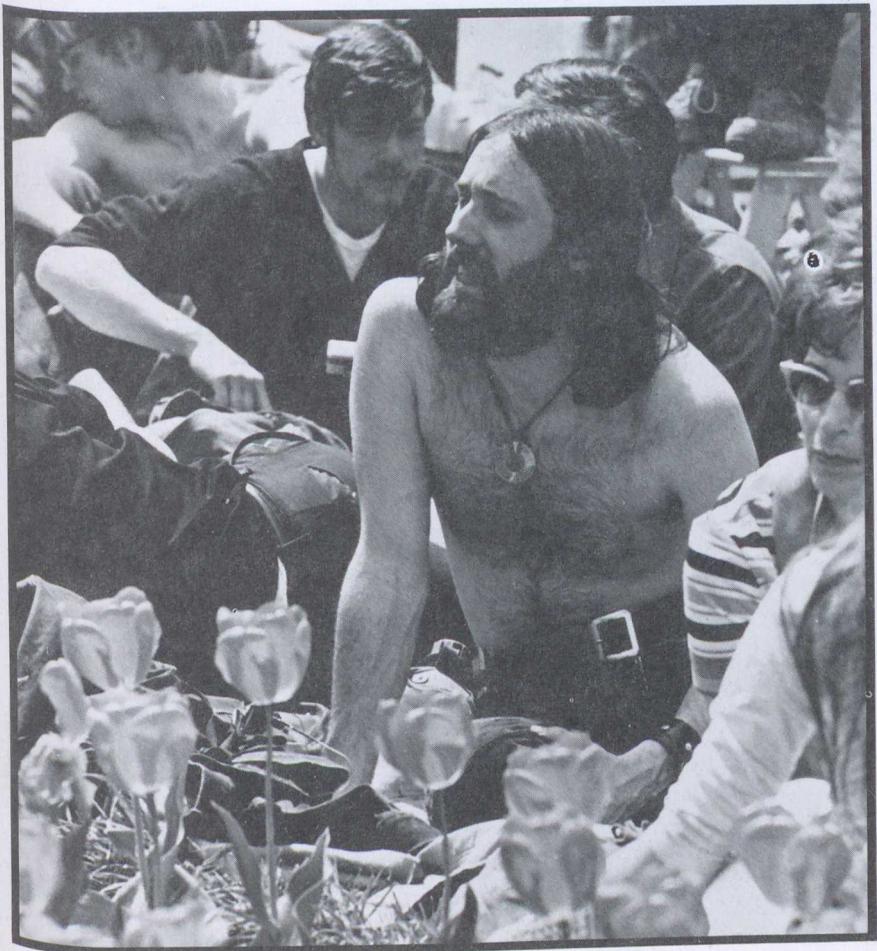
Kay Eshelman

The Sundance at Greengrass

Children sprang
as voices whirled
midair
And bison blistered
swelling tongues.
Skin drums pulsed
like hearts
borne ageless
and dancers heaved
breath and song.

Watching
we rose from
ache and dust,
the world itself
a vision
spun with stars,
casting shadow
from an eagle's wing.
Earth faced,
men held the pain and joy
with prayer,
blown like a bone flute
out across the plain.

David Williams



Photograph

Peter Herdklotz

Business Man

When you go green
Into wool suits and smoke and calculators,
I wait at home and hope
For April moons and midnight rain.

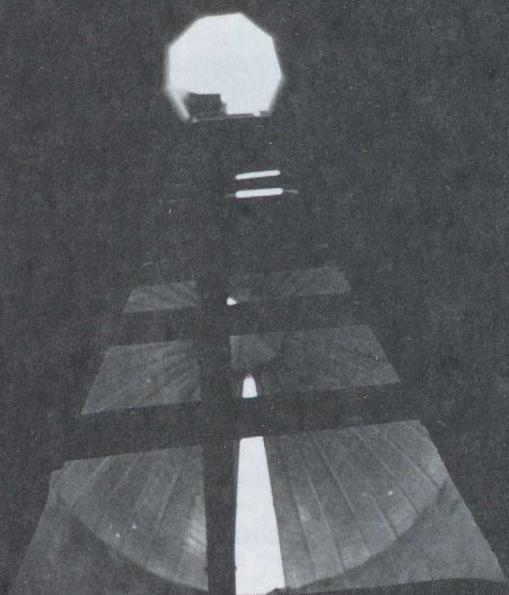
And each night at 6:05,
We stand in the hallway
And I unbutton your coat,
Like a child opening an unexpected gift.

Joann Seastrom



Photograph

Ken Pagni



Rail

the ties are endless
and simple, direct,
there is something catching
in a moving line
grabbing a car
you hold on for life
and you never lose it
though you can fall off
and tumble down through the weeds down the side of the hill
dusting yourself off
you wait back up there
swaying your hands along
starting to pick up
the rhythm again
picking it picking it
picking it grabbing
the rung on the side
and you're on board again
laughing and shouting
the ties are endless
and simple, direct,
there is something catching
in a moving line

Michael Summers



Photograph

John Freberg

Don Chaotic's Quest for Reality By Russell Iwami

I. The Chosen

The color of the sky is readily discernible. It is an artistic blue; more than that I cannot say. I am not qualified yet. The sun burns into my eyes as I look up at the mammoth complex of towers and monorails which is State Cultural College, pride of the New World. I am enrolled there on a scholarship from the local League of Women Roters, which I won for my twenty-five words or less essay on "Why I Like My Home Town."

I guess it has always been my dream to go here and become a famous writer but I never really expected it to happen. The College of Creative Writing here is known throughout the fatherland for its Modern Masters program. Getting admitted into the program was my biggest surprise. You almost have to have a work published already, which is impossible. Only qualified writers are allowed to publish their works in the State literary magazines, such as the Police Blotter, Reader's Digest of Acceptable Knowledge, and the Daily Doctrine.

I enter the central building through a door marked "Go" and walk to the pneumatic elevators. With a rush of air into the elevator vacuum, I am flung inside and the steel doors clang shut. The car stops with an explosion of released air at the 91st floor and I step out. Two hall monitors show me to my room, escorting me in the customary fashion, each firmly gripping one of my arms and shoulders.

My room is painted in black and white swaths. I like Expressionism; it is so solemn, like the State. The windows are barred on the outside; I guess so no one will fall out. It's a long drop.

I can't wait to meet my neighbors and fellow writers in Picaresque Plaza. I try the door. It is locked from the outside. Around the doorknob is a little card—"Welcome to State Cultural College." On the other side it reads: "Art is the Sole Escape from Reality." I sit down and wait. I don't know for what.

II. I Discover Freedman

It is getting into the night and I am still locked in my room. I have already missed dinner, if there is a dinner, and I am beginning to wonder if anyone knows I am here. I look out my window and notice there is another building just a few feet away. Well, at least it's homey up here.

At last someone knocks at the door. I yell "Come in," forgetting the door is locked. The door clicks open, though, and a gangly fellow with thick glasses peeks in.

"Hello, there. Why didn't you come out of your room? You've already missed dinner. Anti-social?"

"No . . . ah, I couldn't . . . well, the door was locked."

"Oh, you don't know about the door eh? You gotta say something 'artistic', 'literary,' into this hole. See, right here." He points to a little round screen, which I had taken for usual room tap. "For instance, say 'now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country.' "

"Not very original."

He smiles. "It doesn't matter."

I lean over near the screen and whisper, "Now is the time for all good . . ."

"Louder," the gangly kid says, "otherwise it thinks it's normal conversation."

Oh, I think, so it is a room tap, too.

I shout it into the screen. Immediately the door clicks open. I peer outside, the hall is empty. Suddenly the door buzzes violently.

"Close the door. You can't keep it open for longer than fifteen seconds—dorm policy. Any longer and it indicates an abnormal desire for freedom."

"Sorry," I say, more toward the screen than my acquaintance, "I have claustrophobia." He looks through me as if to say, "don't we all?"

The gangly kid surveys the room. "Expressionism sure is beautiful!" I nod in assent until I notice his grimace. He points to the room tap. I shake my head in agreement. I learned long ago to be wary of taps.

I realize at that moment that I hadn't introduced myself yet. It's good to get to know everyone, especially fellow future writers. Especially when you are a freshman.

"I'm Don Chaotic."

"Ozzie Freedman, but don't call me that. It's such a god-awful name. Everyone calls me Hungry Jew." The gangly kid pulls out a small pad of paper and begins scribbling. "There, that's good enough. You wanna take a tour of the community?" I nod.

"Death is the ultimate reward for suffering through life," Hungry Jew reads off his pad. This line also isn't original; it's part of State doctrine.

III. Other Voices, Other Rooms

"Everyone gets together in Ed the Editor's room. It's the one at the end of the hall with the star on the door."

"You mean that he . . . he got something published?"

"No, no. They burned his manuscript . . . of course, but he was allowed to submit, at least. That's something." I nod in appreciation.

We enter Ed's room without knocking. Five other future writers besides Ed lay sprawled upon the floor. Ed is reading his Harcourt-Brace Writer's Handbook while the radio plays a State broadcast of War of the World. Orson Welles' voice booms out its exclamations rapidly. "The gooks are attacking, the gooks are attacking! All American people are urged to blow their brains out. I repeat, the gooks are attacking!"

Two boys are furiously engaged in discussing Richard Nixon's *Seven Crises*. One is saying that Nixon was once president. The other, gesturing violently, says "No, Nixon was never for democracy. He knew the fewer cut in, the better. He always said that people were too stupid to vote. Read his book, *The King*; it's all there. You'll see!"

A girl ignoring all the noise is listening intently to the radio. "This is only a test. I repeat, this is only a test. Had this been an actual alert, you would have all been dead. I repeat, this is only a jest." The girl gulps and looks wide-eyed into my face.

"Isn't that awful? I mean, we could have all been dead. Those gooks, you know. . . ." I nod out of politeness.

The girl comes closer, shivering all the while. "It makes me shake, I tell you, those gooks coming over here spreading jaundice and myopia and torturing and raping innocent girls with their tiny transistors, whatever they are."

I nod in agreement. "If the War with the East had lasted another year, I would have gone over there and fought those yellow devils. But I knew it wouldn't take that long for us to beat 'em."

"Yeah, it sure didn't take long to collect enough money to buy Asia, did it?" She is leaning against me now. That speech about fighting always works.

"Let's not forget it was a costly war. We had to sell Mexico and most of Central and South America—at a loss. We were almost going to throw in England, too." I motion to her and she follows me to my room.

IV. I Attack a Windmill

"Oh, is this your room? I just love Expressionism!" I look this time and nod my head when I see that she means it. She wanders around my 10 by 5 room, glancing at the few things that I have room to unpack. "Hey, what's your influence?"

"My influence?"

"Yeah, my influence is Carole King. What's yours?"

"Oh, I guess Cervantes. I read Don Quixote. I like books about fighting and chivalry and all. Of course, I haven't read any other Cervantes. Is there any?"

The girl purses her lips and gives a contorting shake o fher head and shoulders. "I dunno. I never heard of Cervantes."

I nod. "Not many people have. He's a foreigner. I think he's dead, too. I can't find anything about him in the Encyclopedia of Acceptable Knowledge."

"Carole King is recognized as the greatest woman writer ever. She really is." Her big wide eyes open in emphasis and I can almost see the back of her head. Her mouth opens in a half-idiotic grin. One can see in her the tranquility which dependence on the State produces. She is very beautiful.

"My name is . . ." I begin.

"Don't tell me! And I won't tell you mine. We'll keep it a secret. It'll be real romantic."

I agree, it would be more romantic. I like romantic things. We sleep together.

V. Complaint

First day of classes starts on Sunday as part of the six day work week. My friend, Hungry Jew, doesn't like the six day week. He believes in religion, I think because he stayed in his room on Saturday. Personnaly I don't mind religion except when it interferes with my free Saturday. The State discourages religion; Hungry is allowed to be Jewish, because his influence is Philip Roth.

At six o'clock, the door buzzer goes off to wake us for breakfast. I nudge the girl with no name and she turns over off my shoulder and falls against the wall. Luckily my room is only five feet wide, my bed four feet, and the walls only a half-foot away on either side. I pull her back onto the bed.

"Carole, wake up!" Someone has told me that her name is Carole.

"My name isn't Caroll" she shoots back defensively. "No names, remember? You can be 'The Boy from New York City' if you want." She smiles in appreciation of her idea.

"And you're the 'Horse with No Name!' Come on, I'm tired of this silly shit. Let's be real for a change."

"But. . . ."

The door clicks open and Hungry enters without a knock. He yawns expansively, casually looking at the four feet of my room that isn't my bed.

"Damn it, Hungry! Can't you even knock?" The girl jumps under the covers.

"Hmm, certainly not a very romantic body. Adequate, I suppose." He eyes her half-lustily. "Well, Don, will you still love her tomorrow?"

"I thought you didn't come out on Saturdays?"

"I was ordered to. They decided to kill Roth. Jeeze, I didn't think anyone knew Roth."

"Is he dangerous?"

"He's sane. Some officials from Censorship are cleaning my room. Some service around here, huh?"

"Well, now what are you gonna do?"

Hungry smiled.

"Keep my room clean, of course." He pulls out a little manuscript. "What do you think of Roth?"

"I never read him." Lucky for me.

VI. Writers

In the afternoon, there is a meeting on Philip Roth. We are all urged to turn in any Roth or other dangerous books. I had read the Roth story before the meeting. There is nothing dangerous about it, just some religious disagreement. Why should the State care?

". . . follow the right examples, the Masters. Everything you need to know, right here." He puts his hand on the paperback copy of "The Complete Anthology of Acceptable Fiction." He looks down at it reverently. "All of it, right here. The science of writing, all in one day's reading. Well, that's all, fellows."

"Hungry, I want to talk to you," he added.

VII. . . is the ultimate escape

I am in Ed's room with the girl listening to the radio. Ed casually sneaks up on me, glancing about nervously.

"Say, Don, have you ever read any Philip Roth?"

"No, all I know is that he's Hungry's influence." I really shouldn't say that much.

"Are you sure? Maybe you read about him in the Encyclopedia."

"No, he's not listed in there." Immediately I realize my mistake.

"Oh, then you have tried looking him up?" Ed is the Grand Inquisitor now.

"Why did you do that?"

Just when Hungry Jew comes barging in with the biggest smile on his face. He sits down viciously close to Ed. Ed shrinks away noticeably.

"I wish you wouldn't just run right into the editor's room like that."

"You sent for me. Anyway, editor of what?" Hungry asks slyly, the biggest grin getting bigger. "Of what, may I ask?"

Ed turns bright red. Everyone is staring in surprise; even the girl turns the radio down.

"Something has to be edited for publication before you're an editor, right? But none of us are qualified to be published.—What makes you an editor?" Hungry is sure clever, but this is dangerous.

"Senior future writer, then," Ed offers nervously.

"Ah, a writer," Hungry says, his glasses a solid glare, and an insane grin over his face. "A writer has to be original, but if he is original, how can he have an influence?"

Ed looks nervously about the room, then at the room tap. His face is twitching and his hands clench belligerently. He opens his mouth with a gasp, his teeth bared, and steps right in front of Hungry's face. I never noticed before how big Ed looks, more like the monitors and State Guardsmen with their violently powerful arms and expansive chests. He looks like an animal now.

"I'll have to ask you to leave!" Ed manages to bark out, "Right now, damn it, right now!" His arms with his fists clenched upward at his side are quivering. His teeth are fully bared and his eyes show madness.

Hungry remains calm before him. He smiles broadly, at first, then breaks out in open laughter. Ed stares like a dumbfounded cow.

"You mean me or do you mean Philip Roth? Or do you me and Philip Roth?" He begins giggling hysterically. "If authority is a joke and a joke is to be laughed at, then it isn't a joke if nobody laughs."

Immediately the door clicks open and monitors escort Hungry to his room. We all sit back afterwards and continue our talks. The radio blares Wagner harshly. The girl stares into space. I unobtrusively pull away from her.

Just as I reach the door, Ed pulls out of his daze. He jumps against the door with a thud and wheels toward me.

"Why did you look up Roth?" He looks down at me like a master again.

But I understand the game now. I look straight at the room tap.

"I know that you must of looked him up, you're the one who mentioned looking him up in the Encyclopedia. How did you know that he wasn't there."

"Shut up!" Ed screams. "You shut up! You're lying."

Everyone looks at him suspiciously. It doesn't matter that they don't know for sure. In a state of ignorance, nothing is known but fear.

I walk out; the others follow quickly behind. Two men enter Hungry's room. I hear him say ". . . and then they came for my neighbor and I said nothing, now they have come for me and there is no one left to speak."

I hear Ed down the hall, screaming "You're lying, you son of a bitch! You're lying!" The buzzer is ringing loudly in his room I ask him to close his door. I hear a loud thud outside.

VIII. Afterwards

The next day they told us that Hungry Jew had jumped out of his window. He had been working on the bars every Saturday, they said. We all knew different.

The girl with no name is the greatest woman writer now. She is also an alcoholic. I couldn't believe that; she was always so romantic.

I went on to become a master, an accomplishment that wasn't as impressive as I had once thought. I changed my influence to Borges during my sophomore year and became editor the same year, filling Ed's vacancy.

Presently I am working on "The Complete Works of Jorge Luis Borges." I soon hope to publish a novel, "Don Quixote," if they will allow me. Work is going quickly now that I have discovered that I needn't know Spanish. I understand now, there is nothing I can do. I am not qualified.

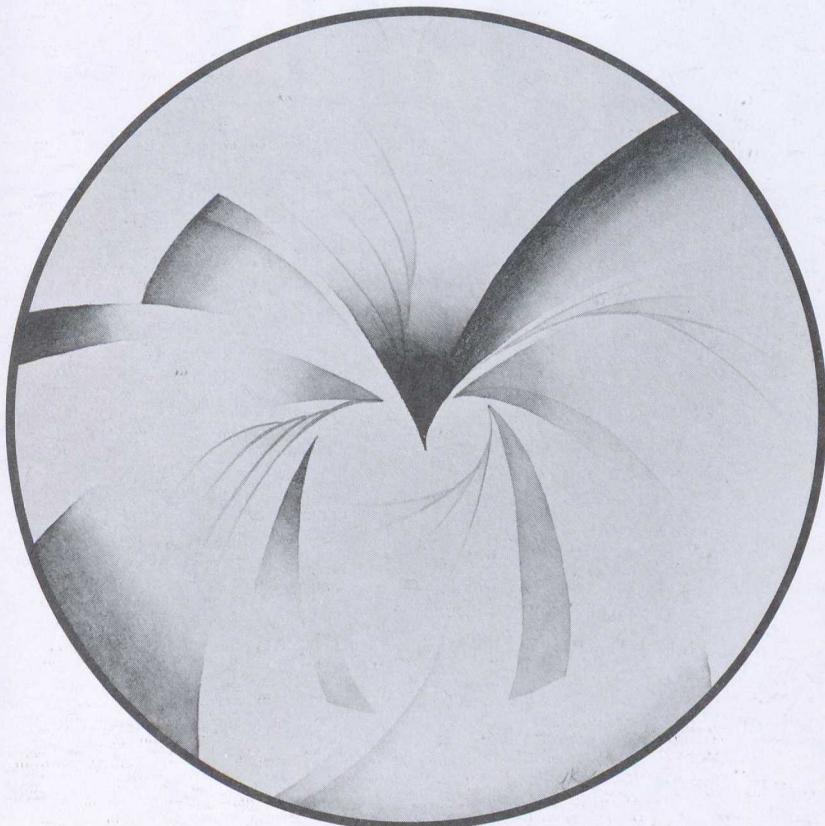
Welders

Knights of the electrical realm
drop visors and become healers;
swarming over the metal dragon,
flux filling sores,
they make him whole

Through mask-bound darkness
they see only the spark,
familiar in its threat.
Flashing in recess of mind:
"The world will end like that"

Helmets rise to torch smoke haze
Miguel straddles two girders and yawns.

Lawrence Keenan



Watercolor

Virginia Kondziolka



Photograph

Into Paradise

By Edward A. Chupack

Under the three flickering lights they looked like characters in an old silent film — their movements sudden, their white faces spreading over the back of the painted wall, their teeth and tongues becoming larger and larger the longer one looked at them, not dissimilar from any of the movies they might have appeared in — or least they looked like movie stars.

"I had Prince Francis spayed," one said. "I did carry him in my arms all the way. You know —"

"That's nothing," the youngest one said. "I had Queen Timocat spayed and you know —"

"That's nothing," the youngest one said. "I was —"

"Let's all shut up," the first one said.

Actually, they were not movie stars, though they did live near Hollywood. They had been to Chicago for a vacation; they were all returning home. The three, the two ladies and the white-haired gentleman, had been drunk on bourbon and soda, the man's favorite drink, ever since passing over the Grand Canyon, and this is why they were happy, why Mrs. Empol allowed Miss Holit to pinch her in the arm over St. Louis, why Mr. Redolo spilled a little bottle of wine on his gray flannel pants over Phoenix.

"Hey Redolo!" Mrs. Empol screamed. "Redolo, Redolo, Redolo smells like . . . like . . . wait! Redolo looks like . . . wait Redolo . . . oh forget it."

The plane began its descent.

"I have it!" Miss Holit slammed her head against the seat cushion and raised her arms to the air and kicked her legs up and down and shouted, "Redolo is a dog's name! See Mrs. Empol? Redolo sounds like the name of a dog."

Both ladies jumped up and down in their seats and shouted in between laughs, in unison, "Redolo is a dog's name. Redolo is a dog's name."

"Maybe," Mrs. Empol whispered, "maybe we should have the poor thing spayed!"

If the ladies had been watching the movie they would have seen Dirk Tanner push an old lady's head into the mud. Mr. Redolo smiled.

At precisely the same time that one of the three reading lights burned out, leaving two shiny discs to illuminate the three, the pilot told the passengers to fasten their seatbelts and to stop smoking. As Mr. Redolo stripped off his shoes and socks the plane began to dive toward the earth, not as planned by the pilot, but awkwardly, and then, it was then, one of the engines stopped. And Miss Holit screamed. And Mrs. Redolo prayed over and over, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, save me, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, save me." And Mrs. Empol dug her nails into the cloth arm cushion and cut herself on a broken bourbon bottle and bled and wrapped her hand with a magazine page — and it tore — and screamed and her head flew back; and Mr. Redolo looked at her; and the bleeding stopped.

The reactions of the rest of the passengers were not dissimilar.

The pilot's voice, smooth and calm and soothing, drifted over the passenger's heads and said, "Be calm. I have over twenty years of flying experience." A window started to crack.

Mrs. Empol told Miss Holit to, "please stay calm and things aren't, are not, that bad dear, and here, read this." Mrs. Empol threw the magazine to Miss Holit and almost into Mr. Redolo's lap, but it bounced off Mr. Redolo's neck and the magazine fell open to a story about how many dogs are born in the U.S.A. alone and how many by sheer necessity must be killed, and how the number of dogs and cats and hamsters and gerbils born is on the rise, and Miss Holit read this and calmed down considerably.

One of the passengers flew out the window.

A little girl yelled, "Uncle Woawy" and followed him.

Twenty more passengers flew out the window.

"The pilot is dead," screamed the stewardess as she was sucked out of the plane.

"The stewardess is dead," said Mr. Redolo.

The stewardesses that were left led the remaining passengers, who rocked back and forth in prayer, saying, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, saheyvame, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, saheyvame." At least one passenger had time to mutter, "Ohio State" before he did a cartwheel and rolled out the plane.

The copilot screamed, "I am in control, I am in control! Everybody please move to the front of the plane. Everybody please move to the front of the plane."

"This is not real!" Mr. Redolo yelled. "Please! Please! Please! This is not real."

Metamorphosis flew out the window.

"I want to live" yelled Mrs. Empol.

"Don't you see it?" yelled Miss Holit. "We're —"

"This is not real!" yelled Mr. Redolo.

"We're —"

"This is not —"

"We —"

"This is not re —"

"We —"

"This. Please. This is not happening."

Boomsy and Dropsy, an old vaudeville team, tried to cheer up the passengers and did as much of their old routine as they could remember before their suitcases slid out the hole in the plane.

"Goodbye everybody," they had said when they were done.

A portable stereo record player flew out the window.

A small color television, which was not packed well enough under a seat, flew out the window.

Boomsy and Dropsy slid out the window.

A ragdoll flew out the window.

The movie projector flew out the window.

A sunlamp rolled out the window.

An electric heater flew out the window.

The movie screen ripped and half of it flew out the window.

A box containing extra large, red, plastic tomatoes cracked when it fell to floor, and the extra large, red, plastic tomatoes bounced out the plane.

"Don't you see it?" yelled Miss Holit.

"No!" yelled everyone left.

"We're —"

"This is not real!" yelled Mr. Redolo.

"We're heading, we're actually going into paradise!" she screamed.

Just then she tripped on a single, stranded plastic tomato and flew out the plane.

"Maybe they'll make a movie of us!" squealed Mrs. Empol. "Quick Redolo, start writing!"

"Jesus," the last word of Mr. Redolo, rolled off his lips gently and the plane engines sputtered for just a short while.

The End

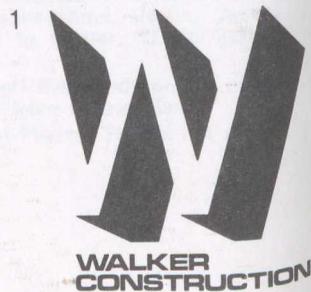
Corporate Identity

Every business association projects an image internally and externally. The growing need for a positive identity with the general public has become recognized by large and small corporations in recent years.

Graphic designers are consulted to develop standards by which this positive identity can be achieved. Extensive research into the nature of the individual company is undertaken. Usually, on the basis of associative characteristics, a symbol is developed to provide a visual composite of the corporate character and direction. The symbol and the type style for the company name become the trademark.

The following trademarks are examples of student work in this phase of Visual Communication. As a part of the NIU Design Area curriculum, students provide a complete Corporate Identity Program for a proposed client of their choice.

1
Designer, Larry Galia
Client, Walker Construction



2
Designer, Mick Shay
Client, Jewel Companies, Inc.



3
Designer, Randy Capp
Client, McCormick and Co., Inc.



4
Designer, William Takatsuki
Client, Palmer Music House, Inc.



5
Designer, Don Evans
Client, Juicy John Pink's

6
Designer, Dan Diederich
Client, Bank of Silvis

7
Designer, Katharine Wolff
Client, Edgebrook Mobile Home Park

8
Designer, Virginia Kondziolka
Client, DeKalb Toys, Inc.

9
Designer, Patricia Quinn
Client, Greenacre Cleaners

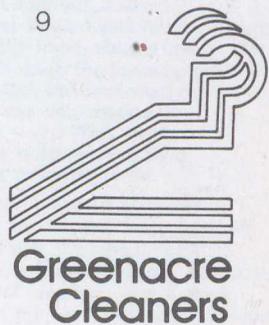
10
Designer, Ken Pagni
Client, The Fabric Square

11
Designer, Jan Terselich
Client, Pizza Villa

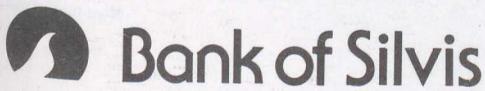
5



9



6



10

The
Fabric
Square



7



8



11



Woman Doing Dishes

"...the sunny inexorable hours" —Randall Jarrell

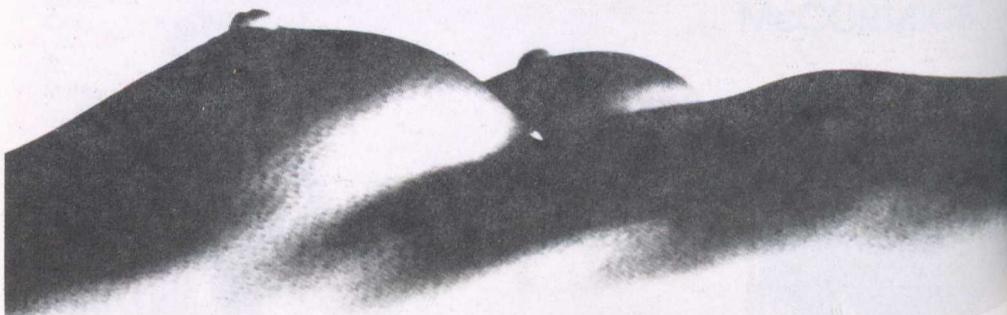
1.

The scent of lemons in a vast, flat day.
Days like this she can follow the sweep from
the edge of the sky to the shrubs in her yard
—gazing through her window, hands in the sink,
tracing the plain as thoughtfully with her eyes
as a mindless, pleasured hand would stroke a silk.

Her hum rising and falling like a bobbin
thread. Her home rests lightly on a loom:
the coldest coppers come piping down
from the tanks and towers that pin the prairie's
water, sewage, electric and gas,
riding lightly in loam as in air,
giving and taking their liquids like love:
running through her house, her neighbors',
and beneath the road, to a country behind her.

She lives in a house of taps and knobs.
When she goes to the stove and twists the knob,
the sweet dangerous air gathered there will leap
lightly up to form a soft blue crown.
When she turns on the radio, the gathered tunes
will drop in an arc from that distant tower
to fill the room with a noise light as thread.

There are voices and nerves that come weaving
in and out of her days, a perfect tension,
a feeling that she cannot fall, or be lost;
that she cannot cry, but it will hum down the line
and someone, six counties away, will know.



Photograph

The landscape is a dream. A green meditation
in the ribbed and rocky fact of the earth
in the life of gullies, gulches, and mudslides;
respite, these long dry roads, the freight trains
aching the plain like beads, cars smoking
dust trails in the distance, transformer towers
stationed like giant housewives in aprons,
perfect crust, a life built on the gulch
of human bones: now shining in the afternoon
of this woman's eyes like silence, lemon
dishwashing liquid, and warm water.

Her hands rest like stones in the soapy water.
The afternoon sags. She thinks of a lake,
turquoise pond at the edge of a road
in winter, startling against the weed-
washed white of a dead farm, where a helpless
man and car vanished from the fact of the earth.
The land is scattered with the glistening traps
of deadly lakes. She seeks a frame, has found it,
here, at the window, and has mastered
the landscape as the builders have, the farms
flowing like quilts, cities like jewels,
the dark forests, everything, beautiful in her eye.
Was it not the man and not the lake that steered
her way to that conjunction? "The mind
makes the world, and makes it beautiful,
anything at all." And then, standing
at her window, she thinks: Nothing can break this
but the conscious will.

3.

At night, she sleeps beneath the deepest blanket,
the nameless warmth of unknowing, of deep sleep
and twitching hands. The lights of fireflies,
the vagrant sex-scents of insects and dogs,
the lights of distant towns and cosmic rays,
the drone of airplanes, smells of cars and factories,
swirl every square of the quiet room and stitch,
with every breath, her chest. She dreams of the tank
that shines in the west, in the moonlight,
the name of her town hugely stenciled on the side,
and it is suddenly clear for her to see
how it is filled with a parfait, a soapy
liquid rainbow, three million gallons: her dream,
and the dreams of the town, ebbing gently, but the
centuries, surging through the buried pipes —
all the colors confused, but sectioned out
to separate houses, the only meters
being love and guilt — and then leaping
lightly up to her ear to form a husband,
lost, or a lover, lost, or a silent lake.

There are faint voices, nerves, a nameless
tension in her days, binding her body to itself.
She knows, or soon will, that she herself
holds to her dreams, is bound, nor can she loose
the certain threads of memory. She is alone,
she sleeps, as out on the road, other people's cars
whip up and down past her house like scythes.

Michael Antman



Photograph

Peter Herdklotz

Kansas

By Lawrence Keenan

Land of Dorothy and the Yellow Brick Road, wheat and twisters, the land locked water spout, belly of the beast. The spirit of farmers haunts this land, once untrammeled by distant power and cross of gold.

They ride now down U.S. Highway 70. Flat and straight as an arrow, it cuts the state in half along its length east to west. A four foot tall cyclone fence runs parallel on both sides of the roadway north and south. Beyond it are the interminable wheat fields, undulating in the breeze to the furthermost horizons interrupted but briefly and rarely by the occasional corn field. Travelling at the fifty-five miles per hour speed limit it is but a flicker of green amid the gold.

The small blue Ford carries its three passengers in a slightly pitching fashion after the irregularities of the concrete. The black upholstery of the interior is dusty as are the foot wells in the back seat where there is not mat. A young man with uncombed red hair just reaching his shoulders dozes peacefully, his mouth

hung open. He rests on a pillow covering the neck of a large guitar case. There are two more cases, but these are in the trunk. Beside him on the seat lies a two foot square cardboard sign. It says:

MAGIC
MOUNTAIN
BLUEGRASS
FESTIVAL

It was taken off the driver's door when the small amount of tape had loosened, threatening to blow it away.

In the front seat on the passenger's side, a tall, lank youth turns with a look of disgust from the monotony of the scenery. He rearranges himself amid such discomfort, easing his weight off the door he had leaned against for the past several hours. A cooler containing liquor and the remnants of a loaf of bread necessitates a twisting motion on the seat. He glances back at his sleeping companion. The front seat passenger seems tired and perhaps feels that soon, he will try to sleep. His hand goes to the dashboard to steady himself after the car takes a particularly rough bump.

The dashboard has three books of matches on it. A white one with gold lettering announces that "Your Savings Are Secure at 1st National Bank of Osmond". A second lies on top of the inoperative car radio's speaker grid. It is white with a black, smiling figure drawn in cartoon bolts of electricity. He is Reddy Kilowatt, the symbol of Wisconsin Power and Light. In the corner of the driver's window is a red book of matches with bold white letters. It says:

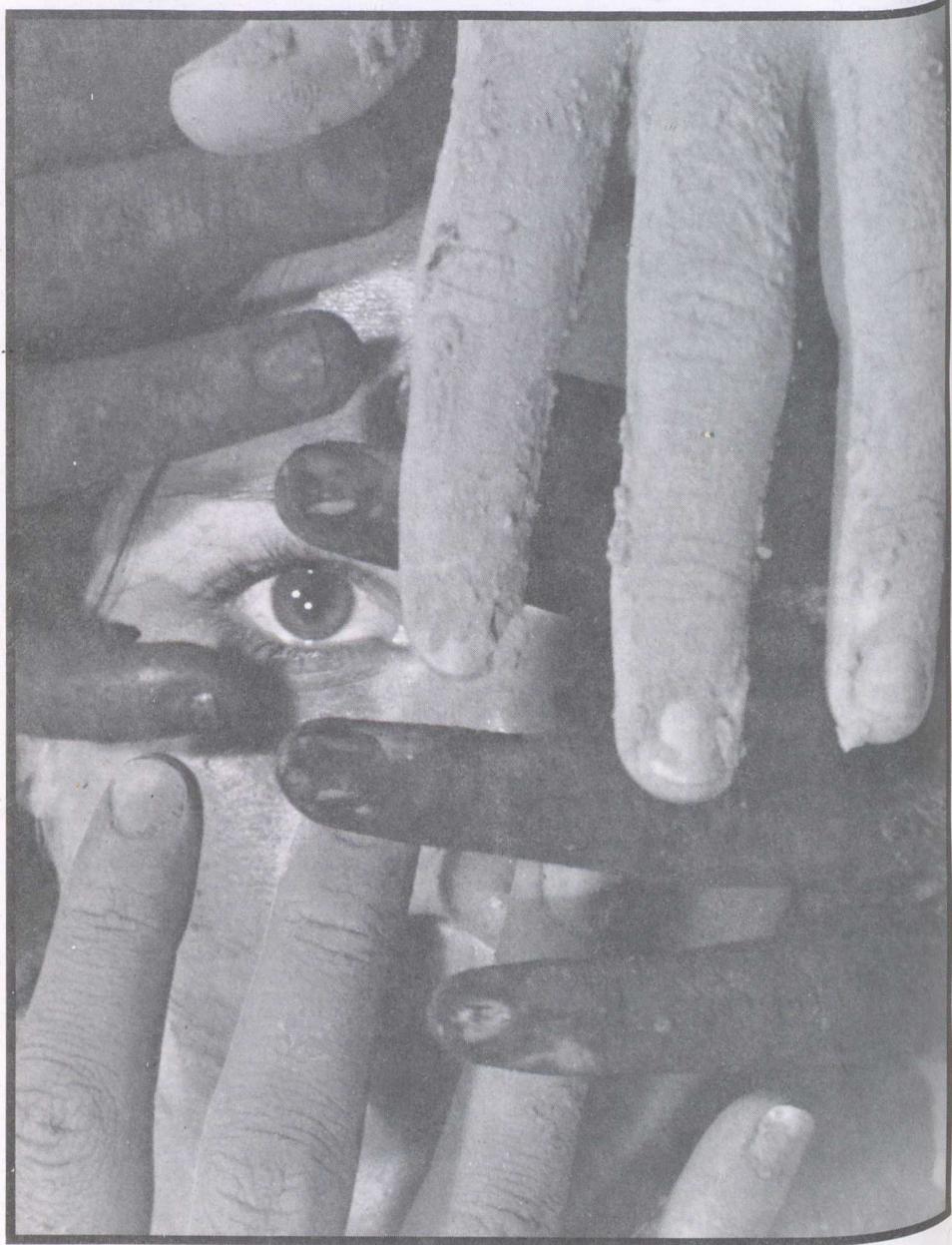
WE STILL DON'T KNOW

The driver lets forth a grumble of discomfort. The afternoon sun is just beginning to shine through the upper edge of the front window. He feels in his pocket for his sunglasses. The driver's hair is long and curly. His head is topped by a cowboy hat. A tangled beard emerges from under his hair, seemingly from some concealed place at the back of his neck. He would appear to be almost a throwback to outlaw times some 80 years earlier in this same locale. He gazes at the stretch of road ahead and his jaw twists angrily. Perhaps he wishes that the horizon was truly an end and its cliff would drop them to the land where the sun slept.

Some thousand feet above them, a small red and white airplane flies. It bears a seal and the inscription "State of Kansas-Highway Patrol." A man in a tan uniform sits leisurely in his pilot's seat. The airplane is on automatic and the road passes beneath him more defined than it appears on the ground in a moving car. For him the highway is a double grey line, the fence appearing hazy at the road's perimeters. The fields of wheat are carefully sectioned off as is the road. Few cars are out today. With a pair of binoculars he picks out a blue car, taking note of its make. Then he takes a stopwatch and times their passage in eight seconds. The officer picks up the microphone of the police band radio and calls ahead, giving the voice at the other end a description of the car that will pass him in several minutes. An officer will give them a ticket somewhere up the road. The officer in the plane looks to the western horizon as if he could see the waiting patrol car beyond the seeming convergence of the parallel lines below.

Putting the notepad down, the patrolman throws off the automatic pilot and pushes the plane into a graceful Immelman that will wake him up. As the plane arches into a sky dotted with several small clouds, perhaps he grasps the beauty of the scene, a second sky of dappled green, hardened and purified by the concrete's slash. There are farmhouses grey and white, numerous red barns and their silos, some of which are metal. The only interruption in the shifting wavelength of gold is a small, fallow space of land about a half mile to the northwest and below the plane.

In that field, a lone farmer walks on the land which he must leave unplanted this year. The government has paid him to aid in the stabilization of farm products. Some one hundred and thirty years ago, when the first settlers came beyond the Mississippi, the land was flat and naked of highway, fence, and food grown by man. Innocent, it lay under its short covering of wild grass for hundreds of miles. They said that when a man wandered beyond family and home, losing sight of those things behind him, he would suddenly discover himself alone in a world consisting solely of ground, sky, and sun. Then the individual became aware of the horror and disgust of being alone in the center of an universe without definition, without identity. They called this prairie madness.



Photograph

Lorne Bidak

Gondola

By Gayle Crist

There's this gondola floating gently along a canal somewhere. You assume it's Venice. The gondolier has curly black hair and a tiny little moustache. He looks just like your favorite disc jockey who has the six-till-nine morning show on the station you listen to all the time. There's no one in the boat except you and he. You don't ask any questions. Bliss is bliss. The splutter of the oars entering the water and the swish as they cut the rippled surface and glide smoothly through the water with the slow swaying of the gondolier's body are all you are aware of. Everything is covered in mist. Then you see them — eight ghostly ballerinas, pirouetting slowly towards you over the water, floating on the mist, not shrouded but clear and amazingly colorful. They wear orange and pale blue and pink and yellow tights, with slippers and skirts to match. Two of each color. You rub your eyes and sneak a glance at your gallant gondolier. He's staring into the water, mesmerized by the motion of the oars, unaware of the strange ballet taking place a few waves away. He catches your eye and smiles, his moustache straightening out over his top lip. You're gazing into his endless black eyes you hear it, clear as day — the "Waltz of the Blue Danube" spilling out of the mist, getting louder and louder. The dancers dance remarkably well on water, perfectly in step with the flow of the music. They're surrounding the boat now, all eight of them, spinning and twirling, doing arabesque after arabesque. They spin faster and faster until the bright colors are nothing but a blurred tornado; you can't see anything but the gondolier's face peering out of the mist. His grin is stationary, his body continuing its steady swaying. The boat tips and rocks and glides and. . . . The ballerinas have stopped. One of them stares at you — it's your cousin Susie who moved to Denver last year, once your favorite cousin. You wonder what she's doing in Venice in tights and ballet slippers. You open your mouth to ask her and she fades away. Still the rocking and the gondolier's grin. You try to break the trance — "Quick, take me to Paris on the double," you say to the dark statue in the corner of the boat. Imagine you're on your way to Paris, everything will be fine when you get there. No more ballerinas, no more sneering gondoliers. . . . The boat has stopped. You see why the gondolier comes toward you with the oar poised above your head; his eyes have turned to black flames, his mouth into a queer, crooked smile. He comes closer. The boat tips, you feel yourself leaning back as the oar comes down and down. . . . A splash of water on your face. You stare into the bathroom mirror. You wish Tony were home; he could make you feel better. You get an urge to call your cousin Susie in Denver to see how she is, if she knows any shifty-looking Italians. . . . You put everything out of your mind and start making the coffee. Tony wouldn't be home until five thirty; if you could stay busy till then, you'd be fine. Turn on the radio. Don't let your mind wander. There he is — the curly-haired disc jockey. "This is Tom Annunzio and the temperature is a chilly seventeen degrees. Today's weather will . . ." Switch it off. The flaming eyes and black moustache swim before your eyes. You gulp down your coffee and plunge your hands in the dishwater. Keep moving, keep occupied, don't watch the clock, hum. The swish of the water, the gentle waves of suds — you hear everything again. Your tune is cut short. You grab the faucets and snap them off, snatch up a towel and run from the kitchen. Lie down on the couch, settle down, breathe deeply and relax. Let everything go limp, concentrate. You bolt upright — the TV! That'll drown out anything. Password! You decide to watch Password. Alan Ludden is smiling as he hands the password card to the players on each side of him. "The password is 'inane,'" a voice says. You snuggle down into Tony's stuffed chair and put your mind to work. The round is over and it's a commercial. The distinguished-looking English guy is telling you how to order a collection of best-loved works of the great masters all on one remarkable long-playing record for the unbelievable price of only \$3.98. The great Ninth Symphony, Vienna Woods, Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture and many, many more. And then, there it is — the memorable "Waltz of the Blue Danube," pouring out of the television set. You fling the remote control box at the wall. Would Tony ever get home?



Photograph

Gerry Zeinz

After Sunday Mass

Home, after Sunday Mass.
Six American children
Freed to romp on the equator.
White shirt backs streaming,
We pile out of the wagon
And stop to watch some
Fat flying squirrels bounce
Among the treetops.

Under the house
Father finds a cobra
Silent among the stilts.
Crystal, eyes like salt
On the tail of a bird, he
Soothes the cobra from striking.

Calls — "that V-blade shaft,
throw me."
I balk like a sun-startled mole.
"that there, throw me."

I see like a switch" clicks,
Grab, and toss to a quick
Hand that bites first
And impales the snake
Six inches below the head.

It rears a coil
And hisses.
A hood spreads bowl-shaped
Below the jaw revealing
The "spectacle" symbol
Of King Cobra.

Voice trembling, father
Explains with a nature lesson,
Severs it with a deeper thrust,
And chattering like chipmunks
We are off to breakfast.

Christopher D. Guerin

In the Philippines

There are huge brown beetles,
Dull, and dragging their stiff undersides
Anywhere there is water.
As children, we dug basins, made puddles
And fed them with bits of rice.
They proved vague and expendable weapons
To our toy commanders.

There are tiny gray beetles,
With pincers twice their bodies' length,
Who bury those bodies
At bottoms of funnel-shaped
Pits they dig, and wait.
With foreheads deeply furrowed,
We captured ants and only dropped them in.

There are red ants that march
In groups, and black ants in
Single file. Natural enemies —
Each always outnumbers
The loser in contest.
We bottled equal numbers and
Rewarded the victor a lid without holes.

There are termites that build
Tunnel homes on the sides of
Trees with sawdust and mud.
As children, we crumbled
What we could. Weeks later,
The fortress stood again
To our punching fingers.

Christopher D. Guerin

The Brace

By Christopher D. Guerin

The U. S. S. *Waverly* sways on the water, lashed to great wooden piles that jut up from the edge of Dock 4: a converted convoy escort, with large open spaces fore and aft from where huge pivotal turrets had once aimed and fired. Now, in peacetime, the *Waverly* carries military travelers. They, its passengers, await disembarkation.

The boy stands awkwardly, hands shoulder high, clutching the brown, salt-stained and pitted railing. A loud piercing blast, followed by a deeper tone, reaches from the forward smokestack, at everyone. Collin feels frightened and alone, compact. His sister Deanne stands close to him, seeming engrossed and excited. What there is left of a fog in a lifting fade moves across the bay, through a red skeleton-like bridge and out to sea. Collin and Deanne face the other way. The sun has burned through, clearing the sky. It was rumored the sailing might be postponed altogether until tomorrow because of the fog. The scheduled leaving time was already three hours past. Hearing this, Collin had smiled, the tan stretching pale on his cheeks. He was glad and had whispered so to Deanne, who frowned. Now, he's disinterested in the action on the deck which is full and peopled; not a ship-deck anymore but a large messy party-floor strung with hundreds of streamers; red, white, blue. The party, now three hours old, has become, it seems, heavy with uneasiness. The sun burns too hot. Collin sees wet hatbands cradled in sweaty palms, parasols hot and dry. Many of the streamers lay torn and trampled on the deck-floor.

Lieutenant and Mrs. Page have left the deck and returned to their berth to look for something Mrs. Page claimed she'd left behind. "I hope they don't find it," Collin says, not turning his eyes from the docks and yards where hundreds of colorful people are watching him. They are working, loading and unloading, or watching and smiling; hurting themselves to send the ship to sea with no more delay. He watches them, intent upon their faces which all seem the same to him. "I wish one of them had it." "No you don't Collee, you know what'll happen if it breaks, you'll hop or crawl or have to stay in bed." "So what, I don't care," he says, not looking at his sister. The flowery little hat on her delicate head looks fresh and bounces right and left with her eager eyes.

Toward the bow, the pointer of the ship still aimed at land; on the dock five men are pushing, rolling a tremendous barrel; black with dirty-white stenciled letters on its side: "Motor Fuel to: Philippine Islands, Luzon, Luzon Naval Base," up a shallow wooden ramp with two-foot spaced slats for footing. There is a loud bang each time the barrel drops up and higher off one of the slats among the curses and commands of the laboring men. It disappears into the hold. Collin leans far over as he can, looks for the men to reappear, frowns when they do.

"Where are we going, Dee, tell me again?" "A hundred times I've told you, Collee, to the Filipeen I-lands, now don't ask me any more." Persisting—"where is it, these Fipileen Islands?" "I don't know for sure, way out there somewhere," she says, pointing toward the mass of the ship itself and gesturing to what is beyond. "I can't see it." Let me take you around to the other side, then you can see." "Will I see the Fipileen I-lands?" "Of course not, dummy, just where they are. They're farther than anybody can see." "Don't call me dummy." "You want to go to the other side?" "No, I want to stay and watch."

He drops his hands off the top railing and grasps the vertical steel rods supporting it. They're not yet warm. He sits cautiously on the rutted floor of the deck and tries to slide his legs through the six-inch spaces between the rods. The right leg fits but he can only get it through up to his knee because the other leg won't fit through at all. The steel strips on his leg are too wide apart. He tries turning the leg sideways, pointing his left toe right as far as he can. His sister isn't watching. By straining and pushing, excited and absorbed by the difficulty of the task, he crams his foot through, but no more. The two metal strips extending from his hip, under his shorts, slightly bulged at the knee and into and through two cylinders attached to his boot, and welded to a steel plate, rubber padded, wedge themselves between the two steel rods through which he can see the roof of the dock-housing and pleasant movement and life action on the hills of the city beyond. There are great red letters on the roof, "United States Naval Docking," and under them in smaller blue characters, "San Francisco, Cal." The red and blue are dim and brightless. The words they paint look timeworn. He pulls at his leg, tries to lift it, straining hard, but it is caught. Calmly—"Dee, my leg is stuck"—no louder—"Can you help me . . . Dee?" His sister has moved down the rail several yards and is watching a huge crane unload a net laden with a long wooden box. Still calm but louder—"Deel!" She walks over to him and shakes her head. Not angrily—"How did you do that?" "I wanted to sit and rest, dangle my leg." She stoops and tugs gently at the leg. "You're always doing things like this, Collee. Last time I had to dig you out of the snow for sticking your leg where it didn't belong. You've got to be more careful." "Don't pick on me. I coulda' got out of that hole. I didn't need your help that time." He looks like any little boy with a brace of steel and leather would have looked, sitting on the deck, trying to watch. No one stopped to help because no one seemed to think anything was the matter.

Collin wears the metal strips two years since August and he is quite used to it. "He's too young to have it bother him" and his friends found it too mysterious to make fun of, except for one little boy, Collin's age, who made fun of him and said he wore the brace because he was bad and his father had crippled him, beating him to be good. He sometimes even likes it. Collin will say to people, but once he was caught with a razor, a dull tool left in the bathroom, trying to cut the leather straps, thin and black with ground-in sweat, into little pieces around the rivets that bound them to the metal strips.

His sister slowly works his leg from side to side until gradually it is free. "For six years old you can sure make a nuisance of yourself," she scolded, "so just stand there, no sitting, and watch. Mom and Dad will be back in a little while." Showing him a sharp look she returns to place down the rail.

The water beneath the U. S. S. *Waverly* is very green. Devoid of depth, yet transparent; a thin slice off the top might be as green and sparkling as the deep ocean itself. The water is one of the things which frighten Collin for he can't see being in it. The boat is in the water and he doesn't know why. The surface looks firm enough to hurt should he touch it hard with his hand. He believes the green itself makes it look firm. But it moves and that is what truly frightens him. Firm things don't move, or roll and peak as the water does beneath the ship. He doesn't watch the water much, but when the boat sways, and he can feel it, he can't understand. It frightens him.

The hills of the city loom close and large upon the dock-house; a mess of scattered buildings with occasional high-rises and skyscrapers, living and peopled, where even a boy could sense the teeming of life and the rootedness of brick and mortar; permanence a city of faces he's only scarcely been allowed to see. The city doesn't frighten him. He grew up in one.

Maybe if he were older, leaving wouldn't be such a hateful thing. The city might still be the same when he returns and that helps him feel better. The beach yesterday had been like a miniature city, people grouped in bunches like they had walls, windows and a roof about them. Maybe that would be, it would have to be the same. And the sand-dollar he'd found in the same space dollarless a moment before, washed there without a sound he could distinguish from any other, from the sea which hadn't that day, seemed quite so firm and impossible. It is in his suitcase along with the other shells and bits of wood and stone he'd found. What of that?

As he watches the hills beyond the dock-house and the cars like cautious sleds defying and freeflying with weight, climbing and shooshing the steep, steady

hills, all at the same speed, an uneasy feeling about the treasure in his bag begins in his head and sends a yellow, depressing shiver through his mind. He pulls his right hand from the rail and, holding steady with his left, fishes into pocket and brings out a piece of jagged stone. He'd stepped on it in the surf and, bringing it out of the water, had been puzzled by its strangeness. He fingers and studies its fine veinlike lines of green and blue, like the back of a hand, the pitted black and red craters of the larger spaces cut deep into the rock and the flat wavy part of its one smooth end.

The hills are beyond the dock-house, bright in the sun and solid. He lets the stone slip from his fingers, bouncing tinny and knock on the deck, kicks it between the steel rods, not watching as it silentplops into the water.

What was that?"

"What?"

"What was that you just kicked into the water?"

"Just a stone."

"Oh . . . I thought it was something else."

"What?"

"Just a toy or something."

"Oh." Collin turns again to the shore, determined to stay there until he's gone. The boy standing next to him he ignores. He likes the feeling of the other's silence. Then he thinks of something — "What's your name?"

"Bobby," the boy smiles.

"You're not six yet are you?"

"Naw, I'm only five," — the boy's thin quivering smile fades a little — "Really I'm five and a half. I was a half two weeks ago . . . what's your name?"

"Collin, but my sister calls me Collee. It's all right, I like her."

"I don't have a sister. I have lots of brothers though. They're all way older than me."

Collin becomes impatient, thinking: . . . he doesn't have much of anything . . . stones or a sister . . . and he's only five and a half. . . . "That's too badyou don't have a sister," he says tersely, pauses and thinks of something else — "Hey, do you have any soldiers? It would be neat if you did."

"Yea, I do," — more excited — "My dad bought them at the base exchange before we left. They're almost brand new, they're the new Alamo soldiers, with Dan'l Boone and Davy Crockett."

"That's neat all right. If you like I could play with them with you some time. We could have a war."

"Sure, that'd be fun," — hesitates — "But I get to be Dan'l, okay?"

Now Collin is almost angry. "Sure," he says, looking into fast-batting blue eyes, "you can be any darn thing you want," he says quickly as he can, "don't like Daneeul Boone anyways." He shuts his lips and snaps his teeth together, feeling he has somehow made himself less.

"Hey, that sure is a neat brace you got on your leg. There's a kid back home has one, but it isn't half as neat as yours . . . how long have you had it?"

Collin says nothing. Watches the people on the dock. Waits.

"Well, I have to go now. Maybe I'll see you later, okay?"

"Sure," Collin says sharply, then — " . . . Bobby." He smiles wan, then unhappy as the younger boy walks away in almost cocky fashion, as if he knows he'll be seeing Collin again, as if he's forgotten the snub already.

Collin's lips become tight, like a shellfish angry at itself for grabbing at fake food — seaweed or shifting sand, or for missing something edible, and determined not to grab again till it is sure.

Deanne returns. "Who was that? Have you found a friend already?" "Naw, he's just a little kid," — then thinking, then saying — "But he does have some soldiers." Deanne smiles. "That's good, maybe he'll let you play with them." "I don't know if I'd want to." "Why not, maybe you'll learn something." "Like what?" "I don't know, I used to learn a lot playing with dolls, maybe you can learn playing with soldiers." "Not with him, he's just a dumb little kid." "You can never tell." Collin doesn't want to talk about it anymore and turns away.

She shrugs — "I wonder where Mom and Dad are, they're going to miss it." "I hope we never leave."

"We found it, Collin. It was in your mother's bag." The boy stares at his father who brandishes a leather hoop like the one on Collin's hip. It is the spare part of the brace that often needs replacement. "Now we can keep you walking," he says and thrusts it into the large pocket of his overcoat. The father smiles, and with the effort a war-wound scar on his jaw stretches and whitens. Collin's eyes, like the glare of a flashlight, are beamed to his father's uncaring. The lieutenant stops smiling, averts his eyes.

The parents take positions, the father on Collin's right and Mrs. Page on Deanne's left. The boat is nearly free in the water, rampless and bobbing more like a cork than it had before. There are great, thick manila mooring lines, wrapped a hundred times around piles on the top of the pier, still stretching to the bow and stern. The party is again re-energized, but with less vigor than before. More streamers, like daylight tracers, are flying; the bomb-like blasts from the stacks are quick and many-numbered. The sun is in full control, and hats, white and black on the dock, bounce around like stark and indistinct ball-bearings. The faces upturned, all smiling, are brown and red and unchanged from their first sailing. The faces on the ship-deck are skittish with reluctant smiles and tired. The hills have begun to look faintly hazed from the heat, quivering and less steadfast; the air is awash with heat and light, refracting and changing the front of house and store-building. It is tradition to chop the great manila lines with big, shiny axes, wielded by strong and robust longshoremen, instead of untying them.

It fascinates Collin for a fleeting second, their ability to sever the thick rope with a single clean stroke. The engines fire but Collin hears only a long, loud, slow rumble, seemingly powerless and inadequate. At last there is motion. It is hard to sense the cause, but soon he feels the throbbing push of the propellers.

Then he is crying. And he tries to hide it. He shifts his leg consciously to a more comfortable position. The heavy block of rubber on his right leg, a device for even height, doesn't hinder him as much as the steel. The right leg is strong. The tears are silent for a time, but soon begins the steady catching and letting go, heaving of his chest, as he cries outright. He isn't loud, but he can't subdue the catches and falls, like slow hiccups. He rubs his eyes with his fists. The Pages see, but leave it to Deanne. "What's wrong, Collin?" he says, touching his elbow. "When will we come back?" "It won't be long." "Are you sure?" "Yes, now why are you crying?" "I don't want to be leaving so soon," he says and reaches up to grasp her waist.

The ship has turned and is pointed toward the red, now rusty looking bridge. Collin can see the sea, beyond. And the ship feels like a car moving smooth and gliding peaceful on a wide and open road, different than the thick hull seemed to suggest of movement in that strange hard glaze by the dock. His sister brushes the dark, straight brown hair from his forehead and, taking his hand, walks him across the deck and through two great metal doors back to their berth.

The Exhibition

The savor of paint and words —
The "Monet" who drew lazy water lilies in circles —
two "artists" wishing to tear the cult
up and out of rooting —

Light, light sweet like a calm sugar —
Paint, paint and words refusing their balance —
Men with sad desires to give themselves
lost to sad, contemporary hands.

Before Monet, they examine their inequalities.
Before themselves, they offer a gentle word:
saying: "The flesh is the paint."
"The mouth is the word."

And they argue with confusion.
And they enjoy sexual innuendo.
And they know a passage between Europe & America.
"And if it is truth, it is bad truth," they say.
And if it is paint "why/wordless?"
Water lilies: dull.
Monet is forgiven: "lost to an element of time."

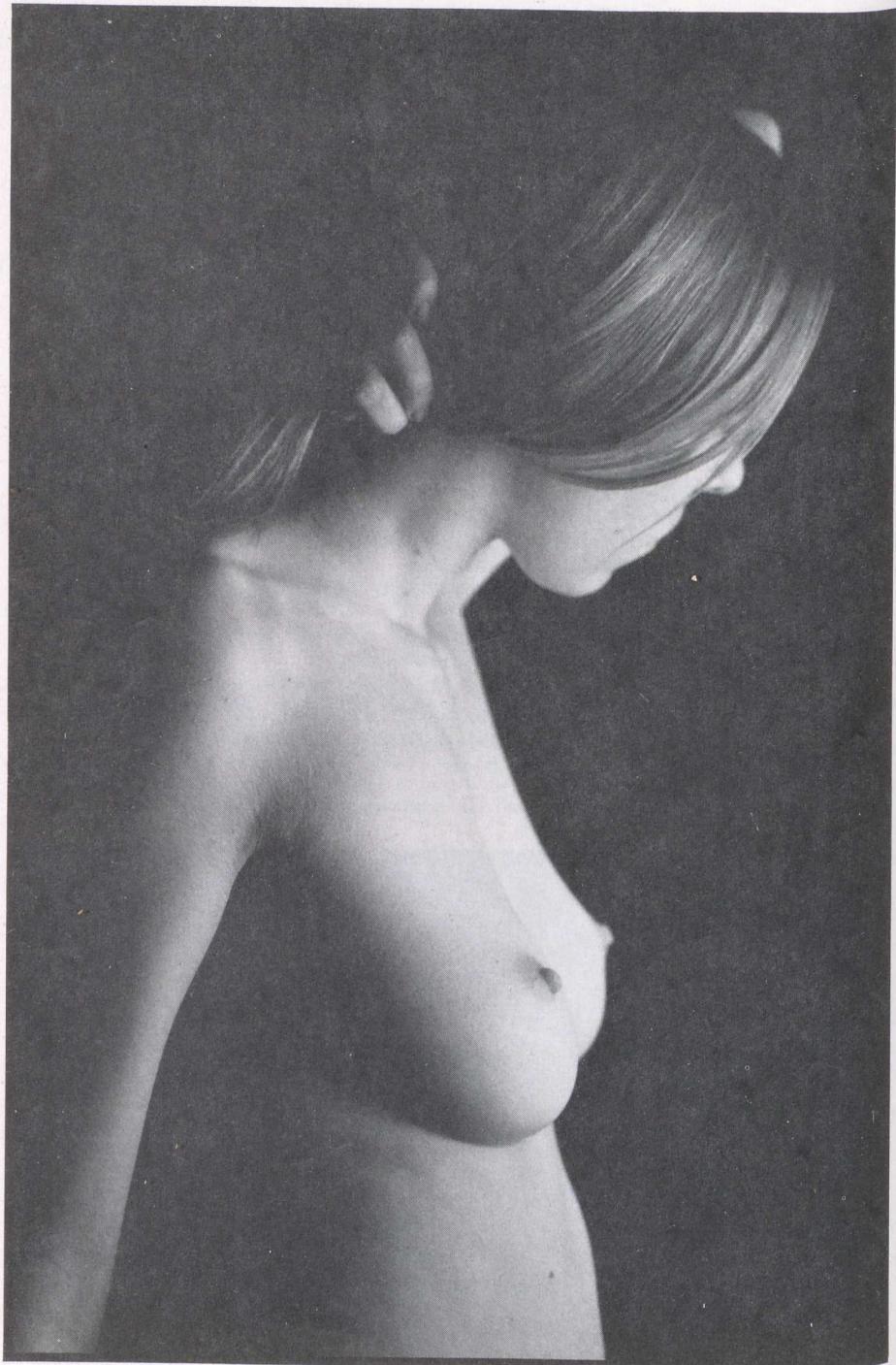
They create a tradition: one of words:
the other, of paint.
They are noticed laughing as the leave.
The art dealer reasserts Picasso appears to
be the "idiot genius" he has suspected.

Thomas Sanfilip



Photograph

Dan Diederich



Photograph

William Takatsuki

Woman Off Her Pedestal:
The Treatment of Sex in Frank Norris' McTeague
By Jane Trucksis

In speaking of Frank Norris, Maxwell Geismar says, "Part of this novelist's early fame rested on the fact that he had restored the sexual drives to their proper place in human affairs. . . . Nevertheless, he persisted in viewing them as the creation of the Devil."¹ This seeming paradox is manifested in all its contradictions in *McTeague*, Norris's most celebrated novel. The sexual impulse is shown as an intrinsic force in man's nature, and yet it is condemned as evil in all its naturalness. This conflict is exhibited in the attitudes and behavior of the main characters, McTeague and Trina, whose destruction is precipitated by the sexual attraction that brings them together.

Robert W. Schneider states that, in *McTeague*, Norris's "Victorian attitude toward the sexual relationship was clearly shown . . ."² In accordance with the limited and essentially negative view of sex that Schneider notes, Norris adopts the puritanical view of women maintained by Victorian society, in which they are classified as either "normally" sexless and good, or deviate and sexual — evil. Trina plays both roles, however, as she gradually (and inevitably) develops from a distorted "normality" to the evil and destructiveness born of sexual repression. As soon as she begins to enact her function of "Destructive Woman,"³ the burden of guilt for the "corrupting" influence of sex is conveniently placed upon her. This narrow puritanical rationale, so restrictive to women, works in support of the notion of male supremacy that went unquestioned in Norris's day, and to which he enthusiastically subscribed. Through an examination of the pervasive influence of sex on the character of Trina and the idea that sex is evil, the puritanical view of women and the concept of the "Destructive Woman" in *McTeague*, the basic connection between a negative attitude toward women and an unhealthy outlook on sex becomes clear.

An "all-pervading influence of the sexual instinct" in Norris's works is remarked by Ernest Marchand as it is manifested in "certain of his (Norris's) feminine characters."⁴ Trina is certainly one of these female characters with strong sexual instincts; this emerges forcibly throughout the action of the novel. For instance, when McTeague kisses Trina at the B Street station, she shows herself to be powerless before her sexual impulses: she responds to McTeague with intense passion after a brief preliminary struggle. He asks Trina if he can kiss her again a few minutes afterward, "But Trina was firm now When it came to his pleading — a mere matter of words — she was strong enough."⁵ It is McTeague's physical approach that overcomes Trina's resistance and wins her consent to marry him. The narrator suggests that the lack of sexual initiative on Marcus's part accounts for his failure to secure Trina's affection: "If he (McTeague) had confined himself to merely speaking, as did Marcus . . . she could have easily withstood him" (p. 727). Norris tells us that McTeague has awakened Trina's sexual self, that "something that had hitherto lain dormant, something strong and over-powering" (p. 73). Curiously though, Trina's discovery of sex, for all its powerful impact, is not seen as a natural, inevitable occurrence, but rather, as a "mysterious disturbance" (p. 73). Before her sexual awakening, "She was frank, straightforward, a healthy natural human being, without sex as yet. She was almost like a boy" (p. 73). It is implied here that Trina will lose these assertive, vigorous qualities when she begins her sexual life. The afterthought — "She was almost like a boy" — is particularly striking. Not only is a state of existence "without sex as yet" considered to be natural and healthy, but the state of boyhood — maleness — also qualifies for this distinction. Thus, if one is male, one is a "natural human being"; if one is female and sexually aware, one is somehow rendered unnatural. Since Trina's sex drive is shown to be as strong as that of McTeague, once it is aroused, she, as a woman, is condemned to abnormality if she realizes her sexual potential. In such a way, the strength of the sexual instinct — which Norris regards as deplorable but undeniable — is a particular curse to women.

Trina does not acknowledge her loss of naturalness upon sexual initiation, however, because she does not conceive of her attraction to McTeague as sexual. A young woman of the Victorian era was only supposed to feel "love." Consequently, after first questioning the nature of her feelings toward McTeague, Trina eventually resolves her anxiety by labeling her sexual desire for him as "love." When McTeague takes her in his arms by force and kisses her, Trina is overwhelmed with desire for him; yet she says, "'Oh, I do love you! I do love you!'" (p. 75). It is only when she has thoroughly blurred the distinction between love and sex that Trina agrees to marry McTeague. She is initially seized with terror of him on their wedding night, but her sexual desire finally conquers her fear. And yet, the narrator tells us that she surrenders her resistance when "her great love for McTeague suddenly flashed up in Trina's breast. . . ." (p. 141; italics mine). The confusion of love and lust that can be discerned within Trina exemplifies the strategic rationalization of sexual feelings in a time when the powerful sexual instinct of man that Norris presents was not conceded by society to be so strong.

The public reaction of shock and disapproval to *McTeague* was, to a great extent, a result of this lack of agreement between Norris and his society as to the primacy of the sexual instinct. It is surprising that this attitude of censure should have prevailed. For although Norris presents sex as a basic human drive, he does not hesitate to condemn it as evil. Marchand asserts that "The idea is ineradicably planted in Norris's mind that the sexual impulse is of its very nature evil and to be deplored."⁶ Norris's judgment of sex in *McTeague* is severe: man cannot resist his sexual instinct; yet, it is his yielding to it that brings on his destruction. For example, when McTeague is aroused at the sight of Trina lying unconscious in the dental chair, the narrator declares that "suddenly the animal in the man stirred and woke; the evil instincts . . . leaped to life . . ." (p. 27). Norris's own attitudes are conveyed through the voice of this third person omniscient narrator. His negative outlook on sex is unequivocally exposed when the narrator asks, "Why could he not always love her purely, cleanly? What was this perverse, vicious thing that lived within him, knitted to his flesh?" (p. 29).

It is interesting that while McTeague believes that the "evil instincts" of sex emanate from himself, he fears more for their power to corrupt Trina than he does for his own debasement. In other words, his sex drive is regrettable, but endurable; yet, if he satisfies his desire with Trina, it is he who will be defiled. This view stems from what is referred to in psychological parlance as the "Madonna-prostitute complex": good women have no sexual urges; those who do have such

impulses are evil.⁷ (This complex is an accurate explanation of the Victorian categorization of women—see above.) By recognizing and responding to Trina's sexuality, McTeague would no longer be able to regard her as good and sexless; she would become an evil woman in his estimation: "Dimly he seemed to realize that should he yield now, he would never be able to care for Trina again. She would never be the same to him, never so radiant, so sweet, so adorable; her charm for him would vanish in an instant. Across her forehead . . . he would surely see the smudge of a foul ordure, the footprint of the monster" (p. 28). McTeague, the monster, might feel remorse for what he had done but he would merge from the encounter unscathed. Indeed, once Trina does respond to McTeague's sexual advance — when she has returned his kiss with enthusiasm — "a slight, a barely perceptible revulsion of feeling had taken place in him. The instant that Trina gave up, the instant she allowed him to kiss her, he thought less of her. She was not so desirable after all" (p. 69). Trina has fallen from her pedestal as the desirable, yet innocent, woman through the reciprocation of McTeague's passion. The narrator, in giving voice to McTeague's thoughts, asks "Was he not disappointed in her for doing that very thing for which he had longed? . . . Perhaps he dimly saw that this must be so, that it belonged to the changeless order of things — the man desiring the woman only for what she withdraws; the woman worshipping the man for that which she yields up to him" (p. 70). What McTeague "dimly saw" Norris felt that he knew for a fact. The author's belief in this "changeless order of things" dictates the actions and orders the downfall of his characters.

It would seem that the application of this belief of Norris's in his novels should have rendered them more palatable to his puritanical reading public. McTeague's disappointment over Trina's fall from grace clearly reveals a longing for the lost innocence of the ideal woman. Gismar says that ". . . Norris accepted an ideal of absolute — almost schizophrenic — purity and complete sexlessness in his popular fiction."⁸ It is hard to understand how Norris's critical audience — which condemned the sexual immorality of the novel — could have missed this. And if Trina's punishment for her sexuality is not sufficiently clear by the end of the novel, the sexless love affair between Old Grannis and Miss Baker is unmistakable testimony to Norris's ideal of love without sex. Significantly, the romance between these two characters is the only one in the novel that is favorably portrayed. Their old age serves as a convenient excuse for the lack of sex in their mutual attraction: a chaste kiss on the cheek is the climax of their intimacy. In idealizing such a romance, Norris exalts a state of sexlessness — or "purity," as he would conceive it — in love relations. It becomes apparent that his attitude toward sex is fundamentally disapproving, and thus it is in harmony with the view of Victorian society.

Norris's conception of women certainly reflects the beliefs of his society. William B. Dillingham states that Norris "took an almost puritanical view of the nature of women and their role in life . . . they were expected to live unselfishly for their men . . . the woman is . . . self effacing, silently dependent."⁹ In terms of their sexuality, this implies that women were not supposed to have any sex drive or to make sexual demands; rather, they were to receive vicarious satisfaction through submission to their husbands' desires. Obviously, to be an ideal woman in such a society would entail a degree of mental imbalance. Since Norris accepted the puritanical ideal of his society, it is unlikely that he intended to expose its essential perversion. Yet, through his characterization of Trina in *McTeague*, this is exactly what he does.

One aspect of the puritanical view of women is the belief that woman has been created as man's helpmate, and that when a woman marries, she becomes her husband's property. McTeague is elated to have "won" Trina. After she has expressed her attraction to him through her passionate response to his kiss at B Street station, "a great joy took possession of him. He had won her. Trina was to be for him, after all. An enormous smile distended his thick lips; his eyes grew wide and flashed; and he drew his breath quickly, striking his malletlike fist upon his knee and exclaiming under his breath, 'I got her, by God! I got her, by God!'" (p. 70). His desire for Trina on their wedding night springs from this same feeling: "An immense joy seized upon him — the joy of possession" (p. 141). Trina does not dispute her status as McTeague's property — that "she was his now irrevocably . . . she belonged to him, body and soul, for life or for death" (p. 74). Just as her desire for McTeague convinces her that she loves him, Trina's "love" for McTeague is based on his possession of her: "She loved him because

she had given herself to him freely, unreservedly; had merged her individuality into his; she was his; she belonged to him forever and forever" (p. 145). This notion of possession would perhaps be less harmful if it were reciprocal between man and woman. But when the male is owner and the female chattel, woman's submission to man inevitably follows. It is the ideal of submissiveness that especially endangers the mental health of women. Trina, in her enthusiastic emulation of this ideal, exemplifies its most devastating effects.

Before Trina will indulge in sexual pleasure, she must first be taken by force and made to submit to McTeague's strength. It is only after McTeague "took her in his enormous arms, crushing down her struggle with his immense strength" (p. 69) that she yields to her desire, responding with unexpected eagerness. The brutality of McTeague's sexual approach is for Trina its most attractive aspect: ". . . he had only to take her in his arms, to crush down her struggle with his enormous strength, to subdue her, conquer her by sheer brute force, and she gave up in an instant" (pp. 72-73). On her wedding night, when her fear of McTeague gives way to the desire he enkindles in her by "crushing down her struggle with his immense strength, . . . she gave up to him as she had done before, yielding all at once to that strange desire of being conquered and subdued" (pp. 141-42). Marriage to McTeague is the culmination of Trina's feeling of submission; she considers marriage to be "the absolute final surrender of herself, the irrevocable, ultimate submission . . ." (p. 145).

If McTeague delights in his possession of Trina, he is repelled by her submission: "The very act of submission that bound the woman to him forever had made her seem less desirable in his eyes" (p. 74). He may not see the necessary connection between Trina's possession by him and her submission to him, but McTeague eventually realizes the perverse nature of her "love" when her passion for him increases commensurate with his brutality. Even when he would bite her fingers, "this brutality made Trina all the more affectionate; aroused in her a morbid, unwholesome love of submission, a strange, unnatural pleasure in yielding, in surrendering herself to the will of an irresistible virile power" (p. 239). At this point, Norris seems to admit the potential destructiveness of the ideal of female submissiveness when it is carried to its logical extreme: masochism. Trina's masochism reaches its climax when she gloats over the wounds that McTeague has given her. She and Maria Macapa try to outdo each other in delineating their sufferings: "They told each other of their husbands' brutalities, taking a strange sort of pride in recounting some particularly savage blow, each trying to make out that her own husband was the most cruel. They critically compared each other's bruises, each one glad when she could exhibit the worst. They exaggerated; they invented details, and as if proud of their beatings, as if glorying in their husbands' mishandling, lied to each other, magnifying their own maltreatment" (p. 240). Trina had become nearly insane with her submission mania. She is the Frankenstein monster of a society which espouses a puritanical ideal of women. It is no wonder that McTeague turns from her with disgust and loathing. Trina has truly become the frightful creature which Norris fears all women to be.

From a vision of women as frightful it is but a short step to a view of them as frightening. Norris certainly portrays Trina as a threatening character. By awakening McTeague's "evil" sexual instincts, and thus arousing his (formerly dormant) brutality, Trina is, if indirectly, the instrument of his destruction. And since it is essentially in her sexual role as a woman that she effects McTeague's ruin, not only Trina, but women in general, appear as destructive by nature. Dillingham notes, "The recurrence of the Destructive Woman (particularly in his early works one of which is McTeague) suggests the extent of Norris's distrust of femininity.¹⁰ Norris expresses his distrust of femininity in various ways in *McTeague*, in each of which Trina represents Destructive Woman.

After McTeague has yielded to the temptation of Trina's sexuality, kissing her as she lies unconscious before him in the dental chair, he regrets his action. But Norris excuses his lust with this explanation: "Below the fine fabric of all that was good in him ran the foul stream of hereditary evil, like a sewer. The vices and sins of his father and of his father's father, to the third and fourth and five hundredth generation, tainted him. The evil of an entire race flowed in his veins. Why should it be? He did not desire it. Was he to blame?" (p. 29). Marchand remarks, in reference to this passage, ". . . it seems hard that desire for a woman should consign a man to the ancestral sewer."¹¹ On the contrary, this harsh belief that man is condemned because of his sexual origin and nature has existed

since the dissemination of the myth that Eve tempted Adam to the first sin. Norris need not blame McTeague for his lust when the guilt can so easily be shifted to woman, the temptress, the descendant of Eve. If McTeague carries hereditary evil in his blood, its source is the sin of Eve, who tempted Adam to sex with her, just as Trina tempts McTeague to sexual desire for her. Trina is just as unaware of the ruin she is bringing about as was Eve, but she is nevertheless made to carry the burden of guilt for it.

As if it is not bad enough that Trina lures McTeague into sin with her, she then refuses to admit that she has committed a sin — she does not believe that sex is evil. When Trina's sexuality is roused by McTeague's kiss, she is startled by the intensity of this force that she had not known to exist within her. She wonders, though, "was it to be feared? Was it something to be ashamed of? Was it not, after all, natural, clean, spontaneous? Trina knew that she was a pure girl, knew that this sudden commotion within her carried with it no suggestion of vice" (p. 73). Trina senses the intrinsic goodness of sex. At a time when women were thought incapable of achieving orgasm, her knowledge of the joy of sex threatens the entire male power structure: believing that sex is good, Trina will not feel that the expression of its impulse should be repressed, nor that she, as a woman, should be oppressed for the possession of it. Norris seems to realize the power inherent in the enjoyment of sex without guilt, and the emphasis on masculine brutality and bravado in his novels is his response to the threat of female sexuality.

Dillingham claims that Norris "lived in constant dread that he might be . . . an effeminate little man, and that fear spread to a wider concern with the implications of the loss of masculine force and philosophy in modern life."¹² Geismar explains how "the philosophy of masculinity," as Dillingham terms it, has influenced the sexual relationship between Trina and McTeague: "On McTeague's part at least, this love affair, opening with the fantasy of rape, was based on the notion of masculine virility that impales a woman rather than satisfies her, and that avoids all the true centrality of sexual feeling for a purely physical sensation of conquest."¹³ If Norris did indeed fear effeminacy, it is conceivable that his male characters would reflect this fear in their tendency to display an aggressive sexual style — a defense against the effeminacy that a gentle approach to sex would suggest to Norris. In order to fully enjoy one's sexual feelings, one must be relaxed and susceptible to sensation. But a male character who thinks of sex as a battle from which to emerge victorious will shrink from the tenderness of an intimate sexual union. He will distance himself from the sensitizing influence of sex by a rough and aggressive method of lovemaking.

It has already been shown that McTeague uses his physical strength to subdue Trina into sexual compliance. That his approach is a response to his fear of Trina's sexual power over him is indicated in his reaction to her beauty in one of their initial encounters: "She breathed warmly on his forehead and on his eyelids, while the odor of her hair, a charming feminine perfume, sweet, heavy, *energizing*, came to his nostrils, so penetrating, so delicious, that his flesh pricked and tingled with it; *a veritable sensation of faintness passed over this huge, callous fellow, with his enormous bones and corded muscles*. He drew a short breath through his nose; *his jaws suddenly gripped together viselike*" (p. 26; italics mine). The sensation that McTeague experiences is one of keen delight, yet he tries to harden himself against this pleasure — manifested in the "viselike" gripping of his jaws — for fear that it will weaken him. McTeague's attempt to resist Trina's sexual allure is futile, however; overcome with lust, he kisses her "grossly, full on the mouth" (p. 28). His reaction to Trina's irresistible attraction is one of fear: McTeague becomes "Terrified at his weakness at the very moment he believed himself strong . . ." (p. 28). With such a need to be on his guard against Trina's sexual charms, McTeague never develops any feelings of tenderness for her. Afterwards, as he contemplates his determination to "have" Trina, a memory comes back to McTeague: "And she had cried 'No! no!' back at him; he could not forget that. She, so small and pale and delicate, had held him at bay, who was so huge, so immensely strong" (p. 3g). He cannot forget her power over him in the mysterious sphere of sex. McTeague's only means of mastering Trina is by using his physical strength; thus, their sexual relationship is characterized by brute force from its initiation to its violent end.

Another way in which Trina's potential destructiveness as a woman is intimated is through the concept of the "second self." When McTeague is tormented by

his "evil sexual instincts," at the sight of Trina helpless before him, "a certain second self, another better McTeague rose with the brute . . ." (p. 28). In McTeague, the second self is his conscience — the superego, in Freudian terms — which acts as a curb upon his animal impulses. In Trina, however, the second self is the id, or the gratification impulse. Trina's sexual nature is the "second self that had wakened within her and that shouted and clamored for recognition" (p. 73). Hence, while man's craving for pleasure is restrained by his conscience, woman's emergent sexuality overrides the natural inhibition of her pre-sexual existence. Female sexuality is thus an unbounded force, and every woman a potential succubus, threatening to drain and exhaust men in her insatiability.

Recent research in sexuality has revealed that Norris's fear has some basis in fact: in term of orgasmic potential, there is a general tendency toward female Sexual insatiability.¹⁴ But this need not be a cause of male paranoia in a loving, trusting relationship between a man and a woman. The relationship between McTeague and Trina, however, is neither truly loving nor trusting. As a result, Trina's unrelenting sex drive comes to irritate McTeague, and he eventually refuses to satisfy her. She in turn becomes selfish in her demands on McTeague, thus confirming the male fear of woman as succubus. Dillingham claims that Norris's conception of the nature of the female is based on this fear: "He believed in a phenomenon of human nature that could be expressed this way . . . when a woman loves a man, her vision tends to narrow and become selfishly restrictive. . . . Sometimes this . . . is projected in terms of sexual interest. Before marriage, McTeague is sexually excited over Trina, whereas she is only vaguely interested. After marriage, McTeague settles down to become an indifferent lover, but Trina's interest intensifies."¹⁵ This pattern can be discerned throughout the novel.

Not long after McTeague's marriage to Trina, the narrator tells us that "There had been a time when to kiss Trina, to take her in his arms had thrilled him . . . beyond words. . . . That time was long past now. Those sudden outbursts of affection on the part of his little woman, outbursts that only increased in vehemence the longer they lived together, puzzled rather than pleased him. He had come to submit to them . . ." (p. 149). Now, it is McTeague who submits to Trina's passion; her supposed submission to him is simply an acted fantasy of hers, no longer a response to any desire of his. Years later, the same situation is seen to exist: "At times, a brusque access of passion would seize upon her, and with a nervous little sigh, she would clasp his thick red neck in both her small arms and whisper in his ear, 'Do you love me, Mac, dear?'" (p. 196). McTeague is still "puzzled" by Trina's mounting passion, and fails to reassure her of a desire which he no longer feels. After McTeague has been forced to abandon his dentistry practice, their relationship deteriorates further, and McTeague's tolerance of Trina's need for physical love becomes strained: "Trina, no doubt, loved her husband more than ever in the sense that she felt she belonged to him. But McTeague's affection for his wife was dwindling a little every day. . . . it was no longer a pleasure for him to kiss her and take her in his arms; she was merely his wife. He did not dislike her; he did not love her" (p. 220). Before long, though, McTeague comes to hate Trina, responding to her anxious demands with resentful anger. His reply to her complaint, "'Oh, Mac, I've only you now, and if you don't love me, what is going to become of me?'" is merely "'Shut up, an' let me go to sleep.' (p. 256).

Trina's growing love for money is partly due to her latent greed that had been exposed through her winning of the lottery. But it is also to some extent a reaction to McTeague's failure to satisfy her ever-increasing sexual needs. Rejected by McTeague in her pleas for warmth and sexual satisfaction, Trina transfers her passion for her husband to a mania for gold. The sexual nature of her love of money is suggested by the hiding-place for her gold: "At the very bottom of her trunk, under her bridal dress, she kept her savings" (p. 163). Trina keeps her gold under her bridal dress, beneath which she originally cached her sexual treasure-chest. When she locks the gold in her trunk "turning the key with a long breath of satisfaction" (p. 164), she is symbolically locking herself off from McTeague. Her husband's demands that she give him her money only harden her resistance: "the more her husband stormed, the tighter she drew the strings of the little chamois-skin bag that she hid at the bottom of her trunk underneath her bridal dress" (p. 237). Trina repays McTeague's sexual coldness with miserliness, knowing that she can get revenge by depriving him of the only thing he now wants from her — her gold.

In time, the sexual nature of Trina's passion for gold becomes more than symbolic; her love of gold becomes a fetish. She puts the gold in a corner of the room, and stands back "to note the effect, her head on one side" (p. 238), just as she once used to play with McTeague, "stretching his ears out straight and watching the effect with her head on one side" (p. 108). She comes as close as she can to making love with the gold: ". . . she would draw the heap lovingly toward her and bury her face in it, delighted at the smell of it and the feel of the smooth, cool metal on her cheeks. She even put the smaller gold pieces in her mouth and jingled them there. . . . She would plunge her small fingers into the pile with little murmurs of affection, her long, narrow eyes closed and shining, her breath coming in long sighs" (p. 238). This perverted love reaches its climax when she experiences symbolic sexual intercourse with her gold: "One evening she had even spread all the gold pieces between the sheets, and had then gone to bed, stripping herself, and had slept all night upon the money, taking a strange and ecstatic pleasure in the touch of the smooth flat pieces the length of her entire body" (p. 277). From a "normally" dependent and submissive woman, Trina has developed into a creature governed by a single obsession. Her advanced degree of madness may not have characterized the mental condition of the majority of women in the Victorian age. Nevertheless, Norris has effectively (if unintentionally) shown the ultimate tragic consequence that can result when the puritanical ideals that this society upheld are fully embraced and emulated.

If Norris presents his female characters unsympathetically — as destructive to themselves and others — he is merely reacting to the hideous manifestation of an essentially perverted social ideal of women. Dillingham suggests that the implicit condemnation of women in Norris's novels does not reflect the author's actual feelings about the nature of woman. He claims that Norris's "dim view of femininity was the result more of principle than emotion."¹⁶ With his belief in the shaping power of the environment, Norris could hardly have denied that his emotional reaction to women was regulated by the ideas of his society regarding their proper place and purpose in the world. From the perspective of the present, the socially determined nature of Norris's attitudes toward sex and women can be more clearly seen.

NOTES

¹*Rebels and Ancestors: The American Novel, 1890-1915* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), p. 6.

²"Frank Norris: The Naturalist as Victorian," *Midcontinent American Studies Journal*, 3 (Spring 1962), 13-27.

³The concept of a "Destructive Woman" type in Frank Norris's novels is postulated by William B. Dillingham in his *Frank Norris: Instinct and Art* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969).

⁴*Frank Norris: A Study* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), p. 113.

⁵Frank Norris, *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco* (New York: The New American Library Inc., 1964) p. 70. All subsequent references are to this edition and appear in parentheses in the text.

⁶Marchand, p. 69.

⁷Arthur Janov, *The Primal Scream* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1970), p. 285.

⁸Geismar, p. 63.

⁹Dillingham, pp. 88-89.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 90.

¹¹Marchand, p. 69.

¹²Dillingham, p. 84.

¹³Geismar, p. 20.

¹⁴W. H. Masters and Virginia Johnson, "Orgasm, Anatomy of the Female," in *Encyclopedia of Sexual Behavior*, ed. A. Ellis and A. Abarbanel (New York, Hawthorn Books, 1961), Vol. 2, p. 792.

¹⁵Dillingham, pp. 91-92.

¹⁶Ibid, p. 92.

In C Minor

My mother likes quiet cool nights
when she can watch her tomato plants
tousle each other in the breeze.
We talk about God and the people we know
and those we don't but would like to
and the songs that have been running through our heads

She sings "Good Morning Starshine"
and gets the words wrong,
and we giggle until no sound comes.
We must lean against each other
like rain-crushed camellias.

After a time, she muses:
"I used to listen to Beethoven.
Tchaikovsky, too.
But they run too deep,
They carve a pain
I'm too fragile for . . .
The older I get, the more
frightened I am to listen."

I watch her sitting there,
moonlight thrown across her feet,
and think:
But the music runs through everything.
A breeze skims the trees
and sends a leaf somersaulting down.
The night is the music, and we are the notes.

Julia Hoskin



Photograph

William Takatsuki

