



# TOWERS

The literary magazine of Northern Illinois University.

# TOWERS

The literary magazine of Northern Illinois University.

*Northern Illinois University DeKalb, Illinois No. 66 Spring 1987*

---

## Verbal

- On A Road Like This* **Susan Eichner p. 4**  
*Untitled* **Susan E. Stemont p. 5**  
*Inside Nuremberg Prison* **Donald Fulmer p. 7**  
*Guardians* **Brian Paul Ritchard p. 10**  
*No Man's Land (Knoitsa, 1947)* **Gus A. Vasilopoulos p. 11** Poetry Prize  
*"Ah, Me!"* **Valarie Jean Gilbert p. 12**  
*Old Age* **Matt Witkowski p. 14**  
*Down In Florida* **Marc Hausmann p. 16**  
Poetry Prize  
*Rain Sonnet* **Gwen Walker p. 17**  
*A Hawk's Passing* **Laurie A. Evans p. 19**  
Fiction Prize  
*The Mechanics of Insanity in Three Easy Steps*  
**Margaret Schafer p. 22**  
*Time Warp* **Robert A. Baker p. 24**  
*Ciema Studies - Sailing Forward Without the Mast:  
A Response to Gerald Mast* **William Covey p. 26**  
*Harp Player* **Duane Tremaine p. 29**  
*borne into the whirled* **Duane Tremaine p. 32**  
*Coleridge's Kubla Khan* **Linda Grandy p. 34**  
*Echo, from the Rocks* **Patricia Austin p. 36**  
*Unwanted Privacy* **Karole Bolin p. 37**  
*Untitled* **Jeanne M. Forst p. 38**  
*Coleridge's Theory of Imagination and "Kubla  
Khan"* **William E. Heise p. 40**  
*Faith* **Teresa Bossert p. 43**  
*Aged Woman* **Christine A. Breier p. 44**  
*Untitled* **Jeanne M. Forst p. 45**  
*Spring Planting* **Steven Denny p. 47** Fiction Prize  
*The Meeting* **Patricia Austin p. 51** Poetry Prize  
*Thick Language* **Bret H. Hamilton p. 52**  
*Hinges in Stone* **Bret H. Hamilton p. 55**  
*Swift's Concept of an Ideal Woman* **Lisa Chase  
p. 56**

## Visual

- Untitled* **Alex Rudinski Front Cover**  
*Untitled* **Kelly Day p. 6**  
*"Stump"* **Dave Renniger p. 13**  
*Untitled* **Steve Doyle, Bryan Collins and  
Andy Garst p. 15**  
*Silent Auction* **Tara Triplett p. 18**  
*Untitled* **Katherine Lavicka p. 21**  
*Untitled* **Heidi Giuntoli p. 25**  
*Untitled* **David Quednau p. 30-31**  
*"Title X"* **King Siu p. 33**  
*Untitled* **John Siblik p. 35**  
*"Crown of Thorns"* **Joel Graesser p. 39**  
*"Amoeba Hands/Field Quest"* **Robert Apolloni  
p. 42**  
*Untitled* **Frank Trankina p. 46**  
*"Study for Mask II"* **Chris Ginette p. 53**  
*"A Toy for Tomorrow's Child"* **Robert J. Billings  
Back Cover**

**Editor:**

Steve Owley

**Art Director:**

Tom Brennan

**Assistant Editors:**Michele Begovich  
Laurie Evans  
Ronda Rueff**Staff****Prose:**Dan Bingley  
Jeff Dixon  
John Gadner  
Bridgette Graham**Poetry:**Karole Bolin  
Mark Colby  
Phillip Craig  
Alan S. Johnson  
Chris Megyeri**Critical Essays:**Dan Bingley  
Katie Wietrzychowski**Advisors:**Janet Heller  
Ben Mahmoud**Special thanks to:**Jean Schlacter  
Preston Mathews**Contributors****Poetry:**Patricia Austin  
Robert Baker  
Teresa Bossert  
Karole Bolin  
Christine A. Brier  
Susan Eichner  
Jeanne M. Forst  
Valarie Jean Gilbert  
Bret H. Hamilton  
Marc Hausmann  
Brian Paul Ritchard  
Margaret Shafer  
Susan Stemont  
Duane Tremaine  
Gus A. Vasilopoulos  
Gwen Walker**Fiction:**Steven Denny  
Laurie Evans**Critical Essays:**William Covey  
Lisa Chase  
Linda Grandy  
William E. Heise**Freshman Essays:**Donald Fulmer  
Matt Witkowski

I am proud to take part in the sixty-sixth issue of *Towers*, Northern's student literary magazine since 1939. As our readers can see, things are a little different this issue—we have included some color (more next year) and expanded our repertoire to include some exceptional freshman efforts. It was a lot of hard work all around; I am very indebted to our staff, especially to assistant editors Michele Begovich, Tom Brennan, Laurie Evans, and Ronda Rueff, for their tireless efforts and considerable patience. I am no less grateful to our advisors, Janet Heller and Ben Mahmoud.

In my opinion, this new format constitutes a little more than color and glossy paper; it is a challenge to the NIU community, an opportunity to publish your work in a framework worthy of your efforts. Whatever their position in the university, *Towers* challenges its readers to submit material, and to encourage those they influence to do so. Any magazine is only as good as the material it receives.

Enjoy this magazine—it is dedicated to a continuing, mutually beneficial relationship with NIU's artistic community, and with the larger community of our readers.

Steve Owley, Editor

## **On A Road Like This**

There may be gold in the hills,  
but there's dust in my shoes.  
I've kicked this stone  
for nearly a mile  
and I still haven't lost it.  
On a road like this  
there isn't much else to do.  
You kick a stone,  
you walk a straight line,  
you watch for the holes  
and,  
if a truck goes by,  
you slap off the dust  
and watch the late day sun  
catch on its roof.

*Susan Eichner*

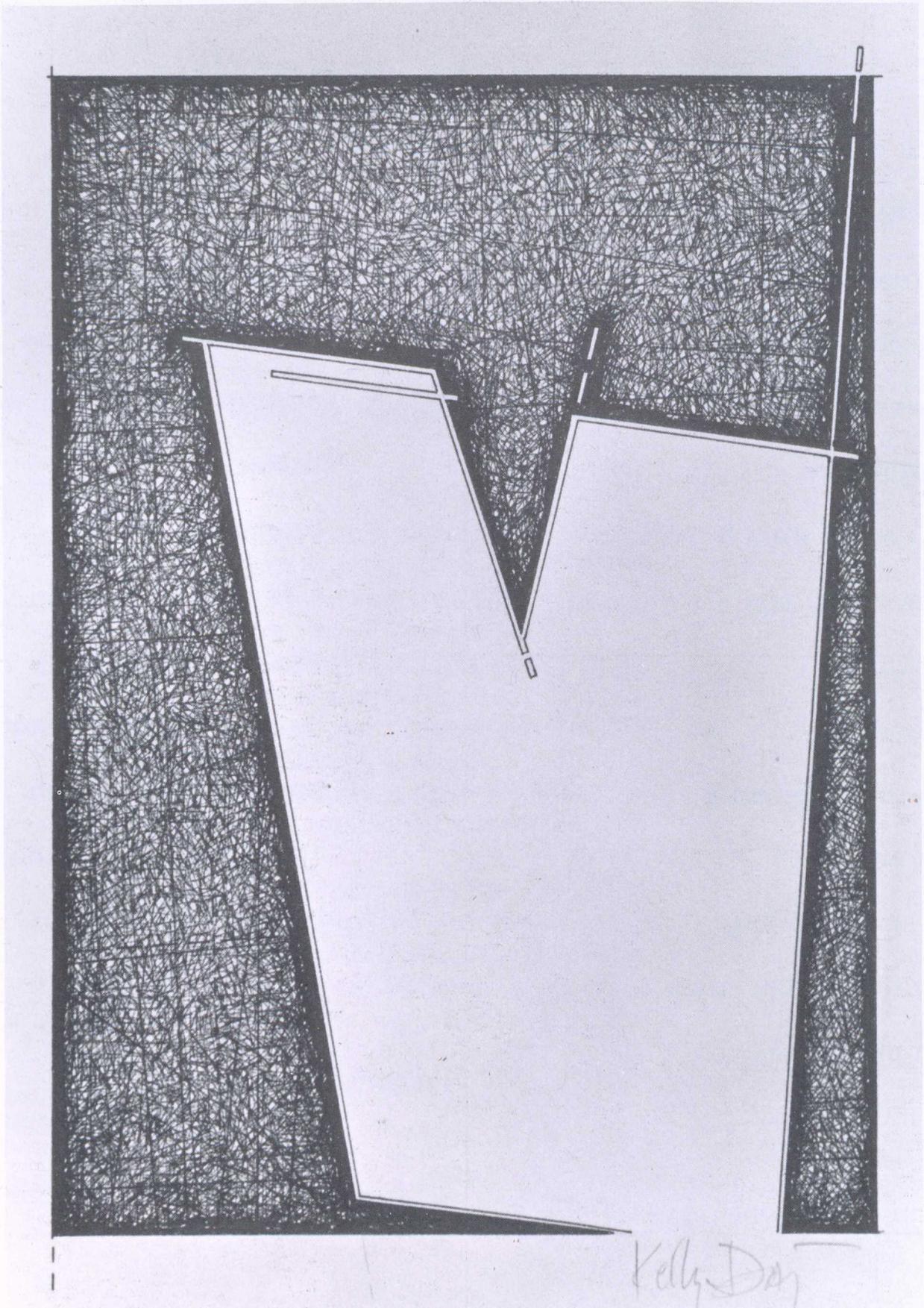
Black oak  
adder-stick  
charred by lightning  
forgotten by the gods  
grows twisted  
bleeding life  
like venom from its wound  
black agony against the winter sky

Black oak  
adder-stick  
falls to the ground  
without sound  
wet and gleaming  
it writhes in the snow  
then disappears  
like ice melting

*Susan E. Stemont*

All summer long  
I read Chinese poetry  
and wrote you a few words  
in lines  
brimming  
with concise passion  
Now I try to write  
lines of a greater length  
but they do not scan  
and the few words too  
have lost their flavor

*Susan E. Stemont*



**Untitled**—Kelly Day

# Inside Nuremberg Prison

Donald Fulmer

For the last four years, I worked at a golf course. It was a gravy job, not requiring much skill. This one afternoon, I was doing what I usually do, reading a book called *Inside the Third Reich* by Albert Speer. The author, Speer, was a defendant at the Nuremberg trial. I'm reading this book and this old man named George comes in and says, "What are you reading?" I told him the title and he said, "Oh, I met the author." Not believing him because some old men have a tendency to stretch the truth a bit I said rather flippantly, "Sure ya did!" George got real upset that I didn't believe him. He said "Will you be here in two hours?" I said, "Sure." Twenty minutes later George came back with some personal mementoes from his army days. It turns out George fought in the Battle of the Bulge, liberated a couple of Nazi death camps, and, after the war, was an American guard at the Nuremberg trials.

He showed me all kinds of pictures from the war. Some were pictures of liberated death camps, places in which Hitler gave his impassioned speeches, bombed out bridges and towns, and hid planes in the forests of Germany. These planes are interesting because the head of the Nazi air force, Hermann Goering, hid them to be used for a surprise attack. The plan was that once the Allies over ran Germany and occupied Berlin, these planes were to be used to bomb Berlin and the Allies.

There were also pictures of the liberated death camps. In one of George's pictures I remember seeing a huge pile of corpses—all white, bony, and very much dead. On their faces was a look of complete agony, suffering and pain. Most of their eyes were open—staring, their mouths open—gaping. They almost looked like mannequins in a department store. I find it truly incredible that people could be that inhumane to other people. I can't help but think that twelve million people went through this hell! After seeing the pictures of these bodies, I wondered how a so-called civilized country could inflict so much pain and death on their own people. I can't believe this event, something out of the Middle Ages, happened a mere forty years ago!

When looking at all the pictures, I like to put the ones of the death camps and the one in which Hitler used to give his speeches together. In doing this I can't help seeing a little sick man with a Charlie Chaplin mustache spewing his hate to

the German masses; I see six years of war and over fifty million dead; I see wrecked buildings and the smell of rotting corpses in Auschwitz—all this for one man and his Third Reich. Hitler's Reich will have an everlasting mark on humanity with its piles of dead from Auschwitz and Dachau.

Another picture that struck me as rather odd showed a horribly mutilated body of a German S.S. officer. When I asked George about it, he said, "If the G.I.'s didn't kill those clowns after seeing all those corpses, the camp inmates who were still alive and strong enough killed them." This is quite an interesting tale—something you won't find in a history book. George said that sometimes the camp inmates went crazy with liberation. Some went around bashing every German's head in and breaking windows, while others went screaming into the wilderness. In one circumstance George's platoon had to lock the inmates back up again because they went mad.

George told me another engrossing story about the starving Russians. Some American C-rations contained stale Hershey chocolate bars and George tried to give his candy bar to a starving Russian P.O.W. When he reached his hand out to give the chocolate to this starving man, George's commanding officer demanded he not give the man any food. When George asked why, the C.O. said that the sugar in the candy would kill the guy. The Russian hadn't had food in so long that any massive dosage of food would blow his circuits and kill him.

The pictures and stories were very interesting, but I was still waiting for George to bring up Albert Speer and the Nuremberg trial. My earlier doubts about George stretching the truth were soon dispelled. Out of his shirt pocket he pulled a small, old, yellow envelope and dumped the contents on the table—five pieces of paper, two pins, and one photograph. I looked at the papers. To my surprise, George had autographs of the top Nazi elite who were on trial at Nuremberg. Three of the autographs were on small scraps of paper and one was on a photo. On the first scrap was the signature of General Alfred Jodl, Hitler's chief of military operations. It was Jodl who signed the surrender papers to the Allies on May 7, 1945. Fieldmarshall Wilhelm Keitel, Hitler's chief of staff, had signed the second scrap. Second only to Hitler in the hierarchy of command, Keitel signed the unconditional capitulation of the German forces

on May 8, 1945. The third scrap held the signature of Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler's chief in foreign affairs. Ribbentrop signed the non-aggression pact with Soviet Russia a week before Hitler invaded Poland, which was the beginning of World War II. The photograph, however, is the prize of this grouping. It is of the most powerful man in Nazi Germany—excluding Hitler—Reich Marshal Hermann Goering. Goering was Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe, President of the Reichstag, Prime Minister of Prussia, and Hitler's designated successor. He was the second man in the Third Reich. The signed and dated picture is of Goering, his second wife Emmy, and his only daughter Edda.

The story about how George got this rare autograph is very interesting. The accused defendants got to see their families once every month. The visit wasn't much: it only lasted fifteen minutes and there were guards everywhere to prevent physical contact through the screened partition. On this particular occasion, Goering strode in as if it was no big thing. He saw his wife, which he usually did once a month. But his 7-year-old daughter was also there, although he had forbidden his wife to bring her because he knew that he would break down if he saw her. Goering started crying and demanded to be led back to his cell. He was well aware that he'd never be able to kiss his wife, hold his daughter, or spend another Christmas with his family; he had a date with the hangman. George led Goering, who was sobbing, back to his cell.

About three weeks later, George was on nightwatch, which was one of the more interesting jobs. The guards had to confiscate eye glasses, pens, and pencils to prevent the defendants from killing themselves. Two prisoners had already committed suicide at the Nuremberg jail. George recalls carrying the body of one Dr. Richard Conti out of his cell. Conti had killed himself by sticking a fountain pen in his vein. Another of George's duties as nightguard was to shine a light on the defendant he was guarding every ten minutes in order to prevent suicide attempts. One night George was guarding Goering. Sleep was almost impossible in the cells, not only because of the ten minute flash light, but also because the prisoners were forced to lie on their backs with their arms above the blankets. When George noticed that Goering was not sleeping, the two started talking.

Goering spoke fluent English so there was no communication problem. George commented to Goering that he had a very nice looking family. With this, Goering got out of bed, turned on his light, and walked over to his collapsible desk. He found the picture of himself and his family, signed it, and gave it to George. Goering's only words were, "You better take this to remember them, because a year from now I'll be dead."

When I look at this, the only picture Goering had of his wife and daughter, I see a family man. I don't see a corrupt, brutal, drugged-out man responsible for the death of millions. It's hard for me to believe that this fat, almost comic looking man literally killed millions with the stroke of his pen. When I asked George about Goering's personality, he said, "He was charming as hell—he charmed us with his sense of humor and intelligence." George found it difficult to comprehend that a man with these talents and traits committed mass murder on a grand scale.

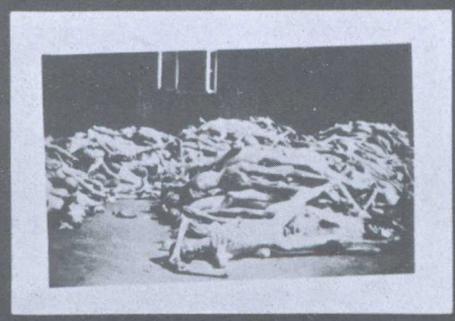
Goering was sentenced to death by hanging. Somehow, though, less than two hours before execution, Goering committed suicide by biting a poison capsule. The mystery of how he got the cyanide is still unsolved. When I asked George about this big mystery, he said, "Goering simply charmed a G.I. who sympathized with him to get the pill—it's no big mystery."

George showed me his passes for the court room and jail. He also showed me the special badges to be worn by all the guards.

I was flabbergasted by the stories and mementoes. George had told me things I could never read in books. I was so happy just to see these relics of our history, but George went a step further and gave them to me! When he saw how much interest I showed, he said, "Take 'em." I said I couldn't because I knew they'd be worth quite a bit. He said, "I want to give them to someone young who appreciates them. I could probably sell 'em, but that wouldn't be right. I picked these things up for my kids, but I didn't have any. You're the first person I've seen take interest. I want you to have them. It's a gift from me." I was really astounded. I thanked him a hundred times. He was really happy to give them to me. To this day, that rainy Friday was the best day I ever put in at the golf course. I'll certainly think twice before I ever doubt an old man again.

INTERNAL SECURITY DETACHMENT  
 The bearer is authorized to enter the  
**WAR CRIMINALS WING  
 NURNBERG PRISON**  
 BY ORDER OF COL. ANDRES  
*[Signature]*  
 signature of bearer OPERATIONS OFFICER

PASS NO. 1050 DATE 12 Dec 1945  
 is authorized to enter the Area of the  
**PALACE OF JUSTICE**  
*[Signature]* signature of bearer  
 Captain, Adjutant  
 SECURITY OFFICER  
 SHOW WHEN ENTERING AND LEAVING BUILDING



*a. jodl*  
 Generaloberst  
 Nürnberg 1945

To George  
 W. Jodl  
 Nürnberg 1945

*Wilhelm Kriebel*  
 1945



## **Guardians**

in these Cossack ruins  
time is railed through  
bottleneck portraits  
staccato  
swollen images of leather-heeled  
madmen well heeled  
poets  
and preachers on broken-horse  
back, begging for slack  
in these fine ruins, their shadows  
are absorbed, united  
by cries of war.

*Brian Paul Ritchard*

## No Man's Land (Knoitsa, 1947)

The leftist snatched  
our father; the right-  
ist ripped our horse.

No pared hogs  
hung in open panes,  
hoofs on hooks.

No wood soles  
across the snowpath,  
purring iceclear.

No barn tabby  
on the top bale.  
No droppings on rafters,

piles on straw.  
No one-eye-open  
high shurring sparrows—

chest rust-frozen.  
No dowry stacks.  
No diapers.

Only clouds, pawed  
on cracked glass.  
Down on soot.

Hand-scooped,  
red potato peels,  
lard from the bottom

of the can, egg-  
plant and okra seeds  
from an ancient jar—

and a horsefly.

*Gus A. Vasilopoulos*

**"Ah, Me!"**

As the mega-sagittal servo of tomorrow

Meets the megaton melee of memory.

We cower from Melpomene,

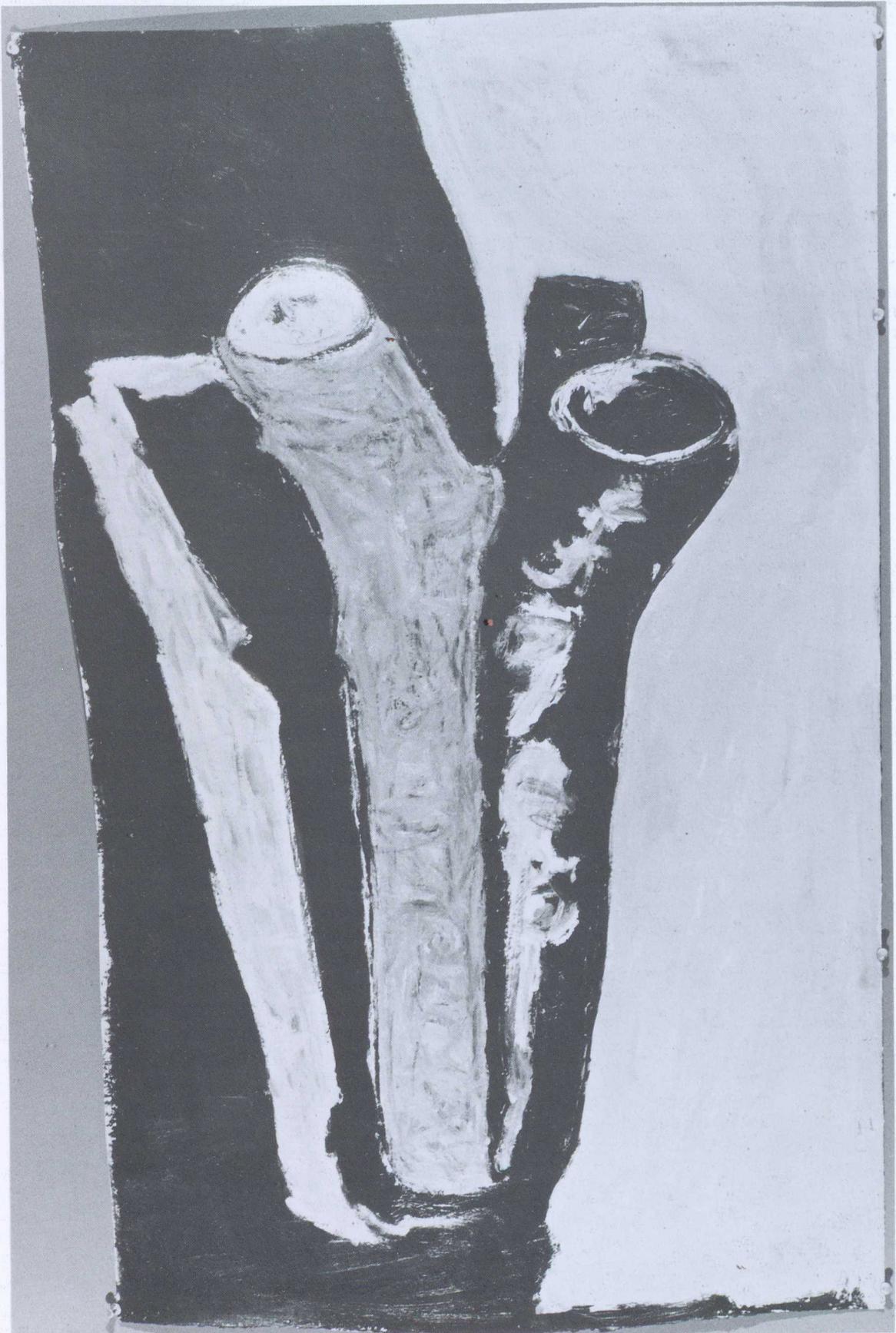
Morbid messenger of memento mori.

We cloak ourselves in mendacity.

Deny our mediocrity.

And die of megaloccephaly.

*Valarie Jean Gilbert*



**"Stump"**—Dave Renniger

# Old Age

*Matt Witkowski*

"I can't believe how much you've grown," was the way our conversations began after the usual awkwardness of being seated on the old uncomfortable couch directly opposite their two chairs. "I can remember when you first started delivering papers" was the next inevitable sentence. With this out of the way and the topic of memories and yesteryear looming in the foreground, they felt comfortable to talk about their past and my future. Every month it was the same thing. I was eight when I started delivering papers, and there I was, at the ripe old age of twelve, with so many experiences and memories ahead of me, listening to the stagnant stories of a couple with many memories to relive, but few to experience.

You see, they were old. Not just old or older, like a parent or a silver dollar-giving grandparent, but old like a deserted building that is slowly beginning to crumble under years of weathering and use. She seemed to show it the most, though. When I first started the paper route, he was still fairly active. He did the lawn work, housework, and ran the errands, while she sat, in her chair, facing out the only window of that gray room, watching life slowly pass her by. It must have been such a helpless feeling. She would wave each time I would walk by, like I was the only visitor in her lonely world. You see, they had two grandchildren that lived very far away, but they were extremely wild kids. Their daughter died delivering the last child, and they were not in good standing with their son-in-law. I felt that I was all they had. All their close relatives and friends had died, and they were all alone . . . except for each other and me.

The visits, at first were a once a month affair, but as months turned to years, they became more frequent and time-consuming. After being seated and smiling through the uncomfortableness of small talk, he would get a shiny look in his eyes. He would then proceed to tell me about their life together. She would interrupt for small corrections or details that he had left out, but he would do most of the talking. They would talk about their past until she sensed that I was getting bored and restless. "Those certainly were the happy times," she would say, as a reminder to him that they did have a visitor. "Yes they were," was his reply. Then I knew that it was my turn to talk. I was now in the spotlight. I would talk about myself and my family, always telling a tainted version of our lives. I think this was their favorite part of my

visits. They seemed to get life from the telling of life itself. But I hated it. I never told them, or in the least bit showed it, but I despised going there. The house seemed so gray and dismal, almost like death itself, and the smell! It smelled musty and old, like a dirty attic. I felt drained after each visit, and it scared me. I didn't like seeing how lonely they were. I promised myself I would never get that way.

The years went by, and she got a little better, but he suddenly took ill. For so long he had taken care of her, and there he was, chained in that same prison that his wife had been in for so many years. Strangely enough, she seemed to get better. Maybe the feeling of being needed so much gave her a small spark of life. She had to use a walker, but she got around well enough. She tried to assume the role that he had played, but there were many things she could not do. That is where I came in. I had to shop, clean, and do all sorts of odd jobs for them. I never regretted this. In fact, I felt good about it, but I dreaded doing it. Helping them brought me one step closer to the realization that someday I might be like them.

Almost a year later we moved out of the neighborhood, and it became impossible for me to help them. Luckily, their neighbors took over my job, and I lost touch. The sad part is, I wanted to lose touch. For a long time I was somewhat of an important figure in their life. Then I deserted them, like everything and everyone else. I did this under my own power and by will. They lost everyone else to death, but they lost me to life. Sometimes I would feel very guilty and bad about this, but I always pushed it away or buried it deep within me.

My life went on, as did theirs, I guess. I never checked up on them. I never went to see them, and I never heard from them, until I was reading the paper one day. I noticed the name first: Jelmer Lindess. The name even sounded old to me. It was listed in the obituaries.

I tried to picture him as I had last seen him; a very thin man, almost like skin wrapped tightly about a brittle skeleton. His hair, what was left of it, had turned stone white, and his eyesight was all but gone. But there he sat in my memory, in his prison-like chair, and his death-smelling house. I hadn't seen him before he died, and I felt terrible. I drove by the house many times after that, but I couldn't go see her. I had left them and forgot-

ten them, like life itself. I would have felt so ashamed talking with her. I did see her, though, as I drove by the last time. I couldn't make out any of the features, but I knew it was her, sitting more alone than ever, in that chair, with its faded arms, ripped cushions, and death-like grip, watching the world go by.



**Untitled**—Steve Doyle, Bryan Collins, & Andy Garst

## **Down In Florida**

Prisoner of another's disease  
This place was not your escape.  
Your bones are showing white by the ocean,  
Flesh gone to feed your children.  
This is the end of the funnel,  
All the bottles poured, draining through  
Tear-clear into the sea.  
Can he see you withering there,  
His eyes etched with red cracks of flame?  
You are a shimmering cloud, heat on the highway.  
Where can you go now, clawing with your skeleton's fingers?  
Up this wretched steaming pipe to where seasons exist,  
Following him, leading him, dragging these little bodies  
To where things were good once and the air was cool,  
To start again. Again,  
Winds of winter singing across your ribs.

*Marc Hausmann*

## **Rain Sonnet**

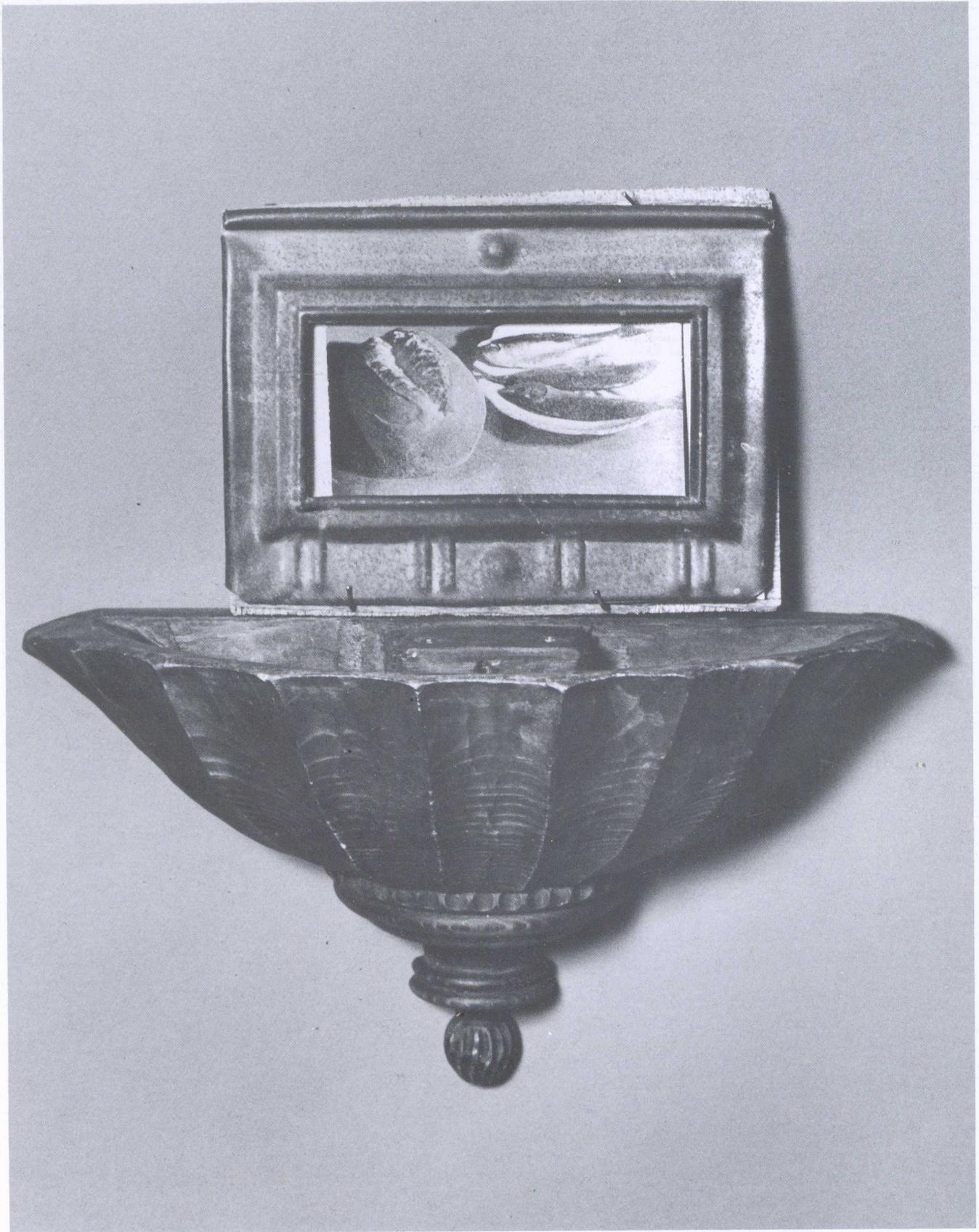
Green-bud my garden midst mud-freckled rocks,  
Rivulet rain-ploughed last night,  
Caught in the moon glister dawning  
Of the shadow-calm preface to light.

Tempest rough-rode the mid night,  
Rend-ripped eve's star-sprink'd dark veil,  
Waked the creek's slumb'ring surface,  
Severed parched limbs in its gale.

Once Golgothan quake rode My midnight,  
Rent asunder the lull of my sin,  
Rivers rose up, welled, wetted and washed,  
Rivulet-ploughed deep within.

Mud-freckled, green-bud, now watered, my soul,  
My winter parched limbs are made whole.

*Gwen Walker*



**"Silent Auction"**—Tara Triplett

# A Hawk's Passing

Laurie A. Evans

The sun nearly centered on the horizon of the road. The road narrowed to the perfect point: two rulers. That was it. Childish visions on plain manilla paper in sixth-grade art class. The sun was always a perfect navel orange setting right there in the middle of the highway. Where the rulers met. The horizon. The secret vanishing point. With the black shadows of hawks. They knew what was hidden there. That's where I wanted to go. Too many straight lines, though. Miss Shadwick never told me when to stop drawing the lines. Sometimes there'd be so many roads leading to the same fiery ball. And, too many hawks. Miss Shadwick told me once that hawks didn't always play in the sunshine. They weren't everywhere. But, she'd put a gold star on my drawing and tell me to be real proud. Because she was. She told me to take it home and show my family. I asked her which line would take me to the hawks. She told me to ask Mom. Maybe I should have asked you. But, I was proud of my star. And I wanted to find the right road. Sometimes I'd take that simple little drawing and study it before I went to bed. Then, I'd try and dream of the road that would take me soaring with the hawks. Now, I have been there. Only, somehow, it couldn't be taken home in my pocket with a gold star. Too many lines. Maybe I haven't tried enough of them. Maybe I tried too many. Remember when I'd be afraid to sleep, after Chuckles died? But, my dreams of the road will always be with me, no one can take that away from me. I want to be on a bluff right now. A bluff so high that when a full moon shines over the valley below, all the summer trees look like huge clumps of broccoli growing wild in a field. And, hawks. So many wild hawks that during sunrise they'd appear as a giant mobile dangling in the breeze, freer than I know I'll ever be. Like that time in Arkansas. I don't know how I got there; funny, I remember Miss Shadwick and not the ride I took to get up the bluffs that time.

I'm gonna take a cigarette break right now, I need a change of pace. Amazing the great Writer's Callous. Remember when I used to admire anyone who had an incredibly warped writing finger? Yeah . . . heck . . . I still got those days in my head.

I'm sitting beside a creek now. I figured you'd like that better than a roadside. I don't know. It didn't take me long to get here. You know the routine of hitchhiking, you taught me how to do it. Hey, did you notice the paper I've written this

on? It's that lotus-paper you picked up for me somewhere. When you gave it to me for my eighteenth birthday you said I reminded you of the lotus-eaters of olden times. You told me it was better than plain old hawk stationery, because a lotus-eater can go many places that a soaring hawk can't. I believed you then, and now. Anyway, I remember how I got to the top of the bluff. Only, I'm not gonna tell that story. You've probably heard it before anyway. Besides, Johnny Blues will make you smile. I've told this one a thousand times, but every time I do, I smile. When was the last time we smiled together anyway? But, back on Flattop Bluff, that's where it was at. If I could only take you there with me, to see it, you'd believe me. That's where I met Johnny Blues. And, Blues introduced me to his hawks. His, only because they listened to him, and he played for them. He told me his name was Johnny; after listening to his stories, though, he was all blues. Just plain Blues. "You 'ave a right nice country here," he'd say to me. His accent was funniest of all. I could never tell if he was Irish or English, and he never admitted to being either one. He learned how to play the harmonica somewhere; I think when he first got to America some guys in a bus station taught him. Yeah, I'm pretty sure that's what he said. But, you know, that's all he needed to exist. He told me so. He told me how he would hitchhike around to different big cities and play in stations or on street corners. And, he existed. On Flattop he just played for his companions. I bet he's still up there, playing his harp and existing. Can you hear him? When I met Blues, he'd only been on Flattop for a little over a month. He knew the ground though. He knew where the drinking streams were, where to find fish in the valley, or even rabbits and squirrels. I think the hawks showed him where to go. As they swooped into a graceful glide I bet the tips of their talons were secretly pointing the way for Johnny. They wanted him to know, to survive, and through his music he asked them to teach him. Once a week, or so, he walked the twelve miles down the mountain taking the road to get a ride to the swimming hole deep beneath the valley greens. He could use his thumb with the best of 'em. I suppose at fifty-four he looked pretty harmless. Johnny would say, "I got me sweet-tooth ac-tin' up again," and I'd know he'd be wanting some candy or junk food. I got there in the prime of summer days, I think around

June. I wanted to be alone, but Johnny Blues really made me appreciate his company. Kind of like now, only for the first time, I am alone. There aren't even any giant black outlines floating in the sun's rays. No screeching harmonies from unknown throats bouncing through the breeze. Is it wrong to think that hawks still make me happy in their flights of freedom? Perhaps one will wander beside this creek and point its talon toward your secret place. I'll ask to be taught, as Johnny used to. After hearing his songs, I couldn't figure out why I complained about life's trifles. Did you ever complain? He was an odd man. I'm really glad I'm thinking about him now. He makes me happy. I'm smiling now. I really wish you could see my smile. It would probably make you happy, too. Or, maybe you are. Johnny smiled a lot. Sometimes, if I'd catch him in thought, his upper lip would have this fascinating snare, like a crooked smile. Kinda like one of those long skinny worms - the ones we'd find all over the sidewalk on rainy days - was casually sunning itself on his upper lip. I wish we could go collecting those worms again, and jump up at the maple trees' water-soaked branches letting the fresh rain fall from their leaves all over us, like the innocence of the first rain. Maybe, one day, we can. Johnny's lips were thin, but, so was the rest of him. Laughing made his lips almost disappear into his gums and teeth. He was missing one tooth off to the left of his front ones, but he didn't care. He laughed more than anyone I know, and he made me laugh. You know, we'd just sit on the bluff sometimes with our feet dangling over the edge, daring the circling valley wind to reach up, suck us in. It never happened, though. Only Johnny's tunes were lucky enough to be carried off, dropping or soaring, undestined, as the wind chose to take them. When he played, the hawks danced, too. High in the sky they'd circle until they came down to our level. One, two, sometimes three of them would glide and curve in and out, up and down, just the way the music inspired them. Johnny could manipulate those ten holes with just his breath and mood. I knew his thoughts by what he played. When I read him a new poem I'd written, usually at dusk as we sat beside the fire, he always asked me to repeat it. Then, he'd walk off somewhere into the night where only the stars knew his path. After awhile, when the breeze intentionally passed my ears, I could hear a note or two from his mystery harp. Eventually, he'd come back and I would be awakened by his telling melody. That's how I knew if my work was good or not. If Johnny's breaths hummed softly in my ears with each line I thought, I felt I had done something. I never told Johnny when things didn't

match. I was the one who failed, not he. On those occasions, I just listened as he played and then rolled over as he stoked the final embers. Johnny knew, though. He always knew. I think his Muse secretly spoke with mine. Did you meet your Muse? You know I haven't had the opportunity to meet mine. But, I thought maybe now, you had the chance. If you meet mine, whisper something for me to hear. Tell Johnny's too. And, surely, the hawks would spread their feathers wide enough to encompass the tune, and waltz before you. Then, we could all smile at our cleverness. If Johnny ever lost his harmonica, I think the folks on Flattop would miss the season. In the two months, or so, that I was with him, everything responded to his melodies. Flowers bloomed earlier each morning or kept their petals open long into the night until he stopped. The littlest chipmunks, squirrels or gophers bushied up and shook their tails. Pushing aside their shyness they'd rustle right up to our camp to the source of these new sounds. Even passing campers followed the notes of Flattop's Pied Piper. You would have liked these visits. Johnny and I would enchant our new acquaintances with poetry and song. We would keep them entertained until long after dusk, and sometimes one or two would stay overnight and take us on a morning hike to their camp for coffee and other luxuries. Johnny and I never had to worry about going hungry. He taught me how to listen to my inner self and not to my outer demands. Remember when you first told me of fasting and peace and vegetarian foods? I can't remember whose teachings you were into at the time, but it never worked for me. But, Johnny became my teacher, and you know, it worked. I guess it all depends on how you place your faith. Johnny never knew I had placed mine in him. He didn't need to, though, his lessons were his life. So simple. So goddam simple. Why isn't it simple now? Has a hawk been so playful since I left? Has a hawk soared in dance before my eyes since I've put Flattop behind me? They remain aloof and proud, like pictures in a book. I wonder why I left. A lot of times I really think on why I walked down the road to the valley by myself. But, once I started, I just couldn't stop. That was my way. I've always been obstinate, haven't I? I mean, once I made up my mind, it seemed like I never thought twice about it, nor regretted its outcome. Why do I regret it now? Why, five years later, do I dwell on my leaving that bluff? I wish I could smile about it now. No, I really wish I could be back up on Flattop with Johnny. I'd write a poem about you, and Johnny would know the right tune to play. We'd go to the edge of the bluff at sunset and we'd enchant you with our souls. The valley

winds would rise this once, with the hawks, and reach you. I almost wish I had never called Mom from the station last week. I was a little late. My timing always was a little off. But, she was doing o.k. I didn't think about it at all until I got here. I couldn't. Now, beside this little creek where the sun is dodging about, playing tag on the ripples with the wind, I give myself freely to you. As a hawk or lotus-eater, I am reaching outward and up. It's been so long, but I knew we'd never forget. It will be even longer now, but I know you are something that doesn't need to be folded up with

a gold star and stuck in my pocket. I hope the straight line you chose to take led you to your own destination and that you are smiling now, with me as I smile now, thinking of you. Ignore the tears for they are of joy and us and Johnny and worms and all we ever were separate and together. Please listen for Johnny and make him smile. You'd like that. I know you will. After I burn this letter, I will save the ashes, as Mom did yours, and release them from high upon a bluff. I will know you by the hawk that ascends alone. One day.



**Untitled**—Katherine Lavicka

## The Mechanics of Insanity in Three Easy Steps

- 1) Ideal situation might be stranger  
in dark alley at midnight,  
pops out  
holds knife to throat,  
rips your clothes off.

(Stolen items missing serial numbers are seldom retrieved)

Reality grows up quickly, catches you  
off guard and you laugh:  
Results remain monotonously the same—  
Darkness occurs AFTERWARDS.

- 2) To replace empty roll; tear off remaining cardboard,  
pull refill from top  
and move fresh roll into position.

We strive for cleanliness . . .

Breatheinbreatheoutbreatheinbreatheinbreatheout

(The rhythm would like to kill you  
but you promise not to tell)

Eventually, you survive, thanks  
to a brown-haired girl in a wedding dress  
who gallantly postpones her Honeymoon to call you  
an ambulance or a taxi  
and her husband, patiently puffing Camels by her side  
waves you off, happily  
ever after.

3) The taking of a body  
has dual meanings when  
the body is your own:

actions  
are just that.

A light awakens  
orange flashes  
and a siren.

You squint from the glare.

*Margaret Schafer*

## **Time Warp**

I'm a counterculture.  
I am a religion.  
Psychedelic lights in the night.  
A joint for supper.  
I reject the norm,  
and accept the infinite.  
I made my own gods,  
they are real to me.  
I'm a "Hippie."  
I, am beautiful man.

*Robert A. Baker*



**Untitled**—Heidi Giuntoli

# Cinema Studies—Sailing Forward Without the Mast: A Response to Gerald Mast

William Covey

There is a Film Division within the Modern Language Association, and there are two reasons the study of film might be the proper province of an organization devoted to literary and language study. On the one hand, films are works—indeed works of art—sequential, patterned, temporal wholes that begin and end and, progressing from beginning to end, elaborate some kind of content in some kind of style that illuminates, reflects, or reveals that content. As works, films are analogous to plays, novels, poems, and essays, the specific kinds of works implied by the general study of literature. On the other hand, film is a modern “language”—a complex communicative system for making and conveying meaning. Of all the alternative modern “languages” that semioticians have investigated—the “languages” of clothing, of traffic signs, of human gesture, and the like—film is the only semiotic system that can rival verbal language’s ability to construct lengthy and complex messages. Any comparison of film and literature must, therefore, begin with a distinction between the comparison of formal wholes and the comparison of systems (or media) of communicating messages. (285)

Gerald Mast. “Literature and Film.” *Interrelations of Literature*. Eds. Jean-Pierre Barricelli and Joseph Gibaldi. New York: MLA, 1982.

Special thanks to Jo Barnes and the “hard” country of Dwight Yoakam, Steve Earle, and Randy Travis.

Gerald Mast begins his paragraph by citing the Modern Language Association, possibly as an imprimatur to use against those detractors in the English profession who still feel that the study of literature and film should not be a part of the English curriculum. Because of the MLA’s acceptance, Mast is free to immediately establish two reasons why the literature or film scholar should study film. These two reasons, keeping with the staid tone of this excerpt, are neither new nor radical. First he states that film is a work of art—a concept dating from Melies and Eisenstein’s montage theories through and beyond the “auteur” theories—and second, film is a language—again dating from Bazin and Metz through Kawin and others. Mast’s reasons for film study are sound but too simplistic. Yet, he does postscript his paragraph with two ideas of interest and possible controversy. He states that film has a semiotic system which can rival the messages of verbal language and then concludes that studying film demands a comparison of formal wholes and also a comparison of systems of communication.

Before I could accept Mast’s argument, I had to decide what audience he was addressing. He seems to address an audience of English teachers

or scholars who may possibly be teaching film as adaptation already and who also assuredly know the importance of an MLA stamp of approval. Because of the excerpt’s moderate stance and persuasive structure, the film teacher should also realize that she has a paragraph which she can hold up as a defense if she happens to be called before a non-persuaded Literature faculty of film philistines. Mast’s excerpt, coming from the work *Interrelations of Literature*, implies an audience who probably reads with the belief that literature study can also include subdisciplines like literature and film. Yet, the final message of his excerpt is safe and predictable.

One year after Mast’s essay, the MLA also published another work concerned with literature and film study, *Film Study in the Undergraduate Curriculum*. This study includes articles on teaching film by Barry Keith Grant and Dudley Andrew who have different, and I believe more poignant, ideas on film study’s acceptance into the Literature and Liberal Arts curriculum. Grant states that, “ ‘Movies’ are still regarded by most people more as a social event and emotional diversion than as an intellectual experience” (Grant viii). He also vividly recalls a shared experience, that of the high school teacher who uses a film

as a substitute for her reading or lecturing. To these teachers film is neither a language nor a work of art and Grant exposes this current problem which Mast fails to address. Andrew also addresses this problem and reveals his own plan of attack for the concerned film teacher. Andrew, the same man who stated that "the study of adaptation is tantamount to the study of cinema as a whole" (14), is really screaming out for general education, both for educators and students, in film study. He not only paraphrases Ortega's call that "education's major goal in our century is to teach the need for education" (43); he also directly addresses the controversy often surrounding the study of literature and film at its source:

*Departments, it seems to me, are political and economic companies determined to grow to the largest possible size by using all normal means of advertising, competition, and self-interest. They demand production from their senior members in terms of publications and blind adherence from their graduate students. Recently they have begun insisting that majors remain more and more within the department to hold enrollments up . . . To reward the field of film by conferring on it departmental status ironically saps from it a native strength it possesses that otherwise could help implement radical changes in liberal education. (Andrew 42)*

Andrew clearly wants film to be a part of each discipline in the liberal arts curriculum, thus requiring its inclusion in English departments. A separate department for film undoubtedly sacrifices much of the insight a trained literary scholar can bring to film study. By addressing the liberal arts profession directly, Andrew causes everyone to question his department and its relation to his acquisitions.

Returning to Mast's argument, the film teacher must also confront and then accept or reject Mast's reasons for film study. I agree with most of what he writes, yet beginning by distinguishing between the formal whole (the work of art) and the systems of communication (the language) is not always the best way to proceed. Mast seems to rely on a criticism based on interpretation while ignoring criticism based on ideology whereas the study of film must incorporate both aspects in order to be considered relevant in current film study. Much current literature/film and literature criticism questions how effective a system of communication really is and whether there is even just one definable system to study. Feminist and Marxist critics often expose a system of communication which is so "code" bound and false that it should be eliminated or at least redefined. Modernist and post-modernist fiction and film question not only the communication system, but also the possi-

ble forms that art can use: "Joyce was not borrowing film techniques from film, but merely appropriating the terminology to describe techniques he is more than likely to have developed on his own" (Bell 181). Modernist films like Godard's *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* or Bergman's *The Passion of Anna* can only be limited by a reading which distinguishes between the formal whole and a comparison of its systems of communication. Employing Mast's traditional "systems" definition, there is really no way to deal with either Godard's whispered narrative intrusions or Bergman's breaks with narrative continuity to interview each of his actors about their present emotions during the filmmaking process. Or, using literature and film examples, similar problems will surface with modernist adaptations like Fassbinder's *Despair* (Nabokov) or Gilliam's *Brazil* (Orwell). Each film intertwines communication devices, language, and forms with items like music, set, paintings, sculpture, mise-en-scene, narration, and dream sequencing; so that limiting film criticism to Mast's two reasons becomes trivial: "In *S/Z* Barthes stresses the plurality of sense' in any given text" (Lesage 454). In this sense, Mast's ideas become backward glancing if not completely obsolete.

On the positive side, Mast's paragraph may help convert some disbelievers, as its form first cites an authority and then posits some rules, thus giving the literature/film discipline credibility through structure and authorization. My heart likes the method of his argument, hoping he converts some new people into the field, but my head disagrees with Mast's oversimplifications. The study of literature and film should have progressed much too far to still be defining and questioning whether or not anyone should study or teach the discipline. Just as literary criticism has evolved from new criticism to structuralism, post-structuralism, and beyond in works like Kenner's *The Pound Era*, Ihab Hassan's work, and in reader response theories like Rosenblatt's *The Reader*, *The Text*, *The Poem*, so also has film criticism progressed. From Bluestone's classic *Novels into Film* to Andrew, Mulvey, Bordwell, and Morrisette, it is now up to the literature and film scholar to keep in touch with the best of the current criticism. The scholar quickly discovers that current film criticism is enmeshed with current literary theory (see: Chatman's *Story and Discourse* or Morrisette's *Novel and Film* plus others).

The possibilities of literature and film study expand as we leave behind the arguments for existence and carry on toward advanced scholarship and education. Since the literature and film study "explosion" of the 1960's, and because of its

relative newness to the proverbial scholarship field, there is an energy which is still bound up in the teaching and studying of film: "The most basic principle of cinematics, its vortex, is that student and teacher share the analytic research attitude; exploratory, experimental behavior is of a higher value than any specific methodological stance or any specific designation of acceptable content" (Sharits 33). Indeed, the good film course evokes a feeling of excitement and discovery which is rarely approached in a traditional literature course—the course with "a mindset where the knowledgeable authority in the field "professes," or hands down, masterpieces which are to be passively absorbed by the student. The sharing of discovery and experiences in a film course often results in both student and teacher input along with many arguments and illuminations which should also be important elements in any study in the humanities curriculum. For example, in the classroom a discussion of *The Grapes of Wrath* includes discussion of the written text, the visual text, and possibly social issues all of which lead to discussions of content, style, authorship, and various ideas which will enhance both the understanding of novel and film. The expert agrees: "No other critic has more to say about the narrative cinema than the critic trained in both literature and the medium of film" (Eidsvik 21). The literary scholar's knowledge of signification, lexicon, syntax, genres, adaptation, narrativity, point of view, etc. are invaluable in the study of film—again repeating the necessity for the two disciplines to work together.

The possibilities of literature and film study are numerous, but first the field must discard essays in defense of the discipline and rather continue both the sharing of education and scholarship between the literature and literature and film departments and their students. The departments must accept and encourage the excitement and experimentation which the study of film provides. Literature and film courses must continue to be taught in English departments thus continuing to broaden the parameters of the field. Works like Dudley Andrew's *Concepts in Film Theory* and Scholes and Kellogg's *The Nature of Narrative* illustrate the study of film "as a field which has significantly developed and matured in the last decade" (Self 55). Studying theoretical works concerning film also relates to the field of literature, especially in contemporary literary theories and

these works often reveal alternative ways to look at older literature. This discovery can and has caused excitement for many scholars: "The dialogue between the two disciplines is dynamic and progressive" (Self 60). Studying film texts like Bluestone's *Novels into Film* and then moving to classroom texts like Beja's *Film and Literature*, and finally seasoning this preparation with some current theory like De Lauretis' *Alice Doesn't*, will increase teaching skills and aid in both fields' dialogues. As recent studies have shown, the film medium is now at the point where it rivals the printed word in communicating the major ideas and aspects of our culture to our children. The literature field must recognize that to understand literature and film study is to also assure a continued and more complete connection with educating the culture.

The parameters of literature and film study are not yet completely defined. Theoretical concerns, often at the cutting edge of criticism in either field, are scattered throughout film journals like *Literature/Film Quarterly*, *Cinema Journal*, and *Wide Angle*. The International Art Cinema, although currently in a slight slump in the United States, also advances the art and parameters of film study and filmmaking. Finally, with the MLA's acceptance of literature and film as a legitimate area of study, the field should avoid safe apologies for study and concentrate on requiring English departments (and other humanities departments) to cooperate and contribute through continued dialogue and use of imagination by scholars—all of which is crucial to the further building of literature and film study.

### Works Cited

- Andrew, Dudley. "The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory" in *Narrative Strategies*, p. 14.
- Andrew, Dudley. "On Teaching Film" *Film Study in the Undergraduate Curriculum*. New York: MLA, 1983: 40-48.
- Bell, Arthur. "A New Perspective on Film and Literature." *Literature/Film Quarterly*, VI (Spring 1978), 180-81.
- Eidsvik, Charles. "Soft Edges: The Art of Literature, The Medium of Film." *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 2 (Winter 1974), 16-21.
- Grant, Barry Keith. "On Teaching Film." *Film Study in the Undergraduate Curriculum*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. New York: MLA, 1983: 20-26.
- Lesage, Julia. "Teaching the Comparative Analysis of Novels and Films." *Style*, 9 (Fall 1975), 454. Special issue devoted to literature and film.
- Self, Robert. "Film and Literature: Current Theory and Practice." *Literature/Film Quarterly* (forthcoming), 55-62.
- Sharits, Paul. "On Teaching Film." *Film Study in the Undergraduate Curriculum*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. New York: MLA, 1983: 28-38.

## Harp Player (Variations on a Theme)

(i)

she rides me  
as a rowdy child would ride a puppy.

(ii)

though I dread the sight and scent of blood,  
I whisper in her pointed ear  
"Be my vampire."

(iii)

Up go the barricades,  
Up goes the drawbridge,  
out come the cannon loaded, aimed  
the moment she spies my marching flag.

her walls have been recently oiled.  
they offer no handholds—  
and I seem to have forgotten my ladder.

our parley is brief:  
"o poo. who wants into your silly old fortress,  
anyway?"

(iv)

she retreats, a seaweary schooner.  
caught in her towline, I drown,  
dragged downward with every knot

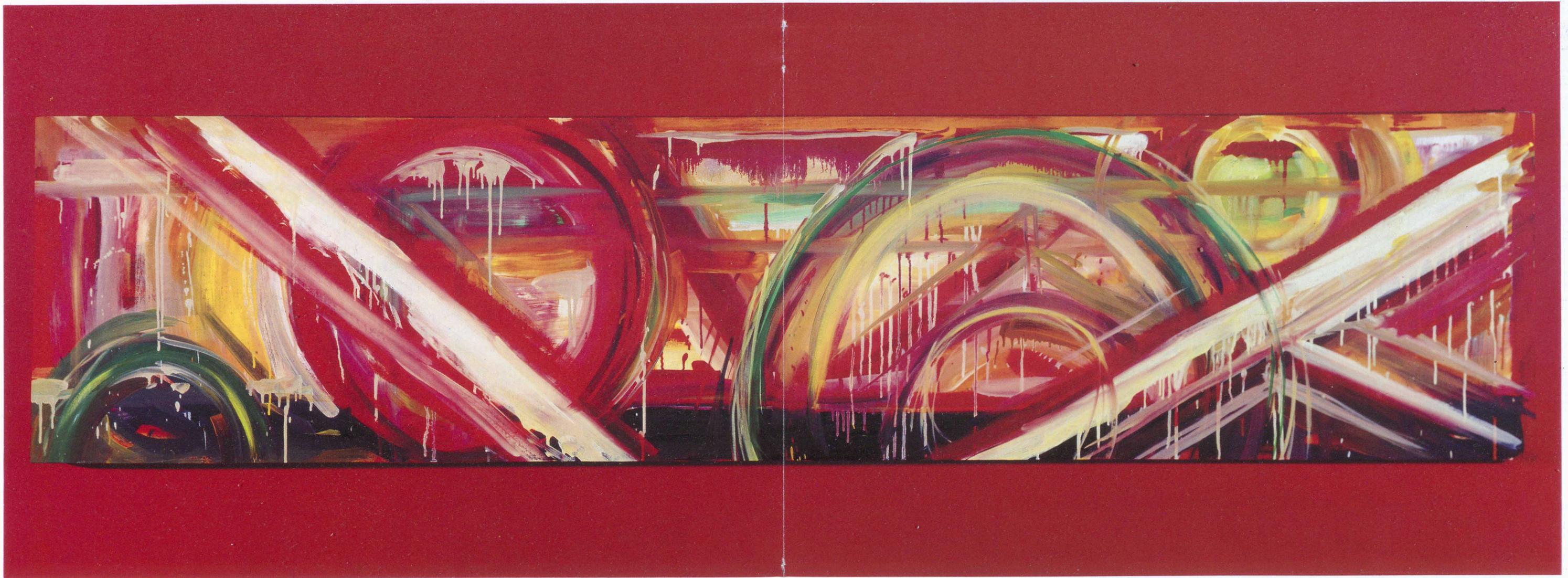
(v)

she retreats, a seaweary schooner.  
I follow like a ship of soap.

(vi)

I make a good Cyrano to her Roxana.  
I have the nose for it

*Duane Tremaine*



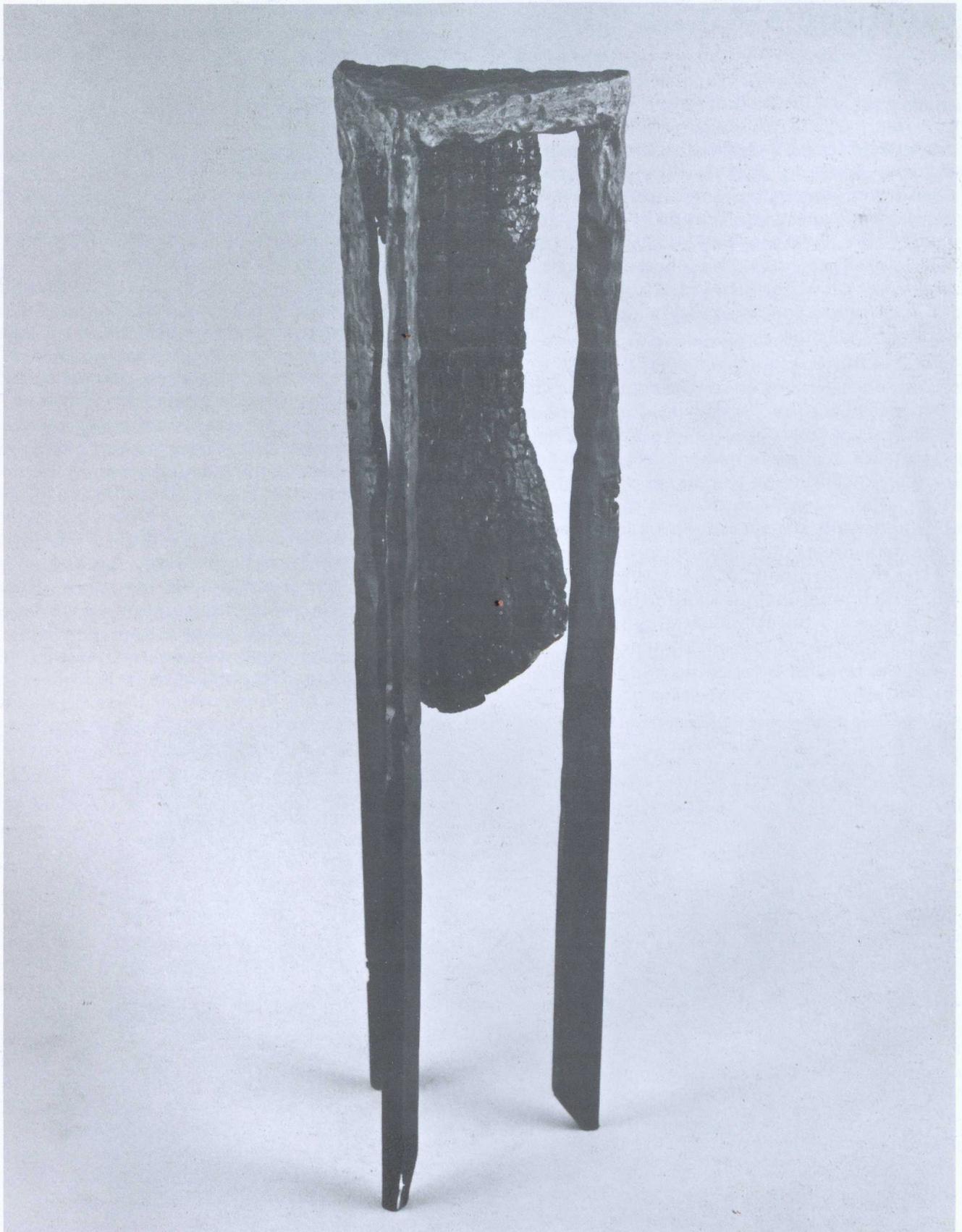
**Untitled**—David Quednau

## **borne into the whirled**

borne into the whirled  
white bred  
pact-like sardines  
express-trained—  
too narrow a birth  
for upward nobility

encased in inValueable boxes  
of the steal and concrete whirled.  
at tired form'ly  
inlamentable grievances—  
to air is human.  
to forgive: divine

*Duane Tremaine*



**"Title X"**—King Siu

# Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*

Linda Grandy

Samuel Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* is a richly-woven tapestry, supposedly the result of an opium-induced dream, which presents us with a symbolic rendering of the poet's inner conflicts. Though the first part of the poem may be viewed as a portrait of Coleridge's fears, and the second a portrait of his dreams and desires, a thread of forbidden sexuality and foreboding mortality wends its way throughout.

Central to the first half is a powerful sexual imagery, at once seductive and disquieting. The words "pleasure-dome" imply an enclosure of fulfilled desires; having as its location an Eden-like spot "Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree" heightens the allure. We are told, however, that Kubla Khan decreed the dome be built "Where Alph, the sacred river, ran/Through caverns measureless to man/Down to a sunless sea." The river, symbolic of life, passes through a cycle which must include death; that the river moves downward toward its destiny may reveal the poet's view of his mortal existence.

The initial tension is taken up and intensified in the powerfully erotic next stanza:

*But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted  
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!  
A savage place! as holy and enchanted  
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!  
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil  
seething,  
As if this earth in fast thick pants were  
breathing,  
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:  
Amid whose swift half-intermittent burst  
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,  
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:  
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever  
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.*

Although the "woman wailing for her demon-lover" is not actually present, her mention gives the action a frightening and forbidden quality, perhaps indicative of the poet's attitude toward his own sexuality. At the same time, this passage may be seen as Coleridge's view of the well-spring of his creative juices, a well-spring which seems to present its own set of fears, as evinced in *The Eolian Harp*. And, though filled with power and life, this stanza may be seen as representative of the poet's fear of, and desire to escape, his mortal limitations, especially when considered along the lines which follow it:

*Five miles meandering with a mazy motion  
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,  
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,  
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:  
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far  
Ancestral voices prophesying war!*

Although the passions of mortality are intoxicating in their power to give pleasure, the poet seems to say, destruction and death are our inevitable end. And however wondrous life may be, the spectre of death is always with us, casting a shadow over our happiness.

*The shadow of the dome of pleasure  
Floated midway on the waves;  
Where was heard the mingled measure  
From the fountain and the caves.  
It was a miracle of rare device,  
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!*

This passage serves as a bridge, floating midway between the poet's fears and his dreams. "Meandering with mazy motion," "shadow," "floated," "midway," and "mingled" usher in changes of tempo and mood; further, they serve to highlight the imagery of the lines to come. Thus far, the poet has functioned as narrator; he enters now, and offers a personal statement of his dreams and desires:

*A damsel with a dulcimer  
In a vision once I saw:  
It was an Abyssinian maid,  
And on her dulcimer she played,  
Singing of Mount Abora.  
Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,  
That with music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air.*

As in the first part of the poem, sounds from a female presence set the mood for this passage. Though a "woman wailing for her demon-lover" conjures up a far different image than a "maid" playing a musical instrument, these two presences have much in common. The maid is black, symbolic of taboos surrounding a sexual union between the races, thus continuing the theme of forbiddenness. Both females have ethereal qualities, the woman being only alluded to, the maid being part of a vision, thereby reinforcing the idea of the elusiveness of beauty, of creativity, and of life. Further, this elusiveness may serve as a symbol of the impotency Coleridge felt in the arenas of his sexuality and of his poetry. Paradoxically, though they are wraithlike, both

female images are strongly intertwined with the sources of energy and creativity which the poem explores, and which the poet seems to fear.

At the end of the poem, the poet not only takes for himself the power Kubla Khan possesses in the opening lines, he intensifies this by projecting himself as a figure to be viewed with fear and dread:

*That with music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air,  
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!  
And all who heard should see them there,  
And all should cry Beware! Beware!  
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.*

"Weave a circle round him thrice" implies a mystical protection, echoing the "enchanted" and "haunted" qualities of the Khan's domain. The words "if" and "would" put the action in a wished-for place, the place the poet dreams of being. If this dream can be realized, the threatening elements earlier described will have been removed, freeing the poet from his fears, and providing him the existence he longs for. Khan-like, he will recreate the pleasure-dome, but by building it in air, he will have escaped the limitations of mortality, for the River Alph will not be there. Further,

the absence of the river (and the fountain) imply an absence of sexuality, relieving him of the anxieties produced by that aspect of his humanness. Presumably, his gender will also be no more, making total his flight from mortality. Interestingly, the image this creates is one of ethereality, bringing him into juxtaposition with the female spirits of his imagination. And, because only by recreating the music of one of these spirits will his dream be realized, the over these female images hold for him is further amplified.

If we fear that which holds power over us, by becoming more powerful ourselves, we may beat down the object of our fear. Coleridge's source of new power is explained in the closing lines:

*He on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.*

Although he has seemed to view his liberation, in part, in the shedding of his sexuality, these lines imply that this metamorphosis will occur by drawing *from* a sensual/erotic entity, thus again engaging the forces he seeks to segregate.

By taking the spirit's song, and by draining the stuff of her powers, the poet may hope to become his own muse. The fear that this attempted transformation may only serve to destroy an essential ingredient of his poetic genius can only bring him resoundingly back to his abiding plight.



**Untitled**—John Siblik

## **Echo, from the Rocks**

I remember you wading in the starry water  
Holding your wrists high against the chill  
Sucking in freedom  
And your body's sinking entrapment

Your private demons fled  
That night in the blue water  
Knowing you couldn't swim to me  
Unable to trust even  
Your own reflection—lengthening,  
Rolling to the black bed,  
Lifting again as I seemed  
To surface in the deep

I felt the last pulse of my veins then  
Seeing you there in the shallows  
Trembling, unable to swim  
I saw you lean down  
To meet that vision you once knew  
And then your hard white arms  
Flashed, embracing air  
And I suppose I left you there  
Possessed at last by the wave  
But still unknissed  
Your marbled hands raking  
Bloodless angels of the night

*Patricia Austin*

## **Unwanted Privacy**

Ronda's crying

Sucking m&m after m&m.

Ronda's dying

Is she yearning for him?

Ronda's smoking

Orange ash-flash in the dim.

Ronda's choking

On chocolate, cigarettes, and men.

*Karole Bolin*

the cord on my phone is twisted  
and you're telling me walnuts are for baking  
and black honey is good when you are ill

traveling with them is square  
opening doors we touch base with planet earth  
and go to greet one whose roots have been severed  
the blinds are off and i can see  
big white circles and pasted eyelids  
dizziness panic hysteria  
a solemn looking host understands

geometric shapes quite quaint provide the eye with entertainment  
against our best wishes  
someone's resting look how peaceful she looks  
coffee and cream and little red stirs the people toss aside  
peace and silence and peace  
only for the lucky ones  
my insides growing, screaming voice never heard  
preservation of the code  
little white balls of paper fill garbage cans as we decide where to dine  
this is the way the world is  
this is the way the life is  
thanks for the memories

*Jeanne M. Forst*



**"Crown of Thorns"**—Joel Graesser

# Coleridge's Theory of Imagination and "Kubla Khan"

William E. Heise

For Coleridge, the poet is the agency through which imagination comes into the world. Coleridge's use of terms and imagery in "Kubla Khan: or, a Vision in a Dream, a Fragment" and his explanation of the faculty of the poet, in his critical work *Biographia Literaria*, are often the same. Both works speak of pleasure, disrupted tranquility, and power. If we use a little imagination ourselves, we may see the poem "Kubla Khan" as an imaginative exposition of the critical principles of poetry outlined in the *Biographia*. Such analysis gives us insight into the poet's own feelings of inadequacy as a poet.

That Kubla Khan is meant to be an imaginative representation of the poet can be inferred from his actions at the beginning of the poem. He uses the same tool to erect this palace that the poet uses to create a poem: words. Kubla Khan decrees a pleasure dome be built. Coleridge states "a poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth" (195). The immediate goal of Kubla Khan is also pleasure. He will come to know a higher truth in the course of the poem, but we are given no indication that he anticipates this in building his pleasure-dome. Holding that pleasure is the first concern of the poet, Coleridge measures the merit of a poem "according to the faculty or source from which the pleasure given by any poem or passage was derived" (167). If truth is a secondary concern for the poet, the poet is well-represented in Kubla Khan who seeks only to create an environment of pleasure but finds more in his creation.

The imagery used in relation to the pleasure-dome gives us our first insight into what it might be to make a poem, while providing us with our first hint of Coleridge's feelings about the art of poetry. Kubla Khan orders that an area be enclosed with walls and towers. Whatever falls within this boundary is to be dedicated to pleasure. The important image is that of enclosure. This is not the only use of the image of enclosure in the first stanza. The pleasure dome is an area enclosed by walls and towers. Within this enclosed area are forests which enclose "sunny spots of greenery" (10). On a different plane of reference we may note that the poet Coleridge has enclosed the action

of the poem "in Xanadu" (1). To make a poem, then, is to enclose something by using words.

In *Biographia Literaria*, he introduces the idea of the "esemplastic" as a substitute for the term imagination. The word is derived from the Greek words "to shape into one." If we understand the notion of the enclosing circle as creating unity, we come closer to understanding Coleridge's poetic representation of the imagination. The circle is the geometric symbol most often used in representing the universe. Kubla Khan encircles a finite amount of territory, thus re-creating an image of the universe on a more physical ground. If Kubla Khan is representative of a poet, Coleridge is recognizing that the poet and his poetry are finite recreations of the universal.

The dichotomy of the enclosed and that which remains outside is not the only dichotomy Coleridge uses in his discussion of the poem. The universe, being infinite, is not rational, and there is an element in any finite representation, such as the completed poem or the encircled pleasure-dome, that is discordant and irrational. The penetration of the infinite and irrational into the finite is shown through the use of surface and depth imagery. Although Kubla Khan has erected barriers to surround surface area, agitation comes up through the ground. Coleridge uses a sophisticated image that shows the relationship of physical to the infinite to be the same as the relationship of the second degree to the third. Though the poem is enclosed, finite, it is not a factual, finished, invulnerable entity like science produces with truth as its immediate goal. In "Kubla Khan," the discordant element is the stream that bursts forth into the pleasure-dome. In the poem, this element is the imagination.

In the *Biographia*, we read this:

*The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and primary agent of all human perceptions, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation (190-191).*

Kubla Khan's pleasure dome is a creation of the secondary imagination, a consciously willed echo of the primary imagination. The stream of primary imagination takes the form of an underground ocean in the poetic work. It is described in Neo-Platonic terms in the critical exposition of imagination. When it bursts forth from the depths, we should not be surprised to see it there. It is that small bit of eternity which the poet has captured. And yet, it is not his intention to capture this disruptive force; his intention was to capture pleasure. This disruptive element, while not the immediate object of the creation, is nevertheless one of its consequences, because the mere amassing of words together in a "poem" does not constitute an analytical reality. Coleridge seems to associate the ability of words to have multiple meanings with the transcendent spirit of Neo-Platonism which he refers to as the infinite.

Coleridge talks of his early years when he was more given to "abstruse researches" than the objects of this world. He speaks of his new preference for the concrete over the abstract in terms of "the cultivated surface" and the "unwholesome quicksilver mines of metaphysical depths" (165). When he translates his theory into an image, the surface is the domain of the immediate object of poetry. The surface is the domain of the physical and the pleasurable. As an intrusion into his created world, Coleridge is able to associate the stream that bursts through the ground with war. Yet he is still apt to venture upon metaphysical speculation as a refuge from pain.

Here we have another reason to suspect that Coleridge doubts his own abilities as a poet. One of the things we have to remember about Coleridge is that, for him, poetry and the poet are nearly the same (196). Whereas he represents Shakespeare as pure imagination when he calls him "out of time" and his poetry of the "unfathomable depth," he cannot be satisfied with what he knows he ought to be satisfied with: his own limitations. Shakespeare is described in terms of his illimitable *genius*, as if he were *genius* itself. Coleridge knows that there is an ocean that lies beneath the surface. He has explored it. It enters his mind against his will, as the element of the imagination becomes the focus of "Kubla Khan," and the element of pleasure is never focused on except that it provides the framework for the action. We see, then, that he has distanced himself from the faculty of imagination and has determined to set his sights to things of this world. He associates imagination with the bursting through of a stream into the world of experience, but it is curious to note that he associates the world of the sensible world of

pleasure with the ability to generate pain. There is a seeming contradiction between the critical stance and that of the dream. Coleridge seems to consciously favor the objective world while yearning for a more permanent entity: the imagination.

In his discussion of the characteristics of genius, Coleridge says that *genius* is imperturbable.

*A close examination will often detect that the irritability which has been attributed to the author's **genius** as its cause, did really originate in an ill conformation of body, obtuse pain, or constitutional defect of pleasurable sensation (171-72).*

Having associated *genius*, in the form of Shakespeare, with the tranquil ocean behind things, Coleridge knows he is no tranquil figure, and he feels he must somehow be a lesser figure for it. Certainly he could be no genius. For him, poetry embodies the tension between his desire to be a genius and what he knows is so.

The prophesy of war that Kubla Khan hears makes a powerful counterpoint to the pleasure he had hoped to find. In *Biographia Literaria* we find Coleridge telling us the forms that imagination takes in peaceful times and in times of trouble. "These in tranquil times are formed to exhibit a perfect poem in palace or temple or landscape-garden" (170). This is exactly the image we are given at the opening of "Kubla Khan."

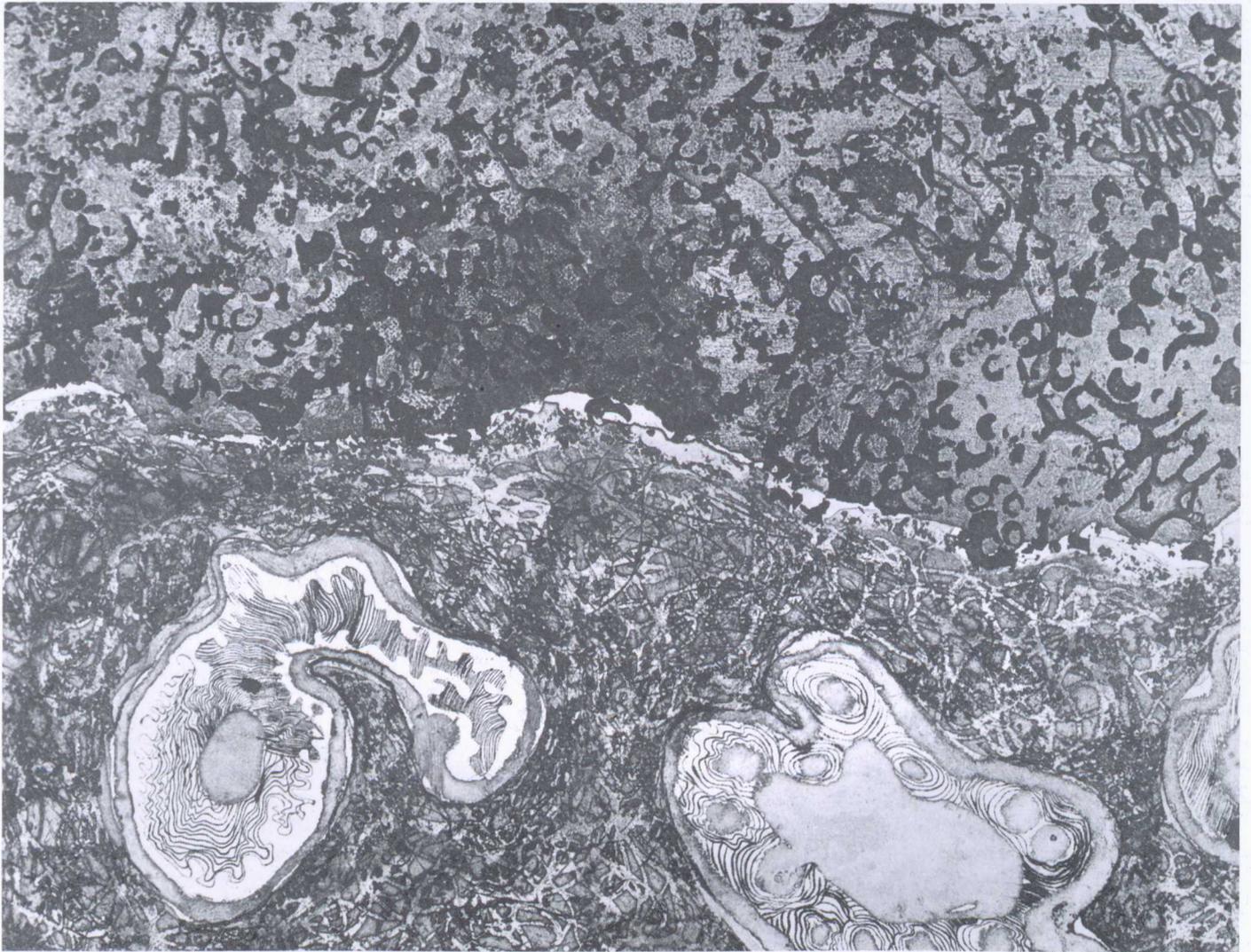
*But alas! in times of tumult they are men destined to come forth as the shaping spirit of Ruin, to destroy the wisdom of ages in order to substitute the fancy of a day (170).*

As the poem makes the transition from tranquility to tumult, so the imagery changes. Kubla Khan is a man destined for war. The poet Coleridge is destined to chase his fancy to destructive imagination because of his "constitutional defect of the pleasurable sensation" (172) or, as we would say, his inability to be happy with what he has got and accepting that he has not got certain things.

What he has not got is the power that he ascribes to genius, that power that would make others fear him and revere him. This is the subject of the last stanza of "Kubla Khan" which shows us a "damsel with a dulcimer" (36) and her power. Having described the domain of imagination as an underground ocean as "caverns measureless to man" (4) we ought not be surprised that she is an "Abyssinian maid" (38). She is imagination herself and therefore she is of the abyss. The use of the double meaning of Abyssinian lends character to the Oriental setting of the poem as well as identifying her as representative of the abyss. Coleridge, using the double meaning of the name, is actually capturing that feature of language he associates with the infinite, but the

stanza is clearly one of loss. His poetry does not sing for him with "deep delight" that resonates both the deep abyss and the delight of Paradise. The inspiration of imagination comes infrequently, and as an intruder, and it seems that Coleridge feels he is only a poet who writes from fancy rather than imagination. Fancy is the organizing of material from memory rather than deriving inspiration from the infinite, the divine, and the "One Life." We see Coleridge very patiently writing about the imagination and the power it brings, and the fact that he has consciously written out

these poetic terms in a critical context elsewhere might indicate that this is exactly what he is doing. As he fears the tendency of his youth to dwell on metaphysical abstractions, Coleridge now fears the tendency of his poetry to have imagination as its subject matter rather than its inspiration. Real things ought to be inspired. He feels that he can only have this inspiration in a dream, but that the inspiration escapes him on waking, and the only inspiration he finds is lament over imagination's departure.



**"Amoeba Hands / Field Quest"**—Robert Apolloni

## **Faith**

I am no naive "believer"  
who waits for poetic lies  
Faith, I think, is captured  
more in the prophet's eyes

*Teresa Bossert*

## **Aged Woman**

Your face is balled up tinfoil  
unballed

Your fingers are worms  
composed of bent toothpicks

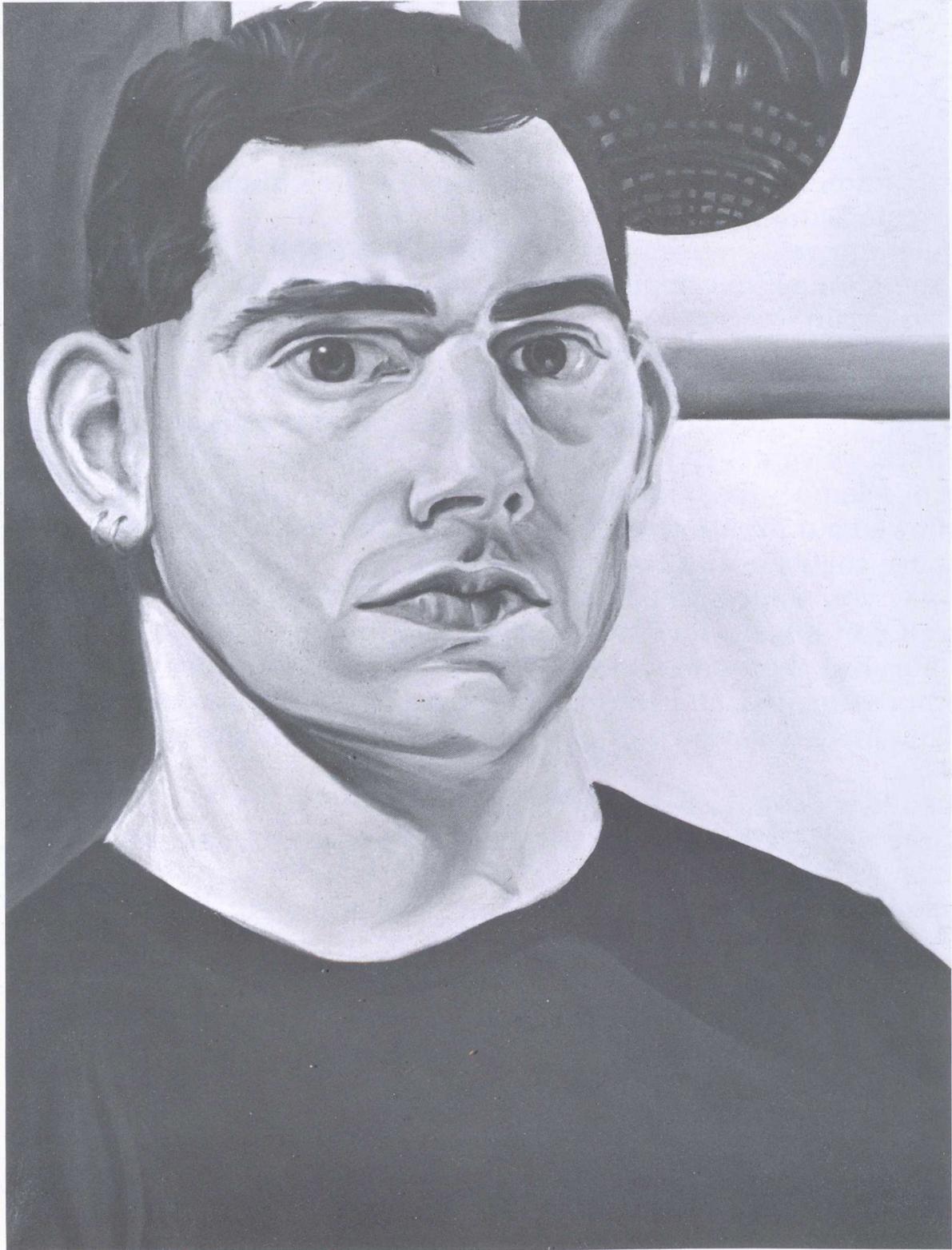
Your eyes are opals  
on a hazy day

You shrivel as a raisin  
without any seeds

*Christine A. Breier*

america america you've lost again one of the children  
you nested and followed  
a while ago yes  
but the ice has just begun to melt on my heart and on my brain  
and so i pain  
a spiritual affair as i see it  
a bond of sorts four of 'em  
veni vidi vici and so forth with screaming and crying and cheesiness  
the likes we've never seen  
at arm's length they snickered and we so cool with their style  
swallowed our breath and ripped our guts out for a chance to see them  
to share their air and twist their words  
you say you want an institution well they knew you did  
so well you know who's responsible for this fine mess  
ego survival then and i with my long hair and you with your wires  
saw hopelessness and things stopped and people screamed again  
but you have to save a part of yourself for yourself after all they're not  
JESUS  
and so it was announced  
and one went east and one went west and one went home and one went  
weird  
'cause he married this girl with long hair and slanted eyes  
and she was cool  
but the public devoured their vows and spit out the residue  
with the rest of their admissions until they were both naked  
and so you see he's all of them and he's dead anyway so this is my ode  
to the guy

*Jeanne M. Forst*



**Untitled**—Frank Trankina

# Spring Planting

by Steven Denny

Clifford never knew what hit him, the doctor had lied to Ellie. "Massive" attack. The more of these things I go to, the more I think my poor old stiff relatives just might have the right idea. Jesus, I hate funerals. Tomorrow I help move Clifford from the church to the cemetery, a role I'm getting used to—my cousins and I are becoming quite the polished pall-bearing unit. That's the downside of having ten aunts and uncles in Mom's family. Ten on Dad's side, too, but brother Jake and I don't get called for that service, thank God—we haven't kept in touch with them since Dad died. Never were very close to them. An odd bunch. There was something wild about their kids, the way they played, the way they seemed to always get caught doing something stupid. Then their parents whipped them long and hard. They screamed like little Indians. Grandma Sanderson's funeral was the last one I'll go to on Dad's side of the family. My last living grandparent. Her youngest, her baby, Donnie Ray, just out of prison, came for money. It seems like something out of a bad movie, not even fit for a dream. The crazy bastard kills his own mother for the few dollars she has lying around the house. I stood in that church in a trance. Didn't look at anybody. Got my new wife out of there as fast as I could. What can you say?

At least in that respect, funerals on Mom's side are a little easier to take. Everybody knows what to expect, anyway. Seems that as soon as the snow melts in the spring of the year, I get a call from Mom. I know what's up, because she pauses before telling me. Her famous dead-aunt-or-uncle pause. The call for Uncle Clifford was no different. After she tells me (so simply), I wonder how much it weighs on her. Being the "baby" of the family, she's sixty years old and watching her brothers and sisters—her life, for Christ's sake—ceremoniously check out of town and into the rolling Hopedale boneyard north of the tracks. I can never bring myself to talk to her about it.

Which is probably why our funerals work the way they do. Take tonight's visitation. Pembroke's Funeral Home is getting familiar to me as any house in Hopedale. Monstrously large white Victorian on a huge lot. No matter how poor the deceased-for-the-day is, he'll be going out in style. My wife and I trudge up the wide gray stairs, and I grab the ornate metal handle of the mahogany and leaded-glass door. The entry hall is large, functional. Coat racks lining the walls are almost

empty. I left work before three to beat the traffic (spring absences are becoming a standing joke at the office). I take my time hanging up the coats, wondering why I have to continue to be nervous at these things. We walk past a grandfather clock—it's five minutes behind my Seiko and so big and old that "tick" and "tock" don't apply to the muffled sound it's making. Its dark wood matches the paneling, which, when I go over and knock on it, seems to be twice as thick as the stuff they sell these days. The "chandelier" hanging too low in the middle of the hall uses those light bulbs that are made to look like flame. "No extra charge," I say to my wife. She has to be bored out of her skull with all this by now, but doesn't come out and say so. That tolerant look gives her away. She grabs my arm and walks us to the parlor door. No signs, no arrows. Pembroke seems to accommodate one service or visitation at a time. I start to wonder what he does for multiple losses. We step into the dim light of the parlor, and I remember what gets to me at every funeral, no matter who's in the box: flowers. Lilies, carnations, roses, whatever. So individually pure and collectively insidious. The sweet, sickening scent dives from my nose down to my stomach, as the creaking floorboards announce our arrival. Those few mourners already seated look at us in slow motion and then turn back to their meditation. Mom is here and gets up to take us on the rounds.

"Hi, you two." She is smiling, but even in this excuse for lighting, I can see her eyes are wet and red.

"How's Aunt Ellie holding up?" I ask. Mom hadn't done well at all at my Dad's funeral.

"Oh, pretty good, considering. Why don't you go up and say hello before it gets so crowded?"

"Okay, good idea." Good idea? The *good* idea would have been to take my vacation in the spring.

I never come up with anything meaningful to say to the widow or widower. One of these years I'll get smart and think about it beforehand. I walk over to the seated small form that is Ellie, sandwiched between the dark twin towers of Aunts Lorna and Emily. I squat down and put my hand on the film of fabric covering her tiny forearm and mumble, "Hello, Aunt Ellie. I'm so sorry. We'll miss Uncle Clifford so." Lame. Really lame.

She's a lot brighter than I had expected. "Thank

you for coming, Stan. And you too, Lisa. You're looking prettier every time I see you." Lisa smiles and puts her hand on Aunt Ellie's shoulder. "Clifford didn't suffer. I take comfort in that. God will take care of us both. We must trust in Him." Amazing. The Bible actually worked for this woman. She seems to move through her existence in an easy state of grace, naturally doing the right thing and using her faith as a source of strength when she needs it. Maybe it's just a childhood perception I hold, but I still want to believe that there are people capable in some way or another of transcending this 68.7-year cosmic joke. Aunt Emily starts to sniff, and Ellie pats her knee.

A man and woman come up next to us, who I don't know, so I get up, (my knees are killing me already) kiss Ellie on the cheek, and pull Lisa away. We can't get to the back of the room from where we're headed, so we have to turn and face the main attraction, the remains of my Uncle Clifford. A little line has formed. I've always wondered what people think when they stand there. Maybe they just remember the good times, pray for his soul. But few ever pass by without pausing. The bronze casket gleams in the enhanced lighting of the little stage area. Spotlights from behind the dying flowers wash heavenward. Dark red velvet curtains frame the white satin background. Not real subtle, Pembroke. As we inch forward, I come to the conclusion that long ago—maybe when my Grandma Jones died and I was only eight—I might have believed that the body smelled that way, not the flowers. Finally, he's in front of us. My first thought is that he looks so different without his glasses on. And now, I'm a kid again, playing in his pine-walled sun porch, listening to the house sounds. Aunt Ellie is all Pine-Sol and mothballs, scurrying from room to room, cleaning, singing hymns, straightening, and making everyone tired just looking at her. Uncle Clifford is asleep in his brown vinyl recliner, softly snoring the afternoon away, with the new color TV blinking in the corner. Ellie is the oldest, in her late seventies now, so even back then Clifford's wavy hair was silver gray, and his farming was confined to overseeing his property from his house in town. A gentle man with an easy laugh, ruddy cheeks and bright eyes. Pembroke, what have you done to his face? The man looks like a drag queen! This is embarrassing. I start to get pissed, feeling the blood in my face, when Lisa gives me a little nudge, and we move on. Viewing the body is so barbaric.

We're moving to the back and toward some folding chairs, when Jake and Cathy creak into the room. He gives me a little brotherly wink, and they retrace our route, stopping here and there to say hello to the aunts, uncles, cousins, and kids.

The room is filling now, and perfume joins the flowers in my stomach. Aqua Velva. Dirty Uncle John can't be far away. Right on schedule he leans between us, whispering to Lisa and goosing me in the butt. If that's all he does this evening, I think, we are truly blessed. I know better, but turn and shake his hand. Sixty-some years old and he nonchalantly crushes my poor fingers, waiting until he's sure I know where I stand. Then he whispers the latest joke-de-toilette in my ear and leers off in Aunt Ellie's direction. When Jake and Cathy come back, he and I leave the girls for an adjacent room.

It never fails in our family: weddings, funerals, reunions, Christmas, you name it—men in one room and women in another. I suppose it's like that in most "traditional" families (whatever the hell that means), but it seems odd just the same. Anyway, Jake and I find Emily's boy Bill looking at the carpet.

"Lose something, William?"

"Hi, Stan, Jake. Naw, I was just wonderin' when Pembroke was going to spring for a new rug. This stuff was beyond help when Elvira died. Eight years ago, right?"

"If you say so. These functions tend to blur together after a while. You guys finally settle with Cat?"

"No way. The smart boys say foreign sales are way down, and the suits aren't hurtin' to get us back to work. All I know is I got to cut wood to keep them babies of mine fed." He laughs. "They'll probably lay me off when it's settled. Yep, it's a hard life, gentlemen."

Bill sits down and rubs his thumb against his forefinger, just the way his dad Wilbur used to do. I can't think of Bill in his new house. I just remember the old house on First Street. Wilbur and his pipes and cigars. Bumper pool, beer, and tossed-back shots in the basement. Weekend suppers with so much food, the men would loosen their belts afterward. Then suddenly, Bill is older and off to Vietnam. Jake and I are lottery lucky a few years later and escape to college. And not many years after that the house on First Street is no more, because it's Wilbur's turn in the box. "It is that, Bill. A hard life."

"Same casket crew tomorrow? I haven't heard yet," says Jake.

"Yeah, same bunch." And soon, cousins and uncles fill the room. Dirty Uncle John's boy, Bobby Lee, up all the way from Tulsa this year; Hank and his boy, Elmer, the swarthy, slow-talking contingent; Lorna's boy, Greg, looking older and fatter than last time; Jess and his dad, Frank, still trucker-dusty in their navy suits and walking in

like cowboys. They're all pretty somber for a few minutes, saying it's a shame and how's Ellie going to manage all alone. But (Am I the only one who knows this?) she'll manage fine. All of the Hopedale family are in walking distance of just about anybody or anything they'd need. After Dad died, they wanted us to move back to Hopedale, but Mom wouldn't even consider it. Said Jake and I would be better off in the city schools. Thank God.

After a few silent moments, Greg leans over to Jake and whispers loud enough for Clifford to hear, "Did you and Stan hear I been to the doctor? He says I got Dunlap's disease."

Jake always falls for these things. He says with a concerned look, "Dunlap's disease. I don't know about that one, Greg. What is it?"

With a wink to the room and a thrust of his immense gut, he smiles, "My belly done lap over my belt."

Well, that did it, of course. Enough sober talk. Faces brighten considerably. I smile too, in spite of myself. But I'm thinking about how we can be this way every time, when, beneath all the jokes, there is such an incredibly sad void. As if to chastise us, *The Old Rugged Cross* starts floating in the room. Pembroke has added a new wrinkle this spring—piped-in stereo *trauermusik*, complete with wobbly soprano and wobblier organ. I make the mistake of actually listening to it for a minute. The tape or deck or both sound like they're ready to join Clifford. As "suffering and shame" drop down about a minor third, Jake and I look at each other. I roll my eyes, and he starts to snort. "Jesus, Pembroke," I say to no one in particular, "At least you could come up with some decent equipment to play that goddamn morbid muzak." I must have said it too loud or the wrong way, because some of the guys look at me funny and don't say anything. I'm tired, embarrassed now, and little mad. I walk to another doorway. The hall I see leads to more doorways.

Any reason to keep on the move. I start walking down the hall, trying to put the whole thing out of my mind. I pass two rooms that look like more of the same—small, couches and chairs, but no people—then notice that at the end of the hall, there is a different type of door. Very clinical looking, white, (metal?) with a small glass-and-wire window. What the hell, I'm curious and keep going. I'm almost there, when I hear a noise from a doorway coming up on the right. Crying. I slow down and almost turn around. The sign above the door says "Director's Office." I lean in through the doorway, and there's Uncle Ernie in the corner, no one else. He's sitting hunched forward, forehead

down on his right hand, out of control.

I almost fall back into the hall, but the *deja vu* is dispelled when I remember the circumstance of that feeling. Dad. The men from both families were packed in a similar room in some other funeral home—funny I don't even remember where—and I'm twelve and not in great shape. Mostly just drained, going through the motions in a bad dream. I walk into the room with Jake. We're dressed in brand new suits that we'll outgrow in six months. The men thankfully ignore us—we've been greeted and sympathized with so much we're numb. They're all talking, about the new highway, about the Cubs' chances this year. Dirty Uncle John has a group chuckling in the corner. After walking around for a while, we head toward two empty chairs in another corner. Uncle Ollie's there, too, all by himself. He looked so out of place in that room, his big red face poking out of a too-tight shirt collar; the top of his forehead suddenly white, from sitting all week on a tractor under his John Deere cap. Jake and I sit down, and he quietly, slowly says, "I'm really going to miss your Dad, boys. He was my closest brother back there on our farm. We'd spend hours together, just the two of us, doing chores, playing in the woods. I'm sitting here feeling so empty. I can't believe he's gone." Ollie continues to talk, tears streaming down over his red cheeks. I hold on tight to Jake's hand.

Well, hell, there I am, crying in the hallway, Ernie in the office. I'm mad at myself for letting go and start to get together again. The white door opens and Mr. Mortuary himself, Philip Pembroke, steps into the hall, laughing about something. Then he sees me and switches on his Solemn Nod. No. 1. He turns into the office, and I hear him say to Ernie, "I'm sorry, Sir, you'll have to go to the parlor. I have some work to do in here."

Well, I just flip out, for some reason. I'm fighting back the tears, but I charge in there yelling, "You shut the hell up, Fat Boy." I bump him into the desk and go over to Ernie. "Come on, Uncle Ernie, let's leave this grave digger to count his money." Ernie takes my arm and we start to go.

"Please, Sir, I didn't mean any harm . . ." Pembroke is frightened, and I feel great.

I wheel around and put my nose two inches from his face, so he can feel the words, "I told you to shut up." He jerks back, slamming into a computer. He can't look at me any more, so I walk Ernie out of the office and back down the hall. I apologize to him for causing all the commotion. Everyone is looking at us as we come back into the room, but I can only shrug, smile, and swipe at my eyes. Nobody says anything for a while, so

I whisper to Greg, "I wonder what kind of software a funeral director uses."

During the country-dark drive back to Mom's house, I'm not saying anything and playing the radio too loud. Out of the corner of my eye, I see Lisa looking around at me. She's going to say something, but waits until we get home and Mom is in bed. We're watching Channel Three's same-day coverage of wailing, reaching, "third world" mourners, as they press through the hot, waving air toward their fallen leader's horse-drawn corpse. Lisa sees the opportunity and eases herself over to the couch with me.

"A bit more emotion than *most* of us could muster tonight."

"Yeah, a bit more." I wasn't going to let her lead me into this too easily.

She turns toward me, and I involuntarily glance into those all-knowing blue eyes. "What happened tonight, Stan? I heard you weren't behaving yourself."

"You know me—can't take me anywhere . . . Not much happened. It's just that pompous ass Pembroke. We're making his grave-digging butt rich with our annual funerals, and he doesn't have the decency to respect our feelings. Uncle Ernie was in his office tonight, trying to be alone for a while, trying to get away from the jokes, and Pembroke is going to toss him out. I just couldn't take that, Lisa."

I want to end it there, but she scoots over close and keeps after me. "The last few times we've been

down here for a funeral, I've noticed that the men do joke around a lot. What's so funny, anyway?"

"Beats the hell out of me."

She turns back to the TV. "Look at those people. Is that a better way?" She puts her arm around me, and we keep watching.

I'm all right now. Tomorrow the whole extravaganza finally winds up with the funeral and burial. I'll watch Mom screw her foot into space as we all sit, wordless, listening to Reverend Sims insert Clifford's name in his treatise on the Deeper Significance of It All. We'll file past the open casket one more time, and Mom will say don't he look good, and I'll say yeah, except for one thing, and she'll pretend to ignore me. Then I'll grab that incredibly heavy rail, and we'll ease him down the steps to the hearse. The pallbearers will still manage a few jokes on the short ride out of town. When we get out of the cars, the spring wind will be fierce, ripping through every soul out there in the open country. Some shivering kid with a bugle will embarrass himself and us with "Taps," and another flag will be folded and presented to a tearful widow. We'll pause a moment, thinking about whatever we think about, and then drive away. Clifford? Clifford will be backfilled, and Eternity will punch in to do its work. Me, I'll just go through the motions for a few days, allowing time to settle me down. It always does. But maybe this year I should find a way to talk to Mom, to Jake. Jokes aren't the way to deal with it, guys. Something else. Something else is what we need next spring. Next spring when the phone rings.

## **The Meeting**

We could meet again here  
In this roofless shelter  
In the grip of stone walls  
And brittle ivy  
Lean against the fallen bench  
Discover its worn white sleekness  
Like carved fat or  
The thigh of some lost statue

We might understand each other here  
Where there are no human voices  
Where fountains fill with leaves  
And things stay broken

Remember the dirt floor? the sun  
Through gaps in stone, the wild  
Rose petals that blew in and clung to us  
Like bleeding thumbprints?

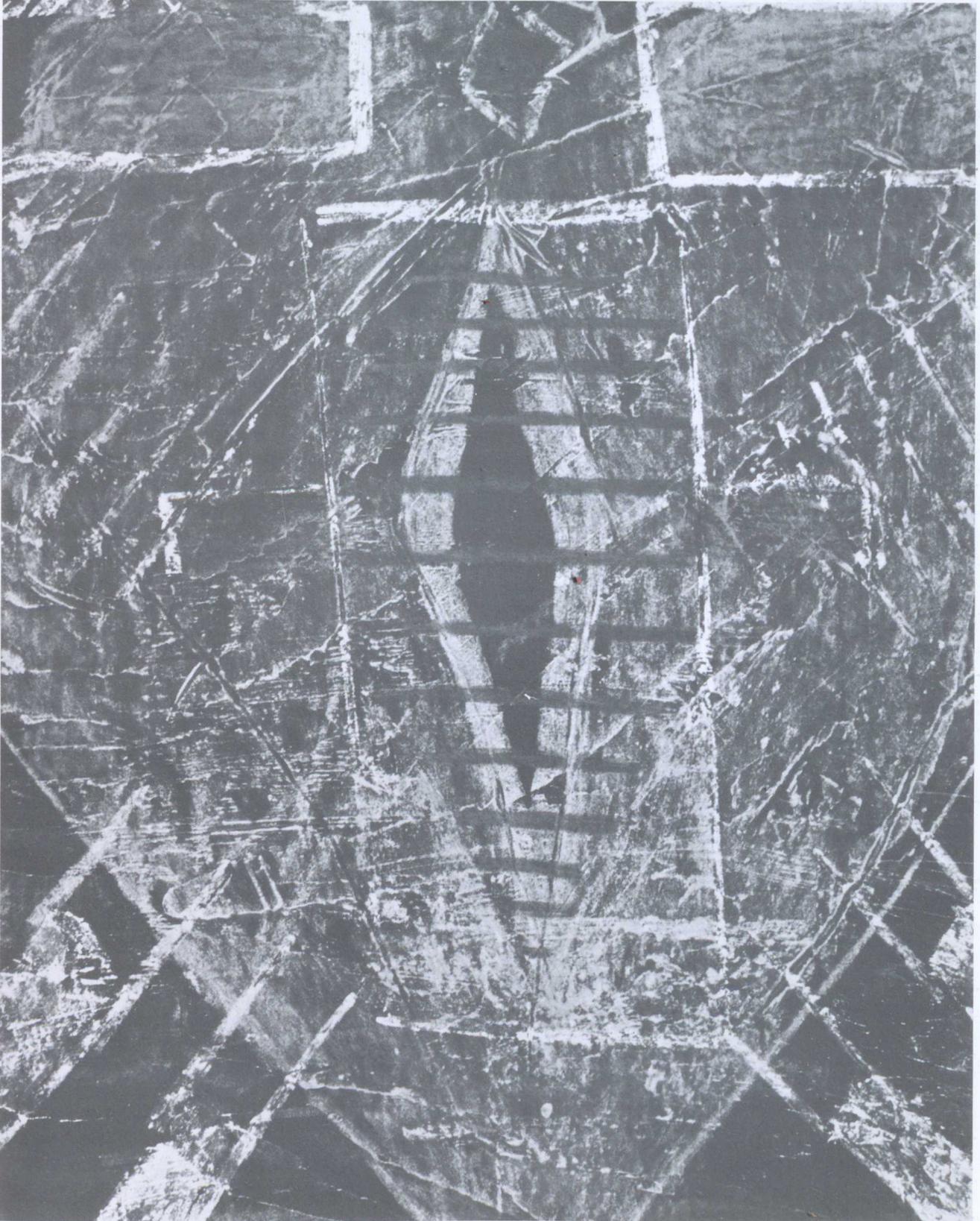
*Patricia Austin*

## **Thick Language**

We want to hear more  
perfidy, fair game is hand-shaped poetry,  
fair game, sleeping.

    Closing eyes to frenchwordspoetry  
    rippling from our tongues, awful without a pen,  
we.

*Bret H. Hamilton*



**"Study For Mask II"**—Chris Ginette

## Hinges in Stone

Unrestless fear  
of you/plot of straight crooked lines  
camouflaged by the spots of rain.

Fear to me  
seeing this mirror of more  
tons than I can  
imagine, moving farther away  
than near.  
But I can see inside of you.

One day at midnight  
sleep fell away and  
I dressed in grey  
came to you, coming  
for what you had for  
me. We  
stood like grains of  
sand together in the rain  
and you told me what you wanted:

To sprout grass, have water  
well up from your center and over  
the top,  
to sing with the voice of buildings,  
piercing the air like a missile.  
To become a planet, classrooms  
circling around you like moons.

Well, first you must give me  
this wild gift.

With plains ascending  
make your lights uncanny  
knives, cut off your shell.  
Show me you.

There is a gash in one of your passages,  
a burst of wounded rainbow,  
schized out, exploding in stasis,  
But I want more.

You're not a natural thing! These games are nothing but pushups, habit  
against gravity, like scratching your head or rubbing your nose in a  
waiting room!

You have to come out sometime.  
When veils of concrete lift, there are no places to hide.

*Bret H. Hamilton*

# Swift's Concept of an Ideal Woman

Lisa Chase

Jonathan Swift's friendship with Esther Johnson was one of the highlights of his life. Swift met Esther, better known as Stella, while residing at the home of his employer, Sir William Temple. Stella, the daughter of Temple's housekeeper, was only eight years old at the time. The lifelong friendship that developed between Swift and Stella became the subject of a number of Swift's poems. Although the controversy surrounding their possible marriage goes on, one thing is known for certain: Swift held a great deal of respect and admiration for Stella. In his poems, Swift portrays Stella as his concept of an ideal woman, particularly in contrast to the other women of his poetry.

Mankind and his activities were regarded as the main subjects of poetry in the eighteenth century. Alexander Pope, probably the greatest poet of this period, expressed this idea as "The proper study of Mankind is Man" (1. 2). The emphasis, then, tended to be on what men possess in common: the general and representative characteristics of mankind. Pope, for example, sets down general rules intended to guide mankind through life in his *Essay on Man* as well as in his *Moral Essays*.

Swift's poetry reveals a similar fascination for the common and the ordinary. More importantly, Swift focuses his attention on humanity's foibles and failures. His poetry on the subject of women clearly reveals this preoccupation with the vices of mankind. In these poems, Swift employs the cutting satire for which he is so famous to attack specific physical and moral characteristics which, in his observation, are shared by women in general.

In contrast, Swift describes Stella as an ideal woman; nevertheless, her feet remain firmly planted on earth. Since Swift, like his colleagues, was solely interested in human realities, his concept of an ideal woman is described in strictly human terms. Therefore, Swift does not endow Stella, as his ideal, with ethereal qualities in his descriptions of her. Nor does he adopt the sentimental clichés that characterize much romantic poetry. Rather, he describes her in mundane terms to convey his image of her as an extraordinary, yet human, woman.

In the poems he addresses to Stella, Swift sets her apart from other women in two ways. First, he devotes eleven poems to an intensive study of

Stella's character. Swift invented fictional Chloes, Phyllises, and Corinnas to use as vehicles for his opinions about women in general. In contrast to these "types," Stella is a fully developed individual that existed outside of Swift's imagination.

The second way that Swift sets Stella apart from other women sets her above them as well. In the poems addressed to Stella, Swift declares her superiority over the rest of womankind. Stella, as described by Swift, is no ordinary woman. Yet, because of his unwavering focus on feminine faults in many poems, Swift could have portrayed Stella as an ordinary woman, by contrast, with relative ease. Instead he approaches the topic of Stella from the exact opposite direction from which he approaches the topic of women in general. In every instance he replaces faults with virtues, criticism with praise, and satire with affection.

Swift expresses his devotion and admiration for Stella, however, without sounding like a sentimental fool. Many poems reveal Swift's contempt for romantic fallacies. He takes advantage of every opportunity to ridicule conventional notions about love. For example, the naive and starry-eyed groom in "Strephon and Chloe" "awfully his distance kept" from his goddess-bride; immediately following their wedding, however, he is completely disillusioned when he witnesses his "heavenly Chloe piss" (1. 114, 178).<sup>1</sup>

One way in which Swift expresses admiration for Stella without sounding foolish is by paying only minimal attention to her physical aspect. He refrains from lingering on Stella's appearance long enough to even indicate whether she is tall or short, fat or thin, blond or brunette. On the other hand, his poems about women in general grimly emphasize their corrupted features. In "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," for example, Swift relentlessly scrutinizes the decayed features of a diseased prostitute. Similarly, he traces the physical deterioration of the "rotting Celia" in "The Progress of Beauty" (1. 103).

Swift's concept of a beautiful woman has little to do with her physical appearance; on the occasions when he does acknowledge Stella's appearance, Swift subordinates the role of her beauty to that of her other attributes. In the birthday poem of 1720, he claims that it was Stella's beau-

ty that first attracted him "to find/In such a form an angel's mind" (1. 19-20). Lest he should sound overzealous, however, Swift tempers his assertion with the statement that Stella has the face of an angel as well—but it's "An angel's face a little cracked" (1. 16). The primary metaphor throughout this poem illustrates the role of Stella's physical appearance: like the sign to an inn that first draws one in to find good food and drink, Stella's beauty first attracted Swift to discover the sharpness of her mind.

On the other rare occasions when Swift makes reference to Stella's physical appearance, he playfully points out her shortcomings; before he's finished, however, these affectionate gibes turn into full-blown compliments. Swift makes it extremely clear in his other poems that perfection is not his ideal of beauty. In fact, he frequently expresses contempt for the "perfect" but false exterior of women. He devotes considerable attention to the woman's dressing room as a symbol of feminine vanity and deception. For example, Strephon expresses shock and dismay during his furtive tour of "The Lady's Dressing Room." After observing the "begummed, bemattered, and beslimed" chaos of Celia's boudoir, the disenchanted Strephon becomes "blind,/To all the charms of womankind" (1. 45, 129-130). Taking pity on poor Strephon, Swift offers him a small piece of advice to help him cope with his knowledge:

*If Strephon would but stop his nose . . .  
He soon would learn to think like me,  
And bless his ravished eyes to see  
Such order from confusion sprung,  
Such gaudy tulips raised from dung* (1. 136-144; Swift's *emph.*)

In contrast, Swift playfully hints that only the natural effects of time can damage Stella's beauty. He smoothly glosses over the minor detail of Stella's age in his poem commemorating her thirty-eighth birthday: "Stella this day is thirty-four/(We shan't dispute a year or more)" (1. 1-2). But he is forced to acknowledge her physical deterioration when an "evil tongue" reports that she is growing old:

*. . . nature, always in the right,  
To your decays adapts my sight,  
And wrinkles undistinguished pass,  
For I'm ashamed to use a glass;  
And till I see them with these eyes,  
Whoever says you have them, lies* (Stella's *BD*, 1725; 1. 43-48).

Although he is fully aware of Stella's defects, Swift does not allow them to interfere with his perception of her.

Although Swift's physical description of Stella

is somewhat vague, he provides an in-depth account of her psychological attributes. Swift praises Stella for her genial personality above all else. He frequently uses Stella as a standard by which to measure other women. In the birthday poem of 1721, for example, he expresses his approval of her refined social graces: ". . . Stella freely entertains/With breeding, humor, wit, and sense" (1. 24-25). In order to meet the example set by Stella, other women are given this advice: "You must learn if you would gain us/With good sense to entertain us" (1. 115-116).

According to Swift, Stella devoted her life to helping those less fortunate than herself. Swift portrays Stella as generous and charitable; he frequently praises her selfless dedication to humanity:

*Say, Stella, feel you no content  
Reflecting on a life well spent?  
Your skilful hand employed to save  
Despairing wretches from the grave;  
And then supporting with your store,  
Those whom you dragged from death before* ("Stella's *BD*," 1727; 1. 35-40).

With his dedication to reforming humanity, Swift has no tolerance for the frivolous diversions of the women, in particular, of upper class society. His account of a day in the life of a modern woman emphasizes her laziness and idleness:

*The modern dame is waked by noon,  
Some authors say, not quite so soon;  
Because, though sore against her will,  
She sat all night up at quadrille* ("Jrnl of a Modern Lady," 1. 38-41).

Swift observes that the modern woman's major accomplishments of a day include choosing the fabrics for her gowns and getting herself made up "almost by four" (1. 91).

Stella, unlike her feminine counterparts, is forever a genuine friend. Swift is certainly the most qualified person to judge this aspect of her character. He emphasizes the value of Stella's friendship by cleverly suggesting that her kindness can be seen as a redeeming quality in the misfortunes of life:

*All accidents of life conspire  
To raise up Stella's virtues higher . . .  
Her kindness who could ever guess,  
Had not her friends been in distress?* (To Stella, *Written on the Day of Her Birth*; 1. 21-22, 27-28)

In addition, Swift praises Stella's "generous boldness to defend/An innocent and absent friend" ("Stella's *BD*," 1727; 1. 43-44). Most women, in Swift's view, relish the opportunity to slander an absent friend:

*Thus every fool herself deludes*

*The prude condemns the absent prudes;  
Mopsa, who stinks her spouse to death,  
Accuses Chloe's tainted breath  
("Jrnl of a Modern Lady," l. 154-157).*

This illustrates Swift's belief that women are quick to criticize their friends for the very faults that they themselves possess. It is interesting to note that Swift expresses his opinions about Stella and about women in strikingly similar—yet opposite—terms. Whereas Stella *defends* an *absent friend* in one poem, women *condemn* the *absent prudes* in a completely different poem. As always, Swift uses positive terms exclusively in reference to Stella and reserves his negative terms to refer to women in general.

Swift conveys the strengths of Stella's character most effectively by exposing some of his own weaknesses in comparison:

*She tends me, like a humble slave;  
And, when indecently I rave . . .  
She, with soft speech, my anguish cheers,  
Or melts my passion down with tears:*

*Although 'tis easy to descry  
She wants assistance more than I;  
Yet seems to feel my pains alone,  
And is a Stoic in her own.*

*("To Stella, Written on . . . Her Birth," l. 9-18).*

Swift begins by describing himself as a typically irritable patient. Despite his disposition, Stella comforts him through his illness with patience, tolerance, and concern. However, the end of this passage ironically reveals that Stella is in more pain than Swift.

In the tradition of the eighteenth century, Swift devoted his attention to mankind and his activities. Therefore Stella, as his concept of an ideal woman, possesses strictly human qualities in his description of her. Nevertheless, Swift's poems clearly illustrate her superiority over other women.

<sup>1</sup>Rogers, Pat (ed.), 1983. *Jonathan Swift: The Complete Poems*. London: Yale University Press. All citations refer to this text.

