Netscape

The mystery-solving heroine of William Gibson's novel roams the globe as well as cyberspace.

PATTERN RECOGNITION
By William Gibson.
356 pp. New York:
G. P. Putnam's Sons. $25.95.

By Lisa Zeidner



VIKTOR KOEN

IN the jagged cities of science fiction, there is a God — or at least a Wizard of Oz — and his name is Thomas Pynchon. "Pynchon is a kind of mythic hero of mine," William Gibson has proclaimed. Gibson, who must be tired of hearing himself identified as "coiner of the term 'cyberspace,' " has gone to worlds not yet reached under Commander Pynchon's rule.

Critics of science fiction grouse that Gibson can't get far while steering the same old postmodern spacecraft, and dismiss his inventiveness as mere bells and whistles. But some die-hard fans lament that he's deserting the mother ship every time he tries something off the flight path of his first novel, "Neuromancer" (1984). All of which puts Gibson in the unenviable position of being able to displease many of the people much of the time.

If his elegant, entrancing seventh novel offers an answer to his detractors, it could be roughly translated as: so sue me. "Pattern Recognition" is almost nose-thumbingly conventional in design. Despite the requisite tech toys, it's set squarely in the present. But then the dates of Gibson-action have been creeping steadily backward. Predicting the future, Gibson has always maintained, is mostly a matter of managing not to blink as you witness the present.

The novel's heroine, Cayce Pollard, — no relation to the Case of "Neuromancer," though Gibson does like a sly self-reference — is a freelance marketing consultant. She's so suspicious of trademarks that she sands the logos off the metal buttons of her jeans and has been known to suffer panic attacks at the sight of Louis Vuitton luggage, or the "terrible eyes" of the Michelin Man. But the advertising world reveres her. As a "coolhunter," she penetrates "neighborhoods like Dogtown, which birthed skateboarding, to explore roots in hope of finding whatever the next thing might be." Her current top-secret assignment takes her to London to evaluate a new logo for an athletic footwear conglomerate.

Single and self-contained, Cayce travels light, with the eccentric clothing that her director friend Damien calls C.P.U.'s (Cayce Pollard Units). She's too hip to lug her own laptop, using Damien's Mac to follow a message board, "Fetish: Footage: Forum," devoted to 135 strange, unexplained, pointedly unattributed film clips that have appeared on the Net and developed a cult following. Entire warring subcultures of interpretation have sprung up around the footage: "Zaprudered into surreal dimensions of purest speculation, ghost-narratives have emerged and taken on shadowy but determined lives of their own."

When Cayce's employer, a billionaire Belgian named Bigend, asks her to track down the footage's creator, she agrees. Although she mistrusts his motives, she's deeply curious, and at the same time secretly hopes to solve another mystery: her father, a retired C.I.A. man, was in New York for unexplained reasons on Sept. 11, 2001, and is presumed dead. With Bigend committing bottomless resources to her search, Cayce embarks on a jet-setting trek that takes her from London to Tokyo to Moscow.

Gibson himself has always been something of a coolhunter, and "Pattern Recognition" gives Cayce his own sharp, wry eye. Her effortless hyperintelligence ought to put to rest any complaints that science fiction's computer cowboys are members of an all-boys' club. With such a tour guide, you don't skip the descriptions.

Here Cayce observes a public statue in Moscow: "Lenin, aerodynamic to the point of featurelessness, molded in white concrete, pointing the proletariat forward like some kind of giant Marxist lawn jockey." She particularly admires design that transcends its time period, like Aeroflot's logo, which has "a sort of a Victorian Futurist look," or her cherished Buzz Rickson's jacket, "a fanatical museum-grade replica of a U.S. MA-1 flying jacket, as purely functional and iconic a garment as the previous century produced."

After a burglar tampers with the Mac she's been using, Cayce finds herself on the trail of what may be an international conspiracy or may, like the footage itself, be merely "an illusion of meaningfulness, faulty pattern recognition." As an ode to paranoia, "Pattern Recognition" resembles not that Pynchonian bible, "Gravity's Rainbow," but "The Crying of Lot 49." In fact, it can almost be read as a tribute or, as Hollywood would say, a remake. After all, when Pynchon explored entropy, counterculture and the postal monopoly in 1966, there was no Internet.

But does our technology really produce a cataclysmic shift, or is human nature immutable? That has always been Gibson's über-issue. As Pynchon has taught us, the right answer isn't necessarily either/or. It may well be both/and. (Even the paranoid can be followed.) When Cayce bumps up against the Russian mafia, a Gibson staple, she muses, "Turns out there are some very not-nice people, out here." Money also makes cyberspace go round. Despite itself, however, this mafia is thrust into new territory when it must contend with the Net.

In Gibson's fiction, to see our souls, look at our cities. Cayce calls London a "mirror-world" — like urban America but, with its oversize appliance plugs and steering wheels on the wrong side, disconcertingly off. Distant cities seem both strange and familiar, especially under the influence of jet lag, here also called "soul-delay." Culture itself, Gibson suggests, is a kind of jet lag, or, as Cayce's therapist puts it, "liminal" — a "word for certain states: thresholds, zones of transition."

If our new century is unsettlingly transitional, it becomes even more difficult to fix an individual identity within it — especially given the fear that, as Cayce's tech-geek colleague worries, there will soon be no national identity left. "Not if the world's Bigends keep at it: no borders, pretty soon there's no mirror to be on the other side of." The danger is of "all experience having been reduced, by the spectral hand of marketing, to price-point variations on the same thing."

Gibson has considered these themes before. He has even considered himself considering them — postmodernism's mirror world. (Or, as Cayce grumbles about Tommy Hilfiger, "simulacra of simulacra of simulacra. ... There must be some Tommy Hilfiger event horizon, beyond which it is impossible to be more derivative, more removed from the source, more devoid of soul.") But "Pattern Recognition" is Gibson's most complex, mature gloss on the artist's relationship to our ever more commercialized globe.

Bigend contends that "the creative process is no longer contained within an individual skull, if indeed it ever was. Everything, today, is to some extent the reflection of something else." The novel argues otherwise. There is a man behind the curtain in Oz — or, for equal opportunity's sake, a woman. Those who expect apocalypse from their science fiction may be dismayed to find Gibson saluting the grisly tenaciousness of the imagination, even celebrating the transformative power of loyalty and love. But his ending is hardly syrupy. Like the most satisfying resolutions, this one manages both to tie everything up and to suggest further loose threads.

AS usual, Gibson's prose is — to use some of his favorite adjectives — corpuscular, crenelated. His sentences slide from silk to steel, and take tonal joy rides from the ironic to the earnest. But he never gets lost in the language, as he sometimes has in the past. Structurally, this may be his most confident novel. The secondary characters and their subplots are more fully developed, right down to their personal e-mail styles. Without any metafictional grandstanding, Gibson nails the texture of Internet culture: how it feels to be close to someone you know only as a voice in a chat room, or to fret about someone spying on your browser's list of sites visited.

Cayce does some fancy travel on Bigend's dollar. Her globe-trotting gives "Pattern Recognition" its exultant, James Bond-ish edge. Yet the book also manages to be, in the fullest traditional sense, a novel of consciousness — less science fiction than Henry James. After all, Oedipa Maas, the truth seeker of "Lot 49," is sort of a pot-smoking Isabel Archer, inheritance and all. Cayce is Isabel, with a search engine.

Can a book with references to Starbucks, iBooks and Hummers become a classic? Can anything transcend its time now? Or is any novel about our tumultuous era bound to be a blip on the radar screen — the equivalent of 20 seconds of stray footage on the Net? "Pattern Recognition" considers these issues with appealing care and, given that this best-selling author is his own kind of franchise, surprising modesty. Gibson's novel succeeds in being both up-to-the-nanosecond and also, in Cayce's highest praise, "curiously difficult to date." □

Lisa Zeidner's most recent novel is "Layover." She is a professor of English at Rutgers University, Camden.

Outnumbered by the Help

Gardner Botsford's memoir of growing up as a New Yorker and working at The New Yorker.

A LIFE OF PRIVILEGE, MOSTLY

By Gardner Botsford. Illustrated. 260 pp. New York: St. Martin's Press. $24.95.

By Jeremy Treglown

ONE day in May 1945, the 27-year-old Gardner Botsford and a friend were briefly in sole military control of the Czech spa of Karlovy Vary, better known as Carlsbad. They had arrived there by accident after being sent ahead of the United States Army to help clear the road of thousands of refugees and deserters fleeing the Russian advance, which was moving rapidly westward. Both were junior officers in the celebrated First Infantry Division — Botsford a lieutenant; his friend, Max Zera, a captain from the Bronx, "built like a tree stump, fluent in Yiddish and a man of volatile temperament and instant emotions, which he expressed in a voice that was part trombone and part chain saw." Botsford had recently spent some time in the hospital in England recovering from a wound, but otherwise they had been in more or less continuous action since landing at Omaha Beach on D-Day, 11 months earlier, and both were distinctly unkempt.

The town's burgomaster was keen that Carlsbad should fall into American rather than Russian hands, and persuaded the German commandant, General Schwaben, to go along with him. Now he put on full regalia and presented the gleamingly polished and bemedaled Schwaben and his aides to the astonished, dirty young Americans. Captain Zera rose to the occasion. In Central Europe, Yiddish was still a lingua franca, and, with some aplomb, Zera announced in Yiddish, "We are the American Army." Disgusted to be so imperiously addressed by a Jew, Schwaben stepped away, but then, remembering the advancing Russians, turned back and reluctantly handed over his pistol. Aware that their moment of glory was not going to last, the Americans waited only until the surrendering party had left the room. Then they scooted back to their jeep and headed for their own lines.

The scene is typical of Botsford's memoir in its humor, in the fact that the main attention is vividly on people other than himself, and also (though Botsford is too patricianly un-self-analytical to have made this connection) in that he seems to have passed his whole life observing muddled handovers of authority. For example, the divorces of his glamorous and wayward mother, Ruth Gardner, heiress to part of an Illinois engineering fortune, required him to adapt to two stepfathers. He got on reasonably well with the first,



FROM "A LIFE OF PRIVILEGE, MOSTLY"

Omaha Beach, June 6, 1944. Gardner Botsford is the man at the left of the tall soldier at the far right front of the landing craft.

the rich, suave Raoul Fleischmann, The New Yorker's founding publisher. The other, Peter Vischer, he makes no secret of having detested, and describes mainly in terms of his pro-Nazi sympathies. After Botsford left Yale in 1939, he spent most of his career, war service apart, on The New Yorker's staff, first as a very junior writer, later as an editor. Much of his story is directly or indirectly affected by the magazine's internal power struggles: between Fleischmann and Harold Ross, Ross and William Shawn, and above all between Shawn and everybody else in his ill-judged, miserably prolonged and vacillating efforts to manage his own succession, which are the subject of the book's last 40 pages.

Botsford traces these throes from as early as Tom Wolfe's 1963 attack on Shawn in The New York Herald Tribune, through to his eventual retirement in 1987. He is not unaffectionate about his editor: "He tiptoed through life as though through a minefield, on guard against ambush by germs, heights, insolent civil servants, elevators and cold weather." He doesn't stint praise for his achievements. But we have heard a lot about this saga in recent years — Shawn's longing for invisibility and its paradoxical relationship to his fame have assumed near-Salingerian dimensions — and some, though not all, of what Botsford adds can seem a shade self-serving, and at a level of detail few will care much about except those directly involved: who liked/was jealous of/said what (said *what*?) about whom. Fortunately, and enjoyably, there is more: about Botsford's colorful upbringing on the Upper East Side, about his dealings with some of The New Yorker's more demanding contributors and about his war, with which the artfully constructed, if patchy, narrative begins.

He was born in 1917 and brought up at 151 East 74th Street, a brownstone in which the family was comfortably outnumbered by the help. The general territory has, again, been well trodden (the most unsparing memoir of a rich boy's upbringing in New York is still Ben Sonnenberg's "Lost Property"). But Botsford gives a lively sense not only of his class but of his period. There are the comic double standards of Prohibition: unconcealed deliveries by a bootlegger who carried cases of drink into the house from an old Buick sedan "with a certain panache, as though he were an Irish estate owner distributing Christmas puddings to needy tenants," while the newspapers were full of pictures of "lawmen busting up rows of bottles with axes or pouring kegs of beer down sewers." There are the all-consuming annual removals of the household and most of its accouterments either to the country or to France, the latter involving a voyage by ship; on one occasion, his mother but not her children missed the departure and she set off in vain pursuit on a tugboat that Raoul managed to engage ("maybe he bought it"), while the 10-year-old Gardner and his two younger siblings, thrillingly unchaperoned, settled into the luxury of the S.S. Paris. There are Botsford's later travels, especially in Germany in 1937, where he saw a Nazi rally in a Munich stadium, giant searchlights "reflecting off the roiling smoke from the torches." And there are his callow attempts at the job of a cub reporter on The Jacksonville Journal in Florida. The only dimension not brought to life is his first marriage, to the spirited but unhappy Katharine Chittenden, known as Tass. In this, Botsford is among the majority of remarried autobiographers, few of whom find much to say about their original spouses.

He joined The New Yorker before America's entry into the war and returned immediately after it, in a state of what he doesn't call post-traumatic stress, though it's clear from his frank, touchingly downplayed account that that is what it was. Among other eventual roles on the magazine, he was made responsible for what, in a different context, he — ironically? — applauds as the "care and maintenance of celebrity," editing some of the best-known regular contributors. These included Janet Flanner and Mollie Panter-Downes, the writers of its Paris and London letters, about whom he writes with humorous devotion. Also about Maeve Brennan. One of the book's highlights is her own account, as given to Botsford, of a Christmas from hell at which her guests included Howard Moss, Moss's hairdresser friend Mark, who disastrously took over some of the cooking, and a drunk and demanding Jean Stafford, who threw a bottle of red wine over the tablecloth and a box of salt over the floor ("so that the cats . . . almost went insane from thirst from their paws and with rage at all the disorder"), then gratuitously announced that she knew that Edmund Wilson hated Brennan and, when she finally left, "promised to vomit in the car."

BOTSFORD'S simple diagnosis of what went wrong with The New Yorker, which is obliquely reinforced by episodes like this, is essentially that everyone got too old: Shawn, Shawn's contributors and Shawn's staff, including Botsford himself. Most of them had joined in their 20's and early 30's, and their readers aged with them. Things change, and the magazine is now full of energy and surprise again, and has a welcome new level of political engagement. A crucial part of how it has benefited from, as well as survived, its sometimes turbulent alterations, of course, has been that plenty has been left intact. Botsford gives a pleasantly gossipy picture both of its traditionalism and of its occasional shifts of style and policy, especially between the Ross and Shawn editorships. As far as continuity is concerned, readers of Kevin Conley's recent, quintessential New Yorker article about the manufacture of ballet shoes will find a pre-echo in Botsford's book. He tells how, sometime in the 1940's, Shawn once suggested with characteristic tentativeness that there might be a topic in Mr. Magruder's skate-sharpening workshop on West 49th Street, to which professional figure skaters all over the world sent their blades to be honed. Here as elsewhere, "Onward and Upward," as one of the magazine's "departments" is idiosyncratically called, satisfyingly often turns out to mean "As You Were." Gardner Botsford makes no claim for his own role in helping to keep the best of The New Yorker as it always was, but it's obvious that he had one. □

Jeremy Treglown is the Sokol fellow at the Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library. His most recent book is "Romancing: The Life and Work of Henry Green."

I Lost It at the Movies

In Robert Coover's novel, we are not watching life, but a film.

THE ADVENTURES OF LUCKY PIERRE
Directors' Cut.
By Robert Coover.
405 pp. New York: Grove Press. $24.

By Will Blythe

METAFICTION. The word alone can strike dread into a reader's heart with its evocation of those self-nullifying tales, those myth-puncturing novels, those narratives about the impossibility of narrative. All of it usually adds up to too much meta, not much fiction. The genre has generally seemed far more interested in the hydraulics of storytelling than the mysterious fluidities of character.

And yet in the 1960's and 70's, such writing as practiced by Robert Coover, John Barth and Donald Barthelme, among others, sparkled with a subversive allure, embodying the extravagant realities of that era while rebelling against the limitations of literary realism. In those halcyon days, metafiction winked conspiratorially at its readers (they were in on the plot, or lack thereof) and sneered at its staid siblings who had gone dutifully to work in the family firm of Dickens, Dreiser and Austen, Purveyors of Fine Traditional Narratives.

Of course, a form that chafes against itself, that resists its own authority and that depends on a roguish, insurrectionary appeal can come to seem as comic and superfluous as a tenured Maoist. If permanent revolution strikes you as a permanent bore, then your initial reaction to Robert Coover's 13th novel, the snickering and repetitive "Adventures of Lucky Pierre," is likely to be dismay. Is this how it ends for the avant-garde, in an old man's endless dreams of tumescence?

Meet Lucky Pierre. When first encountered, our protagonist is striding briskly through the snow and ice of Cinecity (cinema city, sin city), sporting a large and stubborn erection, a nearly chronic condition for the "last of the great pornographic film icons," the veteran of such classics as "Harem Scare 'Em" and "Shipwrecked on the Isle of the Nymphs." Lucky Pierre is also something of a clown, a bumbling maestro of erotic slapstick — think Buster Keaton Does Dallas. As he trudges down the street, a bus splashes by with "THE ADVENTURES OF LUCKY PIERRE" as its "destination sign." We are not watching life, not exactly — this is a movie.

In Cinecity, a kind of virtual dystopia where the skies rain suicides, porno movies have vanquished all other genres. They come in all varieties — feature films, documentaries, animated cartoons, abstract art noodlings. In fact, the entire city seems an elaborate stage set for the production and consumption of sexual spectacle. Smutty narrative abounds. As Coover writes, "Holding a mirror up to Cinecity is like holding a mirror up to a mirror."

Lucky's problem is that (like lots of us) he can't tell the difference between real life and the movies. Everything, it seems, is scripted, and he's getting sick of that. "He wants now that purity of heart to will one thing. He wants continuity. He wants to go home." But his directors aren't having it. "I'm afraid you have no choice," one tells him. "You have to follow the script."

"The Adventures of Lucky Pierre" proceeds by spinning from one porno reel to the next, with nine in all, each directed by a woman, a tutelary muse who has a proprietary relationship with Lucky Pierre. In one reel, he is whipped to ribbons by the dominatrix mayor of Cinecity (women are the only authority figures in the book) for his dalliance with the Extars — a band of guerrillas devoted to destroying movie theaters, "the very heart and emblem of our great municipal enterprise." In another, he has a deeply fulfilling relationship with one of the book's most compelling characters, a sexual robot named Kate whom he assembles from a kit someone has sent anonymously to his home. It makes sense in a novel so patently uninterested in traditional notions of character that a machine would have the biggest heart of all — not to mention the most exotic sexual topography.

Parts of the book are atrociously boring — Lucky is not so much a character as a flickering simulacrum inside a movie, a shadowy projection of light, a filmic will-o'-the-wisp. You often feel as if you are watching the novel rather than reading it. One cliffhanger follows another, nightmares of eternal recurrence with no real consequences for Lucky Pierre or any character. In one scene, the Extars are thrown by security forces from the windows of a skyscraper, only to soar back up from the ground, fully recomposed.

Coover's method seems to be summed up by one of the directors as she lectures Lucky Pierre on the new cinematic consciousness: "There's no more past, no more future, all those patently false assumptions we used to cling to about time and memory, all those old gimmicks we used to use to simulate continuity — the medium shot followed by the close-up, the mystique of moral decisions, the plotline with its so-called developments, the unacknowledged back projection — we're past all that now."

Maybe, maybe not. "Art is not difficult because it wishes to be difficult, but because it wishes to be art," Coover's fellow metafictionist Donald Barthelme wrote. It is certainly unfair to judge such an obstreperously thorny and postmodern performance as "The Adventures of Lucky Pierre" by old-school realist standards. For all of its sprawl and torpor, the book redeems itself in at least two ways — first as an embodiment of a spectacle-obsessed entertainment culture that seems horribly like our own.

And then — most important — it delivers the ancient narrative satisfaction of seeing a character deal with the inexplicabilities of time, the prospect of his own extinction. Toward the end of a novel that accumulates rather than develops, and in which the muses are constantly asserting the existence of a new time scheme, the movie's eternal present, we once again come across old Lucky Pierre. Graying, decrepit, his sexual powers drooping, he shuffles through the slushy streets of Cinecity wearing condoms as booties, terrified that he is being written out of the master script. A tenderness attaches to our befuddled, aging hero at this moment. His story ends in midsentence. The fact that Lucky Pierre is an actor, a simulacrum and an icon as much as a character doesn't diminish the terror and pathos of what seem to be his final moments — life is a serial right up to the very end. And then?

I suppose that's what revival houses are for. □

Will Blythe is a contributing editor at Men's Journal.

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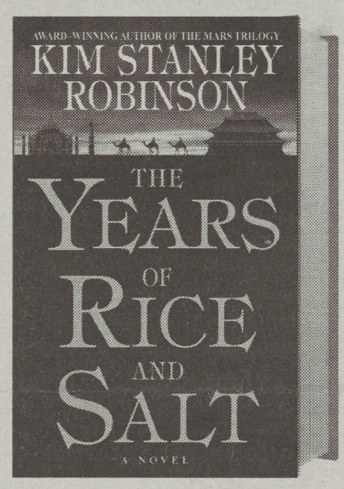



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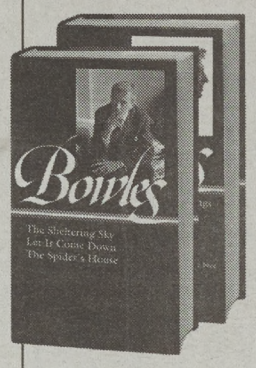

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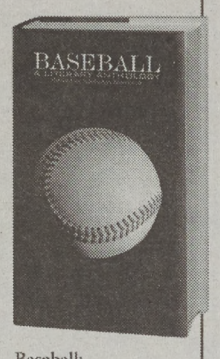

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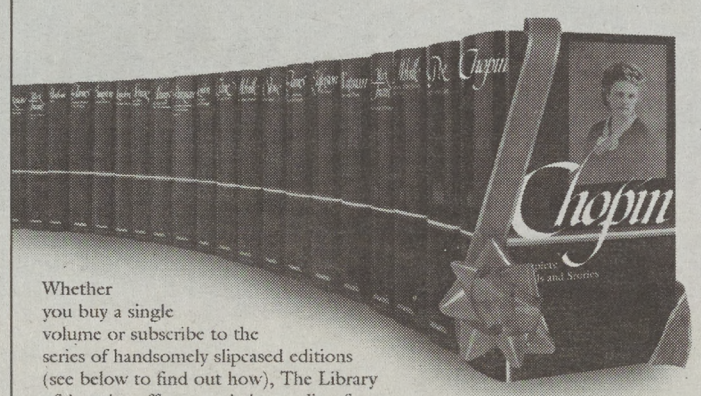

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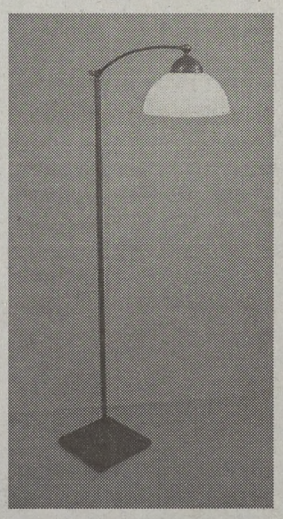

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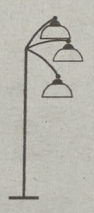

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By Mark Costello

IN his first four books, the Omaha-based writer and lawyer Richard Dooling has emerged as a man who won't be pigeonholed, so let's not even try. In each of Dooling's three novels — "Critical Care," "White Man's Grave" and "Brain Storm" — an American naïf, a kind of yuppie Huck, tangles with a system of spectacular corruption. The plot lines are commercial, bristling with villains and cliffhangers. The tone is brutally satiric and the targets are not small: doctors, lawyers, corporate greed, middle-class religion, groupthink in all forms. Some characters have silly names (Mr. Mutton, Ms. Carbuncle); others are disfigured or sport "zany" affectations, like the bankruptcy lawyer who carries a toy sword into his legal battles.

It's Vonnegut by Grisham — and it's more. Dooling's books are also novels of ideas. In each, the action pauses (and there's lots of it to pause) while the characters debate important questions. What is life? Does hell exist? Should Congress pass more hate-crime legislation? In Dooling's finest book, "White Man's Grave" (a finalist for a National Book Award in 1994), these strong if jangly elements — the thriller, the lampoon, the PBS special — come together in the problems of two central characters, Randall Killigan, a lawyer (see toy sword above), and Boone Westfall, a cosmic drifter who goes searching for a friend. Dooling doesn't rush or push his themes in "White Man's Grave." He takes the time and space to give us all the awkward, accidental and nonprogrammatic moments that fill a life — my life or your life, Randall's or Boone's. We care about the men of "White Man's Grave," and so the fiction works. The book is smart, moving and totally original.

"Bet Your Life," Dooling's new novel, is set in a large cesspool known as the insurance industry. Carver Hartnett, a hotshot claims investigator and computer whiz, is disgusted by the rampant fraud that courses through his in-box every day. People maim themselves to collect $10,000, doctors fake the records, vulture-like lawyers circle overhead. Carver's partner, Lenny Stillmach, is equally disgusted and even better with computers. Both men are in love with the cold Miranda Pryor, a fellow corporate gumshoe who may be on the take. Dooling's Omaha is like a street map of a hangover, a bleary haze of office parks, casinos, girlie bars and porno stores. It's deep Nebraska noir, this stuff, homage to the giants, Hammett, Chandler, James M. Cain.

Carver, Lenny and Miranda crusade against "viatical" insurance policies, a murky subrealm of the industry in which AIDS and cancer patients, strapped for ready cash and facing no tomorrow, sell their policies for nickels on the dollar to pools of ghoul investors who are, in effect, betting that the patients will die quickly. When Lenny is found dead at his computer, Carver and Miranda must investigate each other, and pretty much everybody else in the book, to find Lenny's killer and the truth.

"Bet Your Life" is not without its strengths. Viaticals exist. Dooling knows the subject cold and explains it clearly (though perhaps a bit too often). Miranda, lust object and Madonna, is complex and believable, a pious alcoholic, needy sneak and loyal friend. Like all noir sirens, she's harboring a secret. When her secret is revealed, deep into the book, the moment is both shocking and emotionally right.

But Dooling stumbles badly with Carver Hartnett, his hero and narrator. In "White Man's Grave," Dooling's voice, wordy and wise-cracking, worked against all odds. Here, it works too hard, pounding on the obvious, waxing purple where it strains for grand significance. A sleeper's eyes crack open "like unhealing sores," while mourners' faces wear "the unmistakable pallors of woe." "Sometimes," Carver muses, "you enter a room, and life starts over in an alien place where all the old rules, habits and assumptions are useless — a place that makes you agree with the philosophers who say that the pleasures of this world are nothing more than the torments of hell seen backwards in a mirror. Or worse, that this world is just another planet's hell."

My advice to Carver: stick to Planet Earth. Dooling has always been interested in science and high tech, but his interest, expressed through the webhead Carver, isn't always interesting. In his essays, Dooling has intelligently pondered the politics of chat rooms and virtual existence. In "Bet Your Life," he fetishizes gadgetry in ways that do not make Carver or the story come alive. Standing by the corpse of his best friend, Carver pauses to admire "Lenny's new high-end gaming mouse . . . a small sleek Batmobile idling, ready to roar away on the fiber-optic freeway." "Love or hate Microsoft," Carver gushes elsewhere, "they make it easy to quickly locate the nexus of an entire electronic personality. The program is called Outlook, and. . . ."

You get the idea. Between the hell talk and the Batmobile metaphors, Carver never really pulls his weight. Set up to be the conscience of the novel, Carver is more mannequin than man.

Richard Dooling is a maverick talent. He takes impressive risks. He is forceful and ambitious, excited by ideas and brimming with research. But force and fiction don't always go together. Fiction, it's been said, is like a romance with the reader, a thing of hints and leaps, a slow seduction by suggestion. And this, though it sounds pretty, might actually be true. The reader can't be overwhelmed with facts or rhetoric. What's missing in "Bet Your Life" are the qualities that make a book like "White's Man Grave" so difficult to write and wonderful to read: the mystery, the spaces and the pauses. □

Mark Costello's most recent book is "Big If," a novel.

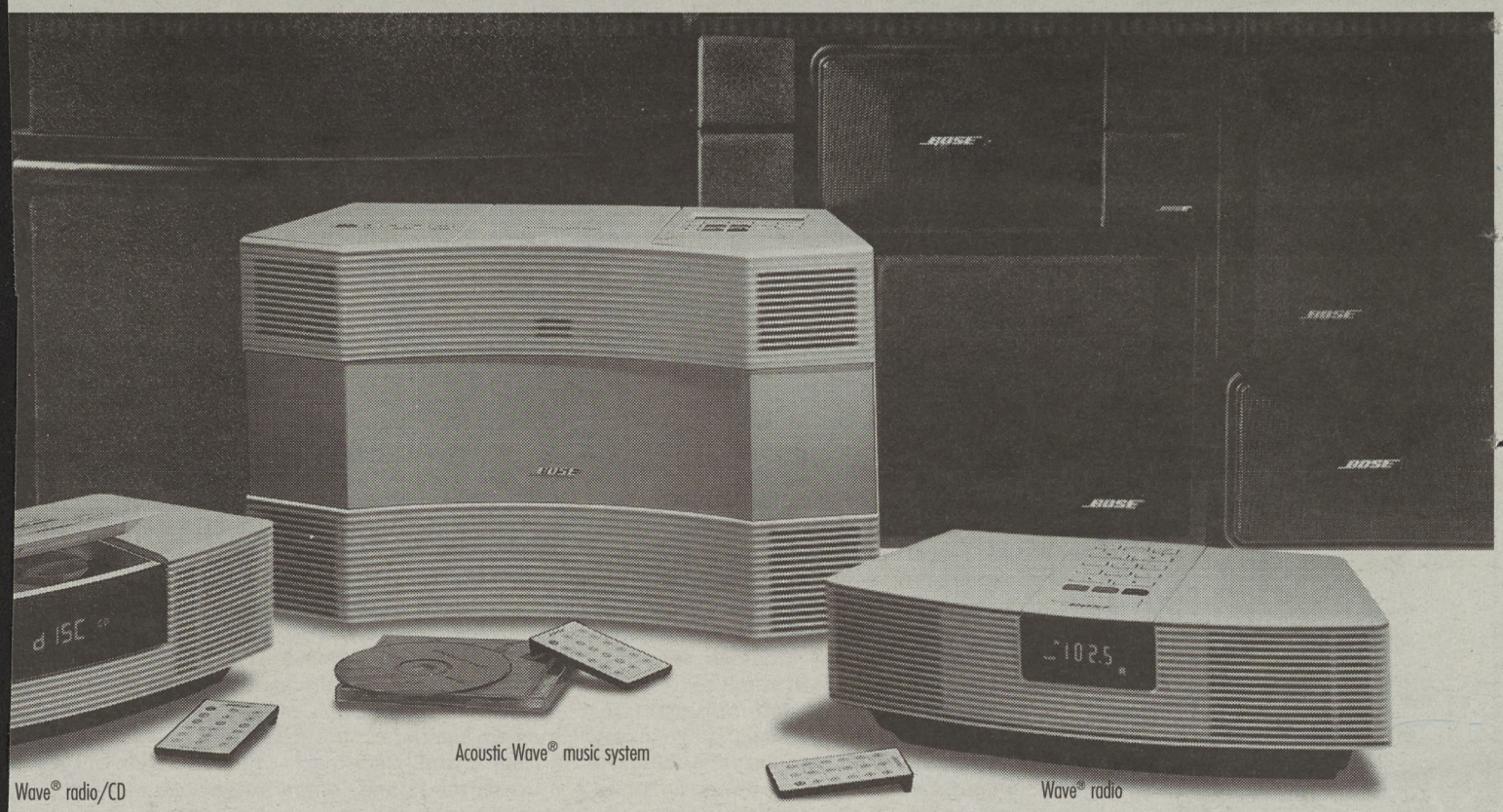
Authors' Queries

For a biography of the singer Peggy Lee (1920-2002), I would appreciate hearing from anyone who knew her, worked with her or has relevant information to share.

PETER RICHMOND
P.O. Box 958
Millerton, N.Y. 12546
e-mail: peterrichmond@journalist.com

For a book on Camden, N.J., I would appreciate hearing from people with old documents, letters and photographs, oral or written histories and reminiscences.

IRVIN MOLOTSKY
1735 T Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20009
e-mail: irvino@peoplepc.com



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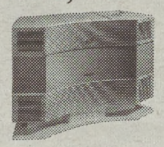

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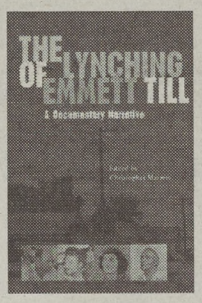

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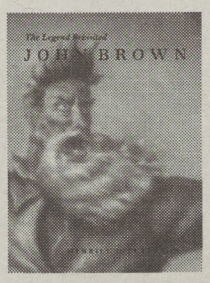

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Her Mother's Daughter

In Eva Hoffman's novel, a girl must unravel the mystery of her birth.

THE SECRET
By Eva Hoffman.
265 pp. New York: PublicAffairs. $25.

By Neil Gordon

EVA HOFFMAN is as accomplished a memoirist and critic as virtually any contemporary American writer. Her three works of nonfiction constitute a singular exploration of World War II's long shadow, whether in discovering the lost world of the Eastern European shtetl, traveling in Poland after the fall of Communism or, in "Lost in Translation," exploring Hoffman's own childhood and coming-of-age as an immigrant to America. Her criticism and reviewing are characterized by a crystalline prose style and intricacy of thought, and they range over an astonishing spectrum. In all her writing, Hoffman's consistent sensitivity is informed by her wide erudition, from her musical education to frequent Freudian insight, both psychoanalytic and philosophical. That Hoffman has turned her immense talent to the novel now is, or should be, a matter of intense interest to any informed reader.

But a novel is an entirely different order of business from anything else she has written; in the cruel world of fiction each book is a first book and has to hook its audience, old and new, as if nothing else had come before.

The hook, in "The Secret," is the secret at the heart of the story. "Of course, I've always had a secret," Iris Surrey says, introducing herself and her book with the question of her birth. The single daughter of a single parent, Iris lives in a small Midwestern town, some 25 years in the future, in a nearly utopian intimacy with her mother. "She was not quite a mother and more than one: home, sibling, the larger part of myself, as much me as my limbs or bloodstream. Most of the time we seemed to move in an idyll of seamless attunement, in which our desires echoed in each other as in a watery reverberating chamber."

What her mother will not satisfy, however, are Iris's ever more insistent questions, as she grows, about her origins. Why does she have no father? Why has her mother, once a highly successful financial analyst in New York, moved to a Midwestern town to live in virtual isolation? Where are her grandparents? Why has she no past? In time, Iris begins to believe that there was "something monstrously out of kilter connected with my birth."

When she reaches 17, the accretion of unanswered questions surrounding Iris's past grows so urgent that she must defy her mother and begin to seek answers on her own. When, a quarter of the way into the book, she discovers her secret, the story shifts to her search to find not only her origins but the meaning of her life.

To crack the code of her past she must run away from her mother to New York, finding those responsible for her strange birth and, ultimately, her grandparents and aunt. With them she pieces together who her mother is and comes to enough clarity about herself finally to confront the central question of her existence: not how she became human but, more fundamentally, what makes a living being human and is there any hope for her to become so?

While the basic structure of "The Secret" is a mystery, it is also at least in part a work of science fiction. Many details of 2025's culture are noted: entertainment is provided by Data Dispensers, extraterrestrial environments are being prepared for human inhabitants, moods are dispensed with "Feel Goods," "biomorphs" — genetically engineered life-forms — are made by artists, and emotions are synthesized by an "Affect Simulator." But the futuristic elements are largely unnecessary to the core identity of this book, and often distract from its more convincing identity as a novel of ideas. In fact, it is when considering what human character owes to the existence of a personal and cultural past that Hoffman comes closest to the rich complexity of her nonfiction work. The novel's finest character, for me, is Piotr, Iris's lover, who is obsessed with photographs of 20th-century suffering. "They pursued him and haunted him in the night; his task was to unlock their meanings." In this view of the near future, Hoffman is entirely convincing.

Iris's quest to understand her own origins, however, never takes on the same urgency. Partly this is a technical problem: even after we understand the secret of Iris's birth, we are never able entirely to share her anguish because the question of her humanity always seems somewhat contrived. Do the genetic mechanics of our creation really cast this kind of doubt on our humanity and emotional complexity? In order fully to engage us in Iris's quest, "The Secret" needs also to educate us as to its philosophical issues, which are not at all self-evident.

"THE SECRET" is compelling throughout for Hoffman's prose, for her insights on identity, for her reflections on history. That it remains, on the whole, less accomplished than her other work has perhaps to do with the difficulty that frequently afflicts nonfiction writers, who fashion their narratives out of verifiable truth, when they turn their talents to the devious world of fiction, a world in which truth is held to a — paradoxically — much higher imaginative standard. Truth is stranger than fiction, and therefore nonfiction writers are able to justify the most far-fetched events by the fact that they are in fact true. But fiction must, in its very divorce from reality, fight tooth and claw for the reader's belief. "I had verisimilitude," Iris says of herself at one point, trying to express her doubts as to her own humanity, "just not conviction. The simulation was failing to believe in itself. I spoke of myself as I, but I was failing to feel the full illusion of life." The reader, too, may fail to feel that full illusion.

Judging fiction, of course, is a notoriously subjective business, and the list of critical blunders later shown up by history is immense. To cut through the subjectivity, I think, one may ask a simple question: does this book give the sense that its author wanted to write it, or *needed* to? How this book fares with its readers will ultimately depend on whether they leave its pages feeling that it came into existence out of a desire to be written or whether it was, truly, a necessary artistic act. □

Neil Gordon is the literary editor at The Boston Review. His third novel, "The Company You Keep," will be published next spring.

Embracing the World, With a Sigh and a Wink

Continued From First Arts Page

Chelm. But the story continues: Manger adds that "for the sake of the truth," he must point out that despite his disappointment with human justice, the rabbi retains his faith. The story ends with the rabbi's mystical dance by candlelight, his illumined body and his black shadow image finally collapsing together in the silence of death. As David G. Roskies and the translator, Leonard Wolf, point out in their introduction, divine justice and its human counterpart make an uneasy union. And a contemporary consciousness seems to hover over a premodern world.

This is a recurring theme. Another new anthology of Yiddish stories, "No Star Too Beautiful" (Norton), edited and translated by Joachim Neugroschel, has selections reaching back to 1382, but the encounter between modernity and a traditional society is one of its main preoccupations as well.

In fact, the confrontation is almost unavoidable, since Yiddish was itself the vernacular language of Jews living in the Germanic lands, combining aspects of German and Hebrew. Already inscribed in its character is an encounter and an accommodation, transforming something ancient into something still taking shape. The flowering of Yiddish literature at the end of the 19th century through the middle of the 20th is a wildly diverse reaction to yet another set of encounters and accommodations, this time between traditional Judaism and the secular West. Those encounters have unusual resonance as cultures bound by beliefs and ritual are confronted with a Western world they alternately yearn for and fear.

In the United States, Yiddish literature entered the literary mainstream with the 1953 publication of "A Treasury of Yiddish Stories," edited by Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg (and including Saul Bellow's classic translation of Isaac Bashevis Singer's story "Gimpel the Fool"). Within a few decades no more introductions were needed. Yiddish phrases were assimilated into pop culture; the musical "Fiddler on the Roof" sentimentalized the stories of Sholem Aleichem; Singer won a Nobel Prize.

But Mr. Roskies, the editor of the New Yiddish Library and professor of Jewish literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Manhattan, suggested in an interview last week that Yiddish literature as a whole has still not entered the academic mainstream, nor has it benefited from interest in multiculturalism. "The impact of Howe's early anthology was very profound," Mr. Roskies explained. "But the focus of that anthology was the shtetl; Howe conveyed a world still shtetl-bound. And his literary predilections went toward realism."

But Yiddish literature, Mr. Roskies said, became a literature of encounters with other worlds — with the Soviet Union, with the urban experience, with Poland between the world wars, with America: "It embraced the whole mode of modernity, not just in subject but in style."

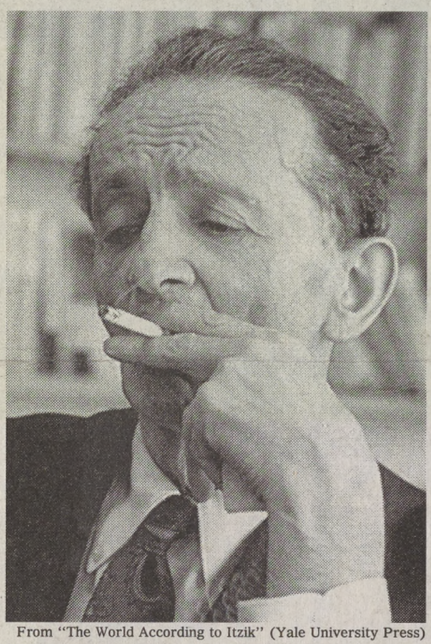
One of the goals of Yale's series, he explained, is to reveal that breadth and establish its place in world literary culture. It is being sponsored by the Fund for the Translation of Jewish Literature (established by the historian Lucy S. Dawidowicz) and the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Mass. The first releases include two previously published books — "The Dybbuk and Other Writings" by S. Ansky and the "I. L. Peretz Reader" — along with the Manger anthology and Hillel Halkin's new translations of Aleichem.

Mr. Roskies has put together an international editorial board and plans to publish works by better-known writers like Sholem Asch, along with neglected books, including a single-volume abridgment of I. J. Trunk's seven-volume Yiddish memoir, "Poland." Also on the wish list are books by Jacob Glatstein, Moyshe Kulbak and Lamed Shapiro.

Meanwhile, the current releases emphasize the recurring themes of encounter and disruption. Even the authors led disrupted lives: Ansky, a Russian revolutionary who once shunned Judaism, ended up collecting Jewish folk materials before fleeing the Bolsheviks; Aleichem came to the United States after a string of financial disasters spurred by his secular ambitions; Peretz, deprived by the czar of the right to practice law, turned to an insecure life of journalism; Manger fled Warsaw for Paris in 1938 and then to North Africa and England.

But disruption of the traditional social and religious orders was even more traumatic, particularly because it was often so hostile. "Impressions of a Journey Through the Tomaszow Region in 1890," is Peretz's journalistic account of his attempts to gather information on the Jews of Poland; the goal was to counter anti-Semitic myths of conspiracy and power with detailed descriptions of Jewish poverty using a peculiarly modern tool: statistics.

But the world of modernity, with all its hostility, was also a world of promise. This may be why the voices of children seem so essential in this literature: the emerging world makes the adult feel like a child, overwhelmed by confusion and rebellion,



From "The World According to Itzik" (Yale University Press)

From New Yiddish Library: An anthology in English of Itzik Manger's works.

lacking, like an immigrant, proper language and customs. But the child first learns to adapt. Aleichem's "Motl, the Cantor's Son," an unfinished novel that was one of the first accounts of Jewish emigration to the United States, is narrated by a 9-year-old boy.

Of course barrels of Justice are never entirely what they seem, and the darkest brooding emerges in selections by Manger, who was, as the editor and translator point out, a "modernist folk bard." His work is suffused with influences from European literature; he retells stories from the Bible, setting them in the contemporary world. He wrote verse that chills with its sense of ominous consequence for lost innocence:

An infected wind weeps in our garden;
Before our house, a scarlet lantern glows;
Death's silver razors play, like fiddle bows,
White music on the throats of pious calves.

In such a world, who wouldn't seek wisdom from the rabbi of Chelm?

NYT Nov. 9 '02

The World, With a Sigh And a Wink

By EDWARD ROTHSTEIN

The wise men of Chelm may be among the most familiar folk characters in the Jewish tradition. In an imaginary East European shtetl, these paragons of scholarship and righteousness are shown to be fools. The moon is not in the sky? Chelmites seek it in a nearby town where, after two weeks, they find it reflected in a barrel of water. They quickly seal the barrel and bring it home.

There is always a knowing wink in these tales, but who is being laughed at? The fools who don't realize they are fools? Those who don't recognize wisdom latent in the foolishness? The corrupt world, which makes innocent foolishness seem like sanctified wisdom? Just kidding, the tales proclaim, but about what?

"Chelm is child," the 20th-century Yiddish writer Itzik Manger intoned. "Golden childish naïveté is crucified on the poles of the world's sly refined perversions."

But in reading the first four books released in the New Yiddish Library — a major series of Yiddish literature in translation being published by Yale University Press — Chelm seems eerily representative of a recurring Yiddish theme. Like Chelm stories, Yiddish literature can be unpredictably unsettling, combining innocence and sentiment with dark sarcasm and knowing irony. Modernity makes its demands and traditional societies outwit it, join it or are overwhelmed by it.

For example, included in "The World According to Itzik: Selected Poetry and Prose" — the first English anthology of works devoted to Manger, who died in 1969 — is a different kind of Chelm story. Chelmites seeking Justice are craftily sold the rare substance in a sealed barrel by an innkeeper. But Manger is darkly winking. A stench emerging from the barrel gives the joke a deathly cast. "Justice stinks!" the rabbi proclaims as he sniffs. He orders the barrel buried. His wisdom becomes renowned.

O.K., then, one thinks, this is allegory: "Justice" — as the world calls it — really does have a stench to the residents of

Continued on Page 21



Scala/Art Resource; Artists Rights Society/ADAGP Paris

Tradition meets the modern world in a new Yiddish literature series in translation, as in Chagall's "Around Her."

The Little Corporal Who Could

Napoleon embodied the Romantic ideal of the man of action; after his defeat, things got dull again.

NAPOLEON
By Paul Johnson.
190 pp. New York:
Lipper/Viking. $19.95.

NAPOLEON
A Biography.
By Frank McLynn.
Illustrated. 739 pp. New York:
Arcade Publishing. $32.95.

By Mark Mazower



NATHAN FOX

THERE are, the historian Paul Johnson says in his new potted biography, more books about Napoleon than about any other historical figure with the exception of Jesus Christ. Every generation has sought to reinterpret his astonishing career for its own purposes, and the public appetite for reading about him shows no signs of falling off. On the contrary, Napoleonic Web sites now abound, offering souvenirs and walking tours — of Waterloo and St. Helena — as well as guides to further reading, research and collectibles. His memory remains fresh on the ground, too, and not only in France. A parish priest in a small Piedmontese town recently recounted to me the story of how the local quattrocento masterpiece had been saved — by divine intercession — when Napoleon passed through, two centuries ago.

The telling and retelling of the rise and fall of an impoverished Corsican aristocrat has attracted more than the usual accretion of myth. Napoleon himself solicitously fostered the cult that sprang up around his name, and an array of painters, savants and writers ensured its survival. But this myth was, from the first, more than mere political propaganda: Napoleon — toppler of dynasties, lawgiver and general — was, or quickly became, the embodiment of the Romantic ideal of the man of action, his unique qualities thrown into relief with the return of a rather dull kind of monarchical conservatism after his defeat.

The genre of biography itself was transformed by the Napoleonic challenge, and no modern treatment of his life can easily avoid responding in some way to the narrative trajectory established so firmly by the literary industry that grew up around his name. During World War II, the distinguished Dutch historian Pieter Geyl wrote "Napoleon: For and Against" to analyze the bewildering variety of Napoleons depicted by his predecessors: he showed how they reflected the anxieties and obsessions of their authors, offering a kind of indirect language for addressing contemporary concerns. And his readers understood too, of course, that in talking about Napoleon, Geyl was really reflecting in his turn upon that sinister figure in Berlin who then held Europe in thrall.

Hitler stalks the pages of Johnson's "Napoleon" as well. Written with the author's characteristic panache, the book lays its cards on the table. Napoleon was an opportunist, who believed in nothing but power. The French Revolution itself was an unfortunate accident, not the starting point of modern history since, as the British and Americans showed, there were less bloody and equally efficient paths to liberty. And it gets worse: Napoleon's legacy was nothing other than "the totalitarian state of the 20th century," and his methods of conquest looked forward to those adopted by Hitler and Stalin. It will be clear that Johnson's is not the voice of moderation. He sees Napoleon as a warning, the progenitor of what went wrong in Europe in the 20th century, the man who left behind him a "legacy of evil."

As if all this were not enough, Napoleon's manifold personal defects are thrown into the mix: he was "a ruler of exceptional treachery and mendacity," and he cared nothing for the lives of his soldiers. He was "a French cultural racist" (it is not clear what Johnson means by this, except that he seems to use the term "racist" rather anachronistically), and his short attention span meant that even his involvement in the shaping of the legal code that bears his name turns out to be exaggerated. One almost breathes a sigh of relief on being told that on his wedding night with Marie-Louise he "put on one of his best sexual performances."

Along the way, the author does make some useful observations: he is acute about Napoleon's impact on Germany and underlines the long-run shift in the European balance of power, from France to Prussia, that followed Waterloo. But at bottom Johnson seems more interested in slaying the ghosts of totalitarianism than in Bonaparte himself — there are frequent gratuitous references to Nazis and Communists — and this makes the treatment feel rather perfunctory at times. Indeed, Johnson's keenness to stick the knife in deepens the mystery that surrounds his subject rather than explaining it.

Napoleon was capable of great brutality, as at Jaffa, where he massacred thousands of prisoners; but the analogy with the Nazi occupation is silly. Johnson, who has little time for intellectuals, wants to suggest they were the ones who were enthralled by the Napoleon myth, not the mass of what he terms "ordinary" people. But the Greek brigand hero Theodore Kolokotronis was no intellectual, and yet his verdict was rather more positive. "The French Revolution and the doings of Napoleon opened the eyes of the world," he wrote late in life. "The nations knew nothing before and the people thought that kings were gods upon the earth. ... Through this present change it is more difficult to rule the people."

Frank McLynn's "Napoleon" is four times as long as Johnson's, and quite different in tone and purpose. It lacks Johnson's polemical intent, and sets itself the useful task of offering the general reader a synthesis of the huge quantity of research that now exists. It is fair-minded and well written, and examines the diverse myths and controversies that surround the subject. More relaxed than Johnson, McLynn sketches in context and milieu and, after a slow start, brings his subject to life. Napoleon's paradoxes, his extraordinary energy, his mercurial temperament all form part of a rounded and persuasive portrait.

Yet if Johnson's "Napoleon" is really all about Stalin, McLynn's is too much about Napoleon's mother. Throughout his treatment of his hero, he relies heavily on psychoanalysis and especially on Carl Jung. In its own way, this risks the same kind of anachronistic treatment that afflicts Johnson's book with its emphasis on totalitarianism. "Concern about the fatherland," McLynn writes, "really indicates concern about the mother." So much for patriotism. Not the empty Napoleon bent on power, then, but the contradictory and tormented Napoleon, playing out his internal turmoil, enacting the role of Jung's "sacrificial victim" and indulging in irrational fantasies like conquering the East.

Elsewhere, McLynn, the author of several biographies, writes that one of the keys to Bonaparte's success was his realization that "at root human beings are driven by money but that they hate to admit this is what actually motivates them." As a result, the book fishes extensively in the murky waters of money and sex. It is not, after all, as though these two matters did not count. Quite the contrary; they counted a great deal, both to Napoleon and to his entourage. The problem lies in reducing the complexity of human experience in this way. Men were driven by desire for glory as well as by money; the one was not merely a fig leaf for the other. And the exciting stories of sexual shenanigans at the court of the emperor need to be put into the context of behavior at that time, and not described with such dubiously puritanical terms as "nymphomania" and "satyriasis."

Reading these two biographies, one cannot help feeling that at least some early-21st-century writers are using a relatively impoverished vocabulary for describing the human character, especially one as complicated as Napoleon's: compared with the descriptions of contemporaries like Madame de Staël and Alfred de Vigny, these portraits seem flat and unsubtle. Earlier ages seem to have been happier than ours with marveling at the rise of a Great Man, and less in need of the reassurance that comes from cutting him down to size.

For this reason, possibly, they bought more of the Romantics' justification for the genre of biography. The fundamental problem with both these works is not so much the implausible Napoleons they offer us but rather the difficulty of biography itself. Even McLynn, who does sketch in background, is not really concerned with the problem of context. One would not guess from reading his book that academic tomes have been written on the Napoleonic state. There is little sign here of those endless studies of the "Eastern question" of earlier generations, which showed how the French invasion of Egypt was born not from irrational obsessions but rather from a coherent, if misguided, response to one of the great international issues of the age — the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the expansion of Russian power. Too many of our own concerns have pervaded these Napoleons. It is time to allow the man to return to his own era, to allow him the grandeur, the theatricality and perhaps also the impersonality that marked him out, and remain the source of his enduring fascination. □

Mark Mazower is a professor of history at Birkbeck College, London.

A Tale of One City

The protagonist of Ward Just's novel is a washed-up film director who seeks artistic rebirth in the new Germany.

THE WEATHER IN BERLIN
By Ward Just.
305 pp. Boston:
Houghton Mifflin Company. $24.

By Rand Richards Cooper

FOR over three decades Ward Just has been building a reputation as a novelist of America's governing class, the overseas branch in particular. An astute chronicler of expatriate life, he portrays ambassadors and soldiers, writers and spies and trust-fund bons vivants: avatars of the American imperium, political and cultural. Just knows that empire means being at the center of the world's attention, and through the eyes of outsiders, Europeans mostly, he shows us the unflattering ways we are sometimes seen: "rootless cosmopolitans whose culture is worse than any narcotic" in one novel; moral prima donnas with "an insufferable belief in the rightness of their own actions" in another. His fiction provides a bracing corrective to American innocence about our image abroad.

"The Weather in Berlin," Just's 13th novel, follows a burned-out American movie director on a three-month stay at an artists-and-intellectuals institute in the capital of the new Germany. At 64, Dix Greenwood is remembered for a film made decades ago, an art-house favorite set in a German lake village just after World War I. Since then, it's been two flops and a long silence, and Greenwood has fallen off the Hollywood radar; he's the kind of director younger filmmakers quote in their work but moviegoers are surprised to know is still alive. Ailing physically, tantalized by a fading memory of artistic inspiration, resenting his actress wife for her still-active career, Greenwood repairs to the city Willy Brandt once called Germany's *Schicksalstadt,* city of destiny. Berlin is experiencing a rebirth; perhaps Dix will too.

The novel tours the new Berlin, from Kreuzberg to the Ku'damm to the American-style glitter of Potsdamer Platz, in whose shadow Dix frequents a dim cafe for schnitzel; we visit the sleazy district around the zoo, where avid East Germans, Dix learns, poured into the sex shops once the wall fell. Just takes the temperature of reunified Germany, measuring Wessi triumphalism and Ossi discontent — the latter in the form of a German director, Willa Baz, who learns Greenwood is in the area and invites him onto the set of a popular TV series she is shooting. Willa pours out the resentments of East Germans, still angry at the old system but hating the new, and convinced the world will never stop making Germans pay for the sins of fascism. "What's past is past," she complains, "except with us it's never past." In Hollywood, the only roles for Germans are Nazis — and even then, if it's a leading role, they get Gregory Peck to do it.

Just has long been fascinated by Germans. Both "The American Ambassador" (1987) and "The Translator" (1991) center on German-American romances, personifying two nations married in the drama of the 20th century, formed respectively by triumph and defeat, innocence and guilt. Just's novels situate the German, with his brooding, bitter self-consciousness, as a foil to American insouciance. To lose is to carry the burden of history; to win is to float free, to "pursue happiness without the inconvenience of memory . . . stepping cheerfully from one year to the next with scarcely a stumble or a look backward." National character is a state of mind and historical circumstance; while Dix may have been born American, his brooding preoccupation with the past has turned him into a spiritual and psychological German.



RASTKO CIRIC

"The Weather in Berlin" has a plot of sorts, with Greenwood eventually invited to direct an episode of Willa's TV drama; and there's a mystery, in the person of Jana, one of three Sorb village girls Dix recruited for his first film decades ago, a Garbo-like natural actress who disappeared from the set one day, never to return. But the novel's primary movement is backward. Just keeps opening rear doors in the narrative and scooting us through, into the alleys of Greenwood's past. Sentences like "Dix took a long swallow of beer and a forkful of schnitzel, still remembering . . ." inaugurate chapter-length digressions of memory, charting the ups and downs of Greenwood's marriage, his career and travels, his relationship with his father. More beer and schnitzel, *bitte!* "The Weather in Berlin" fashions a distinctly German tilt on Wordsworth's definition of poetry; call it emotion recollected in satiety.

Just's voice is hard to pin down. His prose echoes now Henry James or Edith Wharton, now Hemingway or the modest 50's naturalism of, say, Richard Yates; and there's more than a touch of Fitzgerald in the reveries of Dix "drawn back to his freehanded youth," to "summer dances under high-topped tents" and a chance conversation with a "scandalous girl" to whom he pours out his secret ambitions. The novel's take on Americans abroad ranges from the glimmering nostalgia of between-the-wars literary romance to the mordant gloom of cold war intrigue. There's a novelist-newsman split to Just's résumé — as a journalist in the 60's he covered Europe for The Washington Post and Vietnam for Newsweek — that may account for his curious mixture of F. Scott Fitzgerald and John le Carré.

"The Weather in Berlin" shows an eclectic style, shifting points of view and narrative distance, alternating formal cadences with a breathless shorthand meant to convey interiority. As Greenwood gets involved in filming his segment of Willa's TV drama, Just repeatedly segues into lengthy passages of script, blurring the reality of the actors Greenwood is directing into that of the characters they portray. The idea, perhaps, is to show Greenwood's imagination once again at work, thinking in movies; but having to wade through so much movie treatment becomes ponderous. At times Just's characters sound like movie narrators; an older German telling Dix about the onslaught of the Red Army in 1945 — "Millions swarming from the steppes of Russia and beyond, well-equipped, well-fed, brutal men nourished by centuries of resentment and blood lust" — could be narrating for the History Channel. Elsewhere, as if in an excess of sympathy, his narrator lapses into unconscious Germanisms ("Greenwood turned in his chair to call for the bill but the Vietnamese was already at his side, the reckoning" — *die Rechnung* — "in hand.")

The novelist and editor Charles Simmons once divided all novels into those "written in a certain style," meaning that "all the styles they are not written in are implied by not being used," and those that are "catch-as-catch-can." Just tends clearly toward the latter — pragmatist rather than purist, fox rather than hedgehog. Like the fox, Just knows many things, and his novel serves up discussable topics at every turn. A chef lectures Greenwood on Marx's view of history; Willa dilates on the psychosexual effects of East German statism, the political legacy of Martin Luther and the similarity of Communism's "destructive paternalism" to that of the American corporation. Perhaps the price of a novel of ideas is characters whose conversation is "marred slightly by a tendency to lecture," as someone puts it in another of Just's own books.

If "The Weather in Berlin" finally lacks the intensity of "The American Ambassador," with its acid melding of personal and political furies, it may be because the current novel's protagonist — like its author — is older. Unlike Ambassador North, whose posting to Bonn brings him into conflict with a son linked to German terrorists, Greenwood no longer finds himself in the middle of things. He's on the far side, gravitating toward the sublime. There's a curious exchange in which Greenwood and Willa, who toiled for years as a news reporter in the former East Germany, discuss the "consoling" properties of news — its "order" and "tidiness," its "shape and familiarity." "The Weather in Berlin" reads like the valedictory of a lifelong news junkie abandoning the "coherence" of news — a false coherence, when all is said and done — for the elusiveness of art, the "mystery and poignance" of its "enchanted" moments of creation. The novel reveals an author more preoccupied with the inner life of the artist than he has been in the past, and less with the intrigues of politics. What occupies us through the busyness of our lives is mostly news; what endures is history and art. Ward Just has had a rare career as purveyor of one, witness to another and creator of the third. "The Weather in Berlin" consistently shows the suppleness of his sympathies and the breadth of his observations — himself a worthy traveler, a superb American abroad. □

Rand Richards Cooper is the author of "The Last to Go: A Family Chronicle" and a collection of stories, "Big as Life."

CONNECTIONS NYT

Edward Rothstein 6/15/02

What It Takes to Bring Tears to an Unsentimental Reader's Eyes

I am not usually a sentimental reader. The trials of young lovers do not bring tears to my eyes. I rarely gasp at unexpected turns of plot or sigh aloud at a beautiful turn of phrase. For a reader brought up under the watchful gaze of modernism, such physiological gushings and exclamations have long been associated with vulgar literary romanticism: with the death of Little Nell, with the seduction of Clarissa and with relics of a bygone period when feeling was more important than form and irony was not a way of life.

But recently something has changed. The grinding down of dreams and desires in Thomas Hardy's "Return of the Native" was accompanied by a palpable chill on my neck, as if caused by a night wind blowing over Egdon Heath. When I was reminded how tautly Dickens had wound the hatreds and heroism in "A Tale of Two Cities," I unknowingly gasped aloud as possessed perhaps as the Bastille prisoner Charles Darnay cobbling his shoes. And was that a tear that appeared in my eye, when, after hundreds of pages of misunderstandings and maneuverings, Trollope's lovers were finally paired off in "Barchester Towers"?

In the face of such feelings, the analyst's pen and critic's interpretations are inconsequential. Reactions are more direct, more physical. Nabokov's lush language in "Lolita" seduces with a perverse aesthetic thrill. The gibbering shades of Hades clamoring for Odysseus in Robert Fagle's translation of "The Odyssey" send shocks through the spine. And yes, isn't there a trace of a tear present again, as, in Henry James's "Ambassadors," I begin to feel just how much cannot be known and just how much must always be sacrificed?

There is a reason for this new sensibility — and it is not just because literary post-modernism and post-structuralism, with their abstractions and skepticism, have become intellectual corpses. My sensibility is changing because my reading is: I have become an avid listener to audiobooks — to recordings on cassette and CD of unabridged literature. So I am listening to Frank Muller narrate "A Tale of Two Cities" (Barnes & Noble), Ian McKellen recite Homer (Penguin) and David Horovitch dryly ennact Turgenev's "Fathers and Sons" (Audio Partners). And stunned, I listen as Jeremy Irons, with liquid preciousness and metallic sarcasm, turns Nabokov's Humbert into a tortuously twisted aesthete (Random House). I listen in the street, on the subway, exercising, cleaning, opening mail, eating, driving. And madly switching tapes or discs, I gasp and sigh and groan as if possessed by gothic spirits.

I am not alone of course. According to the Audio Publishers Association, the audiobook now represents a $2 billion industry sampled by 23 million American households last year. That industry has its own book club (the Audio Book Club), its own retail chain (Talking Book World), its own magazine (AudioFile), its own technological debates (tape or CD or, now, MP3?) and its own narrative stars (including Patrick Fraley, who recreates dozens of dialects in his Mark Twain readings). I am not even alone in my concentration on unabridged literature rather than on classic mysteries or new fiction or self-help books. Among the top 40 sellers published by Blackstone Audiobooks are unabridged recordings of "Moby-Dick" (on 17 tapes for $119.90) and "Nicholas Nickleby" (on 23 tapes for $152.90).

Blackstoneaudiobooks.com also offers a rental program.

Is it possible that this form of listening is also altering the nature of reading itself, perhaps even restoring something that was lost? After all, literature was spoken before it was written. Scholars agree that despite examples of silent reading in Greek drama and philosophy, they were the exception; to read meant to read aloud. And Augustine, in his "Confessions," found silent reading so exceptional that he made a point of describing it: "His eyes scanned the page and his heart sought out the meaning, but his voice was silent and his tongue was still."



Reading Dumas inspired the Monte Cristo cigar.

In his elegant book "The History of Reading," Alberto Manguel — who used to read aloud to the blind novelist Borges — cites Pliny the Younger describing readings at dinners in ancient Rome. Rousseau promoted his "Confessions" with readings in aristocratic Paris. Dickens boasted of his theatrical "power" that could make listeners cry during his public readings. In Key West during the 19th century, cigar workers, read to in their factory, wrote to Alexandre Dumas, asking if they could name a cigar for their favorite novel (hence the Monte Cristo).

Reading aloud eventually came to seem condescending — suitable only for illiterates and children and laborers. But it still inspired urgency and discouraged detachment. One 19th-century reader described the crowd that gathered to hear a book: "They were clinging and clustering around the windows like bees, standing on chairs, looking through windows and listening, their faces tier upon tier."

The gasp and cry and sigh must be as common for the read-aloud novel as they are within the theater. There is no time, when listening, to underline and dissect. One must submit to the waves of sensation and sensibility, hoping later perhaps to return to an extraordinary passage to unravel its resonances. Meanwhile, the story unfolds and exfoliates — free of the folds of ordinary library bindings and unbounded by numbered pages.

Hearing a novel is, in a way, anti-modern: it emphasizes plot and character. All else — the grand structural and symbolic meanings, the accretion of interpretations and political analyses — falls aside, at least temporarily. The story acts as story, which means it is, first and foremost, not about language but about characters and their choices; language is in *their* service.

Much depends (as always) on the reader. Nothing is more demoralizing than the sing-song intonations or mannered phrasings of a reader whose mind and abilities lie elsewhere. But the embodiment of characters and voices, including the narrator's character and voice, becomes one of the great achievements of readers like Alan Rickman or Mr. Muller or Mr. Irons or any of the score of others I have started to recognize.

Of course it is somewhat perverse, this early 21st-century listening. It is done with headphones in artificial solitude; it often accompanies some other activity; it uses up a tremendous number of AA batteries. But think of what is offered in return. Unafraid of Oscar Wilde's scorn, I'm prepared to weep at the death of Little Nell.

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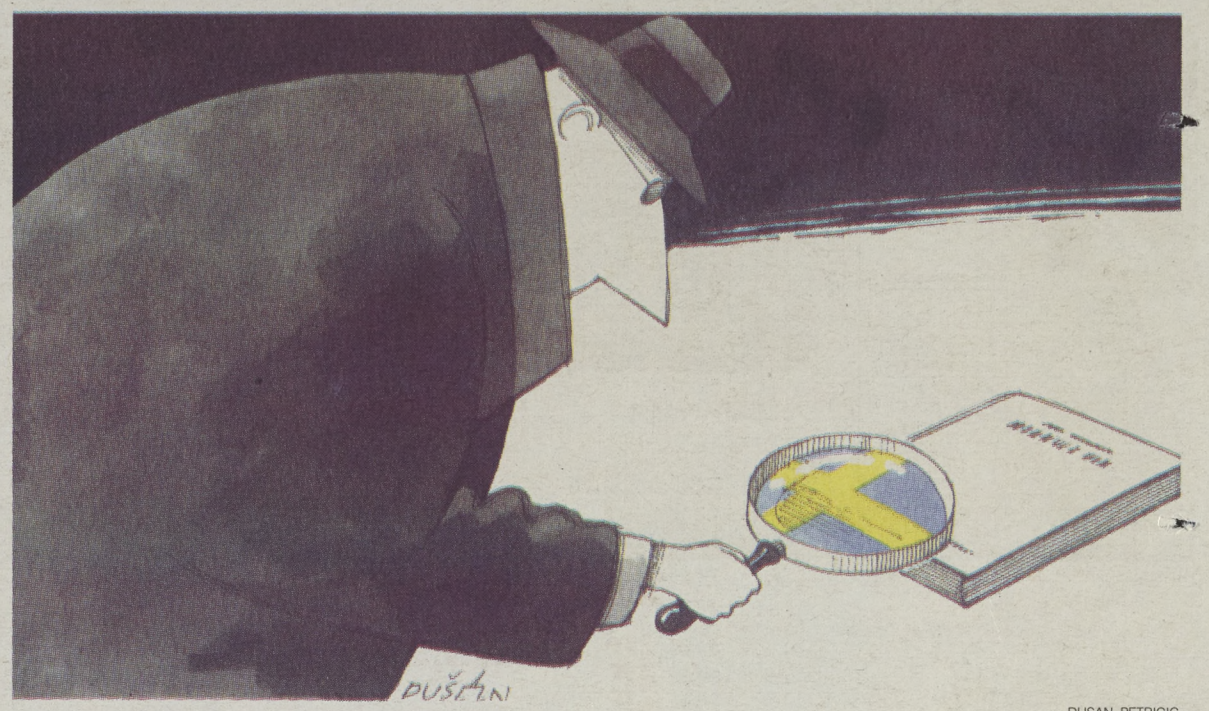

DUSAN PETRICIC

IT'S the why that lets us down in crime novels. You hit the last quarter of the book, and you get impatient or cranky. All will soon be revealed — and all might not be enough. Criminals are best in action (action includes their thoughts); so are the detectives who partner and track them. And readers are almost pathetically excited by crime that leads to death. Police Inspector Wallander is talking about us, in Henning Mankell's new novel, "One Step Behind," when he says about local crime scene gawkers: "They probably just get a thrill from being in the presence of the unthinkable. . . . Knowing that they themselves are safe." This must be one reason so few popular novels focus on the kind of crime that costs thousands of people their jobs and life savings. Those crimes aren't unthinkable enough.

No one tops American writers when it comes to certain "whys": ambition and greed; dangerous liaisons; corrupt organizations, from crime syndicates born bad to law enforcement agencies gone bad. The solitary pursuer casts the longest shadow: the rebel detective, cop, journalist or citizen who has to solve crimes on his or her own. And he or she has to go it alone in a city like New York, San Francisco or Miami; in a particular neighborhood; in a small Southern town or on an Indian reservation. It isn't the nation we think about when we read crime novels. The classic American crime tale is as local as Tip O'Neill said our politics were.

Sweden has produced some of the best crime writers of the last several decades, and they couldn't be more different from ours. American power has grown since the 18th century. Sweden, once an imperial force rivaling England and Russia, has had to master the paradox of reduced international power and increased economic prosperity. It is proud of its reputation as a just and practical utopia. So when Sweden looks at itself through the lens of crime, what does it see?

American cops are stoic and hard-boiled; Swedish ones are stoic and melancholy.

By 1967, when Maj Sjowall and Per Wahloo published the first of 10 now celebrated Martin Beck mysteries, Sweden was struggling to integrate its Old World Lutheran morality (gloomy and fervent) with a New World of youthful, no-nonsense sexual freedom. "Roseanna" begins when the body of a young American tourist who believed in free love and free will is dragged from a canal. Women, dead or alive, keep the crime novel in business — they're vulnerable and threatening. What writers do with their characters and corpses makes all the difference. As the Stockholm police, led by the shrewd, slightly dour Beck, investigate Roseanna's past they become obsessed and depressed. And you realize, though it's never strenuously pointed out, that all of them have dreary-to-disastrous marriages or catch-as-catch-can relations with women.

Sweden is stalked by the leftover complicities of World War II and by the continuing hypocrisies of the cold war. By the 1970's, when Sjowall and Wahloo's superb novel "The Laughing Policeman" came out, there was the Vietnam War, along with Sweden's first mass murder. ("Mass murders seem to be an American specialty," says one officer.) Benevolent socialism notwithstanding, the poor still exist, while a certain ruthless greed, especially among the prosperous, feels new. Sjowall is a poet; her husband, who died in 1975, was a journalist, playwright and scriptwriter. Their mysteries — five are currently available in the Vintage Crime/Black Lizard series — don't just read well; they reread even better. Witness, wife, petty cop or crook — they're all real characters even if they get just a few sentences. The plots hold, because they're ingenious but never inhuman. The writing is lean, with mournful undertones. American detectives are stoic and hard-boiled; Swedish ones are stoic and melancholy. And they're physically fallible. When they drink too much liquor they tend to act stupid. When they drink too much coffee their stomachs hurt.

The atmosphere is beautifully done and without excess. (We've all read those showoffy "They'll see I'm a real writer" paragraphs.) "The Man on the Balcony" opens like this: "At a quarter to three the sun rose. . . . The street-sweeping machines had passed, leaving dark wet strips here and there on the asphalt. . . . Five minutes later the tinkle of broken glass had been heard as someone drove a gloved hand through a shop window; then came the sound of running footsteps." As it moves into a tale of pedophilia and murder, we realize that scenes like this have the quiet, fatal exactness of Fritz Lang's still astounding 1928 film on the same subject, "M."

Henning Mankell published "Faceless Killers" in 1991, and its form and craft showed that he was the heir to Sjowall and Wahloo. The police procedural had been their chosen form. Those dates and times and police interviews noted with such care showed how fragile an invention order is. The form is being stretched, the invention assaulted in Mankell's five novels. Inspector Wallander and his officers — they include women now — question their own competence and purpose. Greed and violence go together; one cop notes that a brutally murdered businessman has left no survivors "except for a few grieving, plundered corporations." Immigrants and refugees arrive from Turkey, Poland, the Dominican Republic and Somalia. Racism flourishes; sexual exploitation expands and diversifies.

Homes are no safer. Parents neglect children and each other. Children join cults and attempt suicide. Husbands beat their wives and kids. The old abuse the young sexually, and the young want revenge, even if they have to wait years and find stand-ins for the original culprits.

POSTCOLONIALISM hangs over the country now. The role of Swedish mercenaries in the Congo's struggles after independence is crucial to "The Fifth Woman" (1996). And "The White Lioness" (1993) is a first-class thriller about a plot to assassinate Nelson Mandela upon his release from prison. The plotters include the white South African secret service, black hired assassins and an ex-K.G.B. agent hoping to use his skills in a new country.

Globalization casts its shadow too. In "One Step Behind," that lethal American export, the serial killer, has found his way to Sweden. "You have to rethink what it means to be a police officer," says Wallander bleakly. "The experience you've acquired after years and years of grinding work doesn't apply anymore." Like Sjowall and Wahloo, Mankell asks readers to rethink what it means to be Swedish. What does Sweden's past, those years and years of work, mean for its future? These books make you ask the same questions about America. □

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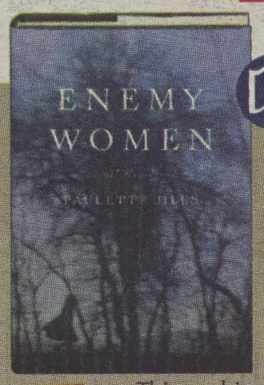

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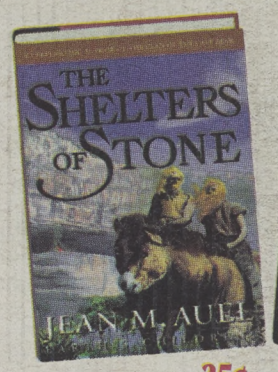

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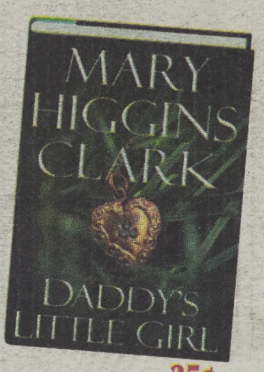

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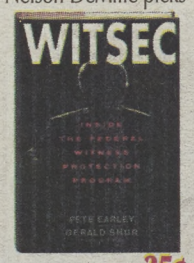

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The New York Times

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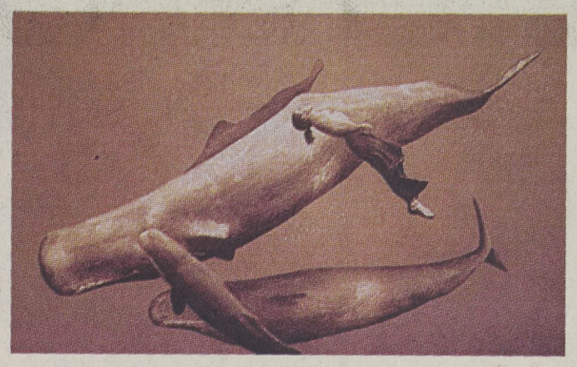

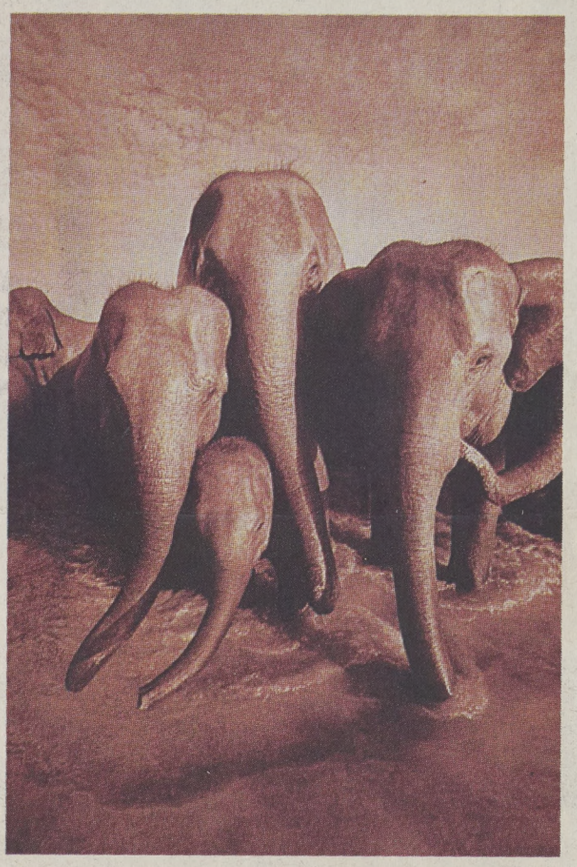

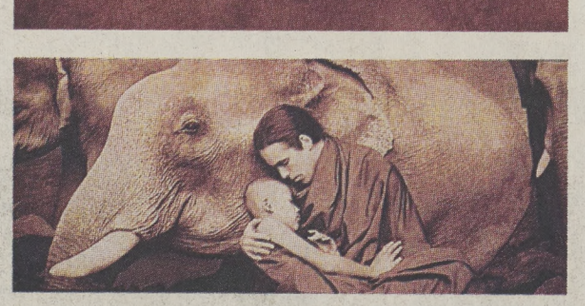

Photographs by Gregory Colbert/Arsenale, Venice

Dances With Whales

A Canadian Photographer's Voyages of Discovery

By ALAN RIDING

VENICE — Until now Gregory Colbert has been that rare artist who goes out of his way not to be noticed. He was represented by no gallery, he held no exhibitions for a decade, and he gave no interviews. He was in a sense a secret artist, though the secret was shared by a small group of wealthy private collectors who, through acquisitions and sheer enthusiasm, helped to finance his work.

He needed this help. In his quest to photograph the mystical relationship between humans and animals, he made 27 lengthy trips to distant corners of the world over nine years. He was usually accompanied by a support team, supplies and equipment. He even rented oceangoing vessels for months on end. In brief, it was both costly and complicated to produce images of great simplicity.

Now, in the vast and sober space of the Arsenale, the Renaissance-era shipyard owned by the Venice Biennale, Mr. Colbert, 42, is for the first time exhibiting the fruits of these voyages. And as he might have hoped, the result is a discovery not only of this Canadian artist but also of an ageless realm in which elephants and whales as well as manatees, royal eagles, sacred ibis, cranes and falcons cohabit and communicate with humans. Comprising 200 images and a 58-minute documentary, the show, "Ashes and Snow," runs here through July 6.

The earth-tone photographs are printed on Japanese handmade paper, yet the power of the images comes less from their formal beauty than from the way they envelop the viewer in their mood. They are accompanied by no captions, because it matters little how or when or where the photographs were taken. They are simply windows to a world in which silence and patience govern time.

Of course they are also the work of an artist. In other words, they are not nature photographs but careful compositions in which humans and animals are juxtaposed in unexpected ways. Yet even when Mr. Colbert is seen swimming — he prefers to call it dancing — with whales, the humans and the animals seem to enjoy equality. "I have invented nothing," he said. "I have simply documented a magical alchemy that I want to share."

A different kind of alchemy is at work in the Arsenale, which for the first time has devoted its entire 140,000-

Continued on Page 3

Gregory Colbert's exhibition in Venice, "Ashes and Snow," depicts a realm that humans share with elephants, whales, cranes, ibises and other creatures.

THEATER REVIEW

Wry Smiles At the Pitfalls Of Closeness

By BEN BRANTLEY

Comic charm, like power and new money, seldom announces itself quietly in New York. This is a city that likes its humor fast, flashy and overstated, and it's rare that a Broadway comedy seduces by stealth. Which may be why Paul Osborn's "Morning's at Seven," which has been given a wonderful new revival at the Lyceum Theater, surprises Manhattan theatergoers every time it comes around.

When Mr. Osborn's story of four elderly sisters first opened in 1939, Brooks Atkinson in The New York Times described its characters as "too true in homely essence to fit any of the Broadway fashions." This seemed even more the case when Vivian Matalon's fine production became the sleeper hit of 1980.

MORNING'S AT SEVEN

And yet here the play is again, like a shy country cousin who wanders into an overdressed cocktail party, stealing the thunder from the self-impressed cosmopolites. No doubt about it, "Morning's at Seven" — which opened last night with nine ideally cast troupers under the pitch-perfect direction of Daniel Sullivan — still has charm to burn. It just doesn't wear its appeal on its surface. And what a relief that is.

Sure, you could call the play's dialogue witty, in a homespun way. And its characters might be described as likably eccentric, as people on contemporary sitcoms are meant to be.

Yet what makes this gently colored, sharply etched family portrait so engaging is its understanding that laughter and tears, as responses to everyday life, are as close and connected as Siamese twins. When the curtain rises on John Lee Beatty's luxuriously realized vision of a backyard in small-town America, you may anticipate a cozy, theatrical answer to the Andy Hardy movies of the same period. Don't be fooled.

"Morning's at Seven" may look like a Norman Rockwell illustration. But its soul is out of a painting by Edward Hopper, who so vividly identified solitariness as an all-American trait. "You can be alone in a lot of different ways," someone says in "Morning's at Seven." The play counts the ways, but in a spirit of such benevolent acceptance that it comforts even as it breaks your heart. That Osborn's study in solitude has been realized by such a gloriously symbiotic ensemble is a happy paradox in a Broadway season that needs all the good news it can get. To single out one performer seems unfair and not just because they all wear their roles like favorite old sweaters.

It's also because each of them needs the

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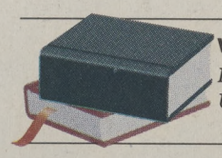
In Paris and Moscow, a Novelist Finds His Time and Place

By ALAN FURST



WRITERS ON WRITING

Inspiration Strikes Up There in the Garret

A few months after I published my fourth book, I decided to become a writer. I would move to Paris and, as it's said, write my novel. "Isn't that," said a friend, "rather, uh, *bohemian*?" Perfect, I thought, she's not wrong, that's exactly what it is. But why not? I would sit in cafes, smoke Gauloises, look out over a courtyard and write a long, difficult, ambitious book with a doubtful future. My early novels had been acquired by the National Library of Oblivion, they were happy and at peace now, I was free to do whatever I wanted. And what mattered most of all was that I'd found something I wanted to write about.

The idea came, as usual, by accident. I'd gone to the Soviet Union in 1983 to do a travel piece for Esquire magazine and discovered that the country was a police state. Yes, I knew that, but I was, in some special American way, emotionally innocent of what it meant. When you handed in your passport at a Moscow hotel, there was a curtain hanging over the window, so you didn't see the security officer's face, just the hands. The Soviet authorities weren't subtle about it, they wanted you to be afraid of them, and it made me mad.

Moscow was a tense, dark city, all shadows and averted eyes, with intrigue in its very air, a city where writers should have turned out spy novels by the yard. So then, where was the Russian le Carré? Dead or in jail, if he or she existed at all. In fact I believed that Russian writers were not allowed to write spy novels — or political novels of any sort.

Fine, I thought, *I'll* write them. And since I felt that Moscow and its satellite states in Eastern Europe were in some sense stuck in 1937, I would write about 1937. I had a recording of the Django Reinhardt-Ste-

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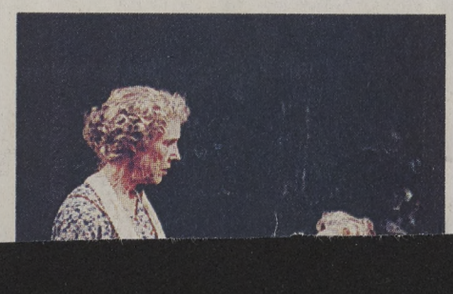

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WRITERS ON WRITING

Continued From First Arts Page

phane Grapelli sessions at the Hot Club of France, recorded in 1937. *There*, I thought, *right there*. And what kind of novel would you write about Russia in 1937? Why, a spy novel, what else? So I would write historical espionage novels. Was that a genre? Not that I knew about, but it was now. I could write about Bulgaria and Romania, Byelorussia and the Ukraine. Even Bohemia, up on the German border with Czechoslovakia, important in the autumn of 1938. So, yes, *Bohemian* at last.

Back in the United States, I went where all historical novelists must go, to the library. My favorite place. I have a theory that writers don't actually want to write books, they want to read them, but, discovering that they are unavailable to be read, because they are unwritten, they write them. Anyhow, I discovered a treasure trove. There were volumes and volumes on the history of espionage: Russian espionage; Russian espionage in the 1930's; Russian espionage in the 1930's in France; Russian espionage in the 1930's in France, but the other guy got it wrong.

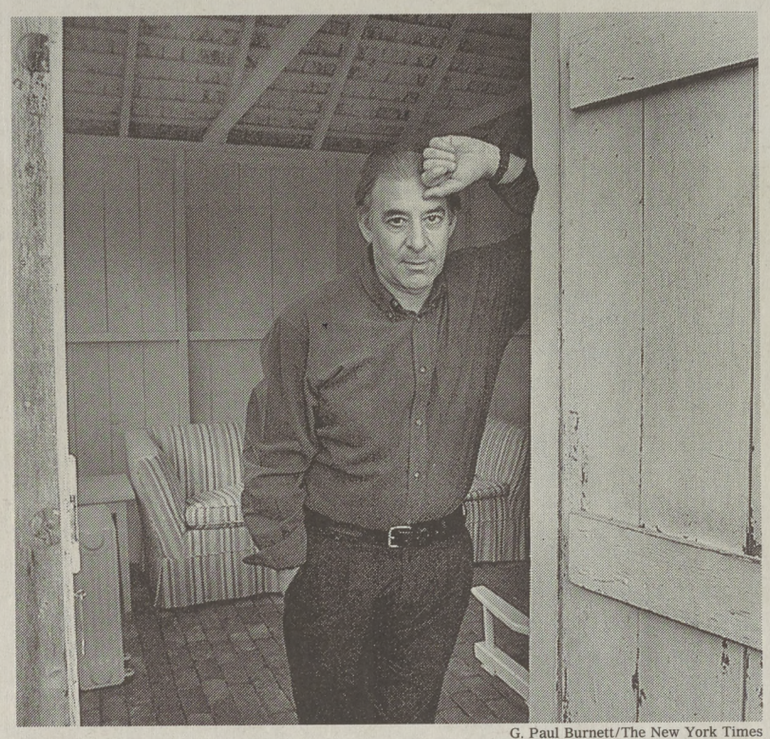
And that was only part of it. Because I now realized that my favorite writer, Anthony Powell, was a novelist of the midcentury, his late youth and his war spanning the 1933 to 1944 period I'd taken for my own. For me, Anthony Powell is a religion. I read "A Dance to the Music of Time" every few years, as well as others, especially "Venusberg," a political fantasy of the Baltic.

There was more. Genre novels — by Eric Ambler, six of them prewar, and Graham Greene — and just plain novels, with characters wound up and set moving through the European political realities of that era. Christopher Isherwood's "Prater Violet," for example, and Arthur Koestler, Josef Roth, Babel, Bulgakov — especially "The White Guard."

It's funny, the apartment in Paris actually had a garret, a room beneath the roof with a slanted ceiling, and I'd lie up there and read, and sometimes I'd turn on the radio, and there would be, "This is the BBC." News of war (Iraq) faded in and out and crackled with static. Damn.

And then, along with the espionage history and the fiction — used as social and psychological history — there was political history. The ascent of Hitler in 1933. Stalin's first purge, 1934. Spanish Civil War, 1936. Munich and Kristallnacht, 1938. Invasion of Poland, 1939. Fall of France, 1940. Invasion of Russia, 1941. With stories, endless stories. I don't happen to be able to write plots; they come out like plots. So what I do is use the stories that happened, then create the sorts of characters who could have taken part in those stories.

Fact is, during this period in particular, history twisted and turned in more intricate and desperate ways than anything a novelist could think up. In March I finished a new book, called "Blood of Victory." The title is taken from a speech by a French senator at a conference on petroleum in 1918. He said that oil, "the blood of the earth," had become in time of war "the blood of victory." And the central story of the book follows a real story of the period: the attempts of the British secret services in 1940 to impede the exportation of Romanian oil to Germany. This will be the seventh book in the series, and the number of available stories just grows with research.



G. Paul Burnett/The New York Times

Alan Furst's novel "Blood of Victory" is being published in August.

Research, once shunned, becomes a vocational privilege.

Research. Once upon a time I toyed with the idea of a career in academia, as a medievalist. But academia toyed with me, and I gave up on the middle ages, because I didn't think of myself as somebody who would spend his life doing research. I leave the moral of the story to you, but eventually I became addicted, and I now see it as a vocational privilege.

Still, there is something to be said for the 300-page interior monologue in italics — at least you won't get letters informing you that the British Beaufighter aircraft was *not* in service until the *end* of October. It's hard to avoid that sort of thing in 350 pages of manuscript, even with good editing and copy editing. I think it was Randall Jarrell who once defined the novel as a work in prose of a certain length that has something wrong with it.

The word *wrong* takes on a particularly spicy flavor when you write for a living. At the beginning of my book "Dark Star," some of the action is set in Prague, and I wanted the 1937 name of the railroad station there. Given the custom of the time, it would have been either a version of the Parisian Gare du Nord, North Station, no doubt seductively exotic looking in Czech, or the name of a 19th-century hero, just as good.

When I finally found it, however, I discovered that the station had been named for Woodrow Wilson. I knew why, but that didn't help at all. You can't have your hero scuttling through the back alleys of Prague in the rain and show up *there*. So, eventually, his train "left the central station at 9:30."

And that's the easy part, facts, because the hard part is the words. Basically, if you write novels, you sit alone in a room and fight the language. For example, I had, in one of my books what I came to think of as *the billowing problem*. Everything was billowing — smoke, parachutes, curtains, clouds. And what horrifies you, in retrospect, is that every single time you thought it was just a terrific word. Now, go and try to replace it. I knew enough, at that point, to avoid the malady I call thesaurusitis, the symptoms of which are ghastly: " 'Oh, no!' he ejaculated," and like that. So in the final version, the curtains stay where they are, the clouds drift, the parachute billows on Page 28, while the smoke billows on Page 228, and you hope nobody notices.

No big deal, any of this, just the daily turmoil of a writer's life. A little penury, a little sciatica — still no big deal. It's an honor to be in this profession, fiction writing. I see now and then that some people are concerned about its future, *the novel*, but I'm probably one of the worst people in the world to ask about that. I don't even own a computer. I work on a descendant of the magnificent IBM Selectric, using a typeface that has a sort of 1940's look to it, and I write 1940's-style novels about the 1940's.

Curious thing about the IBM Selectric, a writer's machine if ever there was one. I discovered, in Paris, that there's an IBM Selectric underground. Somebody I met at a party told me about it, and I went out the Boulevard Richard Lenoir, off in the commercial part of the 11th Arrondissement, where I followed the owner of an office supply store to the first basement, then the second, down a long hallway to a padlocked wooden door, which he opened with a key on a chain attached to his belt. He turned on a light and there, on metal shelves, stood a dozen well-used IBM Selectrics.

"I keep them around," he said. "There's always somebody who wants one."

Writers on Writing

This article is part of a series in which writers explore literary themes. Previous contributions can be found at The New York Times on the Web: **nytimes.com/books/columns**

PUBLIC LIVES

Seeking Grandfather's Savior, and Life's Purpose

By JOYCE WADLER

IN mid-April 2002, the ecstatic reviews of 25-year-old Jonathan Safran Foer's first novel, "Everything Is Illuminated," began appearing in the shtetl of Manhattan, and hundreds of writers may or may not have thrown themselves on the tracks of incoming subway cars, thinking as one, "Why *him*?"

"From space," or so Mr. Foer has written whimsically in his novel, "astronauts can see people making love as a tiny speck of light. Not light exactly, but a glow that could be confused for light — a coital radiance that takes generations to pour like honey through the darkness to the astronaut's eyes."

The same light, we might theorize, can be created by jealousy: young writers, alight with the flaming ambition. Middle-aged writers, smoldering like the red coals on the outdoor grills of the summer rentals they cannot afford to own. Writers so aged they can not recall where they last placed their keys, yet who can recite, wincing, the reviews calling Mr. Foer's effort "brilliant" and "virtuostic."

The night sky over Manhattan glows.

But return now to earth, to Jackson Heights, Queens, to see how Mr. Foer, bespectacled, brainy and polite, is handling his fame.

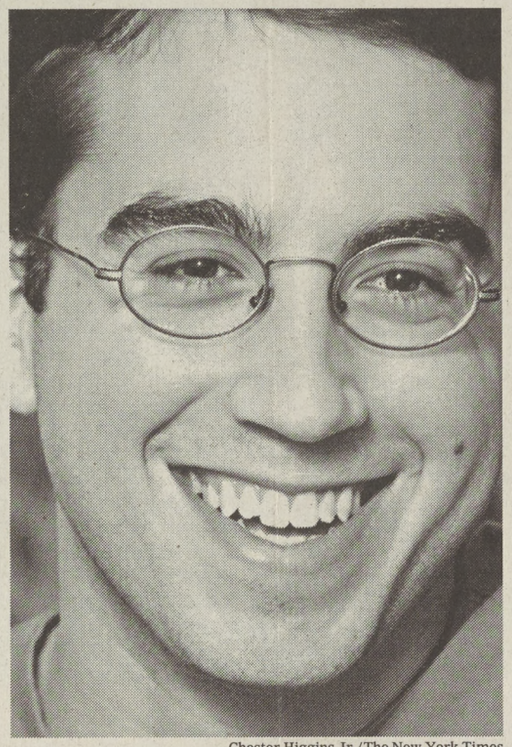
His novel, inspired by a trip he made to Ukraine as a college student to find the woman who saved his grandfather from the Nazis, is often hilarious. An imagined history of an Eastern European shtetl evokes S. J. Perelman and Chagall.

In person, however, Mr. Foer (pronounced four, which, if you add five zeros, is the low estimate of his advance) tends toward the serious. He declined a publication party. When studying with Joyce Carol Oates at Princeton, he never broached the practical question of finding an agent. His college major was philosophy, and he has yet to shake it off.

"I realized rather late in the game that writing presents itself as a kind of answer to that question, 'What should I be doing?' " Mr. Foer says. "What I realized is that the question is the final answer. That what I wanted to do with my life is figure out what I wanted to do with my life."

What on earth are you talking about, Jonathan? "It means there is no destination."

Then there's the matter of his living-room art. Much of it is blank paper, framed. It comes from writers whom Mr. Foer admires. He wrote them, asking them to send him the next piece of paper on which they intended to write. And so it came: lined yellow paper, computer paper, a recycled fax (this from Ms. Oates). Mr. Foer stands before one blank piece and explains.



Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

"It took a week or two to decide which path to follow, a path of names and dates or a path of the imagination. Once I gave myself the green light to imagine, it went pretty fast."

JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER

"When I. B. Singer's archivists entered what was his apartment, they found this incredibly old typewriter and next to it a stack of paper — paper with carbon between each sheet," says Mr. Foer, young enough so that both typewriters and carbons have an aura of antiquity, fairy dust to the imagination. "They were going to throw it away. It had no obvious archival use, so my friend sent it to me. I loved this. I became obsessed with it. I found it moving in so many ways."

How?

"Because it hadn't been realized yet. Because it was an artifact of his life. Because it was waiting for him. It felt to me heavy with potential."

Back to reality.

"I hope I don't get my friend in trouble telling you this."

AS for Mr. Foer, he grew up in Washington. His father was a lawyer; his mother, born in a displaced-persons camp in Europe, was in public relations. Mr. Foer knew that his grandfather, who died when Mr. Foer was a child, had been saved by a woman in his hometown, Trochimbrod, in Ukraine, but the Holocaust was not a subject his family discussed. It was not until his sophomore year at Princeton, prompted by he knows not what, that Mr. Foer asked his mother about the story. She could provide only a photograph of his grandfather and the woman.

Mr. Foer spent three days in the area of his grandfather's town, which no longer existed. An idiotic trip, he says. He had done no research; he found no one.

Then he went to Prague and wrote the first draft of "Everything Is Illuminated" in 10 weeks.

AAAIIIEEE! (That was the sound of a middle-aged writer.)

"I spent one week on one sentence," Mr. Foer says, showing compassion.

He picks up a copy of his novel and reads: " 'It was March 18, 1791, when Trachim B's double axle wagon either did or did not pin him against the bottom of the Brod River.' That's the only sentence in the book based on reality. There was a story that a wagon had gone over the Brod. I went back and forth. The wagon *did* go in. The wagon did *not* go in. It took a week or two to decide which path to follow, a path of names and dates or a path of the imagination. Once I gave myself the green light to imagine, it went pretty fast."

There were, he adds, three years of revisions, during which he worked odd jobs. His last was as a receptionist at a public relations company. When his novel sold, he waited two months before quitting that job — to quit immediately, he says, would have made him a real jerk; his bosses had been great to him.

The raves and the wunderkind label?

A nice surprise, but the label is unimportant, he says. "If I only wrote one book, it might matter, but I've already written my next book."

New York Repo

The New York Times

Under Increasing Pressure, City and State Speed Up Trade

By EDWARD WYATT

State and city officials said yesterday that they had speeded up the timetable for the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site after recent criticism that the planning was moving too slowly.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which owns the trade center site, and the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, which is overseeing much of the downtown redevelopment, jointly issued a request for proposals for a design for the trade center site, including space for offices, a hotel, retail stores and services, and an analysis of transportation projects.

A deadline of July 1 was set for initial plans, and a final proposal for the development of the site is due by Sept. 1, according to the timetable laid out yesterday. Final transportation plans and an urban design for the broader downtown area are to be completed by Dec. 1, the agencies said. Would-be planners must apply by May 6, less than two weeks away.

In addition, a schedule for the development of a memorial to victims of the Sept. 11 disaster will be completed in July, the agencies said.

The faster timetable comes as Gov. George E. Pataki has come under intense criticism from Andrew M. Cuomo, a Democratic candidate for governor, over the seemingly slow pace of the rebuilding effort.

Mr. Pataki, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and officials of the Port Authority and the development corporation each issued statements yesterday praising the collaborative process among all the parties involved in the planning effort.

Mr. Pataki said the joint effort would draw "on the best ideas and reflects our commitment to build the broadest consensus possible." Mr. Bloomberg called the request for proposals "an important step forward."

But in fact the planning has spawned intense bureaucratic rivalries over who is in charge of the redevelopment effort.

Those rivalries were most evident two weeks ago when the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation issued a request for proposals for an urban planner to complete designs for the site and surrounding areas. Within days the request was withdrawn after Port Authority officials objected, saying they were not adequately consulted.

On Friday the Port Authority issued its own call for plans. Although it was similar to the earlier one and was issued "in cooperation with the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation," it made clear that the Port Authority was driving the plans for the site.

Would-be planners are given a May 6 deadline to apply.

The rivalries between the Port Authority and the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation became enough of an issue that the two agencies agreed to a memorandum of understanding laying out details of how they would work together, city and state officials said in their news release about the new timetable.

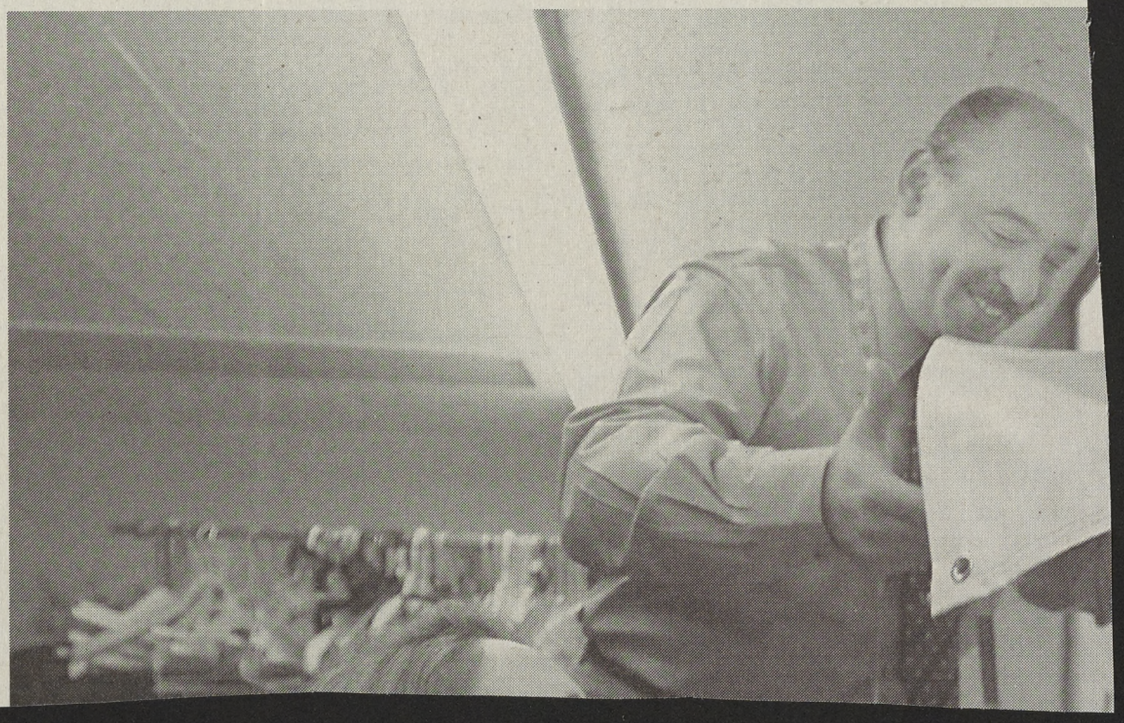
The development corporation will basically solicit input from the public and from governmental agencies about the process and take the lead role in planning for a memorial. The Port Authority, meanwhile, will have more of a say over the trade center

Casualties Of Dot-Coms Help Revive Small Firms

By ROBERT F. WORTH

Colleen Galvin never expected to work for a tailor.

But here she is in her black business suit, standing precariously on a battered sewing table and helping Luigi Barbato tape a temporary sign to the window of his second-floor tailor shop on Fulton Street, a block or so from ground zero. When the phone rings, she answers, covers the receiver with her palm, and whispers the client's name to Mr. Barbato, asking, "Will the pants be ready tomorrow?"



THE WRITER'S ART

S. Times 2/3/02

To really sting, a killer barb needs to sing

BY JAMES J. KILPATRICK
Syndicated columnist

Several weeks ago a gentleman in Florida set out to insult me. In an e-mail littered with bang-marks, he upbraided me as an impotent moron, a mealy moron, a miserable moron and finally as an (unprintable) moron. Evidently he held me in low regard.

Fair enough, but as an example of robust invective, the poor fellow's effort falls in a class between pitiful and pathetic. He struck not with a swordsman's rapier but with a caveman's club. Who could take offense at such billingsgate? Like the hook slide and the squeeze bunt, a good mouth-filling insult is a work of art. Let us learn by good example.

John Randolph of Virginia served in the House of Representatives in the early 1800s with Edward Livingston of Louisiana. They did not get along. Even so, on one occasion Randolph voiced a word of admiration for his colleague. Mr. Livingston, he said, "is a man of splendid abilities." He continued:

"He is a man of splendid abilities, but utterly corrupt. Like rotten mackerel by moonlight, he both shines and stinks."

Notice the alliteration! Notice the cadence! Notice the richness of imagery! On another occasion, Randolph commented on the appointment of Richard Rush as secretary of the treasury under John Quincy Adams: "Never were abilities so much below mediocrity so well rewarded." Notice the balance of "so much" with "so well." Randolph continued by comparing Rush to Caligula's horse. (The horse had been made a consul.) The best insults will be marked by style and swing and sis-boom-bah.

Oscar Wilde was a master of the art. A second-rate poet of the 19th century once complained to Wilde that his candidacy to become poet laureate was not going well. A conspiracy of silence had been formed against him. He asked, "What ought I to do, Oscar?"

"Join it," said Wilde.

Not surprisingly, the best writers fashion the best insults. Often they aim their shafts at other writers.

I am indebted to a Henry LaBrun of Charlotte, N.C., for sending me "The Little Book of Venom," compiled by Jennifer Higgie and published in the United States by Contemporary Books (Lincolnwood, IL 60646). The anthology is divided into a dozen chapters quoting the nasty things gifted people have said about other gifted people. In this body-contact sport, writers and politicians lead the league. A sample:

Virginia Woolf on Thomas Hardy: "No one has written worse English than Mr. Hardy in some of his novels — cumbrous, stilted, ugly and inexpressive."

Dame Edith Sitwell on Woolf: "Her writing is no more than glamorous knitting. I believe she must have a pattern somewhere."

William Butler Yeats on Henry James: "I have just read a long novel by Henry James. Much of it made me think of the priest condemned for a long space to confess nuns."

Some great insults come in small packages. A New York critic summed up the movie "I Am a Camera": "Me no Leica." In Richmond, Va., long ago, a reviewer took on a whole family in five words: "The Sitwells don't with, me."

Several readers have cited an exchange launched by the fourth Earl of Sandwich in his prosecution of John Wilkes.

His lordship predicted Wilkes would die either upon the gallows or from some venereal disease. Wilkes made a gracious response: "That depends, m'lord, on whether I embrace your principles or your mistress."

On that cheerful note this lecture must end. Go forth, ye students, and defame!

The Writer's Art by James J. Kilpatrick appears Sunday in Northwest Life. Address comments or questions to: Writer's Art, c/o Newsroom, The Seattle Times, P.O. Box 70, Seattle, WA 98111.

vorcelowcostwa.com. He tells me a story about the divorce that was caused by shoes.

"This gentleman came into the marriage not knowing his wife loved shoes. He owned his own home, and he married her; he had to construct three shoe closets and give up the laundry room to make it into another shoe closet. Finally, he said that enough was enough. She was unapologetic. She didn't recognize the strain that buying expensive shoes was

"The joke you hear is, 'Divorce today, bankruptcy tomorrow,' " he says.

Well, I think that's enough pre-Valentine's Day talk.

Now, go get her some flowers, guy. Romance is in the air, if you ignore the 50-50 chance of legal papers following sometime thereafter.

Erik Lacitis' column runs Sunday, Tuesday and Friday. E-mail: elacitis@seattletimes.com.

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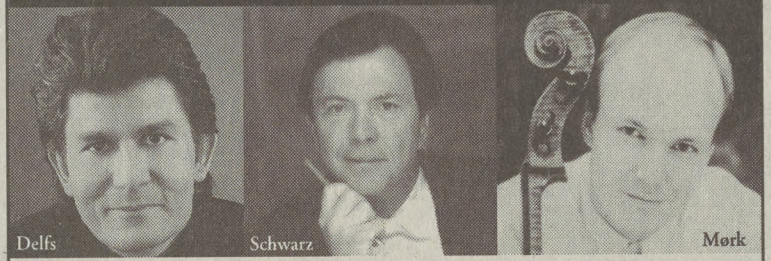

Andreas Delfs conducts Beethoven's vibrant Seventh Symphony

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Beethoven: Symphony No. 7
Saturday's performance sponsored by PONCHO
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• **Fri., February 8 at 1pm**
• **Sat., February 9 at 8pm**
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POET'S CHOICE: A FAREWELL | *By Rita Dove*

Poems to me are not just objects of art, exquisitely wrought cages for the living tissue of a captured moment; nor are they mere puzzles to be unraveled or sources of passive entertainment. I have always thought of poems as my companions—and like companions, they accompany you wherever the journey (or the afternoon) might lead: They will listen as well as expound; they can influence the mood of the encounter and they can even change their minds; they comfort us and argue back when they don't agree. A poem grows on me and, if I'm receptive and it's a good poem, grows with me.

My most recent companion has been Mary Oliver's *The Leaf and the Cloud*, a book-length poem in seven parts published in an elegant, slim volume by Da Capo Press. It's a brilliant meditation, a walk through the natural world with one of our preeminent contemporary poets, although she also summons companions to her side: Walt Whitman echoes throughout, as does William Carlos Williams—especially in this crisp, judicious tribute to Williams's (in)famous red wheelbarrow:

Nothing is so delicate or so finely hinged as the wings
of the green moth
against the lantern

against its heat
against the beak of the crow
in the early morning.

Yet the moth has trim, and feistiness, and not a drop
of self-pity.

Not in this world.

One of the earliest and longest-lasting of my poetic companions has always been Shakespeare. His sonnets have the dizzying effect of seeming to be as instantaneous as a snapshot, yet as casually intimate as listening to your best friend's confession after the third beer. The emotional circumstances he portrays so succinctly are so singularly complex that they tend to be conducive to endless reflection, even while the entire concoction is being gathered neatly into the net of a single metaphor. In the case of the following poem, "Sonnet 30," the metaphor of financial management is threaded through via words that are still quite modern—canceled, expense, account, pay, restored, losses:

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since canceled woe,
And moan th' expense of many a vanished sight.
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of forebemoaned moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored and sorrows end.

There seems to be a Shakespeare sonnet to mark every occasion, and I have chosen this one as a way of saying goodbye: This will be my last Poet's Choice column. The reasons vary from the practical (I believe in freshening the pot by rotating the position, thus inviting different opinions, aesthetics, even regional viewpoints) to the personal, but in the end the person won out: I am hard pressed to continue the column while maintaining my personal writing schedule; as much as I love talking about poems, I enjoy writing them more. To quote Mary Oliver again:

Would it be better to sit in silence?
To think everything, to feel everything, to say nothing?

This is the way of the orange gourd.
This is the habit of the rock in the river, over which
the water pours all night and all day.

But the nature of man is not the nature of silence.
Words are the thunders of the mind.
Words are the refinement of the flesh.
Words are the responses to the thousand curvaceous moments—
we just manage it—
sweet and electric, words flow from the brain
and out the gate of the mouth.

We make books of them, out of hesitations and grammar.
We are slow, and choosy.
This is the world.

And so I take my leave of these pages, dear readers, and thank you for your company. Over the past two years I have introduced you to quite a few of my friends, in the hopes that you would hit it off. Many of you wrote to comment on particular poems or to offer insights from your own reading. You were at turns erudite and joyous, discerning and sympathetic, and I will miss hearing from you—though, if one believes William Stafford, true communion is all the stronger for being invisible and silent:

ASK ME

Some time when the river is ice ask me
mistakes I have made. Ask me whether
what I have done is my life. Others
have come in their slow way into
my thought, and some have tried to help
or to hurt: ask me what difference
their strongest love or hate has made.

I will listen to what you say.
You and I can turn and look
at the silent river and wait. We know
the current is there, hidden; and there
are comings and goings from miles away
that hold the stillness exactly before us.
What the river says, that is what I say.

Excerpts from "Flare"—"Nothing is so delicate or so finely hinged . . . "— and "Work"—"Would it be better . . ."—reprinted from "The Leaf and the Cloud," Da Capo Press, copyright ©2000 by Mary Oliver. Sonnet 30—"When to the sessions of sweet silent thought . . ."— reprinted from "The Pelican Shakespeare: The Sonnets," edited by Stephen Orgel, Penguin Books, copyright ©2001. "Ask Me" reprinted from "The Way It Is: New & Selected Poems," Graywolf Press, copyright © 1998 by the estate of William Stafford.

Bestsellers

Paperback

Fiction — *Weeks on Lists*

1 The Blind Assassin [16]
By Margaret Atwood (Anchor, $14)
The lives of two sisters told through intertwining stories.

2 Prodigal Summer [9]
By Barbara Kingsolver (HarperPerennial, $14)
Three tales set in an untamed patch of Appalachia.

3 Girl With a Pearl Earring [48]
By Tracy Chevalier (Plume, $12)
A young maid in Vermeer's Delft household inspires a portrait.

4 True History of the Kelly Gang [4]
By Peter Carey (Vintage, $14)
19th-century outlaw and Irishman Ned Kelly pens his memoirs.

5 Shopgirl [11]
By Steve Martin (Theia, $10.95)
A comedy of manners revolving around a glove salesperson at Neiman's.

6 The Lord of the Rings [2]
By J.R.R. Tolkien (Mariner, $20)
The complete trilogy of the quest for the One Ring in Middle Earth.

7 The Red Tent [50]
By Anita Diamant (Picador USA, $14.95)
A lengthy midrash chronicling the lives of Jacob's four wives.

8 The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay [18]
By Michael Chabon (Picador USA, $15)
A comicbook's success alters the lives of its creators.

9 First Counsel [2]
By Brad Meltzer (Warner Vision, $7.99)
Murder muddles the tie between a lawyer and the president's daughter.

10 The Best American Short Stories 2001 [6]
Ed. by Barbara Kingsolver (Houghton Mifflin, $13)
An eclectic mix of stories from new voices and proven masters.

Nonfiction/General

1 The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook: Dating & Sex [5]
By Joshua Piven et al. (Chronicle, $14.95)

2 Personal History [22]
By Katharine Graham (Vintage, $15)

3 Brunelleschi's Dome [6]
By Ross King (Penguin, $13)

4 The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt [4]
By Edmund Morris (Modern Library, $17.95)

5 A Beautiful Mind: The Life of Mathematical

Hardcover

Fiction — *Weeks on Lists*

1 The Corrections [16]
By Jonathan Franzen (FSG, $26.95)
A complex, comic portrait of one Midwest family's dysfunction.

2 Skipping Christmas [6]
By John Grisham (Doubleday, $19.95)
A seasonally jaded couple forgo observing Christmas to take a cruise.

3 Portrait in Sepia [8]
By Isabel Allende (HarperCollins, $26)
Aurora del Valle, plagued with nightmares, begins to probe her past.

4 The Best-Loved Poems of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis [9]
Ed. by Caroline Kennedy (Hyperion, $21.95)
A literary tribute from the former First Lady's daughter.

5 Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage [2]
By Alice Munro (Knopf, $24)
Nine stories of women buffeted by circumstances beyond their control.

6 Last Man Standing [6]
By David Baldacci (Warner, $26.95)
An FBI Hostage Rescue Team member inexplicably freezes during a mission.

7 Half a Life [7]
By V.S. Naipaul (Knopf, $24)
A young man flees to London to escape his mixed caste heritage.

8 Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress [5]
By Dai Sijie (Knopf, $18)
Victims of China's Cultural Revolution rely on literature to survive.

9 Ten Poems to Change Your Life [2]
Ed. by Roger Housden (Crown, $14)
A collection of poems to inspire and astonish, replete with commentary.

10 Violets Are Blue [4]
By James Patterson (Little, Brown, $27.95)
With the Mastermind still a concern, a vampire-themed case appears.

Nonfiction/General

1 Theodore Rex [4]
By Edmund Morris (Random House, $35)

2 John Adams [30]
By David McCullough (Simon & Schuster, $35)

3 Marie Antoinette: The Journey [5]
By Antonia Fraser (Doubleday, $35)

4 Churchill: A Biography [5]

New in Paperback

Fiction

When I Lived in Modern Times, by Linda Grant (Plume, $13). Twenty-year-old Evelyn Sert, the English-born daughter of a Latvian Jewish mother and an unknown American father, sets sail in the spring of 1946 for Palestine. "I was looking for a place without artifice or sentiment, where life was stripped back to its basics, where things were fundamental and serious and above all modern. This is my story. Scratch a Jew and you've got a story." Moving from a kibbutz to Tel Aviv, she searches for her place in her new homeland, and falls for a Zionist who draws her into a world of deceptions and political unrest.

The Selected Works of Cesare Pavese, translated from the Italian by R.W. Flint (New York Review Books, $16.95). In a testimonial published in 1960, Italo Calvino wrote, "Pavese's nine short novels make up the most dense, dramatic and homogenous narrative cycle of modern Italy." Pavese (1908-1950) lived through his country's embrace of fascism and war, committing suicide after a love affair with an American actress. This volume comprises four novels, including *The House on the Hill*, which follows a teacher's wartime flight through the countryside, and *The Devil in the Hills*, about three friends whose summer trip becomes a crash course in the secrets of love and death.



Affinity, by Sarah Waters (Riverhead, $14). It's 1874, and upper-class do-gooder Margaret Prior, recovering from a suicide attempt, begins making the grim rounds of the women's ward at Millbank, one of Victorian London's less cheerful prisons. There she encounters Selina Dawes, a young spiritualist imprisoned after a seance gone disastrously wrong. From the first glimpse of Selina in her cell, Margaret develops an interest in the other woman that leads to seemingly supernatural events and later to a desperate plan. By the author of another novel of Victorian women in love, *Tipping the Velvet*.

Nonfiction

Homophobia: A History, by Byrne Fone (Picador, $17). Ranging through literary and historical records from classical times onward, Fone—a leading figure in gay and lesbian studies and a professsor emeritus at CUNY—investigates what he calls "the last acceptable prejudice," a claim borne out by statistics such as the following: In 1998, one poll found that "44 percent [of Americans] believed that homosexual relations between consenting adults should be illegal."

The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference, by

MAKING BOOKS

Martin Arnold

Poetic History Of the Heart

Is it possible that our great-great-grandchildren will learn more about our times from the music and incantations of our poets than from our novelists? Since love and death are the parents of poetry, it's probably not surprising that people are turning to it for solace and understanding these days. Poetry is such a worthwhile tool to help decipher emotions that it's unfortunate that it takes a horrific event to make one focus suddenly on this art form. But maybe its popularity has been creeping up on us for a while and we weren't aware.

Poetry is the literary version of the sound bite. It's Internet and e-mail friendly precisely because it has the pared-down power of words in their purest form.

Thus a poem by Auden (written after the Nazi invasion of Poland) and one by Yeats ("Easter 1960") were e-mailed and posted on the Internet throughout the world and printed in newspapers and read on television and radio as a shared comfort after Sept. 11.

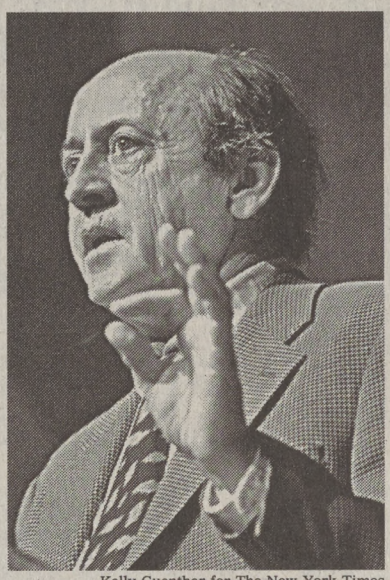
Does the sonnet song have a future? Harold Bloom, the critic, said that it might be difficult to find new writers "who show astonishing strength and creativity in narrative fiction," but that the same might not be true of poetry. "Poetry is protected by the fact that it doesn't need enormous audiences to keep going," he said. "There's something in the poetic tradition that allows it to sustain itself on elitist readers."

He is exuberant about English-language poets like Geoffrey Hill, Henri Cole and Anne Carson, whom he finds "an astonishing poet for her intensity." He didn't tell me how many poets would be included in his next book, "Genius: A Mosaic of Exemplary Creative Minds," which is to be published by Warner Books in the fall of 2002.

Poetry is refining language flow, an aesthetic insight caught at the instant, the perfect pitch pipe to establish a thought or an emotion. This is a dark moment, but poetry also springs and metamorphoses from the street into the literary.

Deborah Garrison, poet and poetry editor of Alfred A. Knopf, said she thought poetry had been gaining in popularity for the past five years or so. "In poetry there's the pure essence of life distilled in few words," she said, "and its very distilled form gives people something to hang onto." She went on, "There's rap and hip-hop music that moves toward poetry; there's the energy of the spoken word." (Ms. Garrison's last book of poems was "A Working Girl Can't Win and Other Poems," from Random House in 1998.)

Mr. Cole ("The Visible Man," Knopf, 2000) explained poetry's power and popularity in times of distress this way: "One of the ingredients of poetry is primary emotions — fear, grief, triumph, wonder — and we respond to an event like the terrorist attack with pure primary emotion in its most animalistic sense. Musicality and attention to language make the lyric poem, its function, the perfect form to articulate how we feel."



Kelly Guenther for The New York Times

Billy Collins

Finding solace in 'the pure essence of life distilled in few words.'

Of course the speed at which poetry can be circulated makes it ideal for spreading comfort and insight. One can't e-mail "War and Peace" but can easily send "The unmentionable odor of death" that "offends the September night" from Auden's "Sept. 1, 1939."

Poetry is "like creating a Frankenstein monster, taking a little bit from the present and past," said Billy Collins, the new poet laureate of the United States. He added: "I am sure there are more influences on me than I am aware of. The results are probably mediocre if the poet knows what he's doing all the time."

Unlike most of us, Mr. Collins reads poetry like baseball players watched Tony Gwynn hit: "I find poets who can do something I can't. I'm reading for something to steal, to appropriate, reading as a bandit in a stickup."

The idea of today's poetry reaching an audience 100 years from now? "It's the only history of the human heart that we have," was Mr. Collins's answer. His latest book, "Sailing Alone Around the Room: New and Selected Poems," was published by Random House last month. His editor, Daniel Menaker, who has relocated since then to HarperCollins, said: "There's a perceived wisdom in the last six or seven weeks that poetry is enjoying a more prominent spot on the cultural radar screen. There's an understanding and a comfort in poetry and a compression, and if you have ears to hear its lessons, it will speak to everyone, like certain classical music."

He continued, "The better the poetry, the more ears will listen, and poetry doesn't have the impediments of fiction — what kind of car is the character driving? — or the need to set a scene." So to Mr. Menaker the eruption of poetry readings — more than 1,000 people attended a recent one at Cooper Union — was not entirely surprising.

Mostly poetry has been a franchise of smaller independent publishing houses or university presses, but Knopf publishes 200 poetry titles a year — including of course its back list and the classic poets — and annually sells nearly 250,000 copies of books of poetry. Random House; W. W. Norton; Farrar, Straus & Giroux; Houghton Mifflin; and HarperCollins are among the mainstream houses publishing poetry, though it generally brings in small revenues and seldom has a first printing of more than 5,000 copies.

Still, James Merrill's "Collected Poems" (Knopf), has sold 20,000 copies this year, a heady number.

Christopher Carduss, a contributing editor at Counterpoint who edits Mr. Hill's poetry, said that in times of trouble, personal or national, "people turn to poetry because it's such a concentrated form of literature, and there's no better form to articulate emotional truths." He added: "A phrase or a series of lines can turn over in one's mind. One can hold it in the hand like a gem."

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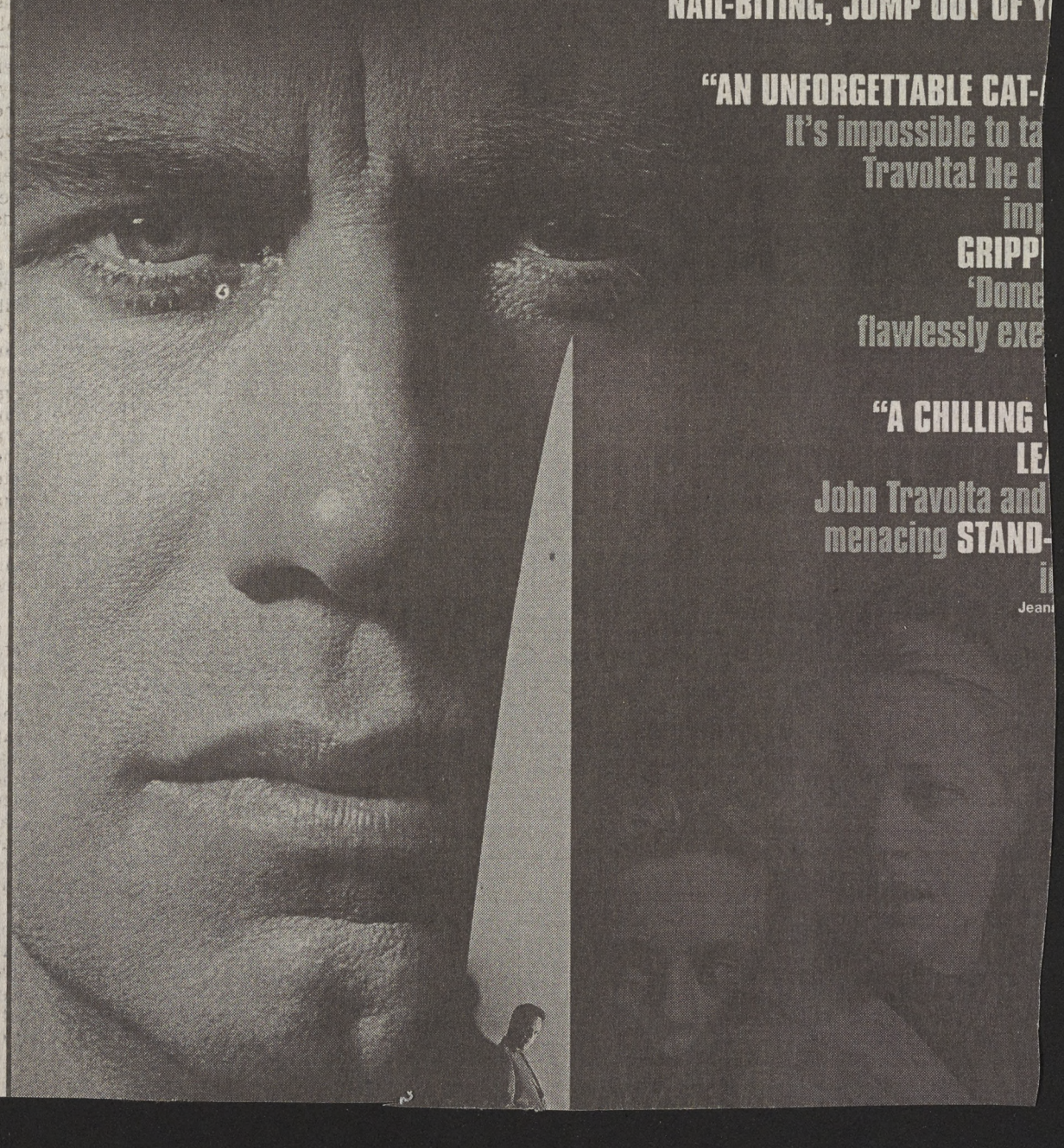

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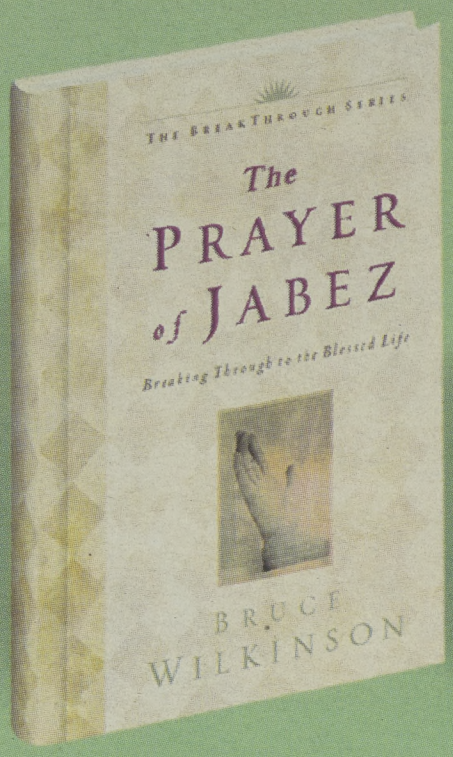

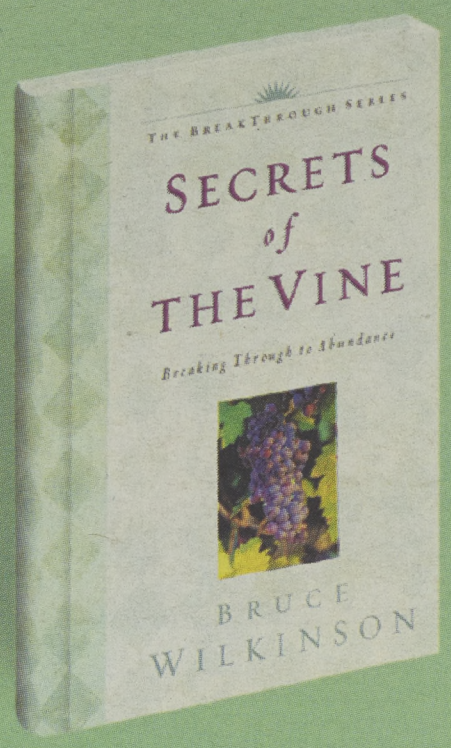

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A Poet of Love and Loss

The collected work and a memoir by a friend describe the life and times of James Merrill.

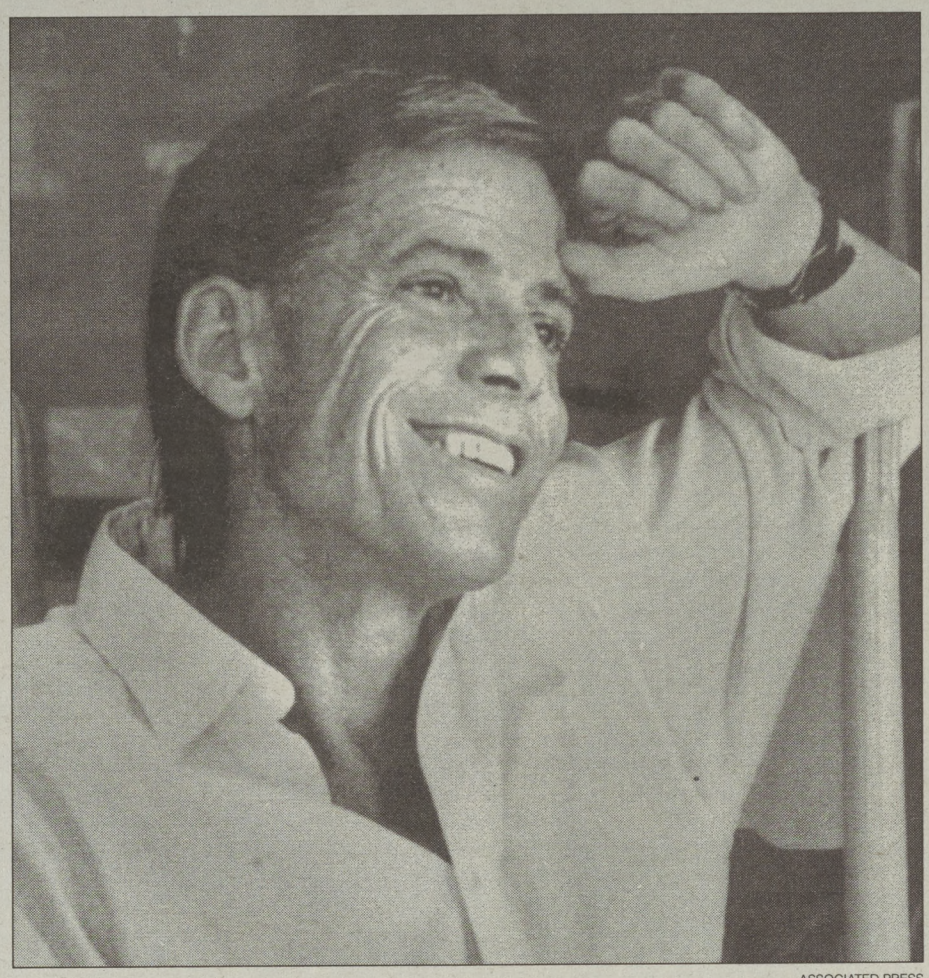
COLLECTED POEMS
By James Merrill.
Edited by J. D. McClatchy
and Stephen Yenser.
885 pp. New York:
Alfred A. Knopf. $40.

FAMILIAR SPIRITS
A Memoir of James Merrill
and David Jackson.
By Alison Lurie.
181 pp. New York:
Viking. $22.95.

By Daniel Mendelsohn

"EXTRATERRESTRIAL" isn't exactly the first word that comes to mind when you hear the name of James Merrill (1926-95), the American poet who during the course of a staggeringly successful 50-year career won two National Book Awards, a National Book Critics Circle Award, a Pulitzer Prize, a Bollingen Prize and the Library of Congress's Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry — to say nothing of a shelfload of other honors and distinctions. But that's what Alison Lurie, in her new memoir of her 40-year friendship with Merrill and his longtime companion, David Jackson, calls him — twice. Otherworldly creatures are, of course, a famous part of Merrill's story: his best-known work, "The Changing Light at Sandover," is a sprawling three-part epic inspired by an obsession with a Ouija board. But that's not what Lurie's referring to in the opening pages of her book, when she describes her first meeting with Merrill, in 1950, with "Sandover" still a quarter of a century in the future. At that point, Jimmy, as he was called, was still an unknown; but his good looks, astounding erudition, superior culture, abundant talent and fabulous wealth (his father was a founder of Merrill Lynch) made him seem, not only to Lurie and her husband but to pretty much everyone who encountered him, like "a highly civilized visitor from another planet" and "a kind of Martian: supernaturally brilliant, detached, quizzical, apart."

You don't realize just how apt Lurie's description is until you make your way through the gigantic and ravishing-looking volume of Merrill's collected poems, edited by his friends and literary executors, J. D. McClatchy and Stephen Yenser. Readers who were long ago seduced by Merrill's work — it's hard not to resort to erotic metaphors when speaking of this poet, for whom every increment in the progress from desire to fulfillment to separation to memory was the occasion for shimmering contemplation — were pleased, while he lived, to have the collections he put out every three or four years; what the new volume provides, not without a small shock even to those familiar with Merrill, is the size and scope of his accomplishment. (The only Merrill you see in the superstores anymore is "Sandover"; with any luck, this new collection will edge it aside.) Once Lurie's phrase has stuck in your mind, it's hard *not* to think of Merrill as some kind of superior alien being who deigned to walk among us for a while, absorbing the totality of experience on our planet — time, eros, death, friendships, animals, plants, America, Europe, Asia, sex, minerals, X-rays, families, houses, opera, discos, lovers, art — and reporting it all from every conceivable point of view (that of a goldfish, for example) and in every known register of our language. (Merrill's the kind of poet who can put "plink!" and "Villiers de l'Isle Adam" in the same poem — and get away with it.)



ASSOCIATED PRESS

James Merrill in 1977, the year his book "Divine Comedies" won a Pulitzer Prize.

What's particularly uncanny about Merrill — indeed, what makes him seem even more supernatural — is that he had all these gifts from the start. His earliest work exhibits the same astonishing technical proficiency that characterizes his final output. The first poem in this collection, "The Black Swan," gave its name to Merrill's first serious collection, published in a limited edition in Athens when the poet was 20; its description of the eponymous bird, "Black on flat water past the jonquil lawns / Riding" is remarkably assured: the undulating alternation of vowel colors — "black" and "flat," on the one hand, and "water" and "lawn," on the other — which slap against each other like wavelets; the liquid repetition of the consonants l and n. Although these early poems are often showpieces of bejeweled versification, they betray, already, a very Merrillian awareness of the proximity of pain and loss and death ("Near by what silkiest blows a sharp thing grows").

As ravishing as the early work is, you often can't help feeling that in these poems the insights about art and life and death have been learned — book-learned, that is — rather than earned. One of the pleasures of having nearly all of Merrill in one volume is to see how the poet grew into his poetry — how he became willing to grapple with things themselves, rather than the intellectualized or aestheticized symbols of things (black swans, say). Merrill himself was aware that he mastered form before he mastered content. "Given metrical facility," he wrote in his 1993 memoir, "A Different Person" (that's quite a "given," but never mind), "poems are far easier to write than prose. . . . A young poet's ignorance of life will go unnoticed. Meter, rhyme, felicitous phrases and what not mask the underlying weakness or banality." "Weak" and "banal" are certainly too strong for what you get in the very early poems; if you sense a little youthful glibness in them, it's only because what was to follow reveals an engagement with life and love and friendship (if not — a frequent criticism — with politics) that is so obviously authentic.

This isn't to say that Merrill ever sacrificed formal polish for emotional intensity; his lyrics at all stages of his career have a lapidary smoothness and mosaic fit that recall not his beloved Greeks but, if anyone, the Roman lyricist Horace — another poet who was haunted by the specter of time and death even as he puckishly pursued the pleasures of life. But as the poet grew older, the intense and sometimes traumatic experiences that life inevitably presednted opened up new possibilities in form, as well as in content. His third collection, "The Country of a Thousand Years of Peace," appeared in 1959; already in its first poem, dedicated to a beautiful Dutch friend who died of leukemia in Lausanne (hence the poem's, and the collection's, beautifully rhythmic name), there's a relaxation you don't get in the earlier work. Merrill himself suggests the reason:

"When word of Hans's death not long afterwards reached me in Salzburg, a poem began to take form — or rather, for once, *not* to. Lines varied in length, end words rhymed or didn't. The phrases, like river stones, learned their own shape and smoothness from the current of grief that swept through me. I'd had no brush with death so close as this."

THE result was a poem that uses sophisticated formal tools to convey deep emotion — in this case, the cold terror of a pretty place whose charms have been annihilated by private disaster: "It was madness to look down / On the toy city where / The glittering neutrality / Of clock and chocolate and lake and cloud / Made every morning somewhat / Less than you could bear." Those unrelenting hard c's in the fourth line, ticking away the last hours of Hans's life, are as chill and hard as ice, cruelly mocking any pretense that either prettiness or pleasure can save us from death. Merrill never really abandoned the classic stanzaic forms and rhyme schemes that served him so well, but there are some striking exceptions, especially during his last decade: the 1988 collection "The Inner Room" contains a sequence called "Prose of Departure," which consists of short, rather melancholy pieces, filled with ghosts and goodbyes, in which short paragraphs of prose segue, suddenly, into brief lyrics.

As deeply preoccupied as they are with big and often difficult themes, the poems of Merrill's fertile middle period during the 60's and 70's — those originally published in the collections "Water Street" (1962), "Nights and Days" (1966), "The Fire Screen" (1969), "Braving the Elements" (1972), and much of "Divine Comedies" (1976) — suggest a worldview that is essentially comic. Comic, that is, in the Dantesque sense of "comedy": not funny, but grandly, wryly, humanely perceptive about human weakness, vanity, anxiety. One reason you allowed him to go on about these comedies is that, as he grew older, he made himself the butt of most

Daniel Mendelsohn, the book critic for New York magazine, is the author of "The Elusive Embrace: Desire and the Riddle of Identity."

of the jokes. Something that allowed Merrill to explore with such texture what it felt like to be middle-aged was his increasing interest in narrative, which it's hard not to ascribe to his devotion to Cavafy, whom he translated beautifully. (Another reason we should be indebted to the editors of the present volume is that they've collected here the poet's many translations of other poets, in languages from French to Portuguese to Dutch to modern Greek.)

Some of the classic works of this period are, in fact, brilliantly etched stories stretching for several pages at a time; the greatest of these, perhaps, is "Days of 1964," which beautifully oscillates between wry awareness of the mundanely physical (steep-hilled Athens has "literally breathtaking views") and big metaphysical concerns ("Love makes one generous"). And in the shorter lyrics, there's no sign anymore of baby fat or pretension. "Hourglass," from Merrill's "First Poems" (1951), is an ornately constructed rumination about (what else?) time and beauty, one whose confident, punning exquisiteness (there are plays on "waste" and "waist") competes with a certain juvenile glibness (this "baffled century"); "Hourglass," written in 1968, is about the same things, but it's as hard, sculptured and bonily wry as a grinning death's-head. "Dear at death's door when you stand / I will run to let you in" is a line that could only have been written by someone who'd had first- rather than thirdhand experience of death. One of this famously generous poet's achievements, in fact, is to make death seem less scary.

Readers of the present volume will notice a curious gap of nine years — the longest between any two sections here — between "Divine Comedies" (1976) and "Late Settings" (1985). As Merrill's fans know, the "missing" years were those that saw the production of his three-part supernatural epic, "The Changing Light at Sandover" — omitted here for reasons of space. Much of it (we're told) consists of transcriptions of conversations that Merrill and Jackson had with spirits of the dead who'd been summoned by the Ouija board with which they played constantly over the course of two decades. In this strange and haunted poem, in which spirits of everyone from Maria Callas to W. H. Auden make appearances (Nabokov, famously, was not allowed to get a word in edgewise) — and which, with its long pages of text all in capital letters, sometimes gives the impression that the dead like to communicate by telegram — Merrill and his partner created an alternative universe, with elaborate angelic hierarchies and systems for rating people's moral and spiritual worth (poets, not surprisingly, rank highest).

This bizarre enterprise is the subject of "Familiar Spirits," Lurie's perplexed and sometimes hurt memoir. (She was on "a rather low level: stage 2.") "When two sophisticated, extremely intelligent people devote over 25 years to recording messages from imaginary beings," she writes, "you have to ask, 'What was in it for them?' " Lurie's book itself is a little odd, and her tone can be strangely prissy ("He was unusually beautiful, if you admire that sort of thing": What planet is *she* from?); but as with the unexpected but brilliant characterization of Merrill with which it opens, it offers a lot of interesting suggestions. That, for instance, the Ouija business provided a sometimes jaded couple with some silly fun, and (this seems just right) that it was a way for Jackson, whose own literary career never took off, to be part of a creative undertaking once again, one that managed to balance the emotional books between the two men as well.

Whatever you think of "Sandover," which has been hailed as a Whitmanesque masterpiece and written off as an overlong joke (I agree with Lurie that it deteriorates as it progresses), one thing is clear: after it was finished, Merrill produced some of his best work. Indeed, the poems collected in "Late Settings" (1985), "The Inner Room" (1988) and "A Scattering of Salts" (1995) are at a higher level than anything he'd produced before. The first of these three collections contains "The House Fly," a shortish lyric about a former Greek boyfriend that, in implicitly contrasting the life span of humans and their loves with that of the housefly ("her ancestress alit / On the bare chest of Strato Mouflouzelis"), manages to be wry, funny and heartbreaking while taking on, with dazzling compression, all the big Merrillian subjects: time, memory, love, loss. The abundance of wholly superior poetry in Merrill's post-"Sandover" work makes you wonder whether the sheer silliness and excess of a lot of "Sandover" wasn't a necessary, somehow refining experience for the poet — some crazy tunnel he had to enter, equipped with his early successes and blithe facility, only to come out the other end purified, annealed, perfected.

MERRILL died in February 1995, a month before his 69th birthday. Later that year, his final collection appeared. The first lyric in "A Scattering of Salts," much of which reads as a haunted, self-conscious farewell, is called "A Downward Look." In it, Merrill imagines the world as seen from high above: "Seen from above, the sky / Is deep. Clouds float down there, / Foam on a long, luxurious bath. / Their shadows over limbs submerged in 'air' / Over protuberances, faults, / A delta thicket, glide." It's the quotation marks around the word "air" that bring you up short, reminding you of why the poet in whose opulent presence you find yourself in this collection is a great one. Good poets make you look more closely at the world; poetic language, always slightly at an angle to everyday speech, makes you think harder about what's in front of you. (She doesn't walk in beauty; she walks on her feet.) But great poets transfigure the world itself. This is what Merrill does here, flipping the world upside down for you, making you wonder about that stuff you thought was "air," — and, in the bargain, about everything else as well, about just where you stand in relation to everything and anything. There is no question about where Merrill stands. If "A Downward Look" suggests, slyly, that Merrill is in heaven, this monumental new collection reminds you that throughout his life and in all of his art, he was already looking at things from the other side. □

164 East 72nd Street

These city apartment windows — my grandmother's once —
Must be replaced come Fall at great expense.
Pre-war sun shone through them on many a Saturday
Lunch unconsumed while frantic adolescence
Wheedled an old lady into hat and lipstick,
Into her mink, the taxi, the packed lobby,
Into our seats. Whereupon gold curtains parted
On Lakmé's silvery, not yet broken-hearted

Version of things as they were. But what remains
Exactly as it was except those panes?
Today's memo from the Tenants' Committee deplores
Even the ongoing deterioration
Of the *widows* in our building. Well. On the bright side,
Heating costs and street noise will be cut.
Sirens at present like intergalactic gay
Bars in full swing whoop past us night and day.

Sometimes, shocked wide awake, I've tried to reckon
How many lives — fifty, a hundred thousand? —
Are being shortened by that din of crosstown
Ruby flares, wherever blinds don't quite . . .
And shortened by how much? Ten minutes each?
Reaching the Emergency Room alive, the victim
Would still have to live *years*, just to repair
The sonic fallout of a single scare.

"Do you ever wonder where you'll — " Oh my dear,
Asleep somewhere, or at the wheel. Not here.
Within months of the bathroom ceiling's cave-in,
Which missed my grandmother by a white hair,
She moved back South. The point's to live in style,
Not to drop dead in it. On a carpet of flowers
Nine levels above ground, like Purgatory,
Our life is turning into a whole new story:

Juices, blue cornbread, afternoons at the gym —
Imagine who remembers how to swim!
Evenings of study, or intensive care
For one another. Early to bed. And later,
If the mirror's drowsy eye perceives a slight
But brilliant altercation between curtains
Healed by the leaden hand of — one of us?
A white-haired ghost? or the homunculus

A gentle alchemist behind them trains
To put in order these nocturnal scenes —
Two heads already featureless in gloom
Have fallen back to sleep. Tomorrow finds me
Contentedly playing peekaboo with a sylphlike
Quirk in the old glass, making the brickwork
On the street's far (bright) side ripple. Childhood's view.
My grandmother — an easy-to-see-through

Widow by the time she died — made it my own.
Bless her good sense. Far from those parts of town
Given to high finance, or the smash hit and steak house,
Macy's or crack, Saks or quick sex, this neighborhood
Saunters blandly forth, adjusting its clothing.
Things done in purple light before we met,
Uncultured things that twitched as on a slide
If thought about, fade like dreams. Two Upper East Side

Boys again! Rereading Sir Walter Scott
Or *Through the Looking Glass*, it's impossible not
To feel how adult life, with its storms and follies,
Is letting up, leaving me ten years old,
Trustful, inventive, once more good as gold
— And counting on this to help, should a new spasm
Wake the gray sleeper, or to improve his chances
When ceilings flush with unheard ambulances.

JAMES MERRILL, FROM "COLLECTED POEMS"

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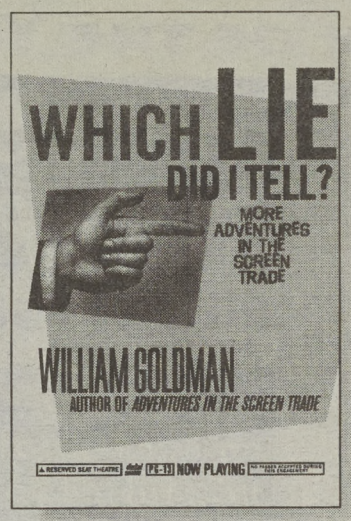

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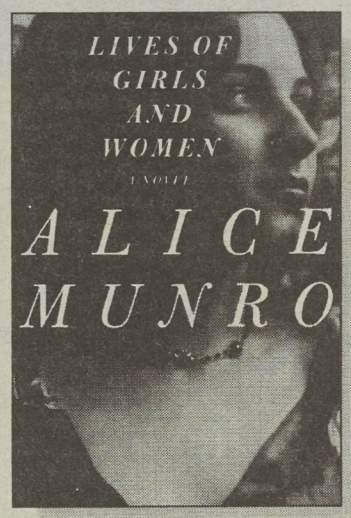

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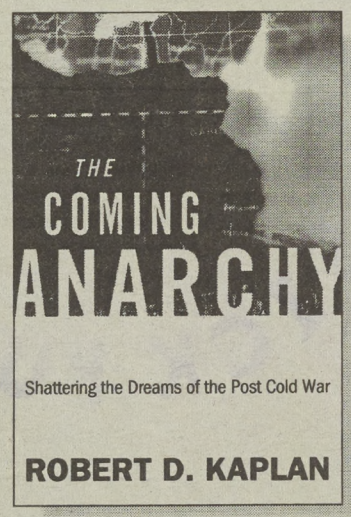

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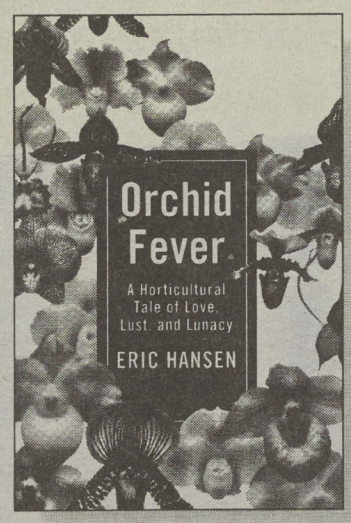
—*USA Today*



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The Father Thing

Archibald MacLeish was hard for a boy to catch up to.

UPHILL WITH ARCHIE

A Son's Journey.
By William H. MacLeish.
Illustrated. 287 pp. New York: Simon & Schuster. $25.

By Nathaniel Tripp

IN the autumn of 1981, when Archibald MacLeish was nearly 90 and in the last year of his life, and his son William was 54, there was a moment when they were both standing in the book room of Uphill Farm, and William attempted to say how much he loved his father. Unfortunately, the words tumbled over each other and came out, instead, as: "Do you know how much I owe you?"

The question sets the tone for "Uphill With Archie," his poignant memoir, which is suffused with the evening light of his own life. The construct of a family and the sweep of history are interwoven with reminiscences of Uphill Farm, the beloved property in Conway, Mass., and his father's extraordinary accomplishments. William H. MacLeish's own life was occasionally uphill, too, for having a very successful father can be just as difficult at times as having a very unsuccessful one, but there are no accusations here, just a yearning, as he writes this in his 70th year, for his father and a closeness that took almost a lifetime to achieve.

Success and fame, along with some fortune, came early to William's parents. Archibald demonstrated his competitive intellect first at Yale, and then at Harvard Law School, where he became editor of The Harvard Law Review and formed lifelong friendships with Dean Acheson and Felix Frankfurter, among many others. After several very successful years of practice, he next had the audacity to announce his intentions to leave his firm, on the very day they offered him a partnership, and become a poet. He moved to Paris with his wife, Ada, an accomplished singer, and took on the 20th century, falling in with the Fitzgeralds, Dos Passos, James Joyce, Picasso, and particularly Hemingway.

The couple returned to the states in 1927 and bought the farm in Conway, where William, the youngest of their three children, was born the following year. He grew up with the run of the place, which he adored, and got more of his father's attention than his siblings, who were older by 6 and 12 years, but he was also somewhat isolated, a very young witness to the fast-paced world of some high-pressure adults.

Often it was like living inside a play his parents had created, filled with fascinating guests and grand dinners. His father took to calling him Mr. Stanley, inspired by those all too rare moments when they explored the property together; his original given name was Peter, which was later changed to William. This confusion of names was but one example of the difficulty he would face in finding his true identity. His rebellion was mild, expressed in things like his own secret nickname for his father during times of stress: "Arse Poetica."

The Great Depression gave Archibald MacLeish the pulpit he needed to launch into his finest oratory and emerge not only as a renowned poet, playwright and winner of three Pulitzer Prizes, but also as a statesman, humanist and ally of Roosevelt. Unfortunately, this brought considerable disruption of the sylvan routine of Uphill Farm, as William's father moved first to a job in New York and then on to Washington. In the style of the times, and with such active parents — anyone from Carl Sandburg to the president himself might drop by — William's day-to-day rearing was left pretty much in the hands of nannies, distant relatives and headmasters.

The times when the family was reunited at the farm, mostly in summer, were indeed golden but all too brief. By the time William reached manhood himself, he was not so much launched as cast adrift, and there were many times, such as when he was tapped by Skull and Bones at Yale, during which he doubted his own ability to navigate independently. He tried to do the right thing in the '50's and '60's: marrying, living in the suburbs and doing a credible job as a journalist, editor and publicist. In 1969, he went to work for Kingman Brewster, the president of Yale, when things began to fall apart, both on campus and within his own life. Those turbulent times seemed to signal a chaotic end of the old order in many ways; even his father was ill equipped to deal with them.

Then came the epiphany for William, in one of the most moving moments in this book, which has many, when he discovered his own freedom with the help of his daughter. His great love of the natural world, and especially of the sea, could no longer be denied. He moved to Woods Hole and took on the editorship of the Oceanographic Institution's magazine. He divorced, remarried and wrote "The Day Before America: Changing the Nature of the Continent"; "The Gulf Stream: Encounters With the Blue God"; and "Oil and Water: The Struggle for Georges Bank."

Times have changed, and the fashions of literature, as well as families, have changed too. The words of Archibald MacLeish, which appear frequently in this book, are well worth revisiting, especially in the context his son provides. Some of those words, emanating from the political and social turmoil of the Great Depression, World War II and the McCarthy era, have renewed meaning today.

WHAT William misses most of all is the resonance of his father's voice, and a time which seemed to place a higher value on literacy. But William's own emergence as a writer is clear in this memoir, which is personal and reflective of himself, his parents and their fortress-like marriage, while also putting them all into the context of dramatic times in our nation's history. He pokes fun only at his own shortcomings while tracing the long, painful evolution of parenting skills over successive generations, and writes movingly of others in his family who are now gone, especially his brother Ken, who died of cancer in 1977 at the age of 60, and who, William thinks, may have suffered an overdose of Hemingway tough-guy style as a boy.

At Ken's interment, William stood on a nearby knoll wearing the plaid of their clan, and played "Amazing Grace" on the treasured pipes his brother had given him. He continues to play a fine tune as his father, and then his mother, shuffle offstage and the light fades on all that was once Uphill Farm. An era is also gently laid to rest with humor and insight, and yes, he was finally able to tell his father how much he loved him in this warm and delightful book. □

Nathaniel Tripp is the author of "Father, Soldier, Son: Memoir of a Platoon Leader in Vietnam."

New Insights Into the Novel? Try Reading 300

By CHITRA DIVAKARUNI



WRITERS ON WRITING
Unexpected Rewards For a Contest Judge

When Neil Baldwin of the National Book Foundation called to inquire if I would agree to be one of the fiction judges for the 2000 National Book Awards, I responded with an immediate and enthusiastic yes. It was a great honor. An opportunity to influence the course of American letters and uphold the standard of art. Under the enthusiasm a certain trepidation gnawed at me: Would I be able to do the job, and do it well? And what about the novel I was halfway through writing? But I blithely shrugged it off.

Until the 300-plus volumes we were to judge showed up at my doorstep.

To keep up with the grueling schedule the judges had been set, I read nonstop, pausing only to jot down notes and questions before picking up a new book. I'd immerse myself in the worlds of the novels until words ran together. When I closed a book, sometimes it took me a moment to remember where I was. It was a reading experience unlike any I'd ever undertaken, even during graduate school at Berkeley.

Mingled with the pressure and the seriousness of the endeavor was a sense of illicit pleasure, of holiday. I loved to read, that was one of the reasons why I was a writer. Now I could pursue my passion without guilt while I let the dishes mildew in the sink and fed the children unhealthy microwave dinners and did not return phone calls from boring people. I was influencing the course of American letters, after all.

What I didn't realize was that this five-month marathon reading session would change my understanding of the novel form and force me to see my own writing differently.

Perhaps this was because I'd never before read, in such large numbers, books that I didn't actively choose. Many were by writers I hadn't heard of, and while several of them delighted me, a large number did not. Interestingly, though, in each case I began to see distinct patterns being repeated. (This was true, to an extent, of the short stories in the group as well. But it is my sense that the story, perhaps because of its brevity and its closeness to poetry, is a more

Continued on Page B2

is all it takes.



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From top, Eric Y. Exit/"House"; Steve Kagan for The New York Times; Liz Lauren/"Garden"

Joel Hatch, with B. J. Jones in "House" (top), dashes between stages (center), so he can appear onstage with Barbara Robertson in "Garden."

Ayckbourn Plays Raise the Curtain On New Chicago

By BRUCE WEBER

CHICAGO, Feb. 11 — It was a year and a half ago that Robert Falls, the artistic director of the Goodman Theater here, first read "House" and "Garden," the twin plays by the prolific British playwright Alan Ayckbourn that are meant to be performed simultaneously by the same cast.

Critic's Notebook

Part lunatic farce, part melancholy comedy about marriage and family, the plays are set on an English estate — one in the house, the other in the garden — and fit together like an animated jigsaw puzzle. They break for intermission at the same time, and the final curtains come down together. They take place concurrently in a single day with the same teeming nest of

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WRITERS ON WRITING

Continued From Page B1

experimental form, and thus more actively committed to breaking patterns.)

First, I noticed how good the beginnings of most of the novels were. Drama, conflict, interesting characters, memorable gestures, snappy dialogue, significant themes: they were all there. Reading the initial pages, I would swing between delight and despair. How on earth would I judge among all these great works?

But after the first 50 pages or so, in many novels there was a downhill rush. (Was this because the initial energy was difficult to maintain? Or because — particularly in the case of first-time writers — the beginning had been workshopped and polished many times, but not the later portions? Or because the novel was sold on the strength of its first few chapters, after which the writer slackened off and the editor didn't care?)

The unsuccessful novel reminds me of a top that has been spinning for a while. One can see the chapters begin to wander in loose, uneven circles. Pacing grows shaky. Events are rushed through, so that they are a mere catalog of plot happenings, or scenes lose momentum as the narration gets snagged on an idea. Characterization becomes wobbly. Motives do not convince. Actions no longer reveal new dimensions of personality. Language falters. And finally the novel topples over into a contrived or commonplace ending and comes to a skittery halt.

The successful novel, on the other hand, has a shape much like a bell. We begin at the top of the bell, its tight curve. Every detail has purpose here: the way a woman tilts her head, the slant of light as one exits the subway, the repetition of a phrase. As soon as we have gained our bearings, we notice things beginning to open up, flaring outward the way a bell does.



Peter DaSilva for The New York Times

For Chitra Divakaruni, serving as a judge for the National Book Awards had some unexpected dividends.

John Gardner rightly insisted that a good novel must be a "vivid, continuous dream." To this I would add that there must be in it a sense of expansion. This may be through the development of new and layered narrative voices; it may be through a fuller realization of a stylistic device introduced earlier; through metaphor or symbol or a series of ironic juxtapositions; or through methods as yet unthought of.

The characters are layered, too. At any moment an incident might tug the top layer from person and reveal an astonishment of traits below. Lists, recipes, letters, e-mail, found poetry, excerpts from other writers, real and imaginary: any or all of these begin to add depth and texture, to create a pattern. The pattern may not be obvious or conventionally symmetrical. It may be held in tense balance, aesthetics battling with a desire to push the boundaries of the acceptable. It stirs us, maybe even disturbs us.

Still, we feel confident that the author has an overall design in mind, a large and generous design, the way the first bell maker must have had: a three-dimensional design, with enough space inside it to create resonance and allow its melody (perhaps a cacophonic melody) to echo in the reader the way, it is said, that the tolling of a perfectly made bell creates a corresponding vibration inside the chest of each listener.

It is this resonance, finally, that separates the successful novel from the others. The cast of major characters may be small or large, clowns or kings. The backdrop may be modest (a room) or ambitious (a continent). The vocabulary may be simple or flamboyant, literary or colloquial. The melody may be created by a single flute, or performed by an entire orchestra. But through it all, there's a sense that what we're seeing is not all that this is about.

The novel continuously opens into something larger than the specifics that form the boundaries of the story, though paradoxically these specifics must be concrete and convincing if we are to intimate a larger truth through them. Reading it becomes a three-dimensional experience, beginning in the book and ending in ourselves. Such a novel, while it is a mirror of, and a commentary on, a particular event, people, country or time, is on some level about each one of us, our central truth. Each successful novel gives a special flavor and shape — and tone — to this truth, but does not limit it to these. In this it is similar to the bell, which shapes sound without enclosing it.

The National Book Awards were finally done. Bursting with energy, resolve and newfound wisdom, I returned to my half-written novel the way a mother flies, after an enforced separation, to her darling child. But what was this? In place of the (bell-shaped, I am convinced) work of art I had lovingly constructed was — no, not a spinning top, but a limp, wrinkled, balloon out of which air was leaking even as I watched. (Dare I introduce, so late in the essay, a new analogy? I do it to underline the fact that there's always a new way in which one can mess up a novel.)

I've now gone back to the beginning of my novel for an extensive rewrite. I'm not sure how well I'll be able to use the vision I gained in shaping my work. There's a great gap, after all, between understanding and practice. But I'm finding the process — after the initial pain involved in discarding almost 200 pages — strangely satisfying. Pinned to the wall by my writing desk is a modified quote from Browning:

Ah, but a girl's reach should
exceed her grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?

Writers on Writing

This article is part of a series in which writers explore literary themes. Previous contributions, including essays by John Updike, E. L. Doctorow, Ed McBain, Annie Proulx, Jamaica Kincaid, Saul Bellow and others, can be found with this article at The New York Times on the Web:

www.nytimes.com/arts

The Big Chill



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

AS the terrestrial world is warming up, the literary one is cooling down. A century ago, books engaged the heart as well as the mind, and when we read, emotion seized us, took us over, broke us down. Who could sit dry-eyed through the death of Père Goriot? Who was unmoved at Anna Karenina's despair? But things have changed, and this deep engagement is now rare. Passion is largely absent from our books: an icy chill has crept across the writer's landscape.

If we look at the novels that receive the greatest attention today, the most frowning and serious consideration from critics and the most coveted places on prize lists, we'll find powerful intellect, great themes, technical skill and psychological complexity. What we seldom find is powerful feeling as a driving force. The characters in these books often seem stunned and affectless, emotionally absent. This absence makes emotional participation difficult for the reader. Passion in the character is what elicits compassion in the observer; it's hard to feel much for someone who feels nothing. In many of these books we may not find characters we can even like, let alone ones we can love.

At the end of these novels we may feel stunned, we may feel muted sadness, or even a sense of despair, but we won't feel powerful emotion flooding through us, reminding us of our own vulnerabilities, our own anguish. Instead, we'll find coolness and detachment: in the Robert Stone story "Helping," for example, a character muses: "He thought of his own tears as childish and excremental. He stifled whatever it was that had started them." This notion — of tears as shaming, infantile and disgusting, emotion as something to be stifled — informs much of contemporary literature, and has produced a strange post-passionate landscape, sere and bleak.

The shift from warm to cold is quite recent. For the last 2,000 years, throughout the long sweep of European literature and up until the late mid-20th century, great writing has required a powerful, passionate and compassionate response from the reader. Emotion has been a driving force. Think of Oedipus and Achilles, Lear and Othello, Jane Eyre and David Copperfield and Catherine Barkley. What changed? What brought about the cooling down?

One influence, of course, is Freud, who made us so self-conscious about our emotions. Before Freud, our feelings belonged to us. They were powerful, violent, necessary, but private. They were ours. Freud took our feelings over and taught us to analyze them, which turned us into the objects of our own dissection. The idea of passionate engagement came to seem naïve and foolish as we moved from an innocent, 19th-century, pre-Freudian childhood to a 20th-century adulthood, detached and analytical. Other factors in this change are the violence of our century and the rise of the technology that has recorded it. The news media have delivered more vivid horror — both real and fictional — than we can absorb, and out of self-protection from this onslaught, we tend toward disengagement.

Then there's our modern notion of masculinity, and our expectations of male characters in literature. For centuries, our heroes had powerful emotional responses: Achilles, that most macho of men, wept for three days after the death of Patroclus. Men were moved all the time; deep feeling signified depth of character. But now we don't want our heroes weeping, because weeping signifies weakness. Depth of character these days is more often shown by restraint. A modern hero may experience feeling, he might even struggle to experience it, but he seldom gives way to it.

The writers we praise bear this out: Richard Ford, Cormac McCarthy, Don DeLillo, Martin Amis, Paul Auster, David Gates and, of course, Stone himself. By and large they prefer the cold end of the emotional spectrum, choosing alienation and irony, disaffection and distance, over passion and tenderness, engagement, anguish or rapture. And since men still make most of the literary rules, the women writers who receive the most attention are the ones who follow these rules of disengagement: Joyce Carol Oates, A. M. Homes, Kathryn Harrison and Lorrie Moore, for example. The Brontës and Jane Austen, who wrote exclusively about women and the world of the emotions, would have a hard time today making it out of the "women's fiction" category.

The critics play a part as well. During the 20th century, literary criticism aspired increasingly to be a science. Its terminology became dry, esoteric and professional, deliberately stripped of the subjective language of feelings. This makes the emotional register increasingly difficult to describe, let alone evaluate, but critics would rather not evaluate emotion, since it is largely outside the bounds of scientific observation. What they prefer to focus on — and praise — are books that engage the intellect, books that can be explicated on the cerebral level alone. The result is that we lose from critical discourse the whole turbulent landscape of feeling.

An elegant example of the paradigm shift from warm to cold is Jane Smiley's novel "A Thousand Acres." The book, which draws its plot from Shakespeare's "King Lear," was widely acclaimed, and rightly so. It's a highly accomplished work, boldly conceived and brilliantly achieved. It's a brave move to ask deliberately for comparisons between your own work and Shakespeare's, and Smiley's writing is so powerful and her vision so large that, for the most part, she pulls it off. What's interesting, however, is the difference in the emotional dynamics between the two works: Smiley's book lacks much of the humanity that makes "Lear" so powerful. Where Lear ultimately reveals himself to be, instead of an arrogant and tyrannical ruler, a humble and passionately devoted father, Smiley's farmer turns out to be not only an arrogant tyrant but also a ruthless and incestuous child molester. All three of his daughters are icy-hearted and vengeful. We can sympathize with none of Smiley's characters — but we're not meant to. Her world is illuminated not by sympathy, but by the arctic dazzle of her intelligence.

Not all contemporary writers, of course, subscribe to this cool post-passionate code. But when emotionally engaging fiction does appear, reviewers seem to have difficulty in even discussing it. Sue Miller, a serious writer who focuses on the world of the family, received an excellent review in this publication for her novel "While I Was Gone." The reviewer seemed hard put, however, to explain what was important about the book, or what it was, exactly, that he liked. He recounted the plot, praised Miller's handling of religious faith and called the book "beautiful and frightening."

But why is it beautiful and frightening? The protagonist, Jo, is a complex and intelligent woman in the middle of her life, deeply absorbed by her three daughters, her job as a veterinarian and her husband, Daniel, a minister. Deftly and lucidly, Miller builds up a whole world. She draws us into this woman's sensibility, her meditations, her full but rather quiet life. Miller vividly evokes the sense of family, its complexity and awkwardness, its closeness and dissonance. Then she begins to disturb us, first with a series of revelations about Jo's past, then with Jo's horrifying acts. What Jo actually does is rather minor on the grand scale of good and evil — all she does is plan an affair — but it's horrifying to us, because we've become so connected to her world that we've come to believe in the value of what she's risking.

WHAT makes Miller's work so interesting and troubling — and so unfashionable — is the emotional demands it makes upon the reader. The success of her work depends upon our commitment. She charges us with full engagement, then holds us to account. We must invest in her characters and feel compassion and sympathy for them. We're allowed no distance, no irony or judgment. We have no choice but to experience these things as though they were happening to us.

Faulkner said once that writing is about "the human heart in conflict with itself." Few writers today would describe their work this way; the human heart would hardly be mentioned now. Contemporary attention goes to the books that are shocking, clever, brash, ironic, but not heart-wrenching. But we haven't actually changed much in 2,000 years. We still have hearts; they still govern our lives. We still inhabit the world of the emotions, whatever we pretend. We still need books that explore and illuminate this world. Human love still drives us; we still need it as the moving force in what we read. We still need compassion, deepened understanding, the moment that creates the connective tissue of humanity between reader and character. Perhaps in the new century we'll rediscover it. □

Roxana Robinson's latest book is the novel "This Is My Daughter."

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"... a thousand graceful subtleties"
Rhetoric in Poetry
of Robinson Jeffers
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Chapter Four

Logos:
Nature as Scene and Agent

A fire a few years before had skinned the hills' faces,
And nature played one of her beautiful tricks;
She planted them solidly with purple lupine, sheets of pure blossom
From peak to base, so that they stood like archangels
Above the shadow in the canyon, their purple shoulders
In the blue sky.

—"The Love and the Hate"

When writing about the poetry of Robinson Jeffers, critics often recognize that much of his work naturally divides into two opposing categories. Some of the time, the words used to define these categories also describe traditional literary genres: the terms narrative and lyric come to mind. But sometimes critics seize instead on differences in length, and name the categories accordingly: the long poems and the short poems. Occasionally critics even argue that Jeffers was working in a new genre or creating a new perspective on an older one. Patrick Murphy uses the term "verse novel" to describe some of Jeffers longer works; Frederic Carpenter uses the term "meditative lyric" to describe many of the shorter ones (*Jeffers* 97). Perhaps the fact that critics find themselves using their own creative variations of opposing terms marks the uniqueness of the poetry Jeffers created.

Carving up Jeffers's work in this way seems useful enough and acknowledges an obvious division. And, since a rose is a rose, even though the resulting taxonomies do not meet with universal critical accord, no one disagrees which poems fit into the oppos-

ing groups howsoever they are named. *The Women at Point Sur*, originally almost two hundred pages of narrative verse complicated by plot twists and sinister human motivations, would never be considered a "short poem" or a "lyric." Similarly, "The Place for No Story" [1932], eleven lines of moody wonder set along a narrow strip of central California coast, could never be included in the same category as Jeffers's famous "narrative" poems, poems that often seethe with human tragedy and incomprehensible suffering in the midst of an indifferent cosmos. A poem like "Hungerfield," a narrative framed, as we have seen, by an elegy, resists such facile classification. And that resistance leads me to an important point.

Classifying Jeffers's poems inevitably brings critics to the unproductive (because ultimately unanswerable) question of whether Jeffers was a better lyrical poet or a better narrative poet, almost as if two different Robinson Jefferses existed, each writing a different kind of poem. The irony is that for many readers some version of this bifurcated Jeffers must almost seem real. Anthology publications whose editors usually acknowledge that Jeffers wrote long, narrative poems rarely include excerpts from them, let alone the text of an entire Jeffers narrative. Readers of these collections savor only the "lyrical" Jeffers, the melancholy voice from "Il Penseroso" now reinvented as the observer of natural life in and around the Monterey Peninsula. Professional critics, on the other hand, spend most of their time delving into the complications of the longer works, emphasizing the inhumanist Jeffers, the doomsaying Cassandra foretelling the fall of every human institution.

In fact, we should remember that one Robinson Jeffers penned both types of poems, that when we emphasize the undoubted differences between them, we overlook the important similarities that they share, similarities that reflect in their own subtle ways a single sensibility. One of the best ways to appreciate this fact is to ignore the critics and the usual anthology collections and for the moment turn instead to two Robinson Jeffers picture books, *Jeffers Country* [1971], a marriage of Jeffers's verse to the black and white photographs of Horace Lyon, and *Not Man Apart* [1965], a Sierra Club book of color and black and white photographs glossed by Jeffers's poetry. A common aim of both volumes is celebrating the

power and beauty of the Pacific coast through the art of the lens and through the words of the poet who made this landscape his own.

Horace and Edna Lyon originally conceived of *Jeffers Country* in 1935 when they were struck "by the thought that admirers of Robinson Jeffers' verse . . . would have an enhanced appreciation of his work if they could see images of the country in which so much of it centered" (7). In 1938, Robinson and Una both contributed forewords for the book, and Una even made suggestions about lines of verse to be included. But various publication plans came to nothing until Scrimshaw Press revived the project in 1971, almost a decade after Jeffers died. Between its covers, readers will find in *Jeffers Country* evocative Lyon photographs of ocean breakers spraying the rocky coast, a Pacific fog bank creeping stealthily across a headland, livestock grazing within a chaparral canyon, and a freshwater creek spreading wide as it reaches its ocean goal. Each photograph illustrates a selection from Jeffers's verse, significantly selections drawn from poems representative of both Jeffers's longer poems and his shorter ones. Segments from *The Women at Point Sur* and "The Loving Shepherdess" [1929], for example, appear alongside shorter works like "Return" [1935] and "Ocean" [1928]. The preponderance of lines, I should say, are culled from the longer works.

Not Man Apart follows the same kind of pattern, featuring the photographs of Ansel Adams, Morley Baer, Cole and Edward Weston, and others. In fact, the book even includes the 1938 foreword Jeffers had originally penned for his collaboration with Lyon. (Though conceived far earlier, remember that *Jeffers Country* finally appeared six years after the publication of *Not Man Apart*.) The idea was to celebrate the country itself, "its meaning," says David Brower in his preface, "reinforced by Jeffers" (26). The poetry here comes mostly from shorter works like "The Answer" [1937] and "November Surf" [1932], but lines from longer works like "Tamar" and "Solstice" [1935] fill out a significant portion of the volume.

Although neither book was meant to do so, both stand as useful reminders of that which unites virtually all of Robinson Jeffers's best work: the sense of awe for a living landscape. By printing first-rate photographs of Jeffers Country and by picking out lines

from his longer verse and from the shorter poems (some of these printed whole), *Not Man Apart* and *Jeffers Country* emphasize for us what we always knew and what we often take for granted: that Jeffers made use of this landscape—or perhaps it made use of him—in all of his best work, remaking its dynamism in poetry. In doing so, he not only used that landscape as setting, he personified it, transforming scene into a divine agent that acts for its own inexplicable reasons (or for no reason at all?) in all of his most successful poetry—including the short, "lyric" verses. Making landscape an agent, however, requires its own logic, its own principles of reasonable combination. In the case of Jeffers's poems—whether one speaks of the short or the long ones—that logic is very often the logic of narrative.

Jeffers himself presented a version of this thesis in Part II of his poem "Apology for Bad Dreams":

> This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places,
> (The quiet ones ask for quieter suffering: but here the granite cliff the gaunt cypresses crown
> Demands what victim? The dykes of red lava and black what Titan? The hills like pointed flames
> Beyond Soberanes, the terrible peaks of the bare hills under the sun, what immolation?)
> This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places: and like the passionate spirit of humanity
> Pain for its bread: God's many victims', the painful deaths, the horrible transfigurements. . . . (*Collected Poetry* 1: 209)

In this *ars poetica*, Jeffers presents an important motivation for his writing, creating imagined victims that will stand in his place to fulfill the demands of that violent and beautiful landscape. By responding to that demand, he transforms that landscape into a divine spirit: forsaken forever is the notion of nature as a neutral expanse of space and time benignly surrounding humanity; it becomes instead the manifestation of an inscrutable god who demands humanity's ritual suffering, itself a reflection of the suffering of that same self-torturing god.

Depicting the transfiguration of a once benign landscape into spirit and depicting how that now-transfigured spirit acts upon human beings requires the scope of narrative with its emphasis on action and change, even if sometimes the narrative is compressed into a shorter form. Given that in the foreword to the *Selected Poetry* Jeffers sees narrative as an antidote to the "eccentric" poetry of his contemporaries (xiv), and given that in "Apology for Bad Dreams" Jeffers offers another important reason for choosing to write narrative poetry—to depict the tragedies demanded by the spirit of the landscape he inhabits—then why should readers forget the importance of that narrative impulse when Jeffers chooses shorter forms? In fact, only through some form of narrative can Jeffers hope to depict what he sees as the truth of nature's dynamism, its constant activity: "God," says the Reverend Barclay in *The Women at Point Sur*, "thinks through action / And all this show is God's brain, the water yonder, / The coast hills, thinking the thing out to conclusion" (*CP* 1: 254). This story of "god thinking" is patterned on a structural principle common to much of Jeffers's poetry. Remember that John Crowe Ransom claimed that every poem must have a structure from which its argument "depends." I believe that Jeffers's verses conform to that principle most often when they conform to the requirements of dramatic narrative, which include not only action and scene, but agency and motivation as well. It was Jeffers's unique genius to see how the California landscape could function as both scene and agent in the stories he wished to tell.

The words *scene* and *agent* have become familiar as two of the five terms defining Kenneth Burke's "pentad," a terministic screen by which human motivations may be probed. "Any complete statement about motives," writes Burke in his *A Grammar of Motives*, "will offer *some kind* of answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)" (x). Burke shows how these five terms may be used to investigate any "dramatistic" situation and he therefore treats even language and thought as modes of action (xvi). The advantage of this perspective is that it allows Burke to investigate any mode of human symbolic behavior from the writing of literature to the reading of philosophy within a common framework and to make comparisons and draw out significant differences.

Considered by themselves, these terms merely look like a slightly less lucid version of the familiar reporters' questions derived from the interrogatives of who, what, when, where, and why.

hind / The screen of the world for another audience." The personification of these natural phenomena makes them agents in nature's drama, their motivations unknown and, more to the point, unknowable. The initial example of the narrator (whose testimony evokes the "cathedral-feeling" so cherished by William Everson) and the "rifts in the screen of the world" offer the healing possibility of rapprochement between humanity and these personified agents, however imperfectly it may be achieved. It also extends the chronology of the poem into the future by asking the audience not only to infer the state of the scene before the poem opens, but also by asking them to reflect upon a conflict stretching before them. Readers must now decide whether to continue rehearsing humanity's solipsistic drama and accept the idea that "we had not been meant to see," or to follow the example of the narrator who has already stepped behind the arras to become an agent in a different, bolder drama. Either way, the decision here of the narrator to tell of the inhuman quiet surrounding an evening ebb tide attests to the importance he attaches to the values he finds immanent within nature, a decision that involves his audience in completing the chronological structure of his narrative.

Other Jeffers poems rely on similar types of narrative structures, for example works like "Fog" [1925], "Autumn Evening" [1925] and especially the late poem "Vulture." Even a poem like "The Place for No Story"—despite a title that aggressively rejects any conventional notion of narrative description—seems to me susceptible to analysis as a narrative partly structured by the refiguration of scene into agent. Its eleven lines may represent the most compact of all of Jeffers's "narrative" verse:

> The coast hills at Sovranes Creek;
> No trees, but dark scant pasture drawn thin
> Over rock shaped like flame;
> The old ocean at the land's foot, the vast
> Gray extension beyond the long white violence;
> A herd of cows and the bull
> Far distant, hardly apparent up the dark slope;
> And the gray air haunted with hawks:
> This place is the noblest thing I have ever seen. No imaginable
> Human presence here could do anything
> But dilute the lonely self-watchful passion. (*CP* 2: 157)

For me, "The Place for No Story" evokes even more solemnly than "Evening Ebb" Everson's cathedral feeling: the natural scene of this poem feels just as still and just as hushed as the most magnificent and imposing house of worship. In other words, the mode is lyrical not narrative, that is, except for the closing of the poem. Here the individual elements of the scene—hills, creek, rock, ocean, and hawks—coalesce into a single agent, responsible for the "lonely self-watchful passion" whose presence the poet feels. That presence oversees this scene just as clearly as does the eagle in "Fire on the Hills," and once again, as scene transfigures into agent, the lyrical mode extends toward the boundary of narrative.[4]

Appreciating how Jeffers's long and short poems share a narrative strategy—symbolizing and deifying the landscape by turning scene into agent—banishes the specter of the bifurcated Jeffers forever. When we think of poetry today, thanks partly to the legacy of Modernism, we tend to think in terms of lyrics. Jeffers's short poems are certainly lyrical, as are broad passages contained within his longer, often more ambitious works. But Jeffers's regard for the landscape, his appreciation for the spiritual quality of its beauty, and his wish to convince his readers of his awe of nature's ceaseless drama all led him to depict nature as an indomitable influence. This wish drove his poetry—of whatever length— towards narrative in order to portray the dynamic power of that influence.

In a way, then, Horace Lyon and David Brower got it right. They never took their eye off Jeffers country when matching photograph and verse, and so their books do not bother to argue that Jeffers was a tragic poet, or a lyrical poet, or, I must admit, a narrative poet. These handsome volumes eloquently argue that it may be best to regard him simply as a poet in the classical sense, as a "maker" of stories in verse. What links these stories of whatever length together is the symbolic and rhetorical potential of portraying the landscape as an agent, for depicting nature's beautiful cyclic processes of destruction and renewal, and for presenting the fact that these processes impinge on the acts of human beings. Burke might call Jeffers's poems "representative anecdotes" (59–60), stories that not only depict the kind of cosmos in

which Jeffers thought he lived but also stories that illustrate the inhumanist attitude that best serves men and women who want to appreciate it.

Notes

1 By focusing on the narrative structures that I see as a common element in both Jeffers's long and short poems, I do not mean to imply that other structures are not present as well. The archetypal progression of life, death, and rebirth lends much of Jeffers's poetry structure and so does the Oedipal struggle between father and son. But here, I wish instead to emphasize common narrative elements that while more easily discerned when we read the longer works, seem to be little understood as structural elements in the shorter ones. And after all, even if one wishes to emphasize the archetypal or Freudian in Jeffers, are these too not based on narrative, iterable stories by which we define our place within the world?

2 Robert Brophy has published a study of Shelley's "Cenci" and Jeffers's "Tamar," wherein he argues that both poets use incest as a "structure-shattering symbol," as a means by which to question conventional human values. The chief biblical reference (there are four references to the name "Tamar" in the *Old Testament*) is Samuel 2.13 and the "Crime of Amnon," a son of David who overpowers his sister Tamar to satisfy his desire for her. Jeffers, of course, turns the story inside out, making his Tamar assert her will when she seduces her brother.

3 Without implying undue influence on this point, it is interesting to note that Jeffers read Hardy for pleasure and aesthetic enjoyment (*Letters* 272–73), and over the years, he read ten Hardy works aloud to his sons (Bennett 148). Jeffers's regard for Hardy is also recorded in the stone walls of the Tor House dining room where Jeffers carved the date of Hardy's death, January 11, 1928. For a detailed analysis of Hardy's narrative commentary, see Dorothy Van Ghent, "*On Tess of the d'Urbervilles.*"

4 For those who may think I am stretching a point about the narrative elements of these poems, I would point out that rhetorician Walter Fisher, in *Human Communication as Narration*, has argued that all forms of symbolic action "may be seen as stories, interpretations of things in sequences" (24) partly because, he maintains, human beings are inherently storytellers who have a natural capacity to recognize the coherence and

Son of Seven-Per-Cent

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End Horror:
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son, M.D.
Meyer. 222 pp.

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his talent for disguising himself, and the mystery is such a muddle that he resorts more than once to three pipes of tobacco before proceeding.

With a clever combination of personalities, localities, and incongruities, Dr. Watson and Mr. Meyer recreate the colorful, eccentric world of Victorian London. For the most part, we can trust Dr. Watson's observation and memory, even though he seems overly harsh on Oscar Wilde, who is here depicted on the day after the Marquess of Queensberry made his ruinous allegation about Wilde's sexual preference. As in other Sherlock Holmes stories, Watson is slightly pedantic and bumbling, and his purple prose has lost none of its heaviness. British readers doubted the authenticity of *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* because of Watson's use of "Americanisms"; Meyer here takes pains to explain that Watson's trip to San Francisco between 1883 and 1886 irremediably affected his vocabulary. So much for explanation, but there are times when the narrator's archness sounds more like a contemporary imitation than the good doctor who told the earlier, unquestionably authentic Sherlock Holmes tales.

The West End Horror is a delectable tale about two mysterious murders and the horrible consequences that might have arisen had Sherlock Holmes not been called in to investigate them. There is enough fun and excitement in the book to please all but the most devout Sherlockians. It may not be authentic, but it is a real thriller. □



Poetry

Soul Claiming
by Jody Aliesan, drawings by Julie King. 65 pp. Mulch Press, $6; paper, $3.50

Among the first offerings of the newly established Mulch Press at Northampton, Massachusetts, the poems of Jody Aliesan strike me as the freshest and generally most interesting, though she is (to judge by her photo) still a very young woman.

> Because you love it, babe
> I hate the sea.
> The noise of surf seething,
> slapping rocks
> sets my jaw
> and the spray makes all my hairs
> writhe and stand.

Here are at least the beginnings of an original, personal voice, moving common speech toward lyrical distinction. Notice the avoidance of adjectives, a rarity these (or any) days, especially with young poets. Notice the rhythmical clarity and cleanness of the alternating long and short lines. I don't know if Aliesan has studied H.D., but I wouldn't be surprised.

> My nipples change like the moon.
> Since I heard tides in your earshell
> somewhere in my blood the sea moves.
>
> Tonight the rain smells of oysters.
> I roll a pearl with my tongue.
>
> How long before you touched me
> did I feel your hands?

Sexual feeling without sexual display: that isn't easy. Nor is the expression of fear without the rhetoric of fear:

> The book of police photographs
> passed around at the meeting on rape:
> I didn't close it fast enough,
> the dead women float on my retina,
> I see them on this paper
> like watermarks . . .

"On *this* paper," she says—as skillful a way to turn the poem directly toward us, the readers, as any I have seen.

What Aliesan lacks, predictably, is the intellectual depth to give her poems the cultural resonance that art requires. A poem must not only survive in time, it must be a part of time, an echo of the perdurable ideas. This will come to Aliesan, I think, or at any rate she has a good deal better chance than most to attain it, and her work in the future will be something worth waiting for. Meanwhile her first book, decorated with exquisite drawings by Julie King, is a fine beginning and a very good book in itself.

—Hayden Carruth

Interview with rtha Foley

Villiam Jaspersohn

eorge Bernard Shaw used to call her "that woman in America," but for almost thirty-five years, Martha Foley has been better known as the editor of the annual Best American Short Stories *collections. Born in and educated at Boston Girls' Latin School, Miss Foley studies at Boston University in 1919, in her sophomore soapbox for socialism and women's rights. ("I've been a troublemaker," she says.) Soon afterward, she er literary career as a journalist, working for a number r newspapers as a reporter, copy editor, and foreign ondent until 1933. In Paris, in the late Twenties, she ted short stories to the influential magazine,* transition, *1931, she and Whit Burnett founded* Story *magazine in*

g her eleven years as co-editor of Story, *Miss Foley d over a thousand short stories, including first works am Saroyan, John Cheever, J. D. Salinger, Nelson Alseph Heller, and Norman Mailer. In 1941, she became 's premiere anthologist, succeeding Edward J. O'Brien r of* Best American Short Stories. *Her fiction and articles peared in numerous magazines, and she has taught at ia University.*

Foley now lives outside Amherst, Massachusetts, in a apboard house, on a quiet, tree-lined street. Her living ouses the tools of her trade: a typing table with a new typewriter on it, some low shelves containing books, lders, index cards, and, of course, several stacks of the 200 different magazines she reads each month in search est. "Will you take a stack home with you?" she asked id.

Foley doesn't tell her age anymore, but she shows no slackening her pace. Last year, along with the 1976 lume, she edited a Bicentennial anthology, 200 Years of merican Short Stories, *and this year, in between reading 1977* Best, *she is writing her memoirs of her years with r W. W. Norton. She's a warm, vigorous woman, and a l storyteller in her own right.*



William Jaspersohn

Foley

Have you always had a love affair with the short story?
Yes, always. My first short story was published in the school magazine when I was eleven years old.
Do you remember the first things you read that attracted yo to literature, to the short story, specifically?
Well, I'm a compulsive reader. In fact, as a child, I used wish I could be cast away on a desert island with all t in the world, and nobody to say, "Go out and play [Laughs.] I remember one of the greatest blows in m life came when I was about eight. My parents w ill at the time, and I was boarding with some pe intensely. I had read almost all of Dickens, a a snowy winter day when I had no school, wonderful!" I'd been saving the last story Dickens to read. I started out happily . . . the story was? *The Mystery of Edwin Dr* it wasn't finished! It was one of the tra
Did you ever guess when you left c someday be editing an anthology Short Stories"?
No. I always wanted to be a w into newspaper work, becau to writing I could earn my
How did you come to be t
Well, the founding editor, Whit's and my stories in *tr* we became friends. Then *Story* magazine, I was sta and I asked Edward, "W something happens to yo here to take care of it." I know. Then, in 1941, E the Blitz—it was very tra both Whit and I were as *Best*. Whit said he didn' magazines, so I did it a
Did you welcome the jo
No, I didn't. I was more I had no chance to do never liked the word "b the "best" is. Then, I h job. I was scared stiff. my own writing, what fe seem so insignificant c always worry people wi "So she's the person wh *Stories*!" So I have a te writing now.
What kind of schedule d editing the "Best"?
I don't think I have a sc reading between two and at night, so I get up, and there are times when I g Then I get so worried, I No, I'm afraid I'm a ten reading.
But can you discuss the s the best stories?
I keep a card file, and th cards, and the stories I th cards. Then, at the end o reread the stories, and ch story change, but that's m category, a blue card.
How do you know when y short story? What kind of
Well, it's a cliché, but chil overcome with a sensation

seems genuinely unaware of how totally inauthentic and false it makes her characters in their every expression of love, affection, fun, humor, distaste, intellectual curiosity, vanity, or any other passion. She claims her paradise is filled with these experiences; I submit that as a puritan she has great distaste for such pleasures and is quite content to reduce them all to this puling fraudulence the better to concentrate on the puritan's *only* genuine interest: the all-absorbing matter of good social conduct and the attendant obsession with guilt.

The single exception to the unremitting vapidity is revealing: Luciente (with Connie in tow) encounters an old female lover named (naturaliy) Diana. To our amazement, Diana actually speaks like a real person. I suspect this happens because in Piercy's eyes only a lesbian is sufficiently uncompromised by the sexist system, sufficiently guiltless, to escape her otherwise universal wet blanket of sententious piety and moralistic loathing for the threat of authentic human emotions and needs. Genuine feeling, the puritan is convinced, must be made false to keep it innocent, while puritanical doubt, on the other hand, remains what Mencken called it: the terrible suspicion that somebody, somewhere, may be having a good time. Piercy uses all her very real powers as a writer to ensure that none of her readers will be found in this latter category.

I have almost forgotten Connie. Without irony, the question of whether her visions are real or hallucinatory has no interest. She is forced to submit to monstrous brain surgery in the hospital, her trips to Mattapoisett are snuffed out, and she is relegated to the back wards. Her perfect score as a victim is thus maintained.

Forgive my callousness. Piercy is a gifted naturalist, and writes with real

the patient. Yet the budget for Neurological Diseases and Stroke was reduced by the administration. Fortunately, Congress again insisted that this budget be increased.

All Americans would rejoice if a cure for cancer, the second leading cause of death in America, were found or, better yet, if a method of preventing the disease were discovered. Unquestionably, the recommended effort to search vigorously for the cause of this hideous disease is highly commendable. But we also need, now more than ever, to push forward in our studies of heart disease, which are beginning to show promising clues to underlying mechanisms. And yet the administration's budget of $195.4-million for the National Heart and Lung Institute was at the same level as the appropriation for fiscal 1971. The budget therefore did not accommodate for a cost-of-living increase; it would not even have allowed the maintenance of the present level of research activity. Moreover, $5-million of it was earmarked for new research in sickle-cell anemia. Once again, Congress wisely increased this item in the budget to $232-million.

The curtailment of research in any health field is difficult to justify, but it is especially puzzling in the field of heart disease, since this is *the* leading cause of death in America. Heart disease accounts for more than one million deaths annually—more than half of all deaths—many during the most productive years of life. Every ninety seconds someone — a relative, coworker, friend, or acquaintance—dies needlessly from heart disease. With adequate support for research in this field, it is entirely possible that we could extend the lives of fifty million Americans who are currently doomed to die prematurely from heart disease. About 1.4 million Americans have already had one or more heart attacks, and each year more than 125,000 people below the age of sixty-five die of heart attacks. Each year, too, people below the age of sixty-five waste 141 million days because of cardiovascular and pulmonary illness, and those sixty-five and above waste an additional 110 million days. The resultant loss to the national economy is staggering.

These figures, along with a review of the advances made during the past decade in prevention and treatment of heart disease, make it difficult to understand or justify what amounts to an actual reduction in support of research and training in cardiovascular disease. Risk factors for premature heart attacks have been identified and documented, and this information is now ready to be disseminated to the population at large. Although we have not yet discovered cures for many of the underlying disorders, we are now able to correct surgically certain congenital malformations of the heart and to relieve some forms of acquired heart disease by coronary arterial surgery. We have also developed pacemakers, artificial heart valves, prosthetic vascular grafts, and cardiac assistors, which, along with such new drugs as the anti-hypertensive agents, and better methods of treatment for cardiogenic shock, have increased not only the *length* but also the *quality* of life for patients with heart disease. The thousands of patients alive and productive today—who would have been dead a number of years ago but for the products of cardiovascular research—testify to the *practical* dividends from this investment.



"Who put the buttermilk in the Water Pik?"

Just as ill-advised as the curtailment of funds for research is any reduction in support of medical education and training, especially in light of our current serious deficit in health manpower. The education of more and better-trained doctors, nurses, and other allied health professionals will obviously cost money. Yet, both fellowships and training grants for graduate level training are suffering serious cuts from 1970 to 1972. Some 440 *fewer* researchers and physicians of advanced training will be available at the end of 1972 than would have been available had the fellowship funding remained at the 1970 level. Nor is the decrease in fellowship support offset by an increase in support available through training grants to specialty teachers; rather the reduction is substantial here too.

All those involved in the operation of a medical school, both professional and lay persons, are acutely aware of the ever-escalating costs of training well-qualified medical practitioners, much of which can be attributed to general inflation. Almost every medical school in the country is dependent on alumni support, not only to build new facilities and equip them suitably but to establish what, in the best judgment available, is thought to be a balanced portfolio of stocks and bonds. As we all know, such portfolios have not provided capital gains or reasonable dividends during the past several years. It will take some time, even if the economy recovers with miraculous speed, for these investments once again to

(Continued on page 69)

Language



—Bettmann Archive

"The world will little note nor long remember what we say here . . ."

The Language of Statesmen

by LOUIS J. HALLE

If we have in our minds a sharper distinction between poetry and prose than exists in fact, it is because we are misled by the difference between the appearance on paper of what is presented as the one and what as the other. At its best, prose has always verged on poetry, and in our own day especially, what is presented as poetry may be utterly prosaic. A composition that appears as prose may, in fact, represent poetry better than another that appears as poetry. No one questions that the following is poetry, although cast in the typographic form of prose:

> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. . . .

If, then, we rid our minds of a categorical distinction based on superficial form only, we are in a position to resolve a common paradox pertaining to the language of statesmanship.

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is not notable for the substance of what is said in it, which is commonplace. Why, then, should it rank among the greatest utterances of statesmanship? Why should it remain unforgettable when utterances of other American Presidents, far richer in content, have been quickly forgotten? The answer is that, like the Twenty-third Psalm, it is a poem.

To appreciate this, one must read the Address aloud, even if soundlessly, as an actor reads Shakespeare to himself. The Twenty-third Psalm and the Gettysburg Address are poems not so much on account of any images they contain as on account of their music: their rhythms, their beat, the echo of their phrases, the symmetry of passages that rise, each from the level of its beginning only to return to it again, as a passage in music takes flight from the keynote only to conclude, like a bird, by coming to rest on it again.

The theme of the Address is dedication, the dedication of a national cemetery, and the word "dedicate" is repeated like an incantation, gaining in power and meaning at each repetition.

"The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." This has equilibrium as well as rhythm, for it is statement and response.

The large rhythm of the phrases in the Twenty-third Psalm tends to be triple:

> He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.
> He leadeth me beside the still waters.
> He restoreth my soul.

And again:

> Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.
> Thou anointest my head with oil.
> My cup runneth over.

The second set of diminishing phrases echoes the first. In the Gettysburg Address the rhythm is primarily duple, secondarily triple, the two rhythms setting each other off, as in so much of Bach's music.

Certainly Lincoln was not consciously practicing the principles of poetics when he composed what he re-

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LOUIS J. HALLE is professor of international relations at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva. His latest book, *Ideological Imagination,* will be published next month by Quadrangle.

ferred to as "a few appropriate remarks." Presumably, because his mind had been formed so largely on the King James Bible, his language fell into certain rhythms naturally. So one who does nothing but read sonnets will at last find himself speaking, naturally and unconsciously, in iambic pentameters.

Evidence of this tendency can be found in Lincoln's private letters, which have, in greater or lesser degree, the same elements of poetry as his public utterances. His letter of August 22, 1862, to Horace Greeley is an example. After its opening statement ("I have just read yours of the 19th, addressed to myself through the New York 'Tribune.'"), it goes on:

> If there be in it any statements or assumptions of fact which I may know to be erroneous, I do not, now and here, controvert them. If there be in it any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not, now and here, argue against them. If there be perceptible in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend whose heart I have always supposed to be right.

The rest of the letter (which at one point falls into a rhyme in keeping with the context) has the same rhythmical quality, the same beat. The style was the man, and therefore it was consistent throughout his writings.

Here is Walter Pater's famous description of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*:

> She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants: and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands.

William Butler Yeats, in his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, presents this as a poem, having broken it up into lines of varying length for the purpose.

The question arises whether the elements of poetry to which I have drawn attention have any fundamental importance, whether they are more than the mere ornamentation of language, the serious purpose of which is not to produce pleasant sounds but to say something.

Would it not be extraordinary if the judgment of the centuries on what constituted great utterance had consistently gone to mere ornament? Would it not be extraordinary if this judgment were wrong in preferring the Gettysburg Address, as empty of substance as it is, to the forgotten address of February 22, 1947, in which Secretary of State Marshall, aware that the United States faced one of the greatest crises in world history, summoned the American people to adopt a higher standpoint and a more magnanimous attitude than in the past, and on that basis at last to shoulder their world-wide responsibilities—but summoned them to do this in language that would hardly have served for an argument in favor of raising the postman's salary? Surely such judgment is not wrong, and poetry is not something that is merely added to the substance of language like the icing on a cake.

Having argued that what passes for prose may be poetry, I am tempted to make the further argument that language itself is poetry. At least there is a sense in which it is. Again I go to music for an analogy. The difference between noise, on the one hand, and musical tone, on the other, is that the former represents chaos and the latter order. Noise represents chaos because there is no regularity in the frequency of its vibrations, while musical tone represents order because its vibrations are rhythmical, occurring at fixed intervals. Language is logic, and logic, too, represents order as opposed to chaos. So language as logic is related to sound as music. Each is confined by rule, whether the rule of fixed intervals or the rule of logical sequence.

My premise is that all mankind in its present condition, its evolution uncompleted, is suspended between the aboriginal chaos, above which it has risen some way, and a higher order of which it still perceives only glimmers. Each one of us, at least with part of his being, aspires to the higher order and is drawn to it. Therefore, when we organize ourselves into societies, it is not only for the sake of greater physical security and economic advantage; it is also for the sake of realizing a nobler life than is possible for wild animals rooting in the woods. The Athenians of the fifth century B.C. did not give their devotion to Athens merely because it sheltered them behind a stone wall and allowed them to make a living. They did so as well—indeed they did so primarily—because it represented the order epitomized in the Parthenon, in the statues of Phidias, and in the religious dramas performed at the foot of the Acropolis. Certainly the patriotism that caused Americans to break with the England of George III was based on the vision of a higher life that seemed already on the way to realization in our new national society.

If this is so, then political leadership is failing in its role if it confines itself to the problems of physical security and the economy. Abraham Lincoln, even while exercising the leadership of one side in a civil war that was being fought with savage partisanship, rose above the partisanship to the vision of a national union, embracing both sides alike, that had to redeem a sordid past, the guilt of which both shared, and thereby to attain a state of grace. All this he made explicit, while the war was still being fought, in the poem that we know as his Second Inaugural Address. With little change, parts of it might be included among the Psalms.

In the present stage of our development, I say, we men are uneasily suspended between a sordid chaos and the sublime order of which we have intimations. It is the function of poets —as of painters, sculptors, and musicians—to catch these intimations and enshrine them for us in the forms of language or of the graphic arts. This is also the function of political leadership at the highest level, a function that can be discharged only in what an early poet called "wingéd words."

The elements of a higher order, enshrined in language by our greatest leaders, are not represented only by such attitudes as those of compassion and magnanimity that we may think of as constituting the content of the Second Inaugural Address. They are also represented by the rhythmic forms into which inspired language falls, by the shapes its phrases take, and by the harmony of its sounds. At the highest level, then, as perhaps at the lowest too, thought and language are inseparable. The greatest political leadership has always expressed itself in poetry—under whatever guise. That is why the Gettysburg Address, while saying so little, still says so much.

"The greatest political leadership has always expressed itself in poetry—under whatever guise."

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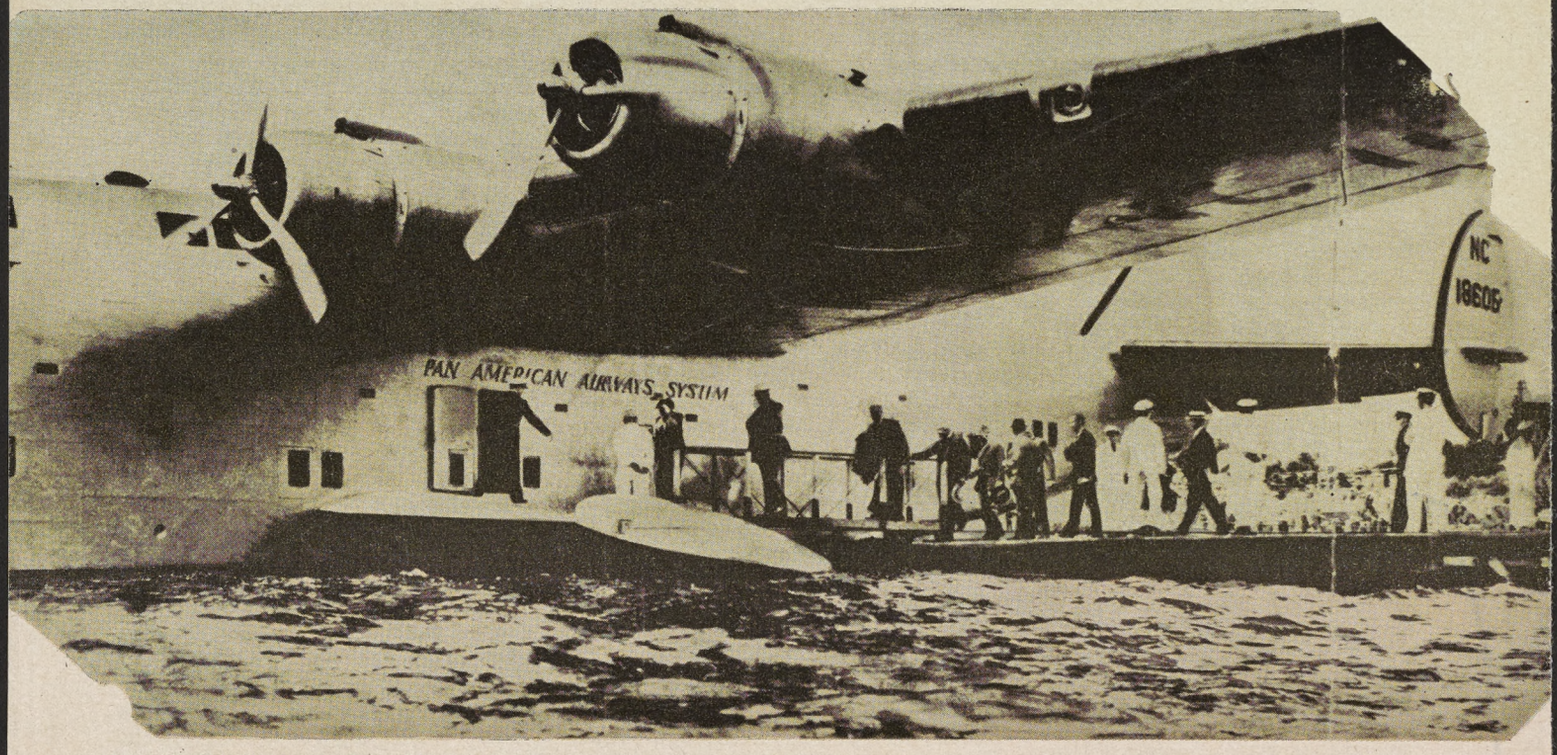

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Rabura

Excerpts from
"The Awful German Language"
by Mark Twain

The Germans have another kind of parenthesis, which they make by splitting a verb in two and putting half of it at the beginning of an exciting chapter and the other half at the end of it. Can any one conceive of anything more confusing than that? These things are called "separable verbs." The German grammar is blistered all over with separable verbs; and the wider the two portions of one of them are spread apart, the better the author of the crime is pleased with his performance. A favorite one is reiste ab--which means departed. Here is an example which I culled from a novel and reduced to English:

> "The trunks being now ready, he DE-after kissing his mother and sisters, and once more pressing to his bosom his adored Gretchen, who, dressed in simple white muslin, with a single tuberose in the ample folds of her rich brown hair, had tottered feebly down the stairs, still pale from the terror and excitement of the past evening, but longing to lay her poor aching head yet once again upon the breast of him whom she loved more dearly than life itself, PARTED."

However, it is not well to dwell too much on the separable verbs. One is sure to lose his temper early; and if he sticks to the subject, and will not be warned, it will at last either soften his brain or petrify it. Personal pronouns and adjectives are a fruitful nuisance in this language, and should have been left out. For instance, the same sound, sie, means you, and it means she, and it means her, and it means it, and it means they, and it means them. Think of the ragged poverty of a language which has to make one word do the work of six--and a poor little weak thing of only three letters at that. But mainly, think of the exasperation of never knowing which of these meanings the speaker is trying to convey. This explains why, whenever a person says sie to me, I generally try to kill him, if a stranger.

Every noun has a gender, and there is no sense or system in the distribution; so the gender of each must be learned separately and by heart. There is no other way. To do this one has to have a memory like a memorandum-book. In German, a young lady has no sex, while a turnip has. Think what overwrought reverence that shows for the turnip, and what callous disrespect for the girl. See how it looks in print--I translate this from a conversation in one of the best of the German Sunday-school books:

> "Gretchen.--Wilhelm, where is the turnip?
> "Wilhelm.--She has gone to the kitchen.
> "Gretchen.--Where is the accomplished and beautiful English maiden?
> "Wilhelm.--It has gone to the opera."

To continue with the German genders: a tree is male, its buds are female, its leaves are neuter; horses are sexless, dogs are male, cats are female--tom-cats included, of course; a person's mouth, neck, bosom, elbows, fingers, nails, feet, and body are of the male sex, and his head is male or neuter according to the word selected to signify it, and not according to the sex of the individual who wears it--for in Germany all the women wear either male heads or sexless ones; a person's nose, lips, shoulders, breast, hands, and toes are of the female sex; and his hair, ears, eyes, chin, legs, knees, heart, and conscience haven't any sex at all. The inventor of the language probably got what he knew about a conscience from hearsay.

Well, after the student has learned the sex of a great number of nouns, he is still in a difficulty, because he finds it impossible to persuade his tongue to refer to things as "he" and "she," and "him" and "her" which it has been always accustomed to refer to as "it." When he even frames a German sentence in his mind, with the hims and hers in the right places, and then works up his courage to the utterance point, it is no use--the moment he begins to speak his tongue flies the track and all those labored males and females come out as "its." And even when he is reading German to himself, he always calls those things "it," whereas he ought to read in this way:

TALE OF THE FISHWIFE AND ITS SAD FATE

It is a bleak Day. Hear the Rain, how he pours, and the Hail, how he rattles; and see the Snow, how he drifts along, and oh the Mud, how deep he is! Ah the poor Fishwife, it is stuck fast in the Mire; it has dropped its Basket of Fishes; and its Hands have been cut by the Scales as it seized some of the falling Creatures; and one Scale has even got into its Eye, and it cannot get her out. It opens its Mouth to cry for Help; but if any Sound comes out of him, alas he is drowned by the raging of the Storm. And now a Tomcat has got one of the Fishes and she will surely escape with him. No, she bites off a Fin, she holds her in her Mouth--will she swallow her? No, the Fishwife's brave Mother-dog deserts his Puppies and rescues the Fin--which he eats, himself, as his Reward. O, horror, the Lightning has struck the Fish-basket; he sets him on Fire; see the Flame, how she licks the doomed Utensil with her red and angry Tongue; now she attacks the helpless Fishwife's Foot--she burns him up, all but the big Toe, and even she is partly consumed; and still she spreads, still she waves her fiery Tongues; she attacks the Fishwife's Leg and destroys it; she attacks its Hand and destroys her; she attacks its poor worn Garment and destroys her also; she attacks its Body and consumes him; she wreathes herself about its Heart and it is consumed;

next about its Breast, and in a Moment she is a Cinder; now she reaches its Neck--he goes; now its Chin--it goes; now its Nose--she goes. In another Moment, except Help come, the Fishwife will be no more. Time presses--is there none to succor and save? Yes! Joy, joy, with flying Feet the she-Englishwoman comes! But alas, the generous she-Female is too late; where now is the fated Fishwife? It has ceased from its Sufferings, it has gone to a better Land; all that is left of it for its loved Ones to lament over, is this poor smoldering Ash-heap. Ah, woeful, woeful Ash-heap! Let us take him up tenderly, reverently, upon the lowly Shovel, and bear him to his long Rest, with the Prayer that when he rises again it will be in a Realm where he will have one good square responsible Sex, and have it all to himself, instead of having a mangy lot of assorted Sexes scattered all over him in Spots.

# # #

.... That paragraph furnishes a text for a few remarks about one of the most curious and notable features of my subject--the length of German words. Some German words are so long that they have a perspective. Observe these examples:

Freundschaftsbezeigungen.
Dilettantenaufdringlichkeiten.
Stadtverordnetenversammlungen.

These things are not words, they are alphabetical processions. And they are not rare; one can open a German newspaper any time and see them marching majestically across the page--and if he has any imagination he can see the banners and hear the music, too. They impart a martial thrill to the meekest subject. I take a great interest in these curiosities. Whenever I come across a good one, I stuff it and put it in my museum. In this way I have made quite a valuable collection. When I get duplicates, I exchange with other collectors, and thus increase the variety of my stock. Here are some specimens which I lately bought at an auction sale of the effects of a bankrupt bric-à-brac hunter:

GENERALSTAATSVERORDNETENVERSAMMLUNGEN.
ALTERTHUMSWISSENSCHAFTEN.
KINDERBEWAHRUNGSANSTALTEN.
UNABHAENGIGKEITSERKLAERUNGEN.
WIEDERERSTELLUNGSBESTREBUNGEN.
WAFFENSTILLSTANDSUNTERHANDLUNGEN.

Of course when one of these grand mountain ranges goes stretching across the printed page, it adorns and ennobles that literary landscape--but at the same time it is a great distress to the new student, for it blocks up his way; he cannot crawl under it, or climb over it, or tunnel through it. So he resorts to

the dictionary for help, but there is no help there. The dictionary must draw the line somewhere--so it leaves this sort of words out. And it is right, because these long things are hardly legitimate words, but are rather combinations of words, and the inventor of them ought to have been killed. They are compound words with the hyphens left out. The various words used in building them are in the dictionary, but in a very scattered condition; so you can hunt the materials out, one by one, and get at the meaning at last, but it is a tedious and harassing business. I have tried this process upon some of the above examples. "Freundschaftsbezeigungen" seems to be "Friendship demonstrations," which is only a foolish and clumsy way of saying "demonstrations of friendship." "Unabhaengigkeitserklaerungen" seems to be "Independencedeclarations," so far as I can see. "Generalstaatsverordnetenversammlungen" seems to be "Generalstates-representativesmeetings," as nearly as I can get at it--a mere rhythmical, gushy euphuism for "meetings of the legislature," I judge.

There are people in the world who will take a great deal of trouble to point out the faults in a religion or a language, and then go blandly about their business without suggesting any remedy. I am not that kind of a person. I have shown that the German language needs reforming. Very well, I am ready to reform it. At least I am ready to make the proper suggestions. Such a course as this might be immodest in another; but I have devoted upward of nine full weeks, first and last, to a careful and critical study of this tongue, and thus have acquired a confidence in my ability to reform it which no mere superficial culture could have conferred upon me.

In the first place, I would leave out the Dative case. It confuses the plurals, and, besides, nobody ever knows when he is in the Dative case, except he discover it by accident--and then he does not know when or where it was that he got into it, or how long he has been in it, or how he is ever going to get out of it again. The Dative case is but an ornamental folly--it is better to discard it.

In the next place, I would move the Verb further up to the front. You may load up with ever so good a Verb, but I notice that you never really bring down a subject with it at the present German range--you only cripple it. So I insist that this important part of speech should be brought forward to a position where it may be easily seen with the naked eye.

Thirdly, I would import some strong words from the English tongue--to swear with, and also to use in describing all sorts of vigorous things in a vigorous way. 1

Fourthly, I would reorganize the sexes, and distribute them according to the will of the Creator. This as a tribute of respect, if nothing else.

Fifthly, I would do away with those great long compounded words; or require the speaker to deliver them in sections, with intermissions for refreshments. To wholly do away with them would be best, for ideas are more easily received and digested when they come one at a time than when they come in bulk. Intellectual food is like any other; it is pleasanter and more beneficial to take it with a spoon than with a shovel.

Sixthly, I would require a speaker to stop when he is done, and not hang a string of those useless "haben sind gewesen gehabt haben geworden seins" to the end of his oration. This sort of gewgaws undignify a speech, instead of adding a grace. They are, therefore, an offense, and should be discarded.

Seventhly, I would discard the Parenthesis. Also the reparenthesis, the re-reparenthesis, and the re-re-re-re-re-reparentheses, and likewise the final wide-reaching all-inclosing king-parenthesis. I would require every individual, be he high or low, to unfold a plain straightforward tale, or else coil it and sit on it and hold his peace. Infractions of this law should be punishable with death.

And eighthly, and last, I would retain Zug and Schlag, with their pendants, and discard the rest of the vocabulary. This would simplify the language.

I have now named what I regard as the most necessary and important changes. These are perhaps all I could be expected to name for nothing; but there are other suggestions which I can and will make in case my proposed application shall result in my being formally employed by the government in the work of reforming the language.

My philological studies have satisfied me that a gifted person ought to learn English (barring spelling and pronouncing) in thirty hours, French in thirty days, and German in thirty years. It seems manifest, then, that the latter tongue ought to be trimmed down and repaired. If it is to remain as it is, it ought to be gently and reverently set aside among the dead languages, for only the dead have time to learn it.

1. "Verdammt," and its variations and enlargements, are words which have plenty of meaning, but the sounds are so mild and ineffectual that German ladies can use them without sin. German ladies who could not be induced to commit a sin by any persuasion or compulsion, promptly rip out one of these harmless little words when they tear their dresses or don't like the soup. It sounds about as wicked as our "My gracious."

Continued from page 8

emergence of a pressing cultural need. Simply, ours is an age of radically increasing specialization, wherein every discipline has become a cosmos unto itself. One consequence of this has been the arrival into our midst of the articulate explainer, the essayist who has enough purchase on the abstruse, as well as enough narrative skill to span the gap for the lay reader. The list of naturalist-essayists and scientist-essayists is impressive; it includes the late Loren Eisely, Robert Finch, Lewis Thomas, Henry Petrosky, Richard Selzer, John Stilgoe, Oliver Sacks, Stephen Jay Gould, John McPhee, Vicky Hearne, Sue Hubbell and David Quammen. Writers range in spirit from the detective-investigator (Gould, Sacks) to the comprehensive context builder (McPhee) to the cosmic celebrant (Eisley, Thomas).

Interestingly, and sadly, in the midst of this seeming renaissance, the one kind of essay that has seen its estate shrink significantly is the serious literary essay, as well as the kind of free-ranging culture criticism of the sort practiced in former times by Mary McCarthy, Dwight Macdonald, Lionel Trilling and others. This was the non-academic belles-lettristic work that traced its heritage back to Matthew Arnold, and its fading—subject for extended lament—says a great deal about the growing perception that literature is a parlor art, something for the universities, an irrelevance.

To be sure, we still have more than a few exponents of informed literary fluency—Cynthia Ozick, Elizabeth Hardwick, William Gass, Gore Vidal, William Pritchard, James Wood and John Updike all come to mind—but there is no sense as there once was of a culture of engaged readers waiting for wisdom from its anointed sages. In the churning millrace of opinion, personal revelation and dramatized reportage, the reflective essay is flailing, if not yet drowning.

At least this is true in the larger marketplace. But our culture is densely stratified, and there are significant pockets of resistance—or at least independence. For another major development of the last decade or has been the growth of writing programs, those intriguing subcultures in which serious literature gets read, discussed, analyzed and attempted. I have taught nonfiction writing in one such program for the last six years and I have seen an interest in the personal essay and memoir grow as if someone had attached an exponential variable of growth to the number of students originally enrolled.

In that time, for all the writers' works that have been passed around and discussed, three names invariably get lifted shoulder-high above the throng of others: George Orwell, James Baldwin and Virginia Woolf. Over and over the conversation comes back to them; I see the writers trying out their moves, looking for the thing, the secret.

The writers themselves are so very different: the straight-shooting, clean-carpentering Orwell; the gnarly master of rage and tenderness, Baldwin; and the lyrically involuted Woolf. But it seems plain to me now, after years of reading and teaching their works, why students should keep discovering them with excitement. In these writers, their essays—more, I think, than in essays by other writers—we feel the palpable exertions of honesty. More consistently than others, they take the extra step in their work, pushing the observation, the sentence, to where the truth starts to prickle. Each resists, differently, the pull of sensationalism and overstatement and rhetorical commonplace. They reconnect the line of the tireless form to its point of "modern" origin—in the rambling, effortless-seeming, patiently self-scouring prose of Michel de Montaigne, who set so much in motion more than four centuries ago when he wrote, addressing his reader, "I desire to be seen in my simple, natural, and everyday dress, without artifice or constraint; for it is myself I portray." How little has changed at this fundamental level. Most working essayists, I imagine, would endorse Montaigne's platform wholeheartedly. Indeed, for all its suppleness, the essay is at heart a conservative form. It inscribes and reinscribes the human contour, even as the world rushes breathlessly forward. It endures because it is fundamental. ■

Sven Birkerts is the author of five essay collections, most recently "Readings." He teaches writing at Mount Holyoke College and in the Bennington Writing Seminars.

BEST OF THE GENRE: ESSAYS | *Selected by Sven Birkerts*

Moments of Being, by Virginia Woolf. Woolf's attempts at the directly autobiographical essay are gathered in this slim volume, which is nonetheless extraordinary for its density of detail and for Woolf's insistence on following the most elusive prompts of memory.

Notes of a Native Son, by James Baldwin. These charged excoriations of racial hypocrisy are coupled with searching interrogations of the writer's own experience, both as a native son and as an expatriate living in Europe.

A Collection of Essays, by George Orwell. This is a compilation of Orwell's best-known essays: plainspoken, shrewd, and avid at every turn for insight into moral ambiguity—and human ambivalence—as well as the collisions between rigid ideology and the gnarly twists of subjectivity.

Against Joie de Vivre, by Phillip Lopate. Lopate is that oxymoronic thing, a genial curmudgeon. A Montaigne in modern dress, he aspires with some success to forging narratives out of the happenings and insights of daily life.

A Supposedly Funny Thing I'll Never Do Again, by David Foster Wallace. Here we find '90s gonzo journalism kicked into rich serio-comic life by Wallace's insistently venturesome imagination. The man is a language cormorant; the reader should keep a dictionary near to hand.

Slouching Towards Bethlehem, by Joan Didion. One of the early examples of engaged personal reportage. Didion's astringent romanticism bathes the least encounter in the peculiar light of its cultural (or countercultural) moment.

Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak-Catchers, by Tom Wolfe. The man in white needs no introduction. He was the original pioneer of the verbal jazz that gained so many imitators it ascended happily into self-parody.

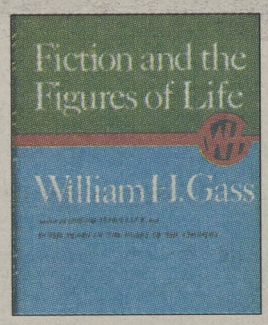
The Broken Estate, by James Wood. Wood is the last of the young old, writing—brilliantly, confidently—as if his mode of intense literary reflection were still culturally central. Wood, Cynthia Ozick and a very few others are keeping the tradition alive.

Approaching Eye-Level, by Vivian Gornick. Here is the quintessential lone urban woman's voice—armored, unexpectedly vulnerable—documenting the steady clash of private sensibility and the growing dissonance of public life.

Mythologies, by Roland Barthes. Erudite and playful, Barthes's prose remains instigatory decades after it first delighted readers. We see the level of contradiction working at the surface of modern life, releasing fresh insight with every ounce of applied pressure.

Under the Sign of Saturn, by Susan Sontag. These are immersed readings of the careers of some of Sontag's literary masters. Intelligence follows the track of affinity. A beautiful introduction to the work of Walter Benjamin, Elias Canetti and others.

The Edward Hoagland Reader, by Edward Hoagland. Hoagland writes with compressed immediacy, merging the wisdom of the senses with the often warring logics of the heart and mind. Each essay is a search for the path of most resistance, the way to the less glamorous truths.



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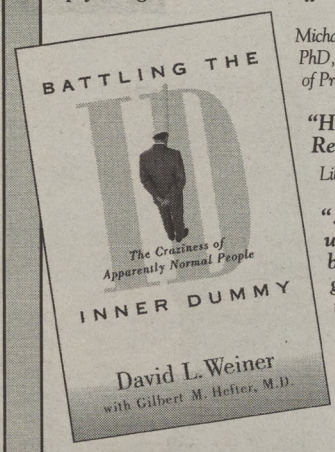

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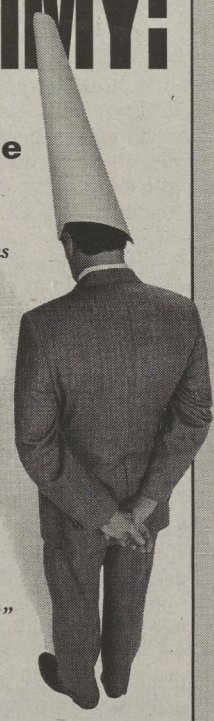

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Reviewed by JABARI ASIM

Who was Oscar Micheaux? It's an ironic question to ask at a time when media magi are once again announcing the dawning of a new era for blacks in film. Long before the banner headlines trumpeting the latest box-office triumph of Spike Lee, Eddie Murphy or the brothers Wayans, Micheaux was a one-man movie studio. Although the exact number of films he produced is uncertain, estimates range from 30 to 40. Most informed observers agree, however, that he dominated the first generation of black movie makers. "The Homesteader," which he released in 1919, is considered the first full-length feature directed by an African American. "The Exile" (1931), another Micheaux production, was the first black-helmed feature-length film with sound. And yet, despite the dogged efforts of groups such as the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame, various historical societies and certain scholars, Micheaux's name is rarely mentioned.

This turns out to be a mixed blessing, because Micheaux has seldom been a critics' darling. He published his first three novels as the Harlem Renaissance began to bloom around him, laboring in the shadows of the celebrated writers who are now forever identified with that movement. Writing about this period, David Levering Lewis succinctly—and perhaps charitably—characterized Micheaux's fiction as "curious folk novels." His films haven't fared much better. Critics often have condemned Micheaux as a Booker T. wannabe whose work castigated black behavior while failing to challenge the racist laws and customs that circumscribed the lives of his peers. What's more, some have charged, he was technically incompetent, a sloppy director who cared more about ticket sales than the quality of his productions. Should Micheaux be regarded as a mere historical curiosity, a racial heretic with minimal artistic skills? Three new books about Micheaux's life and work suggest that the trailblazing director was mostly just misunderstood.

Betti Carol VanEpps-Taylor's biography focuses on Micheaux's early years. He was born in 1884 in rural Illinois. He left home at 16, hustling at various jobs until he landed a lucrative stint as a Pullman porter. Working and saving and riding the rails, Micheaux decided that his destiny awaited him in the Great Plains. In 1904, he purchased a homestead on the former Rosebud reservation in Gregory, S.D. A year later he returned with $3,000 and oodles of optimism. For the details of Micheaux's life as a struggling farmer, VanEpps-Taylor relies on his first novel, *The Conquest: The Story of a Negro Pioneer*, which is widely regarded as disguised autobiography. (Barely disguised at that: The lead character is "Oscar Devereaux"; the setting is "Meggory, S.D.")

Toil and trouble marked Micheaux's time on the prairie. He ultimately lost his land and his wife, who returned to her father's home in Chicago. But one's man's heartbreak is another's golden opportunity: In an exemplary display of fortitude, Micheaux turned a record of his Rosebud experiences into the manuscript that became *The Conquest*. The novel includes the line that is most frequently associated with Micheaux: "One of the greatest tasks of my life has been to convince a certain class of my racial acquaintances that a colored man can be anything." Paradoxically, his can-do spirit is the source of much of the antipathy toward Micheaux; his detractors say his outlook was hopelessly naive and failed to take into account the power of racism to defer—or destroy—black men's dreams.

Micheaux expressed his philosophy via heroic central characters that were usually variations of himself. As VanEpps-Taylor notes, these alter egos "consistently appear as educated, assimilated men who speak standard English and uphold middle-class values and morality while retaining a strong race pride. They believe deeply in African Americans' ability to pull themselves up by their bootstraps if they will only apply themselves." While the characters' "strong race pride" hasn't been evident to everyone, no one can dispute that Micheaux practiced what he preached. Exhibiting remarkable acumen for a man in his time and place, he hired and trained salesmen "to handle his books exclusively through door-to-door commission sales in black communities." Building on his proceeds, he eventually opened his own publishing house in Sioux City, Iowa. In 1917, the Lincoln Motion Picture Co. approached Micheaux to discuss making a film based on his novel *The Homesteader*. Characteristically, he broke off negotiations and launched his own production outfit. Two years later, Micheaux's screen adaptation made its debut.



POSTER REPRINTED FROM "OSCAR MICHEAUX: DAKOTA HOMESTEADER, AUTHOR, PIONEER FILM MAKER"

For the most part, VanEpps-Taylor sidesteps the ideological arguments that Micheaux tended to provoke, although she does discuss his willingness to use controversy to stir up interest in his work. Her book is perhaps most valuable as part of the expanding history of black settlers in the Great Plains, a drama in which Micheaux unhesitatingly cast himself in a central role.

J. Ronald Green, author of *Straight Lick: The Cinema of Oscar Micheaux*, aims to rescue his subject's aesthetic reputation. Contending that "the evaluation of Micheaux's accomplishment has hardly begun," Green offers a careful assessment of Micheaux's filmmaking technique and proposes a re-evaluation of his allegedly conservative politics. The author's frequent lapses into academic jargon threaten to overwhelm his attempts at clarification. Green's windy sentences would give any copy editor pause; one whopper weighs in at 164 words. Plus he has a weakness for what we can mischievously call sesquipedalian excess: Look out for such terms as "epiphenomenal," "diegetic" and "proprioceptive." If you can get past them, you'll find that Green has plenty of good ideas and can fashion a nimble phrase when he chooses to. I'm particularly fond of his description of D.W. Griffith's cinematic celebrations of white supremacy as "monumental and bloody visions of nationhood."

Green explains that Griffith was as responsible as anyone for the advent of black independent film. In the aftermath of his "Birth of a Nation" (1915), "numerous black film companies were formed, most of which never produced a film," he writes. In Green's view, Micheaux's prodigious output can also be seen as a response to Griffith's hateful propaganda. Green cautions against drawing the wrong conclusion from Micheaux's criticisms of his fellow blacks. "The successes and failures of his ethnic group Micheaux treated ultimately as an African-American responsibility," he argues, "though that did not mean that white racism had to be left out of account." None of this sounds unreasonable, especially when considered alongside Green's fascinating breakdown of several scenes from Micheaux's "The Girl From Chicago."

Politics aside, was Micheaux a hapless hack whose films were (and are) painful to watch? Only if you "assume that the conventions of Hollywood cinema constitute the only valid basis" for narrative moviemaking, according to Green. In another impressive instance of original thinking, he compares Micheaux to self-taught "outsider" artists of his era, such as Grandma Moses and Horace Pippin.

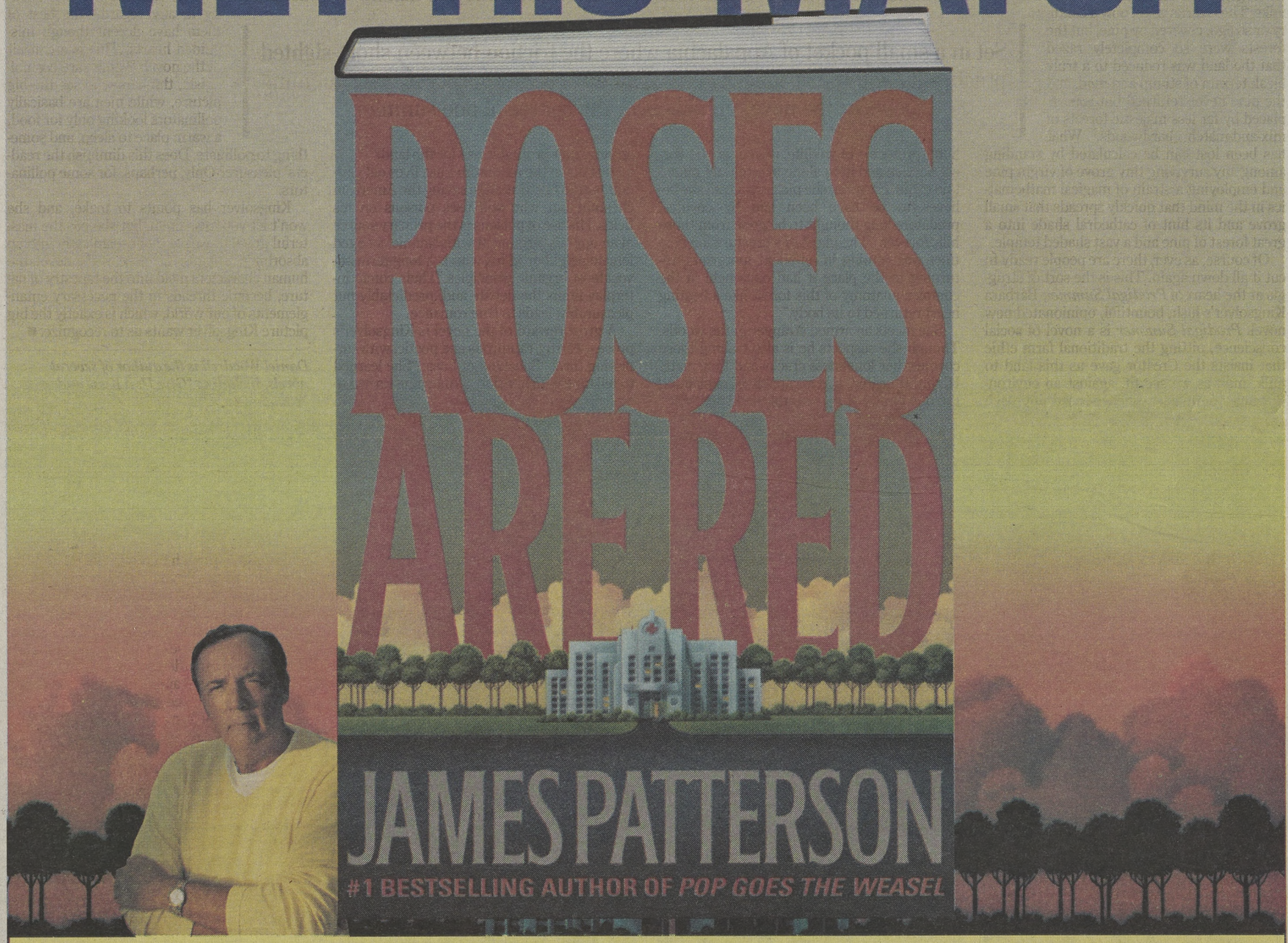
While constantly catching flak from black critics, Micheaux battled white resistance in the form of state censorship boards. Ironically, while blacks called for greater exposure of white duplicity, whites thought Micheaux's work was exposing too much. In *Writing Himself Into History*, Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence note that censors were "particularly offended by suggestions of miscegenation, the questioning of white authority, and the depiction of racist attitudes of whites in the everyday interactions between the races"—themes that Micheaux addressed throughout his career. Bowser and Spence's thoughtful and persuasive study concentrates on the years preceding the Depression, when Micheaux made his silent films. Three of them are still in existence: "Within Our Gates" (1920), "The Symbol of the Unconquered" (1920) and "Body and Soul" (1925). The authors show Micheaux capitalizing on a convergence of several factors, most notably the arrival of black masses to the cities, the proliferation of movie houses catering to them and the emergence of an urban working population with money to spend on entertainment. They suggest that Micheaux understood these folks, knew they were "people who still felt hopeful about sharing the American dream . . . and he felt that he knew what the audience wanted."

As time passed, Micheaux lost that audience. As Bowser and Spence point out, more than half of his films were made before 1929—the year Hollywood sound films with black casts took over the market, forcing him into bankruptcy. Twice he reincorporated, but each effort brought decreasing returns. His last film, "The Betrayal," flopped in 1948. By that time he had returned to writing novels, but the book market was changing as well. Micheaux claimed to have sold more than 125,000 books in a 30-year span. In contrast, Richard Wright sold more than 200,000 copies of *Native Son* in less than three weeks, thanks to the Book-of-the-Month Club. While black novels and movies went mainstream, Micheaux continued to do business the old-fashioned way. In 1951, he died on the road while selling his books.

So was Micheaux basically a businessman, cool and calculating? Yes. Was he an artist at heart, sensitive and sincere? Yes again. "There are contradictory, even multiple Micheauxes," Bowser and Spence concede. "Oscar Micheaux—the man, the writer and the filmmaker—remains an enigma," writes Betti Carol VanEpps-Taylor. I guess we'll have to be content with that, although I still wonder what the old homesteader was thinking during those last laborious days, when the future he helped to create rose up to swallow him. ■

Jabari Asim is a senior editor of Book World.

ALEX CROSS HAS MET HIS MATCH



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STATE OF THE ART: THE ESSAY

By Sven Birkerts

Taking the measure of a prickly, flashy, confessional, self-dramatizing, old-fashioned genre.

Describing a pincer movement of the sort beloved by military strategists, though probably not planned, the near-simultaneous release of two hefty compendia—**The Best American Essays of the Century**, edited by Joyce Carol Oates and Robert Atwan (Houghton Mifflin, $30) and **The Book of 20th Century Essays**, edited by Ian Hamilton (Fromm, $30)—suddenly maneuvers the venerable form into high visibility. It may be time, say the people who direct the beam of public attention, to have some reflection on the state of the art. So it is. How fitting, then, given that paradox is one of the mainsprings of the mode, that these two volumes, each a storehouse of treasures, each a canon-making initiative, should show us almost nothing about that state.

I offer this not as a criticism of what any of these canny editors has achieved. Their job was, in part, to serve our pleasure with their own exactions of taste and to represent what has been done. Gatherings on this scale, alas, can only ever serve an embalming function. One needs to honor as many of the deserving as possible, and when that has been mostly done the game is over. Meanwhile, now and in recent years, undaunted by all this venerability, the essay has been carrying on with an antic freshness.

I'll get to that in a moment. First, Oates, Atwan and Hamilton. Each of these volumes has culled the archive of 20th-century American and English essays, confirming for anyone who needs confirmation that there exists a gratifying range of voices and forays into subject matter. The Oates and Atwan compilation begins with Mark Twain, nods dutifully to such early eminences as W.E.B. Du Bois, Henry Adams and Jane Addams, moves among textbook favorites like T.S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Edmund Wilson and E.B. White, guiding us into the present with selections from Susan Sontag, Elizabeth Hardwick, Alice Walker, John Updike and (!) Joyce Carol Oates. Let that exclamation point stand for a full-page screed on the subtle arts of self-inclusion.

Hamilton ventures what seems to me a slightly less predictable mix, though that may only be because some of his British and Anglo inclusions—writers such as Desmond McCarthy, Nancy Mitford and Dan Jacobsen—are less familiar on these shores. So far as American essayists go, Hamilton bowls straight up the middle; most of his choices are also found in Oates's volume.

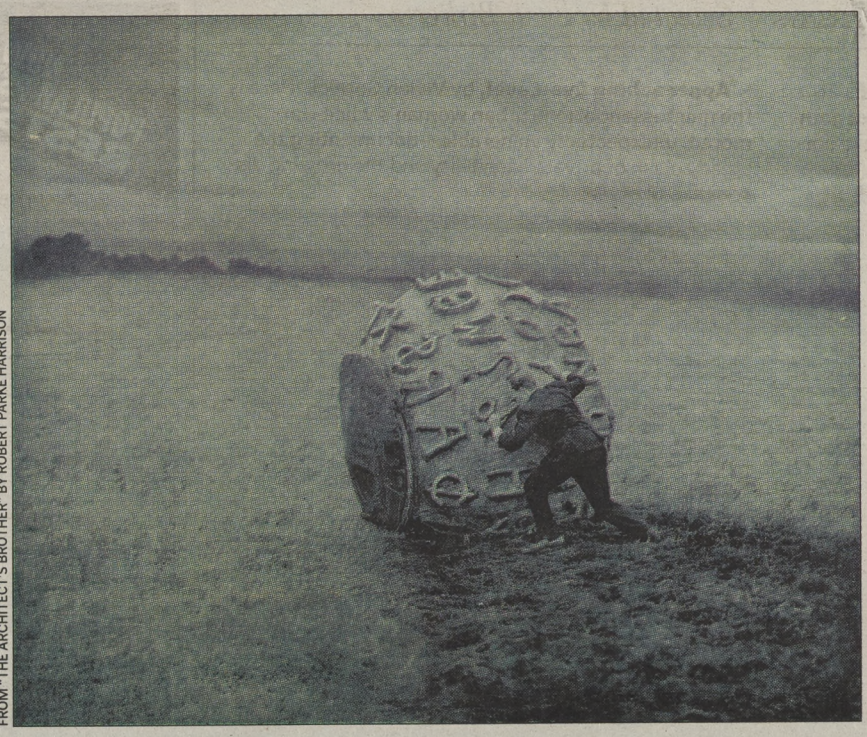
The essay—how easy it is at times to forget what a thrilling ride it can offer. Even after many years of reading, teaching and trying myself to wrestle the insouciant beast, I feel when I hear the word—"essay"—the encroaching shades of Wordsworth's prison-house. Try as I might, and I *have* tried, I can't quite purge from the word its righteously medicinal taint.

Growing up, originally more a student of the spines rather than the contents of books, I conceived the impression that the essay had to do with a group of bearded sages, men of the sort that might have taken tea with Sir Leslie Stephen (Virginia Woolf's father), though of course most of them didn't. The names rang out with a "Masterpiece Theatre" fanfare: Lamb, Macauley, Carlyle, Arnold. . . . Then, later, came the school assignments, with the essay as the dreaded hydra of the final exam. I'm sure I'm not alone in this. Even now, as a writing teacher, I notice a certain foreboding steal into the room when I begin to speak of the essay. How different is the response to a word like "memoir."

And this, for me, is the problem with these collections: They don't do enough, either of them, to shake us loose from the feeling that there is a syllabus lurking behind the title page. The format, the chronological arrangement and the inclusion of so many staple works give us nothing at all of the prickly aliveness of the creature in its natural habitat.

The natural habitat of the contemporary essay is, of course, the magazine, and by this I don't just mean, as people used to, the New Yorker, the Atlantic and Harper's—though all three remain significant venues. Essays now flourish eager and strenuous as wildflowers in hundreds of places, from literary journals to shipbuilding magazines, not to mention a galaxy of sites out in cyberspace. It's less a matter of where they are than of what they're not. Thankfully, for the past 15 years, Robert Atwan, as series editor of Houghton-Mifflin's Best American Essay series, has deputized distinguished practitioners such as Ian Frazier and Edward Hoagland to pick and choose among the year's offerings for an annual volume. These gatherings, along with the more recent *Anchor Essay Annual*, edited by Phillip Lopate, offer a vivid and non-academic picture of things; this is where the story of the contemporary essay is being told.

Reading through some of these collections, but also fanning the pages and alighting for a wingbeat in one place or another, you cannot but be struck by a consistent pressure of immediacy, something I do not get, though I keep trying, from the annual short-story volumes. This is less a question of individual talents, I think; it's more that the essay form is in ascendancy. It is—though not for the first time in its history—kicking up its heels.



FROM "THE ARCHITECT'S BROTHER" BY ROBERT PARKE HARRISON

> Writers such as Gay Talese, Michael Herr, Truman Capote, Hunter S. Thompson, Joan Didion . . . brought a thrilling new expressive mode to readers, shouldering the essay's senior cousin, the short story, somewhat to the side.

There are some interesting reasons for this. To begin with, as I suggested above, we are in an era of a great proliferation of magazines and journals. Whole forests are pulped and pressed through gleaming cylinders to gratify a bottomless public appetite for opinion, information, chatter and novelty. Wander into any of the big new book superstores and you will see the gleaming racks stretching away toward the horizon. Every subject area—every niche—is accounted for. And if most of these ephemeral vessels do not showcase the essay, enough of them do. A glance at the listing of "Notable Essays of 1999" in the back of the *Best American Essays 2000*, edited by Alan Lightman, shows that, apart from such esteemed literary journals as the Georgia Review, the Threepenny Review and the Gettysburg review, magazines such as Esquire, Natural History, Preservation, Mother Jones, the Oxford American, House Beautiful, Essence, Audubon and the Family Therapy Networker all play host to top-notch writing.

Second, and this is related—perhaps in a way that a river's tributaries are related to its source—we can look back to the mid-1960s, to the original explosion of what Tom Wolfe christened as the New Journalism, and which could be characterized as the injection of diverse fiction-writing techniques (scene-by-scene construction, use of dialogue and the recording of tell-tale gestures and details) into the formerly sober precincts of documentary journalism. (See Wolfe's new collection, **Hooking Up**, Farrar Straus Giroux, $25.) Suddenly it was possible to begin an essay—article, feature story—thus: "At 2 or 3 or 4 a.m., somewhere along in there, on August 25, 1966, his forty-eighth birthday, in fact, Leonard Bernstein woke up in the dark in a wild state of alarm."

The doors burst open. Wolfe's innovation—and his trumpeting of his innovation—released an extraordinary flow of energies into the print marketplace. It created at the same time a psychological climate, also very much the climate of the times, in which old magazines could renovate themselves and new initiatives could be contemplated. Writers such as Gay Talese, Michael Herr, Truman Capote, Hunter S. Thompson and Joan Didion brought a thrilling new expressive mode to readers, shouldering the essay's senior cousin, the short story, somewhat to the side.

This is not to say that everything produced under the rubric of the New Journalism belongs to the essay. Much of it, if we insist on drawing strict lines, can be seen as highly animated feature writing. In the same way, not every piece of reportage in the New Yorker qualifies as an essay either. The personal chronicles of writers such as Adam Gopnik (see **Paris to the Moon**, Random House, $24.95) and Calvin Trillin (see **Family Man**, Farrar Straus Giroux, $11) can be said to be too faithful to their own immediacy. The essay pitches its address beyond the excitements of the present; it seeks a certain organic closure that most magazine pieces, written for the distractable eye, do not attain. But the creasing of the New Journalism certainly brought life to the older form, imparting flexibility and a substantially widened expressive range.

Another great boost to the essay has been the surge in recent years in interest in memoir and personal writing. We may argue about the reasons for this—is it the fruit of therapy, or the liberation politics of the '60s and '70s, or a rank efflorescence from what Christopher Lasch years ago tagged as our "culture of narcissism"? But the fact is that writing the self has become a major collective endeavor. And along with the memoir, the personal essay (which Phillip Lopate in his anthology, *The Art of the Personal Essay*, traces all the way back to Seneca the Younger in the beginning of the Christian Era). Openness about matters once closeted or shushed is common, if not expected. "My father drank," writes Scott Russell Sanders in his essay "Under the Influence" (included in the Lopate anthology). "He drank as a gut-punched boxer gasps for breath, as a starving dog gobbles food—compulsively, secretly, in pain and trembling." And on just such bursts of dark admission does the form advance itself. Contemporary practitioners of the personal mode include Edward Hoagland, Nancy Mairs, Lauren Slater, Vivian Gornick, Patricia Hampl, Gretel Ehrlich, Lucy Grealy and Lopate himself.

While there are doubtless innumerable other influences at work, I will note only one more, which has to do with the

Continued on page 9

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, 2000

BOOKS OF THE TIMES

Wary and Unsettled in Their Ghost-Ridden Land

By RICHARD EDER

No contemporary literature is more insistently permeated by the spirit of the land than Australia's.

It is a spirit, though, that instead of forming and fortifying, deforms and weakens. In the works of such novelists as Rodney Hall, Janette Turner Hospital and David Malouf, the setting is a canvas whose chemical makeup reacts upon the figures painted on it, causing the pigment to wrinkle and curl away.

"The land was not ours before we were not the land's." So an unlikely Australian Robert Frost might have written. A harsh, even weird geography — the vast barren outback, Martian rock formations, rivers that narrowed instead of widening seaward and sometimes disappeared altogether — resisted settlers who pushed beyond the narrow coastal belt.

The difficulty was more than material. What the writers and some filmmakers register is a flaw of morale, a vulnerability of the imagination. They evoke the sense of inhabiting a geographical and historical fault line, haunted by aboriginal ghosts that the settlers' culture, availing itself of massacre and repression, was never sufficiently confident of its own identity to dislodge. (What a contrast with the confidently indifferent majority tradition of Americans.) Most of the Australian settlers had arrived from Britain not as pilgrims but as penal deportees; not having sought freedom, but having lost it.

Mr. Malouf, the finest and most expansive of these writers, shares some of their darkly violent images of estrangement. In his best and most recent work, though (the novels "Remembering Babylon" and "The Conversations at Curlow Creek"), he goes beyond the stranger-in-a-strange-land theme to suggest with a few of his characters a beginning of wisdom, a rumor of reconciliation.

It is a note he shares to an extent with Michael Ondaatje. In different ways, each launches upon the tidal wave of nightmare a tiny raft-borne human figure, paddling if not prevailing.

Several of the short stories in "Dream Stuff" evoke the curse of landscape and history with no reconciliation at all. In "Lone Pine," an elderly couple on vacation are brutally murdered by a young tough who, with his wife and child, forces his way into their camper to steal it, walks them out into the woods and shoots them. What in another context would be a breath-stopping account of a sadistic crime — Mr. Malouf remarkably manages to make the pity even more stunning than the terror — here seems more than that. It seems foreordained.

"Blacksoil Country," set more than a century ago, is the finest story in the collection, a precursor, perhaps, of "Remembering Babylon." It tells of MacIvor, a rough, bitter farmer who moves from homestead to homestead without making a go of any of them. His failures build into rage against the itinerant bands of aborigines who wander across his property following their ancestral routes. The practice has become a kind of right, respected if not welcomed by the other farmers.

MacIvor, though, threatens them with a shotgun until one day, seeing a band approach with a dead sheep and assuming they've poached it, he shoots one of them dead. It is blind and tragically senseless; another settler, hoping to calm his neighbor, had given the aborigines the sheep to bring as a peace offering.

The truce is broken. Jordan, MacIvor's 12-year-old son, who until then had wandered the countryside free and unharmed, is killed by the aborigines. The white farmers, reluctantly perhaps, start a season of pursuit and massacre.

The story is told — and it is Malouf's triumph — in Jordan's wondering, dead voice. Double victimhood makes him one of the writer's wraithlike reconcilers:

"The blacks in every direction are hunted and go to ground. They too have lost their protection — what little they had of it. And me all that while lying quiet in the heart of the country, slowly sinking into the ancientness of it, making it mine, grain by grain blending my white grains with its many black ones."

Mr. Malouf's engine may be overpowered for a short track. There are clever turns in many of the stories but a certain tire shriek on corners. The ones furthest from his theme of haunted unsettlement seem most contrived.

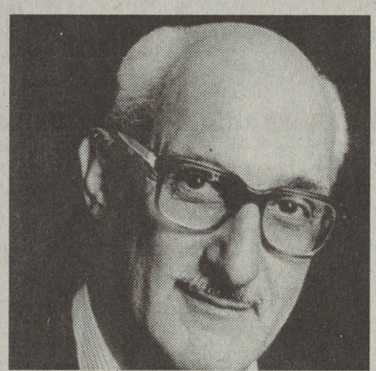
"Sally's Story," set during World War II, portrays the alienated feelings of an Australian woman employed to provide weeklong "marriages" to American soldiers on combat leave. The situation is journalistically provocative, at least to an American reader (Who employed these women? Was it an official program?), but the story is sketchy and flat.

"Night Training" is a slight piece about a studious draftee sadistically abused by his training officer. "Jacko's Reach" is a nostalgic sketch of the conversion into a shopping mall of a bit of city wasteland used for teenage adventures with drink, drugs and sex. More interesting is the title story, but its attempt to compress in 30 pages the memories and emotions of an expatriate writer returning for a visit and getting mugged suffers from forcing. Too much is signaled, too little received.

"Great Day," by contrast, gives expansive range to its story of the passing of a class and a generation. It takes the form of the annual reunion of a privileged and gifted clan to celebrate the birthday of Audley Tyler, its patriarch. He is a man of discriminating temper and shrewd judgment, formerly the highest of civil servants and adviser to six prime ministers, and still much consulted.

Individual vignettes weave through the reunion; a familiar device that Mr. Malouf employs effectively, though with more power than subtlety. It develops a lovely grave complexity, nonetheless, as Audley presides over not only the reunion but also his own stock-taking.

His brief, restless visit to the nearby family museum adumbrates the frailty of privilege and its mementos. (Museums are levelers: whether an old court dress or an old shepherd's tunic, the governing word is "old.") It evokes Audley's own aging weariness with who he is. Mr. Malouf touches, though indirectly, on his abiding theme: how frailly the conquerors, about to become ghosts themselves, have inhabited this ghost-ridden land.



Jane Bown/Pantheon Books

DREAM STUFF

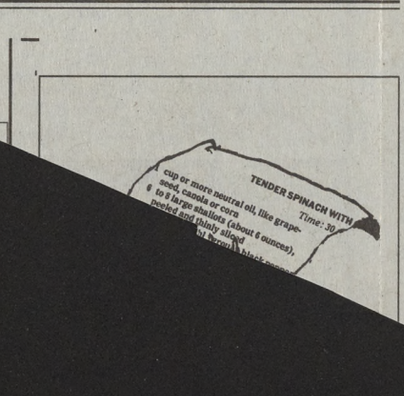
By David Malouf

185 pages. Pantheon. $22.

ON THE WEB

An audio interview with David Nasaw, the author of "The Chief," is available at The New York Times on the Web:

www.nytimes.com/books



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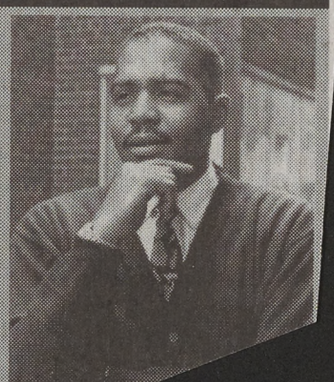
What Makes Zachys Different? Michael Thomas



Nineteen years ago Michael Thomas was on a train to White Plains to lookfor a job. The train broke down in Scarsdale, and while walking around he saw a sign in Zachys' window, NOW HIRING. He applied for the job, was hired, and then quickly advanced from stock to sales.

Michael is constantly on the move; supervising the warehouse, taking care of customers, interviewing potential employees, and more. He has graduated from Harriet Lembeck's Wine Program and The German Wine Institute. His travels have taken him to Burgundy, Alsace, Napa, Sonoma, the Rhine and the Mosel. Thus Michael has become one of our foremost wine experts. When someone asks me what Michael does at Zachys, I say, "Everything plus some more."

Michael's official title is Assistant Manager but his unoffici... and backup to everyone & everything." If Zachys ga... baseball, Michael's trophy case would be full b...

U.S.A... AT S...

National League

ROUNDUP

Clincher For Atlanta Must Wait

By The Associated Press

Tony Armas Jr. ran his scoreless streak to 19 innings before finally allowing a run and Orlando Cabrera homered for the second straight game as Montreal delayed Atlanta's playoff clinching, 6-4.

The visiting Braves, who have made eight straight playoff appearances, could have clinched at least a wild-card berth with a victory. Losses by Arizona and Los Angeles later in the night also would wrap up a postseason bid.

Armas (7-8) brought a 14-inning scoreless streak into the game and didn't allow a run until Bobby Bonilla hit his fifth homer with two outs in the sixth.

REDS 12, ASTROS 5: Juan Castro, Michael Tucker and Sean Casey homered in the second inning off Houston's Jose Lima, who set a National League single-season record by allowing his 47th home run.

Philadelphia's Robin Roberts allowed 46 home runs in 1956, when he pitched 297 innings in 43 games. Lima (7-16) has pitched 188⅓ innings in 32 games this season.

The major league record for home runs allowed in a season is 50, set by Minnesota's Bert Blyleven in 1986.

The Reds' six home runs were a season high, while visiting Houston matched a franchise record for homers allowed.

PARK IS THING FOR GIANTS: Ellis Burks thinks some credit for the San Francisco Giants' stellar season must go to their splendid new home.

"It's great to play in a beautiful place like this," Burks said of Pacific Bell Park, where the Giants clinched the National League West title Thursday night.

"This is the best ballpark in the game right now. Other teams come in here, and they wish they had a building this nice. That has an effect on a team."

And what an effect. With essentially the same roster that missed the playoffs the previous two seasons, the Giants have baseball's best record with 10 games to play.

Their bats are hot, their pitching is frequently dominant and their frenzied fans are debunking the myth of mellow Bay Area sports crowds. Some think there's a sense of destiny surrounding these Giants, who would like nothing better than to christen their new park with the franchise's first World Series title since 1954, four years before the team moved from New York to San Francisco.

"We knew that this ballpark would give us an advantage," said Peter Magowan, the Giants' owner, who led the charge to build Pac Bell with $319 million in private funds. "There's a great fan-friendly atmosphere here. The players know that it's going to be sold out, and that's a boost."

Even the Giants were amazed at the ease with which they ran away with the West. With their 8-7 victo

METS 9, PHILLIES 6

Mets	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
Agbayani lf	3	1	1	0	0	0	.290
McEwing lf	0	0	0	0	0	0	.217
a-Hamilton ph	1	0	0	0	0	0	.273
Perez cf	1	0	0	0	0	0	.222
DeBell cf-rf	5	0	0	0	0	3	.271
Alfonzo 2b	4	2	1	1	1	1	.321
Piazza c	5	2	3	3	0	1	.329
Zeile 1b	2	2	0	0	3	1	.273
Ventura 3b	3	1	0	0	1	1	.230
Trammell rf-lf	4	1	2	2	0	2	.239
Bordick ss	3	0	1	2	1	0	.273
BJJones p	2	0	0	0	0	2	.024
c-MFranco ph	1	0	0	0	0	0	.242
JFranco p	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000
Cook p	0	0	0	0	0	0	—
Benitez p	0	0	0	0	0	0	—
Totals	**34**	**9**	**8**	**8**	**6**	**11**	

Philadelphia	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
Rollins ss	5	1	2	1	0	0	.368
Glanville cf	5	0	0	0	0	1	.269
Abreu rf	4	1	1	0	0	0	.319
Rolen 3b	3	2	2	3	1	0	.301
TLee 1b	1	0	1	0	2	0	.231
d-Hunter ph-1b	1	0	0	0	0	1	.228
Burrell lf	3	1	1	2	0	1	.252
MOAnderson 2b	3	0	0	0	0	1	.242
e-Sefcik ph	1	0	0	0	0	1	.250
Brock p	0	0	0	0	0	0	.222
GBennett c	3	1	1	0	1	0	.259
Wolf p	2	0	0	0	0	0	.204
Boyd p	0	0	0	0	0	0	—
b-Newhan ph	1	0	0	0	0	1	.130
Telemaco p	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000
KJordan 2b	1	0	0	0	0	0	.222
Totals	**33**	**6**	**8**	**6**	**4**	**6**	

Mets	**200**	**104**	**002—9**	**8 0**
Philadelphia	**100**	**110**	**030—6**	**8 1**

a-grounded out for McEwing in the 6th. b-struck out for Boyd in the 7th. c-flied out for Bobby JJones in the 8th. d-struck out for Lee in the 8th. e-struck out for Anderson in the 8th. **E**—Burrell (8). **LOB**—Mets 5, Philadelphia 5. **2B**—Agbayani (20), Alfonzo (38), Bordick (8), GBennett (3). **HR**—Burrell (17) off JFranco; Rolen (26) off JFranco; Piazza 2 (38) off Brock, Wolf. **RBIs**—Alfonzo (88), Piazza 3 (109), Trammell 2 (12), Bordick 2 (19), Rollins (3), Rolen 3 (89), Burrell 2 (73). **S**—BJJones. **SF**—Burrell. **GIDP**—Ventura, MOAnderson. **Runners left in scoring position**—Mets 2 (DeBell, BJJones); Philadelphia 2 (Abreu, Burrell). **Runners moved up**—Ventura, Glanville. **DP**—Mets 1 (Bordick and Zeile); Philadelphia 1 (MOAnderson, Rollins and TLee).

Mets	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
BJJones W, 10-6	7	5	3	3	4	3	119	5.28
JFranco	⅓	3	3	3	0	1	17	3.57
Cook	⅔	0	0	0	0	1	9	5.34
Benitez S, 39	1	0	0	0	0	1	13	2.47
Philadelphia	**IP**	**H**	**R**	**ER**	**BB**	**SO**	**NP**	**ERA**
Wolf L, 11-8	5	6	7	6	4	7	96	4.47
Boyd	2	1	0	0	1	1	24	7.26
Telemaco	1	0	0	0	0	1	13	7.23
Brock	1	1	2	2	1	2	22	4.43

Wolf pitched to 5 batters in the 6th.
Inherited runners-scored—Boyd 1-0. **Balk**—BJJones. **Umpires**—Home, Tschida; First, Meriwether; Second, Gibson; Third, Rippley. **T**—3:13. **A**—21,128 (62,363).

HOW THE RUNS SCORED

Mets first: Agbayani doubled to center. Bell struck out. Alfonzo doubled to right, Agbayani scored. Piazza struck out. Zeile safe on Burrell's error, Alfonzo scored. Ventura struck out.
2 runs, 2 hits, 1 error, 1 left on.
Mets 2, Phillies 0.

Phillies first: Rollins singled to center. Glanville grounded out, second baseman Alfonzo to first baseman Zeile, Rollins to second. Abreu lined out to center fielder Bell. Rolen singled to center, Rollins scored. Rolen to second. Lee walked on a full count. Burrell flied out to left fielder Agbayani.
1 run, 2 hits, 0 errors, 2 left on.
Mets 2, Phillies 1.

Mets fourth: Piazza popped out to third baseman Rolen. Zeile walked. Ventura grounded out, pitcher Wolf to first baseman Lee, Zeile to second. Trammell singled to center, Zeile scored. Bordick walked on a full count, Trammell to second. Bobby J.Jones struck out.
1 run, 1 hit, 0 errors, 2 left on.
Mets 3, Phillies 1.

Phillies fourth: Rolen walked on a full count. Lee singled to center, Rolen to third. Burrell hit a sacrifice fly to left fielder Agbayani, Rolen scored. Anderson grounded into a double play, shortstop Bordick to first baseman Zeile, Lee out.
1 run, 1 hit, 0 errors, 0 left on.
Mets 3, Phillies 2.

Phillies fifth: McEwing in as left fielder. Bennett doubled to center. Wolf grounded out, third baseman Ventura to first baseman Zeile. Rollins infield single to short, Bennett scored. Glanville popped out to shortstop Bordick. On Bobby J.Jones' balk, Rollins to second. Abreu fouled out to third baseman Ventura.
1 run, 2 hits, 0 errors, 1 left on.
Mets 3, Phillies 3.

Mets sixth: Piazza homered to left on the first pitch. Zeile walked on four pitches. Ventura walked, Zeile to second. Trammell singled to left, Zeile scored, Ventura to third. Trammell to second. Bordick doubled to left, Ventura scored, Trammell scored. Boyd pitching. Bobby J. Jones sacrificed, pitcher Boyd to second baseman Anderson, Bordick to third. Hamilton pinch-hitting for McEwing. Hamilton grounded out, pitcher Boyd to first baseman Lee. Bell struck out.
4 runs, 3 hits, 0 errors, 1 left on.
Mets 7, Phillies 3.

Phillies eighth: J.Franco pitching. Abreu infield single to second. Rolen homered to left on a 2-1 count, Abreu scored. Hunter pinch-hitting for Lee. Hunter struck out. Burrell homered to center on a full count. Cook pitching. Sefcik pinch-hitting for Anderson. Sefcik struck out. Bennett flied out to center

YESTERDAY

Mets 9, Philadelphia 6	Pittsburgh at Milwaukee, ppd.
Chicago 5, St. Louis 4	Florida at Colorado
Montreal 6, Atlanta 4	San Diego at Los Angeles
Cincinnati 12, Houston 5	Arizona at San Francisco

STANDINGS

EAST	W	L	Pct	GB	L10	Str	Home	Away	Intr
Atlanta	90	63	.588	—	6-4	L-2	50-28	40-35	11-7
Mets	87	67	.565	3½	5-5	W-1	50-25	37-42	9-9
Florida	71	81	.467	18½	3-7	L-2	37-38	34-43	8-9
Montreal	67	86	.438	23	6-4	W-3	37-41	30-45	7-11
Philadelphia	63	90	.412	26	4-6	L-1	34-45	29-45	9-9
CENTRAL	**W**	**L**	**Pct**	**GB**	**L10**	**Str**	**Home**	**Away**	**Intr**
x-St. Louis	90	64	.584	—	7-3	L-2	49-29	41-35	7-8
Cincinnati	80	74	.519	10	6-4	W-1	41-38	39-36	7-8
Houston	69	85	.448	21	6-4	L-1	37-41	32-44	6-9
Milwaukee	68	85	.444	21½	5-5	W-4	38-38	30-47	6-9
Pittsburgh	64	89	.418	26	3-7	L-1	33-42	31-47	6-9
Chicago	61	92	.399	28½	2-8	W-1	35-40	26-52	8-7
WEST	**W**	**L**	**Pct**	**GB**	**L10**	**Str**	**Home**	**Away**	**Intr**
x-San Fran.	92	60	.605	—	8-2	W-3	54-23	38-37	8-7
Los Angeles	81	72	.529	11½	7-3	W-6	41-34	40-38	6-9
Arizona	79	72	.523	12½	3-7	L-6	46-32	33-40	6-9
Colorado	77	75	.507	15	4-6	W-1	45-28	32-46	6-6
San Diego	74	79	.484	18½	4-6	L-1	40-35	34-44	5-10

x-clinched division title

TODAY'S GAMES AND PITCHERS

					LAST 3 STARTS		
		Pitcher	W-L	ERA	W-L	IP	ERA
Mets		Hampton (L)	13-10	3.19	0-2	21.2	2.91
at Philadelphia	7:05 p.m.	Politte (R)	3-2	3.91	2-1	21.0	2.57
Houston		Elarton (R)	17-6	4.77	2-1	22.0	4.91
at Cincinnati	1:15 p.m.	Harnisch (R)	8-6	4.68	2-0	19.0	4.74
St. Louis		Reames (R)	1-1	3.48	1-0	18.2	3.38
at Chicago	1:15 p.m.	Nation (L)	No record				
Florida		Smith (R)	4-6	3.56	1-1	20.0	3.60
at Colorado	3:05 p.m.	Wasdin (R)	0-1	6.75	0-0	4.2	5.79
Arizona		Guzman (R)	3-4	6.17	0-1	15.0	8.40
at San Francisco	4:05 p.m.	Estes (L)	15-5	4.05	2-1	20.0	4.05
Atlanta		Maddux (R)	18-8	3.00	3-0	25.0	0.00
at Montreal	7:05 p.m.	Johnson (R)	5-6	6.11	0-0	8.1	14.04
Pittsburgh		Silva (R)	9-9	6.00	1-0	12.0	9.75
at Milwaukee	4:35 p.m.	D'Amico (R)	12-5	2.33	1-0	21.1	2.53
Pittsburgh		Serafini (L)	2-5	6.00	1-2	17.1	5.71
Milwaukee	Game 2	Snyder (R)	3-10	6.23	0-3	13.1	12.15
Arizona		Reynoso (R)	10-11	5.25	0-2	17.1	4.67
at San Francisco	10:05 p.m.	Del Toro (R)	1-0	4.63			
San Diego		Williams (R)	10-6	4.03	2-1	23.0	4.70
at Los Angeles	10:10 p.m.	Brown (R)	12-6	2.63	0-1	20.0	2.70

CUBS 5, CARDINALS 4

St. Louis	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
Vina 2b	5	1	2	1	0	0	.302
Drew rf	3	1	1	0	2	1	.300
Edmonds cf	2	0	1	0	3	1	.299
Saturria cf	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000
WClark 1b	3	0	0	1	1	1	.333
Tatis 3b	2	0	0	1	2	1	.261
Lankford lf	4	0	0	0	0	0	.257
Renteria ss	3	0	0	0	1	0	.277
Matheny c	4	1	1	0	0	0	.263
Kile p	2	1	0	0	1	0	.114
Christiansen p	0	0	0	0	0	0	—
Veres p	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000
Totals	**28**	**4**	**5**	**3**	**10**	**4**	

Chicago	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
EYoung 2b	5	1	2	1	0	0	.296
Gutierrez ss	5	0	2	1	0	0	.279
Grace 1b	4	0	0	0	0	0	.282
Brown lf	4	0	2	0	0	0	.338
I-Meyers pr	0	1	0	0	0	0	.170
Matthews jr. lf	0	0	0	0	0	0	.178
Andrews 3b	4	1	2	0	0	0	.218
CPatterson cf	3	2	1	0	1	0	.133
Buford rf	4	0	1	3	0	0	.254
Reed c	2	0	0	0	2	2	.213
Wood p	0	0	0	0	0	0	.237
Arnold p	2	0	0	0	0	1	.111
Ohman p	0	0	0	0	0	0	—
a-Huson ph	1	0	0	0	0	0	.203
Totals	**34**	**5**	**10**	**5**	**3**	**3**	

[illegible]	211	000	000	4	5	1

TOMORROW

Mets at Philadelphia, 1:35 p.m.
Houston at Cincinnati, 1:15 p.m.
Atlanta at Montreal, 1:35 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Milwaukee, 2:05 p.m.
St. Louis at Chicago, 2:20 p.m.
Florida at Colorado, 3:05 p.m.
San Diego at Los Angeles, 4:10 p.m.
Arizona at San Francisco, 4:05 p.m.

THURSDAY

Houston 7, St. Louis 5
Montreal 10, Florida 3
Colorado 13, San Diego 4
Philadelphia 6, Mets 5
Milwaukee 12, Pittsburgh 2
San Francisco 8, Arizona 7

WILD-CARD RACE

	W	L	Pct.	GB
[illegible]				

Plus

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Buffalo's Program Penalizes Itself

The University at Buffalo announced self-imposed penalties on its basketball program yesterday for what it said were likely violations while Tim Cohane was coach.

The school reported what it believed to be multiple infractions to the Mid-American Conference last October, including illegal workouts of recruits. The MAC informed the National Collegiate Athletic Association, which determined an investigation was warranted.

Neither Buffalo, the MAC or the N.C.A.A. have revealed the other reported violations.

Cohane resigned in December and was replaced by Reggie Witherspoon. The school's self-imposed sanctions included delaying the start of all preseason practices by two weeks. Individual workouts began Sept. 15 and full team workouts will start Nov. 1 — 16 days before the season opener against Niagara. The school will also cut from 13 to 12 the number of eligible scholarships for next season, reduce from 12 to 10 the number of allowable campus recruiting visits during this academic year, and reduce from two to one the number of coaches permitted on the road to recruit at any given time. (AP)

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Yesterday
EAST
Sacred Heart 27, St. John's, N.Y. 6
Today
EAST
Navy (0-2) at Boston College (1-1), Noon
Dartmouth (0-1) at New Hampshire (3-0), Noon
Lafayette (1-1) at Penn (0-1), 12:30 p.m.
Butler (1-2) at Georgetown, D.C. (1-1), 1 p.m.
Memphis (2-1) at Army (0-3), 1 p.m.
Harvard (0-1) at Brown (1-0), 1 p.m.
Columbia (1-0) at Bucknell (1-1), 1 p.m.
Fordham (1-2) at Colgate (1-1), 1 p.m.
Canisius (0-2) at Gannon (1-2), 1 p.m.
Towson (3-0) at Holy Cross (2-0), 1 p.m.
Montclair St. (1-0) at Iona (1-1), 1 p.m.
Siena (0-2) at La Salle (2-1), 1 p.m.
New Haven (2-0) at Massachusetts (1-1), 1 p.m.
Cent. Conn. St. (1-1) at Monmouth (0-2), 1 p.m.
Stony Brook (1-1) at St. Francis, Pa. (0-3), 1 p.m.
E. Michigan (1-2) at Temple (2-1), 1 p.m.
Northeastern (2-1) at Connecticut (2-1), 1:30 p.m.
Marist (1-1) at Duquesne (3-0), 1:30 p.m.
Yale (1-0) at Cornell (0-1), 2 p.m.
Rutgers (2-1) at Pittsburgh (3-0), 3:30 p.m.
Miami (1-1) at West Virginia (2-0), 3:30 p.m.
Maine (2-1) at Villanova (2-1), 4 p.m.
Wagner (1-1) at Albany, N.Y. (0-2), 6 p.m.
Bowling Green (0-3) at Buffalo (0-3), 7 p.m.
West Chester (0-3) at Delaware (3-0), 7 p.m.
Rhode Island (0-2) at Hofstra (2-1), 7 p.m.
Lehigh (2-0) at Princeton (0-1), 7 p.m.
SOUTH
Syracuse (1-1) at East Carolina (2-1), Noon
Morgan St. (0-2) at Howard (0-3), Noon
Liberty (1-2) at Delaware St. (1-2), 1 p.m.
New Mexico St. (0-2) at Georgia (1-1), 1 p.m.
Furman (3-0) at VMI (0-3), 1 p.m.
Wofford (0-2) at Charleston S. (2-1), 1:30 p.m.
S. Utah (1-2) at Hampton (2-1), 1:30 p.m.
Miss. St. (2-0) at South Carolina (3-0), 1:30 p.m.
The Citadel (1-2) at Appalachian St. (1-1), 2 p.m.
Emory & Henry (2-0) at Davidson (2-0), 2 p.m.
Jackson St. (2-1) at Southern U. (1-2), 2:30 p.m.
E. Illinois (2-1) at Tenn.-Martin (1-2), 3 p.m.
McNeese St. (2-1) at Alcorn St. (0-3), 3:30 p.m.
Kentucky (2-1) at Florida (3-0), 3:30 p.m.
Clemson (3-0) at Virginia (2-1), 3:30 p.m.
La.-Monroe (1-2) at Tennessee (1-1), 4 p.m.
Florida A&M (3-0) at Tennessee St. (1-2), 4 p.m.
N. Illinois (1-1) at Auburn (3-0), 5 p.m.
Louisville (2-0) at Florida St. (3-0), 6 p.m.
Middle Tennessee (1-2) at Maryland (1-1), 6 p.m.
Marshall (1-1) at North Carolina (2-1), 6 p.m.
William & Mary (1-2) at UCF (1-2), 6 p.m.
ETSU (2-1) at W. Carolina (1-2), 6 p.m.
Elon (1-2) at N. Carolina A&T (1-0), 6:30 p.m.
Ga. Southern (2-1) at Chattanooga (2-1), 7 p.m.
Tenn. Tech (1-1) at E. Kentucky (2-0), 7 p.m.
Beth.-Cookman (2-0) at Morris Brown (1-2), 7 p.m.
Indiana St. (0-3) at Murray St. (1-2), 7 p.m.
Duke (0-3) at Vanderbilt (0-3), 7 p.m.
Ark.-Pine Bluff (2-0) at Alabama St. (1-2), 8 p.m.
UAB (1-1) at LSU (2-1), 8 p.m.
Northwestern St. (1-1) at La.-Lafayette (0-3), 8 p.m.
Grambling St. (2-1) at MVSU (0-4), 8 p.m.
MIDWEST
Penn St. (1-3) at Ohio St. (3-0), Noon
Minnesota (2-1) at Purdue (2-1), Noon
Austin Peay (0-2) at Valparaiso (2-1), Noon
Northwestern (2-1) at Wisconsin (3-0), Noon
Boise St. (2-1) at Cent. Michigan (1-2), 1 p.m.
Cincinnati (2-1) at Indiana (0-2), 2 p.m.
North Texas (0-3) at Kansas St. (3-0), 2 p.m.
[illegible] at Ohio (2-1), 2 p.m.

AUTO RACING

Coulthard Records Fastest Practice Lap

The McLaren driver David Coulthard recorded the fastest lap time in yesterday's two practice sessions for tomorrow's United States Formula One Grand Prix in Indianapolis.

Coulthard, a 29-year-old Scot who failed to complete a lap in the morning session at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, clocked 1 minute 14.561 seconds in the afternoon to lead his teammate Mika Hakkinen by just under a quarter of a second.

Hakkinen is 2 points ahead of Michael Schumacher of Germany in the world drivers' championship through 14 of the season's 17 races, with Coulthard 17 points back.
(Bloomberg News)

MAYFIELD WINS POLE AT DOVER: Jeremy Mayfield's roller-coaster season swung up again yesterday when he won another pole on one of Nascar's most demanding tracks.

Mayfield, looking to win tomorrow for the third time this year, captured his third pole of the season with a lap of 159.872 miles an hour in Dover, Del. His Ford got around Dover Downs International Speedway in 22.518 seconds for the fifth pole of his career. Three weeks ago Mayfield won a pole at Darlington Raceway. (AP)

MBNA.COM 400 QUALIFYING

DOVER, Del.
Qualifiers for tomorrow's Winston Cup series race at Dover Downs International Speedway with car number in parentheses, driver, car make and speed in mph:
1. (12) Jeremy Mayfield, Ford, 159.872.
2. (14) Rick Mast, Pontiac, 158.926.
3. (10) Johnny Benson, Pontiac, 158.800.
4. (2) Rusty Wallace, Ford, 158.632.
5. (6) Mark Martin, Ford, 158.416.
6. (22) Ward Burton, Pontiac, 158.346.
7. (94) Bill Elliott, Ford, 158.304.
8. (88) Dale Jarrett, Ford, 158.277.
9. (24) Jeff Gordon, Chevrolet, 158.082.
10. (97) Kurt Busch, Ford, 157.936.
11. (25) Jerry Nadeau, Chevrolet, 157.909.
12. (33) Joe Nemechek, Chevrolet, 157.832.
13. (8) Dale Earnhardt Jr, Chevrolet, 157.777.
14. (28) Ricky Rudd, Ford, 157.418.
15. (77) Robert Pressley, Ford, 157.418.
16. (93) Dave Blaney, Pontiac, 157.377.
17. (18) Bobby Labonte, Pontiac, 157.308.
18. (36) Ken Schrader, Pontiac, 157.219.
19. (7) Michael Waltrip, Chevrolet, 156.952.
20. (27) Mike Bliss, Pontiac, 156.952.
21. (99) Jeff Burton, Ford, 156.883.
22. (21) Elliott Sadler, Ford, 156.842.
23. (55) Kenny Wallace, Chevrolet, 156.774.
24. (31) Mike Skinner, Chevrolet, 156.631.
25. (5) Terry Labonte, Chevrolet, 156.631.

SOCCER

Chicago Romps; MetroStars Next

Hristo Stoitchkov had two goals and three assists as the Chicago Fire beat the New England Revolution, 6-0, last night to advance to the Major League Soccer semifinals. Chicago, which won the quarterfinal series 6 points to 3, will face the MetroStars in the semifinals, beginning Tuesday night in Chicago.

On a rainy night that saw flashes of lightning at Soldier Field, Stoitchkov scored in the 14th and 17th minutes and goalkeeper Zack Thornton kept the Revolution scoreless.

M.L.S. PLAYOFFS

Quarterfinal Round
(Seeding in parentheses)
Colorado (8) vs. Kansas City (1)
Saturday, Sept. 16
Kansas City 1, Colorado 0
Wednesday, Sept. 20
Kansas City 0, Colorado 0, tie, Kansas City leads series 4-1
Tomorrow
Colorado at Kansas City, 8:30 p.m.

HOCKEY

Senators Want Yashin to Pay

Rod Bryden, the owner of the Ottawa Senators, wants Aleksei Yashin to pay the team $930,000 for sitting out last season.

The Senators have asked Bill Daly, the National Hockey League's executive vice president and chief legal officer, to proceed with a lawsuit seeking damages from Yashin, Frank Brown, an N.H.L. spokesman, said yesterday.

Bryden told The Ottawa Sun that he wanted to continue with the suit because Yashin's absence from the lineup cost the club a chance to reach the second round of the playoffs. Even though Buffalo eliminated the Senators in the first round the previous season — when the team had Yashin in the lineup — Bryden believes not having Yashin, a former All-Star, cost the club financially. Bryden had been seeking $7 million from Yashin, but he dropped the figure when the arbitrator Lawrence Holden ruled that Yashin, the club's leading scorer in 1998-99, owed the team another year. (AP)

KINGS' BLAKE RESIGNS CAPTAINCY: Defenseman Rob Blake has resigned as captain of the Los Angeles Kings after negotiations for a contract extension broke down. Blake, who is signed through the end of this season, had reportedly been offered a three-year, $22.5 million extension. He rejected the deal and was surprised when the Kings ended negotiations. He faces the possibility that he may be traded, because he can leave as an unrestricted free agent next summer. (AP)

PRESEASON

Thursday
Rangers 5, Atlanta 3
Philadelphia 3, Washington 2
Florida 2, Tampa Bay 1
Boston 6, Detroit 5
Pittsburgh 4, Colorado 2,
Edmonton 4, Toronto 2
Last Night
Vancouver 3, Ottawa 0
Florida 4, Boston 2
Buffalo 2, Columbus 1
St. Louis at Chicago
Phoenix at Dallas
Toronto at Calgary
Los Angeles at Anaheim
Today
Rangers at Dallas, 8:30 p.m.
Islanders vs. Wash., at Richmond, Va., 7 p.m.
Vancouver vs. Minnesota, at Winnipeg, 5 p.m.
Carolina at Atlanta, 7 p.m.
Pitts. vs. Colorado, at Hershey, Pa., 7 p.m.
Philadelphia at New Jersey, 7:30 p.m.
Columbus vs. Buffalo, at Rochester, 7:30 p.m.
Chicago at Nashville, 8 p.m.
San Jose vs. L.A., at Bakersfield, 10 p.m.
Sunday
Atlanta vs. St. Louis, at Lincoln, Neb., 3 p.m.
Toronto at Vancouver, 4 p.m.
Detroit at Pittsburgh, 7:30 p.m.
San Jose at Anaheim, 8 p.m.
Ottawa at Calgary, 8 p.m.
Minnesota at Chicago, 8 p.m.

TRANSACTIONS

BASEBALL

American League
DETROIT TIGERS—Transferred 1B Tony Clark from the 15- to the 60-day disabled list. Claimed P Eric DuBose off waivers from the Cleveland Indians.
Pacific Coast League
CALGARY CANNONS—Announced the renewal of their player development contract with the Florida Marlins through the 2002 season.
Texas-Louisiana League
TLL—Announced the sale of the Amarillo Dillas to a group of investors, headed by Bobby Lee.

BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association
ORLANDO MAGIC—Signed F Ed O'Bannon.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League
CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS—Named Mike Smith general manager. Reassigned G Erasmo [illegible]

Yehuda Amichai, Poet Who Turned Israel's Experience Into Verse, Dies at 76

By MEL GUSSOW

Yehuda Amichai, the Israeli poet who distilled his experience — and his nation's — into highly metaphorical verse written in Hebrew and translated into more than 25 languages, died yesterday in Jerusalem. He was 76.

He died of a rare form of lymphoma, said Stanley Moss, a poet and close friend.

In his poetry Mr. Amichai often wrote about love and loss and, in recent years, about aging and mortality, all of it linked by his gift for poeticizing the particular: the localized object or image in everyday life. From his point of view, the role of a poet was "to name each thing, each feeling, each experience, plainly and accurately, without pretense."

In Mr. Amichai's verse, said the critic Robert Alter, "There is a tension between personal experience and the violent pressures of history." Mr. Alter continued. "Writing about himself, he is also writing about Everyman."

Mr. Amichai's work derived from his own background as a young man fleeing from Nazi Germany to Palestine in the 1930's, as a soldier who fought in the British Army in 1948 and in the Israeli forces, and as a husband and father and lover articulating his feelings and dreams. He was firmly rooted in contemporary Israel and fully aware of the politics that surrounded him, but he often treated it by indirection and had been known to write love poetry in time of war.

Reviewing "The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai" in The New York Times Book Review in 1986, Edward Hirsch said, "Mr. Amichai is an essentially autobiographical poet with the rare ability to characterize the complex fate of the modern Israeli, the private individual inevitably affected by the public realm of war, politics and religion."

He said that Mr. Amichai was like one of Emerson's "representative men," updated and living in Jerusalem, a prophet who "speaks in the guise of an ordinary Jewish citizen concerned with his people and his place."

In Hebrew and in translation, Mr. Amichai's work is remarkably accessible, imaginative, unburdened by artificiality and often almost conversational. As a result, he was that exception: a poet who is read by a wide public and not just by academics and other poets. His books sold about 15,000 copies on average in Israel, comparable to best-seller status in larger countries. Still, in the manner of a poet, for many years he had to support himself by teaching.

His celebrity in Israel followed him down the street. Walking in Jerusalem, his home for many years, he would be recognized and accorded the attention that in the United States might be reserved for a movie star or athlete. None of the public attention seemed to turn his head. In person, he seemed as unpretentious as his poetry. "The reason a poet is a poet is to write poems, not to advertise himself as a poet," he said.

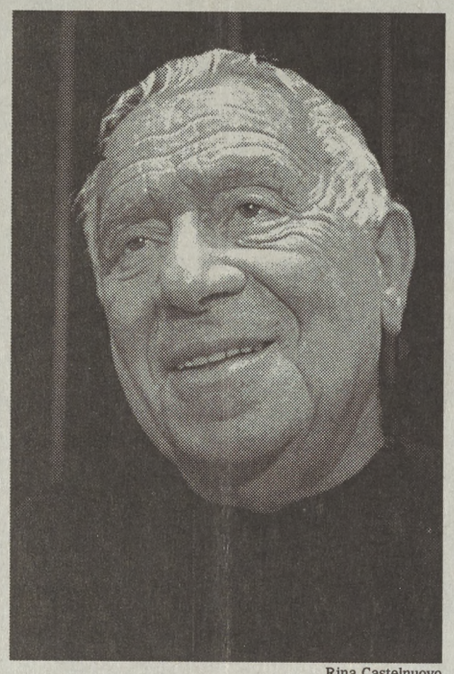
In a profile of Mr. Amichai in The New York Times Magazine in 1986, Mr. Alter said about his work, "His Hebrew is often rich in soundplay, wordplay, allusion and other traits of virtuosity that are not readily evident in translation, and his language is a shifting mixture of colloquial and literary."

But because he was popular in so many countries Eastern and Western, intellectuals in his own land sometimes regarded him with skepticism, as if his popularity negated his authenticity as an artist. In the larger world of poetry, his position is secure.

Mr. Alter said that Mr. Amichai saw no contradiction in a poet's also being a man of action. and that a symbolic tie between the two can be discovered in his use of poetic metaphor as a "weapon in the hand-to-hand struggle with reality."

Mr. Amichai said he believed that metaphor "is the great human revolution, at least on a par with the invention of the wheel." Words were his arsenal, as in his "Poem of My Time":

Is there in this land a stone that was never thrown
and never built and never overturned
and never uncovered and never discovered
and never screamed from a wall and never discarded by the builders
and never closed on top of a grave and never lay under lovers



Rina Castelnuovo

Yehuda Amichai

and never turned into a cornerstone?

In an interview with Lawrence Joseph published in The Paris Review, Mr. Amichai said, "A poet's state of mind is seeing the world with a kind of double exposure, seeing undertones and overtones, seeing the world as it is." Irony was an essential element in his poetry, a way, he said, of "always trying to see another side.'" That was how he lived, he said, "focusing, refocusing and juxtaposing different shifting and changing perspectives."

Describing his process, he said he combined "different, sometimes competing, language and forms." Before he began writing, he said he thought about the shape the poem would take "almost visually, like a piece of sculpture — I can touch it." Then he would fill it in "with my subjects, from the entire world of my subjects." Freely mixing techniques and forms, he wrote poetry that ranged from terse four-line images to sonnets to the epic "Travels of a Latter Day Benjamin of Tudela."

For him, time was the most important dimension in his writing: "Time is entirely relative, relational. The phrase I like to use to describe my sense of time — a play on *comparative literature* — is *comparative time*. Time, for me, is imaginatively comparative and continuous; I have an almost physical sense of memory recall. ... It's easy for me to shortcut back to my childhood, my adolescence, my wars."

Yehuda Amichai was born in Wurzburg, Germany, on May 3, 1924. The Amichais were an Orthodox Jewish family living in a mostly Catholic environment. After immigrating with his parents to Palestine in 1936, he lived in Jerusalem. After his high school graduation, he was drafted into the British army and served four years with the Palestinian brigade during World War II. Stationed in Egypt, he accidently came across an anthology of modern British poetry that included poems by Dylan Thomas, T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden. Their work had a great impact on him. As he said, "I think that was when I began to think seriously about writing poetry."

After the war he taught school in Israel and, in 1948, joined the Haganah underground. He fought in the Israeli-Arab wars of 1948, 1956 and 1973. His adult life was caught up in Israel's struggle to survive and endure and the images of war appear frequently in his work. In his poem "Seven Laments for the War Dead" he wrote that everything is written in three languages: "Hebrew, Arabic and Death. "

While teaching, he also studied the Bible and literature at Hebrew University and wrote poetry. In 1951 he showed some of his poems to a professor who submitted one to a magazine. It was accepted. Then he won first prize in a poetry competition. His first book of poetry, "Now and in Other Days" was published in 1955. The book was attacked by some Israeli critics, partly because of his use of colloquial language, but gradually it became a success, and soon his career was begun.

In the mid-1950's after a trip to the United States, he wrote two essays, one about hearing Auden read his poetry at the 92nd Street Y. Later he and Auden became friends. He began writing short stories, publishing a volume in 1959. Other books followed in Hebrew but it was not until 1968 that his work was published in English, beginning with his first novel "Not of This Time, Not of This Place."

Mr. Amichai's breakthrough with English readers came in the late 1970's with two volumes translated by the author and Ted Hughes. It was Mr. Hughes, he said, "who put me into orbit." With Mr. Hughes's encouragement, he was invited to read his poetry at the Spoleto arts festival, and soon found himself in the company of Auden,

Writing about love and loss, as well as aging, by poeticizing the particular.

Pound and others, "reading with poets whom I had admired for years."

Soon the admiration was mutual, as his work became recognized throughout the world. Although he often taught and gave poetry readings in the United States, he remained an active Israeli citizen who never ignored the politics of his country. "You have to acknowledge political realities," he said in the interview in The Paris Review. "There's an old Jewish saying, 'If you meet the devil, take him with you into the synagogue.' Try to take the evil of politics into yourself, to influence it imaginatively, to give it human shape. This is my attitude toward politics."

For him, all poetry was political. "This is because real poems deal with a human response to reality, and politics is part of reality, history in the making. Even if a poet writes about sitting in a glass house drinking tea, it reflects politics."

In addition to his many books of poetry and his short stories, Mr. Amichai published a volume of plays, two novels and three books for children. A new book of verse, "Opened Closed Opened," was recently published by Harcourt Brace. In it, he said, "God is change and Death is his prophet."

He is survived by his wife Chana, two sons, Roni and David, and a daughter Emanuela, all of Israel.

Since the 1960's he lived in the Yemin Moshe district of Jerusalem. When he moved there, it bordered no man's land, but, he said, it was the only place he could afford. In recent years, it has become an exclusive residential community. The community may have changed, but the resident had remained the same, a man of composure and compassion, who quietly helped to shape the literature of his country, a cafe poet who found and earned an international readership.

In "Gods Come and Go, Prayers Remain Forever," a poem written in 1994, he wrote:

Tombstones crumble, words come and go, words are forgotten,
The lips that uttered them turned to dust,
Tongues die like people, other tongues come to life,
Gods in the sky change, gods come and go,
Prayers remain forever.

Metaphor as a Weapon in 'a Struggle With Reality'

God takes pity on kindergarten children,
Less on schoolchildren.
On grown-ups, He won't take pity anymore.
He leaves them alone.
Sometime they have to crawl on all fours
In the blazing sand,
To get to the first aid station
Dripping blood.

Maybe He will take pity and cast His shadow
On those who truly love
As a tree on someone sleeping on the bench
On a boulevard.

Maybe we too will spend on them
The last coins of favor
Mother bequeathed us,
So their bliss will protect us
Now and in other days.

From "God Takes Pity on Kindergarten Children" ("Now and in Other Days," 1956)

In the place where I never was
I never shall be.
The place where I was, as if
I never was there. Human beings wander away
From the place of their birth
And far from the words their own
Mouth uttered,
No more within the promises
That were promised.

And they eat standing up, and die sitting,
And remember lying.

And what I shall never return
To see, I must love for ever.
Only a stranger will return to my place. But I shall
Inscribe the things again, like Moses,
After breaking the first tablets.

From "The Place Where I Never Was" ("Poems, 1948-1952")

I was born in 1924. If I were a violin my age
I wouldn't be very good. As a wine I would be splendid
Or altogether sour. As a dog I would be dead. As a book
I would begin to be expensive or thrown out by now.
As a forest I would be young, as a machine ridiculous,
And as a human being I'm very tired.

I was born in 1924. When I think about humanity
I just think about those born in my year.
Their mothers gave birth with my mother,
Wherever they were, in hospitals or in dark flats.

On this day, my birthday, I would like
To say a great prayer for you,
Whose load of hopes and disappointments
Pulls your life downward,
Whose deeds diminish
And whose gods increase,
You are all brothers of my hope and companions of my despair.

May you find the right rest,
The living in their life, the dead in their death.

He who remembers his childhood better
Than others is the winner,
If there are any winners at all.

From "1924" ("An Hour of Grace," 1983)

Is It Eureka, or Your Everyday Culture?

Metaphor Getting Its Due As a Wellspring of Science

NYT July 31, '83

By WILLIAM J. BROAD

History repeatedly hints that scientists find inspiration for their discoveries in art, perhaps a striking landscape or other cultural or esthetic experiences. The great 17th century astronomer Johannes Kepler was motivated by a mystical devotion to musical harmonies.

Yet scientists often attribute their breakthroughs to "method" or to a stroke of genius. Erased from their equations is the component called metaphor, analogy, cultural context or social milieu. "The source of the inspiration is often ignored," says Robert Siegfried, a science historian at the University of Wisconsin.

That neglect is coming to an end, however. The role of cultural inspiration in science has come under increased scrutiny by scholars, who are demolishing old myths about the scientist's act of creation.

Something akin to poetic creativity — the search for hidden likenesses — can be traced to the roots of scientific revolution. Kepler, who believed in the "music of the spheres" and tried to work out the notes sounded by each planet, discovered laws that describe how the planets trace elliptical paths about the Sun. "Kepler felt for his laws by way of metaphors," said the late Jacob Bronowski, whose television series, "The Ascent of Man," wove science into the fabric of political, cultural and social life. "To us, the analogies are farfetched. Yet are they more so than the wild leap by which Rutherford and Bohr in our own century found a model for the atom in the planetary system?" That metaphor — electrons orbiting the atom's nucleus like planets around the Sun — still dominates the popular perception of atomic physics, though scientists now describe electron behavior in terms of statistical probabilities and jumps from one energy level to another.

"Scientists use creative analogies and comparisons to extend theories and even to make new ones," says Roger S. Jones, a physicist at the University of Minnesota, in "Physics as Metaphor" (New American Library, 1982). "Modern elementary particles are extensions and elaborations of the Greek atomos, and William Harvey found in the centralized Sun of Copernicus a model for the heart as the center of the circulation of blood." He might have added Sir Isaac Newton, who gave posterity the great machine, a clockwork universe in which everything moves according to inexorable law.

One of the most striking examples of metaphor comes from the work of Charles Darwin, who hit upon "survival of the fittest" in his theory of evolution. Darwin's was the 19th century world of laissez-faire economics, an age in which industrialists reigned supreme and young children were routinely put to work in mines and mills. Silvan S. Schweber, a Brandeis University historian, has shown how Darwin immersed himself in the economic works of the period just prior to his discovery, imbibing the belief that society functions best when individuals are free to compete and struggle to their own advantage.

According to Stephen Jay Gould, the Harvard paleontologist and science commentator, when Darwin explained his insights into natural selection — "nature red in tooth and claw," as Tennyson put it — he claimed to have ignored social influence. Instead, he cited traditional ways in which scientists are said to make discoveries. In step with the scientific vogue of the day, Darwin referred to pure induction. "I worked on true Baconian principles," he wrote in his autobiography, "and without any theory collected facts on a wholesale scale." On another occasion, Darwin conjured up the "Eureka" myth, claiming the idea came like a bolt out of the blue.

"I think most scientists falsely deny the influence of culture for totally honest reasons," Dr. Gould said in a recent interview. "They are trained that way. Most scientists genuinely believe they are reading nature literally, without inspiration from politics or culture. But it's no accident that you got Darwin in the 19th century, and that it was right out of the political economy of the day."

The belief in objectivity is enshrined in the recording of scientific ideas. As a literary form, scientific papers are as stylized as sonnets. If they fail to obey the rules of composition, they will not be published. Conventions require the writer to be above all impersonal, so as to give the appearance of objectivity. Allusions to metaphor, culture or personal history are shelved. "Scientists are constrained to write in an objective style, even if they are dimly aware of political influence," Dr. Gould said.

So deep is belief in method that some deny discovery ever originates by analogy from contemporary politics and culture, rather than from data. Nonscientists, however, have often seen through this self-deception. Social Darwinists of the 19th century adopted evolutionary theory as an ideological banner in support of class distinctions. Romantic poets of the 18th and early 19th centuries denied, in rhapsodic verse, the image of nature as a machine. Blake, for one, wrote of science in terms of "dark Satanic mills," while Goethe proposed humanizing scientific methods and minds by merging nature in all its qualitative glory with science in all its quantitative rigor.

In the intellectual ferment of the 20th century, historians are exploring the subtle interplay between science and social milieu on many levels; among these, the notion that the noncausal physics of quantum mechanics — the "new physics" — is linked to the cultural decay of Weimar Germany. Scholars, notably Paul Forman of the University of Rochester, say that in defeat, German intellectuals sought an escape from historical determinism, which decreed them victims of their past. German physicists, the theory suggests, responded with an acausal physics that permitted uncertainty at the atomic level — a lawlessness and unpredictability that allowed nature to "cheat," to have an electron, for example, act simultaneously as a particle and a wave.



Bettmann Archive

William Blake's drawing 'The Ancient of Days' shows Jehovah using compasses to make the infinite finite.

Today, the very language of science — peppered with talk of black holes, the big bang, gene splicing — hints at metaphor spurring scientific thought. Many scholars believe the process will continually evolve. "Scientific metaphor can have an intuitive, mythic, life-giving character that completes and enhances its quantitative meaning," Dr. Jones observed. "By accepting responsibility for our own creative part in the cosmos, we shall be able, perhaps, to frame the metaphors of the future through a conscious, moral act of human imagination."

(More Ideas & Trends, page 20.)

board of directors. She was alluding to proposals for decentralizing NPR and distributing more Federal money to the 281 member stations.

The final hurdle to a settlement was the issue of who should control the network's transmitting equipment, which is considered a valuable asset. The corporation wanted title transferred to a group of public radio

stretching thin their financial bases and managerial expertise. "We want to free creative talent to do what creative talent should be doing," said Franklin A. Thomas, Ford Foundation president.

During the first five years, the fund hopes to make about 100 grants of two types: First, if an arts group can reduce current deficits by half, the fund

the ambiguities of "association." A House Veterans Affairs subcommittee last week approved a bill that would compensate veterans who contracted soft-tissue sarcoma within 20 years of leaving Southeast Asia or who developed certain liver and blood diseases or chloracne, a severe skin condition, within one year of leaving the battle area. An estimated

and the presence of married ministers among other denominations have made the concept acceptable to the laity. The Pope, however, argues that only celibate priests can symbolize complete dedication to God.

Wayne Biddle and Margot Slade

Headliners



Then There Was One

Will "The NBC Nightly News" be any clearer without **Roger Mudd** co-anchoring the show from Washington? Network executives said they thought so last week and announced that Mr. Mudd would be dropped from that job in September to become a senior correspondent. With Mr. Mudd in Washington and Tom Brokaw, the other co-anchor, reporting from New York, "there was no internal logic" and it was "confusing," said Reuven Frank, the president of NBC News. That explanation didn't wash with Mr. Mudd, who said the network's decision was "shortsighted."



Lasting Impression

Others will learn from the mistakes of a Nebraska highway contracting firm that was recently found guilty of bid rigging. In Lincoln last week, Federal District Judge **Warren K. Urbom** sentenced the Missouri Valley Construction Company to choose either to pay a $2 million fine or to pay a $375,000 fine and give the University of Nebraska $1.475 million to endow a chair of ethics. The university got the chair — the first ever to be so endowed, according to some experts. Under Judge Urbom's ruling, the guilty company will neither choose the professor nor get a tax deduction.



Utah Murders

Arthur Bishop, whom police have questioned several times in recent years about the disappearance of young Salt Lake City boys, apparently came up with some answers last week. After his latest talk with the authorities, Mr. Bishop led police to the remains of five boys who were reported missing between October 1979 and last month. All had apparently been sexually assaulted and beaten or shot to death. Nude photographs of one victim were found in Mr. Bishop's home, police said. The 30-year-old former Eagle Scout was charged with five counts of capital murder.



Is There a Sauce?

One drawback of surviving on a diet of ants is having to catch so darned many. Another, according to a man who spent a few weeks doing it, is that "they didn't really taste that good." Lance Cpl. **Karl Bell**, a marine who was rescued last week after spending 40 days trapped in a steep ravine in northern California, said moss and water were the only other things he consumed during his ordeal. Though he lost 75 pounds, the 22-year-old Mr. Bell was in good spirits and good condition at a South Lake Tahoe hospital, where he described himself as a "dumb jerk that got lost."

just gave to its roughly 2,000 management people. (I don't quarrel wi those raises, incidentally, but some of them are in excess of what the top paid para *earns* in a year.)

I'm really shocked at *The Times*, which prides itself on an enlight ened attitude toward civil rights matters but which described the par pension bill as "the worst" of several "pension raids." Giving low pay t a group of people who are overwhelmingly women and minority may b justifiable in terms of the level of skills required for the job—but wha justification exists for denying them pensions that almost all other em ployees, public and private, can count on?

In its July 17 editorial, *The Times* urged the Governor, "who think of the state as one big family," to veto the para pension bill lest thos who do not work for government "consider themselves mere in-laws. I always thought in-laws were family, too, but to keep *The Times*' meta phor intact, unless paras do get needed and deserved pensions at las they have every right to consider themselves the maltreated stepchildre of a very mean-spirited family—thrown to the wolves after decades service to the city and its schools.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this section every Sunday. Reader Correspondence is invited. Address your letters Mr. Shanker at United Federation of Teachers, 260 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10010. ©1983 by Albert Shank

Master's and Ph.D Programs in **PSYCHOLOGY** At The New School For Social Research

For more than four decades, The New School's Graduate Faculty has been a leading center for study and research in the human sciences. The Psychology Department offers both full-time and

Farm & Ranch

■ Gilles column.....8B
■ Grain and livestock markets 8B

State bull merchants enjoy bull market

By T.J. GILLES
Tribune Agriculture Editor

It's been a great fall for Montana bull merchants.

"In terms of average, I haven't seen anything like it," said Roger Brownson, Montana State University Extension beef specialist.

In the past, he said, a few purebred operations with smaller offerings have enjoyed a high average price for their bulls.

But this fall, auctions with a hundred head or more have been averaging $2,000 to $3,000 per bull, and that's unheard of.

"Montana always has commanded some of the nation's highest prices for seedstock," Brownson said, because the state's relatively stringent health laws have been backed up with progressive breeders who use growth-rate data to select for constant improvement.

But when looking at this fall's bull prices, about the only comparable event was during the "exotics" craze of the 1970s, when [illegible]

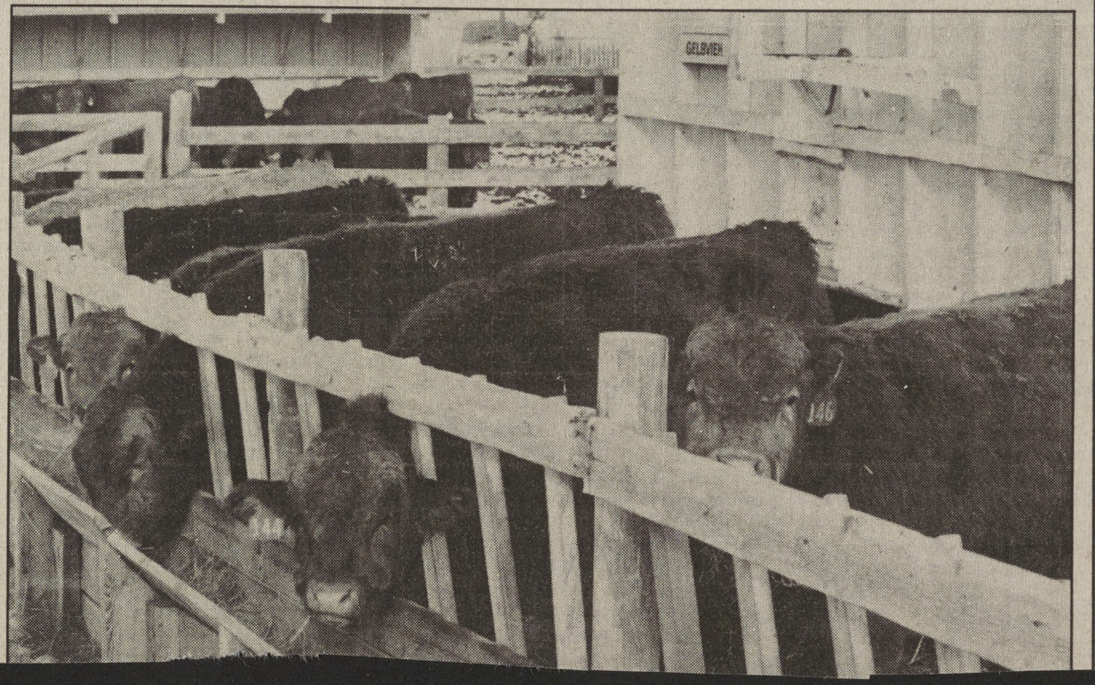
Sale details.....8B

The Hobson operations also had the highest-priced individuals, with two bulls bringing in more than $10,000 each.

Basin Mont Power 5959 brought $10,750 for half interest and full possession. The February son of PJM Montana Power sold to Taylor Angus, Laramie, Wyo., and Fellman Angus, Jordan. Another February son of that same bull sold to Taylor for $10,400 for two-thirds interest.

The Pat Goggins family's Vermilion Ranch near Billings had its best sale in close to 30 years in the business as 113 coming 2-year-old Angus bulls sold for a record average of $3,178 each.

At Sitz Angus near Harrison, home of the nation's largest registered Angus herd, the average on 334 head was $2,834, up $135 from the previous year in another million-dollar-plus sale for the family of the late Bob Sitz, who perished last winter in a tractor [illegible]



Philip Morris pulls out

World Food Prize loses its funding

N.Y. Times News Service

WASHINGTON — Philip Morris Inc., the tobacco and food company, has announced that it is withdrawing financial support for the World Food Prize, a $200,000 prize for farm research that was considered the most prestigious award in the field.

The three-year-old prize, established in 1986 by General Foods, a subsidiary of Philip Morris, has been awarded to two Indian researchers and an American scientist for achievements in developing new crops and livestock systems to feed underdeveloped [illegible]

Writing for writers: The words keep piling up



T.J. Gilles

You've seen the ad: A Clark Kent type gets up from his desk in the foreground of a wall of bookshelves, removes his horn-rimmed glasses and asks rhetorically: "Are you one of the quiet types who should become a writer?"

More than likely, you're one already.

So why bring up this writing game now, on Christmas Eve? Because my bosses don't want me to repeat last year's Christmas classic (or the previous year's), for starters. And those of us who have been in bookstores lately seeking coffee-table literature for those hard-to-appease gift-getters have noticed the re-emergence of the thick Writer's Market book on bookshelves throughout this great land.

The fact that this Writer's Market is not only a two-word joke but an annual best seller is perhaps all I ought to say about the writing business.

It deserves to be a best seller, of course, as do the various magazines devoted to the crafty art.

One of the early chapters in this heavy book wins my annual award for best piece of fiction.

You know, the chapter about the economics of writing. The page with the balance sheet that has expenses — like the $19.95 for the Writer's Market, half that for a subscription to the Writer's Digest (published by the same guys), $1.99 for some typing ribbon and five bucks for a book of stamps.

On the income side, they've got nice, big, round numbers for the $600 sale to Elks magazine or six grand for an unillustrated think piece sold to the New Yorker.

If you think this is all bunko, don't take my word for it or even bother to go down to count the number of M.F.A. recipients who are now matriculating through bread lines.

Take this quote from Robert K. Massie, president of the Author's Guild: "The situation of writers in the United States today is not really better than it was seven or eight years ago when we participated in a survey which showed us that the median income of writers in this country from writing is less than $5,000 a year."

I might add that the survey he's talking about was of some 2,239 **published** authors.

In the past, I've sometimes joshingly suggested that we need some sort of socio-economic program for writers similar to what we've got for farmers. Apparently, the surplus of verbiage is at least equal to what the surplus of grain was up until last year, so I've argued that we should pay writers not to write, just as we've paid farmers not to plant.

After such public utterances, several farmers have indicated I would be the perfect recipient of the first federal Writer's Block Grant, which would be modeled after the Conservation Reserve program and require me to be unpublished for 10 years (except in the case of emergency, like the CRP had with the drought last year).

Since then, I've found out that we already have a writer's subsidy program, the printed word's version of the Export Enhancement Program. Browsing through the newsletter of the Hellgate Writers out of Missoula, it became apparent that nearly every item on a member's most recent triumph — or the organization's upcoming seminars and workshops — contained the word "grant" at least once. And they weren't discussing the late Civil War general whose portrait appears on $50 bills. The organization might well be called the Hellgate **Grant** Writers.

Don't bother buying a copy of the 1990 Writer's Market. I recently obtained a copy of the '86 version, a gag gift at one of those exchange parties. I hadn't bought one since about '79 — the one with the swiveling-ball typewriter on the cover instead of the computer screen — and haven't sent so much as a query letter to any of the 4,000 publishers always hungry for new talent and willing to pay through the nose.

I remember that my '79 copy had 6,000 markets listed, although there was no section at that time on devoted to computer magazines.

Anyway, if you read the Writer's Market, you realize that if there's any money in writing, it's not ain't long-awaited 600-page quasi-autobiographical piece on the inner-personal metaphysics of a young writer's tortuous coming of age.

No, if you want to be a good provider, leave that to the long-shot Louies and stick to recycling party jokes for Playboy and Humor in Uniform for Reader's Digest. Pays a lot more on a per-word basis and the cash flow is a lot more fluid.

It's not that good literature and high art don't pay, but it resembles farming vaguely in that a few fat cats and vertically integrated operations (James A. Michener comes to mind) scooping in the literary lions' share of the gravy while the vast majority are subsistence writers living pen-to-mouth or relying on town jobs to finance the habit.

Look at Montana-based writing stars, and we find that they generally have such fall-back resources as old-money trust funds or inheritances, professorships, or spouses with professional day jobs.

Montana has a pretty good supply of good writers — most of make the bulk of their money from conducting writing workshops or participating in grant-fed panels devoted to debunking Western myths created by previous generations of writers.

Montana-based writers (virtually all of them foreign-born, so to speak) are developing a particular style, defined by the likes of Tom McGuane, Bill Kittredge and Richard Ford. The Missoula M.F.A. School's genre perhaps can be best described as the art of writing of the effects of whiskey, unemployment, broken homes and unreliable automobiles on equally unreliable human beings.

You can look it up.

Nope. There's lots of money to be made in writing. Trouble is, it's mainly made in publishing books and magazine aimed at the frustrated Fitzgerald of the world, or putting on workshops and seminars catering to the rejection-slip crowd.

And it's a big crowd. Writer-oriented magazines sell as well as the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition not just in Missoula — where people can admit they're writers (and are almost obligated to) — but in towns with one traffic light where a would-be writer is a little more cautious about revealing that avocation.

So don't make a New Year's resolve to buy that book and get down to serious scribbling. My advice to most would-be writers is to take up music instead — at least that way, you'll have something to take to the pawn shop when times are tough.

But most of the word-addicted will continue to submit unrhymed poetry to short-lived publications which pay in contributors' copies if you pester 'em long enough before they go out of business, or enter every local radio jingle contest and newspaper sentimentality competition with the back-mind fantasy that this will lead to a career in show biz.

Most likely, they'll continue to go out and buy these aids in the hopes that they'll become the next Hemingway, Huxley — or even just George Plimpton.

Of course, these folks will be working under the illusion that writers are made, not born.

My theory is that writers are born — one every minute.

T.J. Gilles, who was born in Montana but not yesterday, is agriculture editor and part-time literary conscience of the Great Falls Tribune. He has bookshelves, eyeglasses, reliable automobiles and can be a quiet type when required.

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

Sarah Boxer

This (Click), Then This: Walker Evans, Man of Lists

Walker Evans wanted to be a writer, not a photographer. You can almost see the regret seeping into his photographs of signs and posters, window menus and tools embossed with the company name. These pictures of ordinary objects are, after all, also pictures of words.

But Evans the photographer is unrivaled in one kind of writing: list writing. This may sound like faint praise, but Evans's lists — of his likes and dislikes, of his prospective subjects, of his negatives, of the things he needed and the things he saw — are powerful bits of vertical writing. They are everything that his photographs are: laconic, deadpan, sad, true and relentless.

It is not too much of a stretch to say that one of Evans's biggest gifts — and one of his strongest ties to some of his modern descendants, especially Robert Frank, Edward Ruscha and Andy Warhol — was his knack for making great lists, for laying things out thrillingly one after the other, with no connection except a string of "ands." If lists counted as a literary form, Evans might have been a writer. As it was, he became a photographer and many of his great pictures look like lists.

"Throughout his life, Evans wrote intense little prose poems, lists and sketches for proposed visual and literary projects," Jeff L. Rosenheim and Douglas Eklund write in "Unclassified: A Walker Evans Anthology" (Metropolitan Museum of Art/Scalo). In 1926-27 Evans composed a "prose poem" that is really a diary in the form of a list. It begins: "Disgust in the boat train. The taxi horns of Paris. In the Tuileries Gardens. Wallace Backus, Shakespeare + Co." It includes numerous entries of just the word solitude.

In 1929 Evans wrote the short story "Brooms" as "a kind of unconscious literary farewell, in which he decided to 'omit' all of the troubling confessional elements of his 'inner life' " and to assume instead an impersonal style, the authors of "Unclassified" write. In the middle of this goodbye to narrative, Evans included this list: "Imperative Needs: suspenders, drawers, collar pin, bath slippers, Crime and Punishment, rubber cement."

In 1937 Evans and his friend and collaborator James Agee each made a list of the things they hated. Agee's list, beginning with "The Anglo-Saxon tristesse," is self-conscious and high-flown. But Evans's list is a propulsive piece of modern writing. Under the heading "Contempt for," Evans listed: "men who try to fascinate women with their minds, gourmets, liberals, cultivated women, writers, successful artists who use the left to buttress their standing, the sex life of America, limited editions, 'atmosphere,' Bennington College, politics, men of my generation who became photographers during the Depression, journalists, new dealers, readers of the New Yorker, the corner of Madison Avenue and 56th St." And the list kept going, fueled by Evans's seemingly endless, free associative scorn.

But what does all this list-making have to do with photography? It helps to compare Evans with his predecessors. "Evans often spoke of photography as a form of collecting," Peter Galassi writes in the catalog for "Walker Evans & Company," an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art that shows Evans's alongside his forebears and followers. In this way he is very much like Eugène Atget and August Sander, two of the photographers he admired most.

> Raising the lowly list to a diary, a travelogue and a kind of poetry.

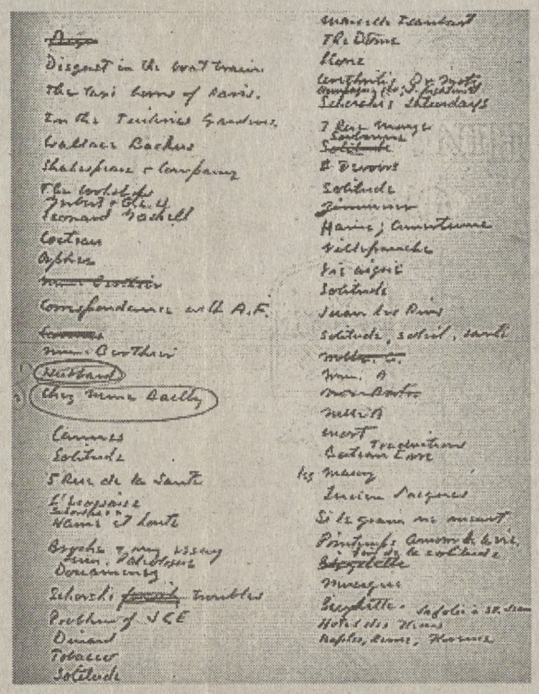
The German photographer Sander collected people. He made portraits of his countrymen profession by profession — manufacturer, industrialist, sailor, farmer, butcher, baker, peasant. The French photographer Atget was a collector too. He surveyed turn-of-the-century Paris, taking pictures of this archway, that gate, this cul-de-sac, that shop window.

In many of his photographs Evans was a collector like Sander and Atget. You can almost see him ticking off the items on his list: Town barbershop, click. Town monument, click. Town church, click. Sharecropper, click. Sharecropper's wife, click. Sharecropper's daughter, click.

But not all his photographs are items picked off a list. Evans's most modern pictures are themselves lists with the rhythm, repetition, speed, momentum and humor of his written lists. Like his written lists, they have many items: this and this and this. They are propelled from within, as if by a motor. And they have a directional pull, a vector of implied movement.



Museum of Modern Art, above; From "Unclassified: A Walker Evans Anthology" by Jeff L. Rosenheim and Douglas Eklund (Museum of Modern Art/Scalo Zurich), below



Walker Evans's photographs can often be seen as lists, for example, "Frame Houses in Virginia" (1936), above. Below, his list-like descriptions of his daily experiences in France and Italy in 1926 and 1927.

Look at the lineup of Model T's on a rainy street in Saratoga Springs (1931), receding diagonally into the distance. Or "Roadside View" (1936), taken in a coal-mining town in Alabama, where the houses and electrical poles march sullenly out of the frame. Or the sad pileup of cars in "Joe's Auto Graveyard" that pours out over the picture's borders. These arrays could go on and on.

In their relentlessness, these photographs have much less to do with Evan's predecessors than with Evans's descendants. Evans's "Frame Houses in Virginia" (1936), a deadpan strip of houses trotting horizontally across the frame, looks like a practice run for Edward Ruscha's marathon of a list, "Every Building on the Sunset Strip" (1966), which is laid out in a long, accordion-folded strip.

Some of Evans's portraits are lists too. In 1938 he went into the New York subways with his camera hidden in his coat and shot across the aisle. Most of the pictures he took are individual portraits. But if you look at the prints that include several subjects or at the contact sheets (reproduced in "Unclassified"), on which the portraits are laid end to end, you can see the list. These have a drive that the individual portraits lack. Evans must have seen this, because he published the pictures as a series in a book titled "Many Are Called."

In their sweet anonymity, they are close to the pictures taken by Evans's descendant Robert Frank. Mr. Frank's "Trolley, New Orleans," with its faces lined up and looking blankly out of every window, is a list. The implied movement of the trolley, registered in the blur of the reflections in the upper windows, suggests that when these faces move along, others will take their place.

So Evans took his gift for writing lists and turned it into something photographic. And when he went to Fortune magazine as the special photographic editor in the 40's, he brought it full circle, back to writing. Rather than using photographs as illustrations for a written text or as sources of information, he made the photographs dominant and the text submissive, with a series of photographs that had a nonnarrative logic and momentum of their own. He called them portfolios.

Evans assigned the portfolios to young photographers. In 1953 he had Robert Frank, who was working on his great opus, "The Americans," photograph businessmen on "The Congressional," the train that ran from Washington to New York. He had Robert Mottor photograph American office life. And Evans photographed some of the portfolios himself.

For instance, in August 1946, he photographed pedestrians walking in front of a blank wall at a street corner in Detroit. The result was "Labor Anonymous." Tellingly, Evans began this project with a very specific typewritten list: he cut the want ads from a newspaper to get the names of jobs, then he listed the different types of workers he planned to shoot. But what he ended up with was an anonymous stream of people replacing his clearly written specifications.

So Evans the list maker invented a new kind of photographic writing. The last line of Evans's 1929 short story "Brooms" contains this promise: "Now I shall suck the dust out of chaos." What Evans meant is unclear, but whatever it was, his followers seemed to get it. In the introduction to Mr. Frank's "Americans," Jack Kerouac wrote a memorable line that is a clear paraphrase of Evans's promise: "He sucked a sad poem right out of America." And the sad poem was a list.

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•Love & Basketball 11:30AM, 12:30, 2, 3, 4:40, 5:40, 7:45, 8:45, 10:50
•The Virgin Suicides 12:25, 3:20, 5:50, 8:30, 11:05
•Keeping The Faith 12:50, 3:40, 6:50, 10:40
•American Psycho 11:40AM, 2:20, 5:10, 8:10, 11
•Rules Of Engagement 11:50AM, 2:50, 6:10, 9:40
•Romeo Must Die 12:20, 3:10, 6, 9:10
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•Center Stage 11AM, 1:45, 4:40, 7:45, 11:05
•Battlefield Earth 10:35AM, 12Noon, 1:15, 3, 4:25, 6:15, 7:30, 9:30, 11
•High Fidelity 11AM, 2, 5, 8:15, 11:15
•Gladiator 10:30AM, 11:30, 12:30, 2:15, 3:15, 4:15, 6, 7, 8, 9:45, 10:45
•Frequency 10:40AM, 1:30, 4:45, 8, 11:05
•The Virgin Suicides 12:15, 2:45, 5:40, 8:30, 11:10
•Keeping The Faith 11:05AM, 2:10, 5:30, 9:15
•Rules Of Engagement 11AM, 2:15, 5:45, 9:15
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•Center Stage 11:10AM, 2:10, 5:10, 8:10, 11:10
•Battlefield Earth 11:20AM, 12:20, 2:20, 3:20, 5:20, 6:20, 8:20, 9:20, 11:20
•Gladiator 11AM, 11:30, 12Noon, 1, 3, 3:30, 4, 5, 7, 7:30, 8, 9, 11, 11:30
•The Flintstones In Viva Rock Vegas 11:45AM, 2:05, 4:40, 7:10
•Frequency 11:05AM, 1:50, 4:50, 7:50, 10:50
•The Virgin Suicides 11:25AM, 1:40, 4:20, 6:50, 10:30
•U-571 12:40, 3:40, 6:40, 9:40
•Love & Basketball 12:10, 3:10, 6:30, 9:50
•Keeping The Faith 11:15AM, 2:30, 5:50, 9:10
•Rules Of Engagement 11:40AM, 2:40, 6, 9:30
•Erin Brockovich 9:45PM
84TH ST. - B'way & 84th St. 50-LOEWS #701
•Screwed 12Noon, 2, 4:15, 7, 9:15
•Time Code 2000 12:30, 2:45, 5, 7:30, 10
•Held Up 12:15, 2:30, 5:15, 7:45, 10:15
•Love & Basketball 12:45, 3:30, 6:15, 9
•U-571 1:00, 4, 6:45, 9:45
ORPHEUM - 86th St. & 3rd Ave. 50-LOEWS #964
•Battlefield Earth 11:10AM, 1:45, 4:30,7:15, 10
•Gladiator 11AM, 1, 2:15, 4:15, 5:30, 7:45, 9, 11
•I Dreamed Of Africa 12:15, 5:45, 11:15
•The Flintstones In Viva Rock Vegas 11:15AM, 1:30, 4, 7, 9:30
•U-571 11:30AM, 2, 4:45, 7:30, 10:15
•Love & Basketball 11:45AM, 2:30, 5:15, 8, 10:45
•High Fidelity 3, 8:30
19TH ST. EAST - B'way & 19th St. 50-LOEWS #858
•Center Stage 12:45, 3:30, 6:30, 9:15
•Battlefield Earth 11AM, 1, 1:45, 4, 4:45, 6:45, 7:45, 9:45, 10:45
•American Psycho 11:45AM, 2:15, 4:30, 7, 10:15
•Love & Basketball 12:30, 3:15, 6:15, 9
VILLAGE VII - 3rd Ave. at 11th St. 50-LOEWS #952
•Battlefield Earth 11:30AM, 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11
•Love & Basketball 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30
•The Virgin Suicides 11:15AM, 1:30, 4:30, 7:30, 10:15
•Rules Of Engagement 12Noon, 3, 6, 9
•American Psycho 12Noon, 2:45, 5:30, 8:30, 11:15
•Keeping The Faith 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 9:15
STATE - B'way & 45th Street 50-LOEWS #901
(Within the Virgin Megastore)
•Sunset Boulevard 12:30, 3:15, 6, 9
•Adrenaline Drive 1:30, 4, 6:45, 9:45
•Croupier 12:45, 2:45, 5, 7:30, 9:30
•The Skulls 1:15, 4:15, 7:15, 10
CORONET - 3rd Ave & 59th St. 50-LOEWS #608
•Battlefield Earth 1, 4, 7, 10
•U-571 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30
72ND ST. EAST - 72nd St. & 3rd Ave. 50-LOEWS #704
•Erin Brockovich 1:30, 4:15, 7, 9:45
NEW YORK TWIN - 2nd Ave. & 66th St. 50-LOEWS #698
•Gladiator 12Noon, 1, 3:45, 4:45, 7:30, 8:30, 11
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•Gladiator 11:45AM, 3:15, 7, 10:45
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Shakespeare, O'Casey and Ventura

Continued From Page B1

young performers, Cheyenne Casebier as Helena and Randy Reyes as Puck, had the glow of genuine talent, and Shawn Hamilton, an experienced actor in regional theater, provided authoritative ballast as Theseus and Oberon.

Mr. Dowling has a gift for moving actors effectively around the stage, and his purpose in emptying his substantial bag of tricks was wonderfully achieved: to make the theater a place of welcome, with Shakespeare the friendly host and teacher. It would be hard to imagine better theater in a high school auditorium. And to judge from the lusty standing ovation at the end of Friday night's show, it was much appreciated. Indeed, the show's reception in Austin couldn't have been a more timely demonstration of popular support for the Guthrie, whose ambition is currently both on display and at issue.

Best known for its full-throttle productions of classics in its home theater — its current show, "The Plough and the Stars" by Sean O'Casey, is exemplary — the Guthrie, founded in 1963, has, since Mr. Dowling arrived in 1996, reached high-water marks, with more than 32,000 current subscribers and nearly $50 million in endowment, making it one of the nation's healthiest theater companies. But it has been restricted by its building, which is attached to the Walker Art Center and has only one performance space, a 1,300-seat auditorium with a thrust stage. It has been unable to compete in the ever more necessary enterprise of developing new work, and its lack of a proscenium stage has limited its ability to transfer shows to commercial houses or engage in co-productions with other regional companies.

Plans for a new, three-theater building have been in the works for several years. Now the search is about to begin for an architect for a site on the banks of the Mississippi in Minneapolis that had once been considered by the city for a new baseball stadium. But for months the Guthrie has been the focus of a political debate over whether the public should help pay for a project estimated at $100 million.

The Guthrie expects to complete the building for the 2004-2005 season, with or without government money. But its initial request to the state for $25 million was whittled down by legislators wary of Gov. Jesse Ventura's antipathy toward government spending on the arts and by newspaper polls that indicated public opinion was uncertain about whether the Guthrie, a nonprofit institution, was of statewide value — more worthy [illegible] private enterprise like



Michael Daniel/"The Plough and the Stars"

Leo Leyden, left, and Milo O'Shea, right, in "The Plough and the Stars."

the Minnesota Twins — or merely a crown for the arts-rich Twin Cities. A bonding bill that would have provided the Guthrie with $3 million in state funds was delivered to Governor Ventura by legislators on Friday. [He struck that provision in a line-item veto on Monday; a legislative override is still possible.]

It's an odd position for an arts institution to be arguing for itself in the political arena. But Mr. Dowling, an Irishman who is a former artistic director of the Abbey Theater in Dublin, admits to an obsession with politics; he and his wife have applied for citizenship, he said, in the hope of voting in November. He has been busy with the Guthrie's own campaign lately, pointing out, in interviews, meetings with legislators and letters to the editor, the economic benefits to the state from the construction project and noting that 100,000 children attended Guthrie performances free or with privately subsidized tickets last year.

Governor Ventura has never been to the Guthrie for a performance; he's not a theater guy, though there is a musical in the works based on his life as a wrestler turned populist politician, a production of which, Mr. Dowling joked, might help the Guthrie in its fund drive. Had the governor attended over the weekend — he was fishing — he would have seen what Mr. Dowling has been up to in his spare time, directing "The Plough and the Stars," O'Casey's portrait, both acrid and affectionate, of Dublin's working class during the turbulent days of the failed citizens' revolt of 1916 against the ruling British, known as the Easter Rising.

Viewing "Midsummer" and "Plough" on consecutive nights, one gets a sense of Mr. Dowling's expansive notion of theater as well as his directorial style. The set for "Plough," by Mr. Dowling's longtime collaborator, Frank Hallinan Flood (he also designed "Midsummer"), is magnificent, a sooty brick tenement front stretching across the back of the thrust stage, with windows lighted and laundry dangling on clotheslines.

An archway between the two wings of the tenement forms a proscenium of sorts, beneath which actors enter from the surrounding Dublin neighborhood in some scenes; for others, whole interior sets — two apartments and a barroom — emerge from it on rollers. Behind it the revolt itself, which fills the play's second half, is replete with the light and sound of gunfire, as though a Hollywood movie were being shot just out of view. Mr. Dowling is not stingy with effects.

O'Casey's tenement is aswarm with neighborly conflict, both personal and political, already simmering in poverty and ready to boil in the crucible of imminent revolution. In scene after scene Mr. Dowling sets his large cast — there are nine principal roles and a substantial company — in perpetual motion. They dance, threaten, fight, embrace, rally round the flag — or flags, since one character, has a son serving the crown in World War I — as their loyalties to one another shift in an increasingly violent milieu.

The cast, alas, is uneven, many with a tenuous hold on the Irish accent that gives a particular poignancy to O'Casey's characteristic poetics. (The contemporary playwright that comes closest to O'Casey's vernacular music of a particular time and place is August Wilson.)

Mr. Dowling has emphasized the hardness of these people, the beleaguered quality that makes them prone to aggravated selfishness, and as a result the American actors often miss the aching romanticism that lies moribund in them but not dead. This is particula[illegible]

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Sophisticated Traveler

A new biography suggests that Freya Stark used her high-profile wanderings to mask deep private insecurities.

PASSIONATE NOMAD

The Life of Freya Stark.
By Jane Fletcher Geniesse.
Illustrated. 402 pp. New York: Random House. $27.95.

By Colin Thubron

THE legend of Freya Stark — traveler, explorer, Arabist, woman of letters — at its height in the 1950's, has mysteriously dwindled. She died in 1993 at the age of 100, leaving behind one of the finest autobiographies in the language, together with several classics of travel writing and eight volumes of remarkable letters. These letters she regarded as her lasting monument: the record of a long era lived in the flood of its crises. Yet it is the personality of their author — the elusive mixture of breadth and intimacy — which is chiefly striking today.

By the time I knew Freya Stark she was already elderly, and whatever disappointments she had suffered had long been folded away into a persona of alluring grandeur, charm and erudition. It was rare to leave her company without feeling that the world was somehow larger and more promising. Yet her life was something of a work of art. Through her intelligence and formidable will she re-created herself from a shy expatriate Englishwoman, mired in domestic obligations, to a figure of unclassifiable eminence — too uncontrollable for high government service but rich in her energies and vision.

In charting Stark's public life, Jane Fletcher Geniesse's "Passionate Nomad" supplies a fascinating individual thread in the tapestry of 20th-century Middle Eastern history. On a more intimate level, Geniesse exposes a woman whose ambition and self-enhancement were generated from a profound emotional insecurity.

Stark had an unstable, bohemian childhood. Her reclusive father and handsome, formidable mother settled in the Italian hill town of Asolo, near Venice. Its civilized beauty remained a lonely anchor through Stark's adult life. Only at the age of 33 did she extract herself from a dutiful subservience to her mother's needs and aspirations for her — marriage to someone suitable — and travel, armed with a painfully learned Arabic, to the East. For the next 12 years the lands she had dreamed about in books — Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Persia, Arabia — became the arena for journeys recorded in highly original travelogues. She remapped a remote region of the Persian Elburz mountains, a perilous journey recorded in her "Valley of the Assassins" (1934); she became the first European woman to journey into Luristan; she made a spectacular but thwarted bid to reach the ruins of Shabwa, the lodestar of south Arabian explorers, and she rediscovered the ancient Arabian port of Cana.

Colin Thubron's travel book "In Siberia" will be published in January.

Her unorthodox journeys were often an embarrassment to the British authorities stationed through the Middle East. She became both the scandal and the darling of diplomatic communities. Even her failures added to her luster. The small, fragile woman became celebrated as an intrepid explorer. She had a gift and a need for friendship and levitated into powerful London social circles.

In fact, her achievements as an explorer, however brave, were not spectacular. She was not the first European to reach Alamut, the chief fortress of the Assassins; she only mapped it more fully. In her search to reach Shabwa she was forestalled by illness and airlifted out of the region by the British in 1935; the next year the site was thoroughly documented by the Arabist Harry St. John Philby (father of the spy Kim). In her second sortie into Luristan she was turned back ignominiously by the Persian police. Yet the books in which she recorded these journeys were seductively individual. Her lectures for learned societies — alluringly modulated, authoritative, pithy with aphorism — enhanced her public success, and her personality was a journalist's dream.



HULTON GETTY/FROM "PASSIONATE NOMAD"

Freya Stark with the orientalist and historian Stewart Perowne at a reception in London after their wedding, 1947.

No small part of Geniesse's achievement is her piecemeal assemblage, year by year, page by page, of this complex, grand and driven woman. Domineering, vulnerable, imaginative, charming, manipulative, sensuous — the portrait that emerges grows harsher with Stark's success. Gradually Geniesse's empathy with Stark's troubled childhood and adolescence turns to critical recoil from her professional ruthlessness and, above all, from Stark's part in the destruction of the marriage that she had long courted. With the growth of self-confidence and self-seeking came the loss of some humility. Like other strong people, Stark was more sympathetic, one feels, when weak. "Her earlier insecurities and shyness," Geniesse writes, "were being fast buried under a solid sense of her own importance — an exhilarating feeling that even she recognized might be a little dangerous."

With the outbreak of World War II, Stark joined the newly formed Ministry of Information and was soon engaged in Arabic news broadcasts from Aden, countering Axis propaganda over the Horn of Africa. With no more equipment than a projector and a few cans of film, she memorably entered Yemen and conducted a one-woman propaganda campaign in its ministerial harems. Her effect in preserving Yemen's neutrality is unquantifiable; but the wives were fascinated by these film shows, and their husbands — and finally the Imam himself — became enthralled.

Soon afterward, as the Axis forces were moving eastward across North Africa, Stark founded the Ikwan al-Hurriyah, the Brotherhood of Freedom, a network of British sympathizers that helped sustain Egyptian and Arab loyalty behind the Allied lines, and whose numbers swelled to 40,000. By the end of 1943 she was touring the United States in a bid to enlist sympathy for the British white paper advocating limits on Jewish immigration into Palestine.

In all this, Stark's importance is the harder to assess because she occupies the borderland between literature, politics and exploration. The complex events against which her career was played out are sketched in with concision and clarity by Geniesse, the author of a novel, "The Riches of Life," and a nonfiction book, "The Attorney's Appetite." These events are counterpointed by a private life awash with self-delusion — Stark entertained a sad procession of unrequited affections and imaginary loves.

In her analysis of Stark's emotional landscape, I think Geniesse owes much to a previous biographer, Molly Izzard. But Izzard's book, so critically intelligent, was marred by an incipient bitterness with her subject. She sought to uncover cold self-seeking at almost every turn and fancifully identified unconscious lesbianism. Geniesse, too, locates Stark's distress in her physical plainness and in her mother's withheld love. But where Izzard stresses cold manipulation in Stark's adult life, Geniesse gives greater weight to her sheer emotional vulnerability. It is a more sympathetic and probably truer picture.

"Freya," Geniesse writes, "would cheerfully have had her body completely reconstructed if she could have done so, because she was acutely appreciative of beauty in others and felt its absence keenly in herself. Her defense was flight into the imagination, a kind of dream safety that had sustained her as a girl in books, romantic poetry and tales of heroic deeds. She wrapped herself in these romances and became the star of her own adventure story. When things went beyond the control of her forceful personality, inventiveness or charm, if the problem was something she could not alter or manipulate, she didn't pine or remonstrate, she merely buried what was threatening or damaging to her sense of worth."

Her postwar life passed into quieter waters. By the time she returned to Asolo, her mother and her only sister were dead (and her father, too, who had emigrated to Canada). But her last 40 years — covered by Geniesse in a single chapter — started out full of literary endeavor. She continued to pour out letters. She wrote a quartet of travel books about Turkey. Her distinctive style became honed to a mesmerizing delicacy; but sometimes her treatment of ancient history shaded into moralizing, and the spontaneity of the earlier Arabian books falls away.

So multifaceted a woman — nomad and social lioness, public servant and private essayist, emotional victim and mythmaker — affords a rich but demanding subject for biography. Moreover, Stark has already re-created her own life in four volumes of autobiography, a host of travel books and hundreds of published letters. Geniesse, like Izzard before her, has concentrated on the political and personal life rather than the literary work. But she has achieved, in the end, an admirable focus, at once critical and sympathetic. The portrait that emerges is a subtle and generous one. For all Stark's unresolved contradictions, her emotional naïveté and thirst for esteem, her distinction as a latter-day woman of letters survives. □

ESSAY/Wendy Steiner

Look Who's Modern Now

IN 1988, I completed a book-length monograph on contemporary American fiction for Volume 7 of the Cambridge History of American Literature. This summer, it was published. Eleven years from pen to print? No, this isn't a joke, and no, I'm not bitter. Sometimes there's value in having to rewrite a book three times in order to weigh in on the fast-fleeting now.

I first heard about the Cambridge History in 1984, when its general editor, Sacvan Bercovitch, phoned me up out of the blue. His assignment, were I to accept it, was to write a history of the American novels and short stories published too recently for me to have studied them in college: to historicize the fiction of my adulthood. A modernist by training and profession, I had written academic books on Gertrude Stein and early-20th-century painting and poetry. The only novel I had taught from the contemporary period was Thomas Pynchon's "Crying of Lot 49," which was more an obsession than an object of study. Good, I thought: academia is all about making a profession out of one's obsessions.

With "Lot 49" in mind, I assumed that the important fiction since the 1950's was post-modern — the esoteric, goofy, often elephantine work of Pynchon, Barth, Vonnegut, Coover and Hawkes. This was a widely held assumption in the mid-1980's. In "The Anatomy Lesson," Philip Roth's Zuckerman — who has published a book that sounds suspiciously like "Portnoy's Complaint" — receives a letter from the editors of his old college newspaper. They "wanted to interview him about the future of his kind of fiction in the post-modernist era of John Barth and Thomas Pynchon." Because Zuckerman is in the hospital, the editors have sent a list of written questions: *"1. Why do you continue to write? 2. What purpose does your work serve? 3. Do you feel yourself part of a rear-guard action, in the service of a declining tradition?"* Guided by Zuckerman's editors, I decided to write one chapter on the post-modernists and another on Roth and the other rear-guard men. I'd add a third on women writers too, since the canon needed expanding.

Accordingly, I read deeply in the experimentalists and wrote that chapter, pleased at finding my way through these compelling mind-teases. Then I started on the traditionalist men — those whose focus was ethnicity, the anomie of suburban domesticity, the alienation of war. But strangely, Roth and Heller and Mailer didn't seem all that different from their experimentalist brothers. Their plots turned in on themselves like Möbius strips; fact and fiction refused to keep their distance; existential despair and post-modern relativism worked their usual nauseous vertigo. It's the end of traditionalism, I decided.

Except, that is, for women writers. In the mid-1980's, everyone believed that women were still writing 19th-century novels, or at least that was what a lot of men, especially experimentalists, liked to say. John Barth used the label "premodern" for the works of "most of our contemporary American women writers of fiction, whose main literary concern, for better or worse, remains the eloquent issuance of . . . secular news reports." I read a raft of women's novels — by Toni Morrison, Ursula K. Le Guin, Louise Erdrich, Alice Walker, Marilynne Robinson, Gloria Naylor — and they did seem different. They were rich in imagery and emotion, consumed by the desire to recover a lost or hidden past. They did not deny existential despair, but neither did they react to it with brittle intellectualism or irony. Instead of offering the blankness of Vonnegut's "so it goes," they dramatized their characters' suffering. I reported this supposedly premodern syndrome faithfully, without using the word "retrograde" except in quotes.



DANIJEL ZEZELJ

By then it was 1988, and my 200-page essay was finished. Unaware of the coming hiatus — my Cambridge history was optimistically marked as "forthcoming" on my vita for each of the past 11 years — I went to London for an extended sabbatical, reviewing a lot of new books and thinking hard about how academic humanists relate to the general culture. The answer that emerged was simple. In England they do; in America they don't. I never went back to studying modernist poetry, but eventually I went back to the States, where I taught contemporary American novels, or at least the ones I had discussed in my history. Disconcertingly, they were growing less contemporary all the time. As I taught them, reviewed new fiction and judged literary prizes, contemporary novels proliferated. I felt like Tristram Shandy, waiting for a birth that was endlessly postponed while its prehistory kept growing and growing.

In just 11 years, the American novel has abandoned metafictional fireworks and taken up with love.

It was obviously time to rewrite. But I noticed a curious thing as I cut and pasted in the early 1990's — and in the middle 1990's and again last year. The themes and values in women's writing that I had discussed in my first draft had become utterly compelling to me, and the "brilliance" of the post-modernists seemed no longer demanding and insightful but tedious and self-indulgent in the extreme. This wasn't the result of a sudden conversion to feminism on my part; it was an esthetic and even an economic response. I could no longer see why I needed to process 700-plus pages of esoteric "in" jokes in order to see the meaninglessness of modern experience yet again. Authorial generosity and proportion seemed much more valuable than uncompromising irony, and I yearned for fineness of touch — beauty — with the hunger of a starving person.

I don't think I am alone here. As a judge for the National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction in 1997, I found especially revealing the debate over Don DeLillo's brilliant "Underworld," which did not win the prize. The novel opens with 60 pages of as glorious prose as may be found in any recent fiction. With its waste-manager protagonist, "Underworld" fits in a direct line from "The Waste Land" (and ultimately Dickens's "Our Mutual Friend") to the W.A.S.T.E. communications system in Pynchon's "Crying of Lot 49." It depicts an American innocence lost with the advent of the cold war and multinational capitalism. The next 800 pages of post-modern convolution reveal that that innocence can never be recovered. For many of the judges, this was a Great American Novel if ever there was one. For others, it was yet another blockbuster metafiction, excellent among its kind, but of a kind by now all too familiar.

Consider an even more recent post-modern megafiction, Salman Rushdie's "Ground Beneath Her Feet." A novel full of etymological puns and literary and pop music allusions, it is nevertheless retro in every sense of the word, wisecracking with the brotherhood of Joyce and Eliot and Pynchon and requiring a lot of reading to achieve what those geniuses achieved earlier and better. How many generations of clever, verbose metafictionists do we need concocting fables of absurdity? Not only have we already heard that there's no ground beneath our feet — the post-modern theme with a thousand faces — but we've moved on from there. The real challenge Pynchon so eloquently bequeathed us is to find a place for interest, beauty, pleasure and value in an ungrounded world.

To the surprise of some, the novel that won the N.B.C.C. award over "Underworld" was "The Blue Flower," by Penelope Fitzgerald. A compact, beautifully realized work about the German poet and philosopher Novalis, who lived his romantic ideal of love, it conveys a depth of feeling — for people, for language — that is in-

Wendy Steiner, the Richard L. Fisher Professor of English and director of the Penn Humanities Forum at the University of Pennsylvania, is finishing a book on beauty.

tensely moving and satisfying. This year, the Pulitzer committee made a similar choice, awarding its fiction prize to Michael Cunningham's fine novel "The Hours," which builds on the tradition of a "softer" modernist than Eliot or Joyce. Granted, one can't generalize on the basis of two recent literary prizes. But both these cases — Fitzgerald's reconnection of esthetics and love and Cunningham's return to a more lyrical modernism — exemplify a shift in taste toward a kind of fiction that was pioneered by contemporary women writers. Readers may be casting their votes this way too, at least according to the Amazon sales rankings, as I'm writing this, for the four books just discussed: "The Hours," 228; "The Blue Flower," 661; "The Ground Beneath Her Feet," 5,424; "Underworld," 9,492.

The last novel I added to my history was Annie Proulx's "Shipping News," the story of an extremely unpromising man who becomes, by the end, something of a hero. He does so not through paroxysms of tortured irony but through humility, dumb will and fidelity to everyday responsibility. The book's language begins as boorish as its protagonist, but stays with him, ending in an inspired, marveling prose — irony humanized into a paradoxical hope: "Water may be older than light, diamonds crack in hot goat's blood, mountaintops give off cold fire, forests appear in mid-ocean, it may happen that a crab is caught with the shadow of a hand on its back, that the wind be imprisoned in a bit of knotted string. And it may be that love sometimes occurs without pain or misery."

THROUGH this lyricism and concern for individual experience, Proulx deals with existential pain, but differently from the early post-modernists. For her, the absurdity of life can be met only by the assertion of individual interest, the same lesson that Pierce Inverarity teaches Oedipa Maas from the grave in "The Crying of Lot 49" — to keep the ball bouncing, "to take on interests." For Proulx, however, the appropriate response is not hyperrationality, paradox and the absurd but a kind of nurturing steadfastness. She stays with the nonheroic until it is imbued with grandeur.

If the post-modern period opened with metafictional fireworks, it closes with the extraordinary commonplace of love. And this is a fine lesson for an academic to have learned through writing — and rewriting — a history of contemporary American fiction. □

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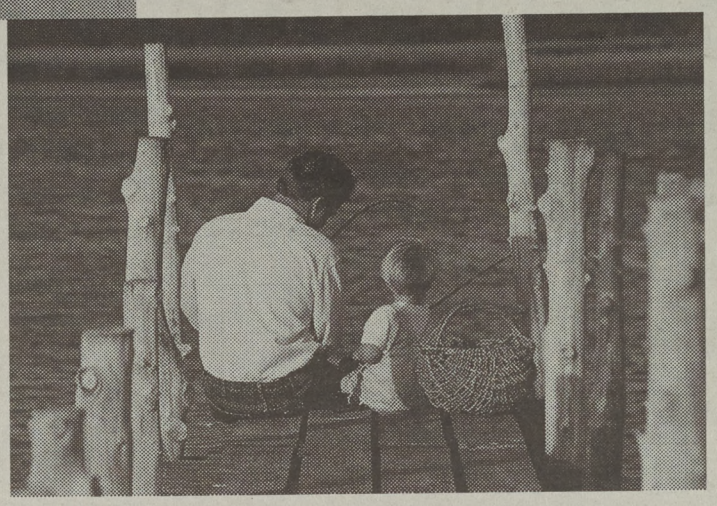

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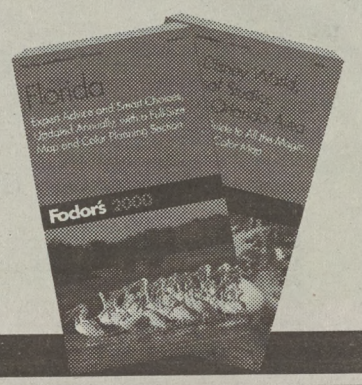

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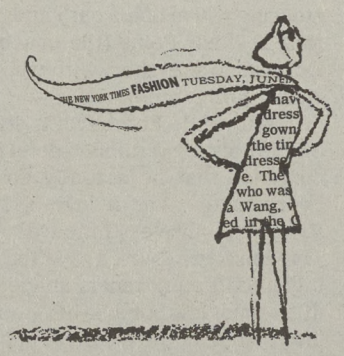

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Coach

A biography of the legendary genius of the Green Bay Packers.

WHEN PRIDE STILL MATTERED

A Life of Vince Lombardi.
By David Maraniss.
Illustrated. 541 pp. New York:
Simon & Schuster. $26.

By Allen St. John

"WINNING isn't everything, it's the only thing." It's a catchy line, easy to remember. If you say it fast enough, it sounds profound. And if it turns out to mean about as much as "Have a nice day," remember that Bertrand Russell couldn't diagram an off-tackle running play either. But those seven words — which came to encapsulate the career of the legendary Green Bay Packers coach Vince Lombardi even though he never uttered them — spawned a whole industry. The ensuing flood of motivational videos, inspirational speeches and self-help books has turned every clipboard-toting championship winner into an instant font of practical life lessons. Welcome to the age of the Philosopher Coach.

In his biography, "When Pride Still Mattered," David Maraniss searches behind the slogan for the man who started it all. Lombardi has been characterized as (pick your stereotype) a success-obsessed tyrant, a great leader, a bully who browbeat his players into submission, a masterly motivator who drew the best out of his team. Maraniss insists that he was all of the above.

One of the things that helped make Lombardi an icon is the perception, inspired by his rapid and improbable rise, that he appeared out of nowhere, a gridiron Athena sprung fully formed from the head of Knute Rockne. Maraniss painstakingly reveals the underpinnings of the coach's philosophy. Devoting as much space to Lombardi's tenure at a new parochial high school in New Jersey as to either of his Super Bowl victories, Maraniss chronicles the influence of Lombardi's Roman Catholic upbringing and education at Fordham (in Green Bay, Lombardi kept a rosary looped around the steering wheel of his car) and his stint as an assistant at West Point (the coach often quoted Gen. Douglas MacArthur, with whom he had reviewed Army game films).

And while Lombardi is still held up as an exemplar of single-minded determination, Maraniss contends that he actually embodied dualism at every turn. "Was it love or hate, confidence or fear, that drove Lombardi and his players?" Maraniss writes. "All — at the same time." Seemingly conflicting tenets shaped not only Lombardi's worldview but also his game plans. The coach, often cited as the ultimate control freak, actually ceded most of the on-field decision making to his players, leaving himself with little to do on game day but pace up and down the sidelines and yell. "Some coaches, considered innovative, might have 20 plays but no options for any of them," Maraniss writes. "Lombardi, sometimes mischaracterized as unimaginative, preferred one play with 20 options. It was a variation of the Jesuit concept of freedom within discipline." Though Lombardi is the archetype of every B-movie football coach — barking orders and hurling insults and diagramming plays on napkins — Maraniss illustrates that the basis for his success was far more subtle. "There are other coaches who know more about X's and O's," Lombardi once confessed, "but I've got an edge, I know more about football players than they do." His very public (and often calculated) displays of temper, so pointed that his players now admit they often wanted to slug him, were tempered with private shows of outright affection, tailored to the player and the occasion. Talking about his team, Lombardi once said, "Heart power is the strength of the Green Bay Packers."

As with his biography of Bill Clinton, "First in His Class," Maraniss, an associate editor at The Washington Post, never forgets that he is profiling a subject who was acutely aware (and in great measure the creator) of his own legend. He cites the largely apocryphal story about the time the veteran center Jim Ringo took the then unusual step of bringing an agent with him to negotiate his contract. According to legend, Lombardi countered the agent's salary demand by stepping out of the room for a moment and then announcing: "Go talk to the Eagles about it. Mr. Ringo has been traded to Philadelphia." Great story, except for the fact that it was mostly untrue. "He spread it himself," Maraniss learned from the Packers personnel manager Pat Peppler, "in the hope that it might discourage players from hiring agents or making difficult contract demands."

And there's that albatross of a quotation. Maraniss traces "winning isn't everything" back to "Trouble Along the Way," a gridiron melodrama starring John Wayne as a coach whose precocious 12-year-old daughter gets the film's only memorable line. Lombardi may have posted those words in his locker room, along with dozens of other motivational sayings, but Packer players are quick to testify that Lombardi was as likely to launch into a tirade after a sloppy win as a tough loss. Lombardi was motivated by something more profound than outscoring the Detroit Lions or the Chicago Bears. In Maraniss's view, he was attempting to attain a state of grace. "Players joked on game day that it was hard to tell which Lombardi wanted more: to win or to get to heaven. He wanted both of course." Notches in the win column were merely a byproduct of this loftier pursuit.

"When Pride Still Mattered" has its share of vivid line-of-scrimmage moments, but Maraniss has concerns other than blow-by-blow reporting of the great Packer victories or his subject's personal issues, like the halfhearted suicide attempts by Lombardi's wife, Marie, or the coach's troubled relationship with his children. Instead, he focuses steadfastedly on the why rather than the how, seasoned by a healthy dose of what if: he reports that Lombardi was seriously considered as a running mate by both Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey.

Maraniss has a superb eye for detail. His book is punctuated with telling vignettes that range from the awkwardly sentimental (Lombardi dancing the Watusi at a father-daughter formal) to the truly bizarre (Lombardi playing dress-up with priest's vestments in his Green Bay office). There is an almost surreal moment when he calls President John F. Kennedy to rearrange Paul Hornung's military commitments so Green Bay's star halfback could continue to play.

"When Pride Still Mattered" stands in stark contrast to most other books by and about coaches. Maraniss shows not only that winning isn't everything, it's not even what it's cracked up to be. "Here was the familiar cycle from success to anguish," he writes. "The more he won the more famous he became; the more famous he was, the more a target of criticism he became; the more he was criticized, the more he felt misunderstood; the more misunderstood he felt, the more anguish he carried." □

Allen St. John writes about sports for The Village Voice, The Wall Street Journal and Maxim.

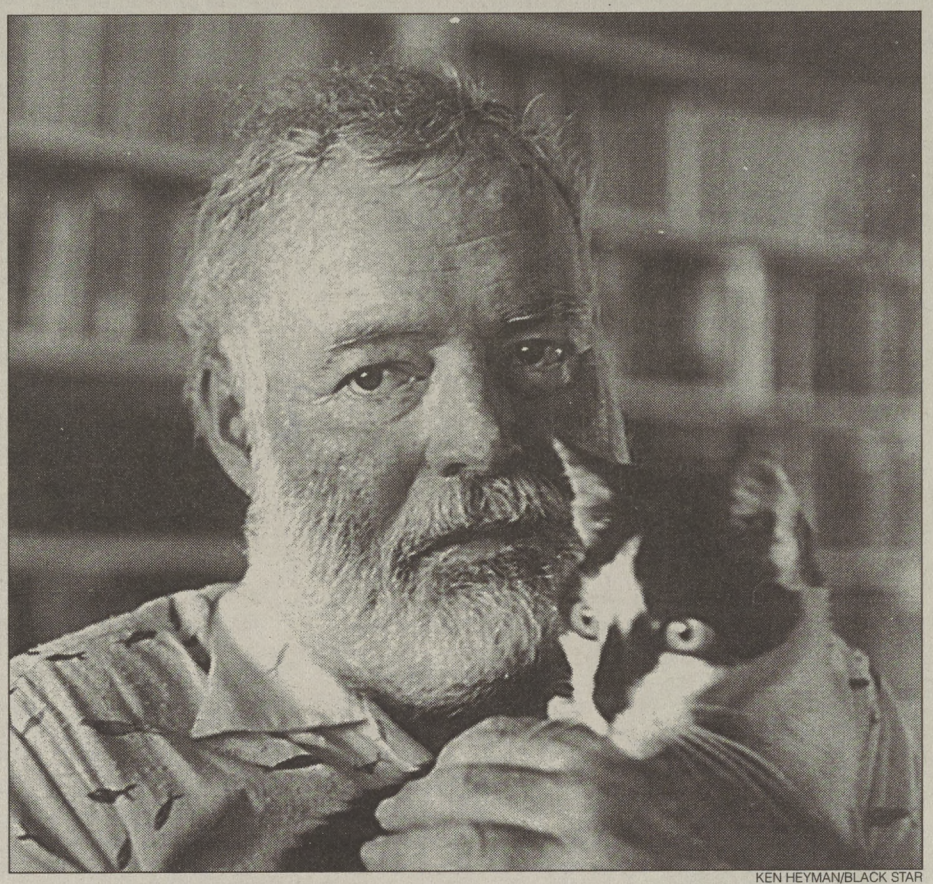
The Lion King

Hemingway's final novel, edited by his son, finds him on an African safari, stalking game and hiding from the Mau Mau.

TRUE AT FIRST LIGHT
By Ernest Hemingway.
Edited by Patrick Hemingway.
319 pp. New York:
Scribner. $26.

HEMINGWAY
The Final Years.
By Michael Reynolds.
Illustrated. 416 pp. New York:
W. W. Norton & Company. $30.

By James Wood



KEN HEYMAN/BLACK STAR

Ernest Hemingway in the mid-1950's.

IMITATION is not original, thus no original writer is ever really imitable. This is true of Hemingway, and it paradoxically explains why he has had such a large and questionable influence on American writing. The danger of a truly original style, of course, is that it has smooth copiers but does not have rough equals. That which is imitable is neutered by repetition. What cannot be imitated is what is truly original, not necessarily because it was so great but because it was, simply, first; it has a hard and unbreakable primacy. Perhaps this is how we feel about Hemingway: we do not feel that we are in the presence of one of the greatest stylists in literature (as we feel, say, when reading Flaubert, Joyce or Proust), but rather that what is great in him is that, as it were, he preceded his own bad influence. He was, at least, the master of his wake.

Not that you would know it from "True at First Light," which was begun in 1954 as the record of a recent African safari, swelled to over 800 pages, was then abandoned by Hemingway and has now been published in a reduction edited by one of his sons, Patrick. It contains all that is most easily imitated of Hemingway's style, reminding us again that after about 1935 the author franchised himself in increasingly despairing outlets. The book's failings are ones that have passed into contemporary currency in American writing. There is much sloshing male sentimentality, in that now characteristic form in which masculinity is taken to be inherently metaphysical (to hunt game is to quest, to be sexually needy is to confront "the loneliness"). There is a refusal to think at all, which is disguised as a reluctance to think about inessentials: "As I walked forward I did not think about anything at all except that it was a lovely early evening and that I was lucky to be in Africa."

The famous style occasionally flares into fineness but is really no more than a pretender to its former royalty. Sentences are either casually functional or busily functional; in the latter category are many sentences that are completely uninteresting except that they carry on as if they were very interesting, as if they were little lozenges of lyricism when in fact they only leak information: "She was fresh looking in her freshly ironed, faded safari slacks and shirt and beautiful and as she poured the Campari and gin into the tall glasses and looked for a cold siphon in the canvas water bucket she said. . . ." Too often, the beauteous repetitions of old seem thoughtless or else careworn, as if, like someone turning his old socks inside out, Hemingway were just trying to prolong the service of his words rather than, as formerly, trying to renew their secrets: "It was very good snuff; not as powerful as that of Arap Meina but enough snuff to let you know you had snuff when you tucked it under your upper lip."

Yet the book is never quite uninteresting. The flat swagger of the language keeps you wary, if only for its rare volleys. There is a kind of mottled glamour, made up of bullying integrity and nonsense, of truth and falsity, which always makes the least of Hemingway's books compelling. (He is like D. H. Lawrence in this regard.) And here and there one comes upon delicate descriptions of animals — for instance, a herd of eland, "the bulls heavy with their awkward grace" — or of a gun firing ("G. C.'s big double was firing and I saw the blossomings of dirt from it") or of an airplane with "widespread cranelike legs" coming in to land: "We saw the plane come over blue and silvery and spindle-legged and buzz the camp and then we were barreling down along the side of the clearing and she was opposite us, with the big flaps down, passing us to land without a bounce and circling now, her nose high and arrogant, throwing dust in the knee-deep white flowers."

Michael Reynolds's excellent and exhaustive biography, now completed with this final volume, informs us that Hemingway and his wife, Mary, traveled to Kenya in the fall of 1953, and stayed in camp until March of the next year. This was the landscape Hemingway had used so majestically in his story "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," almost 20 years before. In that tale, a wounded writer waits in camp for a plane to take him away, and his memories drift, from his involvement in World War I to an apartment in Paris. In many ways, Hemingway had become that stricken writer. He had met Mary Welsh in a London restaurant in 1944, and though still married to Martha Gellhorn, had begun an intense affair. The couple married in 1946; this fourth and last marriage of Hemingway's became a movable theater of war. Heavy drinking and mental breakdown were its climate. Reynolds acutely analyzes the happiness and suffering that both parties created and received. In 1950, Gellhorn predicted that Hemingway would "end in the nut house," and in the same year Mary wrote to her husband's publisher, Charles Scribner, that Hemingway had been "truculent, brutal, abusive and extremely childish . . . it looks like the disintegration of a personality to me."

One of the forces of disintegration, sensitively considered by Reynolds, was Hemingway's fear that he would never write anything better than "For Whom the Bell Tolls," which appeared in 1940. "True at First Light" suggests, indeed, that Hemingway's particular talent was a genius for originality; once it had edgily founded itself, it became, in time, a slack corporation devoted to self-imitation. Presumably Hemingway recognized this; it was why he abandoned the gargantuan "African novel" sometime in the late 1950's. He would first have recognized, on the evidence of what is before us, and despite his own description, that he was not writing a novel, but a somewhat fanciful memoir. The narrator is Hemingway: he is addressed as "Ernie," he recalls seeing D. H. Lawrence in Paris and meeting George Orwell, he muses about his chances of getting the Nobel Prize and so on. (These discussions are often charming, with that flickering, rough humor and self-mockery that Hemingway's determined detractors tend to miss.) His wife is called Mary. A native Wakamba girl, Debba, in whom Hemingway became interested, has the same name in the book as she had outside it, though it seems that in the book Hemingway exaggerates his actual involvement with her.

Most of the book is consumed by descriptions of shooting various animals — wildebeest, a lion, a tiger, some impala, some birds, some baboons; the first half is devoted to Mary's obsessive tracking, and eventual shooting, of a large, dark-maned lion. (It seems that here again, if Reynolds is right, although Mary Welsh did kill a lion Hemingway exaggerates the depth of the actual obsession.) Mary shoots the lion, gets sick and travels to Nairobi. Hemingway is lonely without her, and visits Debba. One night, he goes out alone, armed with a spear.

THE book's preoccupation with the traffic of machismo — sex, drinking, hunting — is tiresome not because it is a preoccupation, something that all books have, after all, but because it is an unexplained preoccupation. It is unargued for, and simply assumed, that to kill a lion is an act of gravity. Clearly it is, but only once you have decided that it is important to kill lions. In the world of this book, you decide that it is important to kill lions because killing a lion is an act of gravity. This circularity of motivation simply exists here like a god: it is, in other words, a metaphysics. Hemingway and his wife live within a belief system that has no interest in explaining itself and therefore little interest in admitting the reader.

This could be a definition of metaphysical provincialism. Hemingway's unwillingness, or inability, to include the reader in his obsessions may have something to do with the virtues and failings of his style and its gradual corruption. The perpetual danger of Hemingway's writing is that a principled refusal to be sentimental actually stifles feeling and the explanation for feeling; then, in turn, that refusal becomes in itself sentimental. It can be put this way: Hemingway is a great truth-telling writer, except when he becomes sentimental about truth telling, and thus becomes untruthful. He is untruthful, above all, about the way most

Continued on next page

James Wood is a senior editor at The New Republic. His collection, "The Broken Estate: Essays on Literature and Belief," has just been published.

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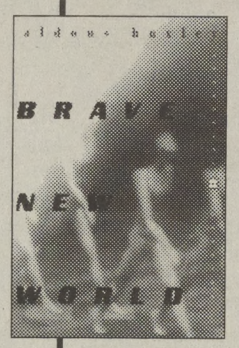

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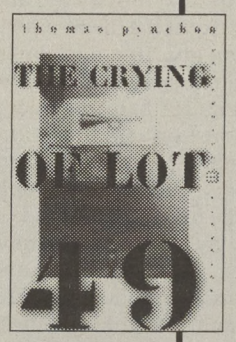

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The Lion King

Continued from preceding page

people actually think: "Then having a drink by the fire I was lonesome for Pop because we had sat by so many fires together and I wished we were together and he could tell me about things." So Hemingway relaxes one evening at the camp. This masquerades as thought, but is no more than the ratification of permissible male reticence. It has the effect, throughout the book and elsewhere in Hemingway's writing, of making the hero not an active mind but merely a voyeur of his own obscurities. This Hemingwayesque creation, paradoxically alert but blocking the consequences of his alertness, can be found in Raymond Carver, in Richard Ford and in Robert Stone, and is perhaps the most depressingly familiar male hero in postwar American fiction.

This nullification of thought seems curious at first, because Hemingway's style so obviously owes so much to actual thought and the attempt to represent it. His long sequences of "and's," the thriving pressure of the tumbled sentences, the careful randomness of the visual detail, owe much to the first-person narration of "Huckleberry Finn," and also something to the general modernist attempt to make consciousness a stream. Hemingway took this mimicking of the motions of thought and turned it outward, onto description itself: "So I asked him for Wakamba words and tried to memorize them and then I thanked him and went out to the fire to sit by the fire in an old pair of pajamas from Idaho, tucked into a pair of warm mosquito boots made in Hong Kong and wearing a warm wool robe from Pendleton, Ore., and drank a whisky and soda made from a bottle of whisky Mr. Singh had given me as a Christmas present and boiled water from the stream that ran down from the Mountain animated by a siphon cartridge made in Nairobi." This is Hemingway in the present book, but it might almost be Nick Adams of the earlier stories. Elsewhere, Hemingway wakes up from a nightmare in his tent: "I lay and thought about that for a long time remembering many places and really bad times and I thought how wonderful it would be now after the rain and what were nightmares anyway and then I went to sleep and woke sweating again with the horrors but I listened carefully and heard Mary breathing softly and regularly and then I went back to sleep to try it once more." This is merely babyishness posing as adulthood.

This kind of writing has the form of thought, but is not really thought. It resembles stream of consciousness, yet at every moment that consciousness is blocking thought, or allowing only a minimum of thought. It is how a mind works, perhaps, but not what a mind thinks. More often, Hemingway uses the form of stream of consciousness and applies it to description — of nature, or of a character's physical activity: "It was pleasant in the mess tent with the heavy beating of the rain and I read and drank a little and did not worry at all about anything."

This was Hemingway's revolution, to take first-person narration and make it into the original style of a third-person author: "It was very beautiful in the spring and summer, the bay blue and bright and usually whitecaps on the lake out beyond the point from the breeze blowing from Charlesvoix and Lake Michigan" ("Up in Michigan"). No one could deny the force and beauty of this new style. But it always contained its own potential perversions and mutations. The danger is a kind of writing that, as in "True at First Light," moves like the mind but has no mind in it, that stifles feeling and then stylizes the very stifling. It is a style that flourishes its own negative veracity, but that in fact offers only negation. "You cannot describe a wild lion's roar. You can only say that you listened and the lion roared. It is not at all like the noise the lion makes at the start of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer pictures," Hemingway writes. Language, one feels, exists precisely to drive around this admission of failure. We are reminded, perhaps, of that moment in "A Farewell to Arms" when the hero sees a dead friend, and Hemingway writes: "He looked very dead. It was raining. I had liked him as well as anyone I ever knew." But if, for a brief historical moment, it was important for literature that Hemingway insist on what was not describable — that he make a hard clearing through the more untruthful descriptions of other writers — that moment soon passed, even in Hemingway's lifetime, and then he was left without proper enemies, and with merely the defense of his own forlorn lack. "True at First Light" is the record of that lack, and as such serves as a warning to let Hemingway be, both as a literary estate and as a literary influence. □

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conscientiously needled Lowell about newly fashionable manifestations he was thought to have sponsored: confessional poetry, extremism, political mass violence, a welcome to popular song and verse. Lowell responded civilly and sourly; his fame, which he knows about, is for him a burden. We believe him, and think it does him credit.

And yet there were lacunae in Lowell's knowledge. Challenged as to living British poets, he remembers neither Basil Bunting nor Thom Gunn; among Americans, he has nothing to say of Charles Reznikoff or Carl Rakosi, George Oppen or Louis Zukofsky. The plot line called "defection from the South" twists in upon itself; the deafness of the New Critics to poets like these is one plank in the Southern rhetoricians' platform Lowell unfortunately did not reject.

He names me in talking to Hamilton, remarking on my escape to America almost simultaneous with his to England. "Davie and I," he says, "are taking vacations from our Furies." I have always felt honored that he thought me, at least in some respect, his peer. □

Eros Makes War

OF LOVE AND SHADOWS
By Isabel Allende. Translated by Margaret Sayers Peden. 274 pp. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $17.95.

By Gene H. Bell-Villada

FEW literary legends can compare to that surrounding "The House of the Spirits," Isabel Allende's family-chronicle-cum-history of her native Chile. Her very first novel, published when she was in her early 40's, rose to best-sellerdom. Reviewers were indulgent. Here was a beautiful, humane, talented woman who happened to be the exiled niece of the martyred Chilean President Salvador Allende. The troublesome secret was that in prose and format the book was mostly imitation García Márquez.

Happily, Ms. Allende is no longer the novice in "Of Love and Shadows," a suspenseful thriller. Set in the terrorized Chile of Gen. Augusto Pinochet (himself an occasional character), it tells of the love that grows between Irene Beltrán — feisty, innocent, marginally upper-class and a reporter for a women's magazine — and Francisco Leal, son of impoverished Spanish Republican exiles, an unemployed psychologist and sometime political activist who casually drifts into Irene's office as a freelance photographer. Together they cover a variety of beats, but something clicks when they start investigating Evangelina, a 15-year-old peasant girl and fabled miracle worker. During a brutal army search of her family's house, Evangelina, in a trance, singlehandedly lifts up a cruel lieutenant and hurls him out the door.

Soon thereafter Evangelina "disappears"; through journalistic tips and footwork the hero and heroine locate the girl's corpse in an abandoned mine shaft, where bodies of dozens of the regime's opponents are also decaying. Francisco takes photos; word spreads; a scandal ensues. Then someone sprays Irene with bullets from a passing car. She survives in the hospital but is obviously marked for Government liquidation. With help from friends she and Francisco assume disguises, quietly flee Santiago and cross the Andes into Argentina, ready to fight the dictatorship from exile. "We will return," they say.

LOVE and struggle à la "Casablanca" — it's all there. Ms. Allende skillfully evokes both the terrors of daily life under military rule and the subtler forms of resistance in the hidden corners and "shadows" of her title, particularly in the churches or in simple unsung acts of solidarity. At the same time the author ably captures the voices of the regime's apologists — the complex lies and clichés of its proud male foot soldiers and the pat false phrases of its rich lady cheerleaders. A journalist herself, Ms. Allende renders with expert detail such offbeat worlds as the professional routines of a hairdresser, the range of types in a private nursing home or the operations of the Santiago city morgue. While her prose at times verges on soap opera, that is also one of its charms. She can just as deftly depict loving tenderness as convey the high fire of eroticism. And when you've successfully mingled sex and politics with a noble cause, how can you go wrong?

While the translation by Margaret Sayers Peden is at times awkward (for example, "pythoness" and "chiromancy" instead of "fortune teller" and "palmistry") and could use more colloqualisms and contractions, on the whole it's a supple piece of work. □

Gene H. Bell-Villada, who teaches Spanish at Williams College, is the author of "Borges and His Fiction: A Guide to His Mind and Art."

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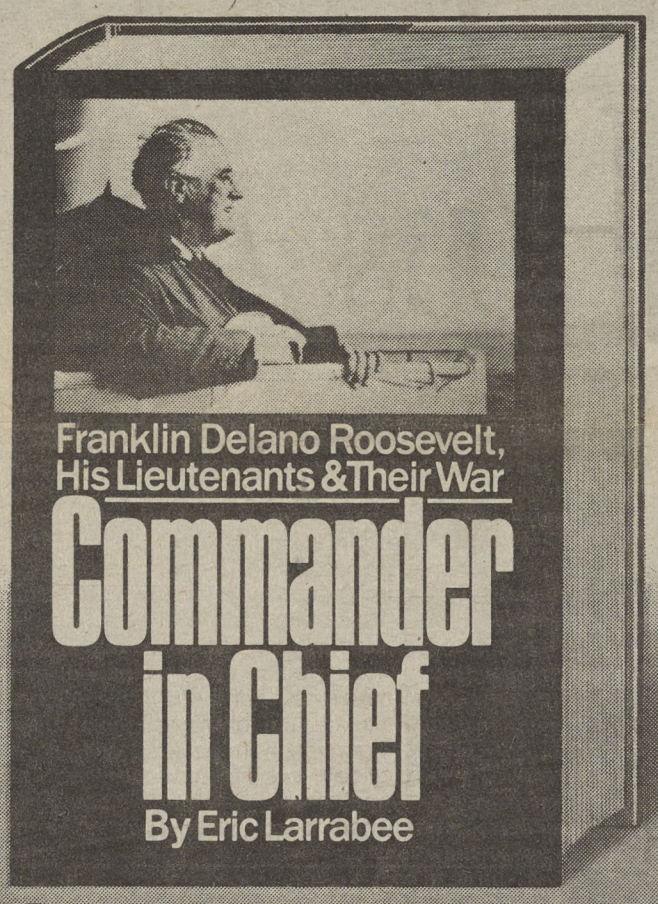

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What's Left Out of Literature

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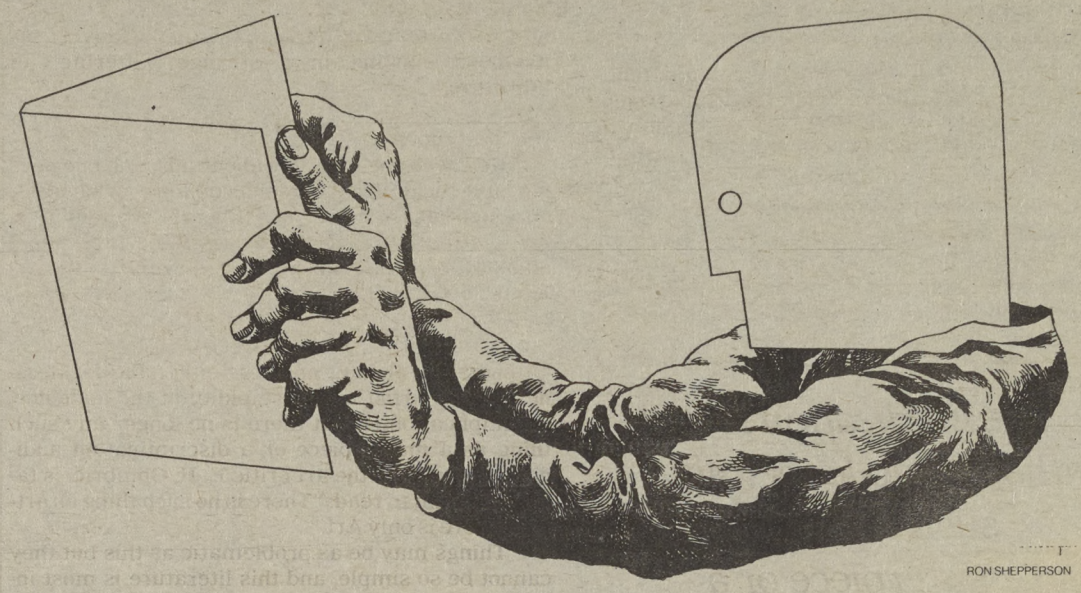

RON SHEPPERSON

written in his book "Les Modernes," with typical tantalizing ellipticity, of a certain kind of American "minimal experience," with its "plastic extenuation of reality and pulverization of life, and above all that universal tendency to confusion which has deprived contemporary culture of its ability to appreciate time." But it is Robert Hughes, the art critic, who gives us a firmer handle in pointing out the strange but predictable consequences of the present generation of art students trained primarily through slides. One cannot help seeing much contemporary fiction as a literary slide show, holding in common a purposive lack of scale and depth, an altogether predictable coloration and a transparency of surface, encoded by a narration that advertises in advance that it will not sustain itself, a voice-over esthetically and ethically neutral.

Slide-show writing is to fiction what demographics are to social science, a nonstyle in search of a homogeneous and static social state, preferring to be emblematic of a slackening situation rather than powerfully descriptive of it. Its hallmark is an affectlessness that is the mother of evasion, as in this passage from Bret Easton Ellis's first novel, "Less Than Zero": "I drive to Trent's house, but Trent isn't there so I sit in his room and put a movie in the Betamax and call Blair and ask her if she wants to do something tonight, go to a club or see a movie and she says she would and I start to draw on a piece of paper that's next to the phone, recopying phone numbers on it.

" 'Julian wants to see you,' Blair tells me.

" 'Yeah. I heard. Did he say what for?'

" 'I don't know what he wants to see you about. He just said he has to talk to you.'

" 'Do you have his number?' I ask.

" 'No.' "

• • •

If we are to take our recent "minimal" fiction seriously, we are in the presence of a new class, one Max Weber anticipated with such clarity in 1922, in "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism": "No one knows yet who will inhabit this shell [of industrial capitalism] in the future: whether at the end of its prodigious development there will be . . . a vigorous renaissance of all thoughts and ideals or whether finally, if none of this occurs, mechanism will produce only petrification hidden under a kind of anxious importance. Specialists without spirit, libertines without heart, this nothingness imagines itself to be elevated to a level of humanity never before attained."

Ordinarily, there could be nothing more interesting to a novelist than the appearance of a new class, particularly one with such *fin de siècle* features. But what kind of bourgeoisie is this, neither wielding power nor challenging it, not easily intimidated but never gratified, a bourgeoisie without thrift or capital or tradition, not overly neat nor sexually repressed by all accounts, a bourgeoisie that doesn't know what it likes? No, this is not the bourgeoisie we love to kick around.

The surface contradiction of the new class appears to be that it is politically conservative, yet art-oriented and culturally hip. This misses the point by a wide margin. Yuppies are culturally democratic but socially elitist, exactly the reverse of their older critics; and it is cultural weightlessness, not conservative politics, that is the distinctive feature of this new class. They march to art, as General Foy said of the Napoleonic troops of Waterloo, "without fear, without hope."

To watch the contemporary consumer of art is to observe a victim of *hype*-nosis — that peculiar combination of sublimated aggression and winsome docility that strikes the contemporary note. This is hardly the healthy skepticism of a tolerant pluralism. It has all the characteristics of overload, of a culture that places so many modalities at the consumer's disposal that none of them can have decisive value. If these are the new bourgeois, they have apparently lost control over their own culture, even as the landscape, from coin laundries to symphony orchestras, is redesigned to their alleged attention span.

Fiction of course has its fashions. The self-conscious mode that drove so much interesting fiction for the last 20 years is no longer with us, and that impulse may well in retrospect be seen, not so much as a conspicuous esthetic strategy, but as a concluding chapter in the long book of how we lost our public life. This writing was congealed under the rubrics of "self-reflexivity" and "Fabulism," just as the younger writers today are lumped together under "minimalism" and "dirty realism." Labels aside, what one notices in John Barth or John Hawkes or William Gass or Stanley Elkin is that no character ever talks the way most people actually do, and the presumption is that in fiction that is how it should be. In minimal fiction, there has never been such a conscious and largely successful attempt to capture in dialogue the elisions and inadvertent rhythms of everyday colloquial speech (whether this is a good idea is another matter). The point is, however, that what is passed off as realistic literary convention in fact is an oblique investigation of social class, and it suggests that recent American culture can be understood through a fiction that delineates the changes in the character of professional elites.

THE obdurate unsurprised and unsurprising plain style that passes for a new realism is something more than yet another American false innocence. While it *looks* anti-intellectual, nonliterary and ahistorical, it is in fact highly conceptual, consciously rhetorical and extremely aware of its antecedents. It is a reaction against both the mannerism of the self-conscious mode *and* commercial fiction, which has always been defined by its peppy style and abundance of information. This new fiction willfully removes energy from style, and spe-

cializes in witholding information. The following example is from Story Quarterly 21; the author Christopher Lee:

"My life is easy. All of my life, every part of it, erything about my life is easy. My life lives itself.

"It is true that all of that is obvious. It is also ue that none of it is true."

Such writing has been scorned for its "nihilsm" and praised for its "minimalism" when, strictly speaking, it exhibits neither. Nihilism implies a critical negation, not an indifference to values or a refusal to differentiate one idea or image from another. Minimalism is also active in its challenge to redundancy and derivative tradition, so that the artistic medium can be explored as medium. But this fiction does not clear the air so much as it sucks it out, so that the prose is stripped not only of traditional content but also of formal awareness of itself. The signature is so immediate, and the effects so interchangeable and chilling, that we tend not to make distinctions between stories and writers, and to overlook occasional triumphs of the style. But if this fiction is bad, it is not bad within any of the categories of badness that we have. It is untraceable to either high or popular culture.

> *"The implication is that there is no longer any such thing as a masterpiece or a discriminating audience."*

This is not to say that literary analysis is irrelevant to understanding cultural weightlessness, which has a tradition, after all, beginning with Melville and fully amplified as early as Henry James. For the old-fashioned narrator withheld the right to criticize and dramatize his characters' emptiness, sometimes ridiculing, sometimes sympathizing, but always maintaining his third-party detachment in service of cultural resonance, in which syntax *is* context. The self-conscious narrator aggressively invaded both his characters' and his reader's space. Now it seems that the narrator is dragged down by his characters, adopting their limitations and defects, so that the reader is let off the hook by an author who refuses to attribute to him any curiosity — a strange deflection in which the reader does not blame the writer but rather feels superior to the characters.

Laid-back this may be; naïve it is not. For what is most noticeable in this fiction is that the cultural weightlessness once attributed to characters or milieus, once a "subject matter" or "atmosphere," is now the narrator's point of view. This thrust toward weightlessness becomes in fact both a class identity and a generational signature, something much more complicated than mere esthetic rebellion or, for that matter, philistinism. This fiction is above all characterized by the author's refusal to take the measure of the reader — depicting through its narrative strategy a culture driven by passive depressives — a work ethic, in Weber's terms, without salvation. Predicated on huge omissions, its very legitimate and potentially very human fears are masked by boredom — always the primary defense mechanism of the middle classes in rude and irreversible transition. If our economy is one in which the older notion of capital formation has eroded, then this is a literature in which traditional notions of real investment and income in esthetic transactions have likewise been discarded. A "paper" asset locked outside the circuits of both literary history and real production, it advertises itself as existing in a strange "afterlife" of literature.

• • •

However one may feel about this, and one does not have to admire it to feel its oblique seriousness, one ought to see it for the deliberate strategy it is, for its literary fashion sends an important signal about all cultural transactions, a change in the dynamic of consumption in all the arts, in which something has happened to diffuse *both* artistic intent *and* audience expectation. While one can make an endlessly elegant case for either the fecklessness of the artist or the stupidity of the audience, the implication is that there is no longer any such thing as a masterpiece *or* a discriminating audience. It reverses the art critic E. H. Gombrich's famous dictum to read: "There is no such thing as artists. There is only Art."

Things may be as problematic as this but they cannot be so simple, and this literature is most interesting for its extraliterary dimension, for it describes a mentality that refuses to attribute — much less contest — value, a social order that shrugs off any reciprocal relations, an economy and cultural life in which the largest industry is the liquidation of distressed inventory, intellectual life that refuses to be tested by experience and art that refuses to be judged by the standards of the past. It is a writing whose tonal universe perfectly captures the eerie calm of a society that has never been more evasive. And in its self-exoneration, such fiction reflects a free-market ideology that believes confronting or intervening in any difficult problem only makes it worse.

NEVERTHELESS, one could argue that there is ample justification for cultural passivity. After all, when the art world is in a panic, when the literary world is defensive if not opaque, and when the thrust of literary criticism has been to evacuate both experience and intention, to coerce from literature a valueless perspective in the name of method, perhaps such supercautionary tales are more appropriate than we would like to think. For that is the charm and poignancy of thinning art out, that it sets limits to the profession of cultural despair.

It would be comforting to see this literature as yet another subversion of narrative conventions, a willful depreciation of inflated literary assets. But if this is an esthetic program, fiction has come to it very late in the game — surely these points were scored in painting, poetry, music, film and dance over a generation ago. What if what is so monotonously low-key and astringent is in fact intense sublimation, a kind of quiet nervous breakdown? What if what gets left out, just gets left out? What if such omissions cannot be written off to that signature of modernity, the clichés of silence, but to the fact that we don't know quite what has happened to us? Have the velocities of recent change been so great that we do not know how to trace their lines of force, that no sensibility, least of all narrative, has been able to articulate them?

With only a trace of that suspicion, we can reread minimalism, not as a literature trying to diminish its territory, but as the chronicle of a climactic shattering of cultural bonds and social retrogression. □

Authors' Queries

For a biography of Alfred A. Knopf (1892-1984), which will incorporate materials collected by Susan Sheehan, I would be grateful to hear from any who knew him or his wife, Blanche, or who worked with them, or were published by them, or who have letters, photographs, contracts or other documents pertaining to their lives and careers.

PETER S. PRESCOTT
81 Benedict Hill Road
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For a book, "The Landmarks of New York," to be published in the fall of 1988, I am seeking information about the origin and evolution of city-designated landmark buildings — including historical, architectural and anecdotal references.

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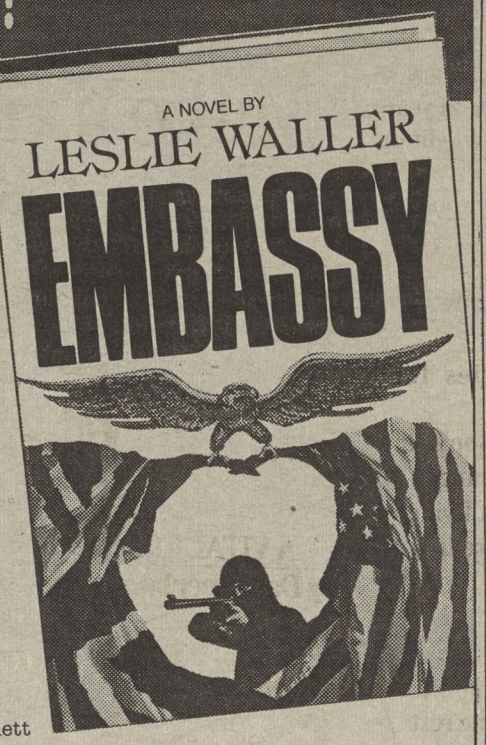

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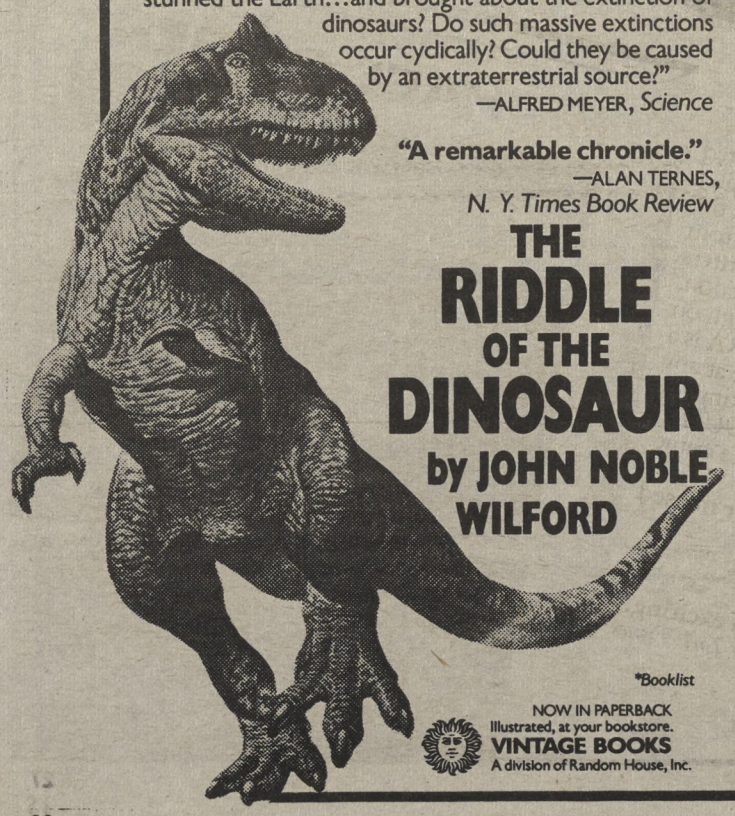

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Truth Was the Last Straw

CAUSE AT HEART
A Former Communist Remembers.
By Junius Irving Scales and Richard Nickson.
Foreword by Telford Taylor.
427 pp. Athens:
The University of Georgia Press. $24.95.

By William Herrick

THAT the University of Georgia Press has published this affecting memoir by Junius Scales has to mean that times do change — and sometimes for the better. Junius Irving Scales was born in 1920 in Greensboro, N.C., of an old aristocratic Southern family, prominent both politically and socially. A gentle Southern boy, he preferred books, poetry and music to fun and games. An outsider as a youth, when he went to the University of North Carolina he was astonished to find "immeasurable suffering, exploitation, and poverty had existed among thousands of people, right under my nose all my life, and I'd been totally unaware of it." The only blacks he'd known personally were those who had been servants in his family mansion.

He was moved profoundly by the plight of the black people, the daily injustices they had to live with, and the poor in general, and soon became friends with students from the North who were openly voluble, if nothing else, about the injustices of our society, especially in the South. Like thousands before him, Junius Scales was moved to take action, and before he really knew what he was about he was a member of a Communist club. Though he had found comradeship of a sort, he now had become an outsider in a more significant way.

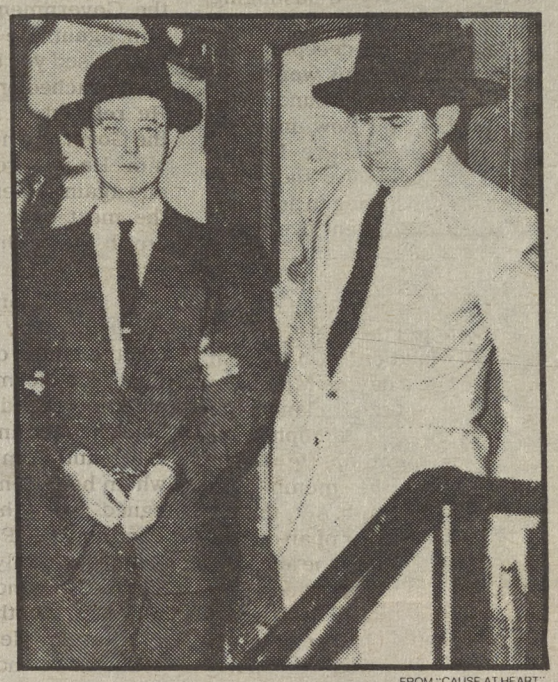
Fifteen years later, in 1954, while working clandestinely for the Communist Party, he says of himself, "He was a Man with a Mission." He was by then married for a second time, the father of a daughter, and he visited wife and child incognito. "To achieve his goals he had entered the labyrinth of Marxism-Leninism, accepted Stalin as his infallible leader, and learned to believe unbelievable things — lured and sustained by that will-o'-the-wisp, socialism."

• • •

He was in the party but a few months when he was hit with reality: the Nazi-Soviet pact, and he wondered (and we wonder with him) how he could have been so easily convinced of its rightness by the district organizer of the party, a man he admired. He did civil rights work, he helped out on a union strike, he was antiwar, this was 1939-40, and in one year he was co-opted, as he says, into the party's North Carolina state committee and elected state treasurer. The party knew when it had a good thing: a blond, blue-eyed, handsome young man from a wealthy, well-known Southern family, and his advancement in the party was swift. Soon he became chairman in each of three front organizations. He was passionately moved by his comradeship with blacks and blue-collar workers: (Every time he writes about minorities — blacks, Jews, impoverished workers — or about party leaders he respects, a light seems to go on and soon halos are seen floating above their heads.) He also felt himself to be among the elite, a special group of men and women who against all odds wanted to change their society for the better. It was almost as if no one else in the United States was working for the right to join a trade union or for the eradication of racism.

It is the calm, even voice of Junius Scales we hear in "Cause at Heart," though he has written this moving and memorable document with the help of his friend Richard Nickson. It is the voice of a decent, idealistic man who spent 18 years of his life in the Communist Party doing everything up to serving as district organizer for several Southern states, including North Carolina. And we don't hear a false note: he is telling us the truth, as he reveals his illusions and delusions, his weaknesses and his strengths, his passionate belief in his party and the Soviet Union, and all the nagging doubts as well. He spares us nothing.

When the Soviet Union was invaded by Nazi Germany, the imperialist war, according to the party, became an anti-imperialist war against fascism, and he was pleased with the change in line. When the United States entered the war, after discussing it with his district organizer, he enlisted in the Army. He tried innumerable times to be sent overseas, but his attempts were blocked by military intelligence because he was a Communist. Other Communists were permitted to give their lives in the war, but it depended on which intelligence officer at what place thought it was perfectly all right to do so. Near the end of the war, Mr. Scales finally made it, and was sent to southern Italy, outside the fighting zones.



FROM "CAUSE AT HEART"

Junius Irving Scales, left, after his arrest by the F.B.I. in 1954. He was indicted under the Smith Act for being a member of the Communist Party, and was convicted and sentenced to six years in prison.

BEFORE he left for overseas duty, at the height of the Grand Alliance, Earl Browder, the party leader, reformed the organization, for all intents and purposes dumping Marxism-Leninism. Mr. Scales was extremely happy with the turnaround: now Communists would become integrated into American society.

While he was in southern Italy, however, Browder was ousted from the party, and Mr. Scales was dismayed, angry. On his return to the United States, he visited the party's national office in New York City and there was convinced by top leaders of the correctness of the move. "What did I," he says, "a product of the big bourgeoisie/landed aristocracy, a half-baked intellectual, know about politics?" He complied yet again and, though reluctantly at first and soon almost automatically, he spoke out against Browderism in the various party organizations which he led. "How could I doubt the integrity of such a movement, even if individuals as fine as Browder went astray? . . . If anyone had offered me proof at that time that Stalin had caused the death of far more Communists than Hitler had . . . I would have laughed at such naïveté."

Employed after the war in a textile shop, he was so overwhelmed by his party work that he didn't have time to think about himself. When he was

William Herrick's most recent novel, "That's Life," received the Present Tense/Joel H. Cavior Literary Award for fiction in 1985.

What's Left Out of Literature

By Charles Newman NYTBR July 12, '87

READERS of the essays in The Book Review have been recently familiarized, whether they like it or not, with the old debate on whether less is, in fact, more. Like so much literary debate, it is most interesting for what it deflects. That is to say, it is very American, and very contemporary, to see this as an *esthetic* issue, refusing to consider literature as taking place in a larger social and cultural framework, of literature having *reference* at all. (Am I alone, in reading the reviews in these pages, in feeling that the fiction — and social, political, and cultural nonfiction — seems not to be written by contemporaries in different genres, but by people from different planets? And more, that it seems a mark of intellectual distinction *never* to review the fiction in the context of the culture?) What happens then, if we ask the question: if this modern American fiction is so "realistic," then what is it saying about the American reality to which it refers?

The fact of the matter is that a sense of diminishing control, loss of individual autonomy and generalized helplessness has never been so instantly recognizable in our literature — the flattest possible characters in the flattest possible landscape rendered in the flattest possible diction. The presumption seems to be that America is a vast fibrous desert in which a few laconic weeds nevertheless manage to sprout in the cracks. But as this weightlessness is located in psychic places as different as Appalachia (Jayne Anne Phillips), a nameless Northwest (Raymond Carver), the New South (Frederick Barthelme) or regentrified New England (Ann Beattie), we begin to suspect that this is not an investigation of particulars, or even a national mood, but a common method, a *chosen* narrative anomie, which disarms by acknowledging its emptiness without pretense or misgiving.

To argue that this new literature is good or bad ignores its most significant common assumption, that it is writing without cultural ambition, willfully severed from consequences. Jean-Paul Aron has

Continued on page 24

Charles Newman, who teaches literature at Washington University in St. Louis, is the author most recently of "White Jazz," a novel, and "The Post-Modern Aura," a book of cultural criticism.

Eliot Janeway: 'The Great Depression of 1990' / **11**

ANNE EDWARDS

AUTHOR OF *VIVIEN LEIGH*

full, in-depth story of the evolution of a poor boy from Dixon, Illinois, first into a movie star and then into a gubernatorial candidate on the brink of national attention. With the meticulous research that is her hallmark, Anne Edwards has been given unprecedented access to the minutes of the meetings of the Screen Actors Guild during Reagan's tenure as a board member and president (permitting an eye-opening portrait of him as a labor leader). Her examination of the Warner Brothers Archives reveals some equally eye-opening memos about his movie career. In addition, she personally interviewed over 200 people, many of whom speak for the first time.

*"For anyone who wants to know more about the circumstances and associates that formed Ronald Reagan into a political figure, this is the book to read. There probably will not be a better."

for themselves.

Political analysts, both amateur and professional, as well as movie fans, will find EARLY REAGAN heady stuff. Edwards' singularly well documented work deserves, however, to be just as carefully read by everyone interested in discovering the ways by which political and economic power are achieved in the America of the mid-20th century."—*Kirkus Reviews*

Illustrated with photographs

William Morrow

Recognition at Last for a Poet Of Elegant Complexity

NYT April 13, 1995

By DINITIA SMITH

She is 77. She has raised seven children, mostly on her own. She has published only four books of poetry in a lifetime. But last month Marie Ponsot won one of the nation's most prestigious literary prizes, the National Book Critics Circle Award, for her latest collection, "The Bird Catcher."

A Marie Ponsot poem is a little like a jeweled bracelet, carefully carved, with small, firm stones embedded in it. Her subjects are domestic life, friendship, marriage and sometimes swimming. She was described in The San Francisco Chronicle as "one of the most elegant, intelligent poets around." A writer for The New Yorker said: "The poems reveal the moral drama enacted just beneath the surfaces of the natural world. Ponsot attends to elegant forms without losing sight of what they are there to express." Still, Ms. Ponsot's work is little known outside the world of poetry.

Her poems "are meant to be beautiful," Ms. Ponsot said last week in her small apartment on the East Side of Manhattan. "That's a very unfashionable thing to say. So unfashionable. Transgressive." She is a small, tough, soft-voiced woman who swims in her building's pool every day. Her apartment is a little dusty and filled with piles of books, plants, photographs of her children, 14 grandchildren and step-grandchildren. "I don't have a strong nesting instinct," she said.

Ms. Ponsot's poems can be lyrical, as in "The Story After the Story," from "The Bird Catcher" (Alfred A. Knopf), about putting her seven children to sleep at night:

. . . bed-ready boys. I crib them, warm in their
soft shirts, & sit to eat a bruised sweet apple
as I nurse Chris and float on mild air . . .

But they can also be tough, as in "I've Been Around: It Gets Me Nowhere":



Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

Marie Ponsot, whose poems won a National Book Critics Circle Award.

I am the woman always too young to be
holding the diamond the baby exulting.

I am the worker afraid of the rules & the boss; my
salary heats the house where I feed many children.

And sometimes they are very harsh. For example, in "One Is One":

Heart, you bully, you punk, I'm wrecked, I'm shocked
stiff. You? you still try to rule the world — though
I've got you: identified, starving, locked
in a cage you will not leave alive . . .

What the poems have in common is verbal precision and syntactical complexity. They are full of carefully thought-out rhetorical strategies. She sometimes uses an ampersand, to link words, for instance, instead "and," creating a short beat rather than a full beat between words. Ms. Ponsot is fond of villanelles, sestinas and even tritinas. But

Continued on Page B3

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Kevin Thomas, LOS ANGELES TIMES

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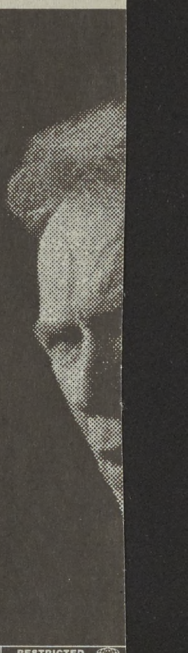

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Recognition Arrives at Last for One Poet

Continued From Page B1

more about that later.

Recognition has taken so long to come, a reporter notes, the question is unavoidable. If Ms. Ponsot wanted to be a poet, why did she have seven children? "Because I loved it," she said firmly, about having her children. No anger here, no sense of time lost or wasted.

"I never had a strong desire to publish a book," she said. "I had a strong desire to write poems." She added: "I see now that was queer. I didn't realize that is a big part of what a poet has to do. I was too busy to sit around and think about it."

Ms. Ponsot was born in Queens, to a family that relished language. Her father was a partner in a company that imported wines for a select list of wealthy New York families. "He was a servant of the rich," she said. Her mother was a schoolteacher. Her grandmother kept scrapbooks filled with poems she liked. She had a poem for everything, Ms. Ponsot said. When sunset came, her grandmother would recite Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar." Ms. Ponsot still knows it by heart:

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea.

While she was still a child Ms. Ponsot began having poems published in The Brooklyn Eagle.

The family was Catholic, and Ms. Ponsot still considers herself a Catholic. "I still announce myself because I want to be in people's face about it," she said. "It's sort of like a club you can't resign from, but anyone can get in."

She graduated from St. Joseph's College for Women in Brooklyn and received a master's degree in 17th-century literature from Columbia University. Soon after World War II she went to Paris. One of her fellow passengers on the boat was the poet and publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who became a friend. When he started City Lights Books in San Francisco, he published Ms. Ponsot's first collection, "True Minds," in 1957. But the book was overshadowed by Allen Ginsberg's "Howl," which Mr. Ferlinghetti had published just before.

"Mine disappeared without a trace," Ms. Ponsot said. "Anybody who bought 'Howl' would not be interested in what I was writing."

In Paris she met Claude Ponsot, a French painter. "We picked each other up in a bar," she said. They married and lived in Paris for three years. Ms. Ponsot said she had not intended to get pregnant, but after her oldest child, Monique, was born in 1951, she knew she loved having babies. Monique was followed by six brothers.

While rearing her children, she translated some 37 books from French to English, including the "Fables and Tales of La Fontaine." She also wrote radio and television scripts, though she didn't own a television set. "I worked late at night when the children had gone to bed," she said.

She and her husband were divorced in 1970, she said, after which she continued to write while raising her children. "

"People would say, 'Poor thing.' I would say, 'Yesss!' " she said, making two fists with her hands. "The kindest thing he ever did was to leave," she said of her husband.

It took 24 years for her to publish her second poetry collection. She was an English professor at Queens College by now, and a friend, the poet Marilyn Hacker, had heard that Knopf was publishing a new poetry series. Knopf accepted her poems and published "Admit Impediment" in 1981. Her third collection, "The Green Dark," was published by Knopf in 1988.

In 1991 Ms. Ponsot retired from the College and turned full time to writing. A poet, she said, should write with "the press of the whole language coming to bear to say something you didn't know." Still, she rewrites her poems "hundreds of times."

For her, difficult forms like the villanelle, the sestina and the tritina, enable the poet to achieve more than if he or she were just free associating.

Her poem "Roundstone Cove" is a tritina, a poem consisting of three stanzas, each with three lines. Each line ends in one of a set of three words, but in each stanza the end words are in a different order. There is an additional line at the conclusion of the poem that contains all the end words. In "Roundstone Cove," the three end words are fog, -hood and sun:

The wind rises. The sea snarls in the fog
far from the attentive beaches of
childhood —
no picnic, no striped chairs, no sand, no
sun.

Here even by day cliffs obstruct the sun;
moonlight miles out mocks this abyss of
fog.
I walk big-bellied, lost in motherhood,

hunched in a shell of coat, a blindered
hood.
Alone a long time, I remember sun —
poor magic effort to undo the fog.

Fog hoods me. But the hood of fog is sun.

Difficult, but it's worth it, said Ms. Ponsot, because "in the process of turning your brain around, you find something you didn't know."

Poetic forms like the tritina are "instruments of discovery," she said. "The forms create an almost bodily pleasure in the poet. What you're doing is trying to discover. They are not restrictive. They pull things out of you. They help you remember."

•Foolish 1:15, 3:45, 6, 8:15, 10:30
•Twin Dragons 1, 3:30, 5:45, 8, 10:15
•10 Things I Hate About You 12 Noon, 2:30, 5, 7:30, 10
•True Crime 12:15AM, 3:15, 6:30, 9:30
•The Corruptor 12:30, 3, 5:30, 8:30, 11
•Life is Beautiful 1:30, 4:15, 7, 9:45

ORPHEUM - 86th St. & 3rd Ave. 50-LOEWS #964
•Go 11:45AM, 2:15, 4:45, 7:15, 9:45
•Twin Dragons 12:45, 3, 5:45, 8:15, 10:30
•The Out Of Towners 1, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:15
•The Matrix 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30
•Forces Of Nature 11:30AM, 2, 4:25, 6:45, 9:15
•Analyze This 12:15, 2:45, 5:15, 8, 10:45

19TH ST. EAST - B'way & 19th St. 50-LOEWS #858
•Go 12:30, 3:15, 5:45, 8:15, 10:45
•The Out Of Towners 11:30AM, 2, 4:30, 7, 9:30
•Ed TV 12:45, 3:45, 6:45, 9:45
•Analyze This 1:45, 4:45, 7:15, 10
•Life is Beautiful 1:30, 4:15, 7:30, 10:30

VILLAGE VII - 3rd Ave. at 11th St. 50-LOEWS #952
•Go 1:30, 4:15, 7, 9:45
•Twin Dragon 11:30AM, 2, 4:45, 7:30, 10:15
•The Out Of Towners 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10
•Ed TV 12Noon, 3, 6, 9
•The Corruptor 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30
•Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels 11:45AM, 2:30, 5:30, 8:15, 11
•Analyze This 2:15, 5:15, 8, 10:45

STATE - B'way & 45th Street 50-LOEWS #901 (Within the Virgin Megastore)
•Go 12Noon, 2:30, 5, 7:30, 10
•The Out Of Towners 12:15, 2:45, 5:30, 8, 10:15
•The Corruptor 11, 3:45, 6:30, 9:15

CORONET CINEMAS - 3rd Ave & 59th St. 50-LOEWS #608
•The Matrix 12:30, 3:30, 7, 10
•True Crime 12Noon, 3, 6:30, 9:30

72ND STREET EAST - 72nd St. & 3rd Ave. 50-LOEWS #704
•Life is Beautiful 1, 4, 7, 10

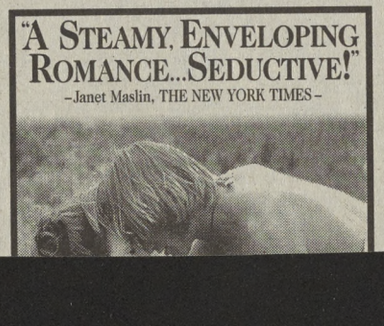
NEW YORK TWIN - 2nd Ave. & 66th St. 50-LOEWS #698
•Ed TV 1:30, 4:30, 7:30, 10:30

Will the Voices Grow Ever Quieter After Robert Shaw's Death?

Continued From Page B1

through actual contact. His disciples range from the 71-year-old Robert Page, who was one of Shaw's successors as director of the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus, from 1971 to 1989, to relative youngsters like Charles Bruffy, the 40-year-old director of the Kansas City Chorale.

Shaw did not teach conducting as such but worked mostly through example, presiding over institutes and workshops for specialists in the field. He might train and conduct an amateur chorus one week and an ad hoc group of choral directors the next.



It was just such an institute, in France, that turned Mr. Bruffy into a Shaw follower. "It changed my life," Mr. Bruffy said. "My chorus at home had a whole new sonority after my first experience with Shaw." Mr. Bruffy sang in Shaw choruses many times, and although he was never a part of Shaw's wide circle of friends, he said, "I sponged from him as hard as I could."

Dwindling Number Of Specialists

In addition to Mr. Page, who directs the Mendelssohn Choir in Pittsburgh, leaders of the generation or two after Shaw include Joseph Flummerfelt, the artistic director and principal conductor of the Westminster Choir College in Princeton, N.J.; Vance George, the director of the San Francisco Symphony Chorus; John Oliver, the director of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus in Massachusetts, and Gregg Smith, the founder of the Gregg Smith Singers.

"There aren't that many of us anymore with our feet above the ground," said Mr. Page, still obviously elder statesman for size.

Others of great promise were lost early to AIDS: Michael Korn, who founded the Philadelphia Singers and died in 1991 at 44, and Thomas Peck, who founded the St. Louis Symphony Chorus and died in 1994 at 56.

Of the younger generations, in addition to Mr. Bruffy, Robert Porco, who teaches at Indiana University and directs the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus, and Dennis Keene, the director of Ascension Music in New York, are often mentioned as rising stars. Other obvious talents are Norman MacKenzie, Mr. Shaw's longtime assistant at the Atlanta Symphony Chorus and elsewhere; Judith Clurman, who directs choruses in New York, including the Judith Clurman Chorale, and Amy Kaiser, who leads the St. Louis Symphony Chorus.

The 45-year-old Mr. Keene is the younger leader most widely touted to pick up Shaw's mantle as not only conductor but also mentor. Mr. Keene started a summer festival last year in Kent, Conn., breaking the Shaw mold in offering specific instruction in conducting and singing as well as choral technique.

Even without Shaw, the field of

never before has there been such a stock of fine chorus masters, largely because of Shaw's eagerness to share his methods and expertise.

"He didn't really have students," said Mr. Keene, who is not particularly known for a Shaw connection. "But I did the Shaw bit. I tagged along, and I sat in on his rehearsals."

Yet that richness has limits. A distinction must be made, several directors pointed out, between choral trainers and actual conductors. Conducting, especially when a full orchestra comes into play, is a whole other discipline, one that Shaw took pains to master as few others have.

"At a certain point, he decided to concentrate on orchestral conducting as well," Mr. Flummerfelt said. "There isn't anyone who can move back and forth as well as he did."

The term "choral conductor," in fact, always seemed too limiting, almost pejorative, in Shaw's case, even when, as usual, it was couched in superlatives. Although he may not have been the most consistently inspired orchestral leader, he was the music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for 21 fruitful years until 1988, no mean feat, although it is

his towering choral achievement.

"Earlier on, you wouldn't even have called choral directors conductors," Mr. Keene said. "They were chorus masters. Shaw changed all that, along with Hillis and Wagner."

The situation the finest choral conductors typically face, with a large amateur chorus in combination with a professional orchestra, is highly complex. Yet partly because of that very involvement with amateur musicians, choral conductors tend to get little respect, even — or especially — from the orchestral colleagues with whom they often collaborate.

Wondering What Will Happen Next

True, certain symphonic and operatic maestros take a lively interest in choral music. Mr. Conlon has directed the renowned Cincinnati May Festival for two decades, and Mr. Masur retains ties to a rich German choral tradition. But there are few others.

And although many skilled chorus masters have followed in Mr. Shaw's wake, relatively few genuine conductors of great promise, demonstrated

TRIGGERING TOWN POEM

Assignment: Write a poem that describes a town. You may write about a town that you don't know very well (allowing your imagination more room to roam) or about where you live now (yet seeing it through the eyes of a stranger). In either case, follow these guidelines:

1. Use second-person (You) point-of-view.

2. Describe the town with specific details, including those you know and those you imagine.

   Note: The deepest truth of a poem depends more upon the poet's feelings than upon a strictly factual portrayal of details and events.

3. Move from an exterior description of the town to an interior description of your own life or life in general.

   In The Triggering Town, Richard Hugo writes: "A poem can be said to have two subjects, the initiating or triggering subject, which starts the poem or causes the poem to be written, and the real or generated subject, which the poem comes to say or mean, and which is generated or discovered in the poem during the writing."

4. Appeal to the senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell) in order to evoke the places you portray.

5. Use figures of speech (similes and metaphors) to connect images with thoughts or feelings.

6. Use vivid words, particularly nouns and verbs, to create images and movement.

7. Choose images and phrases which are original, not cliches.

8. Pay special attention to sound effects (such as alliteration and rhythmical flow) while you write, and surprise yourself.

9. First, look at the last word in each line and make sure it is a strong word (usually a noun or verb) or one which moves quickly to the first word of the next line. Ideally, the last word of each line should tempt the reader into guessing what the next word will be, but surprise: It's a different word. Second, group the lines that develop the same theme or mood together into stanzas, allowing the reader to pause and reflect before continuing.

10. Include the town's name in a title which hooks the reader into reading the poem.

G. Lenihan/00

TRIGGERING TOWN POEM EVALUATION

In groups, discuss which of the following characteristics of triggering town poems apply to the poem you're evaluating. From the three categories, choose which number to circle for each characteristic. Last, decide how many points to award the poem.

<u>In a polished-draft poem</u>:

1. The "You" point-of-view is used consistently, and "You" could be almost anyone.
2. The description of the town is so real that the reader can picture it vividly.
3. The mood of the narrator and the description of the town are interwoven.
4. The details of the poem appeal to at least two of the five senses.
5. Figures of speech are sprinkled throughout the poem, connecting images to ideas and feelings.
6. Key words, especially nouns and verbs, are carefully chosen and precise.
7. The music of the poem, including sound effects and rhythm, accents the meaning.
8. Line and stanza breaks contribute to the meaning and the rhythm of the poem.
9. The title of the poem intrigues the reader and adds to the poem's meaning.

<u>In a working-draft poem</u>:

1. The "You" point-of-view is used consistently, but "I" would work better.
2. The description of the town is sometimes in sharp focus, sometimes blurred.
3. The mood of the narrator and the description of the town are disconnected or developed separately.
4. The details of the poem appeal exclusively to sight.
5. Figures of speech are used sparingly.
6. Key words such as nouns and verbs are sometimes precise, sometimes vague.
7. The sound effects and the rhythm of the poem usually work well but occasionally become garbled.
8. Most line and stanza breaks are effective; some seem arbitrary.
9. The title is interesting but doesn't add to the poem.

<u>In a rough poem</u>:

1. The "You" point-of-view sometimes turns into "I" or "We."
2. The description of the town is too vague to create a clear picture.
3. The mood of the narrator isn't developed or is unrelated to the description of the town.
4. There are too few concrete details to appeal to any of the five senses.
5. There are no figures of speech.
6. Little attention is paid to choosing the best possible word.
7. The poem has no musical flow or calculated use of poetic sound effects.
8. The poem is written in random phrases and paragraphs, not lines and stanzas.
9. Either there is no title or it's uninspired.

Lenihan/2000

TRIGGERING TOWN ASSESSMENT

Dear Editor: When you read someone's poem, take the time (about 20 minutes) to check the following, writing your comments right on the poem:

1. Did the writer use a second-person narrator? If not, write the poet a note at the top of the page.

2. Underline the specific details the poet includes to help you picture what the town is like. If you'd like more details, say so in your concluding note on the back of the poem.

3. Did the poet connect the description of the town to his or her own life? Can you tell what the poet's mood is? If not, say so in your concluding note.

4. Place a capital **C** (for **concrete**) beside each line that appeals to the senses.

   Sight: Words that create pictures (or images) in your mind: for example, colors.
   Sound: Words that imitate the sound they're describing: for example, "plop."
   Touch: Words that describe the texture of something: for example, "smooth."
   Taste: Words that evoke the taste of something: for example, "bitter."
   Smell: Words that conjure a specific smell: for example, "pungent."

5. **Star** (*) the lines which include a figure of speech, either a metaphor or simile.

6. **Circle** vague words, especially nouns and verbs, and suggest **vivid** ones.

7. **Cross out** (**X**) all cliches (phrases or images used a zillion times before). For example: She was my rose, my sunshine, my cup of tea.

8. In your concluding note to the author, mention which sound effects the poet used effectively. See the back of this page for some of the possibilities.

9. **BOX** the line-breaks which are weak or arbitrary and suggest better words, words which create images or a quick jump to the next line. Next, **BOX** the first word of the next line if you knew exactly what it would be. Last, do the stanza breaks make sense by grouping certain ideas or feelings together? If not, say so in your concluding note.

10. Did you find the title intriguing, and was it a key to understanding the poem?

Remember to write the poet a note on the back of the poem addressing numbers 2, 3, 8 and 9 above. Then praise what you especially liked about the poem. Last, comment on its overall meaning or the feelings that it triggered in you. Sign your name so the poet can talk to you for further clarification.

G.Lenihan/00

SOUND EFFECTS

For years and years, true rhyme was the main sound effect that poets used to appeal to the listener's ear. These days, however, the poet's bag of auditory tricks is both bigger and subtler. Listed below are some of these sound effects:

Exact Rhyme: The trick with using true rhyme is to place the rhyming words in unpredictable places so **when** we hear them, **where** we hear them surprises us. Sing-songy, cheesy or forced rhymes are among the deadliest of poetic sins.

Slant Rhyme: Think of slant rhyme as "teasing" the ear and true rhyme as "pleasing" it. Listed below are just a few of the words that slant-rhyme with "soft."

soft * sift * caught * raft * cough * laughed
lift * scent * bereft * neglect * arrest * suffer

Hear how close "sift" is to "soft?" Much fainter, hear the sound echoes of "bereft" and "suffer?"

Alliteration: Repetition of consonant sounds, at the beginning and in the middle of words. For example:

He was a flagrant flake, saved by his fling with a flaming flirt!

Assonance: Repetition of vowel sounds. For example:

The rain came like fate while she waited for the day to break.

Consonance: Repetition of final consonant sounds. For example:

The first and last are either your worst or best, and whether you fast or lust, you'll still list the cost of the rest.

Rhythm: When read out loud, a poem can either be smooth, flowing like a river, or choppy, like a storm-tossed sea. In either case, the rhythm should fit the meaning of the poem.

Onomatopoeia: Some words sound like what they mean: plop, scrape, sprawl.

G. Lenihan/99

George Dangerfield, Historian

George Dangerfield, the British-born American historian, died of leukemia on Dec. 27 at Cottage Hospital in Santa Barbara, Calif. He was 82 years old.

Mr. Dangerfield, a fellow of the Society of American Historians, was the author of a number of books, including "The Strange Death of Liberal England" (1935), 'Victoria's Heir: The Education of a Prince" (1941), "The Era of Good Feelings" (1952), "The Awakening of American Nationalism, 1815-1828" (1965), "Defiance to the Old World" (1970) and "The Damnable Question" (1976).

He was born in Newbury, Berkshire, in 1904, came to the United States in 1930, and was naturalized in 1945. He was literary editor of Vanity Fair magazine from 1933 to 1935. During World War II, he served with the 102d Infantry Division in Europe.

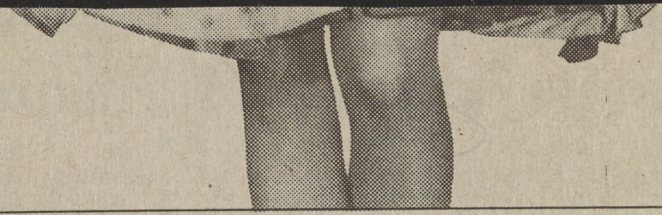
For the last 30 years, Mr. Dangerfield lived in Santa Barbara, where he taught from 1968 through 1972 at the University of California.

"The Era of Good Feelings," which won both the Bancroft Prize and the Pulitzer Prize in American history in 1953, was about some of the personalities and events in the political transition from Jeffersonian democracy to Jacksonian democracy. The American historian Richard Hofstadter praised the book as "a general synthesis of the history of the period that is almost certain to endure as a standard work."

Mr. Dangerfield defined his own concept of historical writing as "a combination of taste, imagination, science and scholarship; it reconciles incompatibles, it balances probabilities; and at last it attains the reality of fiction, which is the highest reality of all."

He is survived by his wife, Mary Lou; two daughters, Mary Jo Lewis and Hilary Fabre, both of Cambridge, Mass.; a son, Anthony, of Hanover, N.H., and a grandson.

NOTICES



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By BERNADINE MORRIS

At a time when some fashion designers seem to be going haywire as they reach for never-before-seen effects, Adolfo has decided to avoid extremes and concentrate on pretty clothes. Nothing looks overblown or exaggerated. Shapes follow the body. Colors are soft and muted. In a calm way, Adolfo has put together one of the most successful shows of his career.

Denying a master plan, he said before the opening of his spring and summer presenta-

hat he
e femi-
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there were many taffeta dress
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dresses outnumbered the floor
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with the peekaboo back was a sh

Lace was one of the flirty fa
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But the designer was not co
with evening clothes. His suits
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with low-heel two-tone pumps.
in cheerful plaids, often lighte
skirts that button down the fr

Pale knitted cashmere card
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cable designs and occasionally
tons. Paired with white silk

Ruffles, Sti

While the watchwords of fashion to-
lay are poufs and ruffles, tailored
clothes have not disappeared from
he scene. Not all the popular styles in

The Lax Habits of the Free Imagination

By Patricia Hampl

A BRIEF cautionary tale: one day some years ago, after I had published a book, I was asked for permission to excerpt a piece from it in an anthology. Delighted, I wrote back. As it happened, I used this anthology in a course I taught. I admired its selections, and found the study questions helpful. Not that I used the study questions much, I suppose, but I directed my students to them from time to time. I was pleased about being included in the next edition of the book, imagining students not just reading my work, but *studying* it. About a year later, the anthology arrived. Snappy new jacket (better than the first edition, I thought), well-designed pages, clean type.

I skimmed through my piece. No typos — good. And there, at the end of the selection, in those shivery italic letters reserved for especially significant copy, were the study questions. There were several under the heading "Questions About Purpose." One will do: "Why does Hampl establish her father's significance to her family before she narrates the major incident?" Beats me, I thought.

I had no idea what Hampl's purpose was. All the study questions looked quite mad to me.

Remember those grade school I.Q. tests, when the teacher would say soothingly, "Just relax, and answer with the first thing that strikes you as correct. You can't fail this test"? My heart always

Continued on page 37

Patricia Hampl teaches writing at the University of Minnesota and is the author of the memoirs "A Romantic Education" and "Spillville."

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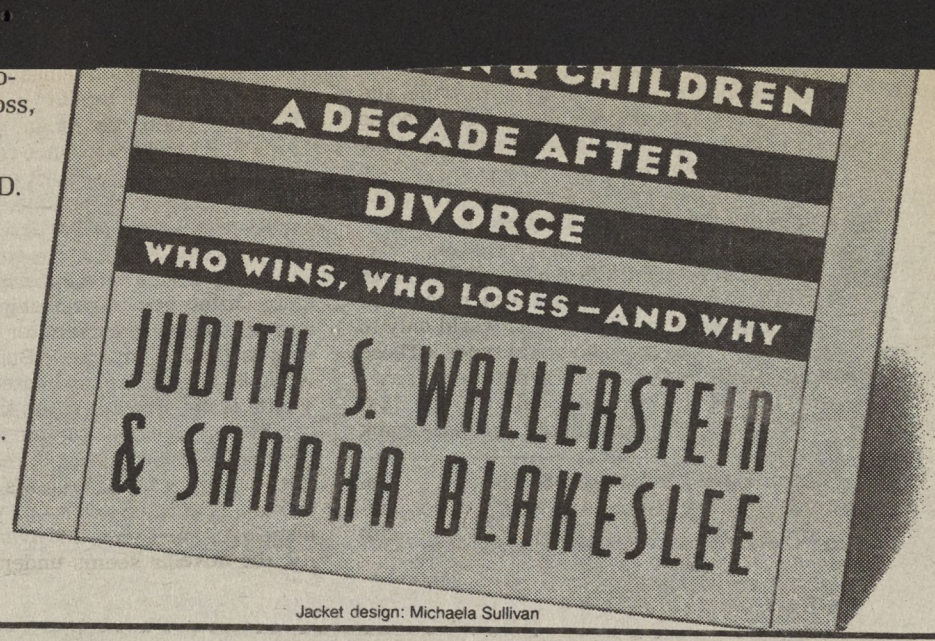

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Habits of the Free Imagination

Continued from page 1

sank; I knew instinctively something worse than failure awaited me. Fate was lurking in those intelligence tests and I might as well surrender to my middle-range score before I picked up the magnetic-lead pencil.

This same sinking sensation swept over me reading the study questions. *My* study questions. If anyone could answer them, it ought to be me. They were not unreasonable. They were questions very much like the ones in the first edition (and how many other textbooks over the years?) that had struck me as useful.

Like a shady accountant, I had for years been keeping separate books on the imagination. In one ledger I logged questions about writing that proceeded from the completed work, treating it as the source and arbiter of itself. The story was the story. Period.

IN the other ledger, apparently written in invisible trick ink, I wrote my own stories and poems. In that ledger, everything was up for grabs. "Hampl" had precious few intentions, except, like the charlatan I suddenly felt myself to be, to filch whatever was loose on the table that suited my immediate purposes. Worse, the "purposes" were vague, inconsistent, reversible under pressure. And who — or what — was applying the pressure? I couldn't say. The best I could say was that this pressure gave me the sharp nose of a scavenger, not the keen mind of a thinker.

It still amazes me that I could be so startled, that I could so instinctively go about learning to write one way, and yet look at writing that moved me in another, far more decorous way. For decorum was part of the problem. I was unwilling to admit any mess into the workrooms of the stories I loved. I was unwilling to admit there was a workroom. For me and anything I wrote — yes, of course, a workroom that sometimes felt like a sweatshop. But for the writers of the stories I read — no.

Every story has a story. This secret story, which has little chance of getting told, is the history of its creation. Maybe the "story of the story" never *can* be told, for a finished work consumes its own history, renders it obsolete, a husk.

Isn't that the point? Fiction, that ingenious architecture, hangs above life, suspended by the invisible tensile wires of the imagination. It glitters and winks up there, impossibly aloof, and performs its chief duty, which is the confirmation of enchantment. Don't mess with the veils and curtains, ladies and gentlemen; give the magician a little room, please.

But another piece of conventional wisdom insists that the best stories come from "life," from "experience." This sends a person scurrying back to the notion that where it comes from and how it all happens must have an essential bearing on what fiction *is*. An unbudging belief asserts itself that the hinge between life and story exists — and matters.

In their notebooks and (a more contemporary and public form of writer's notebook) in interviews, writers often puzzle over how the imagination works. A distinction: *the* imagination, not their own personal, unique imaginations. There seems to be an implicit understanding that the imagination is not owned, not contained within oneself, even though the experience of it is intensely interior. As F. Scott Fitzgerald says in a rueful, self-castigating note in "The Crack-Up," "I had been only a mediocre caretaker of most of the things left in my hands, even of my talent." This sense of being in the service of the imagination — not its master — is a trademark of an authentic experience of creativity.

After long and intimate contact, the imagination begins to be experienced as another. To Henry James it was, quite plainly, a pal. "Look also, a little, *mon bon*," he recommends chummily in his notebook, "into what may come out, further, of the little something-or-other deposited long since in your memory — your fancy — by the queer confidence made you by the late Miss B." *Mon bon*, my good fellow. Sometimes he refers to the imagination as his angel.

In the same notebook entry, James goes from addressing his genius as "*mon bon*," his good pal, to "oh celestial soothing, sanctifying process. Let me fumble it gently and patiently out." And he says of the story he is working on, "with fever and fidget laid to rest."

Again and again in the notebooks, James teases out a story with an offhand inquiry: "Isn't perhaps something to be made of the idea that came to me some time ago . . . the little idea of the situation of some young creature (it seems to be preferably a woman, but of this I'm not sure), who, at 20, on the threshold of a life that has seemed boundless, is suddenly condemned to death (by consumption, heart-disease, or whatever) by the voice of the physician? . . . Isn't there perhaps the subject of a little — a very little — tale . . . in the idea of. . . ."

These questions, tentative and unintrusive, bear the grace of a good host attempting to draw out a shy guest. No crude presumption or demand. This is not an interrogation. Inconsistency is perfectly O.K., indecision ("preferably a woman, but of this I'm not sure") is no big deal. Just keep talking — mumbling is fine. In a sense, these inquiries are not questions at all. They are brooms sweeping a clear space for the story to sit in and compose itself — only if it wishes, of course.

James is not unique, not even unusual, in his attentive courtesy to the imagination. But his notebooks provide one of the best paper trails ever charted to the creative process. His willingness to speak to the imaginative process as to a friend is almost childlike. The faith in the independent personhood of his ingenuity is striking. The vulnerability is breathtaking.

But vulnerability poses a threat. How does authority, that basic requisite of narrative voice, attach itself to someone so thoroughly humbled before the inchoate imagination and its imperious ways? In the story, it just won't wash to be iffy about the details. Sometime or other, James has to settle down and know whether that 20-year-old woman (or man?) on the threshold of life died of consumption or of heart disease.

The lax habits of the free imagination exhibit an appealing open-door policy. But to counterbalance this extreme permissiveness, the celestial process had better employ some sort of disciplinarian, an enforcer, to maintain order. Where else does the famous restraint and brevity of the short story come from? In other words, there must be a plan, an outline. Mustn't there?

RAYMOND CARVER, in his essay "On Writing," turned to Flannery O'Connor when he was mulling over just this question. In her essay "Writing Short Stories," she talks about writing as an act of discovery. Carver found that "O'Connor says she most often did not know where she was going when she sat down to work on a short story." Most writers, she believed, didn't know where they were headed when they began a story.

"When I read this some years ago," Carver says, "it came as a shock that she, or anyone for that matter, wrote stories in this fashion. I thought this was my uncomfortable secret, and I was a little uneasy with it. For sure I thought this way of working on a short story somehow revealed my own shortcomings. I remember being tremendously heartened by reading what she had to say on the subject."

The inevitable trouble of coming to writing as a reader is that the finished stories we read and reread, love and return to, reinforce our sense of their immutability and unity. We see no clue to their process — and forget such a thing even exists. We are enchanted. And that is enough.

For a while. But when you are Raymond Carver, or any writer at all, another form of enchantment lures you. How to *do* it becomes the call. You have plenty of examples of how it has been

Continued on next page

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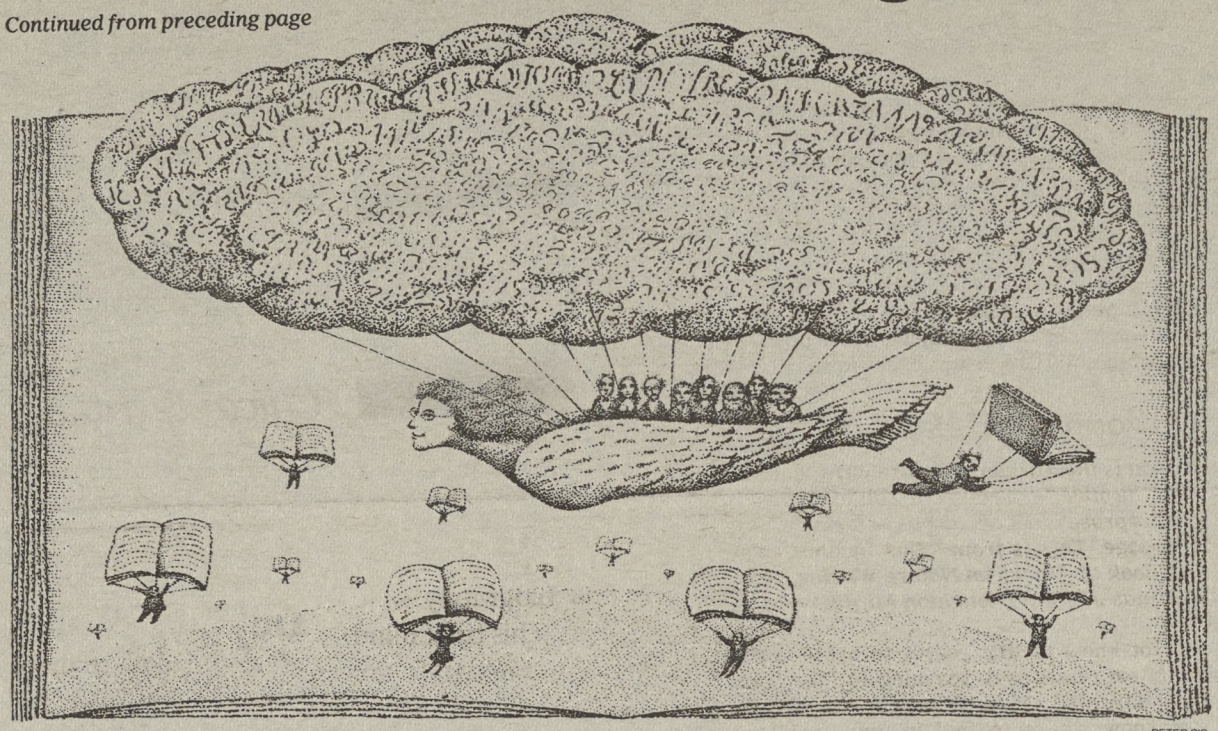
Lax Habits of the Free Imagination

Continued from preceding page



PETER SIS

done. There are days when it seems you spend most of your time on your knees to these canonized idols. Much literary energy is expended in reverence.

Nor is this question of process something that preoccupies only writers. The Graywolf Press has reported that its all-time best seller is a book titled "If You Want to Write" by Brenda Ueland. It is not a how-to book, but an essay about imaginative process. In just a couple of years and with very little advertising, Graywolf has sold 50,000 copies of this little book, which is neither a novel nor a collection of stories. The call for this book clearly does not come from a coterie of writers but from what Virginia Woolf calls "the common reader."

Maybe creation is always magnetic. In any case, readers have only the story before them, the tantalizing story, which keeps its lip buttoned about its private life. A reader waiting at a bookstore to have a book autographed posed the question as well as anyone. "Where," she asked, "do you get your . . . um . . . ideas?" A little cloud of hopelessness attended the question, as if she knew in advance no bright answer would ever break through.

"Read it, read it, and you'll see how it's written!" Isak Dinesen crowed at an interviewer who asked much the same question about her story "The Monkey." But a particular kind of reading is called for, more investigative than the reading that is enchantment, less mechanistic and reductive than the mentality that speaks of "the techniques of fiction."

"The celestial process" suggests a different order of business. A writer must renew the faith in that process as a regular exercise. Otherwise, the blank page is no invitation. It is the abyss. And the writer waits to be hurled into it. The offense? Not having it all figured out in advance.

Just because the goal is unity doesn't mean the method is going to look — or feel — smooth and effortless. I'm not talking about facing up to hard work or discipline, as if the problem were faulty willpower or a poor character. There is such a thing as sloth, and everybody knows what it feels like. It is a form of cowardice. But when it comes to the imagination, there is probably more sinning done in the name of discipline than by any amount of lazy daydreaming.

As Flannery O'Connor said in the passage that encouraged Raymond Carver, when she started her story "Good Country People" she had no idea "there was going to be a Ph.D. with a wooden leg in it. I merely found myself one morning writing a description of two women I knew something about and before I realized it, I had equipped one of them with a daughter with a wooden leg."

Then she brought in a Bible salesman, also without any immediate occupation for him. "I didn't know he was going to steal that wooden leg," she says, "until ten or twelve lines before he did it, but when I found out that this was what was going to happen, I realized it was inevitable."

There's celestial process for you. Something a little devilish about it, after all.

Lest all this begin to take on the perverse aura of paradox: I am trying to describe (and lift descriptions from writers, like James or O'Connor and Carver, who have tried to express it) how the process is experienced. Not how it ought to happen, not how it might be better orchestrated, and especially not how it looks from the light end of the tunnel when the scary part — the writing — is over.

The obviously genuine reports of writers make it clear that the process that brings finished stories into being does not look like the stories themselves. The story is fluid; the process is given to fits and starts. The story speaks with poise and assurance; the process must fight fevers and fidgets, as James calls them.

So, if writers aren't thinking of plot and outline, if all that comes later or only in conjunction with something more fundamental, what is that more fundamental thing?

It's nothing much. Like a poppy seed, it looks like a speck, but it packs a wallop. Life is in there, life and the breeding instinct.

"Caress the detail," Nabokov said, "the divine detail." This is the atom that generates all the stars.

Probably every comp teacher living or dead has a heart inscribed with the phrase "Be Specific." Yet the generating power of the detail is too often obscured in discussions of writing. The detail is paid homage, of course; phrases like "a wonderful eye for detail" or "precise detail" are clichés of reviewing flattery. But such talk sees detail as ornament, an accessory. Worse, it is hired out as a symbol.

Literature engages in the work of transformation: a diamond earring *can* become a sexual wink, and in that glint, the earring breathes a soul and is an earring no longer. It becomes the shocking availability of the married woman wearing it. And so, yes, it becomes a symbol.

But the verb here is telling. Symbols *become;* they are figments of the celestial process, not techniques that *stand for* something or other. They don't stand; they carry. They are not static. As soon as they are imprisoned that way, symbols begin to die.

That is why Nabokov's fervent command — *Caress the detail, the divine detail* — is a necessary caution. Creation is godly work. Well, but who is God? Nabokov once said in an interview that *his* characters were galley slaves. Yet when it is a matter of locating the godhead, even a writer as unabashedly imperious as Nabokov did not point to himself, but to the detail. Detail: the smallest, least organized unit of fiction. Next to grand conceptions like plot, which is the legitimate government of most stories, or character, which is the crowned sovereign, the detail looks like a ragged peasant with a half-baked idea of revolution and a crazy sure glint in its eye.

It comes down to faith. If, as Nabokov says, the detail is divine, there's nothing much to do but give yourself over to it as one properly does in worship. If there's any question about the divinity of the detail, by the way, think of that *one thing* that you can explain to no one but which is precious beyond expression. That is a divine detail. It is also a literary opportunity.

In his notebooks, Chekhov tries to describe to a friend how he writes a short story. "I write the beginning serenely, let myself go," he says, "but in the middle I have already begun cowering and fearing. . . . My start . . . is full of promise, as though I were beginning a novel; the middle section is difficult and broken up, while the end, as in a short short story, is like fireworks. . . . So what emerges is not literature, but something of the order of the sewing of Trishkin's coat. What shall I do. I simply don't know. I put my trust in all-healing time." Time spent cooped up with a pack of crazy details acting like juvenile delinquents, exhibiting no sense of responsibility but a lot of gorgeous random energy.

James provides a clue to how detail gets organized in his essay "The Art of Fiction," when he stakes a big claim for "the rich principle of the Note."

"If one was to undertake to tell tales and to report with truth on the human scene," he says, "it could but be because notes had been from the cradle the ineluctable consequence of one's greatest inward energy . . . to take them was as natural as to look, to think, to feel, to recognize, to remember."

The note is evidence of the drive for accuracy. It is also a safe house where detail with its bit of intelligence can slip into a protected room and be debriefed by friendlies. No questions asked. Just sit a while. Rest a moment. Tell the little you were able to pick up. And vanish as you must. Another operative will come along to take your place.

Adrienne Rich once wrote in a poem, "The notes for the poem are the only poem." That is the sort of faith I've been thinking about here.

The dedication to the fragment, which is not itself discipline, provides a writer with the driving passion to spend all that time, Chekhov's all-healing time, with what often feels not simply lifeless but nonexistent. For remember, the story is nonexistent during most of a writer's intimacy with it.

"I recall kneeling on my (flattish) pillow at the window of a sleeping car," Nabokov writes of a childhood train ride in his memoir "Speak, Memory," "and seeing with an inexplicable pang a handful of fabulous lights that beckoned me from a distant hillside, and then slipped into a pocket of black velvet: diamonds that I later gave away to my characters to alleviate the burden of my wealth." This must be what James meant when he spoke of the habit of taking notes "from the cradle."

Everyone does it, in rudimentary form. Everyone has a memory with precious odds and ends tossed about. That is why we recognize this capacity for the note in others, especially in writers we trust.

THIS view of life as a collection of shards introduces the inevitable thought that life is full of brokenness, after all. Life is not a fixed star, not a unity. It makes sense that stories, for all their apparent seamlessness, should be formed of smashed, discarded bits. Scheherazade keeps going, on and on through the scary night, enchanting the ear of the king who would destroy her. Of course she must be steady, assured, of course the story must not hesitate. Her life depends upon it.

For all the misery of it, this work of writing stories seems to have to do with happiness, which even those who write stories best have trouble describing. "My own happiness in the past often approached such an ecstasy that I could not share it even with the person dearest to me," F. Scott Fitzgerald writes in "The Crack-Up," "but had to walk it away in quiet streets and lanes with only fragments of it to distil into little lines in books."

Maybe "the person dearest" cannot be, for a writer at such a moment, the wife or husband, the friend or lover of daily life. Maybe it is you, dear reader, stranger, who must be trusted with the ridiculous, broken bits that are held long in the hand as the writer struggles to tell the tale. □

Excerpted from "The Houghton Mifflin Anthology of Short Fiction," a college textbook edited by Patricia Hampl and published by the Houghton Mifflin Company.

Noted With Pleasure

The Fiesta as Cosmic Experiment



MICHAEL KNEPP

In "The Labyrinth of Solitude" (Grove), Octavio Paz says that "the solitary Mexican loves fiestas," which represent "the advent of the unusual." He even sees the fiesta as a sort of costume ball of social upheaval.

The fiesta is a revolution in the most literal sense of the word. In the confusion that it generates, society is dissolved, is drowned, insofar as it is an organism ruled according to certain laws and principles. But it drowns in itself, in its own original chaos or liberty. Everything is united: good and evil, day and night, the sacred and the profane. Everything merges, loses shape and individuality and returns to the primordial mass. The fiesta is a cosmic experiment, an experiment in disorder, reuniting contradictory elements and principles in order to bring about a renascence of life.

Long Arm of Responsibility

What do we mean when we speak of a writer's responsibility? Nadine Gordimer's answer, which is almost intimidatingly thorough, is one of several lectures in Volume Six of "The Tanner Lectures on Human Values," edited by Sterling M. McMurrin (University of Utah). NYTBR, Sept 1, '85

The creative act is not pure. History evidences it. Ideology demands it. Sociology exacts it. The writer loses Eden, writes to be read, and comes to realize that he is answerable. The writer is *held responsible*: and the verbal phrase is ominously accurate, for the writer not only has laid upon him responsibility for various interpretations of the consequences of his work, he is "held" before he begins by the claims of different concepts of morality — artistic, linguistic, ideological, national, political, religious — asserted upon him. He learns that his creative act was not pure even while being formed in his brain: already it carried congenital responsibility for what preceded cognition and volition: for what he represented in genetic, environmental, social, and economic terms when he was born of his parents.

The Truest Fiction

In "The Seduction of the Spirit" (Touchstone/Simon & Schuster), Harvey Cox points out the storytelling aspect of religion, which in turn suggests the religious aspect of storytelling.

All human beings have an innate need to hear and tell stories and to have a story to live by. Religion, whatever else it has done, has provided one of the main ways of meeting this abiding need. Most religions begin as clusters of stories, embedded in song and saga, rite and rehearsal. Go back as far as the bloody Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh or to Homer's accounts of the gods and heroes of Hellas. Or read the tales told by Bantu priests, Cheyenne holy men or Eskimo shamans. They are all, in their own way, stories. The Hebrew Scriptures are largely stories; so is the New Testament. Rabbis, saints, Zen masters and gurus of every persuasion convey their holy teachings by jokes, *koans*, parables, allegories, anecdotes and fables. There has never been a better raconteur than Jesus of Nazareth himself.

Marriage in a Wheelbarrow

Under their playfulness, nonsense poems often conceal acerbic social comment. "When I Was a Bachelor" seems to anticipate the stresses of marriage in the 1980's, poking fun at the sterility of bachelorhood and the difficulty of choosing between the "broad" and "narrow" approaches to conjugal life — a dilemma that "tumbles" the institution itself. This anonymous poem is from a classic anthology for children, called "Rainbow in the Sky," edited by Louis Untermeyer (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).

When I was a bachelor
  I lived by myself,
And all the bread and cheese I got
  I laid upon the shelf;
The rats and the mice
  They made such a strife,
That I was forced to go to town
  And buy me a wife.
The streets were so broad,
  The lanes were so narrow,
I had to bring her home
  In an old wheel-barrow;
The wheel-barrow broke,
  And my wife had a fall.
Down tumbled
  Wheel-barrow, wife, and all.

The Erotics of Power



Gossip, says Patricia Meyer Spacks, affords us an opportunity for "emotional speculation." In her book, "Gossip" (Knopf), she observes that some of the appeal for gossip derives from its voyeurism, a secret or projected form of knowledge that is part of "the erotics of power."

The fact that many who disapprove of gossip find themselves engaging in it testifies to its emotional power. . . . Gossip, even when it avoids the sexual, bears about it a faint flavor of the erotic. . . . Surely everyone feels — although some suppress — the same prurient interest in others' privacies, what goes on behind closed doors. Poring over fragments of other people's lives, peering into their bedrooms when they don't know we're there, we thrill to the glamor and the power of secret knowledge, partly detoxified but also heightened by being shared. A relatively innocent form of the erotics of power (we mostly don't expect to affect the course of people's lives by talking about them — or we don't consciously acknowledge any such expectation), this excitement includes the heady experience of imaginative control: gossip claims other people's experience by interpreting it into story. □

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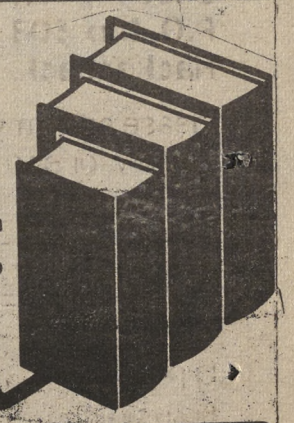

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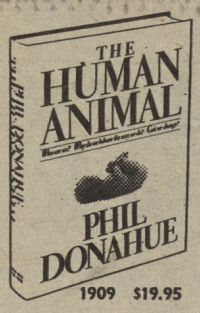

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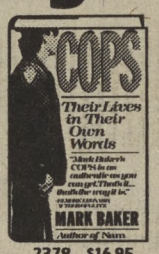

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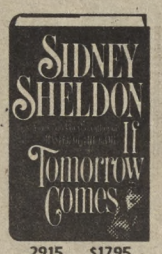

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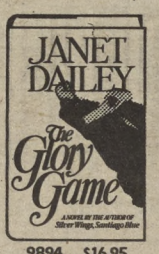

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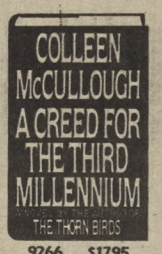

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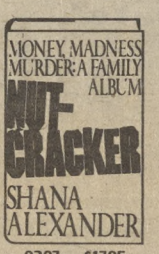

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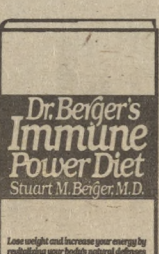

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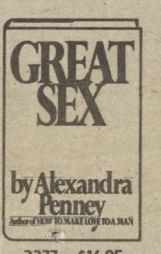

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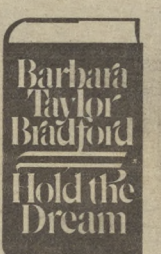

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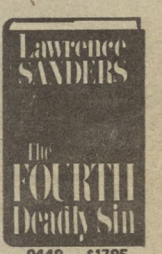

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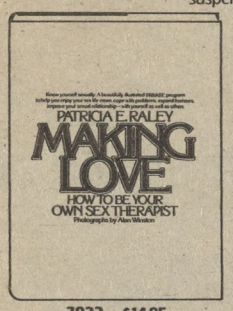

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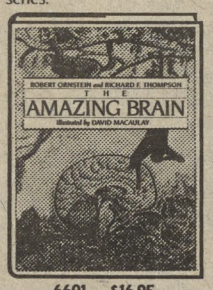

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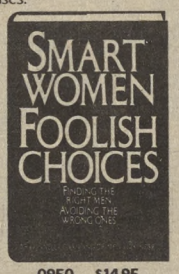

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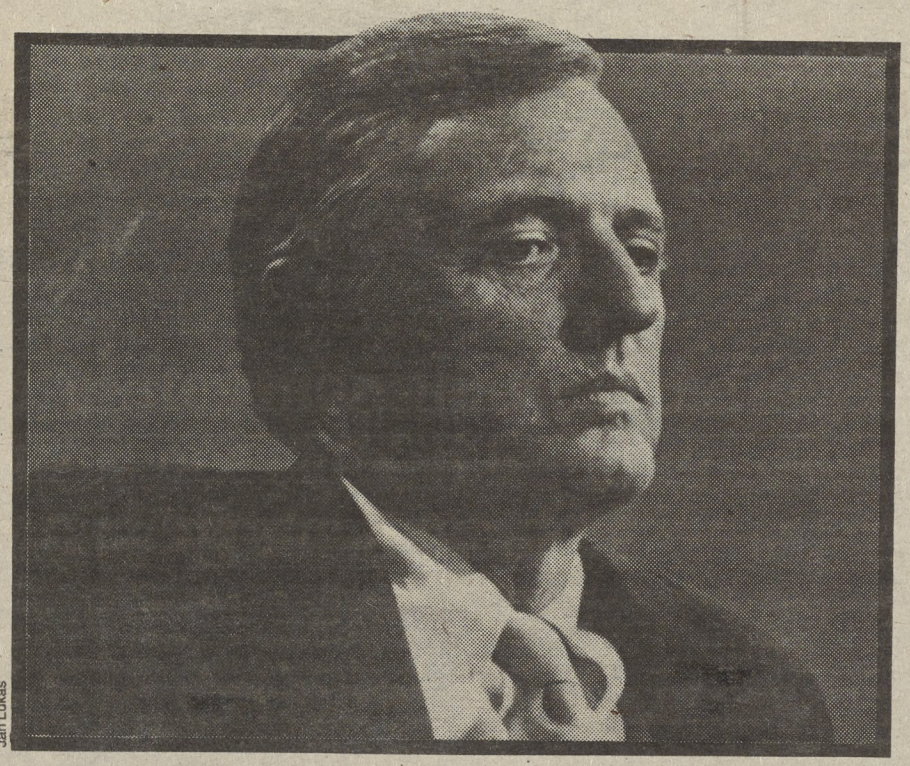
RIGHT REASON



Jan Lukas

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, Jr.

EDITED BY RICHARD BROOKHISER

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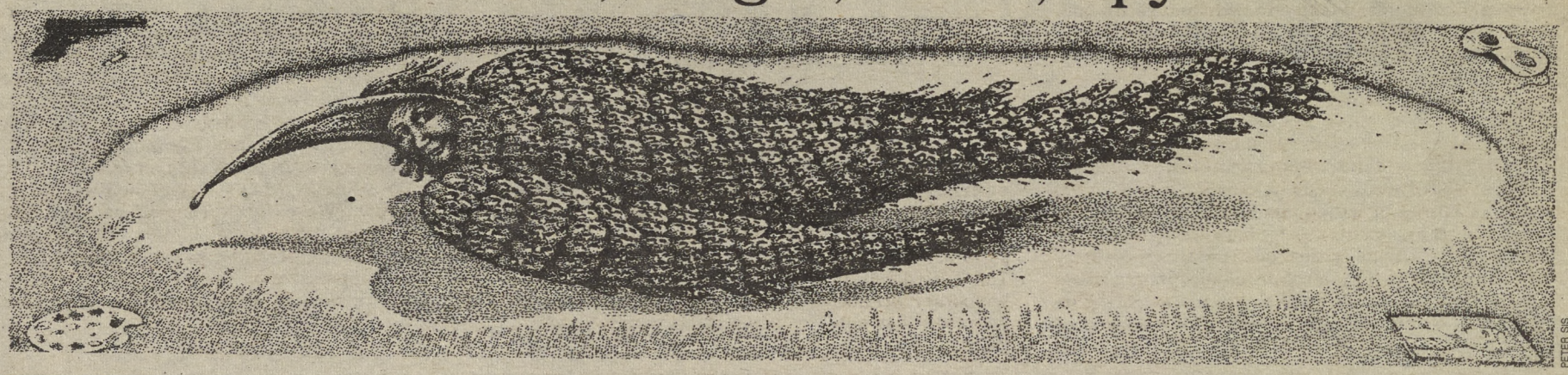
DOUBLEDAY

Painter, Forger, Miser, Spy



PETER SIS

WHAT'S BRED IN THE BONE
By Robertson Davies.
436 pp. New York:
Elisabeth Sifton Books / Viking. $17.95.

By Larry McCaffery

"WHAT'S bred in the bone will not out of the flesh," says the old English proverb that serves as an epigraph to this novel by the Canadian author Robertson Davies. Certainly what is bred in the bone of Mr. Davies's hero, the painter-art forger Francis Cornish, is a fascinating and volatile mixture of contradictory qualities. Focusing on the life and career of an artist irresistibly drawn to the methods and symbols of a bygone era, "What's Bred in the Bone" also explores perhaps the central problem facing contemporary artists: how to retain the old-fashioned virtues associated with great art of the past (chiefly, art's ability to instruct and console by providing a coherent system for interpreting the world and our role in it) in a century whose twin allegiances — to a heartfelt but potentially chaotic subjectivism or to dehumanizing rationality — pose equal dangers to the artist. Mr. Davies ambitiously plunges headlong into these deep divisions and creates both a hero and a novelistic form designed to reconcile these oppositions. In the end, however, Mr. Davies may have produced a masterpiece that is so tied to the codes and methods of an earlier era that it becomes an anachronism.

The book begins with a scene reminiscent of the opening of "Citizen Kane." After the death of the internationally renowned art expert and collector Francis Cornish in 1985, three trustees of his estate gather to discuss the advisability of publishing a controversial biography one of them has written about him. Quickly the bare bones of Cornish's life are sketched in. Born in 1909 in a remote Ontario settlement, he was educated first in Toronto and then at Oxford, served the Allies as an undercover agent during World War II and eventually established himself as an art expert, especially in 16th-century Mannerist painting. Tantalizing references are made to Cornish's apprenticeship during the 1930's to a restorer of old masters "rumored to be altogether too clever with his paintbox," Cornish's scorn for the "psychological fakery in certain modern movements" of art, his failure to marry or leave behind an heir, his remarkable intuition, his miserliness, his interest in astrology and his general eccentricity of character. The inevitable whiff of scandal is introduced by hints that Cornish may have had a homosexual lover and that he may have been involved in the forging of paintings.

• • •

This broad outline of Cornish's life, of course, provides no more of a finished portrait of the man than the "News on the March" film clips did for Charles Foster Kane. So after Cornish's biographer admits that all the verifiable facts he has uncovered "don't add up to the man we knew," Mr. Davies turns the remainder of the narration over to two angels — the Lesser Zadkiel, the angel of biography, and the daemon Maimas — who together fill in the gaps in Cornish's mysterious life.

These two spirits reveal that the dichotomies apparent in Cornish's adult life — the artist who was also a spy, the coward who was a hero, the generous miser, the forger who possessed an original artistic vision, the blend of masculine and feminine in him, the man of intellect and intuition — all have their origins in the powerfully opposed elements that shaped his childhood. His Protestant father came from an old, distinguished family in Cornwall, England, while his Roman Catholic mother was from a French Canadian family whose fortune was made in the timber industry. Gradually, as other oppositions evolve and compete for his loyalty — old money versus new, Old World values versus New World perspectives, provincialism versus urban pretentiousness, respect for conformity and tradition versus freedom and originality — it becomes obvious that the divisions within Cornish's personality are emblematic of the forces that have produced a Canadian national identity that one character here succinctly describes as "a psychological mess!"

The first third of the novel, depicting Cornish's youth, is in many respects the most vivid and engaging section of the book, and it allows Mr. Davies to display his considerable skills as a caustic and amusing satirist of the pettiness and outmodedness of Canadian provinciality. As the envied rich kid growing up in a latter-day house of Atreus, Cornish experiences a childhood that is often traumatic and lonely, but is also peopled with a wondrous assortment of Dickensian characters: quirky relatives, monstrously insensitive schoolmates, dwarfs — and Zadok Hoyle, an embalmer and bootlegger who helps unlock for Cornish the secret beauty of the human body and demonstrates that artistry appears in many unlikely guises.

Once Cornish leaves home, the action slows somewhat, especially when Mr. Davies indulges his passion and lets his brilliant talkers talk too much and too often. But these are minor interruptions in what is basically a gripping, if highly contrived, narrative that eventually takes Cornish through encounters with espionage and Bavarian countesses, through unsuccessful romances and dealings on the international art scene that have global repercussions. Mr. Davies manages to connect all these episodes to Cornish's central quests to understand the sources of conflict within himself and to discover the most suitable means to express his personal vision in painting.

Those familiar with Mr. Davies's "Deptford Trilogy" ("Fifth Business," "The Manticore" and "World of Wonders"), which first brought him to attention in the United States during the 70's, will discover in "What's Bred in the Bone" many of the same elements found in his earlier works. Here too we see Mr. Davies blending realism with the conjuring illusions of art, employing classical allusions and symbols alongside esoteric references to astrology and alchemy, fusing comedy of manners with Gothic melodrama.

THIS odd mixture — part Trollope, part Samuel Johnson, part Nabokov — only partially obscures Mr. Davies's basically conservative, even elitist, views about life and art. These aristocratic preferences ultimately prevent him from creating a work that is Canadian in the way so many important contemporary works from Latin An erica seem recognizably Latin American in sensibility. Whereas such authors as Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Manuel Puig and Julio Cortázar have joined European and Latin American ideas and styles, incorporating into their fiction the full range of their cultures' conflicting myths, voices, gestures and symbols, Mr. Davies has self-consciously written a novel that looks to Europe (and especially England) for its central motifs, symbols and methodology. This approach, elaborately mirrored and rationalized in Cornish's es-

Death Imitates Art

Old McAllister's face, which had turned a dark putty shade, was swiftly painted with a wash that left him a light salmon, and over the cheekbones Zadok brushed some dry rouge of a startling crimson. Next he worked on Old McAllister's mouth, gently massaging the grim, grey lips into an unaccustomed smile: this he touched up with a red salve that a harlot might have thought excessive. Then he rapidly massaged some Vaseline into the thin hair, and combed it forward.

"How do you suppose he did his hair — when he did it? No indications, so we'll give him Old Faithful." He combed the hair with a left-hand parting, then quiffed the right-hand portion over his finger, giving Old McAllister a nifty, almost a dandified air. Quick work with the collar, the necktie; into the waistcoat, draping a huge silver watch-chain, from which the watch had been removed, over the sunken belly. On with the coat. A piece of card on the tip of which some white cambric was sewn was tucked into the breast pocket of the coat (Old McAllister had not used, or possessed, handkerchiefs of his own). The hands were folded on the breast, as if in Christian acceptance, and Old McAllister was a finished work of art.

Then, further astonishing Francis after an astonishing, rapturous evening, Zadok took Old McAllister's right hand in his own and shook it cordially. "Godspeed, old man," said he. Noticing Francis's astonishment, he said, "I always do that."

— From "What's Bred in the Bone."



JILL KREMENTZ

Robertson Davies.

Larry McCaffery teaches American literature at San Diego State University and is co-editor of the journal Fiction International.

thetic stance, is ultimately an ingenious but limiting evasion.

I call it an evasion because it appears to be founded on a nostalgia for the artistic principles of a different age — one in which the artist's inner vision of things could be presented within a coherent language of symbols shared by the community. Cornish finds such a language in the religious and mythic icons used by the great Renaissance painters; he eventually produces two masterpieces that derive from his own experience.

Mr. Davies's reliance on many of the conventions of the 19th-century novel, on an intricate series of literary and artistic allusions and most centrally on the symbolism and patterns of the Arthurian Grail legend and the biblical story of Jesus and Mary is based on a desire to find a system of interpretation he can share with his readers. Cornish and his creator both seek a means not simply to give artistic expression to life's pain, mystery and beauty, but to offer a means of interpreting them. And both suspect their belief that "art is a way of telling the truth" has been eroded by a world view dominated by skepticism and despair and the contemporary artistic emphasis on ambiguity, subjectivity, free play and art for art's sake.

"Mr. Davies blends realism with the illusions of art and comedy of manners with Gothic melodrama."

But is our age really so devoid of potent symbols, patterns, terminology and systems of interpretation? There are dozens of such possibilities available to contemporary writers — those of science (dismissed here because it has only "a miserable vocabulary" and a "pallid pack of images to offer us"), medicine, economics, computer systems, various musical forms. It may be lamentable that many people today are more familiar with the symbols of the film "Star Wars" than with those of "Morte d'Arthur," that the big bang, entropy and black holes grip our imaginations more fully than biblical creation myths or the Devil or that Bruce Springsteen's lyrics about fast cars, urban jungles and the promise of the open road speak to some more urgently about their longings and disappointments than classical poetry. But to ignore the emergence of contemporary myths and symbols, or to deny their power to move people and help them interpret their existence, is to risk being out of touch with one's age.

At one point in "What's Bred in the Bone," Cornish is exhorted to "Wake Up! Be Yourself, not a bad copy of something else." The novel is certainly not a "bad copy" of anything; its intricate conception and intelligence are impressive on their own terms. But those terms also prevent the book from being the original it might have been. □

Inventing the Afrikaner Past

THE POLITICAL MYTHOLOGY OF APARTHEID

By Leonard Thompson.
293 pp. New Haven: Yale University Press. $22.50.

By Vincent Crapanzano

ON Dec. 16, 1938, more than 100,000 Afrikaners (roughly one-tenth of the Afrikaner population) gathered on a hill overlooking Pretoria. They were there to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Blood River — which had ended in the defeat of thousands of Zulu by 468 Afrikaners and their servants — and to lay the foundation of a monument to their ancestors, the Voortrekkers, who, in the 1830's, had fled from (as they saw it) the corruptions of British civilization and rule. The Afrikaners came to the ceremony in a state of highly pitched nationalistic fervor. Women rushed forward and burned the corners of their handkerchiefs and bonnets in the flames of torches that had been relayed across South Africa from Cape Town and Blood River. Ministers, politicians and professors harangued the *volk*, proclaiming the Voortrekkers' religion, their nationalism, their quest for freedom and solidarity, and their opposition to the British and of course to the mixing of races. One Dutch Reformed minister argued that, inasmuch as God had created the color line, to efface it was to destroy His handiwork: "If we go and mix with Indians, Coloureds, and Natives, our descendants will be mules who will not be able to hide their long ears, the sign of their bastardization." And D. F. Malan, the future, racist Prime Minister of South Africa, urged his people to preserve their identity and their culture as the Voortrekkers had. "Will South Africa still be a white man's country at the end of this new century?" he demanded.

Today Malan's rhetorical question is entirely pertinent. How has it been possible for the Afrikaners, who came to power 10 years after the centenary of Blood River, to maintain their domination — the whiteness of South Africa — for almost 40 years? Whatever their political or economic advantages, the powerful are rarely so relentless, so certain of themselves (except perhaps in the eyes of the powerless) that they require no bolstering justification, no rhetoric of vindication, for those advantages. The Afrikaners are no exception. They have defended their supremacy, their discrimination and their oppression of the people of color through religion, science and anthropology. They have manufactured a history, a political mythology, in Leonard Thompson's terms, that gives credence to their politics, and they cling ever more desperately to this mythology as they are made to confront at some level (and at some level they do confront it) the failure of their policy, the crumbling of their privileges and the immorality of their suppression.

Vincent Crapanzano's most recent book is "Waiting: The Whites of South Africa."

For Mr. Thompson, a Yale historian who taught for years at the University of Cape Town, political mythologies are a set of tales that legitimate or discredit political systems. These mythologies are extremely flexible and easily manipulated by the classes that control social institutions. They vary in intensity over time and can accommodate a great deal of error. They have, however, their limits: When they become peripheral to the regnant ideology and cease to serve the interests of the dominant, they tend to disappear.

He looks at the ways in which Afrikaners have given mythic significance to such events as the Battle of Blood River and the grisly execution by the British at Slagtersnek in 1816 of a handful of Afrikaner rednecks who wanted to oust the British from their territory. His approach is cautious. From documentary evidence, he describes these events as accurately as he can and then looks at how the same events have been constructed and reconstructed over the years by Afrikaner historians and incorporated into popular histories and schoolbooks. During the fevered growth of Afrikaner nationalism — a nationalism that invoked religion and culture — the defeat of the Zulu at Blood River was understood as a sign that God truly favored the Afrikaners. Great stress was placed on a covenant made by a preacher, Sarel Cilliers, who had promised God that if his people defeated the Zulu, they and their progeny would celebrate the victory every year. But it may be that at the time of the battle Cilliers' covenant was not nearly so important. Mr. Thompson says that until the end of the 19th century, the covenant — indeed the battle itself — was by and large ignored by Afrikaners. He believes it was when the British threat to Afrikaner nationhood gave way to a black threat to that nationhood that the metaphorical significance of the battle changed. He calls attention to a speech made by the conservative leader Andries Treurnicht on Dec. 16, 1983 — Dec. 16 is a national holiday in South Africa — in which he opposed the Government's institution of Asian and "colored" (mixed race) parliaments. Mr. Treurnicht argued that the Government must stop conceding to "liberalists and Marxists" — read misdirected blacks and their white supporters — and went on to say:

"A surrounded and threatened people, in its hour of utmost need, in a struggle for life and death, placed its dependence in belief in God, and He saved them. . . . Today our people are again a surrounded people."

AS Mr. Thompson sees it, there is much less emphasis today on an anti-British reading of Afrikaner political mythology than on the racist one. The Voortrekkers' flight from the British is much less important than their perception of themselves as a beleaguered people. Mr. Thompson understands this change as a response to different political realities, but he does not elaborate his argument. His is a study of political mythology and not of political sociology. Interesting as it is (and to a reader unfamiliar with the Afrikaners' story of themselves it is an excellent introduction), Mr. Thompson's work seems ultimately disembodied. One wishes he had developed his notion of mythology beyond a mere charter theory of political reality. Myths do more than justify. They provide a repertory of transcending symbols and stories with which people mediate the contradictions in their lives, cover socially embarrassing acts and repress insufferable moral evaluations. They are never as consciously manipulated as Mr. Thompson suggests. Manifest changes may well mark the persistence of traditional attitudes and values that determine behavior.

By isolating the Afrikaners' political mythology, Mr. Thompson inadvertently supports a peculiarly autonomous view of the Afrikaners that fits well with the political mythologies of other South African peoples, most notably the English, but does not do justice to their social and psychological entanglements. □

Unrewriting History

As a historian linked to South Africa, Leonard Thompson says he became "acutely frustrated by the gaps between professional knowledge and the continuously blatant way in which Afrikaner nationalist politicians were distorting history for political purposes."

One of those distortions, or myths, is the belief that white South Africans had an agreement — a "covenant" — with God to maintain separation of the races. Another is that black Africans did not settle in the region until the 17th century, when whites began to arrive. There is, Mr. Thompson said in a telephone interview, strong evidence that Bantu-speaking, farming Africans inhabited the southern tip of the continent as early as the third century. "The obvious implication," he said, is that whites have as good a claim to the land as the blacks do."



MICHAEL F. O'BRIEN
Leonard Thompson.

Mr. Thompson, who now teaches at Yale University, was educated at Rhodes University College, South Africa, attended Oxford University and served in the Royal Navy during World War II. In 1946 he began teaching at the University of Cape Town, where he remained until coming to the United States 15 years later. His first intention was to do "a straightforward hatchet job" on South Africa's manipulation of historical evidence. "But I realized that, in varying degrees and with varying levels of nefarious intention and effect, this kind of thing is done everywhere. In totalitarian countries, history is continuously being rewritten to suit the government's latest ideological position. In South Africa, it's done for the changing interests of the ruling regime."

—Alex Ward

Anawari Feels Restless

KARAN
By B. Wongar.
248 pp. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. $16.95.

By Evan S. Connell

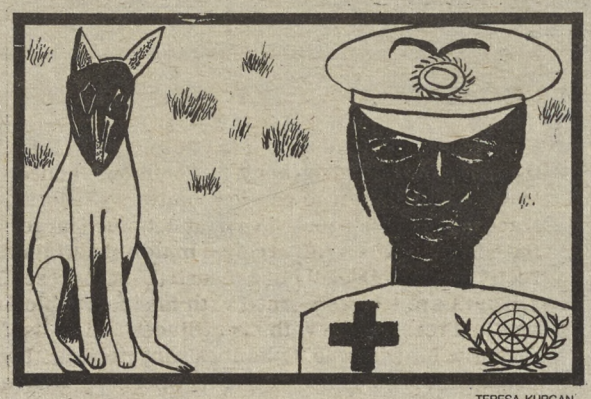
JUST when you think you have exhausted your hatred of militarists, along comes something else. For about 10 years, during the 1950's and 60's, the British secretly tested nuclear weapons in South Australia, a fact not disclosed until 1984. The area chosen for these tests is among the most desolate regions on earth. Nevertheless, some aborigines lived there. According to the author's preface, these experiments had "a lethal effect on Aboriginal tribal man and his culture." This is the basis for a provocative novel. Its author, B. Wongar (a pseudonym), is the son of an aboriginal mother and a European father. He was educated in Europe, but later returned to Australia, where he married an aborigine. This explains why, although this book, like its predecessor, "Walg," is written in English, it is not altogether the product of a Caucasian sensibility.

Anawari, the protagonist of "Karan," has been raised among whites, so he reasons very much as they do, but the source of his being — his soul, or *karan* — is black. The people with whom he works at a welfare center for aborigines allude to him as their black European and address him as an equal. Indeed, he is engaged to a white nurse. He has been given the honorific title of "Reverend" — "an idea hatched by someone in Canberra not to pay tribute to him as a man, but to gain religious sympathy from the Aborigines by promoting him as a 'Christian' figurehead." His uniform is a Salvation Army cap, a Red Cross badge and a shirt embroidered with the United Nations flag.

Evan S. Connell is the author of "Son of the Morning Star" and other books.

His situation somewhat resembles that of certain Jews in Nazi-occupied countries who managed to survive by helping the Nazis catch other Jews. At the Tribal Research and Assimilation Center he interviews blacks who want clothing, food and other necessities. Like any good bureaucrat, Anawari collects information — name, tribe, provenance, nature of request — after which he dispenses a handful of biscuits with a cross baked into the crust, or perhaps an army blanket. Near him are two baskets, one labeled "Freedom From Hunger" and filled with lollipops, the other containing oranges — especially prized in this arid land.

He conducts his interviews while an unobtrusive computer, "its electronic eyes and ears built into the



TERESA KURGAN

bench top and sides, recorded in accurate detail every word spoken in any language or dialect, took photographs of the client, and carefully analyzed any tribal marks on his skin." Rebellious aborigines, Anawari comes to suspect, are caged and subsequently subjected to experiments; and there is some sort of aborigine-catching game that begins to mystify him.

One morning he is commandeered for a manhunt by helicopter because a defiant half-aborigine named Gara has got loose. Aboard the helicopter are chains, nets, rope and two buckets of oranges marked "P" or "D" — poison or drug. Anawari's job is to roll "D" oranges through a flap in the floor. Gara, being thirsty, will come upon an orange, suck the juice and be knocked out long enough for the helicopter to scoop him up.

Western technology succeeds. The savage is returned to the compound, where Anawari, not yet fully conscious of his Judas role, does what he is paid to do: "Let me get you some clothes, Brother. Stand here," he reassures Gara, as he leads him to the computer that decodes the tribal scarification.

BUT in the darkness of his soul Anawari feels restless. Furtively interrogating the computer, he does not like what he learns. Very often the material he wants is unavailable, marked "Classified." He nonetheless learns details of a campaign to transfer aborigines to Government settlements far away. The computer reveals quite a few as "missing"; and he comes upon the word *walpa* — meaning storm (the nuclear blast). The center begins to seem increasingly malevolent. Soon after, Anawari discovers that he has become a bit radioactive; he decides that living like a dingo in the bush is preferable to further intercourse with the scientific genius of white civilization. Accompanied by Gara, whom he has released, Anawari steals his fiancée's car and drives toward a ruined land of deformed children, of kangaroos born without tails, of birds without feathers.

Suddenly, like the fugitives, the narrative enters a different realm — a world no longer pragmatically evaluated, where anything may be construed as a myth. The odd metallic creature with red eyes that pursues Anawari and Gara remains unnamed. Henceforth Mr. Wongar perceives things as a bushman.

As the fugitives advance — or retreat — "Karan" withdraws further from objective reality, and so appears to lose focus. What the transition means, perhaps, is that one may apprehend things as much by looking within as by looking without. Thus when Anawari at last turns into a *pipalia* tree and observes the surrounding landscape with enlarging vision in the process, we have wandered very far indeed from Western truth. □

Fast Mean Cows and Slow Mean Cows

THE GRASSHOPPER TRAP
By Patrick F. McManus.
214 pp. New York:
Holt, Rinehart & Winston. $13.95.

By Ian Frazier

PATRICK F. MCMANUS is a writer who makes people laugh out loud, hard. The first time I read his first collection of pieces, "A Fine and Pleasant Misery," I was sitting by myself in a one-room house, and the experience gave me a chance to hear what my own laugh sounds like. I began to laugh on page 6, and as I went along I listened more closely. The sound was not "ha ha ha"; I laughed with loud barks and high-pitched, wheezy runs and long, helpless relapses. I was like one of those Bag-o'-Laffs you buy in joke shops.

Since his first book, Mr. McManus has written four more: "Kid Camping from Aaaaiii! to Zip," "Never Sniff a Gift Fish," "They Shoot Canoes, Don't They?" and now "The Grasshopper Trap." Every so often I give a friend a McManus book the way John Garfield might roll a hand grenade into an ammunition dump. The spark doesn't always catch: setting off an explosion that big requires the right conditions, and it helps if the reader is either from the West or from a small town or knows something about the outdoors.

Almost every story in these books appeared first in a magazine, in Field & Stream or Outdoor Life — or in Gutmann Knife Annual, Hunting Guns, Diwa Fishing Annual, Johnson Outboards Boating 1980, Scotch Game Call Annual, etc. When writers for outdoor magazines try to be funny and fail, the cause is usually excessive heartiness, joviality and guy-ness, but what is so great about Mr. McManus is that he has an interesting and eccentric mind and he pays attention to it. Unlikely dangers loom at him — cows, for example. They chase him sometimes when he is fishing. He divides them into two categories: Fast Mean Cows and Slow Mean Cows.

Fear is a topic he writes about often, which is appropriate, since the outdoors is a fearful place. A lot of his stories are about how scared he used to get camping out at night as a kid: "Mom went back inside, and minutes later the last light on our side of the house flicked off. Ronnie and I were in *TOTAL DARKNESS*! Not just the well-defined cube of darkness that filled a bedroom, but a great shapeless ocean of night!" This fear of the dark seemed to obstruct his childhood ambition of becoming a mountain man; he imagined a trapper asking, "Any sign of beaver a half-day's ride from the fort?" And since the fear was real and not something assumed for comic purposes, he can end one of his stories with a serious and beautiful sentence. He is alone in the backyard, wide awake in the dark; morning is far away; and he knows his sister is inside waiting for him to chicken out. He says, "I slouched back down into the saddle of myself and grimly rode against the night."

A writer who really gets your attention or makes you laugh hard you trust, and read with hope from then on. In "The Grasshopper Trap," Mr. McManus tells several stories featuring characters from his earlier books — childhood friends like Retch Sweeney, and Henry P. Grogan, the army-surplus-store owner, and the old woodsman Rancid Crabtree. He also tells a number of stories set closer to the present. "Down and Way Out in Brazil," about a fishing trip he went on with some American travel agents and pro football players, sounds at times almost like a reporting piece. I liked best the first story, "The Skunk Ladder," which is partially about a device he and a friend once built to help a skunk get out of a hole they had dug.

It might be a good idea for people who have never read Mr. McManus to start with "A Fine and Pleasant Misery." It is denser than the other books, with autobiography and adventure and childhood memories shouldering their way through the comic-essay form. It also has some of Mr. McManus's best nature description: "When you see lightning hit from a distance, it appears that the bolt zaps into the ground and that's it, but when you are occupying the ground the bolt zaps into, it's not that way at all. First, a terrible bomb goes off and you're inside the bomb, and then streams of fire are going every which way and you're going every which way, and the brush lights up like neon signs in Chinatown, and there are pools of fire on the ground and high voltage sings in the air. Then it's dark again, black, sticky dark, and the rain hits like a truckful of ice."

Of course what Mr. McManus is mainly interested in is being funny; anybody who can title a story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Cucumber" is probably not, deep down, Hannah Arendt. But his best stories, especially the ones about growing up, are not only funny but clear and exact and unique. Everybody should read Patrick McManus, on the off chance. If you happen to be a person who thinks Mr. McManus is funny, most likely you will think he is *really* funny. □

Ian Frazier's humor collection, "Dating Your Mom," will be published next month.

tive young TV producer for WOR-TV, met Dr. Frederickson on an interview program and, sensing the possibilities, persuaded his management to do the series—a very commendable public service. Dr. Frederickson himself is the outstanding discovery of the programs—he is authoritative and has a winning, on-camera style. The impact he could have, were he presented in prime time on a national network, would be of incalculable benefit to smoke-plagued humanity.

WOR-TV put him on Sundays at 11:30 a.m. The doctor, together with John Banzhaff 3rd, helped to organize ASH (Action for Smoking and Health), which is carrying the fight in the courts for more anti-smoking spots on TV. There are some signs that smoking is diminishing in social acceptability; in 1968, the absolute volume of cigarettes and per capita consumption dipped slightly, but cigarette sales are greater now than before 1964, when Dr. Luther Terry, then Surgeon-General, issued his major report on the relation of smoking to health. The tobacco companies still spend approximately $300 million dollars annually in advertising; and more than 250,000 premature deaths each year are attributed by the medical profession to cigarette smoking.

Emerson Foote, a prominent advertising agency executive who has long campaigned against cigarette smoking, suggested recently in a speech to the Philadelphia Interagency Council on Smoking and Health that the nation explore the idea that the United States Government take over the cigarette companies. Thereafter, he said, they could be "operated more in the public interest than the private owners of these companies could possibly be expected to operate them." Short of that miracle, the use of the electronic media offers the best hope. One can understand the reluctance of the commercial broadcasters to smoking clinics on the air, but the inaction of the public television (non-commercial, educational) people is something of a scandal.

WOR-TV has offered to supply video tapes of its series to all stations at cost. They might consider taking an ad in *Broadcasting* magazine to publicize their offer more widely. The stations, commercial and public, that can ought to replay the series. Stations should do their own withdrawal clinics, cooperating with local health agencies. The latter might well request action from local station operators. Finally, a foundation ought to provide Dr. Frederickson with funds to finish his experiment, to produce new TV (and radio) programs and conduct much-needed research on the behavior-sustaining or changing effects of televised withdrawal clinics. If smoking is murder, the Establishment might put its money where its law and order is.

Steve Allen's "daughter" almost died.

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SR-2-69

Sat. Review Feb. 8. 1969

MID-MONTH RECORDINGS

Big Little Band In Toronto

WESTFIELD, N.Y.

IT IS late—around 2:15, 2:17 a.m., I guess—and I am sitting in this tiny grape-juiced town (a Dr. Welch, or Reverend Welch, invented grape juice here around 100 years ago because he totaled tees with such diligence he could not stand to serve sacrificial wine at Sunday services). Sitting here in a cold room in a warm house, I am listening to lonely horns from Lake Erie, sounds from ships or from instruments that make sounds to warn ships off shoals, but mainly listening in my head to some sounds I heard in Toronto last night, sounds of jazz as it seldom is played these days.

The sounds of jazz in my head are as alive right now as the whirling wind outside and those moanful booms of the boats and the warning whistles. More alive, in fact; I wish it were possible to get them onto paper, for if I could, you would stand, excited as I was, and applaud in exhilaration and in the pride of human endurance shown by the men who were telling the old jazz stories in melodies, shrieks, groans, agonies, and incredible technicalities—hearts and lungs bursting with energy, now shattering the room, now putting joy into it.

The Colonial Tavern, it is called, this joint, and I now forget what street it is on. The street name doesn't matter. It is in Toronto, and out of it are coming musical complexities that ought to make every booker, agent, public relations man, and promoter in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco rush up there and sign it up—the band, I mean, not the tavern.

This is not just a good band. It is one of the great bands I have ever heard. And at the risk of sounding like all those writers named George (Frazier, Simon, Wein, Avakian, the lot of the real Georges), I would like to stand up here in print—as I did in person last evening—and announce the same.

For the moment, forget names. I will get to identities presently. The pianist is a man who has been out of sight, not to say out of mind and hearing, for so long I thought he was dead. All the great stride pianists are gone—Fats, James P., and the little-known but much-respected Kissman Lavender—but this one is as alive and well as Jacques Brel and living momentarily in Toronto.

The bass player is a younger man, so corpulent he has to sit down to pluck his axe, except when he finally heaves himself off the stool and comes to the front and does a bowed solo on "Yesterdays," so poignant and mortally heartfelt that his fellow musicians stand around listening reverently.

The drummer is a small man, so small he seems to be hiding behind his equipment. I asked him how he knew when to put in the oddly placed accents at which he is so resoundingly yet unobtrusively adept. "I don't know," he said. "How do you like know when to put a period at the end of a sentence, or like a comma in the middle of one, or like—what do you call it?—a colon?" That was the end of that intellectual exchange. My work as a writer sometimes suffers for it, and I know he thinks his work as a drummer does too. But we keep at our jobs by relying on our nerves. Only writers—playwrights—who write about their mothers *know* and talk about it. This drummer is, without question, the world's greatest living white drummer. The world's greatest living black drummer is a Mr. Singleton, known as "Zutty" (who can be found living, but not drumming much, damn it, in a hotel called The Alvin in New York City).

THE trombonist in this band stands back in the bulky shadows cast by the immense bassist. He does not step to the fore when he solos because, he says, his slide might hit a customer and break, and it would be a nuisance to buy a new slide. He has played with many bands, large and small, but I proclaim he never has played better. He has always kept himself in the background deliberately, and *he* now states that he never has played with any group more comfortably, or—he states this diffidently, for his diffidence is inboned—with more enthusiasm. Trombone players, like stride piano men, have been dying off—Teagarden went, and Cutshall went permanently to sleep one morning in Toronto while playing a job in this very club. This one—to my gratification, edification, and musical education—shows no signs of being about to obtain his Local (AFM) benefits for a good long time to come.

The clarinetist in the band has always stood quietly behind his more famous brother, now also among the dead. That darker, older brother played in a way that made Benny Goodman at his best sound like the knickered kid he was when he first ventured onto a riverboat to play with Bix Beiderbecke. The surviving brother plays even better. He does not play as economically as his brother did; if he has eight bars to do, he sometimes will make them sound like sixteen, or anywhere from twelve to thirty-two, but he can be selfish with his notes when he needs to in an ensemble chorus. He stands there with a beautiful African-mask face, and he is something to see and hear.

The leader plays cornet. Once someone said in print (I think it was I) that he does not play that cornet, he *aims* it. I have been listening to him since I was fourteen or fifteen, and at times when he was sick or drunk he always, yes, *always* played as though his next note might be his last, and he was determined to make it his best, whether it came out in the form of a low growl or a sudden pulsation of the highest possible exuberance.

Once a leader for whom he was working said of him, "Even with that chewing gum, he plays as though his life depends on it." Now, on the other side of sixty, he still is chewing gum, playing a jazzy advertisement for Wrigley's.

YES, here in Westfield I still can hear it, and I curse myself for not having taken along a recorder, for this band has vigor and drive and a substance all its own. Each member knows who he is, and what he can do, but he also knows enough to fall in with what the band is doing, something almost beyond belief. This is a band that could make "Stardust" sound as though it were written yesterday or the day before, and could take "Mack the Knife" or "Saints" and make them fresh. These men do not invent; they *find*. Who are they?

William E. ("Wild Bill") Davison, cornet; Herbert (brother of Edmond)



—Photo (c. 1940) by Arsene Studios from "The Big Bands."

Claude Hopkins—"looking like Claude Hopkins, Jr."

Hall, clarinet; Benjamin Morton, trombone; Buzzy Drootin, drums; Arvell Shaw, bass; Claude Hopkins, piano. I thought Claude Hopkins was dead, and told him so. "Lot of people think that," he said, looking like Claude Hopkins, Jr. "I've been playing around. Never stopped. I play gigs in Harlem, Denver, Omaha, other places far away. What do you think of the band? I think we sound —well, not bad. Of course, an audience does a lot for a band, and the audiences in Canada are hipper than they are in the States, they dig more than those cats down there do, and that makes us do better. I think so, anyhow. We're *playing*, man."

So they are. Davison and his untrammeled horn dominate, as they always have and always will. But there are the totally reliable Benny Morton and Herb Hall behind him, not just lending support but sending him on and on. And there is that incomparably imaginative Drootin, the amazing Shaw, and Claude Hopkins—playing better than he did when his big band, thirty years ago, was playing "Do You Ever Think of Me?" Upon hearing them again in my head, I think Drootin is perhaps the most important member of the band, with his brushes acting like sand drills, making his fellows attempt to do things which the listener feels may possibly be beyond them, but which, as they prove, are not.

ONCE Eddie Condon said to me about Billy Butterfield: "He's the kind of guy who'll go for a wrong note and *make* it." Exactly what this band does. They are smash-and-grabbers, a mob of bold adventurers who carry off the swag right under the noses of their audiences. They *is*, as Edmond Hall easily could have said. They must be heard, live, to be appreciated. I hope some manager or the equivalent has sense enough to realize their ability to extend the limits of what old Mr. Jelly Lord called "jass" and claimed to have invented. These gentlemen make no such claim.

"What we do," Davison said to me the morning after the night I heard them, "is show up and play the way they —I mean the guys in the band—know how. Some of the critics might say we're old-fashioned, and I guess if you look at us their way, we *are*. All I know is that something new happens to us on that stand every night. I don't know how it happens, and I don't know why; all I know is that if it was an accident, it took a long time to happen, and we're all pleased that it did."

It is now around 5 or 5:20 a.m., or some time, and I am dead tired from having tried to put down what this band made me feel, but I think I will go back to Toronto tomorrow night or the next.

—RICHARD GEHMAN.



—*Columbia Records.*

Frank Sinatra—"The Battler"—Sinatra (center) with one of his early best selling LPs. Left, his adviser, the late Mannie Sacks, and, at right, the then chairman of the board of Columbia Records, Edward Wallerstein.

The Sinatra Syndrome

"FRANK SINATRA has always been a study in myths and images, some of them carefully constructed," Arnold Shaw declares in the introduction to his book, *Sinatra: Twentieth-Century Romantic* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, illustrated, $5.95). To bring the man, his life, and his works into perspective was the author's goal when he embarked on the project eight years ago, without the benefit of his subject's involvement. An assiduous researcher, obviously interested in Sinatra, Shaw has provided us with a carefully prepared, well thought-out, and highly readable effort. It is sober rather than sensational—unlike other books on Sinatra—and errs only on minor points (i.e., John Derek played the part of Nick Romano, the young killer in the film *Knock on Any Door*, not Humphrey Bogart).

Progressively the reader is brought to terms with a show-business divinity and how he got that way. The book instructs and illuminates via the author's adept and objective organization of information culled from Sinatra's "recordings, the motion picture screen, the TV tube, the nightclub performance, and the public prints." Well placed interviews add spice and immediacy. Due emphasis is given the singer's recorded legacy that, in many ways, has an autobiographical and unveiling quality.

It becomes apparent that the man in question undoubtedly is a person of consequence, yet, like the rest of us, consistent in his fallibility. Singled out by some as the essence of charm, he falls quite short of this evaluation when viewed by others. A "constant counterpoint of toughness and tenderness" contributes to his magnetism and power to perplex. Sinatra is, in truth, many people, having passed through several life and career phases, each leaving a mark, each adding or subtracting something.

Shaw deals directly with Sinatra's evolution and multiple images, using both to structure his anecdotal yet flowing biography. In following the progression from one image to another—documented and explained in detail—we locate the outlines and some of the substance of the paradoxical thin man. Only his direct participation in the preparation of this book and the emancipation of some of his close friends and associates could have invested it with the drama and decisiveness of Sinatra in all of his dimensions. This, however, is not to disparage what Shaw has accomplished with what was available to him.

He uncovers a lonely, only child who finds in music possibilities for fame and fulfillment and revenge for what he does not find at home, in school, or in the streets of his native Hoboken. A polite but quietly aggressive personality with the Harry James and Tommy Dorsey bands, the public Sinatra comes across as soft and pliable. His yearning aspect —a vulnerability defined in his voice and lean and hungry look—is found deeply touching and sexually provocative by women and fits perfectly with the wartime gestalt.

Yet, off-stage, he is far from the silken, little boy lost—and the first of the seven Shaw images, "The Vulnerable Tough," emerges. Sinatra allows for no funny business, particularly when it comes to his work. Buddy Rich's showboating one night during a number featuring his vocals at New York's Astor Roof—when both were with Dorsey—results in a

Jazz LPs

Data	Report
Don Ellis: *Autumn.* Ellis, quarter-tone trumpet and amplified trumpet; with eighteen-piece band. Columbia stereo, CS-9721, $4.98.	This record, which seems ugly, laughable, and pretentious by turns, contains "the sound of our time" according to Al Kooper, its producer. God save us all!
Bill Evans: *At the Montreux Jazz Festival.* Evans, piano; Eddie Gomez, bass; Jack deJohnette, drums. Verve stereo, V6-8762, $5.79.	That knowledgeable critic, Gene Lees, who supplied both notes and cover photograph for this album, says Evans and Gomez play here "with more aggressive drive than ever before." It is an interesting comment, because relative to, say, Art Tatum or Earl Hines, drive is a quality in which Evans is notably deficient. There is certainly less of the customary twilight melancholy, and from time to time the well-adjusted trio generates a kind of genteel swing. Talented though Gomez and deJohnette are, the most rewarding performance is "I Love You, Porgy," which Evans plays unaccompanied.
Fletcher Henderson: *The Immortal Fletcher Henderson.* Henderson, piano; with quintet, sextet, septet, and eleven-piece band. Milestone mono, MLP-2005, $4.79.	Henderson has been well served by reissues since Columbia led the way with a four-record set. This will make nine currently available albums that are devoted to his music, and there are more to come. He deserves the attention, for he was unquestionably a major figure in jazz history. The fourteen selections here all derived from the Black Swan, Paramount, Puritan, Apex, and Broadway labels. They do more than supplement the others, because by themselves they illustrate the band's development between 1923-31 surprisingly well. The impact of Louis Armstrong is striking in "Mandy" and the three following titles. They are followed by four in which Henderson's other great trumpet star, Joe Smith, is heard to advantage. Those familiar with the original 78s will be especially appreciative of the skill and care that have obviously been lavished on their transfer to LP.
Jazz for a Sunday Afternoon: *The West Coast Scene.* Harry Edison, Bobby Bryant, trumpets; Carl Fontana, Frank Rosolino, trombones; Harold Land, Pete Christlieb, tenor saxophones; Tommy Flanagan, Jimmy Rowles, pianos; Victor Feldman, vibraphone; Ray Brown, Chuck Berghofer, basses; Ed Thigpen, Mel Lewis, drums. Solid State stereo, SS-18037, $5.79.	This is the Californian equivalent of the two albums from New York jam sessions on the same label (SS-18027/8). It suffers from the same faults—long, vainglorious passages where technique takes the place of inspiration and feeling. Edison and Land are the most effective and personable of the soloists, the two distinguished pianists not being given enough elbow room to rival them. Brown's bass is a very potent feature of the second side, which consists of more than twenty minutes of Monk's "Straight, No Chaser." The reverse is similarly devoted to one number only, a supervisory goof in the circumstances.
Wes Montgomery: *Willow Weep for Me.* Montgomery, guitar; Wynton Kelly, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums; with brass and woodwinds arranged by Claus Ogerman on four tracks. Verve stereo, V6-8765, $5.79. *A Portrait of Wes Montgomery.* Montgomery, guitar; with quartet, quintet, and added strings and horns arranged by Gerald Wilson. World Pacific Jazz stereo, ST-20137, $5.79.	In the Verve set, brass and woodwinds have been added to quartet performances originally recorded live at the Half Note in New York during 1965. In the World Pacific, recordings made by small groups a decade or so ago have been "enhanced" by strings and brass. In each case, the obvious intention was to align the album's sound with those that brought Montgomery mass popularity. The potential in this kind of hanky-panky —if carried to the nauseating extremes of which the record industry is all too capable—is simply frightening. Here, however, the "enhancement" has been done discreetly, and there are many attractive performances in which Montgomery lives again.
Don Patterson: *Opus de Don.* Patterson, organ; Blue Mitchell, trumpet; Junior Cook, tenor saxophone; Pat Martino, guitar; Billy James, drums. Prestige stereo, 7577, $4.79. Lou Donaldson: *The Midnight Creeper.* Donaldson, alto saxophone; Blue Mitchell, trumpet; Lonnie Smith, organ; George Benson, guitar; Leo Morris, drums. Blue Note stereo, BST-84280, $5.79. John Patton: *That Certain Feeling.* Patton, organ; Junior Cook, tenor saxophone; Jimmy Ponder, guitar; Clifford Jarvis, drums. Blue Note stereo, BST-84281, $5.79.	Mitchell and Cook, both formerly of Horace Silver's quintet, bring an element reminiscent of that group to each of these albums. The trumpet player is particularly impressive on *The Midnight Creeper,* where he uses repetition differently but quite as effectively as Harry Edison. This album is also the most exciting of the three, thanks in large part to the contributions of Benson and Smith. Although woefully prone to clichés, Donaldson often seems to bring out the best in other musicians. (Thus, apart from an incredible liner note, Lonnie Smith's own album, *Think!,* Blue Note BST-84290, is quite undistinguished.) Don Patterson, obviously inspired by Jimmy Smith, is the most enterprising of the three organists, but Lonnie Smith scores on Donaldson's superior tempos. The Patton album is noteworthy for the introduction of Jimmy Ponder, a young guitarist of whom much more should be heard in the future, as the final track, "Daddy James," will testify.
Oscar Peterson: *The Great Oscar Peterson on Prestige.* Peterson, piano; Sam Jones, bass; Bobby Durham, drums. Prestige stereo, 7620, $4.79.	Peterson's drive makes him almost the complete antithesis of Bill Evans (see above), although he is hardly, as the notes curiously claim, "the epitome of Earl Hines in his ability to swing." Durham, a drummer formerly with Duke Ellington and Wild Bill Davis, meets the pianist's requirements very capably, but would have benefited from more presence in recording. It is interesting to note, however, that European engineers have once more captured a relatively true piano sound, overtones and all, as compared with the xylophonic quality their American counterparts usually favor when recording jazz. Peterson's technique is as dazzling as ever, but his exuberance and mountainous crescendos tend to be exhausting—physically, not emotionally—if both sides of the record are played without pause. It seems less a matter of exhibitionism than of pleasure in the exercise of piano power. Two numbers are in ¾, and both contradict the title of the first—"Waltzing is Hip." On the other hand, "Sandy's Blues" is nearly ten minutes of forcefully developed blues playing that will prove even more enjoyable if isolated from the other performances.
McCoy Tyner: *Tender Moments.* Tyner, piano; Lee Morgan, trumpet; Julian Priester, trombone; James Spaulding, alto saxophone and flute; Bennie Maupin, tenor saxophone; Bob Northern, French horn; Howard Johnson, tuba; Herbie Lewis, bass; Joe Chambers, drums. Blue Note stereo, BST-84275, $5.79.	When Tyner left the late John Coltrane's quartet after six years, the saxophonist was turning toward the musical anarchy of "free form" jazz. This outstanding album indicates the road Tyner preferred to travel. His compositions encompass several different moods, and his writing for the six horns is full and positive, the tuba being incorporated into the ensemble with singular success. Besides piano choruses of the expected precise elegance, there are good solos by Maupin and Morgan. The final track, "Lee Plus Three," is played by Morgan and the rhythm section only, but it is its immediate predecessor, the reflective "All My Yesterdays," that stays in the memory. —Stanley Dance.

NYTBR Mar 16, '86

Neither Sin Nor Duty

THE PURITAN CONSCIENCE AND MODERN SEXUALITY
By Edmund Leites. 196 pp. New Haven: Yale University Press. $17.50.

By Avodah K. Offit



THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

A Puritan couple on their way to church. Engraving by J. S. King.

SEX on bed linen usually surpasses sex on paper by such an order of magnitude that it's a wonder people write about the subject at all. Yet whenever scribblers do put sex into words, it is most often to make rules, an extremely bizarre approach considering how hard it is these days even to govern small islands, much less the national orgasm. Eastern ancients, like today's behaviorists, have written lessons on the sex act; medieval Western churchmen issued austere injunctions against earler pagan rhapsodies. Lately we've got into the habit of analyzing sex as we continue to cope with the efforts of those dark inquisitorial times, so far from the Garden of Eden.

In "The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality," Edmund Leites tells us that a popular misconception of religious history holds the Puritans to have believed sex should be repressed if not extinguished. Most Americans, as well as the German sociologist Max Weber, whose views Mr. Leites more specifically rejects, have viewed the Puritans as harsh ascetics who procreated more by unfortunate accident than design, and, like Cotton Mather, only wrote about sex to drive lust from their hearts. Mr. Leites argues that Puritan sexuality in 17th- and 18th-century England occupied some sedate middle ground between Calvinist hell and a joyous agnostic anarchy. "Sex was not simply for procreation or to avoid fornication but was good itself to the degree that it gave pleasure to both husband and wife."

Add to warm connubial morality the conception of constancy — not merely sexual fidelity but a total and perpetual harmony of spirit, will, emotion and flesh — and we begin to appreciate the Puritan romance. The laws are as stringent as any debtor's code, although the chains are golden. The ideal is to have constantly good sex in a calm, faithful spirit, to espalier the libido rather than to truncate it, to create an orderly domestic florescence.

To exemplify this spirit and its influence, Mr. Leites, who is a professor of philosophy at Queens College, chooses to write in a free form identified as philosophical history. From the whole humanist library, he selects central texts of the culture under examination to support his argument. His first three chapters invoke the Cambridge Platonists, John Locke, and Addison and Steele to illuminate, respectively, religious, political, and emotional constancy. Addison does it best: "Chearfulness . . . keeps up a kind of Day-light in the Mind, and fills it with a steady and perpetual Serenity."

• • •

But even with help from literature, the author inevitably begins to suffer from his subject. A fourth chapter on "Puritan Marriage and the History of Friendship" emphasizes the revolutionary bravado of being an actual friend to a wife, but constancy, fidelity and sexual decencies simply don't stir the reader's emotions. Mr. Leites suggests that they might not have been particularly exciting to the contemporary lovers' nervous systems, either.

After 30 pages of encomiums on marital bliss, the irreverence of the Restoration in the chapter "Passion, Fidelity, and the Stage" is a relief. Arch, independent Millamant in Congreve's "Way of the World" defines the "trifles" she demands of a husband: "And lastly, where ever I am, you shall always knock at the door before you come in. These Articles subscrib'd, If I continue to endure you a little longer, I may by degrees dwindle into a Wife." The Restoration comedies remind us that humor is now permissible and that sex often ventures abroad in daylight.

> *"The ideal was to have constantly good sex in a calm, faithful spirit."*

Society, however, is oscillating too wildly. The reigning force that would dominate the Victorian era arrives in the next chapter, in Samuel Richardson's novel "Pamela." The pain of virtue recurs, afflicting a moral heroine. A critical division of constancy and lust now segregates the sexes: moral superiority for women (Pamela) and the double standard for men (Mr. B.). The maternal female is the sexual "iron cage," the prison of conscience that man must now escape from. The moral mother rather than the Oedipal father must be defeated. Thus does Mr. Leites dispute Freud. The summarizing philosophic chapter postulates modern women as the "bearers of the full message of conscience — and the fullness of sexuality."

IN its style, Mr. Leites's book resembles a pleasant translation from the German. The tone promises that reason will lead to a conclusion, but the major philosophical thesis ultimately seems to become a minor commentary. It is surrounded by an unfocused lament that 20th-century sexuality continues to stumble between constancy and sin, between bohemia and bourgeois Puritanism.

Mr. Leites does not develop his crucial moral mother theme beyond a dateless modernity. He mentions feminism only briefly, timidly. After laboring so conscientiously, is it possible that he has allowed the final proof of his thesis to elude him?

What has recently happened to sex is that the moral mother, in charge of education and erotic ethics, has been at some pains to redeem men and relieve them of the necessity to invade the iron cage of purity. Women have created an unmistakeable sexual, political and economic revolution. Selected passages from Betty Friedan, Erica Jong, Shere Hite, Kate Millett and Simone de Beauvoir might demonstrate that sex is no longer a sin and certainly not a woman's constant duty. They would fortify and define the purpose of Mr. Leites's scholarly attempt to show how women came to appropriate the province of sex in a society commonly described as "made by men for men." □

Avodah K. Offit is a psychiatrist in private practice. Her books include "The Sexual Self" and "Night Thoughts: Reflections of a Sex Therapist."

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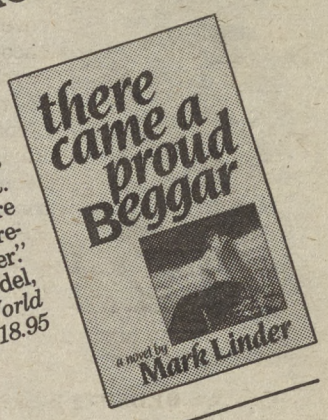

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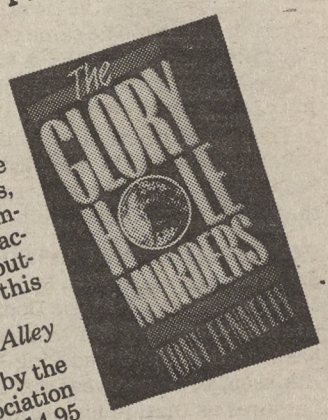

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Calling for Clout

CAMP DAVID
Peacemaking and Politics.
By William B. Quandt.
420 pp. Washington:
The Brookings Institution.
Cloth, $32.95. Paper, $12.95.

THE OTHER WALLS
The Politics of the Arab-Israeli Peace Process.
By Harold H. Saunders.
179 pp. Washington:
American Enterprise Institute.
Cloth, $17.95. Paper, $9.95.

By Bernard Gwertzman

FOR the Middle East, the years 1974-79 were a sort of golden age for American diplomacy. American officials achieved in that space of time five different Arab-Israeli agreements: the Egyptian-Israeli disengagement accords of January 1974 and September 1975; a Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement in May 1974; the Camp David agreement of September 1978; and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of March 1979.

Since the March day on the White House lawn when President Anwar el-Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed the peace accord, while President Jimmy Carter acted as official witness, there have been no other Arab-Israeli agreements, save an Israeli-Lebanese accord worked out by Secretary of State George P. Shultz in May 1983, which was abrogated less than a year later by Lebanon under Syrian pressure. And at this writing, the latest attempt to promote peace talks between Israel and Jordan has again seemed to falter.

The authors of these two books were each deeply involved in the successful negotiations of the 1970's. William B. Quandt was the senior Middle East staff member on the National Security Council staff during the 1977-79 period, and Harold H. Saunders served in a variety of senior posts throughout the 1970's, ending up as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs in the Carter Administration. They have both been active in Washington since then, speaking out frequently on Middle East issues but all too often not listened to very much by the Reagan Administration. Each has produced a useful, specialized study that offers what seems to me sound advice on why American mediation produced accords in the 1970's but does not seem able to do so today.

• • •

The main reason offered is also the most obvious. In the 1970's, a remarkable confluence of events — an oil embargo imposed by the Arabs, a bold Egyptian President and a sense of drama in all capitals — allowed Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, and then President Carter and his Secretary of State, Cyrus R. Vance, to devote extraordinary personal energy to producing agreements between Israel and its neighbors. That same sense of priority has been missing in the Reagan Administration, even though Mr. Reagan did put forth on Sept. 1, 1982, a peace plan for the region that contained the ingredients for an active involvement.

But there is no overriding political pressure in Washington for an American commitment at the highest levels and indeed, for the last two years, Mr. Reagan and Mr. Shultz have been content to limit their involvement in the Middle East negotiations. The main burden has fallen on Richard W. Murphy, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, who has shuttled back and forth in search of breakthroughs that never occur.

Mr. Quandt, in summing up his engrossing history of the Camp David negotiations, makes the point that one of the major lessons from Camp David was "that only the president and the secretary of state have much clout with the Middle East parties." He adds that "special envoys rarely produce results." No one in the region "will show his cards to anyone on the American side other than the highest authority." He writes: "Kissinger and Carter may have spoiled Middle Easterners by lavishing attention on them. Now nothing less seems to produce results. If the Americans are to get involved, it cannot be half-heartedly or without full presidential attention."

Mr. Saunders' book is less a history than a book of advice on how to break the current stalemate in Middle East diplomacy. It is a wise and compassionate work, with analyses of the particular problems of each side in the Middle East, but it is also difficult reading because it is dotted with too few anecdotes drawn from the author's lengthy Middle East career. He, too, argues that there has to be top-level American involvement. "During the 1970s, we learned that progress was possible but that it required intense involvement at the highest political levels of our government," Mr. Saunders writes.

> *"Why American mediation produced accords in the 1970's but not today."*

THERE are no major surprises in either of these two books, but Mr. Quandt does put together the best single study of the Camp David negotiations that I have read, building on the memoirs already published by Mr. Carter, Mr. Vance, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the national security adviser, and by various Egyptian and Israeli participants. What Mr. Quandt makes clear is how Mr. Begin ended up the big winner at Camp David, even though Mr. Carter and Sadat had originally hoped to combine forces to pressure Mr. Begin into making major concessions to the Palestinians. Instead, because Mr. Begin could afford to leave Camp David without an accord and Sadat and Mr. Carter could not afford to do so politically, the Israeli leader was able to hold out for essentially a framework agreement on Egyptian-Israeli peace.

The accompanying Camp David document on Palestinian issues was so vague that it was regarded as a disappointment not only to Egyptians but to many members of the American delegation who realized that without a significant document on Palestinian questions, Sadat would face ostracism in the Arab world. William Quandt and Harold Saunders, despite their pride in being part of Camp David, both seem to regret that Mr. Carter was not able to extract more from Menachem Begin. ☐

Bernard Gwertzman is a diplomatic correspondent in the Washington bureau of The New York Times.

Correction

Because of an editing error, a review March 2 of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's book "Family and Nation" incorrectly described the origin of the 1965 report "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." Mr. Moynihan prepared the report for the Johnson Administration in his capacity as Assistant Secretary of Labor for Policy Planning and Research.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 1986

Concentration Is Likened To Euphoric States of Mind

By DANIEL GOLEMAN

THE seemingly simple act of being fully absorbed in a challenging task is now being seen as akin to some of the extravagantly euphoric states such as those sought in drugs or sex or through the "runner's high."

New research is leading to the conclusion that these instances of absorption are, in effect, altered states in which the mind functions at its peak, time is often distorted and a sense of happiness seems to pervade the moment.

Such states, the new research suggests, are accompanied by mental efficiency experienced as a feeling of effortlessness.

One team of researchers describes these moments of absorption as "flow states."

According to Mike Csikszentmihalyi, a psychologist at the University of Chicago, "flow" refers to "those times when things seem to go just right, when you feel alive and fully attentive to what you are doing."

The understanding that deep absorption can be transporting will not come as news to those who readily sink into rapture at a symphony or while reading poetry, but the new research adds precision in defining the circumstances that evoke such heightened awareness.

Peak activity found on line between boredom and anxiety.

The Chicago research on flow, which has been under way for more than a decade, began with a study of people performing at their peak. Basketball players, composers, dancers, chess masters, rock climbers, surgeons and others were asked to describe in detail times when they had outdone themselves. One of the elements that was invariably present in these descriptions was full absorption in the activity at hand, an attention that was finely attuned to the shifting demands of the moment.

Along with a full absorption, people in flow described a set of experiences that, taken together, suggest an altered state of consciousness. These include a distortion in the sense of time, so that events seem either to go very quickly or very slowly; an altered sense of one's bodily sensations or sensory perceptions, and a fine precision in gauging one's responses to a changing challenge.

With a group of colleagues at Chicago, and another group at the University of Milan Medical School, Dr. Csikszentmihalyi most recently has been studying the circumstances that draw people into the flow state. In one recent study, 82 volunteers carried beepers that would remind them, at random times throughout the day, to record what they were doing, how concentrated on it they were and how they felt. The volunteers ranged from assembly-line workers and clerks to engineers and managers.

"People seem to concentrate best when the demands on them are a bit greater than usual, and

Continued on Page 22



Part of the excavation of a synagogue, thought to have been built during the Roman Empire, at Bova Marina, Italy.

The New York Times / Roberto Suro

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While psychoanalytic training deals with the emotional feelings, including sexual attraction, that a therapist can feel toward a patient, only a minority of therapists go through such training.

Sexual feelings for clients arise in the ordinary conduct of psychotherapy and are not necessarily harmful, the researchers contend.

"To be successful, a training approach must first of all acknowledge the value of honest, serious discussions about therapists' attraction to clients," the report said. "Therapists and therapists in training must be acknowledged as fully human, as capable of feeling attraction to those to whom they provide professional services. The taboo must be lifted."

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Dinosaur Winter

For several years, scientists have debated the hypothesis that the demise of the dinosaurs might prefigure the fate of the human race if we should ever be subjected to a "nuclear winter."

New evidence disclosed by a team of American and Canadian scientists suggests that, if any climate change resembling a nuclear winter occurred at the time the dinosaurs died out, the cold weather could have persisted only a few months before returning to normal.

Geologists of the United States Geological Survey, the Los Alamos National Laboratory and the National Museums of Canada based their report in Science on their study of fossilized plant spores in Saskatchewan, at a site where rock strata are accessible both above and below the thin layer of sediment on the earth's surface at the time the dinosaurs disappeared. They found that ancient palms and screw pines, both presumed to have been highly vulnerable to cold weather, survived whatever it was that killed the dinosaurs.

Moments of Peak Concentration Are Likened to Euphoric States of Mind

Continued From Page 21

they are able to give more than usual," Dr. Csikszentmihalyi said. "If there is too little demand on them, people are bored. If there is too much for them to handle, they get anxious. Flow occurs in that delicate zone between boredom and anxiety."

No Easy Formula

There is no easy formula for getting into the flow state, but some circumstances make its occurrence more likely, according to the research. If a situation is boring, for example, somehow making it more challenging may lead to flow. One assembly-line worker in the Chicago research, for example, had a job in which he simply tightened a set of screws all day long. But after several years he was still experimenting with ways to shave a few seconds from his time, a challenge that kept him engrossed.

On the other hand, if things are overwhelming, sometimes simplifying a complex job into manageable pieces can bring that alignment of skill and challenge that evokes a flowing concentration. And simply making the effort to pay attention, even if a struggle at first, can on occasion give way to flow.

"Most jobs have a ceiling built in — you can learn them in a few days," said Dr. Csikszentmihalyi. "Your skills for it increase rapidly, but the challenge doesn't change, so you get bored. Many people are bored much of the time, and their attention is totally scattered. When their concentration drops, so does their motivation and confidence."

"The fine focus during flow cuts out all irrelevant thoughts and sensations," Dr. Csikszentmihalyi said. "There is a mental recruitment where everything aligns in an effortless concentration, sort of a mental overdrive."

In that way, this level of concentration resembles meditation in which the the desired result is often a feeling of envigoration and relaxed alertness. The essence of medition is simply to focus attention.

2 Kinds of Attention

The "flow" state studied by the Chicago researchers needs to be distinguished from the strained concentration that is brought to bear when, for example, a person has little interest in the task at hand and must force attention. These two kinds of attention — effortless and strained — have been found to have distinctly different underlying patterns of brain function, according to findings by researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health.

The research on attention and brain activity has, in the past, revealed seemingly contradictory findings, some studies finding that full concentration increased cortical arousal, and others finding a decrease. Dr. Hamilton's research showed that the effortless concentration typical of flow brought about a lowered cortical arousal. When more effort was put into concentration, on the other hand, it seemed to increase cortical arousal.

"There seems to be a difference between effortful and effortless attention," said Jean Hamilton, a psychiatrist in Washington, who did the research with Monte Buchsbaum, a psychiatrist now at the University of California Medical School at Irvine.

The studies show that the strained concentration involves greater activity by the brain, almost as if it is in the wrong gear for the work demanded.

The scientists are finding a number of individual differences among people in their abilities to become absorbed and to make the most of it when they do.

"The ability to become completely immersed is necessary for productivity, but not sufficient," said Auke Tellegen, a psychologist at the University of Minnesota. "You also need the capacity for mental constraint, so you don't just get swept away by impulse. Many people who are prone to absorption don't have the mental discipline that allows them to be productive."

Similarity to Hypnosis

One of the most suggestive pieces of evidence linking deep concentration to other kinds of altered states is its similarity to hypnosis.

Dr. Tellegen and others have done research showing that people who easily become absorbed in, say, fantasy or a painting, are more readily hypnotized than are those more impervious to such pleasures. And research reported in a recent volume of The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology shows that people who are given to rapt absorption are also susceptible to altered states of consciousness.

"There is a group of people who readily get so absorbed in things that they become lost in them, or in their thoughts or fantasies, for that matter," said Ronald Pekala, a psychologist at Center and Jefferson Medical College in Pennsylvania, who did the research on altered awareness with another psychologist, Krishna Kumar. "It is these same mental processes that seem to get intensified during hypnosis."

The people who are easily hypnotized, although they may become readily absorbed in some things, have to struggle as much as anyone else when it comes to endeavors that are not so enjoyable, Dr. Pekala has found. But when he simply asked them to sit quietly for a few minutes with their eyes closed, they frequently reported feelings approaching an altered state, including a rapturous joy, a sense of some profound meaningfulness, vivid imagery, and an altered sense of time, all accompanying a deeply absorbed attention. Such people, Dr. Pekala believes, may go through much of the day lost in a pleasant, reverie-like state.

Although it may not be possible to force oneself into a feeling of absorption, it seems possible to learn to enter that state of mind more easily. Ellen Langer, a psychologist at Harvard University, has been studying the effects of what she calls mindfulness, a state of active attention that seems to have much in common with flow.

One of the ways Dr. Langer has increased people's mindfulness is straightforward and simple. She has them think about what is going on from as many vantage points as possible. "We taught people to watch television mindfully by asking them to watch shows as though they were someone else — a politician, or an athlete or a criminal," Dr. Langer said. "The point is to break through people's assumptions with an active attention that stimulates their thinking."

Dr. Langer has found that mindfulness has both psychological and health benefits. In a series of studies conducted among elderly patients in nursing homes, Dr. Langer and her colleagues have discovered that compared to patients who did not receive the mindfulness training, these patients had lower blood pressure and, in a three-year follow-up had fewer physical ailments, better overall health and a better mortality rate.

Meditation training, Dr. Langer has found, produces similar effects. "We're trying to achieve the same goal as meditation, but in a Western way," Dr. Langer said. "We try to get people to see the moment more creatively by paying more active attention."

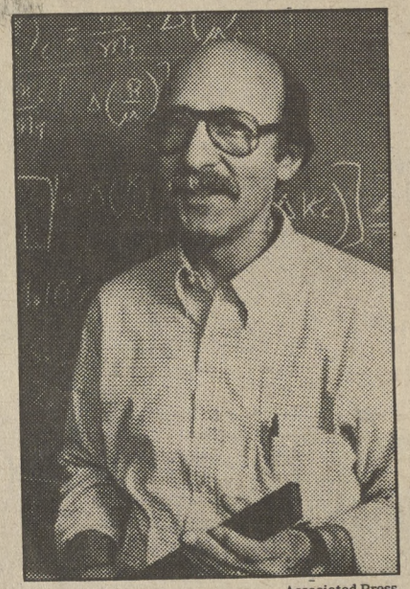
The New York Times means business every day of the week. / Keep up with Business Day Monday through Saturday and with the Business section every Sunday.

new force, working against gravity at short ranges, has unleashed a flurry of new research and sharp debate over the validity of the finding.

In Colorado, scientists are using lasers to monitor the rate of falling objects within a box designed to shield the objects from air drag.

At Stanford University, the test objects are being floated in a magnetic field so that they may respond freely to the most subtle gravitational forces.

At the University of California at Irvine, a complex version of the torsion-



Associated Press

Dr. Ephraim Fischbach

a new force, but many of them have welcomed the proposition as stimulus for a new round of critical experiments. As Robert H. Dicke of Princeton University, a leader in such efforts, has put it, "Few experiments are simpler in principle, harder in practice and so far-reaching in implication."

The follow-up experiments are extraordinarily demanding, both in terms of sensitivity and in the need to eliminate extraneous influences. The tests must avoid such effects as imperceptible tilting of the landscape by a nearby high tide or the gravitational influence of an observer's body.

The new force would be the fifth known to control phenomena in the universe. The others are gravity and electromagnetism, which are long-range forces, and two forces that operate only on an atomic level, a weak force and the strong force that binds particles together in the nucleus.

Gravity is the force of attraction one body, or particle, exerts on another. By Newton's law, the force due to gravity would be proportional to the product of their masses divided by the square of the distance between them.

A Repelling Force

Unlike gravity, the theoretical fifth force would be a repelling force. But it would influence objects only within a limited range; estimates are from a few feet to thousands of feet.

Physicists believe that this fifth force might take the form of what they describe as a "hypercharge" force. Hypercharge is the number of protons and neutrons in atomic nuclei; these particles are held together by what is called the binding energy.

The theory is that the hypercharge appears to work against gravity, to slow the rate of acceleration. The amount of deceleration due to the hypercharge force is determine by the ratio of protons and neutrons divided by total mass of the atom (total mass being the total number of protons and neutrons plus the binding energy).

But since the binding energy in various atoms is not the same, they would differ in the degree of the fifth force that they generate. A small object made of iron and a large one made of wood, even if they were identical in weight, would fall at slightly different velocities, since their binding energies differ. The binding energy of iron is greater and thus the smaller iron object would fall at a slightly slower rate than the larger wooden one.

Evidence for the new force was re-

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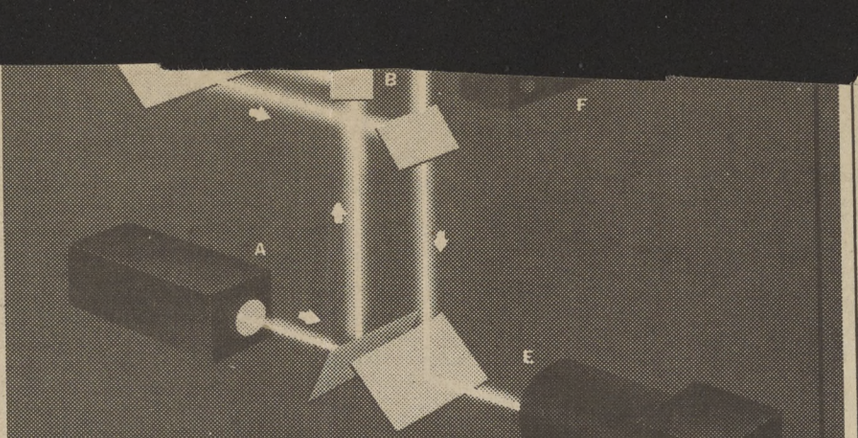

In this schematic view a beam from a laser (A) is reflected upward and split (B). Half of the beam is reflected from the falling object (C); the other half is reflected sideways and upward into a stationary reflector (D) isolated from vibrations by a spring. The beam's two halves are rejoined and directed into a receiver (E) for processing by an oscilloscope (F), providing an extremely accurate record of the fall.

Dan Osyczka

"We were first asked to look at our stock portfolios," said William R. Cotter, president of Colby College in Waterville, Me., which has sponsored a handful of such students. "Out of that experience came a realization that we had a role to play given the very restricted opportunities for black South Africans in that country."

Universities are so eager to attract these students that this year they are offering about twice as many scholarships as there are students available for placement.

Universities, corporations, private foundations, education groups and the United States Agency for International Development have produced programs praised for their effectiveness in matching black South African students with American schools.

Under these programs, this fall about 150 new black South African students will begin graduate and undergraduate studies in the United States; some 400 blacks, including those classified by Pretoria as Africans, Indians and coloreds, have pursued degrees since the first group arrived in 1979.

More than 220 scholarship offers have already been received for the 105 students who will be placed by the largest of these programs, the New York-based South African Education Program, or S.A.E.P., with new proposals still coming in, according to David R. Smock, program director. The program is part of the Institute of International Education. The situation is similar at Aurora Associates, a Washington-based management consulting firm that will place about 40 students this year.

Mr. Smock said that although scholarship offers were limited in some fields, including engineering and law, his group was increasingly able to be more selective in matching students with schools and with the most lucrative offers.

"We're in a situation where we're going to be most responsive to the most generous scholarships," he said. "A lot of schools are calling up and asking for their case to be given a fair hearing."

Signs of support for such programs are also visible

Continued on Page 25

Seize the Day

Lite Reading

For days, we've been brooding about a publishing house called Workman, which is busily producing the aural equivalent of light beer — a cassette tape that will dispense "Ten Classics in Ten Minutes." As Workman's publishers explained to William Greer of The Times, their aim is to "cut down the literary canon to a lean pistol."

An enterprising aim, given the hurried pace of modern life. But an entire minute for a classic? Surely the people at Workman are capable of even more efficient compression. Forget Book-of-the-Month. By our stopwatch, it's possible to offer a whole library in a minute:

Ulysses, by James Joyce: A fellow named Bloom spends a June day walking around Dublin. yesyesyesyes yesyes.

The Complete Works of Shakespeare. Enter kings, fools, princes, merchants, witches, queens, Romans, Greeks, husbands, wives, sons, daughters. Many die. The rest exeunt.

Moby Dick, by Herman Melville. Ishmael embarks on Pequod, finds Captain Ahab is odd, looks for white whale, discovers whale is odder. Glug.

The Hound of the Baskervilles, by Arthur Conan Doyle. Dog scares heir, heir hires Holmes, detective meets dog, heir spared, Watson tells all, o'er moor and fen.

The Study of History, by Arnold Toynbee. What rises, falls.

The Collected Fiction of Henry James. Of what might have been, and of what should have been, the polarities, so to speak, that mark one's destiny, to which each of these stories not insensibly attests.

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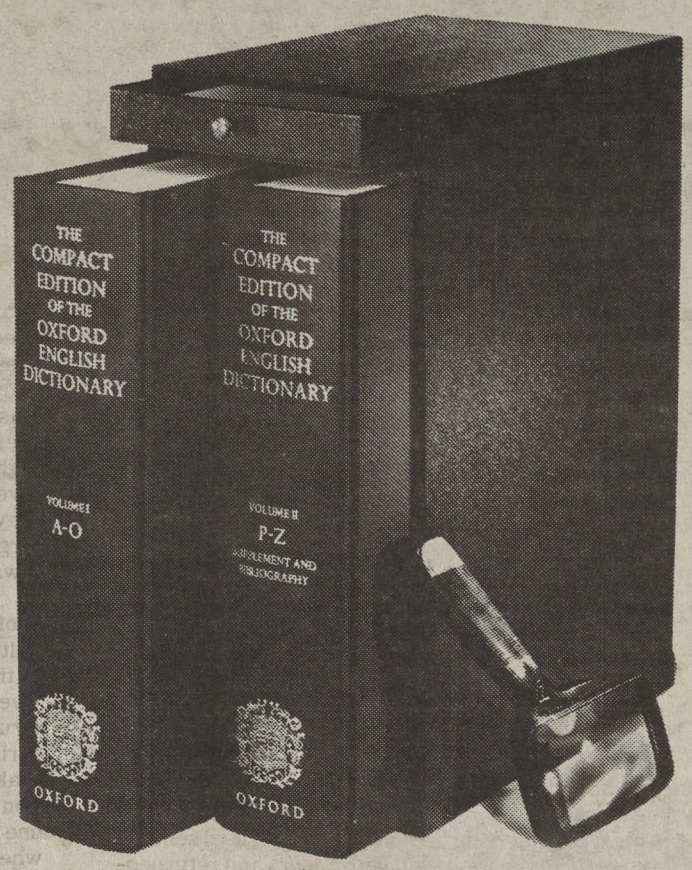

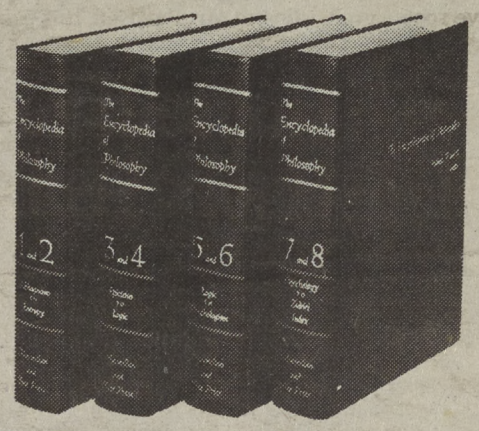

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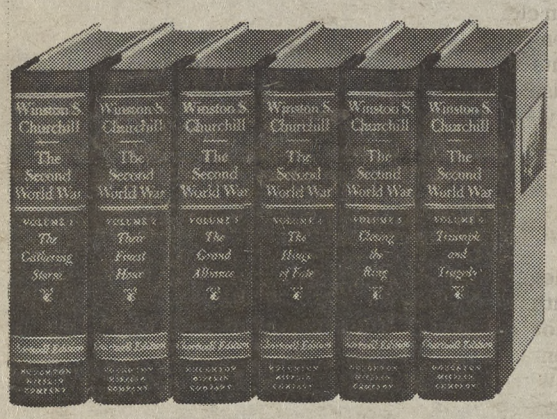

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About Books

Feelings of And and If, Of and But

By Denis Donoghue

IN the second chapter of Joyce's "Ulysses" Stephen Dedalus is admonished by his employer, Mr. Deasy, "We are a generous people, but we must also be just." "I fear those big words," Stephen answers, "which make us so unhappy." He does not specify the big ones: presumably they include "generous," "people," "just" and "must," words that lodge an ethical or a nationalist claim.

I have long assumed that Stephen's fears coincide with my own: big words offer a challenge I can rarely meet. But lately I have been finding that most of my trouble, as a reader and critic, arises from the little words, which hide in the corners of a sentence as if they were embarrassed to be seen. Most of the big words are nouns and adjectives, and the Oxford English Dictionary is helpful in dealing with them. But the O.E.D. is sullen with the little words, the prepositions and conjunctions. Verbs are not a problem: they can be treated as substantives of behavior. But prepositions and conjunctions have only virtual existence till they are sent for. They denote relations between one thing and another, and must await the production of the things to be related. Often they merely indicate that a relation of some kind is being proposed, but not its character.

When I teach a course called "Literature and Politics," I think I know what literature is and, with less conviction, what politics is, but the relation between them is opaque. It's the "and" that gives me trouble. When I read Elizabeth Bishop's gorgeous poem "Over 2000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance" and come to the line "Everything only connected by 'and' and 'and,' " in one mood I construe it as if it ended with the further word "alas"; in another, I think she is letting us feel that "and" is a sufficient connection, and that anything more specifically binding would be a regrettable compulsion. Is she finding the sundry character of the world intolerable, or dreadful, or just acceptably quaint? The poem ends with a variant of "and" and "and" — "and looked and looked our infant sight away," an exhilaration of perception that for such boons one pays a price, the infancy is lost in the practice of its glow. But I'm still not sure about "and."

• • •

When it comes to these little words, William James's "Principles of Psychology" is the readiest guide I know. In the chapter called "The Stream of Thought" he moves from considering thought as a stream or a river to considering it as a bird in flight, an alternation of flights and perchings. The perchings or resting places are the substantive parts of thought, the places of flight are the transitive parts. James cares



MICHAEL KLEIN

more for the transitive parts, the process of thinking, than for the substantive parts, the thoughts reached or defined; if only because, traditionally, philosophers and psychologists have hardly noticed the birds in flight, or adverted to the energy such flights discover and display. James is a true Emersonian in this preference, pupil of the Emerson who wrote in "Self-Reliance" that "power ceases in the instant of repose; it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf, in the darting to an aim."

In James's version the shooting and darting are the work of little words, the prepositions and conjunctions. "There is not a conjunction or a preposition, and hardly an adverbial phrase, syntactic form, or inflection of voice, in human speech, that does not express some shading or other of relation which we at some moment actually feel to exist between the larger objects of our thought." No language is capable of doing justice to every shade: relations are numberless. But James is especially tender to the relations that propel the transitive parts of thought. In a beautiful sentence James says that "we ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling *blue* or a feeling of *cold*." We do not; "so inveterate has our habit become of recognizing the existence of the substantive parts alone, that language almost refuses to lend itself to any other use." As a result, all dumb or anonymous psychic states, as James says, have been suppressed.

James's *and*, *if*, *but*, and *by* lie doggo in every sentence, but the more attention we pay them the more they imply that the attention, belated indeed, is richly merited: they are as deserving as Cinderella, and now their hour has come. It is awkward to note that by recognizing a feeling of *and* or *if* or *but* or *by*, we promote these little words to the status of substantives, we tend to turn them into nouns and perch upon them. A feeling of *and* recognizes a connection between things already connected in nature or culture — Egypt and the Nile — or hitherto unconnected but to be connected now — cabbages and kings, sons and lovers, the ring and the book, hail and farewell. Even if a pair is mismatched, our joining them with *and* testifies to a sentiment we continue to celebrate: we want to bring them together, that is our way of being human.

How much connectedness we want is a matter to be argued; just enough to retain the sentiment, I suppose. The feeling of *if* seems to me expansive; it holds out a possibility, though not a promise. If I walk down this mean street rather than that one, I may be mugged; on the other hand, perhaps not. On balance, I think it buoyant. The feeling of *but* is like one's older brother: a wise fellow, but he brings worldly wisdom into disrepute. There is no joy in being joylessly right. As for the feeling of *by*, I can't feel it at all, so I suppose it's the purest transition, it lasts only long enough to have been there, always on the wing.

BUT the little word that gives me most trouble is *of*. Sometimes I can manage well enough with it. When Philip Larkin in "The Old Fools" refers to "the constant wear and tear of taken breath," I know that *of*, and catch my next breath with a due sense of being already worn and torn. When Wallace Stevens begins "The Snow Man" with "One must have a mind of winter . . ." I feel myself qualified, it is my only season. But elsewhere Stevens baffles me with his *of*. I think he resorted to *of* when he didn't want to decide whether the relation between one thing and another was adjectival or constitutive. What does "the poem of the act of the mind" mean in his "Of Modern Poetry"? It doesn't just mean the poem about the act of the mind. Nor does it quite mean the poem that consists of the act of the mind: the mind can act without becoming a poem, even if it acts in the ways that particular poem indicates.

My favorite *of* in Stevens comes from the "Canon Aspirin" passage of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction":

He had to choose. But it was not a choice
Between excluding things. It was not a choice

Between, but of. He chose to include the things
That in each other are included, the whole,
The complicate, the amassing harmony.

Of course a choice *of* is still a choice *between*, but it is between all and nothing, and with fallible reasonableness he settles for all. □

Denis Donoghue is a regular contributor to About Books.

Honora Bliss Awaits the Wrecking Crew

THE PART OF FORTUNE
By Laurel Goldman.
249 pp. New York:
Weidenfeld & Nicolson. $15.95.

By Cathie Pelletier

GREEN MANSIONS is the kind of name given to homes for the elderly in the hope it will conjure up Grandma peacefully crocheting beneath a rose trellis while Grandpa repairs his golf game on an Edenic green. But the Green Mansions Home for the Elderly, the setting for Laurel Goldman's second novel, "The Part of Fortune," is hardly green or a mansion. "In its first incarnation [it] represented the Southeast's sole attempt to capitalize on the success of the $1.99 steakhouses which . . . were doing a brisk business in New York City. Only the red-flocked wallpaper in the women's tub room serves as a reminder of those long-gone days that ended in financial disaster."

Now it is a decrepit building, where the paint peels, the furniture is ill-assorted, the pudding is always beige and the potatoes dehydrated. Like the sad, lingering souls who come and go at Green Mansions, the aluminum chairs can be folded up, when the time is right, and put away. As the novel opens, Green Mansions is crumbling and nearly dead, on its way to rebirth as a clubhouse for Taralawn Estates, a proposed new complex of condominiums.

Honora Bliss, the director and head nurse, has had three months after the sale of the property to vacate the building and has parceled most of her clients out to other nursing homes well in advance of the wrecking crew. Only four residents remain, on the official understanding that they are *difficult* to place. They are also Honora's favorites. There is the arthritic and caustic Miriam Stone, who has loathed her husband "for forty years" and forbidden him to visit her. She mails home newspaper clippings hoping to unnerve him. There's a warning about the dangers of alfalfa seeds and sprouts — "Systemic lupus erythematosus. . . . That'll get Vernon. Since I'm in here he eats every day at that little place near the campus that serves that stuff. He loves it. It makes him feel young. All those young girls and all that salad."

David Martin is the only male resident. He followed his wife into Green Mansions, and after her death stayed on, though aside from an irregular heartbeat and diminishing eyesight nothing prevents him from carrying on as well as before. Virginia Merriman suffers from a disease of the central nervous system and even Honora has yet to hear her speak.

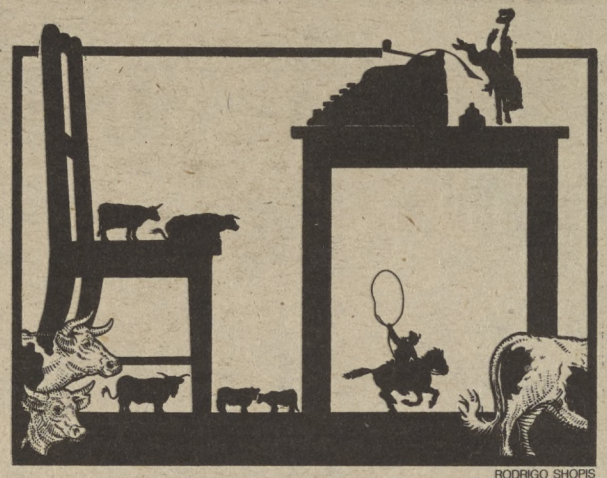
The fourth and oldest resident is Hannah Jessup, 93 years old. She fell in her New York City apartment and

Cathie Pelletier's first novel was "The Funeral Makers." She is completing a second, "The Bubble Reputation."

Tall in the Saddle

LONESOME DOVE
By Larry McMurtry.
843 pp. New York:
Simon & Schuster. $18.95.

By Nicholas Lemann



RODRIGO SHOPIS

THE practice of trail-driving herds of beef cattle over long distances from ranch to railhead flourished for just a moment after the Civil War and before the widespread use of barbed wire. It was the tiniest fraction of our national experience and did not directly involve more than a few thousand people. But maybe more than anything else — more than wars, more than slavery, more than urbanization or immigration — it has animated a part of our imagination out of which flows a vital branch of popular culture. Cowboyana in the form of dime fiction and stage shows flourished even before the short era of the trail drives ended. It nourished movies and television when they were young. Even today, it seems to be everywhere: in clothing, in advertising, in political rhetoric.

Unlike other themes that have obsessed us, though, the trail drive has not made the transition from low art to high art very well. The South has "Gone With the Wind" but also Faulkner; the cowboy has "Red River" and J. Frank Dobie. It seems mysterious that so rich a subject has not produced a great novel — perhaps it has become so stylized that there is no juice left in it.

Readers who held out hope have been getting sustenance for years from the rumors that Larry McMurtry was writing a big trail-driving novel. As much as anyone, he knows the subject: he comes from a large west Texas family that he has described as "cowboys first and last," and his essays show that he has done considerable digging around in obscure first-hand accounts of trail drives. Also, if the myth-making machine has expropriated the subject, well, Mr. McMurtry knows about that too. It is hard to think of an American novelist who has been so lucky in Hollywood for so long ("Hud," "The Last Picture Show," "Terms of Endearment") without becoming a part of it. By now a cowboy novel probably would have to show some underlying awareness of the movies. Mr. McMurtry seems ideally equipped for that.

At its beginning, "Lonesome Dove" seems to be an antiwestern, the literary equivalent of movies like "Cat Ballou" and "McCabe and Mrs. Miller." The novel's title comes from the name of a Godforsaken one-saloon town on the dusty south Texas plain near the Rio Grande. Two former captains in the Texas Rangers have retired from the long wars against Indians and Mexicans to run the Hat Creek Cattle Company — when a customer wants horses or cattle, the former lawmen drop into Mexico at night and steal them. One of the captains, Augustus McCrae, is a lazy, hard-drinking, falsely erudite old coot; the other, W. F. Call, is strong and silent in circumstances that don't call for strength or silence. Surrounded by a motley crew of cowboys, Mexicans, old Rangers and flea-bitten animals, they have been living this funky life for nearly 15 years.

Then an old Ranger comrade of theirs rides into town, on the lam because he accidentally killed a man in Arkansas. He suggests they drive a herd of cattle to the unsettled country in Montana, where he has been on his wanderings. In no hurry to stop the picaresque fun, Mr. McMurtry lets the idea of a cattle drive gradually take hold among his characters. Call steals some horses and a herd of cattle and lines up some cowhands; grumbling and wisecracking and pulling on his jug, McCrae ambles along; the old friend brings the town prostitute as his guest.

As they get under way, the novel's scope begins to become clear. Mr. McMurtry weaves a dense web of subplots involving secondary characters and out-of-the-way places, with the idea of using the form of a long, old-fashioned realistic novel to create an accurate picture of life on the American frontier, from Mexico to Canada, during the late 1870's. He gives us conversationless cowboys whose greatest fear is that they will have to speak to a woman, beastly buffalo hunters, murderous Indians, destitute Indians, prairie pioneers, river boat men, gamblers, scouts, cavalry officers, prostitutes, backwoodsmen; open plains and cow towns; the Nueces River and the Platte and the Yellowstone. Everything about the book feels true; being antimythic is a great aid to accuracy about the lonely, ignorant, violent West.

Mr. McMurtry plows right into the big themes. The lack of a good reason for Call and McCrae's epic trail drive — "Here you've brought these cattle all this way, with all this inconvenience to me and everybody else, and you don't have no reason in this world to be doing it," McCrae says to Call at one point — makes the drive seem oddly profound. It becomes a way of exploring whether what gives our lives meaning is the way we live (as Call and McCrae believe, though in different ways), or what we accomplish, or nothing at all. The trail drive and the turns of plot provide many loves and deaths by which to measure the degree of meaning in the frontier's codes and imperatives. Even Call and McCrae's ages — just at the far edge of middle age — are conducive to mellow, sad tallyings-up.

The characters in "Lonesome Dove" seem always to be putting their horses into easy lopes that could be sustained all day, and this is the way Mr. McMurtry writes. His writing is almost always offhand and laconic, with barely any sustained passages intended to be beautiful or fervent. He always has time for another funny minor character to pirouette on stage, or for McCrae to produce a new bon mot. And he leisurely pursues familiar themes — two friends in love with the same woman ("Leaving Cheyenne"), a 17-year-old coming of age ("The Last Picture Show"), a formidable middle-aged woman surrounded by terrified men who love her ("Terms of Endearment"). During the last decade or so, the idea that eccentricity is the best way to deal with life has permeated Mr. McMurtry's work, and he makes an awfully good case for it again here. The question is whether it is possible to be eccentric and "major" in the same novel.

The scenes that best put the matter to rest are the most traditionally Western ones — the gunfights, stampedes, hangings and horse-stealings. Every one of these is thrilling and almost perfectly realized. In describing violence, Mr. McMurtry does not need to raise the stakes with labored prose — they are already high. When a young boy rides into a nest of poisonous snakes in a river and dies of the bites, or when McCrae singlehandedly fights off a band of Indians on an open plain with only a dead horse for shelter, it is unforgettable.

SUCH moments give "Lonesome Dove" its power. They demonstrate what underlies all the banter, and they transform Call and McCrae from burnt-out cases into — there is no other word — heroes. They are absolutely courageous, tough, strong, cool, loyal, fabulously good fighters. They and their men live through incredible travails, and, once they get to Montana, it is a paradise, worth everything. When McCrae explains the journey to the woman he loves by saying "I'd like to see one more place that ain't settled before I get decrepit and have to take up the rocking chair," it is moving, not silly. Whether this response is justified by the grandeur of their mission to tame the frontier, or conditioned by popular culture, it is there and cannot be denied.

All of Mr. McMurtry's antimythic groundwork — his refusal to glorify the West — works to reinforce the strength of the traditionally mythic parts of "Lonesome Dove," by making it far more credible than the old familiar horse operas. These are real people, and they are still larger than life. The aspects of cowboying that we have found stirring for so long are, inevitably, the aspects that are stirring when given full-dress treatment by a first-rate novelist. Toward the end, through a complicated series of plot twists, Mr. McMurtry tries to show how pathetically inadequate the frontier ethos is when confronted with any facet of life but the frontier; but by that time the reader's emotional response is it does not matter — these men drove cattle to Montana!

The potential of the open range as material for fiction seems unavoidably tied to presenting it as fundamentally heroic and mythic, even though not to any real purpose. If there is a novel to be written about trail-driving that will be lasting and deep without being about brave men — and about an endless, harsh, lovely country where life is short but rich — it is still to be written. For now, for the Great Cowboy Novel, "Lonesome Dove" will do. □

Nicholas Lemann is a national correspondent for The Atlantic.

Herding Words



DIANA WALKER/GAMMA LIAISON

Larry McMurtry.

For "Lonesome Dove," his latest Texas novel, Larry McMurtry reached back to the stories he had heard of that vanished era when cattle were driven from his native Texas to railheads in Missouri and Kansas. "It grew out of my sense of having heard my uncles talk about the extraordinary days when the range was open," he said by phone from Washington. "In my boyhood I could talk to men who touched this experience and knew it, even if they only saw the tag end of it. I wanted to see if I could make that real, make that work fictionally."

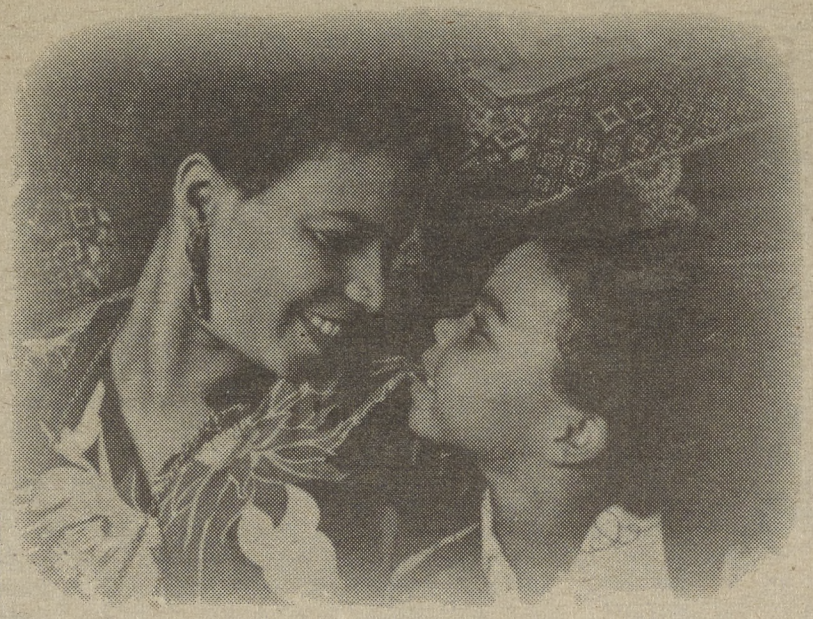
Since his reputation has been fashioned on portraying the degeneration of those myths in today's West, in novels like "The Last Picture Show" and "Horseman, Pass By" (on which the movie "Hud" was based), his latest book was something of a departure. But this time he was intrigued by the myths themselves, by how they endured so powerfully even though the trail-drive era lasted 20 years.

"I don't know," he said, "except most of the men who participated in it were young men and the country they were going into was young country. Almost everyone who participated felt that it was about the finest experience of their lives."

Mr. McMurtry, who is 49 years old, once observed that Texans have retained something of the frontier spirit even though the frontier is lost, and he is a wry example of that notion. Like cowboys of yore, he too migrates — from Washington, where he is part-owner of a rare-book shop, to north central Texas, where he has a ranch near his boyhood home, to Hollywood, where he writes screenplays.

"I grew up in a herding tradition and that's determined everything I've done. I was never good at herding cattle, but writing is a way of herding words and rare books a way of herding books, and I suspect by my constant driving around the country I'm practicing a form of trail-driving, driving whatever happens to be ahead of me, the cars and the trucks, rather than cattle. There's a grain of truth in that."

— Joseph Berger



Janice Rubin

"A superb storyteller's loving celebration of the differences that make us human."

—New York Times Book Review

America's most lyrical black voice—poet, playwright, and novelist Ntozake Shange—paints a warm, intricate portrait of a thirteen-year-old girl discovering the magical and frightening complexities of adolescence. Set in St. Louis in 1959, *Betsey Brown* explores the ways school integration becomes a catalyst for Betsey's understanding whites and her own extraordinary family: her formidable grandmother, determined to keep Betsey within the world of "colored" gentility; her jazz-playing physician father, proud of his roots but eager for his children to move into a wider world; and her independent mother, caught in the tension between her mother and husband, and unable to resolve her own (and her children's) place in black society and the world beyond.

"A memorable, quietly powerful book. Writing in the vibrant, lyrical vernacular familiar to readers of her *Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo* and to those who saw her play *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*, Shange stirringly evokes the love and respect that finally reunite this uneasy family."—*Publishers Weekly*

"Fresh, funny, sweetly human" *—The Kirkus Reviews*

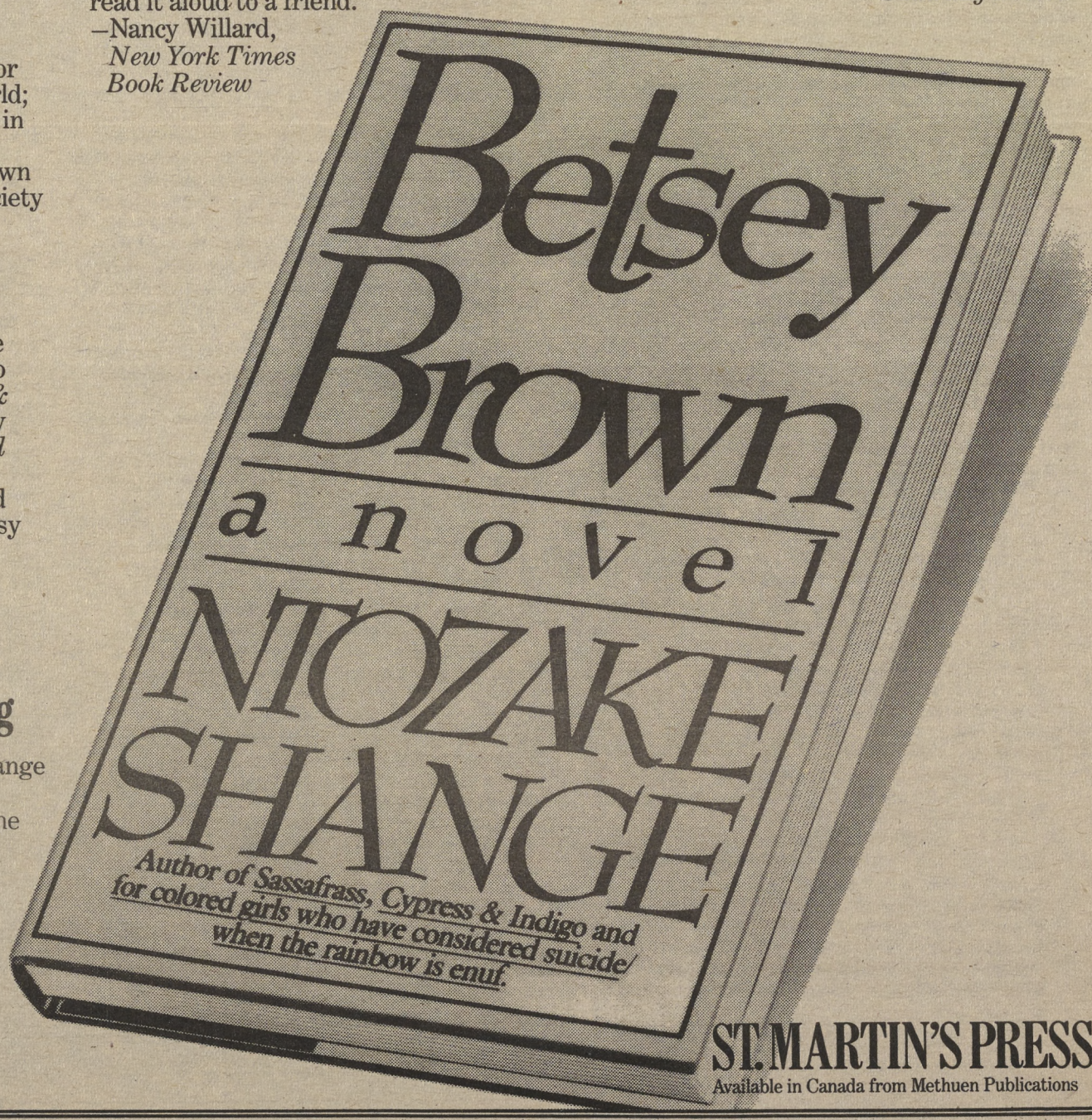
"Rendered with convincing vividness... charm and sass. Shange is a novelist of great sensitivity."
—People Magazine

"Shange is a unique, and gifted, literary executant." *—Chicago Sun-Times*

"Both black and white readers will feel at home... Miss Shange has an extraordinary ear for the spoken word... and keeps her eye on what brings her characters together rather than what separates them: courage and love, innocence and the loss of it, home and homelessness." After you've read *Betsey Brown* to yourself, you can read it aloud to a friend."
—Nancy Willard,
New York Times Book Review

"Memorable...a fine coming of age novel." *—Houston Chronicle*

"A sense of time and place that ensnare a reader... Lively characters, colorful dialogue... Shange certainly knows how to use words."
—Saturday Review



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Journal of Exploration

Approach to Teaching Writing

By Pete Sinclair
October, 1981

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Journal of Exploration

Pete Sinclair

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Introduction

Mark Twain said that if you had a particularly strong dislike for some young person you should give him a journal. Virginia Woolf begins the entry in her diary for 23 October 1917, "Another lapse in this book, I must confess; but if I do it against my humour I shall begin to loathe it; so the one chance of life it has is to submit to lapses uncomplainingly."[1] My own experience corroborates what is suggested by Mark Twain and Virginia Woolf: only dire necessity should induce a person of sound mind to keep a journal. Nevertheless, for a large number of the people who want, or have to write, the keeping of a journal <u>is</u> a dire necessity.

There is some evidence that the impulse to keep a diary stems from a need less dire. Judging from the number and variety of diaries on display in bookstores--multicolored covers of paper, cloth, vinyl, and leather; bindings more or less fancy; paper of weight, shade, and composition appropriate to the cover and price; some clasped and keyed with yellow metal; some embossed "My Diary" in gold leaf--a person's diary keeping impulses can be marketed to.

I once tried to keep a diary. I purchased an unpretentious black-covered diary with white, lined paper and the dates for a year printed at regular intervals. I began the account that I supposed all diaries kept, shaped by mere chronology, me the subject, me the audience, the theme "who am I and what am I doing?" Whether because the plot, the subject, and the theme were too depressing or too boring, I gave it up. Many years later I was drawn to another section of the bookstore, to the section where there were black, brown, and gray notebooks with titles like "Journal Cash or Day." Next to the journals were accounting sheets, pads, and books. What brought me there is what brought Virginia Woolf to write:

> It is all very well, saying one will write notes, but writing is a very difficult art. That is one has always to select: and I

am too sleepy and hence merely run sand through my fingers. Writing is not in the least an easy art. Thinking what to write, it seems easy; but the thought evaporates, runs hither and thither. Here we are in the noise of Siena - the vast tunnelled arched stone town, swarmed over by chattering shrieking children.[2]

My permanent condition of mind was too sleepy, sand running between my fingers, thoughts evaporating; even thinking what to write was not easy for me. And I was never able to pull myself out of this state by penning an observation like that in her closing sentence. Genius was not going to rescue me. I somehow knew that my proper beginning in bringing order to my thoughts was to rub shoulders with accountants.

What I have to say here is for people who are more like me than they are like Virginia Woolf: students in a composition course, students in creative writing courses, letter-writers, even my physicist friend at JPL writing a report to the Department of Energy about the application of photovoltaics to the nation's energy hopes. I have no new suggestions to make: everything here was discovered and used successfully by other people. All that is new is the way I combine the good suggestions they originated. Part Two provides a form for putting them to use. I will begin by considering the journals of writers of literature.

RECORDS OF IMAGES AND RECORDS OF FACTS, VIRGINIA WOOLF AND JAMES BOSWELL

Writers, all writers, upper and lower case, need to retrieve images and facts from their memories. There are three ways of retrieving past experience from one's memory: free association, sitting and thinking purposefully, and consulting a written record. Many writers who are artists have kept a written record, a diary, a journal, or "Notes." Although there is no generally accepted distinction between these three terms, I will observe the following arbitrary distinction: 1) A diary is personal and private. 2) A journal records personal experiences and observations that the writer, at the time he makes the entry, expects to be of interest to others. 3) The writer's notebook is a step in composition preceding the first draft. Also, it is commonly the case that the subject of the diary is the self, of the journal, the world, of the notebook, one's writing.

Two famous records, which are all three of the above, are the journals of James Boswell and the diaries of Virginia Woolf. James Boswell lived in the Eighteenth Century (b. 1740, d. 1795), and Virginia Woolf was born in 1882 and died in 1941. Boswell began his London Journal when he was 22; Virginia Woolf's published diaries begin when she was 33. As artists, Boswell was a conservative, who emulated the best models of the past and his present; Virginia Woolf was a dedicated and important innovator. Both recorded what they saw and what they imagined. Boswell is thought (by me and others) to be more authoritative in recording facts and Virginia Woolf in recording images.

There are other important similarities between the two. They were both members of the English privileged class, though not of the aristocracy; they had control over their daily schedules and the leisure needed in order to write. They were both intellectuals who believed that self-consciously observing and commenting on their

life and times was part of their work. In these respects then, their lives were like that of a student. Students have time to think and write--and are, temporarily at least, charged with the duties of intellectuals. Finally, since Virginia Woolf and James Boswell regarded the systematic recording of their experience and thoughts a literary rather than a devotional or therapeutic activity, their work can help us to learn to do the same. Our talents are smaller, but our efforts can be as serious even though the world will feel itself less indebted to our effort.

BOSWELL

Frederick A. Pottle, the editor of the LONDON JOURNAL, notes this excerpt from Saturday, 18 December 1762:

> 1 Citizen. Pray, Doctor, what became of that patient of yours? Was not her skull fractured?
>
> Physician. Yes. To pieces. However, I got her cured.
>
> 1 Citizen. Good Lord.

and comments:

> No point in it: Boswell knows neither the speakers nor the patient. But there it is, an authentic bit of the genuine conversation of nearly two hundred years ago, caught in an eternal sunbeam.[3]

Boswell prefaced this bit of conversation with: "This day I was rather too late in going to Child's so that the politics were over. I have therefore little or nothing from thence worth setting down. However, as I am a man who loves forms, I shall always continue to present (such as it is) my Saturday's 'Dialogue at Child's'." The moment caught in an eternal sunbeam was caught because: 1) Boswell had a method. 2) That was what he happened to remember. 3) He wrote it down.

Here is another sketch for which we can thank Boswell's conscience:

> When I went home in the evening, I felt myself quite dissipated by running about so much. I was indolent and careless and

could not fix to anything. Even this my journal was in danger of being neglected. Near a whole week had elapsed without my writing a single page of it. By way therefore of penance for my idleness, and by way of making up for the time lost and bringing up my business, I determined to sit up all this night; which I accordingly did, and wrote a great deal. About two o'clock in the morning I inadvertently snuffed out my candle, and as my fire was long before that black and cold, I was in a great dilemma how to proceed. Downstairs did I softly and silently step to the kitchen. But, alas, there was as little fire there as upon the icy mountains of Greenland. With a tinder-box is a light struck every morning to kindle the fire, which is put out at night. But this tinder-box I could not see, nor knew where to find. I was now filled with gloomy ideas of the terrors of the night. I was also apprehensive that my landlord, who always keeps a pair of loaded pistols by him, might fire at me as a thief. I went up to my room, sat quietly till I heard the watchman calling, "Past three o'clock." I then called to him to knock at the door of the house where I lodged. He did so, and I opened it to him and got my candle relumed without danger. Thus was I relieved and continued busy till eight next day.[4]

That scene has my nomination for the Eternal Moonbeam Award. But is the purpose of a journal to provide the matter of one's life and times for later historians? Providing brief, detailed glimpses of the life and times of the recorder is a minimum requirement of a useful journal. This is part of the method, not the motive.

Boswell had many reasons for maintaining a journal. He says that one is the

improvement of his character, I could postulate others. What is more interesting to me is that he contrived a method and stuck to it. Both what happened and what they imagined, in any interesting sense, are infrequent in the records left by James Boswell and Virginia Woolf. Most of the time, they and not the world is the subject. Given who they were, that's wonderful. Even if deep down we harbor a tiny hope that we will one day be James Boswells and Virginia Woolfs, we can't make that hope the motive for keeping a journal. As dire necessities go, hope for a glorious posterity does not rank high. Boswell, when making the above entry in his journal, could not have known that, two centuries later, we would be fascinated by an account of elegant London life that, to our experience, is comparable to camping out and forgetting our matches. However, once having decided to include these events in his journal, he does not say, "stayed up all night to catch up on my journal, candle went out, got light from the watch." He gives us the tinderbox, the watchman's words, and the watchman's knock. We, his audience two hundred years later, are in that dark becoming grim; we hear the hoped for voice and the comforting knock; we take the light, an imaginary warmth returns, and we get through the night. Boswell, two hundred years ago, would have gotten the same response out of reading his own account. It is just as easy to give the detail as it is to accurately note, abstract, or summarize the experience, and a lot more fun. His motive, I suspect, was simply to answer for himself the question, "How did I get through the night?"

These examples illustrate the kind of experiences that everyone has. Boswell included them because he set out to keep a journal and they were part of what he remembered. Who knows why these particular memories found their way to the pages of his journal. Reasons could be given. But, the fact that Boswell remembered these experiences and wrote them down has turned out to be reason enough.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Virginia Woolf was nearly thirty-three--awaiting the publication of her first novel--before she began, in earnest, the practice of keeping a diary. There are twenty-six of her "books," as she called them. (She did bind them.) Virginia Woolf opened her diaries on 1 January 1915. Early on New Year's morning six hundred men died on the HMS Formidable when it was torpedoed by a German submarine. In the ensuing week, a week of constant rain, Virginia Woolf's major personal concerns have to do with helping a former servant who has been discharged from service because her new employer found her in the kitchen with a soldier, housekeeping, and searching for a new house. The following excerpts reveal some of the other happenstances and thoughts of the week:

Friday 1 January

Half way home we heard "British warship ... British warship" & found that the Formidable has been sunk in the channel. We were kept awake last night by New Year Bells. At first I thought they were ringing for a victory.

Saturday 2 January

This is the kind of day which if it were possible to choose an average sample of our life, I should select. We breakfast; I interview Mrs. LeGrys. She complains of the huge Belgian appetites, & their preference for food fried in butter. "They never give one anything" she remarked. The Count, taking Xmas dinner with them, insisted, after Pork & Turkey, that he wanted a third meat. Therefore Mrs. LeG. hopes that the war will soon be over. If they eat thus in their exile, how must they eat at home, she wonders? After this, L. & I both settle down to our scribbling. He finishes his Folk Story review, & I do about 4 pages of poor Effie's story; we lunch; & read

the papers, agree that there is no news. I read Guy Mannering upstairs for 20 minutes; & then we take Max (a dog) for a walk. Halfway up to the Bridge, we found ourselves cut off by the river, which rose visibly, with a little ebb & flow, like the pulse of a heart. Indeed, the road we had come along was crossed, after 5 minutes, by a stream several inches deep. One of the queer things about the suburbs is that the vilest little red villas are always let, & that not one of them has an open window, or an uncurtained window. I expect that people take a pride in their curtains, & there is great rivalry among neighbours. One house had curtains of yellow silk, striped with lace insertion. The rooms inside must be in semi-darkness; & I suppose rank with the smell of meat & human beings. I believe that being curtained is a mark of respectability--Sophie used to insist upon it. And then I did my marketing. Saturday night is the great buying night; & some counters are besieged by three rows of women. I always choose the empty shops, where I suppose, one pays ½(d) a lb. more. And then we had tea, & honey & cream; & now L. is typewriting his article; & we shall read all the evening & go to bed.

Sunday 3 January

We went to a concert at the Queen's Hall, in the afternoon. Considering that my ears have been pure of music for some weeks, I think patriotism is a base emotion. By this I mean (I am writing in haste, expecting Flora to dinner) that they played a national Anthem & a Hymn, & all I could feel was the entire absence of emotion in myself & everyone else. If the British spoke openly about

W.C's, & copulation, then they might be stirred by universal emotions. As it is, an appeal to feel together is hopelessly muddled by intervening greatcoats & fur coats. I begin to loathe my kind, principally from looking at their faces in the tube. Really, raw red beef & silver herrings give me more pleasure to look upon.

Tuesday 5 January

After lunch we took the air in the Old Deer Park, & marked by a line of straw how high the river had been; & how a great tree had fallen across the towing path, crushing the railing beneath it. Three bodies were seen yesterday swiftly coursing downstream at Teddington. Does the weather prompt suicide? The Times has a queer article upon a railway smash, in which it says that the war has taught us a proper sense of proportion with respect to human life. I have always thought we priced it absurdly high; but I never thought the Times would say so... I bought my fish & meat in the High Street--a degrading but rather amusing business. I dislike the sight of women shopping. They take it so seriously. Then I got a ticket in the Library, & saw all the shabby clerks & dressmakers thumbing illustrated papers, like very battered bees on very battered flowers. At least they are warm & dry; & it rains again today. The Belgians downstairs are playing cards with some friends, & talk--talk--talk--while their country is destroyed. After all, they have nothing else to do--[5]

There are several connecting images: death, flesh, flesh to eat, flesh to touch, clothed bodies, clothed windows, colors, the appearance of respectibility, and water. Then on Saturday 9 January 1915, she makes an entry which stands out from the others:

Saturday 9 January

At two o'clock this morning several barges moored in the river broke loose. One crashed into Richmond Bridge, & knocked off a good deal of stone from one of the arches-- The others went to the bottom, or drifted down stream. All this I mention, not because we saw or heard anything of it, but because we noticed the damaged Bridge as we walked to Kingston this afternoon. The stone is yellower inside than out, which makes it more obvious. We had a very good walk. The purplish fields outside Kingston somehow reminded me of Saragossa. There is a foreign look about a town which stands up against the sunset, & is approached by a much trodden footpath across a field. I wonder why one instinctively feels that one is complimenting Kingston absurdly in saying that it is like a foreign town. On the towpath we met & had to pass a long line of imbeciles. The first was a very tall young man, just queer enough to look twice at, but no more; the second shuffled, & looked aside; & then one realised that every one in that long line was a miserable ineffective shuffling idiotic creature, with no forehead, or no chin, & an imbecile grin, or a wild suspicious stare. It was perfectly horrible. They should certainly be killed. We found a market going on at Kingston, as if it were Marlborough. We bought a pineapple for 9d. The man said they had all ripened on his hands, &, as he expected another boatload on Tuesday, he had to sell at a loss. We had a bad tea in a very pretentious place. We came back by train with a working man & two small boys. The working man began to tell us about the Lyons meat contract scandals, & told us that

> he was attached to the flying department at Hounslow. He was very clever, & should have been an M.P. or a journalist at least. I see Will Vaughan quoted in the Times to the effect that teachers neglect the grammar of modern languages, & talk too much about style & literature; but nothing fortifies the character & mind so much as grammar. How like him![6]

The tone of this piece is disturbing, especially her response to the line of "imbeciles." We, knowing (and she imagining) what lies ahead for the English youth of all classes, can easily see a vision of foreign fields with young soldiers on the footpath. Whether she means by "They should certainly be killed " that they are likely to be killed or that they ought to be killed, she seems to have condemned a whole troop of her fellow beings to death on esthetic grounds. (Once a record has been made, and gotten public, her intentions are irrelevant.) Even if Virginia Woolf were as cold-blooded as this remark makes her seem, and she wasn't, this remark is not something that one would want made public.

One reason Virginia Woolf included remarks like this in her diaries is that the writing in her diaries seems directed to different audiences. Sometimes she records thoughts that were, or ought to have been, locked up. Sometimes her remarks seem addressed to her most intimate friends. Sometimes she seems to have the world at large and posterity in view as she writes. Boswell wrote his journal to be read by

his friend John Johnston. This did not prevent Boswell from including in his record thoughts and experiences that he regarded as evidence of a dissolute character, but Boswell always has control of his tone. His recounting of his meetings with prostitutes in the park is as one would relate such an adventure to a close friend. On the other hand, some entries in Virginia Woolf's diaries generate further thoughts, useful to writers, that Boswell's entries do not.

In the minds of many, my colleague, Andrew Hanfman, for one, World War One is still the most traumatic historic event of this century. War between the industrialized western European nations was, to the intellectuals of these nations, inconceivable. Civilized man had become both too enlightened and too powerfully armed to allow himself to be drawn into all-out war. Virginia Woolf's entry for 9 January 1915 can be read as an interesting response to the war that wasn't supposed to be possible.

The entry is a drama in three parts: going to Kingston, at Kingston, return to Richmond. Vaguely, a sense of time past pervades the first part, time present the second, and the future the third--though there are allusions to each in each. There are three strong visual images in the first part, the yellow stone, the purple fields with footpaths, and the faces of a line of men. The sense of time past is heightened by the fact that the narrative of her progress to Kingston runs ahead of her presentation of these images so that she has to "go back for them," as it were. Thus she begins her account oddly with a report of an unseen catastrophe. Not until the fifth sentence does she record what she has observed. We feel, however, that the barges crashing into the bridge were part of her experience, added to the, as one of the philosophers associated with the Bloomsbury group might have said, "sense-datum--a yellow patch." The result of an unseen catastrophe having disembowled an ancient stone is a patch of yellow to brighten "a very good walk." What was good about it, the yellow patch?

She has to back up again to give us more detail about the walk. The next patch of color, purple, puts her in mind of Sargossa, a town in sunny Spain, the ancient capitol of the kingdom of Arragon. By noting only the fields and footpaths outside Kingston, her description is of the place as it always has been. Then she has an almost patriotic thought, "I wonder why one instinctively feels one is complimenting Kingston absurdly in saying that it is like a foreign town." If she was close to a tender sentiment there about her country and her countrymen, she backs off it with a vengeance: "then one realized that every one in that long line was a miserable ineffective, shuffling, idiotic creature, with no forehead, or no chin, & an imbecile grin, or a wild suspicious stare. It was perfectly horrible."

Her remarks about being at the market in Kingston are brief and gastronomic rather than visual. She buys an about-to-rot pineapple which is from the sunny south and is also, like the bridge stone, yellow inside. Then she has a bad meal. It has been a week of war, rain, and death. Behind the yellow, the purple, the sunset, the fields, footpaths, and memories of sunny Spanish cities are her experiences of rain, raging icy waters, death, and decay giving "one" a feeling of revulsion that sits in her stomach like a bad meal and tempts her to accede to the death of her fellow beings.

In the third part, on the train homeward, she meets a working man who speaks with wit and intelligence. As if to ameliorate her snobbery, she imagines a happy, productive future for this one fellow being. The subject of their conversation is the Lyons meat contract scandal. (Lyons & Co. was tried, and later convicted, of supplying rotten beef to troops in training.) Should they who should certainly be killed be first fed with rotten beef? And the articulate working man she has met could not be an "M.P. or a journalist at least" unless he can write formally as well as he can converse cleverly. The President of the Modern Language Association is reported in

the Times to have said that teachers neglect the grammar of modern languages. The working man hasn't a chance; his mind and character never got fortified by grammar. The soldiers don't have a chance. What chance does the writer have against the war with grammar her only fortress.

In her diary, Virginia Woolf has kept the day esthetically distant. In the surrounding entries of her diary are thoughts and conversations about ethical issues. It is as if the war has reopened questions she thought that she and her friends had settled. Ethical questions were intensely discussed in her circle; the text for these discussions was often Principia Ethica by their friend and mentor, G.E. Moore. In his work, Moore concludes that the highest "goods" for a person are friendship and esthetic pleasures. Prominent in his argument is the argument that good is as irreducible to further definition as the color yellow. I see this day, Sunday 9 January 1915, as a day in which the words conspired to test the foundation of Virginia Woolf's ethical beliefs. She had the material for a wonderful short story using the technique of stream-of-consciousness, in which a woman, as insulated from the war as any Englishwoman could be, goes about her daily tasks and finds the war impinging on her from every direction.

How "true" are my speculations? If I should go out to the pasture this evening to feed the horse and come upon a spiritual guide, say Dante, and he should take me to the place where Virginia Woolf now resides, I can imagine the following conversation:

P.S. Delightful to meet you. Do you know of my account of your diary entry of 9 January 1915?

V.W. Yes.

P.S. What do you think of it?

V.W. Interesting but not true.

P.S. Not true in what way?

V.W. I had no thoughts of the war at all that day. As for your "recruits," I didn't imagine them being blown up by artillery shells in the fields of Flanders, I thought of them all drowning.

P.S. Aha, like the men on the Formidable!

V.W. No, like a litter of unattractive whelps cast into the river from the Richmond Bridge.

Insofar as truth is concerned, that would be that. Still, I want to keep my thoughts because there is something of the truth in them. A woman like Virginia Woolf could respond as I have said to an event like WWI. I can keep my thoughts if I do not think of them as an account of the causes of her journal entry but as a probable story inspired by her written account of her day. Virginia Woolf could, if she had wanted to, speculate about the causes of her entry. Shortly after this date, she suffered a period of extreme depression. If she had wanted to seek help from Dr. Freud, she could have used her journal while they discussed patterns and forces of the mind. If, after these discussions, she began to feel better, then she and Dr. Freud could have counted her subsequent feelings and actions as evidence that their account of the causes of her journal entry was to some degree true--in the context of psychoanalytic theory. She also might have written the story I outlined. It is the journal entry as inspiration for further writing that makes it useful to a writer, not the journal entry as a symptom. Virginia Woolf used her diary both as a source of inspiration for further writing and as a means to speculate about the health of her psyche--and seemed not to get confused about what she was doing. I find this distinction difficult to maintain. And, from what I have observed of the writing of my students, I am not the only one. To get help in remembering this distinction I have turned to other traditions of journal keeping than that of the writers of literature.

Records of Discovery

Everyday, spacecraft send images back to us of the surface of our planet. They are up there now, endlessly circling, clicking away. An astonishing amount of ingenuity and expense has gone into the making of these images. Yet, it has only been two hundred years since a person could look at an accurate image of the planet and not be surprised by the number, position, and proportions of the earth's land masses and waters. Until the end of the 18th century, the most learned geographers who tried to picture the earth as God sees it got it wrong for more than half the earth. One man set it right. The first man who could draw an image of the earth that put every place on the earth in its correct position in relation to every other place on earth was not, like Odysseus, the great navigator of the ancient world, the son of a king, a politician, a warrior: the man who discovered over half the world was the son of a Lowland Scots farm laborer and a Yorkshire village woman. The gods did not concern themselves with him. Luck had a small part in his life and work, but he accomplished what he intended to accomplish by means that are, in retrospect, simple and obvious. Should we model ourselves on his virtues, as the Greeks did on Odysseus's, the fact that he did what he intended to do by means that are simple and obvious may turn out to be his greatest accomplishment. The man's name, of course, was Captain James Cook, and he kept a journal.

I am, as it may be superfluous to remark, an admirer of Captain Cook, both his work and his virtues. I think they are related; I think they can be emulated; and I think his journals help one learn how.

Cook's accomplishments have been recognized since his return from the first of his three voyages to the Pacific, the voyage of the Endeavor 1768-1771. There are five that I will mention:

1. Cook devised a method of surveying that was so much faster and more accurate than previous methods, and his charts were so carefully and elegantly drawn, as to transform the whole enterprise of making charts for navigation.

2. Cook, simply by close observation, and the judicious use of a strict regimen, solved the scurvy problem a century and a half before anyone knew what caused scurvy.

3. These two, knowing where he was, and keeping himself and his crew healthy enough to get there and back, are obviously prerequisite to his three great voyages.

4. Cook set a new standard of leadership for enterprises of this kind. Two great seamen, Vancouver and Bligh, whose charts are even better than Cook's, began their naval careers under Cook. A remarkable thing about Cook's leadership is that at a time when social rank was a condition to promotion in the Royal Navy, Cook rose on the strength of his professional competence alone.

5. His journals set a new standard of accuracy and breadth of observation.

At the time Cook was elected to the Royal Society Club, Boswell, who had fantasies about making voyages of exploration, contrived to meet Cook. Sir John Pringle, president of the Society, was a friend and advisor to Boswell. Boswell reports his impressions of "the celebrated circumnavigator" gained at a dinner party given by Sir John Pringle:

> Cook, as Sir John had told me before, was a plain, sensible man with an uncommon attention to veracity. My metaphor was that he had a ballance in his mind for truth as nice as scales for weighing a guinea. Sir John gave me an instance... It was supposed that Cook had said he had seen a nation of men like monkeys, and Lord Monboddo (a Scottish judge interested in the notion of an unbroken chain between man and the lower animals) had been very happy with this. "No," said he, "I did not say they were like monkeys. I said their faces put me in mind of monkeys." There was a

distinction very fine but sufficiently perceptible.[7]

And of a later conversation with Cook, Boswell reports Cook confessing that because he and his companions could be certain about nothing they found in the South Sea Islands "except as to objects falling under the observation of the senses ... any thing which they learned about religion, government or traditions might be quite erroneous."[8]

We can credit Cook's parents and fellow Yorkshire villagers with planting the seed of his "uncommon attention to veracity." But it was left for Cook to discover exactly how one pays uncommon attention to veracity.

For centuries pilots and navigators were inclined to conceal much of the knowledge they had acquired on their voyages. The great sea powers regarded the information gathered by their navigators state secrets. Individual pilots regarded their knowledge as their stock in trade. All officers of the Royal Navy on voyages of discovery were required to keep personal journals, in addition to the ship's log, that were turned over to the Admiralty immediately upon reaching home port. However, since the days of the Hakluyts, the public was eager for accounts of famous voyages. Ordinary seamen found that they could sell most any account of such a voyage. Officers sometimes kept journals secretly and published them pseudynomously. Naturally, under these conditions, a number of erroneous notions about distant parts were let loose in the world--notions that fired the imaginations of the theoretical geographers. Comfortably seated at their hearthsides, the geographers invented Terra Australia Incognita and the Northwest Passage. Navigators were sent in pursuit of these chimeras. Or, as with Cook, had their otherwise sensibly conceived voyages burdened by these inventions. Partly for these reasons and partly because

the great navigators of the 18th century shared the scientists' view that knowledge superceded nationalistic considerations, the navigators wanted their discoveries published in authorized accounts.

Cook prepared the journal of his second voyage for publication himself. The journal of his first voyage is interesting because he didn't expect it to be printed. His audience, the Admiralty, were people he knew but not intimate friends. His writing to this audience was formal but not as constrained as it might have been had he known he was to become an historic figure. This is exactly the right audience for the kind of journal I think is helpful to a writer.

Cook was fortunate in his companions on the first voyages. First was Sir Joseph Banks, to become the pre-eminent gentleman amateur of Science. What a wonderfully happy circumstance that these two, the archetype of the professional seaman and the archetype of the amateur scientist, should have sailed together to the island paradise. With them was one of the foremost botanists of the age, Dr. Solander. Then there was the astronomer Green who, at the most dangerous moment in the entire voyage, calmly completed an astronomical observation. These men helped transform Cook's view of how he should apply his talents. He was selected as command for the voyage because he was the best seaman available in every respect. The major purpose of the voyage was to observe an astronomical event, the transit of Venus, from the other side of the world. Cook, a lieutenant at this time, was recognised for his chart work, navigational ability, and leadership ability; and it was known that he had astronomical interests and abilities beyond those of the average navigator. At the beginning of the voyage, Cook is amused by the mild form of greed that possesses the collectors of specimens for natural history. Given that the Endeavor was a small ship, and the voyage three years, he displayed remarkable good nature about the cluttering of his decks, holds, and even his own cabin. Before the voyage was over, he, too, is recording with pleasure the arrival of a new specimen aboard.

Captain Cook took command of the Endeavor a man who had dedicated most of his professional efforts toward making images of the world more accurately than anyone ever had. He left his ship at the Downs 13 July 1771, a man whose curiosity and professional habits had engaged questions in plant and animal taxonomy, comparative religion, history and ethics. He was there at the beginning of the modern interest in ethnography. He was still a chart-maker, accuracy remained his goal, but he had a new world to chart where the forces at work could not so easily be measured. By birth and by temperament, Cook was a genuinely humble man. Still, when it came to describing the accuracy of his former work he could say:

> Sir,
>
> I am greatly obliged to you for the Perusal of the North American Pilot, for Newfoundland, Labrador. I am much pleased to see a Work, in which I have had some hand, so likely to prove useful to Navigation. -- From the knowledge I have of these Parts (which is not a little), I shall not hesitate to declare, that as much Faith may be put in the Charts, together with the Sailing Directions, as ought to be put in any Work of the Kind.[9]

Compare that assessment of his work with the following on the subject he and Boswell discussed:

> With respect to Religion I believe these People trouble themselves very little about it. They however believe that their is one Supream God whome they call _____ and likewise a number of other inferior Deities, but whether or no they Worship or Pray to either one or the other we know not with any degree of certainty. It is reasonable to suppose that they do and I beleive it, yet I never saw the least action or thing among them that tended to prove it.[10]

The same temperament is at work here on a matter where the requirements of accuracy are utterly different than in chartmaking. Whereas, in the North American Pilot, the location of a rock in a harbor is ultimately traced by an imaginary but certain line to the North Star, here, his belief about what the Mauori's believe has to be traced to what European's believe. The transit of venus can be timed and measured. Terra Australis Incognita can be found if it is there. But how do you survey and sound the thoughts of a new people?

From 30 July 1768 to 21 April 1769, Cook's journal contains only matters of importance or of particular interest to seamen.

This section is called "Remarkable Occurences on Board His Majesty's Bark Endeavor." Some insight into Cook's nature can be gained from the closing words of this section, where Cook, with characteristic modesty and good nature announces that he has defeated the killer of thousands of seamen, scurvy:

> At this time we had but a very few men upon the Sick list and these had but slite complaints, the Ships compney had in general been very healthy owing in a great measure to the Sour krout, Portable Soup and Malt; the two first were serve'd to the People, the one on Beef Days and the other on Banyan Days, Wort was made of the Malt and at the discrition of the Surgeon given to every man that had the least symptoms of Scurvy upon him, by this Means and the care and Vigilance of Mr Munkhous the Surgeon this disease was prevented from geting a footing in the Ship. The Sour Krout the Men at first would not eate untill I put in pratice a Method I never once knew to fail with seamen, and this was to have some of it dress'd every Day for the Cabbin Table, and permitted all the Officers without exception to make use of it and left it to the option of the Men either to take as much as

they pleased or none atall; but this pratice was not continued above a week before I found it necessary to put every one on board to an Allowance, for such are the Tempers and disposissions of Seamen in general that whatever you give them out of the Common way, altho it be ever so much for their good yet it will not go down with them and you will hear nothing but murmurings gainest the man that first invented it; but the Moment they see their Superiors set a Value upon it, it becomes the finest stuff in the World and the inventer an honest fellow.[11]

(Cook nearly got carried away in making this announcement; his original version of the final phase was "a damn'd honest fellow.")

The next section, the account of their stay in Tahiti, begins on 14 April 1769 and is titled "Remarkable Occurrences at Georges Island." On the 15th, while Cook was walking in the island's groves, an incident on the beach ended in one of the crew killing a native. Cook had wanted to prevent any incident of this kind. In his crew were seamen who had been on the Dolphin, the first European ship to reach Tahiti, and what he had learned from them about Tahitians gave him reason to believe that such incidents could and ought to be avoided. He had to count this incident as a failure in his leadership. He also learned, I think, that only by assiduous study of the behavior and beliefs of these people, could he find out what he needed to know to forestall future occurrences of this kind. His entry for the 21st begins:

Friday 21st. Got the Copper Oven aShore and fix'd it in the Bank of the breast works.

Yesterday as Mr Green and Dr Munkhouse were taking a Walk they happen'd to meet with the Body of the Man we had Shot, as the Natives by signs made them fully understand, the manner in which the body was enterr'd being a little extraordinary I went to day with some others to see it.[12]

Then he gives an exact description of the burial site with, naturally, measurements and concludes:

> It was at this time thought that this manner enterring their Dead was not common to all ranks of people as this was the first we had seen except the Skeleton just mentioned, but various were the opinions concerning the Provisions &c laid about the dead; upon the whole it should seem that these people not only beleive in a Supream being but on a futerue state also, and that this must be meant either as an offering to some Deitie, or for the use of the dead in the other world, but this last is not very probable as there appear'd to be no Priest craft in the thing, for what ever provisions were put there, it appear'd very plain to us that there it remaind untill it consum'd away of it self. It is most likely that we shall see more of this before we leave the Island, but if it is a Religious ceremoney we may not be able to understand it, for the Misteries of most Religions are very dark and not easily understud even by those who profess them.[13]

From this point on, the objects of Cook's observations become more and more complex. A part of his long entry, "Description of King Georges Island," entered into his journal upon their departure from the island three months later, will illustrate the point.

> Musick is little known to them and yet they are very fond of it, they have only two Instruments the flute and the drum, the former is made of hollow bamboo about 15 Inches long in which are 3 holes, in to one of them they blow with one nostril stoping the other with the

thum of the left hand, the other two holes they stop and unstop with their fingers and by this means produce four notes of which they have made one tune which serves them upon all occasions, to which they sing a number of songs generaly consisting of two lines and generaly in rhime. At any time of the day when they are lazy they amuse themselves by singing these couplets but especialy after dark when their candles are lighted which are made of the kernels of a nut abounding much in oyle, these are stuck upon a skewer of wood one upon a nother and give a very tolerable light which they often keep burning an hour after dark and if they have strangers in the house much longer. Their drumms are made of a hollow black wood coverd with Sharks skin and instead of drum sticks they use their hands, of these they make out 5 or 6 tunes and accompany the fluits. The drums are chiefly used at their *Heivas* which are a set of musicians 2 or 3 drums for instance as many fluits and singers, which go about from house to house and play and are always received and rewarded by the Master of the family who gives them a peice of Cloth or what ever he can spare, for which they will stay three or four hours during which time his house will be crowded full for the people are extravagently fond of this diversion.

The young girls when ever they can collect 8 or 10 together dance a very indecent dance which they call *Timorodee* singing most indecent songs and useing most indecent actions in the pratice of which they are brought up from their earlyest Childhood, in doing this they keep time to a great nicety; this exercise is however generaly left of as soon as they arrive at years of maturity for as soon as they have form'd a connection with man they are expected to leave of dancing *Timorodee*. One amusement or Custom more I must mention tho I must

confess I do not expect to be believed as it is founded upon a Custom so inhuman and contrary to the first principals of human nature; it is this, that more than one half of the better sort of the inhabitants have enter'd into a resolution of injoying free liberty in love without being troubled or disturbed by its concequences; these mix and cohabit together with the utmost freedom and the Children who are so unfortunate as to be thus begot are smother'd at the moment of their birth; many of these people contract intimacies and live together as Man and wife for years in the Course of which the Children that are born are destroy'd. They are so far from concealing it that they rather look upon it as a branch of freedom upon which they value themselves. They are call'd *Arreoy's* and have meetings among themselves where the men amuse themselves with wristling &c and the women in dancing the indecent dance before mentioned, in the Course of which they give full liberty to their desires but I believe keep up to the appearence of decency. I never saw one of these meetings. Dr Munkhouse saw part of one enough to make him give credit to what we had been told.

Both sexes express the most indecent ideas in conversation without the least emotion and they delight in such conversation behond any other. Chastity indeed is but little Valued especialy among the middle people, if a wife is found guilty of a breach of it her only punishment is a beating from her husband; the men will very readily offer the young women to strangers even their own daughters and think it very strange if you refuse them but this is done meerly for the lucre of gain.

The Houses or dwellings of these people are admirably calculated for the continual warmth of the climate, they do not build them in

Towns or Villiges but seperate each from the other and always in the woods and are without walls so that the air coold by the shade of the trees has free access in whatever direction it happens to blow, no country can bost of more delightfull walks than this; the whole plains where the natives reside are cover'd with groves of Bread fruit and Cocoa nut trees without under wood and intersected in all directions by the paths which go from house to house, so that nothing can be more gratefull in a Climate where the sun hath so powerful an influance.[14]

He has come to a strange but beautiful place. His description is in his words. His language reveals the values he has. But the order of the presentation, from music, to dancing, to sex, to the consequences, to a hint of what it might have been like to stroll in the Garden of Eden, ultimately reveals that Cook is more interested in describing what is in the world than what ought to be. That's an excellent view for a writer to have.

Cook had no illusions about his skills as a writer. The Admiralty required only the equivalent of what I have defined as notes. They got more than that from Cook but didn't use the best of Cook's genius. The Admiralty turned Cook's journals over to professional writer, John Hawksworth, who, as requested, produced Voyages, an adaptation of the journals of Byron, Wallis, Carteret, and Cook. Hawkesworth wrote each account in the first person. His commission for this project was greater than the combined salaries of the four captains who made the voyages. Cook was at the Cape of Good Hope, nearing the end of his second voyage, when he first received a copy of Voyages. Beaglehole describes Cook's response:

> Cook read them, and was surprised beyond measure; worse, he was 'mortified'. He was mortified because he did not recognise himself--

and could hardly do so when so much of Banks appeared as Cook, with original nautical blunders by Hawkesworth himself; he was surprised to learn from the introduction that the manuscript had been read to him at the Admiralty for his approval, after which it had been given to him to peruse, and such emendations as he had suggested had been made. Hawkesworth, no liar, seems to have been the victim of a vast misconception, but that did not make matters better for Cook.[15]

I think the whole of Cook's life and work indicates that Cook wouldn't have been upset because others profited from his work. Voyages secured him fame. Nor would he have been offended because he was portrayed on Banks' model. Cook had unashamedly learned all he could from Banks, especially in the complexities of dealing with native aristocracy. I think that Cook was disturbed at not seeing himself in what purported to be a report of his experiences because the reader is thereby robbed of his means to judge the accuracy of Cook's observations. In the matters Cook had been observing, the observer's voice is part of the data. Cook being Cook, there was but one thing he could do. Hawkesworth had gained Cook an audience; now Cook had to learn to write as best as a person with his background could. Cook made his own account of the second voyage. He worked very hard at it. It was probably easier for him to produce the most accurate and elegant charts ever made. We have an account of what he thought of the results of his labor in the manuscript of his Introduction--before the editors polished it:

> I shall conclude this preliminary discourse by publickly acknowlidging the Kind Assistance of some worthy friends, in whose hands I left the Manuscript, when I embarked on a third expedition, who were so obliging as to superintend the printing and make such corrections as they found necessary, without altering the stile. For it was judged that it would be more exceptable to the Public, in the Authors words,

than in any other persons, and that the Candid and faithfull manner in which it is written would counterbalance the want of stile and dullness of the subject. It is a work for information and not for amusement, written by a man, who has not the advantage of Education, acquired, nor Natural abilities for writing; but by one who has been constantly at sea from his youth, and who, with the Assistance of a few good friends gone through all the Stations belonging to a Seaman, from a prentice boy in the Coal Trade to a Commander in the Navy. After such a Candid confession he hopes the Public will not consider him as an author, but a man Zealously employed in the Service of his Country and obliged to give the best account he is able of his proceedings.[16]

Beaglehole gives us the world's assessment of Cook's work: "The publication of this book was, itself, one of the great events in the history of Pacific exploration." Moral: If the observations are the ones we made, if we pay uncommon attention to veracity, if the style is ours, and if the writing is literate, we may not produce a major event in the history of Pacific exploration, but we can have our say. The observations we made, however, does not mean standing on the corner soaking in the pageant of life. "Made" means systematically recording our observations.

There is a lineage that comes down from Cook's voyages. The conjunction of the journals of the natural historians and those of the navigators, made on Cook's voyages, continued on the voyage of the Beagle in the relationship between Fitzroy and Darwin. The consequences to our image of the biological world have been as dramatic as were the results of Cook's voyages to our image of geography. The age of sail ended in the third quarter of the 19th century. Captain Joshua Slocum, a man who like Cook had risen to the top of his profession from humble origins, found himself on the

beach. He rebuilt an abandoned oyster fishing boat and became the first man to sail alone around the world. His account of that voyage, in which he acknowledges Cook and Darwin as predecessors, has sent so many people to sea in small sailing vessels that making a sea voyage and publishing an account of the voyage has become a minor social movement in the industrialized nations from Japan to Switzerland. Two prominent elements in this genre are reports of observations of nature and reports on the state of one's soul during the voyage. I have never seen a log from one of these voyages, but the excerpts included in the published narratives indicate that the log serves as ship's log, journal, diary, and notes. It is a system that could confuse the writer as to the purpose of the entry and who the audience is.

Two Current Journal Types

At The Evergreen State College, Steve Herman and his colleague, Al Wiedemann, have refined the naturalist's field journal to a point where it is nearly a precision scientific instrument. A detailed account of the system and its uses is contained in The Naturalist's Field Journal: A Manual of Instruction Based on a System Established by Joseph Grinnell, by Steven G. Herman (available from The Evergreen State College Bookstore, TESC, Olympia, Wash. 98505). The naturalist's field journal is to natural history what the telescope was to astronomy. The field journal magnifies the memory--as the telescope magnifies the heavens. The analogy would be more exact if telescope lenses were polished by looking through them: the more you use the naturalist's field journal, the sharper the focus, the wider the field of vision. In developing the journal system described below, I have stolen everything I could get my hands on from the work of Herman and Wiedemann.

But the system of the naturalist's field journal does not provide all that a writer needs because the memory, to a writer, is not only the means, it is also much of the content. So, what I wasn't able to steal from Herman, I stole from Marilyn Frasca. Marilyn Frasca conducts Intensive Journal Workshops according to a form developed in association with Ira Progoff. One interesting feature of this journal-keeping method is that it can be learned only by attending a workshop. It remains, in other words, in the oral tradition--though the main activity is writing. In the workshop, Marilyn gives the participants a form that the participant applies to the content he wants for the purposes he wants. The general purpose of the workshop is to help people sort out their thinking about their own lives. One tradition the workshop comes from is the "human potential movement" of recent decades. It differs from most of the manifestations of that movement in that there are no public confessions and there is no coercion. The product of the workshop is, by my definition,

a diary. It differs from real (as opposed to defined) diaries in that the participant is instructed to keep his writing personal and private and mean it. I have a friend whose wife kept a diary that he was instructed not to read. At night when they were in bed, she kept the diary locked up. The usual daytime position of the diary was on the bed, on her husband's side, open.

The particular content of the journal kept according to the form of the Intensive Journal Workshop is individual but, in general, it will be a journal of the soul's progress. For this, there is a long and venerable tradition in American letters:

> It is probable that almost every literate Puritan kept some sort of journal; the number of diaries that remain from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is legion, and the habit became so thoroughly ingrained in the New England character that it remained a practice with various Yankees long after they had ceased to be Puritans, to the great enrichment of our political and literary history, as witness the diaries of John Quincy Adams and Gideon Welles, or the journals of Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne. Henry Adams, dissecting his career in the search for "education," is writing in the true New England Tradition, and undertakes no more than countless Puritans had done when they submitted their lives to microscopic examination to discover if they had at any time found that vision of the unity and meaning of the universe which they called regeneration and for which he endeavored to substitute a dynamic theory of history.[17]

It might be interesting to see what a scholar of American letters with experience in using the form of the Intensive Journal Workshop could make of the records left by the Puritans. The record made by the participants in an Intensive Journal Workshop

is, like the journals of the Puritans and the literary progeny thereof, a record of as well as from memory. A record of his memory, made with uncommon attention to veracity, to discover what is in the world as opposed to what one imagines ought to be in the world, is a valuable record for a writer to keep. In Part II, I will describe one way of making a journal that accurately records what one finds in the world and in memory.

PART II

The purpose of this part is to describe a journal that is systematic in form, that helps the writer use his memory, and that a person can keep regularly without the compulsion of genius. The purpose of the journal is to make images and facts available for later writing of other kinds. I think of the process of composition as having three steps: (1) notes, (2) outlines and preliminary drafts and (3) the finished composition. My journal is not a direct step in composition, but a way of remembering and thinking in writing. This distinction would be hard to remember, because I both compose and keep my journal at my desk, with pen and paper, if I didn't remind myself that I am making a record and make that record according to a particular form. What follows is a description of what I record and the form of that record.

Equipment

The Field Notebook

Natural Historians and field scientists use a field notebook to keep notes while they are in the field. A writer can make a field trip out of his or her life, any line of inquiry the subject. If I am waiting in the check-out line at the supermarket and I wonder how Lewis and Clark would manage trading there, I have a subject. The field notebook is especially useful in keeping track of quantities: days, dates, times, distances, number, dimensions, weights and so forth. I find numbers hard to remember. I suspect this is true of everyone except numerologists, whose minds are organized to give significance to numbers.

Brevity is the virtue in keeping a field notebook; otherwise, I would find myself becoming reluctant to reach for notebook and pencil. I use a 6 1/8" x 3 3/4" end-opening notebook. I keep notes on one side of the sheet only and use the flip

side for sketches, lists, addresses, names, bolt sizes, tail light bulb numbers, and other things I need to remember for more than 40 seconds but less than a day or two. One notebook lasts about three months. It doesn't take long to learn how much notation one has to make: the nightly session at the journal quickly tells you if your notes were inadequate.

These uses of the field notebook the writer and the student of the field sciences have in common. But for me, the field notebook has a much more important function to perform. I was born and raised in New England. My ancestors were New Englanders preceded by Scots and Irish. I belong to the Congregational Church. I received an Honorable Discharge from the army. I got a Ph.D. in Medieval English literature. My weight at age 46 is what it was at age 18. I am married to the mother of my children. But I simply cannot keep a promise to myself to keep a daily journal. Now when a man of my character can't keep a promise made to a man of my character, there is something wrong with the promise and not the character of the promiser or promisee. What is wrong is that I am not a professional writer. I write a lot, normally six days a week, but writing is a part of my profession, not it. There are many people like me, people who write as a way to think. The field notebook can be a great help to our consciences as well as our memories. If I make even one entry in a journal, I take on the whole tradition of journal keeping, which is daily. My field notebook is daily, my journal is not. My conscience is clear.

And it works. Sometimes I realize after the fact that I should have used my journal to record the events of a particular day. In my field notebook I have at least the day, what I thought was noteworthy at the time, and, very helpful to the memory, something like an outline of what was going on before and after that day. If I were one of those people who always made a daily schedule and lists, and stuck to the schedule, I might not have to keep a field notebook. If I kept my lists and schedules, I would have a very useful memory aid. The price would be high though;

most of the fun of keeping lists and schedules consists in obliterating the items on them. I wouldn't want to give that up. I have also found that the field notebook tells me if I need to make a journal entry that evening. When I find my notes getting more extensive than usual, I ask myself if what I'm doing isn't more appropriate to the journal. If it is, I make notes to that effect and begin paying closer attention to what's going on. The difference is the difference between items on an outline and notes.

For the journal itself, I use the equipment prescribed by Steve Herman. Since I cannot improve on his excellent description of the equipment and its uses, I include the following in case his manual should be unobtainable. Some of his discussion applies only to the Naturalist's Field Journal; the spirit of those matters is worth ingesting with the prescriptions that do apply to this journal.

Pen

I take notes in my field notebook in pencil but my journal record is in pen and ink. The pen to use is the technical pen used by engineers, draftsmen, and designers. I am now using a Staedtler "Marsmatic 700" technical pen with a .35 mm point. When this pen wears out, I will switch to a smaller point, .30 mm.

The first time I used a technical pen, the experience reminded me of the first time I used a properly sharpened chisel. "So," I said to myself, "that's what it feels like to be a woodworker." It was a surprise to me to discover that I didn't have to be an arm wrestler to carve wood. I spent so many years embedding words in paper with a ball point pen that, though it has been two years since my conversion experience, I still pick up my technical pen anticipating the pleasure of brushing a sentence lightly and neatly across the page.

Ink

The ink I use is the black, waterproof, "permanent" ink made to be used in technical pens.

Paper

The paper is the best paper I can get that is regularly available. It is 8½" by 5½" bond paper, narrow-lined in blue ink, with three holes on the left.

Binder

The binder I use is covered in vinyl. A cloth-bound binder would be esthetically more pleasing but I haven't found one with pockets inside the covers.

Straightedge

In one of the pockets I keep an 8" x 60° triangle with beveled edges. The hypotenus of the triangle is long enough to make a vertical margin; the beveled edge allows me to draw lines without smearing the ink.

Preparing the paper

Every page in my journal is prepared in the following way:

1. I draw a horizontal black line with pen and straight edge over the top blue line on the page, completely across the paper.
2. I draw a vertical black line 1 3/16" from the left edge of the page, completely down the paper.
3. In the box formed by the two margins in the upper left corner of the page, I write my name and the year.

Titling

My paper comes in packets of 100 sheets. I prepare all the sheets as above. The journal has three sections. The first section is titled "Journal" so I center

that word in the middle of the blank section at the top of the page on fifty or more of the sheets. The remaining pages are for use in the other two parts of the journal and are titled at the time of use.

Preparing the pages for my journal is an activity I enjoy. It is the easiest thing I do that gives me a sense of craftsmanship. And, though easily acquired, that sense of craftsmanship is still there when I remove the page from its storage place in the back of the binder to use in making an entry. Why not prepare the page, then, at the time of use? Wouldn't the sense of craftsmanship be that much stronger? Perhaps. But I usually write in my journal in the evening, when I am tired. I need the little head start that the prepared page gives me.

Procedure

I keep my journal in three sections. There could be a theory about these parts, a story about how the memory works, but I don't have one. As the Wife of Bath says, experience is authority enough for me. Part of that experience comes from reading the journals of writers, part from the journals of explorers, and part from the practice of natural historians. I have mentioned two colleagues whose work has been important to me, Steve Herman and Marilyn Frasca. Most of the form of my journal comes directly from them. Less direct, but just as important have been my opportunities to work with: Robert Sluss, entomologist and interpreter of Darwin's story, Mark Levensky, philosopher and writing teacher, and Richard Jones, dream psychologist, interpreter of Freud, and writing teacher. Finally, it has been seventeen years since Robert O. Payne called to my attention Chaucer's couplet, "And yf that olde bokes were awey,/ Y loren (lost) were of remembraunce the key." I've been looking for keys to memory ever since. The journal is one that helps me and may help others .

First Section : Journal

The first and most important section of the journal is the "Journal." I try to make the record in this section true, detailed, fair, and literate. My model for the content of this section is the Remarkable Occurences entries in Cook's journals. The difference is that my experience is not of the newly discovered Tahitian Paradise but like the experiences recorded by James Boswell and Virginia Woolf.

I also have a composite model for my audience. I imagine that I am keeping a journal that will be read by some equivalent of the Admiralty or similar disinterested authority: the Senate committees that received the journals of the Lewis and Clark, Wilkes, and Stevens expeditions to the Northwest, for example. But, since this audience is a little too disinterested, I also imagine that my great-grandchildren will read my journal. This is the right audience for me. Someone else keeping a journal of this kind might find for an imagined audience a different mean between writing an account of their life and times for their twin sister and, the other extreme, writing an account as if it were to be placed in a space capsule and fired at the Andromeda Nebula. The following entries from my journal illustrate form and content:

Pete Sinclair 1981

Journal

14 June continued:

horses that seemed not true or not applicable to the present case. I had an urge to tell him what I experience I did have with horses, but didn't, thinking I would embarass myself.

15 June Sailing in S Puget Sound aboard Fregata

Monday Bob and I left West Bay Marina shortly after 0900. The winds were light airs from W to NW. Scattered clouds. The birds were mainly P. Guillemot, Common Murre and R. Auklet; we saw a seal off Dofflemeyer Point. Took on stores at Johson Point Marina: salmon flasher, chips, chip-dip, and accompanying requirement for use of same - left at 1330. We watched a Bald Eagle at Devil's Head for ten minutes. He was perched in a snag on the S side of the point, watching us and the rest of the boat traffic. "For any eye is an evil eye / That looks in onto a mood apart." We sailed S around Anderson Island to moor at Eagle Island at 1720. It took most of the day for me to forget about the college. During the cocktail hour, Bob and I

Pete Sinclair 1981

Journal

15 June — continued:

planned the spring portion of Vancouver and Puget. I told Bob about the life of H.W. Tilman and how pleased I was, and why, that they had given the book (H.W.T's biography by T.R.L. Anderson) to ~~him~~ Kirk for his graduation. It is a perfect book for him now when he has to think about finding his work. Tilman did not marry, was not homosexual or a misogonist, died at sea in an attempt to celebrate his 80th birthday in the Antarctic. ~~Thus~~ Thus came the premature end of his fourth career. At Kirk's age, it is useful to know the range of options open to him. Nina del Mar, C. McCann + B. Crowe, alongside at 2300; we had been reading T. Capote.

16 June — Eagle I sland to Olympia

Tuesday — Awakened at 0710 by Robert who had "a dazzling bit of behavior" to describe: 4 P. Guillemot on the beach, one adult instigated mocking by first "biting the other on the ass." One youngster missed the nesting cave, crashed into the bank. Robert said he slept exceptionally well. I said my dreams woke me and I was glad that I could remember none of them because they required so much

Pete Sinclair 1981	Journal
16 June	continued:

work to understand. Bob said that while he could work up interest in other people's dreams, he found his own boring. We were underway at 0905, Nina del Mar for Berkeley Sound, Fregata for home. As we rounded the island, I looked back to see the Nina diminishing in the distance. As time goes on, she looks more beautiful. I remarked that I would even be sorry to see her lose salmon-colored deck and cabin; Bob agreed. It turned out to be an exciting day for weather. First some spectacular towering Q's building at maybe a thousand feet per minute, then a squall line, then continuous gusty, strong breezes. We were overpowered on the pulsating, frequent, gusts with reefed main and lapper up. Docked around 1400. To at Sluss's for dinner that evening with Jan Shaw, Dana and Andrew, Jean and Jerry, Al and Flora, and a friend of Jean's, Kirsten(?)- remarked about contrast between Bob's interest in "a dazzling bit of behavior" and boredom with dreams. Also, had an interesting exchange with Al about the non-fiction novel stuff.

If I think the hour and minute are important, I use the 2400 hour method of noting the time. But, because I regard place, time, and weather as part of the setting, I also note time by "dawn," "morning," "forenoon," etc. I want every journal entry to have the following:

Date

Place

Day

Setting

Description of place

Time

Weather

Purpose or Occasion

Image

Other Activities

When I sit down to write in my journal, "full of thoughts," it is hard to remember this resolution. So I have the above list affixed on the inside front cover of my journal. Getting the right balance between "too wordy" and "too sketchy" is a matter of practice that is not so easily learned as notation in the field notebook. Following the form and using the checklist helps. Before I begin the account of the day I have done the following, before or at the time:

1. Drawn a line across the top of the page.
2. Drawn a line down the left edge of the page.
3. Written "Journal" at the top of the page.
4. Written my name.
5. Written the year.
6. Written the date.

7. Written the place.

8. Written the day.

9. Given the setting.

10. Given the occasion or purpose.

Doing this has the salutory effect of putting my account in a wide context and curbing my fulsome thoughts. All this is by way of making my journal useful to a future reader when, as Herman says, "I've become an angel." I find the form and checklist indispensible to maintaining this perspective. For example, in the entry for 15 June 1981, I realized that "Sailing in S Puget Sound aboard Fregata" covered the place but could be misleading as to the purpose. So I added, "It took most of the day for me to forget about the college." There's a difference between sailing as a form of skylarking and sailing as a form of therapy that could effect the accuracy of the day's account.

I rely on the form of the journal page and the checklist to satisfy the requirements of the disinterested audience, the Admiralty and my grandchildren. For the rest of the content, I am the audience. If I asked myself, "Could anybody but me be interested in what I did today?" I wouldn't be able to write much. I am the authority on what is interesting about my life and times while I am writing in my journal. But that authority is based on giving a good account of my life and times. Boswell, beginning his journal at age 22, was nobody in particular. Virginia Woolf beginning her diary at age 33, knew that the world was about to discover that she was an important writer. Boswell had no case to make, didn't know what his opinions were, didn't know what his career was to be, didn't even know what his religion ought to be. The thesis for his entries in the London Journal is simply what did I do, see, and think today. He had, as a matter of fact, published more at age 22 than had Virginia Woolf at age 33. But he didn't keep his journal as a writer, he kept it as an observer of his life and times.

Virginia Woolf sometimes stepped beyond the limits that I think are appropriate to a journal account. She too made many valuable, objective observations about her life and times. She also made many fictional ones. Fiction is as useful a contributer to the world's store of truths as are records of facts. But it undermines the authority of a journal, as Quentin Bell reveals in his Introduction to Vol. I:

> Considering the diary not as art but as history, we should perhaps try to answer the question: Is it true?
>
> To this no completely unequivocal answer can be given. Virginia Woolf's reputation for truthfulness was not good. She was supposed to be malicious, a gossip, and one who allowed her imagination to run away with her. At least one of her friends, foreseeing the publication of her letters and of this diary, tried to warn posterity that it must not believe everything that she might tell it.
>
> Sooner or later Virginia's diaries and letters will be printed. They will make a number of fascinating volumes: books, like Byron's letters, to be read and re-read for sheer delight. In the midst of his delight let the reader remember, especially the reader who itches to compose histories and biographies, that the author's accounts of people and of their sayings and doings may be flights of her airy imagination. Well do I remember an evening when Leonard Woolf, reading aloud to a few old friends extracts from these diaries, stopped suddenly. 'I suspect', said I, 'you've come on a passage where she makes a bit too free with the frailties and absurdities of someone here present.' 'Yes', said he, 'but that's not why I broke off. I shall skip the next few pages because there's not a word of truth in them.'*

*Clive Bell, Old Friends: Personal Recollections, 1956, p. 97.[18]

Quentin Bell goes on to argue that truth results from the whole of her diaries and letters, but again it is Virginia Woolf we are talking about. I keep a journal because I need help in my writing now. It takes all the talent I have to make sense out of my remembered experiences without also having to make sense out of my fantasies. That does not mean that I can't use my imagination. My hope in keeping a journal is to combine the passionate interest of the divine's in their subject with the rigor of the discoverers and natural historians, both applied to one's everyday experiences. It helps me to make a formal distinction between being objective and being subjective. That's why there are two more sections to my journal.

Second Section: Subjects

Almost every Journal entry records an event or image that I want to write something more about because the event or image is connected to a view I have, a current topic, or a concern. These thoughts do not belong in the Journal section because they are not part of the experience of the day but reflections in the evening about the day. By maintaining this distinction formally in my journal, I get by with only a common attention to veracity. Of course, if these perceived connections are part of the experience of the day--a conversation with a friend about something we both witness for example--then they do belong in the Journal section. I have thought of different names for this section: Matters, Matter, Views, Comments, Reflections, Responses, Sentiments, and have ended by calling the second section of my journal, "Subjects." This section is the record of my first considered responses to the experiences recorded in the Journal section. In the Subjects section I try out opinions and change them. I am willing to risk being wrong but not silly or unfair. I remember that I am keeping a journal and not a diary. The audience is still the Admiralty, with at least one member who does, or could, or ought to have, my view.

I prepare the page as I do the pages for the Journal except that the title of the subject replaces the word "Journal" at the top center of the page. Some titles are like the titles of sections of news magazines: The Economy, The Election, Football, Law and Order. Some titles name categories of my life: Work, Marriage, Home Repair. Some titles are like department store departments: Tools, Ladies' Wear, Furniture, Bargains. Some titles are like titles for movies: Going Home, Freeway, Airport. It has turned out that the eternal verities, Love, Faith, Hope, Charity, Truth, have not found their way into my journal. I can't think of any reason why they couldn't be there but they're not. Many of my titles are the names of friends.

The length of my entries varies from a sentence to mini-essays. When I first started keeping this section, I thought I was going to be overwhelmed with things about which I wanted to write commentaries. I soon discovered that my opinions are neither as numerous nor as well-formed as I imagined.

The following are typical entries:

Pete Sinclair 1981 16 June Tuesday	Work The natural scientist will spend any amount of time watching birds on a beach, some time thinking about a person's dream, little time thinking about his own dreams.

Pete Sinclair 1981 16 June	Robert Sluss I was surprised to find that Bob, who has also worked with Richard Jones, reflects on his own dreams out of duty if at all. I shouldn't have been. It follows logically from what I admire about him: his delightful curiosity about the natural world.

The entries about friends are the ones where I try hardest not to be unfair. My model for the tone of these character sketches is Chaucer's Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. The Narrator does not shrink from mentioning uncomplimentary details, but his attitude is that of a natural historian observing the behavior of birds.

Third Section: Memories, Dialogues, and Letters

The third section of the Journal of Exploration has been shaped by my having attended Marilyn Frasca's Intensive Journal Workshop. I have for several years recorded my early memories in my journal. I thought of this writing as an excursion into deep memory. During the course of the Intensive Journal Workshop, I realized that my deep memory is not merely stories of the past; it is also an accumulation of patterns of thought and models of action. I now keep a third section in my journal in which I do one of three things:

1. I record a deep memory.
2. I have a dialogue with someone not here either because the person is dead or because the person is distant.
3. I write a letter to someone I would not normally write a letter to, in the manner of Herzog in Saul Bellow's Herzog.

I find, in making entries in this section, that what I am doing feels very personal and is often accompanied by strong emotion, like Wordsworth's definition of poetic writing, "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility." These entries have the feel of direct communications with an intimate audience. I have promoted Conrad's Secret Sharer to the Admiralty.

In a way, every writer has but one audience, the populace of his or her memory. This populace includes people the writer has not met. Because I am a teacher, I sometimes write as if Socrates were looking over my shoulder. Novelists sometimes find that literary critics and letter-writing readers have intruded themselves into their imagined audience. Suppose that a writer decided that he has to compromise his integrity and write for crass commercial purposes. How does he know what the people are like who would read his writing? He has met them, or met parts of them in other people and in himself, or read stories about them in which he has found part of himself.

So, my entries in the Memories, Dialogues, and Letters Section are direct communications with distant important people including, in the case of deep memory, myself. All of these are part of my present self. And, although the impulse to make these contacts is personal and frequently accompanied by strong feelings, the form keeps the record from becoming merely personal or inappropriately emotional.

The dialogue with Virginia Woolf is an example of that form from my journal. Here is an example of a letter:

Pete Sinclair
1981

29 July
Wednesday

Letter to Irwin "Bunny" Yerkes

The last time we talked was while having dinner together in that restaurant near Fort Dix. You were still dating showgirls then. Did you marry one? What has made me remember you is ~~that I~~ a piece I've been writing about a mountain-climbing incident. When I finished, I wondered if ~~it was true~~ I'd ever been scareder. That's when I thought of you. Do you remember, when you were a senior and Roger Greene and I were freshman, that we visited you in your room to hear about the difficulties you had in keeping your showgirl faithful to you while you were away at school in the North Woods? We all were having the same difficulty, but you did what we only wished to do - you hired a private detective. You lived a high-risk life in those days. You fell in love with a showgirl and wanted her to be as faithful as the girl next door. ~~But~~ What I remember particularly is a time you scared the wits out of me, an incident you have probably forgotten. It was three o'clock in the morning. We'd been studying all night. You invited me to join you for breakfast at that diner in White River Junction. There

Pete Sinclair 1981

Letter to Bunny Yerkes

29 July

continued:

was a cold wind coming off the river, the rain was turning to snow. I ~~was wishing~~ wished that I dared defy convention enough to wear long-johns. I in the warm diner over the wonderful aroma of pepper on scrambled eggs and homefries, buttered toast, and coffee, you talked about your girl. You were sort of talking to yourself. I was sleepy, my attention wandered a bit. Then you ~~stopped~~ looked at me, not talking, for a moment and said, "Mm-yes, I think you could handle it, I'm going to do it." "What?" "I'm going to take you to New York with me and have my girl fix you up with a showgirl. It'll be good for you. Most of these kids around here would make asses of themselves but you're pretty cool. Just watch, keep the conversation going but don't say anything more than you have to. When we get back to the apartment, she'll help you out." There went my sleep for the rest of the night. I have a confession to make to you. All the nights after that, when I was sympathizing with you about your broken heart, I was secretly glad that the detective found out what he did. If we had gone to New York, and if I had ever gotten back to that apart-

Pete Sinclair 1981	Letter to Bunny Yerkes
29 July	continued:
	ment, the first task that poor show-girl would have had would have been to change my diapers.

Wednesday 29 July 1981 was the day of the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana. My Journal entry for the day describes a bit from the television coverage of that event about the training of London taxi drivers. That led me to recall my involvement in an effort to set up a certification system for mountain guides--to a recollection of a particular climb I'd been writing about--to Bunny Yeckes. I could have opened a page in the Subjects section titled "Rites of Passage," or a page titled "Aristocracy in America," but I wasn't in that kind of a mood.

The memory below is a response to the Journal entries of 15 and 16 June 1981. There are obvious connections to thoughts about my son having to find his work, to Truman Capote's invention of the phrase "non-fiction novel," and to thinking about writing this account of the Journal of Explorations but the connections were not obvious when I was making my journal. I did not think of the connections or remember the chain of reflections before, or during, or soon after I wrote the entries in the Journal section, the letter, or the memory. Again, a method, what I remembered, and writing it down is all there is to keeping a useful journal.

Pete Sinclair 1981

Advice, September 1954

16 June Tuesday

Because it was Freshman Week and school hadn't really started yet, the Dean of Freshmen wore sunfans with his Harris Tweed jacket instead of gray flannels. Me too. He was young. I didn't know that they made deans that young. "Your scores in reading are very high: in the upper three percent in speed and in the upper one percent in comprehension. Your high school grades don't reflect that," he said. "I know," I said, "I spent most of my time in high school reading library books under my desk." "What kind of books?" "Mostly non-fiction. I don't much like novels" Unless they're sexy, I didn't ~~tell~~ add. "Oh, I prefer good fiction, Hemmingway, James, Faulkner. Have you read any Faulkner?" "Yes," I lied, "the one about the bear." What I had done is to read enough to learn the names of the characters for the guys like the rest of the kids, Irish, Italians and Polish, I went to school with. ~~This~~ That place, Dartmouth, was full of prep school kids. I determined to read "The Bear" that night - or maybe next week. "Well, you'll read some good fiction in English 1 and 2, I think you'll find there's truth in fiction too. Have you thought about what you might do after college?" I want to be

Pete Sinclair 1981

Advice, ~~g~~ September 1954

16 June

continued:

an explorer." He laughed. "There isn't much demand for explorers anymore." "Oh, there's a few places left to explore," I said. The Dean was right about fiction. I was right about exploration - when I learned a new meaning for "places".

Conclusion

I will conclude this account of the Journal of Exploration by an aside to my brethern, college teachers of composition--not all of whom are in the English Department. One of the best writing teachers I know about, in addition to the ones I've already mentioned, is Peter Misch, a geology professor at the University of Washington. But most of the responsibility for the teaching of writing in colleges is assigned to composition teachers, the only teachers who have to teach form in writing without the content that comes with teaching a subject. The Journal of Exploration will do little to help students improve the form of their writing. However, students are willing to work harder on the form of their writing if they have content that interests them--doing it, not writing about it. The problem is to find a content that interests you. If you don't, it's another Sunday evening with twenty-five almost-five-hundred-word essays due back in the morning. Writing authored by an authority has a better chance of being interesting than writing without authority. The student is the authority about his own experience,but he or she has to be taught what responsibilities go with that authority. "The unexamined life... etc." Nothing could induce me to read a student's account of falling in love, but it seems cruel not to allow students to write about the classic experience of going home for the first time. The classic experiences are by definition the most commonplace, and hence, require the most skill of the writer. This journal is designed to help the writer make discoveries out of common experiences. An account of a discovery requires less skill of the writer to be interesting. If you are tempted to try having your students use this journal system, heed this warning: Don't relent on the form of the journal. You cannot order a student to be smart, witty, humane, humble or imaginative; you can insist on the form. A journal kept according to the form I have described will help the student produce a useful record of his or her experience, including the experience

of reading an old story, such as the Iliad. Helping the student write something interesting out of his or her record is where the hard work, for teacher and student, begins. At least you could have a written record of facts and images with which to begin.

[1]Virginia Woolf, The Diary of Virginia Woolf, ed. Anne Oliver Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), Volume One, 65.

[2]Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, ed. Leonard Woolf (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1953), p. 156.

[3]Frederick A. Pottle, ed., Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950), p. 12.

[4]London Journal, p. 224.

[5]V W Diary, I, 4-8 passim.

[6]V W Diary, I, 13.

[7]James Boswell, Private Papers of James Boswell, ed. G. Scott and F.A. Pottle (Yale, 1928-1934), XI, 217-18. Cited in J.C. Beaglehole, The Life of Captain James Cook (Stanford: 1974), p. 451.

[8]Boswell, Papers, XI, 256-7.

[9]Beaglehole, p. 454.

[10]James Cook, The Journals of Captain James Cook, ed. J.C. Beaglehole (Cambridge for the Hakluyt Society: 1955), I, 286.

[11]Cook, I, 74.

[12]Cook, I, 83.

[13]Cook, I, 84.

[14]Cook, I, 127.

[15]Beaglehole, p. 439.

[16]Beaglehole, p. 471.

[17]Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, The Puritans (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), II, 461.

[18]From his "Introduction," V W Diary, I, xiii, xiv.

BOOKS OF THE TIMES

Auditions for Hungry Muses at the House of Truth

By RICHARD EDER

"Adverbs," Umberto Eco replied when someone asked him what "The Name of the Rose" was really about. More significant than his story and characters is the drift of voice in which they eddy. In the same way you might say that Penelope Fitzgerald's novels are about subordinate clauses. A leading action, a statement, a mood are yanked from below like a fishing float and dart zigzag away.

At one point in "Human Voices," Vi Simmons, employed in wartime London, brings a fellow worker to stay in her mother's house, from which a previous roommate had upsettingly decamped. "Mrs. Simmons, who was generous enough not to learn from experience, welcomed a new lodger," the author writes.

Between those two subordinating commas a large character has mushroomed. Ms. Fitzgerald writes characters dramatically, as if they were actions. Then, beneath character and action, she writes possibility: the world is such and such a way, but it may be other ways as well. Mrs. Simmons's dependent clause is one of a number of apparent asides pervading "Human Voices" and giving it both scope and lilt.

Using the gaiety and unexpected gravity of such asides, Ms. Fitzgerald, who is past 80, has been writing fiction for only the last 20 years. Almost by stealth her eight novels have grown steadily in assurance and dimension, from "The Bookshop" and "Offshore," which won the Booker Prize, to four culminating works — "Innocence," "The Beginning of Spring," "Gate of Angels" and "The Blue Flower" — which deserved it more.

The most European and least insular of contemporary British novelists, and to my mind the finest, Ms.

A story told in subordinate clauses.

Fitzgerald works an airy continuum between what you might figuratively call gastronomy and eating. "The Blue Flower," a seriocomic evocation of the German Romantic movement, begins with a great quantity of laundry. Here in "Human Voices" notions of truth and mortality meld with a wonderful passage about piano tuning. Ms. Fitzgerald's writing is earthy at its most elevated and a trampoline at its most down to earth.

"Voices," an early novel published in this country for the first time, is bumpy in places. It concludes with what feels like a sketch of an ending; romantic and dramatic but not really worked out. Several characters assemble some promising contradictions and paradoxes, but the writer has not figured how to put them together. Yet in its best moments, and there are quite a few, there is outrageous pleasure coupled with an occasional disconcerting free fall: Ms. Fitzgerald's specialty.

The novel takes place at the British Broadcasting Corporation during World War II. The BBC played a signal role in holding the British together when there seemed little else in the early years of blitzkrieg and retreat that could have. Ms. Fitzgerald, too old to have jettisoned reverence from her peddler's pack of contradictions — tenderness, a cold eye, comedy and grief — interjects what she believes the place stood for:

"Broadcasting House was in fact dedicated to the strangest project of the war, or of any war, that is, telling the truth. Without prompting, the BBC had decided that truth was more important than consolation and, in the long run, would be more effective. And yet there was no guarantee of this. Truth insures trust, but not victory."

A stage setting of some dignity, then, for a comedy too pure to have the slightest use for any. Ms. Fitzgerald's novels are never far from the stage. (Even when they think or talk to themselves, her characters perform.) There is a hint of Aristotelian unities in her use of an office world as the world. If "Voices" is theater, though, it is somewhere between music hall and traditional English pantomime. What is being performed is a version of St. George and the Dragon; here the princess rescues the dragon, and George perishes by accident.

The dragon first: Sam Brooks, the mission-besotted director of recorded programming. He spends two weeks in the country for something to be called "Lest We Forget Our Englishry." To his superiors' horror the records are nothing but squeaks and creaks. Englishry, Sam had decided, could nowhere be more truly expressed than by a harvest festival at a rural church. In his aural purism this was to be registered exclusively by the sound of the Hither Lickington church door opening and closing as parishioners trundled in their vegetable offerings.

Sam is the artist as middle-aged child; his fellow workers are protective as well as dismayed, even when his oddity assumes a more awkward aspect. An artist needs a muse, Sam figures, and he seeks a succession of them: young female interns whose hiring he personally supervises.

They tend to depart as quickly as they arrive, owing to his habit of summoning them to his office for a late sandwich, a tender ear for his sorrows and a little hand squeezing. Not much more — although it is a while before we are sure — but enough to constitute what we plainly recognize as harassment and what Ms. Fitzgerald, interested in inner motions and history's relativities, frames in a way that is subtler and, oddly, more rigorous.

The novel takes in other territory: the foggily surreal office politics of an organization that has no idea how to be one, London in the war, the much-needed reassurance the city gets from an ebullient American broadcaster, as well as various awkwardly unfocused subplots and subcharacters. The conversion of Sam is its heart, though. Human voices wake him from records and avuncular solipsism. Contrary to the T. S. Eliot line of the title, instead of drowning, he manages birth.

The voices belong to two other first-rate characters. One is a cynical and self-indulgent colleague of Sam's who does quite a bit of good in spite of himself before coming to a near-comic end, a suddenly ill-fated St. George. The other, Annie, is the last of the interns.

Daughter of a piano tuner — the piano tuning is transcendental and splendidly particular; the laboriousness of real music versus the surrogate ease of Sam's records — she withers her boss with her highly original independence. She also falls in love but conceals it, harsh on herself as well as him. Harshly, princess frees dragon; for love, among other things. As storytelling, the ending is patly contrived. Ms. Fitzgerald would come to them better. As moral to her witty, earth-attached and buoyant fable, it works fine.



Tara Heinemann/Houghton Mifflin

HUMAN VOICES

By Penelope Fitzgerald

144 pages. Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin. Paperback. $12.



TV NOTES

High Water For Ratings

NBC's version of the biblical account of Noah's ark was the biggest mini-series of the season on television in terms of ratings and reaction.

The two-part movie, which starred Jon Voight as Noah, reached about 50 million viewers on Sunday night, the largest number for any movie this season. On Monday, although the number of viewers fell to about 42 million, the film still dominated the night. The movie had a larger audience than this year's other highly promoted NBC mini-series, "The 60's" and "The Temptations."

But NBC and many of its affiliated stations also reported receiving hundreds of calls complaining that the film diverged too much from the story of Noah presented in the Bible.

The clamor was enough for NBC to issue a statement defending the "artistic and historical license" taken by the film but apologizing to viewers if they found "the treatment of the material objectionable."

The mini-series expanded on the rather limited account in the Bible by having Noah live in the town of Sodom, be a friend of Lot and his wife (who do not appear in the Bible until after the story of Noah), and even fight a naval engagement after the flood against Lot, who has become an eye-patch-wearing pirate.

In its statement, NBC said the film "remains faithful to the essential spirit and values of faith and humanity in the story of Noah, as told in the Book of Genesis in the Bible."

The mini-series did have a disclaimer at the start of each part: "For dramatic effect, we have taken dramatic license with some of the events of the mighty epic of Noah and the flood."

The ratings, if not the reaction, surely will make CBS feel better about a planned mini-series of its own. Next season CBS is to present a four-hour movie called simply "Jesus."

CBS is already promising a film that emphasizes the humanity of the lead character, although it will also feature several miracles. Those who have seen the first draft of the script describe it as a portrait of the adult Jesus, who starts out as a carpenter before moving on to his broader mission.

The production of "Jesus" may be one of the most expensive in recent television history, with a budget estimated at $30 million. Locations in Morocco will be standing in for the Holy Land.

While Gary Oldman has been signed to play Pontius Pilate, the title role has not been cast.

BILL CARTER

The Ratings Race

Prime-Time Audience

Rating/share, April 26-May 2	Season to date
9.5/16	8.9/15
8.1/14	9.0/15
7.1/12	8.1/14
6.3/11	7.0/12

t-Watched Programs

Sunday Night Movie, 's Ark," Part 1 of 2 20.9 rating and 32

BC, 18.6-30)
NBC, 15.1-23)
BC, 13.9-24)
an Angel"
S, 12.5-24)



Paul Drinkwater/NBC

Jon Voight in "Noah's Ark," shown on NBC on Sunday and Monday.

Truth in Packaging

The Fox network issued a rather sheepish statement on Monday promising that any staged re-enactments used in the popular "reality specials," like "World's Wildest Police Videos" or "When Animals Attack," would be clearly labeled as such in the future.

That is because producers of some of those shows' dramatic "caught on tape" segments were themselves caught on tape by sharp-eyed investigate reporters at the syndicated news magazine program "Inside Edition." In a segment broadcast on Monday, "Inside Edition" showed how producers had staged re-creations of the police capturing criminals and of an elephant attacking a photographer in Kenya, and had passed off the re-creations as real.

In one incident from "World's Wildest Police Videos," viewers saw a boat chase, purportedly captured by a police camera, with the suspects beaching their boat and one suspect being tackled by officers.

The "Inside Edition" reporter, Matt Meagher, then interviewed someone he described as "a respected local fireman," who told him: "They needed somebody to play a criminal and a bad guy, and so we volunteered." He added, "They ahead and gave us a script and that this is what happened act as best we could." er interviewed the pro- former Oregon sheriff, John Bunnell, who said that only a few incidents were staged, and that he tried to use the words "police training video" in describing them. He also said that his show was entertainment and should not be held to the same standards as a news program.

"Many viewers don't make a distinction between a reality show and a news magazine show," said Marc Rosenweig, senior vice president for programming and production, East Coast, for King World, the syndicator of "Inside Edition." "One reason is that we in news magazines started running these 'caught on tape' clips a decade ago — authentic ones."

That experience led "Inside Edition" to catch the reality-show producers in their deceptions. Mr. Rosenweig said a producer had watched several of the reality shows and had become suspicious because of the multiple camera angles used.

"He knew it was impossible to have the four or five camera angles they had if it was real," he said. "A real chase would usually have just one camera, mounted in a police car or somewhere else, or maybe a surveillance camera in a workplace or store or something. Knowing what we all know about production, this producer said we ought to look at this."

Mr. Rosenweig added that Fox was not the only network victimized by such techniques; he had seen cable programs with similar stunts, he said.

The specials are produced for Fox by independent companies. But in its statement on Monday Fox said that the producers "must adhere to" its policy "to clearly identify all re-creations, re-enactments and training videos."

LAWRIE MIFFLIN

Leaving Public TV

The Public Broadcasting Service has lost its chief programming executive, Kathy Quattrone, to a new venture of Discovery Communications, a multimedia company called Discovery Health Media Inc.

For Ms. Quattrone, who worked at PBS for 20 years and headed its programming division for almost four years, the move is a chance to join a new kind of company "at the ground floor," she said. Discovery Health is developing a cable channel (to start on Aug. 2), a health portal on the Internet (to start on June 28), interactive television, videos for home and professional use and a publishing unit. She will supervise all these services as senior vice president for programming and production, reporting to the company's president, John Ford.

"Health is both one of the most global and one of the most personal subjects," Ms. Quattrone said yesterday. "There are a lot of opportunities to get people information in a number of different ways they can use."

But for PBS, the move adds anxiety to a beleaguered department, and adds a hefty workload to John Wilson, Ms. Quattrone's top deputy, who will take over for her on an interim basis. He is already shouldering the job of chief of children's programming, one of PBS's most important divisions. The director of that division, Alice Cahn, left last summer to join the Children's Television Workshop.

Ms. Quattrone, who was praised within the public broadcasting system for the way she got stations around the country to agree to carry prime-time programs simultaneously, also had helped Ms. Cahn add many lively programs to the PBS children's menu and had been leading PBS's conversion to digital television.

During her tenure, the chief executive of PBS, Ervin Duggan, pointed out in a memo to stations, "PBS programs earned an extraordinary number of prestigious awards, dominating the Peabodys, the du Ponts, the daytime Emmys and the news and documentary Emmys."

The search for a successor will begin shortly, a PBS spokesman said.

LAWRIE MIFFLIN

a Path to Privilege



n around
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anic
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son had seen him cry. He called the assassination a nightmare. His mother said Dr. King was a troublemaker who deserved to die. His mother's harangue made racism real for him in a way it had never been.

A photograph of his mother, who

NEGLECTED FICTIONS

We asked a number of writers and other international figures to say something about a work or works of fiction – of any time and in any language – which they would like to see better known.

Czeslaw Milosz

I propose a Gothic novel, quite an extraordinary piece of writing, completed in 1815 by a Polish aristocrat, Jan Potocki, who in the same year shot himself with a silver bullet. Silver because, presumably, it protects the suicide victim from becoming a werewolf. The novel was written in French and published only in fragments during the lifetime of the author. The first five chapters appeared anonymously in Petersburg in 1805 and created a kind of legend in international circles. Several other chapters appeared in an 1814 pirate edition of the manuscript in Paris. Later the manuscript of the novel survived various vicissitudes. It was translated into Polish and published under the title *A Manuscript Found in Saragossa*. Renewed interest in the novel in the twentieth century confronted prospective editors and translators with the following problems: the first fourteen chapters existing because they were printed, the rest of the manuscript lost and extant only in a Polish translation from the original French text. The novel's translations into other languages are from a strange mixture of sources.

Potocki's novel in many ways parallels Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, at least as far as its horrors are concerned. Its form, however, reflects the author's passion for Muslim civilization and Arabic literature. Potocki took from the Near East his box-within-a-box narrative structure – ie, in a story a character appears who tells a story in which a character appears who tells a story, etc. The action consists in the tale of the sixty-three-day journey of a young gentleman through the roads of the Sierra Morena leading to Madrid. The time is the eighteenth century and through the novel's adventures transpires the philosophical intent of the author: a man of the Enlightenment and a worshipper of knowledge. Horrors, presumably supernatural, find a rational explanation, while in the gallery of characters true heroes are scholars, mathematicians and devotees of learning – like the man in Madrid who wishes to serve letters but, not having talent, dedicates his life to making ink in enormous pots for the Spanish literati. A complete French text of *The Saragossa Manuscript* has been recently discovered and Gallimard is preparing its publication. It seems to me that this work deserves a definitive English edition and not only as a curio (a term which may be applied to *Melmoth the Wanderer*) but as a fascinating narrative in its own right.

Edward Said

Arabic prose fiction has a comparatively brief history of barely a century. Yet it is also quite rich and has developed subtraditions local to the various Arab states. Yet, with the exception of a few classic works by an even smaller number of writers – Naguib Mahfuz, Tawfik al-Hakim, Tayib Saleh, Ghassan Kanafani and Yusef Idriss – novelists of the *mashriq*, or Arab East, are neither well known nor well translated in the English-speaking world, especially the United States. Nevertheless a fair amount of excellent fiction (and, of course, poetry) by Lebanese, Egyptian, Syrian, Iraqi and Palestinian writers has appeared during the past fifteen years. Much of this work is obviously influenced by contemporary politics and ideologies, but what is strikingly impressive is its formal brilliance and the technical resourcefulness by which it refers to its social and historical circumstances.

Two younger novelists, the Egyptian Gamal al-Ghitany and the Lebanese Elias Khoury, stand out. Each published a first novel of real originality; neither has been translated into English (although Ghitany's *al-Zeini Barakat* has just appeared from Seuil in an elegant French rendition by Jean-François Fourcade). Ghitany's novel (1974) is set in early sixteenth-century Mameluke Cairo, and traces the career of Zeini Barakat ibn Mousa as Cairo's puritanically moral and severe *wali*, or governor, who employs several corps of spies and informers to rule the decrepit city. Using a whole panoply of narrative devices – diary extracts, police reports, legal decrees, first-person narratives, religious discourses – Ghitany achieves a complex but virtuosically managed texture whose relevance to Nasser's Cairo is hard to miss.

Khoury's *al-Jabal al-Saghir* (The Little Mountain, 1974) is more directly about the present. A slim but deeply affecting novel, it chronicles the displacements and dislocations that totally change the life of a young Lebanese Christian in Ashrafiyah (East Beirut), who enters the civil war on the Palestinian side and is eventually alienated from his community and his own senses. There is a remarkable episode set in a church – complete with two garrulous priests – being used as a military base and another startling passage that details the great Mount Sunnin campaign in early 1976. Khoury's novel is a truly prophetic and accomplished work, which should be made available to European readers.

Two exceptional works by older writers also deserve mention. *Al-Bahth 'an Walid Masood* (In Search of Walid Massoud) by the Iraqi-Palestinian novelist and poet Jabra Ibrahim Jabra was published in 1978. It is perhaps the subtlest and most enigmatic of recent Arab novels, Jamesian in its structure, poignant and yet forceful, even heroic in its retrospective analysis of a mysterious financier, lover and intellectual. But by far the most unusual modern Arabic novel – Emile Habiby's *Saeed the Pessoptimist* (1974) – is just about to appear in a serviceable English translation from Zed Press. This ironic and fantastic work – in part folk-tale, in part *maqama*, or verbal display, in other parts like *Candide*, *Huckleberry Finn*, Kafka, Garcia Marquez and Dumas – is *the* genuine prose masterpiece to derive from the Palestinian quandary, although such is Habiby's astounding power that the work has the universality of all great literature. Arabic has no work even remotely like it, nor for that matter like its author, a Christian from Haifa, who has been a Knesset member, a politburo member of the Israeli Communist Party and a journalist.

John Ashbery

I'd like to use this occasion to put in a word for two of my favourite twentieth-century English writers, Mary Butts and Violet Paget (who wrote under the pseudonym Vernon Lee). Mary Butts lived from about 1895 to 1937; apparently she was often in Paris during the 1920s and 30s; a portrait of her by Cocteau is the frontispiece to a limited edition of her novel *Armed with Madness*. That novel and two others (*Imaginary Letters*, *Death of Felicity Taverner*) form a loose trilogy in which the same unsavoury but ultimately sympathetic Paris riff-raff appears; obviously these characters are drawn from life. She reminds me a little of Djuna Barnes but is I think a better writer (and not nearly as portentous), though her writing too is quite mannered – she was fond of using triple or quadruple negatives in the same sentence. When it works – as I think it does best in her short stories, collected in the volumes *Speed the Plough*, *Several Occasions* and *Last Stories* – it's very exciting indeed. *The Crystal Cabinet*, a rather uninformative memoir, isn't one of her best books.

Vernon Lee's dates are 1868 to 1935. She lived much in Italy and wrote about it in travel books and others like *Studies in the Italian Eighteenth Century* (again, this may not be the exact title). I read somewhere that she knew or studied with Walter Pater, and he is certainly a strong influence, especially in her beautiful little book of reminiscences called *Limbo*, which suggests Pater's "The Child in the House". She was extremely prolific, to judge from the list of her publications appended to one of her volumes. She worked in a number of forms; a collection of tales of the supernatural called *The Snake Lady* was reprinted by Grove Press in the 1950s but now can't be found. A portrait drawing of her by Sargent has often been reproduced. A book called *The Handling of Words* analyses brilliantly the styles of various contemporary writers. Style indeed is what her writing is all about, and hers is a rare one, to be savoured slowly and deliberately.

Anita Brookner

My choice for a revival, or at least for a revival of interest, would be the six novels written in conjunction by Edmond and Jules de Goncourt before the latter's horrible death in 1870. These have always been less celebrated than the Realist novels of Flaubert and Zola, to which they are affiliated, much to the chagrin of the easily offended Edmond, and it is not difficult to see why. There is something inbred and exasperated about their style, the famous *écriture artiste*, in which they took such a pride and which may now strike the reader as wearisome. But I would suggest that they achieve the dignity of tragedy in their mournful view of the world, a dignity which escapes both Flaubert and Zola, although the three of them – and I count the Goncourts as one flesh – are truly terrible examples of the fact that writing novels can seriously damage your health.

The morbidity of the Goncourts was the result of earnest researches in the byways of city life. Illness, paupers' funerals, indeed, funerals of all kinds, hospitals, the museum-like rooms of solitary old people, the slow descent into madness of proud but thin-blooded bourgeois families: all were pursued with a collector's mania in the streets of Paris and its environs. The result is a curious modernity and an intensely visual attack. The opening chapter of *Renée Mauperin* has two young people bathing in the river near Sannois, where the factories and sugar refineries are beginning to spoil the landscape: it is 1864. Graceless streets harbour Germinie Lacerteux, in the novel of that name, as she succumbs to her ruinous love for the wastrel Jupillon, while in *Soeur Philomène* the whiteness of the hospital ward, in which a single orange on a patient's locker introduces an almost hurtful note of colour, reflects the virginity of the nursing sister whose mental peace is shattered by the revelation of a dying patient. *Manette Salomon*, the somewhat taxing story of a group of painters searching for the true style, is characterized by a marvellous airy Parisian restlessness. And in perhaps the most impressive, and the least known, *Madame Gervaisais*, the combination of authorial control and the neurotic ability to mimic terminal hysteria, carries an unforgettable impression of true literary power.

These pre-1870 novels have not to my knowledge been translated into English. The works of the Goncourts are known in this country by the inferior later novels written by Edmond after Jules's death. Oddly enough, they have never had much of a press in France, a fact of which Edmond was furiously aware. When one considers the notoriety of the Journals and the publicity surrounding the Prix Goncourt, this is all the more surprising. The brothers' finest achievement remains the least celebrated.

G. Cabrera Infante

So much has been written lately about magic realism, as applied to some sort of typically South American novel, that it has fooled readers and reviewers alike and made them forget that the term has actually been around since the turn of the century. It first appeared when a French critic, Juste LeMot, saw a single violinist playing on a Russian roof in a painting by Marc Chagall and he explained, "Nom de Dieu, ça c'est de la magie, vous savez!" But Chagall continued, "Don't forget there's also truth in it." Said LeMot justly, "Du réalisme magique donc." With this reported repartee the term magic realism was launched. Now the label has come back to haunt critics and to give a name to those South American writers, the practitioners of *realismo mágico*, whose characters levitate to soar with the condor and consort with the caudillos.

There have been other South American writers less famous than those literary Houdinis (or, let's be bold, not known at all north of the Rio Grande), who have written magnificently magical mystery books and nobody knows their names or the title on the cover. To name only a few, there is Adolfo Bioy Casares, the Argentine writer usually type-cast as Borges's sidekick, who has written one or two novellas that are *obras perfectas*. These are *Morel's Invention* and *Plan of Escape*, both already translated into English with not even an *eco in lontano*. There is also the Uruguayan Felisberto Hernandez, pianist by profession, the author of stories depicting the translucid irreality of insomnia. The third unknown is the Cuban writer Virgilio Piñera. An exile in Argentina where the pampas and the pangs of hunger were not worse than homesickness for his island: he was arrested on his return to Cuba for being conspicuously a sodomite. The non-virile Virgilio had to draw a map of his own Hell without the help of a guide; "I don't give a Dante!" he used to say. His unexpected tales are so absurd, intense and cruel, that one can only think of a Bruno Schulz or a Ionesco, though Piñera knew neither. Most of them can be found in *Cuentos fríos*. Now translated as *Cold Tales*, Piñera's book has run the gauntlet of several American publishers who said No. It still waits for its shivering British publisher. Perhaps, it will warm him up if I whisper that old password: "Magic Realism"?

Iris Murdoch

I should like to see these two books more readily available: Honor Tracy's wildly funny, gently ironical novel, *The Straight and Narrow Path*, and Brigid Brophy's elegant work of imagination, *Palace without Chairs*.

John Hersey

The Kingdom of This World, by Alejo Carpentier, deserves new readers. This Cuban author's dazzling short novel of Haiti in the times of Toussaint L'Ouverture and Henri Christophe was first published in Mexico, in its original Spanish, as *El Reino de Este Mundo*, in 1949; I first read the book in its sparkling translation into English by Harriet do Onís when it was published by Knopf in the United States in 1957; Gollancz issued the same translation in the United Kingdom in that same year. It was also published in Paris as *Le Royaume de ce monde*.

On its surface the novel is a tale of a blood-soaked period of history – of bitter racial hatred and violence, voodoo, sexual excesses, overreaching power and doomed grandiosities such as the mindless imitation of Versailles at Christophe's Sans Souci and the almost unbelievable massif of the Citadel of La Ferriere, the mortar for which was mixed, for invincibility's sake, with the blood of bulls. All this is rendered in a prose that gives these monstrosities a ravishing tropical beauty, so that even the worst human frailties seem products of some kind of everlasting and mysterious magic.

What is remarkable about this book is that it speaks with startling resonances to us in the kingdom of *this* world, the world of 1985. Anyone who reads this book and reflects on its many layers of suggestion will find much to think about in relation to South Africa, Central America and many of the so-called Third World countries; about racial tensions, about greed and about fallible arrangements of power in governance. For this beautiful, pleasure-giving book is about much more than a Haiti of the past. It is about deep, eternal urges of the human heart for both freedom from others and domination over others.

Norman St John-Stevas

A largely forgotten novel which I would be delighted to see republished is Robert Hichens's *The Green Carnation*. Hichens met Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas when they were holidaying in Egypt and this delightful send-up of the literary pair was the result. It came out just before the Wilde trial and was then withdrawn and did not see the light of day again until the 1940s. I have not a copy in front of me but I recall one splendid line: "They love cricket and despise poetry. That is what the English consider virtue in boys." Esme Amarinth is Oscar Wilde and when apostrophized by his young admirer with the words "Esme, you are great", replies economically, "How true that is."

A paperback edition has recently been published of *The Lost Stories of W. S. Gilbert*, selected and introduced by Peter Haining (255pp. Robson. £4.50. 0 86051 337 8), first published in 1982 and reviewed in the *TLS*, February 4, 1983.

NEGLECTED FICTIONS

J. M. Coetzee

In 1968, Montreal University Press published a first novel by a writer from the Ivory Coast, Ahmadou Kourouma (born 1940). *Les Soleils de l'indépendance* is a short novel about a petty chieftain, swept from power first by France and now by the post-colonial order, no longer quite right in the head, reduced to scratching a living by giving old-style orations at funerals. The misfortunes of his hero provide Kourouma with openings for mordant attacks on both the neo-colonialist "Ebony Coast" (the Ivory Coast) and socialist "Nikinai" (Mali). But beneath the layer of satire Kourouma has written an elegy for the old order of petty chieftaincies, an order in which no position grew to be absolute because the political economy depended on shifting alliances and the coexistence of rival interests. And finally, beneath the layers of satire and elegy, wrapped in ironies, embodied in the tiny, drought-stricken village over which his crazy and issueless king reasserts his birthright, Kourouma has written a celebration of the old African faith in *palaver*, in the proverbs of the tribe tirelessly reworked by one generation of speakers after another into a fabric which, binding past to present, binds a culture together.

Adrian Adams's translation (*The Suns of Indepedence*, Heinemann Education Books, 1981) keeps alive the creative verve and pungent wit of a work in which Kourouma invades the pale foreigners' language to reimagine and reshape it from the inside. Though not the greatest novel to come out of independent Africa – it tries to do too much in too short a space – *The Suns of Independence* is the liveliest, and one of the most passionate. It deserves to be better known.

Richard Grenier

You are this miserable dog, cold, hungry, mangy, rooting through Moscow garbage heaps in winter. The blizzard howls. Hunger gnaws. But the worst are janitors, human dregs, who beat you with sticks. Cooks can be of all sorts, from that great old Vlas, a real gentleman's cook for the Counts Tolstoy, who would always throw you a bone with a solid chunk of meat on it, to that vile scum from the People's Central Economic Soviet, who scalded you with boiling water. You're smarter than people think, though. You can read. As it happens, you read backwards, so "Fish Trust" comes out "Tsurt Hsif". But just when you are overwhelmed by despair, when you are ready to lie down and die right there in the gateway, and tiny dog tears are flowing from your eyes, the door of the brightly lit shop across the street swings open and out steps, not a proletarian, but a gentleman. Bending over kindly, he gives you a piece of Special Cracow Sausage. Oh, generous soul! You must show your devotion. You lick his hand. You kiss his galoshes. He takes you home. And a new life begins.

Not a bad egg, this doctor fellow. Lives in a seven-room luxury apartment. An assistant. Two servants. Lots of clients. Soon you are eating pounds of steak a day. Your fur is fluffy. Lord, you're a handsome devil. But this doctor has ideas about improving the human species, and taking you unawares one day he operates on you, replacing your pituitary gland and testes with those of a man who died four hours before. You start getting bigger. Soon your fur is falling away except on your head, chin, and chest. The day your tail drops off you say with utmost clarity the word "saloon" and proceed to spout all the obscenities in the Russian language. On your first walk about the apartment you are heard to sneer "bourgeois". The doctor's assistant thinks you are developing into a personality of a high psychic order. Dressed now in patent-leather shoes and a bright blue tie, you give yourself a name: Polygraph Polygraphovich Sharikov.

This is really the life now. You swear, spit on the floor, molest the serving girls when you catch them in the dark, drink the doctor's vodka. And who is this doctor to have more rooms than even Isadora Duncan? You side with Shvonder, the chairman of the house committee, against this anti-proletarian outrage. You read the Engels-Kautsky correspondence and decide they're both wrong. You get yourself a job with the Moscow Communal Property Administration as director of the purge subsection and are a big hit with the typist, whom you bring home to live with you. But the doctor, that pig, reveals your secret, that you were originally a dog. "The rotter," sobs the typist, "he told me he got the scar fighting Kolchak in the war." You fix that doctor. You and Comrade Shvonder denounce him as a counter-revolutionary, and the doctor moans that Shvonder is the biggest fool of all, because he can't see that once Sharikov is sicked against him Shvonder himself will be done for.

All in all, you have a lot of fun in your dizzying rise from dog to proletarian bureaucrat, and it was all written down in *Heart of a Dog* in 1925 by Mikhail Bulgakov, author of *The Master and Margarita*. It has never been published by the Soviet authorities, however, who seem to think, unaccountably, that it is some kind of anti-Soviet lampoon.

Giulio Andreotti

Antonio Fogazzaro was an Italian writer who bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: he was born in Vicenza in 1842 and died there in 1911. He is best known for his novel *Piccolo mondo antico*, and for the film made from it, which is largely faithful to the book and responsible for increasing its popularity.

The novel's successor, *Piccolo mondo moderno*, is also well known. Both books are set in nineteenth-century provincial Italy, where vice and virtue, sensuality and religion coexisted without difficulty.

I believe that two of Fogazzaro's novels, published shortly before his death *(Il santo*, 1905, and *Leila* five years later) should be given more prominence, not merely for their literary quality, which is notable but not exceptional, but because of the singularly pleasing and psychologically penetrating way in which they present the intellectual and religious crisis of the Italian bourgeoisie of the time. From this crisis there evolved the philosophy of "cultural coexistence", first developed in the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII and later completed by Pope Paul VI.

Fogazzaro's progressive views were unacceptable at the time and he suffered the consequences. *Il santo* was even added to the Vatican's list of forbidden publications. However, the writer accepted this in silence and left his fate to be decided by time.

A passage from *Il santo* seems to me to be emblematic:

> There are many Catholics, both in Italy and abroad, among both priests and laymen, who desire a reform of the church. But we wish it to take place without rebellion, under the auspices of the legitimate authorities.

Four centuries earlier the head of the Augustinian order (Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo) had tried, more or less in the same words, to convince one of his impatient monks: Martin Luther. But Luther did not believe in reform from within and it was he who first flew the flag of separation.

Michael Schmidt

Publishers are privileged people: they can rescue what they take to be masterpieces from neglect.

The book that has given me greatest joy in recent years has been Emmanuel Bove's *Mes Amis* (1923). Bove's protagonist in this episodic exploration of failure in threadbare quarters of Paris is like a prose M. Hulot, so sad and so doomed to being himself. The book is hilarious and mournful, a *fin-de-siècle* character strayed into the 1920s with a dozen secret wounds under his shabby greatcoat.

Bove has been neglected by all but a few (that few including Samuel Beckett) until the last decade, when Peter Handke translated him into German and his books began to circulate once more in France. Soon I hope they will circulate widely also in Britain and in the United States.

Edward Upward

It may seem strange to select as the most underestimated English novel of the twentieth century Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, which has been much admired by many readers in many countries, and, since first being published in April 1914 in an abridged edition, has gone into at least five other editions, has been reprinted perhaps fifty times and has been translated into Russian, German, Czech, Bulgarian, Japanese, French and Swahili. Yet F. C. Ball, Robert Tressell's biographer who rediscovered the 250,000-word manuscript of the novel and in 1955 edited the first full-length version of it, has described it as "a kind of underground book",unmentioned in literary histories or in encyclopaedias for many years, and he likens Tressell to John Bunyan, whose *Pilgrim's Progress* had to wait even longer for recognition by literary critics. Tressell's view of the world is perhaps too different from the prevailing view they are familiar with. In every age the ruling ideas about what is humorous and what is not, about what is praiseworthy and what is abominable, have been the ideas of the ruling class; and Tressell's ideas were those of a Marxist socialist who under his real name of Robert Noonan spent his working life as a workman (a sign-writer and decorator) in the building trade. But his novel is not a political tract. "Tressell was a literary artist and knew precisely what he was doing", the *TLS* said in 1957. In years to come his novel will be generally recognized as one of the great classics of English literature – and of world literature.

Humphrey Carpenter

I can't understand why the marvellous comic novels of Caryl Brahms and S. J. Simon aren't kept perpetually in print. It's a rare dinner-table where somebody isn't a devotee of *A Bullet in the Ballet* (1937) – a farcical thriller about the Ballet Strogonoff in which every dancer chosen to play Petrouchka is fated to die on stage – or can't cite some of the more blissful moments in *No Bed for Bacon* (1941), a mock historical novel centring on Shakespeare, which evokes the sixteenth century far more successfully than do most serious efforts. I wish I could give a better account of these books, but I have never owned a copy of any Brahms-Simon work (and there are quite a few of them); I can never find them in bookshops; and I never manage to grab them in the public library. At present the whole lot are very hard to obtain.

Ned Rorem

To me, Sarah Orne Jewett was merely an "authoress" whose middle name turned up in crosswords, until my sister Rosemary gave me *The Country of the Pointed Firs* thinking I might make an opera out of it. What an antidote to the lubricious navel-gazing in so much of today's writing, including my own!

"If I were asked", wrote Willa Cather in 1925, "to name three American books which have the possibility of a long, long life, I would say at once, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and *The Country of the Pointed Firs*." Indeed, what Cather later did for Nebraska, Jewett had by 1896 done for Maine – lent to one state of the union a graspable colour, a humanized identity, a very smell and taste by which all ensuing descriptions must be judged. Knut Hamsun did it for rural Norway in the early years of the century, as did Louis Hémon for northern Canada and Jean Giono for meridional France. By "it" I mean the glorification – or codification, if you will – of the strange laws of nature, of the rational magic which, although surrounding us daily, we are, because of urban pressures, no longer trained to perceive, much less to need. Jewett captured the uncapturable by putting into literature that which is non-literate, is speechless. Our concept of geography is always for ever changed by art, and Jewett made a real place into a fictional extension of herself. As Debussy's *La Mer* never reminds me of the sea although the sea reminds me of Debussy, so the forlorn coast of Maine no longer belongs to itself but oozes Jewett as I drive through.

Born in that state in 1849 she lived her whole life there, commemorating patiently and securely what she knew best: the Protestant peasant perception of a flora and fauna that are no more. "In the life of each of us", she said, "there is a place remote and islanded, and given to endless regret or secret happiness; we are each the uncompanioned hermit and recluse of an hour or a day; we understand our fellows of the cell to whatever age of history they may belong."

If I were sentimental, I would recommend this book as others recommend *Walden*, hoping it might urge us toward a better world. But of course, there is no better world.

Brigid Brophy

Castle Richmond is in paperback print (Dover/Constable, £7.95). May it inform the (in one of its own phrases) novel-reading world. Despite mini-vogues, chiefly for his least considerable works, and recent scholarly autopsies of the useful but unlovely kind, Trollope still needs hoisting to his proper place up there with Jane Austen and Thackeray as a master of fiction.

Though a "good long read" and an exciting one, *Castle Richmond* is compact. It is set in Ireland and appeared in 1860, at a time when, as it remarks, Irish novels were out of fashion. With pity and with an analytical eye for the grass roots of politics, Trollope evokes what he calls the "agony" of the potato famine of 1846–7, which he had witnessed during his Post Office service in Ireland and which forced the hasty repeal of the Corn Laws on the most U-turning of British prime ministers, Sir Robert Peel (a defence of whom Trollope had tossed into the narrative discourse of a novel he published three years before). Against this Trollope sets, in counterpoint, the rivalry between two suitors and between two upper-class families. It imposes a convincing and sympathetic agony of mind on the very young heroine, and on her not-very-old mother it imposes a compact version of the agony of Phèdre.

Dick Davis

James Morier's *Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (1824) enjoyed a considerable vogue during the nineteenth century; it is certainly the best oriental novel of its time written by an Englishman (or subsequently, with the possible exception of *Kim*) and is also one of the best picaresque novels of the century. Morier knew Islamic Asia very well; by taking his hero through a series of improbable and very funny adventures – he is in turn barber, thief, pimp, executioner, merchant, dervish, saint, servant to a doctor, to a mullah, to an ambassador – Morier is able to give us a panoramic view of early nineteenth-century Persian life (when the novel was translated into Persian many Persians were convinced that it was the English version that was the translation, so accurate did the portrayal seem). It is, in its way, as fascinating a glimpse into a traditional Islamic society as E. W. Lane's much more sober *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836). But the work succeeds as a novel, not as a sociological report: Morier's great creation is the central character, who reminds us in turn of Felix Krull (Hajji Baba manages all situations by relying on "a certain confidence in my pretty self"), Sancho Panza, Schweik, even Sam Weller, whose creator may well owe something to Morier. The novel's flaws – a sentimentality about Christians, a liking for "Gothic" effects – are slight in comparison with the energy and charm of the work as a whole. Its rambling technique (stories within stories: when new characters are introduced they frequently tell their life histories, as in the *Arabian Nights*), its exotic and even surreal piling up of detail, its constant exuberance about the most grisly events, make it a novel that should have a strong appeal for lovers of latter-day Magic Realism.

NEGLECTED FICTIONS

Claude Lévi-Strauss

This summer, while on holiday in the country, I came across Arthur de Gobineau's *Nouvelles Asiatiques* (1876), a book which I had entirely forgotten since I first read it about sixty years ago.

It is a gem. I was positively entranced by this French miniature "à la manière de" the *Arabian Nights*, exquisitely written, full of wit and permeated with a wonderful feeling for the beauties of nature and the singularities of exotic cultures. The last short story entitled "La Vie de voyage" embodies within its fifty pages all the joys and disenchantments experienced while sharing the life of peoples whose culture is widely different from one's own. This small masterpiece should be read, re-read and mused on by all professional travellers, especially by anthropologists.

Leonardo Sciascia

I vicerè by Federico De Roberto is, after *I promessi sposi*, the greatest of Italian novels. But who, even in Italy, is familiar with it? It was first published in 1894, and, after an unfavourable verdict from Benedetto Croce and his followers, immediately lapsed into obscurity. It enjoyed an ephemeral resurrection following the success of Tomaso di Lampedusa's *The Leopard* because someone remembered that De Roberto's book was set in the same period and was also an account of the same delusions. But while *The Leopard* offers the Sicilian aristocracy an alibi, *I vicerè* attacks it.

Croce and the "crociani" declared that the book "lacked poetry"; and it was adjudged to be "fifty pages too long". But anyone who is prepared to disregard Croce and the "crociani" and to read it is unlikely to feel burdened by the last fifty pages or to regret the absence of poetry. If the book lacks poetry that is so much the worse for poetry and not for the novel itself. De Roberto is a great writer and *I vicerè* is a great book.

It is the story of a Sicilian family set in the period between the end of the Bourbon era and the coming into being of the kingdom of Italy. There is a large cast of characters, and the fortunes of the family ramify in all directions; and De Roberto's historical judgment is so exact that it remains valid for understanding Italian history since 1860. It appears that his protagonist, Prince Consalvo di Francalanza, was based on the marchese Antonino di San Giuliano, a Catanian nobleman who was Foreign Minister under the monarchy and supported the colonial wars. The book ends at the prince's electoral rally, at which the Italian politician – in particular the Southern Italian politician – is portrayed in his unchanging "typicality"; that is in his refusal to face up to the real problems of his country, in his rhetoric, in his capacity always to change the subject. A novel, in fact, that is a "document", but one created with great art, subtle observation and consummate skill.

Claude Rawson

Dred: A tale of the Great Dismal Swamp (1856) is Harriet Beecher Stowe's "other" slave novel. It is even more neglected nowadays than *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, though George Eliot once said that these two books alone placed Stowe "in that highest rank of novelists who can give us a national life in all its phases". *Uncle Tom*'s latter-day disrepute comes partly from resentment at the portrait of the meek long-suffering slave, but *Dred* (the name was changed from *Dread* while the "Dred Scott" case was before the Supreme Court) is different. It takes in those aspirations for messianic insurrection which some have since proposed as the only alternative to Uncle Tomming. Stowe understood the impulse, in angry hopelessness of the paternalist reformism which remains her own deepest aspiration. She wrote the "Dred" portions of the book, which are based on Nat Turner's rebellion, in aching bitterness at the attack which nearly killed the abolitionist Senator Sumner in the Senate Chamber, having begun the book as a more leisurely study of white country houses and the effects of slavery on the characters of those who lived there. The book, as a result, may seem disjointed, but the notion that Stowe's vision did not include more radical solutions is the merest cant, fuelled by ignorance.

Dred is not so much as mentioned in James Baldwin's brilliant and mean-spirited essay, "Everybody's Protest Novel", the classic down-grading of *Uncle Tom* in our time. He said that Stowe couldn't accept blacks unless she robed them in angelic whiteness. (Such paradoxical colour-codings were already a fashionable sport in 1949.) Flaubert made the same point without the fancy binarism when he said that in order to detest slavery he didn't need to be told that the slave was a meek godly fellow. Both take a tough-minded view of notions that some subjects are more important than art, but Henry James thought *Uncle Tom* transcended the merely literary in a way that was its own artistic triumph, "as if a fish, a wonderful 'leaping' fish, had simply flown through the air". Since human realities were at stake, it's worth recalling that Stowe's books did more for blacks than all her detractors put together, and George Eliot had a point when she said in her review of *Dred* that Stowe's critics were "like men pursuing a prairie fire with desultory watering-cans".

D. M. Thomas

The Revd Sabine Baring-Gould (1834–1924) wrote, standing at his desk, some 150 books, from romantic novels to Lives of the Saints; fathered seventeen children; composed "Onward Christian Soldiers"; researched west-country folk-songs; and conscientiously looked after his flock in his parish and squiredom of Lew Trenchard, Devon. He was, in short, an amazing example of Victorian energy. Two of his novels, *Mehalah* and *In the Roar of the Sea*, are intermittently re-published; but what is in my opinion his best novel, *John Herring* (1881), is totally neglected.

John Herring is set in the landscape dearest to Baring-Gould's heart, the region between Exeter and Boscastle. It has a romantic plot but living, authentic, richly flavoured characters, description and dialogue. It crackles with energy, doesn't have a boring page, and is very funny . . . . " 'Sampy, my boy,' said Tramplar the elder, 'Improve each shining hour, says Paul, afterwards called Saul, and he couldn't have given a better piece of advice if he'd been paid to do it.' " Except, perhaps, to any paperback publisher reading this, to snap up *John Herring*.

David Cecil

My choice of a novel unjustly neglected is *Crossriggs*, by Mary and Jane Findlater, published early this century. I read it first and with great enjoyment over sixty years ago: I read it again with great enjoyment this year. Formally, it is of the traditional type of domestic novel, an account of life in a Scottish village inhabited by a variety of characters and itself a mixture of comedy and drama, satire and pathos. It has the merits of its type in high degree: in particular its comedy is outstandingly amusing. But it is also distinguished by other less typical merits. Power, for instance; the drama in it rises to a dark moment of tragedy, precipitated by the character of a sensual brutal girl, unforgettably well drawn and unusual to find in a book of this kind. There is also a strain of imaginative poetry in it, apparent chiefly in the descriptions of the countryside in which it is set – on the bleak, windswept east coast of Scotland – which also reinforces and colours the tragedy of the drama, dignifying it by a sense of inevitable fate. Finally *Crossriggs* is memorable for its heroine Alix, a woman of thirty, an interesting, intimately realized character, imaginative and humorous, but too incurably romantic in outlook to be able to come to terms with life as it is.

The book has its weaknesses. The noble-minded scholar who is the object of Alix's frustrated love never comes to life, and the last short section of the story, designed presumably to give it a hopeful if not a happy ending, is improbable, though the presence of Alix makes it still hold the reader's attention. I understand *Crossriggs* is soon to be reprinted (by Virago). I recommend readers not to miss it.

Maggie Gee

Alan Burns, author of, among other works, *Europe After the Rain, Dreamerika!* and *The Dead Father*, has been highly praised by Angus Wilson and B. S. Johnson; he is not so much underrated as underl-read. This is superficially hard to understand, since the books have many obvious attractions. They are topical, disturbing, surreally funny, visually and linguistically interesting; and they have a strong narrative content – intriguing characters, drama, sex, death – forcefully linked to their experimental form. Despite these alluring surfaces, it is in fact clear why Burns is under-read. The label "experimental" acts like a jacket sticker saying "of interest to very few people". "Experimental" becomes a marketing category. The irony is that the surrealist tradition in which Burns operates is in intention subversive and democratizing, an art where the extraordinary dream is a universal possession. Yet twentieth-century radical art has hardly ever managed to circumvent the system of distribution which divides us into perspicacious élites and pulp-loving masses.

There is another side to this. Kurt Vonnegut, marketed as a science fiction and slapstick popular writer, is the opposite of under-read; he is a best-seller. He is also, to my mind, underrated in Britain. His best books, like *Breakfast of Champions*, are original, exciting, ambitious and, though they do not insist on the fact, highly experimental. Yet their mass-market reputation seems to signal to the critics "not serious; for pulp-lovers only". Because Vonnegut is popular, he is not perceived as experimental. It is not just a question of how he is perceived and presented; Vonnegut has made some very different stylistic choices from Burns.

Of course, some serious writers might just prefer being underrated to being unread.

Eric Korn

William de Morgan was sixty-seven when he published his first novel. He had been a celebrated potter and tiler, partner of William Morris. *Joseph Vance* (1906) brought him instant celebrity in a second sphere: he published a new book each year till 1911. After his death in 1917 came two posthumous novels, instant oblivion. Apart from *Joseph Vance*, an OUP World's Classic in 1954, there have been no reprints: second-hand copies of his diverse works are neither scarce nor dear. Timorously reading *Somehow Good* (1908) I found pleasures unexpected, mild, prolonged. His contemporaries thought of him as a literary coelacanth, a strange early Victorian survival (and compared him, absurdly, with Thackeray and Dickens); he seems now thoroughly Edwardian, a sample of that valuable but not quite gem-grade material that lies around in abundance awaiting the prospector, while the more famous workings (the Conrad Mine, the Wells Pit, the James Deep Drift) near exhaustion.

Early Victorian his plots certainly were. In new London suburbs are enacted dramas of lost heirs and lost memory, doubtful paternity, mistaken identity, heroic vows of silence. There is ruthless manipulation of outrageous contrivance: but the author's engaging detachment, his distancing and commenting on the contrivance, is neither Victorian nor Edwardian. Twenty years before *Somehow Good* opens, Rosalind Nightingale has been seduced on the way to her waiting bridegroom in India. She marries him, gives birth too promptly, is spurned, returns to England with her infant daughter, resumes not her maiden but her stepfather's name. Her husband, refused divorce on a technicality, travels to forget. He forgets with a vengeance. Rich, under a new name, accidentally without ID, he returns to London after twenty years, falls into chance conversation on a tube-train with his wife's now grown daughter. Before they can be properly introduced he is electrocuted (reaching under the seat for a dropped coin) into severe retrograde amnesia. His new friend takes him home to nurse him: her mother, naturally, recognizes her husband but decides to keep mum and remarry him. She does: and spends five hundred uncomfortable pages fearfuly half-helping him recover his identity; he is scarcely less uncomfortable, having a faint recollection that he has an extant wife already. All comes right with the help of a seaside-pier electric-shock machine: memory is recovered, forgiveness and legitimation assured.

The pleasures of the book outweigh the irritations of cosiness and lackadaisicality: they are de Morgan's genuine sweetness of tone, the density of his domestic scene-painting, above all the self-conscious ingenuity with which the dénouement is deferred. Between them, husband and wife have five surnames; at one point the two halves of the secret pass on a foggy stair. "We hope our reader was not misled, as we ourselves were, when Mrs Nightingale first saw the name on Fenwick's arm, into supposing that she accepted it as his real name." The novelist shows off his machinery as proudly as the Centre Pompidou, and with the same period charm.

THE DHIMMI

Jews and Christians under Islam

by Bat Ye'Or

This enlightening book examines the fate of the Christian and Jewish communities who were subjected to Muslim domination after the conquest of their homelands. These peoples, who were governed by their victors according to a specific legal system, the *Dhimma*, became known as *dhimmis*.

This book is essential reading for an understanding of the current problems in the Middle East. Originally published in French, Bat Ye'or's work achieved European acclaim. *Le Monde* described it as 'a unique reference book', *Le Figaro* as 'enlightening'. The text has been substantially updated for the new English edition and the important documentary section enlarged, particularly with regard to the Christians of Syria and Lebanon during the nineteenth century. Preface by Professor Jacques Ellul. 444pp.

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NEGLECTED FICTIONS

Alice Thomas Ellis

I don't know whether one can count the Bible as a neglected book. I read it a lot, much of the time with my mouth hanging open, because in between the more familiar passages with which most of us are conversant from sermons, homilies, quotations etc there is to be found evidence of such evil-doing – massacres, dirty tricks and plain old sin – that today's gutter press loses much of its power to astonish. Until I got to grips with the Bible I had naively supposed that real wickedness was of fairly recent origin. Not that the prophets hadn't noticed what was going on. Ezekiel for one minces no words : "Wherefore, O harlot," he remarks roundly, addressing Jerusalem, "hear the word of the Lord . . . your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite." I don't quite know why, but that sounds most grossly offensive. Ever since Freud, or possibly before, people have been saying knowingly that the Song of Songs is not quite what it seems, but to those interested in the dingier recesses of the psyche I commend Ezekiel 16. The state of mind of the author offers rich matter for speculation.

There are, however, more cheerful aspects to the Bible, especially in Paralipomenon, and the Book of Tobias is a splendid tale comprising a quest, an angel in disguise, a maiden possessed of a devil, a fearsome fish and a dog. Tobias the elder was an excellent old person whose hobby was burying people against the express orders of King Sennacherib. One day "wearied of burying" he lay down for a nap under the house wall and a swallow shat in his eye and he went blind. His wife Anna then became the breadwinner and went to work every day, weaving. Returning one evening with her pay – in this case, a young kid – she was extremely annoyed to be told by her husband to return it in case it had been stolen. The passage ends: "And with these and such like words she upbraided him." It is such glimpses of human nature as this which make the tale so compelling.

J. Enoch Powell

Whatever happened to Zola? In 1889 one could be, and was, imprisoned for translating him into English. After 1877 he could sell anything in French until his death in 1902. After the Second World War he rated in Paris at least two complete paperback editions. In England nowadays, however, mention, let alone commendation, of the serial romance of twenty, genetically connected catastrophes – the history of the Rougon-Macquarts – meets with incredulity where it does not confront blank ignorance.

It must, I suppose, be a sign of some fault – genetic, perhaps? – on my part to find Zola gripping when Balzac is boring, genuine when Hugo is artificial, comparable in power with Stendhal and in style as unforgettable as Proust. If that be sin, "I am the most offending soul alive". In those precious two or three weeks of every year that are ritually consecrated to France and the French, in which it is sacrilege to read a page of English, the choice of novel is crucial. I must confess – why not? – that from the year that I picked *La Fortune des Rougons*, I knew that there would be no escape, no turning back: year by passing year it would have to be Zola, until *Le Docteur Pascal* was finished.

Oh, but it doesn't translate! I dare say not. What *does* translate? But if translated Zola was enough to get the translator into prison a hundred years ago, there must surely be something about him that will penetrate the screen of translation today.

S. S. Prawer

Despite *Fiddler on the Roof*, the works of the Yiddish writer who called himself Sholem Aleykhem are still virgin territory to many English-speaking readers. One of his writings which I relish particularly is a nest of sketches entitled *Progress Comes to Kasrilevke* (1914/15), describing the return of an emigrant to the little Ukrainian town that had been the scene of many earlier pieces, and the changes he finds there. It focuses on differences of class and status, on social rivalries and varying attitudes to religious precept, which come to the fore in the rivalry of two newspapers called *The Skullcap* and *The Homburg*. Both are written in Yiddish, but editors, contributors and readers are drawn into a conflict between Hebraists and Yiddishists that had been exacerbated by the Czernovitz Conference of 1908 which declared Yiddish a national language of the Jews alongside Hebrew. To evoke these changes and conflicts, Sholem Aleykhem's narrator introduces a marvellous gallery of small-town types, ranging from matchmakers to littérateurs, from shopkeepers to actors – compulsive talkers all, whose speech-rhythms pervade the whole narrative. The story is humorous, yet also sharply observant and elegiac; it is set in an old-world *shtetl*, yet the conditions its author encountered in America may also be perceived within it; it evokes a vanished, a murdered, world, yet it speaks directly of aspirations, conflicts, rivalries and solidarities we know in lives lived out in a very different setting. It is worth learning Yiddish to savour the richness of a language in which characters reveal their nature as much by the way they shape their speech as by the surface meaning of their words. Those to whom that avenue is closed, however, may find a byway: a serviceable American translation by Curt Leviant, contained in a volume entitled *Stories and Satires* (Yoseloff, 1959) which also makes further delightful forays into regions of this great writer's work that have been left unexplored by other translators and anthologists.

Frederic Raphael

Vladimir Nabokov always rated H. G. Wells above Joseph Conrad, though he confessed that he had not read *Kipps* again after the age of fifteen. I have admired Alfred Hayes for the best part of thirty years, but I have not read *In Love* for almost as long. When I went to confirm my opinion, I found that someone must have admired the novella as much as I: it has disappeared from my shelves. The dust-jacket of a later book is badged with effusive comment on *In Love* from J. Maclaren-Ross ("A work of art"), Antonia White ("A complete success"), John Lehmann ("Quite unforgettable"), Stevie Smith ("Absolute knowledge, comicality and pity"), Elizabeth Bowen ("A little masterpiece") and even the *TLS* ("Brilliant"). With such sponsors, what reputation could survive? Hayes's other books include *The Girl On The Via Flaminia* and *All Thy Conquests*, which make excellent use of his war service in Italy, but *In Love* is a flawless, perfectly cut gem. Its eroticism is tactful (but how telling was the use of a single black curl on a rumpled sheet!) and its mood elegiac (how old the forty-year-old hero seemed in 1954!). The story is of two lovers and the rich, rather nice, dull man who comes between them, with a thousand dollars for a night. The New York of the 1940s is slyly, knowingly sketched in. The girl is never named, but who will forget the touch of scent between her legs or how the door-knob sometimes turned as she sat alone in her apartment, without the protection of the man who might have made her his own, as they used to say? My old friend Guy Ramsey, long dead, not forgotten, said that *In Love* was infallible with the accuracy of true art. I hope and believe he was right.

Gavin Ewart

Robbery Under Arms by Rolf Boldrewood (pseudonym of Thomas Alexander Browne, a magistrate), the famous novel about Australian bushrangers in the early days, was published in Melbourne in 1888. It's first-class narrative, foreshadowing Hemingway in its demotic style, exciting and absorbingly interesting. The toff who lives in the bush and steals the racehorses of his fellow "gentlemen", which he disguises and enters as outsiders at tremendous odds – himself hobnobbing with the owners at the race-meetings – is a remarkable character. Even more remarkably, the story is, apparently, true. There have been various editions (including an Irish version in 1936) but it's often been hard to find; Penguin at last now have one.

John Bayley

Patrick Hamilton is remembered for thrillers like *Rope* (1929) and *Gas Light* (1939), which were successes on stage and film, and *Hangover Square* (1941), a novel somewhat in the manner of Simenon. His one real masterpiece, however, is the trilogy *Twenty Thousand Streets Under the Sky*, published in 1935. The first part, *The Midnight Bell* (the name of a pub), came out five years earlier.

As the title suggests it is a panoramic novel about London – London between Barons Court and Piccadilly. The main characters are a barman, a barmaid who loves him and is trying to get a job as a nanny, and a girl whom he loves who has become a prostitute. But that synopsis is misleading: the characters have an



Patrick Hamilton in 1931

individuality, an inner life and a refinement of humour which are miles away from the stereotypes they suggest. Numerous minor characters exist in more or less genteel poverty, and worry themselves and each other in ways that are irresistibly funny and touching. The humour and observation have no debt to other fiction, nor has the novel's atmosphere. It is entirely original, unfashionable and unserious in the sense that all good novels are ("seriousness" usually only needs to be claimed for the bad ones). I believe the author was a Marxist and an alcoholic but you would never guess it. I do not set up as the book's sole admirer; many good judges have praised it: Michael Holroyd has written a discerning tribute. But for some reason it never caught on, never managed to make a comeback after the war, and as far as I know it is now unavailable. It is a classic, and should certainly be republished.

Hubert Butler

Howard Sturgis's *Belchamber* was first published in 1904 and republished in the World's Classics in 1935 with an introducion by Gerard Hopkins. "It presents", says Hopkins, "what few English novelists have succeeded in presenting, tragedy in urbane surroundings . . . . It is a leisurely book and, in a sense, harks back to the tradition of Thackeray but it is has a roundness of conception and a consciousness of design not common on this side of the Channel."

When Hopkins was a young man, he was entertained by Sturgis in his home at Windsor. Sturgis was an Anglo-American, a friend of Henry James, and one met at his house court officials, Members of Parliament and many leading writers. It was the golden sunset of the aristocracy in England, and Sturgis, susceptible to its glamour, could see it with American detachment. He chose to write of one of its victims. The young Marquis of Belchamber inherited an enfeebled body from two generations of debauched Belchambers, and a strict sense of justice, integrity and honour from his sternly religious Scottish mother. He was a scholar and would have liked to stay on at Cambridge as had his friend and mentor, Gerald Newby, a young socialist don with whom he discussed the new radicalism, "the brotherhood of man" and "the aristocracy of the intellect". This happy period ends abruptly when he is summoned home to his twenty-first birthday celebrations, the tenants' dinner and the ball, at which he is to "take his place in the county". He secretly dreamed of surrendering his estates to his popular and conventional younger brother. With Newby's assistance and his own money he had hoped to found a sort of working-class university in London's East End. But Newby is the first to fail him. As they drive together through the vast Belchamber woods to the dreaded party, Newby asks him, "Where do you begin?" "Where do I begin?" Belchamber repeats in bewilderment, then slowly realizes that Newby too has succumbed to the mystique of his historic house and that he will never be able to opt out of his inheritance. Everybody is interested in what he represents, nobody in what he is. He is trapped into a loveless marriage with bitter consequences. It is not a mawkish or a hackneyed story. It is full of wit and irony and sensitive perceptions.

To recall Hopkins again: "It is a true, if minor, classic . . . a work of imagination deeply felt, truly observed and achieved with a sense of style and architecture."

A. J. Ayer

One of my favourite books is W. H. Mallock's *The New Republic*. It was first published in 1877, when its author was aged twenty-eight. It was reprinted between the wars by Michael Joseph in their collection The Rosemary Library, but I believe that it has now fallen into neglect. It is a *roman à clef*, the account of a weekend spent at a country house by characters portraying such contemporary luminaries as Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, Herbert Spencer, John Ruskin, Dr Jowett and W. K. Clifford, who try and fail to lay the groundwork of a modern Utopia. The tone of the book is satirical and the mockery of Walter Pater and Dr Jowett particularly effective. W. H. Mallock, who died in 1923, was a prolific author but never repeated the success of *The New Republic*.

Julia Briggs

E. Nesbit's second novel, *The Secret of Kyriels*, written for adults, is a splendid example of the Victorian Gothic, rich with echoes of *Jane Eyre*, but with a symbolic landscape and structure all its own. Judging by the uncut pages of the copy in the Bodleian, it can scarcely have been opened since an early reviewer claimed it was "not poetical, nor reflective nor psychologically interesting" and regretted that the author had been unable to invent "a secret respectable beyond suspicion". By today's standards, the secret is surprisingly respectable; since the Mad Woman locked up in the New House is being punished for an infidelity that never took place – she is the innocent victim of an act of malice. Her rescuers find Edith (named after her author) sitting in an inner courtyard entirely invisible from outside the house, wrapped in furs, under a dead vine – a poignant vision of rejected sexuality.

The topography of the New House is consistently and startlingly Freudian – its courtyard and hidden passages designating it as female, while the Old House, with its dark library and outlook, stands for the male world. When Edith's daughter, the real heroine, is imprisoned in the New House through the machinations of her lascivious West Indian cousin Bertram, the hero must rescue her by climbing down inside a round tower, and then along a secret underwater passage that comes up beneath the New House – the last trapdoor yields only to the greatest pressure. After this forced but necessary entry, the sluice-gates open and the passage is flooded. With its opening, the heroine finds the will that gives her rightful possession of the New House. Interestingly, she insists that her husband take her name, and that of the house. Though the plot creaks, the novel's theme – how women can live and love in a world dominated by male aggression, fears and possessiveness – shows no signs of dating.

NEGLECTED FICTIONS

Julian Barnes

I can't think of any British fiction which cries out to be reprinted (indeed, the problem is more the opposite: writers long since decently buried are being exhumed by publishers who press a grisly mouth-to-mouth on the ochre jaw). Amongst foreign fiction what needs to be better known is, paradoxically, the fiction that is already very well known. Translation into English is often a hideous lottery for the foreign writer. Some are fortunate: Proust has struck lucky twice, so has Chekhov; Mauriac got Gerard Hopkins; Calvino got William Weaver; Nabokov characteristically fixed things by getting himself (or keeping the job in the family). The Russians have tended to do pretty well; the French less so. I was talking earlier in the year to France's best novelist, who was still boiling from the fact that his first successful novel was translated into English by someone who, he said, clearly hated the book and changed lots of things in it. Translators, by and large, are no more than a convenience to publishers, paid a microscopic royalty if any at all. If your work is given such low status, you have to be incorrigibly high-minded to do it as well as it deserves: who can blame the translator on a flat fee who can't be bothered to get it right (it's not just English translators, of course: a French translator of one of my books cut about fifteen pages here and there through the book, presumably because he thought they were too long-winded). I picked up a Penguin Zola the other day and was appalled at the crudity of its translation: it was writing-by-numbers like painting-by-numbers. For decades publishers kept on churning out the old Eleanor Marx version (so derided by Nabokov, who doubtless got a political as well as intellectual thrill at its badness) of *Madame Bovary*. These books make money; they will be set texts for generations; yet many of them exist in shocking editions. Part of our seriousness as a culture ought to lie in correctly representing other cultures; at the moment this happens spasmodically.

Daniel Bell

My candidate, though it is more fable than fiction, is Ignazio Silone's *School for Dictators*, first published in 1939 and rewritten in 1962, but still neglected. It is a dialogue between Mr Double You, who hopes to become dictator of the United States (abetted by his ideological adviser, Professor Pickup, the inventor of pantautology, a corn-fed mixture of Machiavelli and Dr Pangloss), and Thomas the Cynic, who will instruct them in the *arcana respublicae*, the black arts of mass deception.

Much of political history is ransacked to provide telling illustration of the genius of opportunism, which is the mark of the successful politician. Many of the entertaining stories are about Mussolini (and his early pornographic novels), but such is the quicksilver mirror of gullibility that the reflections apply as well to a Tito of yesterday, the *adeste Fidelismo* of today and, unhappily, to whomever becomes the *primum mobile* of tomorrow.

As for a novel, I would name Roger Martin du Gard's *The World of the Thibaults*, the masterpiece of a genre that has now almost completely disappeared, the *roman fleuve*. Its creation flowed over a long period: begun in 1922, the first seven parts, *Les Thibaults*, were not completed until 1929; and after seven years, Martin du Gard returned to write three further parts, and an epilogue, *L'Été, 1914*, published in 1939. In structure, however, there is a discontinuity of composition, consisting of separate episodes rather than an uninterrupted flow of narrative, thus revealing a twentieth-century sensibility. Martin du Gard won the Nobel Prize in 1939, and years later a paperback edition appeared in the United States with an introduction by Albert Camus, yet it is not widely read; probably because of its old-fashioned virtue.

The Thibaults is a family chronicle about the father, Oscar, a model of middle-class rectitude, and his two sons – Antoine, who becomes a doctor, and Jacques, a rebel who lives in agonizing tension with his father. It is not only an extraordinary panorama of bourgeois life from 1890 to the beginning of the First World War, but also a philosophical novel about the vicissitudes of faith: the agnosticism of Antoine, the socialist pacifism of Jacques and the Catholic orthodoxy of the older Thibault, as played out in the several milieux in which they live. It is also about the tension between the serious and "responsible" people, and the ideologists and rebels. In the end, all are defeated. Jacques is disillusioned by the behaviour of his comrades at the outbreak of the war, takes up an aeroplane to drop pamphlets exhorting all soldiers not to kill one another, and crashes. Antoine, his lungs corroded by poison gas, commits suicide.

It is a novel which brilliantly replays the different surfaces of the private worlds of moral conflict with the public worlds of abstract beliefs, told impassively, with a Spinozian concern, as Nicola Chiaramonte once put it, to understand and not to judge. Yet it is also the last novel about a moral order that was once shared by everybody, orthodox and rebels, in which each person accepted the responsibility for his actions, rather than justifying behaviour by some "cause". As Antoine writes in his diary, as he is dying, nothing much is to be hoped from man for thousands of years, and one's duty is to distrust the ideologies of the moment. His testament to his infant nephew, the son of Jacques, is that he should "embrace no comforting doctrines", but "grope in the dark alone". It is a cold message to leave on one's bier; but it is what he learned from walking the stumbling stones of history.

Caspar Weinberger

My usual taste is for classical nineteenth-century English and American novels, and I do not read much military fiction. I have settled, however, on a new novel that is now the talk of the United States and does seem to me to deserve to be better known elsewhere.

The Search for the Red October by Tom Clancy (US Naval Institute) tells the story of the defection to the United States of a Lithuanian who has risen to the command of a Soviet nuclear missile submarine, despite his fierce hatred of the Soviet system and its military bureaucracy. But this in not your ordinary defection, for Captain Marko Ramius brings his submarine with him. In fast paced point and counter point, the compelling narrative moves between the Soviets' attempts to block the loss of "The Red October" by the use of a large fraction of their total naval strength, and the combined efforts of the American and British navies, first to deal with what appears to be the beginning of a major naval attack by the USSR, and ultimately to help "The Red October" find safe anchorage in the United States.

The technical detail is vast and accurate, remarkably so for an author who originally had no background or experience. Critics who take themselves seriously will no doubt fault the characterization as weak and unrealized, but none except the most jaded will be anything but enthralled by the swift and expertly built crescendo of narrative excitement, the intricacy of the plot, and the chilling but wholly believable series of tightly-knit episodes that build, through many subclimaxes, to a most exciting and satisfying conclusion.

There are also many lessons here for those who want to keep the peace. This is emphatically not a work of propaganda. It is rather a splendid and riveting story that demands to be finished at one sitting.

Shirley Hazzard

I know of no novel with which I can truly compare Elsa Morante's *Menzogna e Sortilegio*, but the English writer to whom she is closest in this work is Thomas Hardy. Her theme is the working out of immense passions in obscure souls and settings. She combines a poet's power and exactitude with a poet's fearless confiding in the reader's own candour; and depicts, with consummate naturalness, a society inexorably close, in its forms and spirit and tragic sense, to the classical world. I can think of no other large modern work of fiction in which an impassioned familiarity of writer with material is combined with such pure sustained detachment in the telling.

Menzogna e Sortilegio was first published in 1949. In 1951, Adrienne Foulke's sensitive English translation was issued, in mutilated form, under the inept title *House of Liars*. A complete version of this powerful book should be available to the English speaking world.

Another Italian novel of the same period, Raffaele La Capria's *Un giorno d'impazienza* also briefly appeared in English translation, and deserves to be better known outside Italy; as does a much earlier work, Luigi Gualdo's fine realist novel, *Decadenza*.

I'm astonished to learn that Frank Tuohy's excellent novel of contemporary Poland, *The Ice Saints*, is out of print. It would be good, too, to see Alice Ritchie's 1928 novel, *The Peacemakers* – set in the League of Nations, and discussed in Leonard Woolf's memoirs – back in circulation; and Margaret Dick's *Rhyme or Reason*, which first appeared in 1959. And should not Elizabeth Harrower's fiction be better known outside her native Australia?

Anthony Burgess

This masterpiece, perhaps the most considerable English – as opposed to Anglo-Polish or Anglo-Irish – novel of the twentieth century, continues to lack readers. For that matter, Ford Madox Ford's *Parade's End* continues to lack a British publisher, since the Bodley Head edition presents it as a trilogy when it is, as the American edition continues to demonstrate, a tetralogy. Graham Greene must be blamed for the truncation: he, as editor, took too seriously Ford's expression of dissatisfaction with the fourth novel of the sequence. What is needed is a new Penguin one-volume edition. The work remains the best novel of the Great War that we have, and Christopher Tietjens is perhaps the most complex and rounded character in twentieth-century fiction. The end of a phase of English social history is devastatingly delineated, and the technique is a brilliant summation of what fictional modernism is about.

W. W. Robson

A book long out of print that I should like to see current again is *Memories of the Future: Being memoirs of the years 1915–1972 written in the Year of Grace 1988 by Opal, Lady Porstock*, published in 1923 by Methuen. Its genre is that of parody, a mild skit on the typical autobiographies of society ladies, but its main purpose is to satirize contemporary fads and fancies, about health, education, politics, and religion – it is most serious, least ironical, when on the subject of religion, which is to be expected, as the author was Ronald Knox. I think this forgotten book is Knox's best work in fiction, with the exception of *Let Dons Delight*. The future according to Opal has none of the horrors we are threatened with in *Brave New World* or *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: with gentle irony Knox indicates that the England of 1988 will not be very different from the England of 1923, and he may have proved a better prophet than Huxley or Orwell. Sometimes, as in the sermon of Canon Dives hoping "to include Evil and Good under a Higher Synthesis", the voice is obviously that of the ironic priest himself, but now and then the humour is distinctive of Opal. One small sample:

> I was introduced to the great Hungarian novelist Myslok. He asked how many of his works I had read; I said none. As he seemed disappointed, I added that I had recently had to spend most of my time reading geography. "Geography!" he said. "What is that? It is only the science of the earth, and what is earth? Only one big piece of dirt" – he pronounced the word with great emphasis and contempt. I was rather nettled, and said I supposed at that rate geography was very much the same as reading modern novels. He asked me which of his characters I liked best; I said I had not read any of his works. He said that was very strange, because they had all been translated into English. I said I always found translations of foreign books dull reading; somehow the thing altered so much in the process. He agreed with me enthusiastically, and said that when his last novel was translated the English publisher had insisted on cutting out the part where the hero (I forget his name now) trampled on the heroine because he did not like her dress. I was feeling rather vague and inattentive, and asked, "Did it kill her?" He said no, but she limped like a crab all the rest of the book.

Eugen Weber

What do R. M. du Gard's *Jean Barois* and Paul Bourget's *Le Disciple* have in common? Both etch sharp pictures of the intellectual problems of their time, both have been translated long ago into serviceable English, neither is available in print. Nor would Emile Guillaumin's *Life of a Simple Man* be available, but for a long struggle almost lost to commercial publishers and university presses unwilling to take a chance on so obscure a book. So I shall skip minor classics like Agricol Perdiguier's *Mémoires d'un compagnon*, or Martin Nadaud's *Mémoires de Léonard, ancien garçon maçon*, which would richly repay translation, to recall another *roman vrai*, translated into English three-score years ago and unjustly forgotten: *The Notebooks of Captain Coignet*, one of Napoleon's *braves des braves*.

An illiterate orphan of eight, Jean-Roch is driven from home in the Yonne by a stepmother who torments and starves the children of her predecessor (a younger brother and sister were abandoned in the nearby forest). He works as shepherd and potboy, is taken up by a horsetrader, then rises through the ranks of Napoleon's armies, criss-crossing Europe by way of almost every battle on the Arc de Triomphe – Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Madrid, Wagram, Moscow, Waterloo – sometimes carrying chicken or wine-bottles in his grenadier's bearskin, among the first decorated with the *Légion d'honneur*, but never wounded in the forty-eight engagements that he fought.

Placed on half pay at thirty-nine, this very ordinary extraordinary man who only learnt to read at thirty-three on the eve of his commission, had fifty more years to live under three further monarchies before he died at eighty nine, in 1865. His recollections, which he privately printed and sold himself in the 1850s, and from which both Madelin and Arsène Houssaye have borrowed, provide the liveliest *grognard*'s-eye-view of epic times that one can wish to read. But cannot buy in English.

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NEGLECTED FICTIONS

Frank Tuohy

A writer's name will turn up in print again and again, yet no one bothers to inquire. In Edmund Wilson's "Bit between my teeth", Dawn Powell appears with Dos Passos and Faulkner among "older writers I always read". In a separate review of her last novel *The Golden Spur*, he placed her on a level with Anthony Powell, Evelyn Waugh, Muriel Spark. Wilson was often over-kindly to women writers who had been friends: it was a laudatory reference by Gore Vidal which sent me after Dawn Powell (1897–1965). She wrote fifteen books, of which the London Library possesses two. *Turn Magic Wheel* (1936) starts very promisingly – a young writer shrinking from an encounter with the older woman he has satirized in his new novel, the divorced wife of a Hemingway-like figure who lives in Africa. *Turn Magic Wheel* has too many themes but the gently satirical picture of New York in its age of innocence, not too long ago, is an enchanting one. Innocence is still there in *The Golden Spur* (1963) but the satire has broadened out: two girls fear scandal if they share an apartment, so they invite the hero to join them. Dawn Powell treats men and women even-handedly. Wilson remarks that she is like the English "who do not insist on having the women in their fiction made attractive". Perhaps this is why – unlike writers of far less talent – she has not been reprinted. *The Golden Spur* is very entertaining but somebody should look at her other thirteen books – one of them called *Angels on Toast* – and give us a report.

Karl Miller

I have been re-reading Edward Hyams's translation of *The Sponger* by Jules Renard (*L'Ecornifleur*, 1892), which does not seem to be all that well known in Britain. The story is told by a man who poses as a poet – and who *is* a poet, in the telling. He battens on a middle-class couple – a superior being who is also their parasite. *The Sponger* may have appealed to a prevailing taste of the 1950s – England's 1950s, that is – when I last read it, though I remember trying in vain to press this French work on an English patriot, an enemy of "artists" and poseurs, and a writer of comic novels. Renard's novel feels different now – less didactic. It is as funny and as fresh as before. "Harsh, frowning, venerable on the tip of its promontory", an old seaside fort is "like a great principle no longer observed".

Douglas Hurd

Disraeli loved the exaggerated world of high Victorian society, the show of wealth and style in country houses, clubs, balls, and above all in endless dinners. In *Lothair* he lovingly and repeatedly describes that world. Every leading character is beautiful and rich. The Roman Catholic and and Anglican churches and the cause of Italian nationalism, each represented by a woman, struggle for the soul of an immensely rich and beautiful young lord, backed respectively by a cardinal and a cloud of flitting monsignori, amiable Anglican duchesses and countesses, and mysterious conspirators. The lady who represents Italy wins the first round, and the scene shifts from England to Italy where Lothair enlists in a march alongside Garibaldi to free Rome from the Pope. Lothair is wounded and captured, and nursed back from a nervous breakdown in Rome. The Cardinal makes a final bid for his soul by trying to persuade him that in fact he had fought *for* the Pope against the Nationalists, and been succoured by the Virgin Mary. His Eminence points out in a superb interview that all the evidence supports this view, and that the only contrary evidence, namely that of Lothair himself, can safely be discounted. Lothair breaks free, journeys unconvincingly to Greece and Jerusalem, but finally returns to enjoy the end of another London season, and the love of the daughter of the Anglican duchess.

The style, like the plot, often overflows from the rich to the preposterous, notably in the descriptions of aristocratic and clerical life. It is as if *The Young Visiters* had been written by Norman St John Stevas. But just as the dish becomes cloying, vinegar is added to the salad, and we realize that Disraeli enjoyed mocking what he loved. *Lothair* is full of splendidly quotable passages, now forgotten, and it is mainly for these nuggets that it deserves to be read. An American artist on the English aristocracy:

> What I admire in the order in which you belong is that they do live in the air, that they excel in athletic sports; that they can only speak one language; and that they never read. This is not a complete education, but it is the highest education since the Greek.

And the Bond Street jeweller on the Duchess of Havant's pearls:

> I told her Grace, "Wear them whenever you can, wear them at breakfast"; and her Grace follows my advice. She does wear them at breakfast. I go down to Havant Castle every year to see her Grace's pearls, and I wipe every one of them myself, and let them lie on a sunny bank in the garden, in a westerly wind, for hours and days together. Their complexion would have been ruined had it not been for this treatment. Pearls are like girls, my Lord, they require quite as much attention.

Julian Symons

Frances Newman (1888–1928) was an American writer, once briefly celebrated, now completely forgotten. *The Hard-Boiled Virgin*, the first of her two novels, was immensely successful on its publication in 1926, in part perhaps because of the misleadingly sensational title, which shocked Atlanta into convulsions (she was born and mostly lived there) and caused its banning in Boston; but in part also because it was praised by many of the most prominent novelists of the time.

The book is a series of episodes in the life of an Atlanta girl, none more than eight pages long, none containing a line of dialogue. Such a style might sound like no more than a clever trick, but in fact it was perfectly suited to a writer who always preferred inference to statement. It helped her to write, without using a single sexual word, such scenes as that in which a gentlemanly-looking young man at whom Katharine Faraday smiles across a narrow Venetian canal, immediately drops the guitar he has been strumming and exposes himself. Katharine's attempts to find a man who will fulfil her romantic illusions, and her final discovery that the preservation of such illusions is necessary to her existence, are shown to us with the wit and evasive daring of Restoration comedy. The book was, Frances Newman claimed, "the first novel in which a woman ever told the truth about how women feel", and this is true in the sense that Katharine concludes that what Southerners name as love should really be called sexual fulfilment. But there is more to the book than such early feminism. Unlike most of the American literary dandies of the 1920s, Frances Newman had something real and interesting to write about, and her style turned this story of a Southern girl's emotional education into a wonderfully witty and elegant comedy of manners.

Anthony Powell

The only novels I can think of off the cuff which are not available, and ought to be, are, as it happens, both by Austrian writers. So far as I know the final unfinished volume of Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* has never appeared in English, and I believe has some very good moments. It really should be on offer to round off Musil's great panorama of Viennese life. The other novelist is Alexander Lernet-Holenia (1896–1976), whose *A Young Gentleman in Poland* (1933), and *The Standard* (1936), were both excellently translated into English by Alan Harris. The former is a little like early Waugh, light-hearted, savage, a touch of fantasy, about a German hussar lieutenant, who gets left behind the lines in Poland during the first war. *The Standard* is the sort of novel the English do not much run to, romantic, realistic, satirical, moving. It is about the crack-up of the Austro-Hungarian army in 1918. Lernet-Holenia wrote much else too, which would probably be worth translating – I notice that a French translation of *The Standard* has been recently appearing in the French literary magazine *Cahiers de L'Energumène* (Editions Gérard-Julien Salvy), which suggests renewed interest.

Hermione Lee

The question set me thinking, not so much about underrated books, but about books which were once controversial or startling, read with passion and excitement, and which time has smoothed down into "interesting" historical documents. Of these, I'm especially fond of those marvellous Victorian autobiographies (often disguised as fiction) where the writer looks back on his bitter struggle with religious or paternal oppressiveness, with poverty or schooltime humiliation, and describes himself emerging from these tunnels into a self-determining adulthood. My favourites are Trollope's ingenuous *Autobiography*, so painfully truthful about his horrible childhood, so naively proud of his successes; Edmund Gosse's humane and witty *Father and Son*, an escape from a Plymouth Brethren upbringing; and Mark Rutherford's scrupulous, moving and absorbing account, in his *Autobiography* and *Deliverance*, of a hard-won development from lukewarm religious faith into political and moral maturity. Rutherford – the pseudonym of William Hale White – tends to be overshadowed by the "big" Victorians, like his friend George Eliot – but he's the author, also, of some striking and surprising novels (*The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, *Catherine Furze*, *Clara Hopgood*) in which political, personal and sexual independence are struggled for with strenuous honesty. Madge Hopgood, for instance, is one of the first Victorian heroines to decide on unmarried motherhood – and she's no pitiable victim, like Tess Durbeyfield, but a cogent and determined adult. Mark Rutherford is in print now, thanks to the Hogarth Press, but deserves to be better known. Those "minor" Victorians can still pack a punch.

John Fuller

The early work of Shirley Jackson, particularly her superb collection of short stories, *The Lottery*, deserves to be better known. Like, for example, her contemporaries Helen Eustis in *The Horizontal Man* or Patricia Highsmith in *Strangers on a Train*, Jackson's importance in *The Lottery* (1949) and in her novel *Hangsaman* (1951) was to have introduced the observations of clinical psychology into the most commonplace of American small-town settings, with chilling results. As Highsmith became a writer of thrillers, so Jackson was diverted into the supernatural. Her last novels, filmed with modest success, were Gothic hauntings not to be compared with the brilliant anatomy of evil in *The Lottery*. Here, Jackson makes us shudder at the purely human way in which a mind can be manipulated. In some of the best stories these are simply social and cultural assumptions: petty power-politics of new neighbours, for example, shockingly innocent naggings of racial prejudice, or the casual creation of outcasts. "After you, my dear Alphonse" and "Seven Types of Ambiguity" are classics of this kind. Her most characteristic stories involve the lacerating self-effacement, breakdown or victimization of women – finely controlled cries of panic from the bland suburb, as in "The Tooth", "Pillar of Salt", or the title-story, which obsessed its readers in the *New Yorker* and was the occasion of the largest mail ever received by that magazine on a piece of fiction. Jackson also wrote well on the art of narrative in a posthumous collection I have seen, and her domestic piece *Life among the Savages* is an object-lesson in the art of avoiding sentimentality, touching and funny. But *The Lottery* at least ought always to be in print.

Daniel J. Boorstin

Leo Szilard (1898–1964) spent half his scientific life trying to devise the controlled nuclear chain reaction required for an atomic bomb, and much of the rest of his life trying to prevent the destructive uses of nuclear fission. When Szilard, a Hungarian-born Jewish refugee, came to the United States in 1937, he had already conceived the possibility of controlled nuclear chain reaction. He urged Einstein to write the letter to President Franklin Roosevelt which persuaded him to establish the Manhattan Project to develop an atomic bomb in a non-lethal demonstration. With Enrico Fermi he received the basic patent for the nuclear fission reactor in 1945, but never had financial profit from it. In his *The Voice of the Dolphins and Other Stories* he reveals the delight and bewilderment of the great scientists of our age at the wonders they have wrought.

These futurist fantasies forecast the extravagance of technological progress in our time and the frustration of efforts to control its products. The Dolphins at the Vienna Institute for collaboration between American and Russian biologists devise a foolproof – and still tempting – system for preventing secret violations of disarmament agreements, but somehow it is not quite foolproof. A consequence of the widespread market for human sperm is the fortune accumulated by a prosperous donor, Mark Gable, who determines to "contribute to the happiness of mankind" by a foundation for the retardation of scientific progress. His committees occupy the leading scientists with processing fund-applications, and reward projects "considered promising and pretty certain to lead to publishable results". As their efforts are dissipated in the mania for current scientific fashions, the threat of basic scientific progress disappears. The Dolphins pose some tantalizing questions, such as "whether it would be correct to assume that Americans were free to say what they think, because they did not think what they were not free to say".

Gabriele Annan

Nikolai Leskov never seems to be a favourite even among secondary Russian fancies like Shchedrin, Kuprin, Bulgakov. Five of his stories were translated in 1962 by David Magarshack, with a marvellous introduction by V. S. Pritchett. Leskov, he says, "bursts upon the reader without art in a rambling, wily, diffuse, old-fashioned way. He shambles into his tales without embarrassment, indifferent to technique. . . . It is an old joke that Russians have a soul; but Leskov's characters *are* souls as well as being people. They embody imaginations and dreams; they are always dipping into unexpected layers of consciousness; they are always liable to drop off into the inherited mind of their race." Besides, Leskov moves – in both senses of the word: getting on with the story and touching your heart. But he never manipulates it. There is no sentimentality. My favourite story is not in Magarshack's collection: called "The Toupee Artist", it is about two lovers in a company of serf actors brutally separated by the *droit de seigneur*.

Terence de Vere White

Harriet has eyes "the glutinous black of treacle" and a "horrid uncouthness . . . the more noticeable in that she had a powerful zest for such aspects of existence as were intelligible to her". When Lewis Oman, an auctioneer's clerk, decides to marry her for her money she co-operates enthusiastically. Lewis's brother Patrick and Patrick's wife Elizabeth take Harriet off his hands when she proves useless at housekeeping. Lewis buys himself a nice place with Harriet's little fortune where he lives in style and sin with pretty Alice, Elizabeth's sister. Harriet becomes an embarrassment ("It isn't as if she felt anything"). Her keepers have no qualms about locking her up behind barred windows with her sick baby. No meat is wasted on her. When the family tries to have her decently buried, suspicion is aroused by the lice and her emaciated frame.

Elizabeth Jenkins's *Harriet* has had its friends since it was first published by Gollancz in 1934, when it won the *Femina Vie Heureuse* prize. It has been out of print since 1949.

Time has enriched such felicities in this stark novel as the chaplain's call on Elizabeth in her cell to tell her that her husband has died in his:

> It was with relief that she saw him at last close his prayer-book and prepare to go, because she knew it was past her dinner-time and that his presence was delaying the bringing of food; and food, though plain, was so delicious; looking forward to it, and receiving it and then eating it, was the pleasure and interest of her uneventful life. . . .

NEGLECTED FICTIONS

Marina Warner

The first European collector of fairy-tales, Giambattista Basile has been incomprehensibly neglected. His wonderful thesaurus of Neapolitan stories, the *Pentamerone* or *Lo Cunto deli Cunti* of 1634–6, is really essential pleasure for anyone who loves a master narrator. It might be an idea to republish N. M. Penzer's two-volume translation of 1932, which is based on Croce's Italian edition, and catches the mischief and the flourishes of the original. Fantasy of a different kind, but no less rich, Jan Potocki's *The Saragossa Manuscript* (1804) needs a proper, complete English version. Boris Vian (*L'Écume des jours*, 1947; *L'Arrache-Coeur*, 1953), one of the most appealing, imaginative and versatile figures of post-war Paris, seems shamefully forgotten in England, as is another, lyrical fabulist, Jules Supervielle (*Le Voleur d'enfants*, 1926). Perhaps not exactly fiction, *The Golden Legend* by Jacopus de Voragine, one of Caxton's early issues, would make a handy guide for travellers today, pretty much essential too now that the lives of the saints are fading from collective memory and altarpieces dedicated to St Roch or St Dymphna have become as impenetrable as representations of the Eight Taoist Immortals.

Michael Tanner

Hermann Broch's trilogy *The Sleepwalkers* was written a decade before the novel for which he is best known today, *The Death of Virgil*. Strange and difficult as that last book is, it is less puzzling but also in many respects less fascinating than *The Sleepwalkers*, which is written in a variety of modes, sometimes mutually enriching, sometimes merely disjunctive. The first novel of the trilogy takes place in 1888, its central character being a bewildered Romantic who follows what he regards as the high calling of the military life, while being passionately in love with a Bohemian call-girl, but duty-bound to marry into his class. It's a more or less straightforward narrative with ecstatic lyrical flights and enough self-subversions to satisfy contemporary tastes. It is also very moving. The second novel, which takes place in 1903, is about an Anarchist with religious leanings, and it registers, in the portrayal of the resentment-filled lives of its largely loathsome characters, a further breakdown in the values on which Broch saw Western civilization as being founded – Christian-Platonic values. The third novel, much the longest and most elaborate, has as its central figure a Realist, a deserter who insinuates himself into Trier society in 1917, and murders the Anarchist of the second book, a rival for the approval of the now collapsed Romantic of the first. There are in this third volume a variety of related sub-plots, and a series of essays on the disintegration of values.

If in some ways that makes the whole work sound like a grim parody of what is often regarded as "the German novel", that is to some extent the first impression that it gives. But the writing is often extraordinarily vivid, and the philosophical excursuses sometimes profound, even if they obtrude in a way that Thomas Mann's do not. For all its obvious faults, I find it heartening in its ambition and its unflinching, now most unfashionable high-mindedness.

John Sparrow

Forrest Reid's novels are out of fashion, but his writing was admired during his lifetime by other writers, notably E. M. Forster and Walter de la Mare. Like all his other books, *Pirates of the Spring* (1919) is about boys – though not *for* boys. He wrote after reading a critical article about his work:

> Nobody understands in the least what I am trying to do. In *Pirates*, for instance, I had a definite intention, a definite subject to be treated, but nobody seems to have seen anything but a series of boyish adventures – even the somewhat staring fact that not one of the boys is the same at the end of the book as he was at the beginning is unnoticed. Yet that *is* the story.

The boys in the book go to a day school, so there is a counterpoint between the worlds of school and family. Reid treats with perfect seriousness the friendships, quarrels, embarrassments, secrets, jokes and agonies of adolescence. The tensions between Catholic and Protestant (the scene is Northern Ireland, Reid's home for most of his life), between rich and poor, adults and young people, heterosexual and homosexual feelings, give depth to a novel that is never less than beautifully written and might well gain the author a new following among readers tired of today's slick and sensational or obscure and convoluted novels.

Francis King

Like Nabokov and Sybille Bedford, Edith de Born is one of those cosmopolitan writers who seem to belong nowhere and yet to be at home everywhere. Born and educated in Vienna, she married a French banker, has for many years lived in Belgium and writes in an English of impeccable distinction. Such is her background that it is hardly surprising that so many of her eighteen novels should have been concerned with the aristocratic, the moneyed, the famous and the cultivated. But in my favourite, *The Bidou Inheritance*, she shows a remarkable ability to enter into the lives of the middle-class inhabitants of a small French provincial town during the first thirty years or so of this century.

The book treats of two kinds of love: sexual love, love of money. Women novelists rarely choose to write of money and even more rarely do so well; but in delineating Bidou, miserly proprietor of a department store and secret writer of maxims in imitation of Montaigne, Madame de Born has created a character of Balzacian dimensions. Bidou's only daughter, Madeleine, is victim of both kinds of love. She becomes pregnant by a philanderer, and her father makes her work as his slave. Briefly, she experiences a spasm of rebellion; but when Bidou dies, leaving her an heiress, the unexpected fortune becomes, by a savage irony, the means whereby the dead tyrant still continues to impose his will on her. The conclusion of the novel is bitter: for a woman life is easier than for a man, since she has so much less choice in shaping her own destiny.

Here is a writer who, though she has always had her fervent admirers (Evelyn Waugh was one of them), ought to reach a far wider public. If it is true, as Thomas Browne said, that the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, then it is equally true that the iniquity of fame blindly scattereth her laurel.

David Lodge

Why some writers do not seem to "travel", in the vinous sense, across the Atlantic (in either direction) is a perennial mystery. Leonard Michaels is a contemporary American writer who, it seems to me, has hardly received due recognition in Britain. His novel *The Men's Club* (1981), very successful in the United States, was little noticed when Cape published it here. It is a kind of speeded-up, West Coast *Decameron*. A group of Californian husbands, refugees from the triumphs of the Women's Movement, come together in the home of one of them for mutual solace and support, and tell each other stories of their dealings with women. The stories are both funny and sad, as are the group dynamics of the occasion, which lead to a violent, cathartic climax. Michaels takes risky short-cuts as a writer: you hold your breath as you read him, and release it in explosions of laughter. He has honed the Jewish-American style of ironic humour into an instrument as sharp and delicate as a scalpel.

The Men's Club is still in print here, but not, alas, his second collection of stories, *I Would Have Saved Them If I Could*, my personal favourite among his works, which includes the definitive satire on the publish-or-perish syndrome in American academe ("Some Laughed") and possibly the shortest great short story in the language, "The Hand":

> I smacked my little boy. My anger was powerful. Like justice. Then I discovered no feeling in the hand. I said, "Listen, I want to explain the complexities to you." I spoke with seriousness and care, particularly of fathers. He asked, when I finished, if I wanted him to forgive me. I said yes. He said no. Like trumps.

Steven Runciman

Just as it is a mistake to revisit a place that one has loved after a long interval, so it is usually unwise to reread a book that one admired many years ago. In 1922, when I was a young undergraduate, there appeared a novel called *The Poor Man*. Its author, Stella Benson, is now almost entirely forgotten; but in those days one mentioned her rather in the same breath as Rose Macaulay. She was witty and satirical, but with more poetry in her writing than Macaulay ever showed. Indeed, she had the habit of heading her chapters with a short poem of her own; and *The Poor Man* begins with a short dramatic scene in verse, set in the Temple of Kwan-yin, which I now find a little embarrassing. But her poems are strangely



Stella Benson in 1911

moving; and it is sad that apart from one early volume they have never been collected.

The novel itself has an early type of anti-hero, a spotty, sickly, feckless young man with a touching sensibility, who falls for a beautiful and clever girl who is almost equally unsure of herself. The setting for the first chapters is San Francisco; and there are wicked pictures of intellectual life there. The scene then moves to China, where in the end the girl, who has done her best to be kind to the hero, can bear it no longer and rejects him cruelly and ashamedly. The descriptions of both California and China are vivid and make a poignant background to the human characters. The whole story is dotted with shrewd and amusing comments. Close to the beginning we hear that the hero cannot be called musical as he never makes remarks such as: "Moussorgsky is the spiritual son of Ouida and Charlemagne". Indeed, the whole book is tragic and compassionate and very funny; and one cannot ask more of a novel than that.

Stella Benson had written three novels already; and two more were to follow, both set in China: where she died, still, I think, in her thirties. She deserves to be better remembered.

Zinovy Zinik

At a time when children in the West were being corrupted, subconsciously, into believing that they were victims of the Oedipus complex, we Soviet Young Pioneers, born during the glorious epoch of Soviet Socialism's final victory, consciously developed an entirely new type of parricide complex, a complex which I call the Stalin complex. Passionate lovers of the Motherland, we were constantly on guard against even our own fathers lest they turn out to be enemies of the Soviet State and people. Since Stalin was for us God the Father, Godfather and Fatherland, he himself taught us to love him more than our own egotistical selves and at the same time to be ready to murder Him, if need be, for the sake of the victory of Communism all over the world. This is exactly what happened in 1956 when Khrushchev denounced Stalin's Cult of Personality. That case of ideological parricide lead to the partial elimination from school textbooks of a number of unforgettable legends (entirely fictional in origin) which helped Soviet boys and girls of my generation to develop the aforesaid Stalin complex. The most powerful of them was the legend of Pavlik Morozov, who betrayed his own father, a kulak, for hiding grain from the state authorities during Collectivization. For his heroism Pavlik was lured by enemies of the people into the forest, where he was axed to pieces. All described as though witnessed by Stalin himself.

In view of the revival of interest in the Gothic novel, these sado-masochistic legends and ballads ought to provide good family entertainment for those in the West disillusioned with Freudianism and fed up with either dissident or officially liberal Soviet writings, but who still retain an admiration for the world of Russian letters. Any pre-1956 edition of the Soviet schoolbook *Native Speech* (*Rodnaya Rech*, Uchpedgiz, Moskva) will contain these stories in their unabridged and uncensored versions.

Auberon Waugh

The first novel I ever reviewed was Shiva Naipaul's *Fireflies* (Deutsch, 1970) and it has haunted me ever since. A funny, sad, immensely moving book about "one of Trinidad's most important Indian families" – the Khojas – it is really a study in the fierce and cruel absurdities of gentility struggling to survive without money. Although set in the West Indies, it resonates wonderfully in provincial England.

The novel was a tremendous success when it came out, winning three prizes (Rhys Memorial, Winifred Holtby and Jock Campbell/*New Statesman*), but it is hard to find now. His second novel, *The Chip-Chip Gatherers* (Deutsch, 1973), which won the Whitbread Prize, was equally haunting but somehow gloomier and might not appeal to quite as large an audience, if republished first. Shiva Naipaul had a large and profoundly personal talent. In time, one comes to relish his gloom, but *Fireflies* is an essential introduction to the *oeuvre*, with its touches of comic relief which, by their recklessness, transform the whole narrative and frame the poignancy of the central character, a young lady of good family but no fortune who is required to marry a bus driver and confront the erosion of social values with dignity. It is undoubtedly one of the most original and successful novels published in the last twenty-five years. I wish more people knew about it.

Oliver Sacks

In 1866 Silas Weir Mitchell, a pioneer neurologist in the States, the first explorer of "phantom" limbs, "alien" limbs and the like, wrote, for his own amusement, *The Case of George Dedlow*, the story of a man who had lost all four of his limbs, and with this a large part of his self-of-self and individuality. This story was based on a real case, but shot through with Mitchell's rare imaginativeness and insight, and cast in the form of an "autobiographical" memoir:

> I found to my horror that at times I was less conscious of myself, of my own existence, than used to be the case. The sensation was so novel that it quite bewildered me. . . . Well aware of how absurd I might seem, I refrained from speaking of my case, and strove more keenly to analyse my feelings.

These feelings, profound disturbances of body-image and body-ego, as we would now say, "Dedlow", at once physician and patient, ascribes to "the eternal silence of the great ganglia subserving the limbs". Unknown to Mitchell, this piece was sent to the editor of the *Atlantic* magazine, who published it in July 1866, and encouraged him to write other "psychophysiological fictions". Weir Mitchell wrote several such in the ensuing years – how many, or where, it is now difficult to ascertain, for afraid that being known as a "writer" might hurt his neurological reputation, he published them in different places, and under a variety of pseudonyms. They are, to my mind, far more interesting, and far more "real", than his later, relatively conventional, novels. I wish that these remarkable "Neurological Ghost-Stories" (as he once called them), some lost for a century or more in the pages of long-defunct magazines, could be recovered from oblivion, collected and published.

NEGLECTED FICTIONS

Michael Wood

I'm not sure a winner of the Pulitzer Prize can be described as neglected, but I haven't heard Jean Stafford's name lately, and none of her books is in print in England. She died in 1979, at the age of sixty-three. Like many American writers, she had trained her imagination to interrogate violence, to watch its first tremors and last ripples. She wrote essays, novels, children's fiction and a profile of Lee Harvey Oswald's mother, but if we are to resurrect only one work it must be the *Collected Stories*. Her prose is exact and witty; there is a quiet gaiety even in some of her excruciating situations. I think of the old lady who has lost the use of verbs and adjectives, can only shout nouns and pronouns: "Hours. Him me. I her. Time." Stafford's characters are trapped in compulsions, stranded in bleak marriages and blank hospital beds, but they are not victims and they have no self-pity. They seek something like a clarification of their loneliness, the solace of austere understanding. One of these stories in particular has haunted me for years. Called "The Maiden", it is set in Heidelberg after the Second World War. The Germans at a dinner-party are gentle and civilized, the Americans clumsy and bewildered. One of the Germans, a lawyer, recounts his first case, a shabby murder trial some twenty years back. He lost, but was invited, as was then the custom, to attend the execution of his client. Formal attire was required: top hat and morning coat. The lawyer is jolly and precise in his description of the guillotine; fond in his memory of the fine weather on that distant morning. He went straight from the execution, all dressed up and nowhere to go, to propose to the woman who is now his adoring wife. They are a charming, unruffled couple, happy together. What obscure or horrifying lesson are we meant to learn here?

Anthony Quinton

In 1949, when L. P. Hartley's *The Boat* was published, I bought it, along with other items, for my mother to give away at Christmas. I wisely read it before handing it over for despatch and soon realized that if I was to spin it out for three days I should have to ration myself to a hundred and eighty pages a day. All Hartley's gifts are here and the book's presumably rather closely autobiographical nature preserves it, as it preserved *The Shrimp and the Anemone*, from the occasional thinness of his more speculative expeditions into corners of the social scene with which he was not directly familiar. Timothy, in the book, like Hartley, has been driven by the war from Venice back to England. He takes an attractive house in the country, bordered by a river on which he proposes to exercise himself with cultivated moderation in the handsome rowing-boat he has acquired. This excites the fury of the fishermen among his neighbours. He is also persecuted by his two frightful maids and bullied by a trio of politically conscious friends who write him wonderful long letters from positions closer to the heart of things than the Gloucestershire Avon. On his side are, more or less, the benevolent but gnomic gardener, Wimbush, and, unstintingly, the vicar's wife, Volumnia Pirbright, who, despite her matronly name, is a lean, Forsterian heroine. Is he worthy, he wonders anxiously, of her sacrifice? This is a humane and absorbing book with a theme that engaged all Hartley's powers.

Harold Hobson

John Henry Newman's experiences as a Fellow of Oriel set him on the road to a Cardinalate; they also gave him the material for a quite remarkable novel. *Loss and Gain: The story of a convert* (1848) draws extensively on Newman's life at the college, which he was forced to leave when he joined the Roman Catholic Church. The account of Charles Reding's abandonment of the Church of England is pictorially interesting in its descriptions of Oxford a century and a half ago, especially in its affection for Christ Church Meadow, with the laburnums, the elms and the plane-trees of the Long Walk burgeoning in the spring, and there are fascinating glimpses of the ecclesiastical buildings then scattered in the surrounding countryside.

Though rich in satire, *Loss and Gain* is deficient in action, which probably accounts for its comparative neglect. But personally I find Newman's interest in the tehnique of novel-writing, such as his comments on the problems of presenting a bore in fiction, absorbing. They reflect that intense concern for consummate artistry which caused some of his musical friends to compare him as a violinist with Paganini. Philosophically the book is gentler and less passionate than his *Apologia*, but it is stimulating to discover how much excitement Newman can draw from apparently simple questions, as when he discusses whether wayside crosses are doctrinally permissible. Yes, if they are an expression of a religious feeling already existing in a community; but no, if they are intended merely to create this feeling. For Newman himself these theological arguments are the heart of his story.

To a modern reader, however, who may think them irrelevant to the present age, *Loss and Gain* has, in another connection, an almost electrifying interest. Newman's colleague Thomas Mozley said that the Oriel Senior Common Room contained the most vigorous minds in Oxford, but he complained that its "most prominent talkers, preachers, and writers seemed to be always undermining, if not actually demolishing, received . . . institutions". *Loss and Gain* unconsciously substantiates this judgment, for it shows how a small group of devoted men (some of whom later were horrified to see what they had done) can effectively shake the establishment (in this case the Church of England) to its foundations.

Francis Wyndham

Valery Larbaud's short novel *Fermina Marquez* (1911) has never been translated into English. It seems to me one of those personal, intense, romantic books (like Eugène Fromentin's *Dominique*) which, if one responds to them at all, are likely to haunt one with a peculiar poignancy.

Larbaud (1881–1957) was an influential figure in the French literary scene of his day and also a distinguished (if minor) author on his own account. A passionate Anglophile, he translated (among other writers) Samuel Butler and James Joyce, Coleridge and Landor, Arnold Bennett and Sir Thomas Browne. As a rich young man, heir to one of the Vichy mineral springs, he voyaged round Europe with his formidable widowed mother, writing poetry, fiction, literary criticism and travel essays. His best-known work, *A. O. Barnabooth*, is a combination of all these genres, describing the aesthetic and erotic adventures of a South American millionaire as he moves from one Ritz hotel to the next: Larbaud's sensibility was perfectly attuned to the melancholy glamour of luxury liners and sleeping-cars. He clearly loved women but never married; in 1935 he suffered a severe stroke which incapacitated him for the remaining twenty-two years of his life.

Fermina Marquez is set in a boys' school just outside Paris in the 1890s: Roman Catholic and traditional but also cosmopolitan and rather dashing. Fermina herself is a young Colombian beauty who comes to visit her brother, a pupil at the school. The story examines the disturbing effect of her presence there on some of the older boys – in particular on the school swat, who identifies with Julius Caesar and makes a stern resolution to seduce her. As a psychological study of male adolescence it is delicate, touching, unsentimental; the atmosphere of the school is evoked with a nostalgic vivacity that I have found unforgettable.

Irene Handl

Riceyman Steps by Arnold Bennett is a true and terrible portrait of an otherwise likeable man whose blood is tainted with the cancer of miserliness, and the dreadful effects of this disease on himself and everyone around him. Compton Mackenzie's *Guy and Pauline* is one of the truest and unhappiest love stories I have ever read. Both of these books deserve a wider audience.

Richard Cobb

I was given Jean Reverzy's *Place des Angoisses* last year by a Lyonnais friend who had read one of my descriptions of his city and thought, rightly as it turned out, that the novel would appeal to me, so firmly is it set in the central peninsula, *entre Rhône et Saône*. It is largely autobiographical, the author having been born in Lyon in 1914 and dying there in 1959. He did his medical studies at the Hôpital de l'Antiquaille in the 1930s, joined the FTP during the Occupation and, after the Liberation, set up as a general practitioner in a working-class suburb and continued as a *médecin des pauvres* till his early death. *Place des Angoisses* was first published in 1956. The title refers to the Place Bellecour in the centre of Lyon, a huge, gloomy, windy square on which most of the top consultants of the Lyon medical school have their surgeries. The narrator, born into medicine, studies under an eccentric but brilliant *pontife*, Professor Joberton de Belleville. It is a gently humorous study of the great medical hierarchies that dominate the social life of France's second city. It is a wonderfully convincing portrait of Lyon and its many itineraries across water and up hills. At the opening, we see the medical student with the eyes of his mother, as he heads across the desolate square across the bridge and uphill on the far bank; and it is uphill all the way through the rigorous grind of medical studies. Much of the charm of the novel is due to the fact that it is so firmly set in the recognizable itineraries of a great provincial city. It has the same powers of evocation as Julien Gracq's account of his years as an *interne* at the lycée Clémenceau in Nantes in *La Forme d'une ville* published this year. I like medical novels and I like novels about places. Few – save Henri Béraud – have written so well as Jean Reverzy about Lyon, if you like reading about Lyon. I do. Lyon is an acquired taste.

Brian Moore

It was published in 1939, an unlucky publishing year for any book, anywhere. Its author was an unknown Irish civil servant, writer of a "Beachcomber" type newspaper column for the *Irish Times*, a classical scholar, a Gaelic speaker, a heavy drinker, a Dublin wit. The book is, I believe, one of the glories of English literature and, while largely ignored at time of publications, it has since been praised by such writers as John Wain, Anthony Burgess, Graham Greene and, astonishingly, by that great non-praiser, James Joyce himself.

As well he might. For *At Swim-Two-Birds* rivals any work in the Joycean canon in inventiveness, originality and the stunning variety of its literary techniques. It is first and foremost, a comic novel, a hilarious send-up of each and every tradition of Irish writing, from the ancient bardic poetry, to the Celtic legend, to the work of Joyce, the deadpan prose of the daily press and the gorgeously inept doggerel of a working-class Irish William McGonagall.

It is a book inside a book, inside a book, and so *ad infinitum*. The narrator, a Dublin university student, is writing about a man called Trellis who is writing a book about some characters who, escaping from his mind when he falls asleep, begin to write about him. Characters from an ur-cowboy writer's tales roam the Dublin streets interacting with the Trellis characters and a Pooka, an Irish devil figure and . . . but I realize I am making what the Irish call a "haimes" of the story in an attempt to summarize it. It is a book of utter seriousness and amazing high spirits which captures the rhythms and lunacies of Irish conversation as does no other novel I have read. If Flann O'Brien had been a French intellectual this novel would have been translated in many languages and he would have become a world-class literary figure. But then, no French intellectual could have written *At Swim-Two-Birds*.

Noel Annan

Howard Sturgis was rather an odd Edwardian. An American who was an Etonian, he lived on the edge of Windsor Park in a house called Queen's Acre. Naturally this was pronounced Qu'Acre. Entertainment was his forte. Breakfast was always served in bed and, rare in those days, books were provided in the lavatories. While Henry James, Edith Wharton, Rhoda Broughton, courtiers and Eton beaks talked, Howdie would knit or sew, but more often did needlework sitting at his embroidery frame, a basket of bright silks beside him. He had a companion always called the Babe, a man who enjoyed decanters and cigars and was more given to reading the Pink 'Un than *The Golden Bowl*. Howdie wrote one fine novel, *Belchamber*, and dedicated it to the Babe.

Belchamber is the story of a young marquis who is a cripple and a prig. Through weakness he gives in to those who batten on him and ruins himself. And yet our sympathies are with poor Sainty (as the marquis is called) and not with his puritanical self-righteous mother or his handsome wastrel brother or his frivolous sexy wife or his charming sinister cousin. Not even his child is his, and when it dies the only one to show pity is his common sister-in-law whose eldest will now inherit the title. Like *The Way We Live Now* or *The Awkward Age* this book is about the corruption of society. But to me it is more like Balzac's *Cousin Pons* or *Cousine Bette*. There is the same inevitable destruction of the good by the wicked and heartless. They win because Sainty behaves decently and helps those who hurt him. Henry James disapproved of the book: he found it too explicit. I like it because it is – and it's a marvellous read. Not one of the greatest works of man, but a minor one; and since there are not all that many of those, it's a shame to neglect it.

A. S. Byatt

Writers admire A. L. Barker. Rebecca West's parting shot in her ferocious *Paris Review* interview with Marina Warner was a complaint that Barker's brilliance wasn't widely appreciated. When A. L. Barker was a very small child God appeared to her as a pen-nib, "plain black, with a hole to regulate the flow of ink, what used to be called a 'relief' nib. It was set on shoulders and wore a shining robe and was attended by ordinary angels . . . . The Nib was not a loving god; it was baleful and there was no pleasing it." Anyone who has struggled to find the right word, or correct a cadence, or shape a narrative must admire Barker's passionate accuracy. She writes for the sake of the English language, though her subject is never its inadequacies and pitfalls, which is part of her distance from most major writing of our time. She has her own quiet certainties, and writes out of a primary and intense pleasure in words.

I don't know why she isn't more widely read. You mightn't put her on a reading list for The Novel Today (though you might for a course in writing) because she represents no trend, attacks no large social issues, opens no existential anxieties. You couldn't form a cult round her novels; they aren't cosy or cliqueish; they are idiosyncratic and quietly estranged from the common. Because of a kind of inhuman and uncomfortable brightness in her perception I think of her in the company of Walter de la Mare, but that may be misleading.

She thinks of herself primarily as a short-story writer and is a master of that form. But the book I'd like to see reprinted is a novel, *John Brown's Body*, short-listed for The Booker Prize in 1969. It's about a desirable child-wife with a distaste for sex, Marise, who forms the fantasy that the innocent pest-exterminator, Ralph Shilling, is the gruesome sex-murderer, John Brown. It's about Ralph's dead wife, and his half-living present wife, Bertha, whose fierce sister believes she is being weakened by death-rays from a subterranean stream. It's about the power of fantasy in pinched lives and pinched imaginations; it is very funny and very grim; ultimately it's a complex and composed meditation on mortality, on the strange relations of body and mind and desire, on John Brown's body, very exactly.

Volumes Thirty-four and Thirty-six of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* published in Detroit by Gale Research, at $85 each, are both edited by Thomas F. Staley and both titled *British Novelists, 1890–1929*; but subtitled *Traditionalists* (378pp. 0 8103 1712 5) and *Modernists* (387pp. 0 8103 1714 1).

NEGLECTED FICTIONS

George Steiner

First published in Germany in 1935, and reissued in Switzerland in the early 1950s, Werner Bergengruen's *Der Grosstyrann und das Gericht* has never been altogether forgotten. But it deserves to be reread and made available in translation.

Brilliantly plotted, *Der Grosstyrann* is, on one level, a murder mystery set in an imaginary but graphically evoked Italian principality of the Renaissance (Ferrara comes distinctly to mind). Who has committed a seemingly motiveless murder in the very garden of the all-powerful *podestà*? In turn, each of the principal characters, but also the walled city as a whole, are drawn into a tightening net of conjecture, of perjurious manoeuvring and of (false) confession. The disclosure of the identity of the murderer is at once predictable and startling.

At a more central level, Bergengruen's novel is a study in political and moral terror, in the pressures which absolute autocracy brings to bear on the lives of those who serve it most devotedly, on the actions and motives of those who would oppose it and, above all, on the existence of those who strive to remain uninvolved. The fears and temptations which tyranny disseminates are so insidious precisely because they search out the dreams, weaknesses and desires in the utmost recess of private being. *Der Grosstyrann* is a book which breaths fear.

It is also highly ambiguous. The Nazi régime allowed its publication because it saw in the tale a positive portrayal of dictatorial omniscience and self-control. As in the case of Ernst Jünger's no less ambiguous *On the Marble Cliffs*, such a reading is certainly legitimate. There is, moreover, a strong element of quietism, of submissive religiosity in the denouement. At other levels, however, *Der Grosstyrann* is a dark parable on the infection of the body politic through despotism and the mystification of political control (the actual *persona* of the ruler is subtly suggestive of Stalin rather than of Hitler).

In its psychological penetration, this novel belongs to that handful of illuminating studies of the "ministries of fear" produced by twentieth-century political fiction. It remains all too pertinent.

Peter Porter

Never having handled an original manuscript, except one by a contemporary, I can think of no work of fiction which reached me other than as a modern publication. My reading has thus been firmly in the public domain. Perhaps, among the myriad books in print, there are some I would like to bring to other people's notice, but I cannot think of any novel I feel evangelical about which is not fairly readily available, even a translation, such as Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*. Instead, I would like to be granted the wicked wish to erase completely from all printed record one at least of the many all-too-readily-accessible novels which I have never been able to finish (or in some cases to start). From a long list of great works I have failed to enjoy, I'd nominate *The Brothers Karamazov*, chiefly because I do love and respect Dostoevsky (or as much of him as survives in English translation), and still relish *Crime and Punishment* and *The Idiot*. And so I feel guilty. My many attempts at *The Brothers Karamazov* have never got beyond page 100, which makes my readiness to quote the states of mind described in the colloquy with the Inquisitor even more reprehensible. If not *The Brothers Karamazov*, let it be *Middlemarch*.

William Rees-Mogg

One of the best political novels ever written is John Galt's *The Member*. It was published in 1832. I have read it in Benjamin Disraeli's copy, and it must have been an influence on his political novels, which are great books. They deal with broader political issues but are no livelier and no more full of enjoyable incidental detail.

1832 was, of course, the year of the great Reform Bill, and the politics which Galt describes are the politics of the unreformed parliament, the management of small groups of privileged electors, the patronage of Whig grandees and the lobbying. The member himself writes of the time before the Reform Bill takes effect.

It is extraordinary how Galt's description of parliament still rings true in modern times, despite the reforms and the new parties that have arisen:

> The aspect of a new parliament after a change of administration is very comical. On the left side there are stern and vindictive frowns; and on the right, exultation and complacency, interspersed with young unknown visages, of a serious senatorial cast, prognosticating oratory. It is a lucky thing, however, for the country, that the number of these and other speakers is comparatively very few; for at the best they are but a necessary evil, and only help the more sagacious editors of the newspapers to make wiser reflections.

Penelope Fitzgerald

Gladstone read Charlotte M. Yonge, Baldwin read Mary Webb, but Attlee read my aunt's novels – he told me so. Her name was Winifred Peck. If I could have back one of the many Peck titles I once possessed, now stolen or gone astray, I would choose *Housebound*.

Faber brought it out in 1942. The story – as the title suggests – never moves out of middle-class Edinburgh. The satire on genteel living, though, is always kept in relation to the vast severance and waste of the war beyond. The epigraph is Christina Rossetti's "I must unlearn the pleasant ways I went". High time, too, *Housebound* shows. The book opens with a grand comic sweep as the ladies come empty-handed away from the registry office where they have learned that they can no longer be "suited" and in future will have to manage their own unmanageable homes. There are coal fires, kitchen ranges and intractable husbands. Rose Fairlaw's husband says, "I can't have you opening the door to tradespeople." Rose herself is not quite sure whether you need soap to wash potatoes. Her struggle continues on several fronts, but not always in terms of comedy. To be housebound isn't only to know the prison where others once did the work for you, it's to be "tethered inexorably to a collection of all the memories with which you had grown up. How are we all to get out?"

At times *Housebound* is sentimental, though honest, as sentimentality usually is, but it always corrects itself. I remember it as a novel by a romantic who was as sharp as a needle, too sharp ever to deceive herself.

Roy Fuller

As he himself said, Edwin Muir's poetry has never really "taken on". Even less so has his novel – novella, really – *The Marionette*. It was published by the Hogarth Press in 1927, and Virginia Woolf has a word in her diary about its unsuccess. It was written (and rewritten) in 1926, when the Muirs were translating the epic *Jew Süss* (the amazing sales of which brought them no reward), several years before they began translating Kafka. Muir remarked about *The Castle* that it appealed particularly "to the part of me which wrote *The Marionette*". The novella is set in Salzburg, where the Muirs had lived in 1923, and concerns the relations of a widower with his half-witted son; and of the son with a puppet theatre. Perhaps a more off-putting description could scarcely be imagined, but there is nothing in it in the least silly, pretentious, period-bound or derivative. Undoubtedly the book is a strange one, though plainly it springs from Muir's deep feelings about childhood, parenthood, shyness, family tragedy (subjects on which he was entitled to deep feelings). It should be said, too, that it has little or nothing of Kafka's moral or narrative bafflement, exasperating to some. Moreover, it is underwritten by much extraordinary observation and description – poet's prose in the best sense. I do not think I have ever seen this still-living and, above all, still readable work referred to save in publications about Muir himself. Its modest dimensions probably did nothing to save it from falling down the crack of neglect.

Ian McEwan

The late Italo Calvino's international success derives from the work he did in the last twenty years; the attractions of his ebullient fantasizing have tended to obscure his earlier realist writing. My favourite was published by Cape and remaindered years ago. It is a long story – almost a novella – called *The Watcher*. It is set during a general election in a polling station in one of those vast Italian religious institutions which care for the subnormal and inadequate. Observers from all the main parties are appointed to ensure the correct voting procedures are followed. Our watcher is a communist who is drawn into convoluted arguments and reflections about who is mentally capable of casting a vote. It is suspected that the inmates are under orders to vote for the right-wing Catholic party. At lunchtime, the watcher returns home and argues with his girlfriend who is trying to tell him that she is pregnant. During the afternoon, the polling booth is carried round the wards to the beds of those too ill to leave them. The watcher encounters gross human deformities, and extraordinary patience among the nuns. The events of the day soften his party line and he gropes towards a more tolerant and complex idea of his own responsibilities in both public and private spheres.

Stuart Hampshire

Edith Wharton is very far from being a neglected writer. She might even be said to be most fashionable: certainly revived and living. But she is still within the shadow of Henry James and is usually seen as a novelist interested in the corruptions and moral evasions of worldly society in Europe and America before the wars: an analyst of her own world of the cultivated rich, who demanded before all things to be amused and protected from dimness and boredom, and who were prepared to exact an immense cost from others, and even to pay themselves, if only they could be entertained. Even the labour of *Ethan Frome* has not obliterated or modified this picture of her. But one story of hers stands outside the canon and is a masterpiece not sufficiently famous: *Summer*. It is a long short story, or short novel, a love story, perfect in form and execution, showing the influence of French models, perhaps particularly of Flaubert, but completely American in setting and in style. Romantic presentations of physical love, which are utterly convincing and written from a woman's point of view, are not too common in Anglo-Saxon fiction and outside the theatre. *Summer* is a hard, unforgettable story, drily told and exactly imagined, a celebration of sexual passion and natural impulse as worth any cost: the world well lost in the isolated house on the way to the mountain where the lovers meet. Charity, the heroine, is one of the great women of modern fiction, solitary in nature and enduring.

Thom Gunn

Coleman Dowell's novel, *White on Black on White*, came out in 1983 and went almost unreviewed. It deals with the interplay of racial and sexual obsessions, the way they conflict, blend, mirror and don't mirror each other. Nothing works out neatly, and the book goes deeper than James Baldwin's best seller, *Another Country*, which presented the same relating of themes. Dowell's book was a worst seller because he enters the obsessions so fully that he starts by making his very reader anxious and suspicious, like his narrator. A middle-aged gay white writer tells of how he goes on a holiday with an unstable young black man, apparently heterosexual, who may, or may not, be a hit man. The fictional writer then proceeds to tell the stories of first a young white woman who wants to "use" (and be used by) as many male black bodies as possible, and next her eventual friend, a black policeman who reads the manuscript about himself and has the final say on a tape where he suggests an ending which is also the novel's ending. It is all specifics: Dowell *enters* racism and sexism and their concomitant obsessions in a way that is positively uncomfortable; and if he emerges with no generalized reassurances at the end, that is his power. Yet the characters do come out of the story with something, and so do we. The implication is that if in the first place it was language that led them into their difficulties of understanding themselves and each other, then language also contains the possibility of mitigating those difficulties. It is all we have, after all – and we have to explore language itself, as Dowell does so successfully. He writes with a superb power of constant implication – always careful, always energetic, always suggestive. The book touches greatness.

Michael Holroyd

Patrick Hamilton is best known as the creator of macabre thrillers. *Rope* and *Gaslight* have become famous as films and on the stage rather at the expense of his finest play, a historical tragedy called *The Duke in Darkness*. Similarly, among his novels it is *Hangover Square* and the crime sequence of Ernest Ralph Gorse's adventures (such as *The West Pier*, recently reissued by Viking) that have generally caught more attention than his straight fiction. Here the horror is expressed not by melodramatic acts or cunning larcenies but through the everyday experiences of ordinary people – thirty-nine-year-old Miss Roach, for example, who inhabits a boarding-house in the small country town of Thames Lockton and whose involvement with an American soldier stationed there in the Second World War is wonderfully fully told in *The Slaves of Solitude*.

The richest and most ambitious of these novels, a London trilogy that was first published in the mid-1930s under the collective title *Twenty Thousand Streets under the Sky*, has been out of print many years. This is partly because it is a long book – over 500 pages – and expensive to reissue. But the story-telling is compulsive and the appeal broad. It is not a faultless novel: sometimes the narrative is too wordy, sometimes too mannered. But these are living faults that shadow living characters and are produced by Patrick Hamilton's efforts to convey simple people in situations that are beyond them. His characters are uneducated, homeless, tormented by their fantasies and infatuations, and tormenting others: "real people made plain for us", as J. B. Priestley described them. In the malignant atmosphere of London, these companions in toil come together at the local pub. There is the sailor-turned-waiter with ambitions to be a writer, the fly-by-night young girl trapped into prostitution, the plain barmaid courted by a respectable monster bore. We feel their moral confusion and are absorbed into a world which is observed with humour and inclusive sympathy: "God help us, God help all of us, every one, all of us".

Alan Pryce-Jones

Marcel Jouhandeau was one of the oddest, and by no means the most likeable, of this century's writers. He disclaimed the title of novelist, yet most of the countless little books he poured out over more than fifty years can only be described as novels.

Fascist, homosexual, Catholic, a dedicated and insufferable husband, he created a life for himself which was in itself a novel, and one of its most successful facets is embodied in *Monsieur Godeau marié*, published in 1933. It is cast in a typical French form of between-the-wars, that of a *carnet*. Monsieur Godeau – never referred to more familiarly – is married to a dancer, Elise, and the only theme of the book is the guerrilla warfare between the two of them. Elise is depicted as a monster, and Godeau a very secular saint. They are indispensable to one another, however destructive; devoted, however malevolent.

Jouhandeau's Catholicism is of that crushing kind shared by Claudel, Bernanos, Julien Green. There is nothing Mediterranean about it, just as there is nothing Mediterranean about Godeau's infidelities. He is a superb hater; he lances hypocrisies with deadly skill; he can be as funny as he is odious; and in a mock-modest fashion he can even laugh at himself.

The Paris he writes of – the Paris of Max Jacob, of Gide, Apollinaire, Marie Laurencin – no longer exists. But seen through the eyes of this envenomed provincial, it is still entertaining to read about.

NEGLECTED FICTIONS

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr

William Dean Howells's *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890) is not precisely an unknown novel. But it has been little read, I think, since its brief revival during the Great Depression. It deserves a hearing today as the first exploration in American fiction of the liberal dilemma.

Earlier novels like *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Bostonians* dealt with reformers – ideologues possessed by specific formulas for social salvation. Basil and Isabel March, Howells's protagonists, are something different. They are decent and intelligent, "their hearts so easily moved to any cheap sympathy", but are disarmed by tolerance and complacency, undone by their capacity to see every side of every person and every question. They are, in short, liberals, and the novel's distinctive and original note is that of liberal anguish.

A Hazard of New Fortunes portrays the collapse of values after the Civil War and foretells new values struggling to be born. Without being unduly schematic, Howells assails Basil March with an astonishing variety of viewpoints: Fulkerson, the hustling public relations man; Jacob Dryfoos, the hard-bitten capitalist; Lindau, the Marxist; Alma Leighton, the feminist; Colonel Woodburn, the unreconstructed Confederate; Angus Beaton, the aesthete; Conrad Dryfoos and Margaret Vance, guilty children of the rich who become Christian Socialists. After a quiet beginning, the novel rises to an arresting climax when March, as editor of a liberal journal, faces the demand of Dryfoos, the magazine's backer, to fire Lindau and when a streetcar strike explodes into violence.

March starts out, in Howells's words, as "too self-enwrapt to perceive the chaos to which the individual selfishness must always lead". At the end March is driven to acknowledge "a sense of complicity" with the striving and suffering, the thrusting aside and trampling under foot, of "the economic chance world". But, with characteristic irony, Howells leaves March still essentially uncommitted and rather suggests that the future belongs to Fulkerson. *A Hazard of New Fortunes* has its share of Howells's whimsicalities and refusals. But its rendition of the liberal dilemma bridges the gap in American political fiction between *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Middle of the Journey*.

Paul Johnson

Having pleaded many times in vain for one of our major publishers to issue a complete edition of Trollope – he is our only great novelist who has never been so honoured – I would like to narrow down the field a little and beg for publication of all his Irish novels. Trollope loved Ireland, for it was there he got his first real chance of life, and first tasted happiness. After he left, he returned to it again and again, fascinated by its people and his problems. He wrote a topographical book about the country, which he could not get published, and whose manuscript has now, alas, vanished. His first two novels were set in Ireland. Both were failures. Publishers hated "Irish" novels: they said English readers were sick of the place and its violence and did not want to read about it. But from time to time Trollope reverted to Ireland, and was writing an Irish novel at the time of his death.

Like many people, I was deterred from reading the Irish novels by Michael Sadleir's dismissal of them in his famous book on Trollope. Then I came across *Castle Richmond* (1860) by chance, and found it an immensely readable – almost racy – drama of action. His second novel, *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* (1848), seems to me quite one of his best: careful plotting, strong, realistic characterization, excellent dialogue and effective presentation of the social and political background. His first novel, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (1847), is less accomplished but there are many fine things in it and it is certainly worth reprinting. *The Landleaguers* (1883), though unfinished, has a sombre and forbidding glory. To these I would add *An Eye for an Eye* (1879), which also takes place mainly in Ireland. Occasionally one of them has appeared in the World's Classics, but others are unobtainable and none is easy to find. I believe a uniform edition of the five, with good, solid introductions, would be a commercial success today, as well as a revelation to readers of the passion and imaginative power with which Trollope presented the people of John Bull's Other Island.

Emrys Jones

Few people of my acquaintance seem to have read or even heard of *Trial by Battle*, the novel by David Piper (now Sir David Piper, the recently retired Director of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) which he published in 1959 under the pseudonym of Peter Towry. (A revised version under his own name appeared in 1966, with a preface by Frank Kermode.) It tells of the brief military life of a young Cambridge graduate, first his period of training with a regiment of the Indian army, and then his fatal experience of the real thing in Malaya at the time of the Japanese invasion. The novel is shaped like a funnel that at first imperceptibly narrows and then races to a point. The start is leisurely, observant, humorous: Alan is taught Urdu by a *munshi*, "a small man like a spectacled tortoise with halitosis", or meets his second-in-command, "a tall loosely built major, stooping and kindly and with an odd impression of walking in step with himself like a yak". But the "civilized", fastidious impressions are at the service of the book's theme: the impact of war on a young man who, though trained as a soldier, is quite unprepared for the form which "action" actually takes – an ascending series of shocks, an accelerating process of disorientation, deprivation and isolation.

Trial by Battle is slimly designed and cunningly paced, not much longer than a long *nouvelle*. But it packs great force. Since I first came across it nearly twenty years ago, I have read and forgotten hundreds of longer books; but this short narrative stays in the mind in one piece. Frank Kermode called it "probably the best English novel to have come out of the Second World War". Books "coming out of" the war have continued to appear: J. G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* arrived only a year ago. Whatever one now thinks of its claims to that title, it would be absurd to let such things as *Trial by Battle* be simply forgotten.

Naomi Mitchison

I wonder if publishers are so afraid of magic that they cannot face Stella Benson? There is real and believable magic in most of her books, most of all in *Living Alone*. I shall always remember the two witches on the dwindling cloud up above the barrage, for this comes from the First World War. It is also a very funny book, though dead serious about things like poverty. Benson knew the London slums and she also knew about the more curious class problems of her day. I would like to see about three other of her books reprinted too, but this was always my special one.

Jan Morris

I think one writer very unjustly neglected by the world at large is the Welsh novelist and short-story writer Kate Roberts, who was born in 1891 and died earlier this year. Her work is tough, consistent and compassionate in a Chekhovian kind, and presents in universal terms the narrow lives of quarry workers and their families in the North Wales mountains, and of the gossipy *petit bourgeois* of North Wales country towns. Of her sixteen published works, only a handful have been translated into English: if I had to nominate one example, it would be *Te yn y Grug* (*Tea in the Heather*) which *was* translated, by Wyn Griffith, in 1968.

John Ryle

Slowly, belatedly, inexorably, the reputation of the nineteenth-century Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis waxes and his books, first translated in the 1950s, return to print. It is hard to see why they should ever have been neglected. Machado's three great novels *Epitaph of a Small Winner* (1881), *Quincas Borba* (1891) and *Dom Casmurro* (1899) are beguilingly modern; narratalogically playful, deceptively affable, they echo Sterne and foreshadow Borges. Their portrayal of love, delusion and madness in the bourgeois milieu of Rio de Janeiro in the last days of the empire has a melancholy energy that is hard to resist. There are few writers of international stature in Portuguese but Machado is rightly considered in Brazil as one of the great novelists of the nineteenth century. It is time for the rest of the world to catch up.

Pat Rogers

A minor classic, or something a little more, in France, Eugène Fromentin's *Dominique* (1862) has still not properly taken root in English soil. The metaphor is apt enough, because it is a novel with a strong sense of the land which goes to make landscape – damp moss-filled crannies of a half-decayed formal garden; the heroine's footsteps leaving a brief impression on the soft earth as the lovers take a final walk together on a wet evening in autumn.

Fromentin is perhaps better known in this country as an art-critic and travel writer who helped to encourage a taste for the exotic. *Dominique* is set mostly in the provinces, in the vicinity of La Rochelle, though there are some episodes in Paris and a fine Zolaesque evocation of a suburb growing on the edge of the capital. Dominique attempts to let his beloved Madeleine into his special domain by bringing her "en face de certains tableaux de la campagne choisis parmi ceux qui, invariablement composés d'un peu de verdure, de beaucoup de soleil et d'une immense étendue de mer, avaient le don infaillible de m'émouvoir". The scenes of idyllic nature and unfulfilled love (here, an adultery renounced) are more closely intertwined and shaped into continuous narrative than is the case with *Le Grand Meaulnes*, a book with some common features.

Dominique was never an Everyman choice, a Penguin Classic or (so far as I know) a Book at Bedtime. There is an excellent translation by Edward Marsh (1948), for the old Cresset Library (and its alertness to nuance gives one pause in the face of Marsh's small and comic reputation); Barbara Wright has produced a highly competent edition for Blackwell's French Texts (1965). But that is about all, and in English-speaking countries *Dominique* has not yet attained the place it deserves, described by the hero in relation to those few special creations which possess "ce rare, absolu et indubitable caractère . . . de pouvoir être imitée, mais non suppléée, et de manquer aux besoins du monde, si on la suppose absente".

Stephen Spender

Rex Warner is justly famous for two novels, *The Wild Goose Chase* and *The Aerodrome*, allegories of the ideological conflicts of the 1930s. His later novel, *The Converts* (1967), seems to have attracted far less attention than these but to me it seems his greatest achievement, perhaps the best historical novel I have read. *The Converts* is the story of the early life of Augustine in Carthage, up to the moment of his conversion to Christianity, as related by the narrator, his youthful friend and disciple Alypius. Augustine was at this time the superstar, as orator, philosopher and public performer in Carthage – brilliant and disputatious and free-thinking and free-living with a mistress to whom he was passionately attached. His mother, Monica, preached to him the Christian way of kindness, but Augustine was attracted by the teachings of the Manichaeans.

Rex Warner portrays a world in which there are still Roman citizens like the wealthy Praetextus and his wife, who are examples of pagan virtue, and highly rational in their discourse, though their religion is blood-soaked with sacrifice. Compared with the Roman culture, Christianity seems almost illiterate in its Latin and Greek, and indifferent to the culture of high civilization. Yet, however crude in expression, it is insistent in its claim to be the voice of truth, and it offers Augustine and his friends the power to choose a way of life totally dedicated to the spirit. It has, too, its own heart-searching eloquence reaching deeper than the oratory of the schools.

Seen against the background of the declining Roman civilization, the debate carried on by Augustine and his friend seems in some ways closer to our own times than much dispute of later centuries. Rex Warner portrays his scenes with such intelligence and sympathy that, rereading the *Confessions* after *The Converts* one does not feel that he has sensationalized the material nor cheapened the ideas leading into Augustine's tremendous autobiography.

Tom Paulin

Neglected novels or neglected fictions? It's impossible to discuss most novels formally (unlike poems, plays, short stories they lack a poetics) so the best thing is to enjoy them in private and say nothing. I'd far rather read Clough's great poem of 1848, *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*, than any Victorian novel. Just consider all those courses in English Literature groaning under the dead weight of huge, shapeless prose narratives all about illegitimate babies and the Poor Law and bad drains. Do we really want any more of them? I hope not. The tale of Sara Keays and Cecil Parkinson is much more fun.

LIST OF PRINCIPAL TITLES SELECTED

ALEYKHEM, Sholem *Progress Comes to Kasrilevke*
BARING-GOULD, Sabine *John Herring* BARKER, A. L. *John Brown's Body* BASILE, Giambattista *Pentamerone*, or *Lo Cunto deli Cunti* BENNETT, Arnold *Riceyman Steps* BENSON, Stella *The Poor Man. Living Alone* BERGENGRUEN, Werner *Der Grosstyrann und das Gericht* BIOY CASARES, Adolfo *Morel's Invention. Plan of Escape* BOLDREWOOD, Rolf *Robbery Under Arms* BOVE, Emmanuel *Mes Amis* BRAHMS, Caryl, and S. J. SIMON *A Bullet in the Ballet. No Bed for Bacon* BROCH, Hermann *The Sleepwalkers* BROPHY, Brigid *Palace without Chairs* BULGAKOV, Mikhail *Heart of a Dog* BURNS, Alan *Europe After the Rain. Dreamerika!. The Dead Father* BUTTS, Mary *Armed with Madness. Imaginary Letters. Death of Felicity Taverner. Speed the Plough. Several Occasions. Last Stories*
CALVINO, Italo *The Watcher* CARPENTIER, Alejo *The Kingdom of This World* CLANCY, Tom *The Search for Red October* CLOUGH, Arthur Hugh *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* COIGNET, Captain *The Notebooks of Captain Coignet*
DE BORN, Edith *The Bidou Inheritance* DE MORGAN, William *Somehow Good* DE ROBERTO, Frederico *I vicerè* DICK, Margaret *Rhyme or Reason* DISRAELI, Benjamin *Lothair* DOWELL, Coleman *White on Black on White*
FOGAZZARO, Antonio *Il santo. Leila* FORD, Ford Madox *Parade's End* FROMENTIN, Eugène *Dominique*
GALT, John *The Member* al-GHITANY, Gamal *Al-Zeini Barakat* GOBINEAU, Arthur de *Nouvelles Asiatiques* GONCOURT, Edmond and Jules de *Renée Mauperin. Germinie Lacerteux. Soeur Philomène. Manette Salomon. Madame Gervaisais* GUALDO, Luigi *Decadenza*
HABIBY, Émile *Saeed the Pessoptimist* HAMILTON, Patrick *Twenty Thousand Streets under the Sky* HARTLEY, L. P. *The Boat* HAYES, Alfred *In Love* HERNANDEZ, Felisberto Stories HICHENS, Robert *The Green Carnation* HOWELLS, William Dean *A Hazard of New Fortunes*
JABRA, Jabra Ibrahim *Al-Bahth 'an Walid Masood* JACKSON, Shirley *The Lottery* JENKINS, Elizabeth *Harriet* JEWETT, Sarah Orne *The Country of the Pointed Firs* JOUHANDEAU, Marcel *Monsieur Godeau marié*
KHOURY, Elias *Al-Jabal al-Saghir* KNOX, Ronald *Memories of the Future: Being memoirs of the years 1915–1972 written in the Year of Grace 1988 by Opal, Lady Porstock* KOUROUMA, Ahmadou *Les Soleils de l'indépendance*
LA CAPRIA, Raffaele *Un giorno d'impazienza* LARBAUD, Valery *Fermina Marquez* LEE, Vernon *The Snake Lady* LERNET-HOLENIA, Alexander *A Young Gentleman in Poland. The Standard* LESKOV, Nikolai *Selected Tales*
MACHADO DE ASSIS, J. M. *Epitaph of a Small Winner. Quincas Borba. Dom Casmurro* MACKENZIE, Compton *Guy and Pauline* MALLOCK, W. H. *The New Republic* MARTIN DU GARD, Roger *The World of the Thibaults* MICHAELS,

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writers. And now, to paraphrase what I said to my class, listen to Chekhov instead of me. Here are two quotations from Chekhov's letters, both on the subject of literary style:

> In my opinion a true description of Nature should be very brief and have the character of relevance. Commonplaces such as "the setting sun bathing in the waves of the darkening sea, poured its purple gold, etc."—"the swallows flying over the surface of the water twittered merrily"—such commonplaces one ought to abandon. In descriptions of Nature one ought to seize upon the little particulars, grouping them in such a way that, in reading when you shut your eyes, you get the picture.
>
> For instance you will get the full effect of a moonlit night if you write that on the milldam, a little glowing star point flashed from the neck of a broken bottle, and the round black shadow of a dog or a wolf emerged and ran, etc. . . .
>
> In the sphere of psychology, details are also the thing. God preserve us from commonplaces. Best of all is it to avoid depicting the hero's state of mind; you ought to try to make it clear from the hero's actions. It is not necessary to portray many characters. The center of gravity should be in two people: he and she.

> You understand it at once when I say "The man sat on the grass." You understand it because it is clear and makes no demands on the attention. On the other hand it is not easily understood if I write, "A tall, narrow-chested, middle-sized man, with a red beard, sat on the green grass, already trampled by pedestrians, sat silently, shyly, and timidly looked about him." That is not immediately grasped by the mind, whereas good writing should be grasped at once—in a second.

Another quotation, on the subject of closure:

> My instinct tells me that at the end of a story or a novel I must artfully concentrate for the reader an impression of the entire work, and therefore must casually mention something about those whom I have already presented. Perhaps I am in error.

And here are a number of quotations on a theme which comes up again and again in his letters—the writer's need for objectivity, the importance of seeing clearly, without judgment, certainly

without prejudgment, the need for the writer to be, in Chekhov's words, "an unbiased observer."

> That the world "swarms with male and female scum" is perfectly true. Human nature is imperfect. . . . But to think that the task of literature is to gather the pure grain from the muck heap is to reject literature itself. Artistic literature is called so because it depicts life as it really is. Its aim is truth—unconditional and honest. . . . A writer is not a confectioner, not a dealer in cosmetics, not an entertainer; he is a man bound under compulsion, by the realization of his duty and by his conscience. . . . To a chemist, nothing on earth is unclean. A writer must be as objective as a chemist.
>
> It seems to me that the writer should not try to solve such questions as those of God, pessimism, etc. His business is but to describe those who have been speaking or thinking about God and pessimism, how and under what circumstances. The artist should be not the judge of his characters and their conversations, but only an unbiased observer.
>
> You are right in demanding that an artist should take an intelligent attitude to his work, but you confuse two things: solving a problem and stating a problem correctly. It is only the second that is obligatory for the artist.
>
> You abuse me for objectivity, calling it indifference to good and evil, lack of ideas and ideals, and so on. You would have me, when I describe horse thieves, say: "Stealing horses is an evil." But that has been known for ages without my saying so. Let the jury judge them; it's my job simply to show what sort of people they are. I write: you are dealing with horse thieves, so let me tell you that they are not beggars but well fed people, that they are people of a special cult, and that horse stealing is not simply theft but a passion. Of course it would be pleasant to combine art with a sermon, but for me personally it is impossible owing to the conditions of technique. You see, to de pict horse thieves in 700 lines I must all the time speak and think in their tone and feel in their spirit, otherwise . . . the story will not be as compact as all short stories ought to be. When I write, I reckon entirely upon the reader to add for himself the subjective elements that are lacking in the story.

And now, one final quotation, which, given my track record for making statements and having to retract them a week later, struck me with particular force:

> It is time for writers to admit that nothing in this world makes sense. Only fools and charlatans think they know and understand everything. The stupider they are, the wider they conceive their horizons to be. And if an artist decides to declare that he understands nothing of what he sees—this in itself constitutes a considerable clarity in the realm of thought, and a great step forward.

Every great writer is a mystery, if only in that some aspect of his or her talent remains forever ineffable, inexplicable and astonishing. The sheer population of Dickens' imagination, the fantastic architecture Proust constructs out of minutely examined moments, etc., etc. We ask ourselves: How could anyone do that? And of course, different qualities of the work will mystify different people. For me, Chekhov's mystery is first of all one of knowledge: how does he know so much? He knows everything we pride ourselves on having learned, and of course much more. "The Name Day Party," a story about a pregnant woman, is full of observations about pregnancy which I had thought were secrets.

The second mystery is how, without ever being direct, he communicates the fact that he is not describing The World or how people should see The World or how he, Anton Chekhov, sees The World, but only one or another character's world for a certain span of time. When the characters are less than attractive, we never feel the author hiding behind them, peeking out from around their edges to say, "This isn't me, this isn't me!" We never feel that the Gurov, the "hero" of "The Lady with the Pet Dog" is Chekhov, though, for all we know, he could be. Rather we feel we are seeing his life—and his life transformed. Chekhov is always, as he says in his letters, working from the particular to the general.

The greatest mystery for me—and it's what, I think, makes Chekhov so different from any other writer I know—is this matter he keeps alluding to in his letters: the necessity of writing with out judgment. Not saying, Stealing horses is an evil. To be not the judge of one's characters and their conversations but rather the unbiased observer. What should, I imagine, be clear, is that

Chekhov didn't live without judgment. I don't know if anyone does, or if it is even possible except for psychotics and Zen monks who've trained themselves to suspend all reflection, moral and otherwise. My sense is that living without judgment is probably a terrible idea. Nor, again, is any of this prescriptive. Balzac judged everyone and found nearly all of them wanting; their smallness and the ferocity of his outrage is part of the greatness of his work. But what Chekhov believed and acted on more than any writer I can think of is that judgment and especially prejudgment was incommensurate with a certain kind of literary art. It is, I believe, what —together with his range of vision—makes him wholly unique among writers. And why, for reasons I still can't quite explain, his work comforted me in ways Balzac just simply could not.

Before I finish, I'd like to quote Vladimir Nabokov's summation of his lecture on Chekhov's story, "The Lady with the Pet Dog":

> All the traditional rules of storytelling have been broken in this wonderful story of twenty pages or so. There is no problem, no regular climax, no point at the end. And it is one of the greatest stories ever written.
>
> We will now repeat the different features that are typical for this and other Chekhov tales.
>
> First: The story is told in the most natural way possible, not beside the after-dinner fireplace as with Turgenev or Maupassant, but in the way one person relates to another the most important things in his life, slowly and yet without a break, in a slightly subdued voice.
>
> Second: Exact and rich characterization is attained by a careful selection and careful distribution of minute but striking features, with perfect contempt for the sustained description, repetition, and strong emphasis of ordinary authors. In this or that description one detail is chosen to illume the whole setting.
>
> Third: There is no special moral to be drawn and no special message to be received.
>
> Fourth: The story is based on a system of waves, on the shades of this or that mood. . . . In Chekhov, we get a world of waves instead of particles of matter. . . .
>
> Sixth: The story does not really end, for as long as people are alive, there is no possible and definite conclusion to their troubles or hopes or dreams.

> Seventh: The storyteller seems to keep going out of his way to allude to trifles, every one of which in another type of story would mean a signpost denoting a turn of the action . . . but just because these trifles are meaningless, they are all-important in giving the real atmosphere of this particular story.

Let me repeat one sentence which seems to me particularly significant. "We feel that for Chekhov the lofty and the base are not different, that the slice of watermelon and the violet sea and the hands of the town governor are essential points of the beauty plus pity of the world." And what I might add to this is: the more Chekhov we read, the more strongly we feel this. I have often thought that Chekhov's stories should not be read singly but as separate parts of a whole. For like life, they present contradictory views, opposing visions. Reading them, we think: How broad life is! How many ways there are to live! In this world, where anything can happen, how much is possible! Our whole lives can change in a moment. Or: Nothing will ever change—especially the fact that the world and the human heart will always be wider and deeper than anything we can fathom.

And this is what I've come to think about what I learned and what I taught and what I should have taught. Wait! I should have said to that class: Come back! I've made a mistake. Forget about observation, consciousness, clearsightedness. Forget about life. Read Chekhov, read the stories straight through. Admit that you understand nothing of life, nothing of what you see. Then go out and look at the world.

From a Discarded Novel To Fugard's New Play

Writer Fulfills a Youthful Promise to His Mother

By MEL GUSSOW

In 1953, Athol Fugard quit the University of Cape Town and hitchhiked up through Africa to Port Sudan. Stranded, without money, he booked passage on a tramp steamer, working as "the captain's tiger," or all-purpose assistant. On board, he found time to write his first novel, a book about his mother. But in Fiji, in a fit of desperation, he threw the manuscript into the sea.

Mr. Fugard's new play, "The Captain's Tiger," is in previews at the Manhattan Theater Club, where it is scheduled to open next Tuesday. Subtitled "A Memoir for the Stage," it deals with what happened when Mr. Fugard shipped out on the steamer, an experience that represented his coming of age. In a sense, the play is a substitution for that early discarded novel, as an older artist looks back at a turning point in his life.

"What I never realized," he said in a recent interview, "is that writing 'The Captain's Tiger' fulfills the promise I made to my mother to deliver a body of work of which she would be proud and that would celebrate her by way of that silent dedication behind all of it."

The promise came in a letter he wrote to his mother, Elizabeth Fugard, when his ship docked in Honolulu. In it he said, "If I've the strength to fulfill my destiny it will live when I am no more — and through it, you." He said he might fail as a man but his art would be strong because it was inspired by her virtues: "courage, an indomitable will and faith."

That letter was published some years ago in a critical biography of the playwright. When it was read back to him, his eyes clouded over with emotion. He had forgotten what he had written, and he was moved by what he now remembered and by what had followed in his life.

After he told his mother about his decision to leave the university before graduating, she encouraged him in what other parents might have considered to be a foolhardy venture. When her

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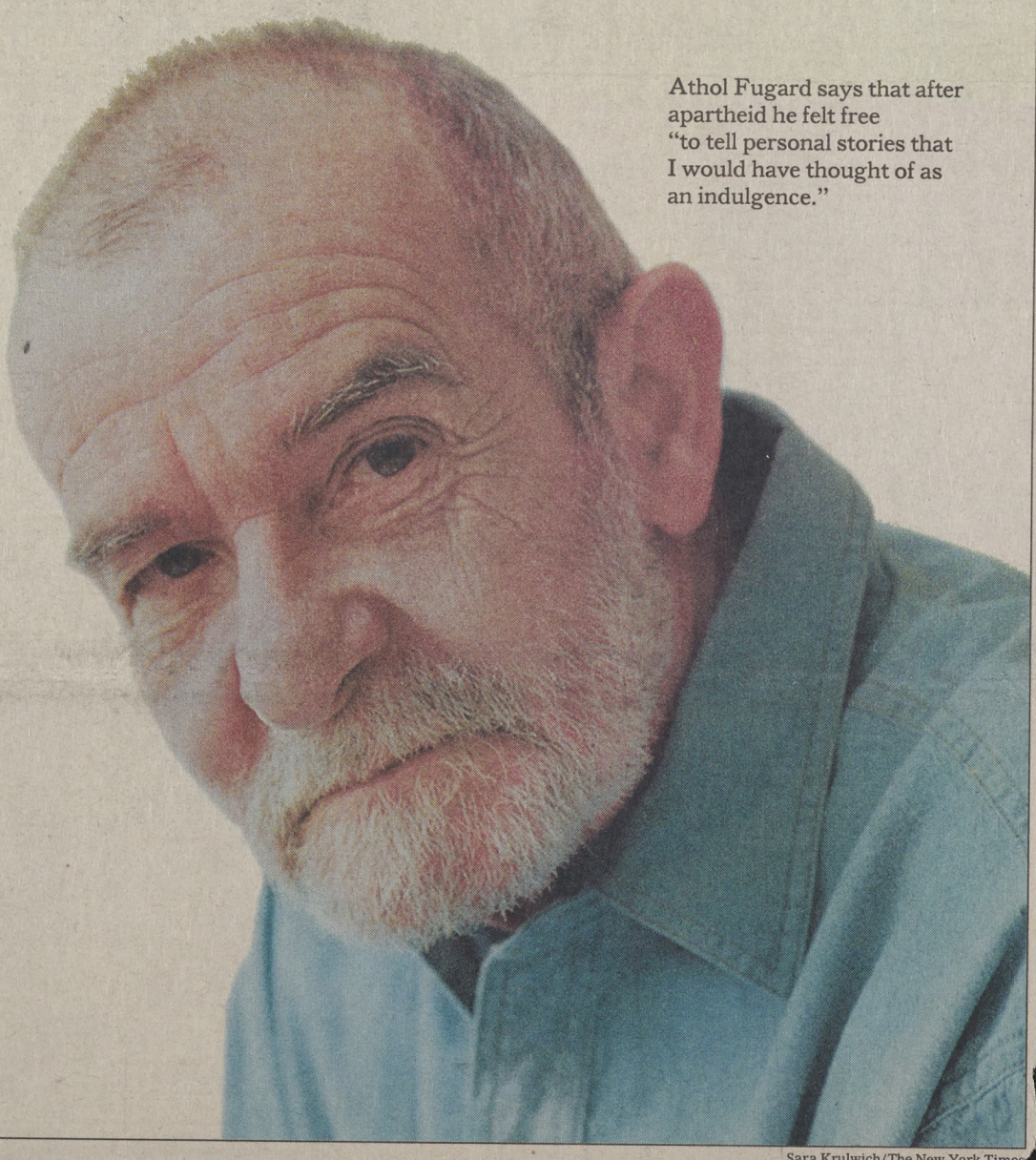


Athol Fugard says that after apartheid he felt free "to tell personal stories that I would have thought of as an indulgence."

Sara Krulwich/The New York Times

Humblot's "Horrors of War."

Another section carries the title "L'École de Paris," the name given to the large number of Central European artists who sought refuge in Paris between the wars, first from the Soviet Union, then from Nazi Germany. Prominent here are a series of portraits by Arbit Blatas, a 90-year-old Lithuanian-born artist who fled to Paris then and has donated some 50 of his paintings, sculptures and drawings to the new museum. He now lives in New York and Venice.

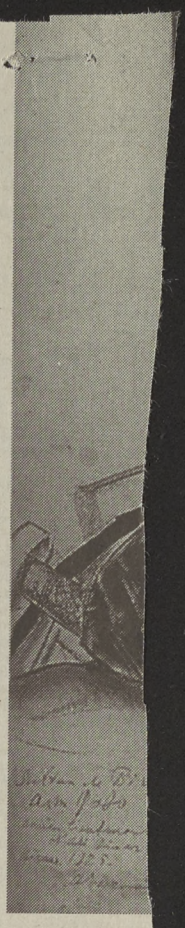
The museum has found a way of displaying some works by Paris-based artists by recalling the "Sundays in Boulogne" spent at Kahnweiler's home. More interesting, perhaps, is the section dedicated to colonial art — not folk art, but work done by European artists visiting French colonies. The museum includes numerous striking works by Alexandre Iacovleff, a Russian-born artist who was the official illustrator of major ethnographic expeditions to Africa in 1924 and to Indochina in 1931.

Until late January, the museum's temporary display area is dedicated to the Austrian-born painter and architect Leopold Krakauer, who moved to British-ruled Palestine in 1924 and subsequently played an influential role in the modernist architecture of Tel Aviv. The museum has complemented this show by including designs and models of modernist

tion when the museum's collection of 1930's furniture and decorative arts will be put on display. Temporary shows, starting with one dedicated to the art and design of the great ocean liners of the era between the world wars, will then move to another large gallery in the Espace Landowski.

In a Paris suburb, a former center of the arts is trying to evoke a whiff of its past glories.

A visit to the museum, which is within easy access of Paris by Métro, prompts the inevitable observation that the collection reaches beyond Boulogne-Billancourt to make its point. Yet if its aim is to recreate the mood of the times, it succeeds. Greater masterpieces can be found at the Georges Pompidou Center in Paris, but this museum suggests what the art of the 1930's really felt like. And, in doing so, it has provided Boulogne-Billancourt with a past worth visiting.



A 1925 drawi

Political Lesson Proves Apt for th

Continued From Page B1

was impeded by the studio's need for product. He believed "all the doomsday scenarios," which said the studio would be in jeopardy if it did not release 15 pictures a year. "Suddenly you're saying yes to something you know you should say no to." In retrospect, he would have taken his time and "only greenlighted pictures when they were good and ready."

It was, he said, "a hopeless mismatch" to think, given his background, that he could be "pitched into that environment and work in that ethos." Among the many things that puzzled him about Hollywood was the constant switching of writers on a movie. Then he realized that the problem was more that of the executives than of the writers. "The executives meet every week, and everyone is quizzed about how his project is doing. The key is to show that you're doing something. You can't have six weeks running and appear before a peer group and say, 'Oh, it's coming along nicely, thank you,' or the truth, 'Slow but steady progress.' They have to do something, so they panic" — and they hire a new writer.

After he left Hollywood, he made movies for HBO ("The Burning Season") and a few films ("Memphis Belle" and "My Life So Far," his last film, scheduled for release in May) before turning his attention to politics.

Knighted by the Queen, he sits in the House of Lords and is chairman of Britain's National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts and is a mem task force. He working on the Greenwich.

Looking bac reer, he said tha done was direc intuitively crea producer, he wa

"I would have direct if I could self that I'd be said. "I had t directed I would weeks that I ha

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nedy."



ACTRESS (Musical or Comedy)
G RYAN

MAIL" PARKER POSEY
GEORGE FENTON
A EPHRON

WARNER BROS.
AINMENT COMPANY
Bros. All Rights Reserved

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TRESSES
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E MUSIC BY JOHN WILLIAMS
ARANDON · PLINY PORTER
RKINS AND RON BASS
RECTED BY CHRIS COLUMBUS
COLUMBIA PICTURES

WHERE

GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINEE
BEST ACTRESS · EMILY WATSON

"ASTOUNDING! AS BEAUTIFULLY ACTED AS IT IS DIRECTED, EDITED AND WRITTEN."
–Stephen Holden, THE NEW YORK TIMES



"★★★★!
ONE OF THE BEST FILMS OF THE YEAR!"
–Jonathan Foreman, NEW YORK POST

"SUPERBLY ACTED! DIFFICULT TO RESIST."
–Kenneth Turan, THE LOS ANGELES TIMES





From a Discarded Novel to Fugard's New Play

Continued From Page B1

husband, a pianist in a jazz band, retired and fell into years of defeat and alcoholism, she supported the family by running a cafe in Port Elizabeth. Scraping by on her income, she sent her son money to come home. Returning to South Africa, he began his writing career.

Through the years of apartheid, as South Africa's foremost playwright, his voice rang out clearly against racism, oppression and censor ship. Plays like "The Blood Knot," "Boesman and Lena" and "A Lesson From Aloes" were conscience-struck about events in his country. All his work seemed to lead to " 'Master Harold' ... and the Boys" (in 1982), an autobiographical play in which he looked back at his friendship with two black men who were waiters in his mother's cafe.

Chronologically, "The Captain's Tiger" follows "Master Harold," and it is something of a sequel. In both plays, he said, "I am at a desk writing, trying to unravel the story of a mother and father," and in each case, a black man is watching him.

In "The Captain's Tiger," he has imaginary conversations with his mother as a young woman as he tries to rewrite her life so that it can lead to a happier ending. "As I saw her life," he said, "it was unformed and blinded by love, devotion and loyalty." She was a woman who had sacrificed herself for her husband.

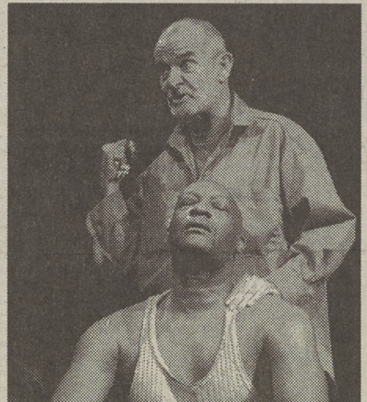
Free to Write In a Different Way

The new play is the latest work in Mr. Fugard's post-apartheid period. With the election of Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa in 1994 and with the end of apartheid, the playwright wondered if he would be at a loss for material. "South Africa," he said, "had to do a complete 180-degree turn in terms of the political miracle of the 20th century for me to realize that somebody had pulled the plug, in a sense, on what was one source of energy in my work — my feeling of outrage and anger. Then it dawned on me. You're not empty. You're loaded. Empty would be a blessing. There's a wonderful phrase in Kazantzakis where he talks about the need to reach your grave unburdened. That will never happen to me, but it's a great sense: unburdened."

To his surprise, after apartheid, Mr. Fugard felt a kind of creative liberation. He was "free to tell personal stories that I would have thought of as an indulgence during those years of apartheid," and he still had "an incurable itch to write."

In subsequent plays like "Valley Song" and "Cousins," his 1997 book about two disparate members of his family, he began focusing more on private matters (as he had in "Master Harold"). With "The Captain's Tiger," as is often the case, the author is also the director and plays the central role.

The third character in the play is an illiterate Swahili stoker called Donkeyman who becomes a friend of the author and is transfixed by the idea that he is writing a book — and then is horrified when he abandons it.



Sara Krulwich/The New York Times

Athol Fugard with Tony Todd, seated, in "The Captain's Tiger."

With his quiet intensity, Donkeyman is like Queequeg studying Ishmael, marveling at the idea of literary creativity.

The destruction of the manuscript was, for Mr. Fugard, an act of betrayal, akin to the scene in "Master Harold" when his surrogate, Hally, spits at Sam, one of his mother's waiters and the boy's devoted father figure. "My life is littered with betrayals," he admitted, and added, "I think that generates the plays." In the case of the discarded novel, it was a betrayal both of his mother and of Donkeyman.

Asked how he could have thrown away the manuscript, he said: "I think it might have had something to do with the fact that Fiji was the moment of real despair on the entire trip. I felt there were no roads from Fiji to South Africa. That led to drinking, and when I really hit bottom, I got very self-destructive."

But some people who felt so depressed might have jumped overboard. "Survivor," he described himself. "Which saved me so many times on the edge of that cliff." That in effect was the beginning of the new play, although it was more than 40 years before he could write it.

In the intervening time, he endured the hardships of a tumultuous political period — including having his passport taken away by the South African Government in 1967 — and he confronted his own alcoholism. During the run of "Master Harold" on Broadway, he went to Chicago for a weekend and, as was then his habit, packed two bottles of Jack Daniel's in his overnight bag. "I was drunk when I arrived in Chicago, and I stayed drunk for the weekend," he said.

Making a Choice About Drinking

Back in New York, he was dining with Susan Hilferty, his set and costume designer and later the co-director of "The Captain's Tiger," and she gave him the telephone number of Alcoholics Anonymous, putting it next to a glass of wine on the table.

He was faced with a choice: A.A. or the glass of wine, the lady or the tiger. He chose A.A. and went to his first meeting that evening, and though he did not follow through with the A.A. program, he stopped drinking. He realized that his drinking had been in unconscious emulation of his father. "Without my knowing it," he said, "I was following in my father's footsteps, getting drunk periodically, using alcohol to cope with a sense of huge personal inadequacy."

His father's story is one of Mr. Fugard's many unkept appointments, a play he has yet to write, along with one about South Africans in exile. All of them are lined up waiting for the right moment, which he once described as when the external specifics of a story run parallel to a very private need to make a personal statement.

In recent years there have been major changes in his life. He bought a home in Carmel, N.Y., and divides his time between the United States and South Africa. His daughter, Lisa, once an actress, is now a writer, in common with her parents. Mr. Fugard's wife, Sheila, is a novelist.

Speaking about other changes, Mr. Fugard said: "I gave up drinking. I gave up smoking. Two weeks ago I gave up coffee." Then came his announcement: "I'm giving up acting." The last performance of "The Captain's Tiger" in February, he said, will be his final appearance onstage.

Asked if he thought acting was bad for his health, he laughed and said: "No, but it might be bad for my writing. I'm 66 and there are any number of celebrations I've got to get down on paper, and acting doesn't allow me to do that. It was a hell of a drug, performance. It's a great thrill, especially for a storyteller. But it can go. Directing can go. Writing can't go. And in terms of what writing lies ahead, I want to have a burning focus — almost like smoke coming up from the paper as I write."

When he begins a play, he follows a ritual. He uses a new fountain pen and a new bottle of ink. Because he has written more than two dozen plays, he said, "the pen collection has gotten totally out of hand." He continued: "The pens complicate my life now instead of being a source of joy. In the early days I had one humble little Parker. Then I discovered Duponts, Mont Blancs, pens from Japan." He has so many of them he is thinking about giving some away, but will never part with his trusty Parker.

A Responsibility: Seeking the Truth

Reflecting on his work to date, he said, "I'm acutely conscious of this moral responsibility to get as close to the truth as I can." During the apartheid years, he said, he was "bearing witness" to the stories of Boesman, Lena and others.

Thinking about his characters, he said, "I have a perfect solution for insomnia." He imagines that it is his 70th or 80th birthday and the guests at a party are all characters from his plays. He has to decide who sits next to whom at a long table and what they will have to say to one another. "Who can you put next to Boesman? Or Gladys in 'A Lesson from Aloes' ?" Next to the author is "the youngest of my family, the ones I've written about last, like the Tiger."

He closed the conversation with a bit of advice: "You must never make rules about writing. That's the first thing I say when I talk to students. After I said that in one lecture, a student asked, so how *do* you start? And I said, 'Wait for the moment when the paper isn't looking at you.' "

Look for Science Times on Tuesday.

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POP REVIEW

Performance Anxiety: Hiding Onstage

By BEN RATLIFF

A substream of independent-label rock could be called wool-gathering music. It is Spartan folk-rock for downcast college students: mulish, painfully drawn-out, occasionally pretty stuff, dealing obliquely with anxieties and dreams, and it can swing slowly between two chords for many minutes with no embroidery. Its practitioners (including Will Oldham, once of Palace; Jeff Mangum of Neutral Milk Hotel, and Bill Callahan of Smog) are young, but they sound as if they've lived long, tortured lives.

Chan Marshall, who performs and records under the name Cat Power, is the new wool-gathering princess. She played a set at Bowery Ballroom on Saturday night that was staggering for its inversion of standard rock performance ethics. Gone was the idea of exultation, or of showing what one can do; in its place was outrageously passive-agressive behavior and nonmusicianship. The show was a meaningful comment on current indie-rock esthetics: Ms. Marshall makes music that's the equivalent of a lifeless handshake, but she has enough artistic credibility to sell out the medium-size hall.

Slight and stooped, wearing afterthought clothes, Ms. Marshall cowered through her show, hiding behind a veil of brown hair. (It was hard not to wonder why she lasted for than two hours if she was as terrified of performing as she seemed.) With her expressive, husky voice — it's her best feature, and it resembles that of another young singer inspired by folk music, Beth Orton — Ms. Marshall sang songs so deeply interior that they were basically meaningless.



Rahav Segev

Cat Power and hair at the Bowery Ballroom on Saturday night.

"Learn to say the same thing," she sang in "Say"; "Let us hold fast to saying the same thing/Never give up/No never give up/If you're looking for something easy you might as well give it up." She accompanied herself with single picked notes as shaky as if she had learned how to play yesterday; a guitarist and drummer backed her up empathetically, shambling through the sadness of songs on her new album, "Moon Pix" (Matador) and a few ebb-tide versions of tunes by Moby Grape and Fleetwood Mac.

There were a couple of places where Ms. Marshall's concentration held through an entire number. Stepping off the stage and settling down on the floor, she made it through her song "Cross Bones Style" with her nose pressed to the ground, while fans patted her on the back to comfort her; later she sang Dimitri Tiomkin's "Wild Is the Wind," achieving the sad, serene state that admirers of her records came to revel in. But for the most part they were watching a train wreck.

Ms. Marshall gave almost every song at least one false start, visibly exasperating her musicians, which she seemed both afraid of doing and consciously trying to do. At one point she asked the crowd, enigmatically, if anyone in the audience had ever felt as if he were walking through a door knowing that a machete was going to fall upon him on the other side. After a silence, she motioned to her band and added, in a trembling voice, "These guys hate me."

She forgot lyrics, let the simplest strumming patterns crumble and fall apart, and by the end of her endless set arrived at abject contrition. "It's not cool," she said, berating herself. "It's not funny. I'm sorry." And then she walked off, leaving the crowd in disbelief. Her guitar player strolled to center stage. "Turn the lights on," he instructed. "It's over."

Get new ideas on the Op-Ed Page.

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The Irish Quotient

SECRETS
And Other Stories.
By Bernard MacLaverty.
130 pp. New York: Viking. $13.95.

By William Boyd

THREE weighty literary presences cast a baleful shadow over most short-story collections published by British authors. They are Chekhov, Joyce and Katherine Mansfield, and their influence — more often than not, quite unconsciously assimilated — has determined the shape of the vast majority of short stories. To put it very simply, what has occurred is a dimunition in the "story" element of the form: the short story as miniature novel, as tale, as completed, resolved narrative, has become increasingly rare. What has emerged is something more akin to Joyce's notion of an epiphany: a kind of moment in life that is pregnant and implicit with meaning and that the writer has, so to speak, distilled from the vast flow of phenomena that makes up the diurnal round.

Bernard MacLaverty, the Belfast-born writer who lives in Scotland, has one of his characters express this notion in a story called "Hugo" — about a failed, would-be novelist — and in so doing neatly defines the ambitions, methods and approach of most short-story writers publishing today:

"It's all a matter of juxtapositions. Intersections might be a better word. Two things happen together and we get more than double the result . . . something different [arises] out of the joining of the experiences."

Succinctly put — and already one can see the prototypical story envisaged: a literal "slice of life," during which some juxtaposition occurs (usually the poignant with the banal) and out of which something faintly numinous emerges. Narrative momentum is inessential — indeed a positive hindrance, a distraction from the moment of epiphany — and endings, perhaps the most difficult thing to bring off in the short story proper, are deliberately left open, unresolved and ambiguous. The resulting sense of anti-climax, of vague inconsequentiality, is meant to function as a hint. Beneath this humdrum account, it is implied, lies significance.

One of the key exemplars of this type of story is Katherine Mansfield, a writer, in my opinion, of over-inflated reputation, who refined the Joycean and Chekhovian approach in the way described above, and whose influence — certainly in Britain — is alarmingly widespread. And at first I thought Bernard MacLaverty was another victim. Many of the stories in his collection are very short indeed — a sure sign of the Mansfield touch — and many of them conform to the "slice of life" model: a housewife waits for the arrival of an Italian chimney sweep and fantasy yields to bathos; three men out shooting rabbits lose their dog; a 50-year-old layabout celebrates his birthday at a fairground. Nothing much happens; the details are undramatic, ordinary, neutral. The tone is precise, honed down, self-effacing. Everything, in short, that normally irritates me intensely.



AMANDA SMITH
Bernard MacLaverty.

But, in fact, these stories are, with one or two exceptions, very good indeed. Two factors in Mr. MacLaverty's writing make him distinct from other practitioners and save him from the air of preciousness and somewhat *voulu* portentousness that normally attends the "epiphanic" story. These are, first, the child's-eye view, and second— Mr. MacLaverty's Irishness. Seven of the 15 stories are told from the point of view of a child or adolescent and in many of the remaining eight stories children are a significant presence. Mr. MacLaverty conjures up the elements of the child's world — its innocence and ignorance — with remarkable self-assurance and lack of sentiment. The result of such an emphasis is to give the collection as a whole a peculiarly distinct atmosphere — idiosyncratic and oddly charmed. This in itself is not enough to explain the collection's success, but added to this is the fact that all the stories are set in Ireland. The Irish quotient is sometimes stressed, sometimes left in the background, but it is never absent. I found it a constantly enriching context for what on the surface are events of little moment. A story like "A Happy Birthday," for example, is just more than three pages long and is about a middle-aged, unemployed man collecting his dole money and drunkenly celebrating his birthday.

To be sure, Mr. MacLaverty's use of detail is the prime reason for the story's veracity and sense of character, but the mundane events possess a resonance and evocativeness that belie the brevity of description. This seems to me to be more than simply an example of the epiphanic method working well — of juxtapositions well chosen. It's perhaps unfair to put it down to ethnic "luck" — after all, the author is responsible for summoning up the accents and images of his country — but what makes this collection memorable is the way it is charged with a sense of Ireland and reverberations of Irish literature — Yeats, Joyce, Synge, Flann O'Brien — and Mr. MacLaverty sits perfectly comfortably with these august shades. □

William Boyd is the author of two novels, "A Good Man in Africa" and "The Ice Cream War," and a collection of short stories, "On the Yankee Station."

NYTBR

gering desperation of the China that presses legless beggars against the front gate and daily exhibits public stranglings; but he has learned to accept cruelty as the real world. Meanwhile, Jim has a secret life, in which he roams Shanghai on his bicycle, and a life of daydreams in which he soars in a fighter plane. He aches to fly, and can identify both with the Spitfire pilots in the propaganda films about the Battle of Britain he sees

John Calvin Batchelor's new novel, "American Falls," will be published next year.

and death on his bicycle. Slowly, he realizes that the Japanese are his only protectors in China. And with the hope of an innocent, Jim submits to the detention camps. His opinion of the Japanese is ambivalent. He admires their courage and fears their brutality; he also knows that the Japanese are capable of mercy toward children. In fact, Jim has understood very early on that "in a real war no one knew which side he was on, and there were no flags or commentators or winners. In a real war there were no enemies."

In the second and third parts of the novel, Mr. Ballard reaches beyond the survivor's manuals, like those

plane that dropped the bomb. However, Jim is not persuaded that the war is really over. He is equally uncertain what kind of world awaits him as he sails from China. The most optimistic thing one can say is that Mr. Ballard, with a splendid and powerful talent, has written a novel that makes haunting fictional sense of what happened to Jim 40 years ago. And with the wisdom born of having actually witnessed the potential of Armageddon, Mr. Ballard has now passed on the opinion that his own survival, and the world's, remain tentative. □

Where the Rest of Him Was

A LEG TO STAND ON
By Oliver Sacks.
222 pp. New York: Summit Books. $14.95.

By Daniel X. Freedman

SOME eight years ago, Oliver Sacks, a poetically gifted neurologist, climbed atop an isolated Norwegian mountain and, in sudden pell-mell flight from a rampant bull (a great white beast, no less), sustained a wrenching leg injury. He underwent successful surgical repair in his native London and — at the story's center — a profoundly perplexing postoperative course. In "A Leg to Stand On," he shares his reflections on the phases of peripheral nerve injury and recovery and on therapeutics.

In part, this short book is a sketchy prologue to a vision. The author wishfully foresees a warmly humane, existentially rooted medical science, a veritable "neurology of self." In its readable fact, it is an adventure in self-discovery, vividly detailed in brief, persuasively instructive accounts of illness and the fundamental rudiments of self. To other physicians, Dr. Sacks remarks that "being a patient forces one to think." But even the severest of afflictions is unlikely to evoke the kaleidoscopic range, depth and verve of reflection that Dr. Sacks conveys with deftly dramatic eloquence.

Cheerfully acknowledging his unordinary perspective, Dr. Sacks notes that his vacation rucksack contained few clothes but 50 books, and from this lively library of personal companions, he offers numerous apt snippets. His injury ripped the attachments of the tendons and macerated the muscle of the left thigh to the knee and leg. The attendant neuromuscular damage deprives him of the power to "call to myself," to command even the slightest motion. There was no knowledge even of passive movement or of the location of the useless leg — not the faintest feeling to confirm the very existence of what he could see but not believe. Touching it, he finds a doughy pulp and can no longer imagine or recall how to move it.

What neither feels, moves nor can even know that it does (or does not) is a lacuna in body image. He struggles to convey, beyond this conceptual defect, the gap in body ego — the sensing, acting and self-reflecting self. The sixth sense of proprioception (once called "muscle sense"), by which the body possesses itself and knows and ceaselessly confirms itself, is gone. The vital organic foundation of reality is removed. Astonished, Dr. Sacks finds not only a lesion of muscle but "a lesion in me," an uncanny and involuntary "experiment in identity" striking at the usually unstated origins of being.

Seeking validation of this internal amputation, Dr. Sacks is curtly dismissed by his surgeon as "unique," but in a convalescent home, and subsequently in his practice, he discovers otherwise. An amputee suffering from phantom limb (still feeling the pain, position, substance or movement of a leg that is gone) eagerly hears Dr. Sacks' description of his own "negative phantom" — a leg that, while present, could not be known. The patient inventively wonders if he could not have usefully borrowed the doctor's defect; perhaps a local anesthetic prior to amputation might have obviated the brain's blind persistence in supplying a leg that isn't "there."

And if these organically mediated distorted mirrors of self and reality were not enough, Dr. Sacks notes Anton's syndrome, by which, with a lesion in the right pos-

Continued on next page

Daniel X. Freedman, M.D., is the Judson Braun professor of psychiatry at the University of California, Los Angeles.

from Edna O'Brien NYTBR Toni Morrison review in Book Reviews/Techniques file:

...I miss the emotional nexus, the moment shorn of all artifice that brings us headlong into the deepest recesses of feeling, moments such as in Faulkner's
p.166 → "Light in August," when the fugitive Joe Christmas takes to the road knowing that it will run on forever "between the savage and spurious board fronts of oil towns," or when...poor, crazed Anna Karenina, observing the bolts and irons of the oncoming train, asks God to forgive her.
....(M'son) hesitates to bring us to the last frontier, to a predicament that is both physical and metaphysical, and which in certain fictions, by an eerie transmission, becomes our very own experience.

Hack Work

For the heroine of this first novel, men are easier to give up than cab driving.

TRIP SHEETS
By Ellen Hawley.
227 pp. Minneapolis:
Milkweed Editions. Paper, $13.95.

By Dwight Garner

ELLEN HAWLEY'S earnest, amiable first novel takes its title from the logbooks that cabdrivers keep — a collection of addresses that tells them where they've been that day (everywhere, nowhere) and how much money they've made (peanuts). "Trip Sheets" reads like its own kind of scattered logbook. It's a series of barely sequential vignettes about a streetwise 28-year-old woman and her attempts to rid her life of two things: (a) her job as a hack and (b) sex with men.

Ditching men is the easy part. Hawley's protagonist, Cath Rahven, has always ignored her mother's strictures to cut out her tomboy act ("If you'd only *try*, Cathy. You're not badlooking"), and by the time we meet her, she's already dropped in on a lesbian poetry reading and started puzzling over her life's new sexual geometry: "What she can't imagine is . . . how two women go from vertical and dressed to horizontal and panting." Cath quickly solves this equation. Before long, she's gathered so many lovers that Hawley is reduced to issuing summary statements like "Experience accumulates. Women accumulate." You'll be tempted to pencil the words "You go, girl!" in the margins.

"Trip Sheets" is set in Minnesota, and Hawley — who lives in Minneapolis — writes about the lesbian scene there with a mixture of fondness and satirical whimsy. At that poetry reading, for example, the only words Cath can seem to decipher are "blood, moon, tree, goddess, earth." Cath often verges on becoming a lesbian cliché herself (she takes karate lessons, has a degree in social work and aspires to be a writer), but her good humor and distaste for "New Age hoo-rah" rescue her — and us — from that fate.

The best writing in "Trip Sheets" isn't about sex or goddess worship, however, but about Cath's improvised career as a cabby. "You don't choose your company" when you drive a cab, she notes, and we're both horrified and delighted by the misfits and miscreants she scoops up off the streets. Cath frequently feels like a miscreant, too. She works for a company that is "so cheap it has to glue down a $5 calculator" — an object she often feels like prying up herself. "Not because she wants a calculator, but because it's the company's. And because it's glued down."

Cab driving, like the Midwest's gay and lesbian subculture, offers Cath something she's never received from her family — a sturdy sense of belonging. As she debates quitting her job, she realizes she'll miss "belonging to a secret elite that owns nothing and controls nothing but knows every bar, every supermarket, every business that's gone belly up, everything that moves down a city street, and how to pry a living from all of it." Leaving won't be easy, a fellow driver warns. "Love doesn't last forever," he says. "There's only one thing lasts forever, and that's cab driving."

Hawley relates Cath's wandering tale in prose that's spare to the point of self-denial; her sentences rarely break into metaphor or poke you awake with sudden flashes of insight. At times, this spareness resonates with meaning. At other times, "Trip Sheets" merely seems flat and banal. When Cath makes a list of what's good about being single, women's-magazine platitudes are all she can come up with: "It makes us take friendships more seriously; it turns us toward a larger world instead of to one other person all the time; it makes us self-reliant." Worse, there's little here in the way of momentum or drama. Whenever "Trip Sheets" threatens seriously to snag your interest, Hawley cuts away to another vignette.

"Trip Sheets" lacks the lusty, wild-eyed comedy of Blanche McCrary Boyd's lesbian love story "Terminal Velocity," as well as the starkly rendered emotion of Dorothy Allison's strongest work. But Hawley's novel sneaks up on you. Toward the close of the book, as the pieces of Cath's life begin to fall into place — she finds a better job and a secure relationship — "Trip Sheets" becomes unaccountably moving.

Before leaving her apartment one evening, Cath checks the mirror "to see if she's gotten any thinner, stronger, more graceful or more likable." Nah, she tells herself. In our minds, however, she's been quite lovely — and quite likable — all along. □

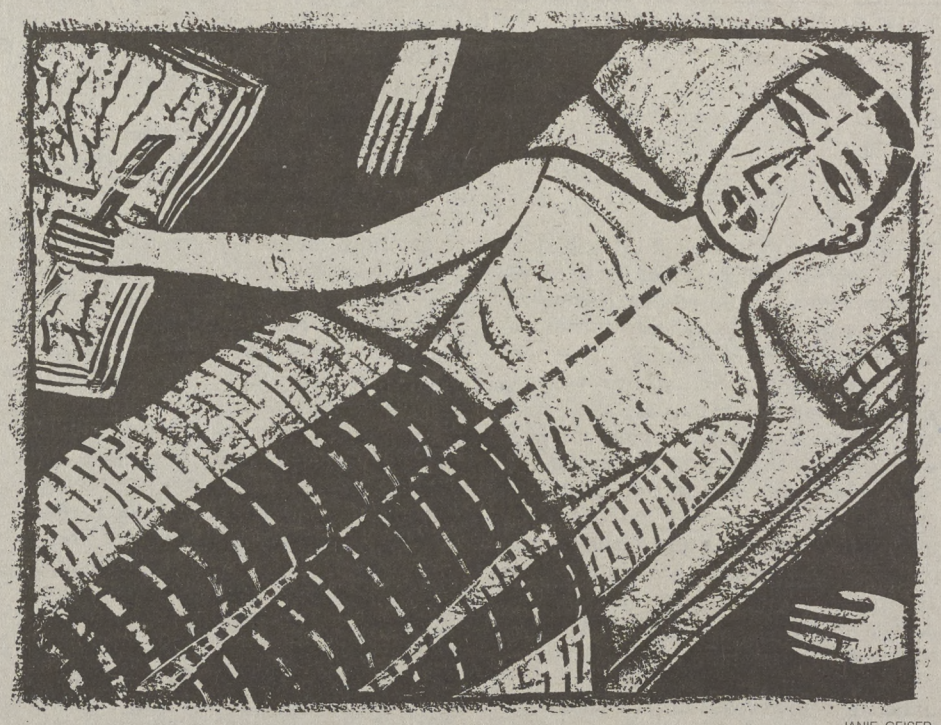
Dwight Garner is a senior editor at Salon, an Internet magazine.

A Commotion in the Brain

The author, who suffered a stroke at 42, writes of the bewildering landscape of illness and his passage back out.

MY YEAR OFF
By Robert McCrum.
231 pp. New York:
W. W. Norton & Company. $23.95.

By Abraham Verghese



JANIE GEISER

THERE is a trick to ordinary living that has to do with pushing far from the mind all thoughts of the maladies that befall hundreds of people every day. Resolutely, we ignore newspaper headlines that remind us of the dangers lurking in the workplace, on the freeway and even (thanks to radon) in the basement. And we ignore the annoying paradox that when we are having the most fun we are often doing things that might be bad for us.

This is why illness comes most often as a shock, as if the veil has been stripped away to show us how vulnerable we really are. Coleridge noted that it is the convalescent who sees the world in its true colors. Indeed, illness has stimulated many a writer to look back: one thinks immediately of Harold Brodkey's AIDS memoir, "This Wild Darkness: The Story of My Death," and Anatole Broyard's "Intoxicated by My Illness." What makes Robert McCrum's story distinctive is that the stroke that felled him affected the very part of the body that must recall the illness and find the language to describe what happened, even as language and speech themselves are disrupted. This quality of the brain observing itself is what gives "My Year Off" its particular poignancy.

When his stroke occurred, Robert McCrum was just 42 years old; he was the editor in chief of Faber & Faber, the London publishing house, and also an acclaimed writer. He had been married a mere two months (to Sarah Lyall, a journalist who writes for The New York Times) when he awoke one morning unable to get out of bed. His wife was away in San Francisco.

"I was supposed to drive to Cambridge that morning to visit my parents. So, time to get up. But there it was — I could not move. More accurately, I could not move my left side. Overnight, my body had become a dead weight." In attempting to get off the bed, he fell to the floor and then half-fell, half-crawled down the stairs. It took him all day, slipping in and out of consciousness, to get to the downstairs phone and make the call for help. At the hospital, it was clear that he had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage, for which no obvious cause (such as raised blood pressure or an aneurysm) was apparent.

During his convalescence, McCrum found "the enforced leisure and opportunity to explore myself, to analyze what made me tick and to discover what mattered to me. Alone in my room, with only my right arm functioning properly (my right leg, though intact, was of no real use to me in this state), and with the demons of physical exhaustion constantly at hand, I began to keep a diary." His wife also kept one, and excerpts from both serve to reconstruct much of what patient and spouse

Continued on next page

Abraham Verghese is a professor of medicine at Texas Tech University. His latest book is "The Tennis Partner: A Doctor's Story of Friendship and Loss."

Commotion

Continued from preceding page

were feeling and thinking during these difficult times.

Barely two weeks after his stroke, McCrum copied out a passage from Marcus Aurelius' "Meditations": "In the life of a man, his time is but a moment, his being an incessant flux, his senses a dim rushlight, his body a prey of worms, his soul an unquiet eddy, his fortune dark and his fame doubtful. In short, all that is of the body is as coursing waters, all that is of the soul as dreams and vapors; life a warfare, a brief sojourning in an alien land; and after repute, oblivion."

MCCRUM tells us that he "read this through a veil of tears with a shock of recognition, as if spoken to across a vast abyss of time and history." A few days later, his wife wrote: "Everyone keeps asking me if he is going through personality changes. Quite a scary question, because the truth is I'm not sure: is he impatient and peremptory because of the combination of his normal self (before I came along) and the frustration of his condition, or because of a neurological problem?"

Once the life-threatening possibility of a fresh stroke subsided; McCrum's efforts revolved around rehabilitation, trying to restore function to his paralyzed left arm and leg. Six weeks after the stroke, "when Sarah was taking off my socks in the evening, we suddenly saw independent movement. There they were — my left toes moving! It was like finding life on Mars." McCrum's recovery was arduous, painful and complicated by depression, shame and self-doubt. But gradually he learned to walk again, his speech returned to almost normal and by the end of the book, a year and a half after his stroke, he and his wife celebrated the arrival of a baby daughter.

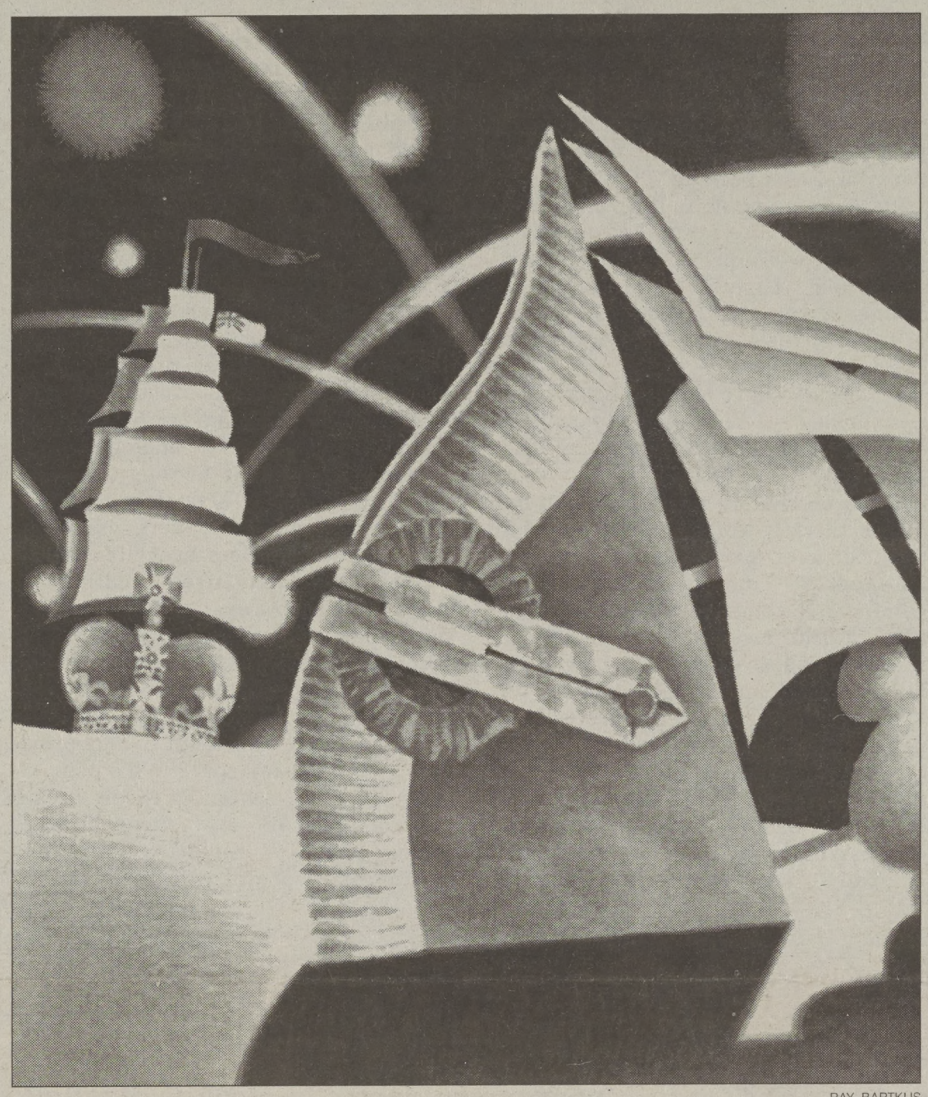
With its lucid, heartfelt prose, "My Year Off" gives voice to the millions of people who suffer from strokes, a quarter of whom are under the age of 65 and most of whom have some residual weakness or dysfunction for the rest of their lives. More important, this book is a testament to the parallel trials and the courage of the family members of stroke victims.

It is human nature to want to seek both causation (beyond the obvious anatomical one) and meaning for an illness. McCrum believes his stroke came about because "I'd reached a point in my professional life when I could almost literally not see my way forward. So it came as a physical punctuation mark, a reminder from my body to pause and to take stock. What I needed was a season of vulnerability. In the language of psychobabble, I needed to get in touch with myself again."

The meaning McCrum finds in his ordeal is astonishingly similar to what others who suffer a catastrophic illness also discover: "I have learned, in short, that I am not immortal (the fantasy of youth) and yet, strangely, in the process I have been renewed in my understanding of family and, finally, of the only thing that really matters: love." □

Naval Gazing

Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin are back in another tale of derring-do.



RAY BARTKUS

THE HUNDRED DAYS
By Patrick O'Brian.
281 pp. New York:
W. W. Norton & Company. $24.

By Paul Kennedy

IT is the early spring of 1815, and two elderly English naval lieutenants are high up on the southern slopes of Gibraltar, observing and commenting on a squadron of Royal Navy vessels under Commodore Jack Aubrey coming steadily closer to the harbor:

"It was a wonderfully beautiful day, with a slight and varying but reasonably favorable breeze at last: the sun blazed on the various kinds of broom in flower, upon the Rock, upon the cistuses and giant heath, while an uninterrupted stream of migrant birds, honey buzzards, black kites, all the European vultures, storks both black and white, bee eaters, hoopoes and countless hirundines flowed across the sky amidst a general indifference; for all eyes were fixed upon the middle distance, where the squadron had come about on the starboard tack."

Thus begins the 19th of what are now popularly referred to as the Aubrey-Maturin novels, about naval warfare, by Patrick O'Brian. They are part of that genre of naval historical fiction that stretches back to Frederick Marryat and C. S. Forester and reaches forward to such contemporaries of O'Brian as Alexander Fullerton and Alexander Kent — a genre that seems to be booming in recent years, and capturing male and female readers alike.

That said, a reading of only the first few pages of any book in the Aubrey-Maturin series would tell the readers that they were being presented with something different from, and more than, fictional accounts of naval actions and storms at sea. Battles there are aplenty, and O'Brian matches Forester in the excitement, detail and bloody realism of his reconstructions. But these naval tales are blended into a larger panorama of Georgian society and politics, science, medicine, botany and the whole conspectus of contemporary Enlightenment knowledge about the natural world.

Consider simply the above quotation, taken from the second paragraph of "The Hundred Days." The overall scene is about British warships coming into Gibraltar; but only O'Brian among the naval writers would think to slip into that long sentence on the migrating birds, and detail specific types. How many other naval authors, one wonders, would actually have known that the Strait of Gibraltar is one of the great crossing points for the northward and southward avian migrations, or even cared? By contrast, O'Brian's works abound with captivating descriptions of fauna and flora all over the globe, of classical concerts (with a Locatelli or Haydn piece being expertly described), of gossip about the changing fate of the Whigs and Tories at Westminster, all forming a rich and varied complement to sections about naval rigging and life below deck.

O'Brian's brilliant device for making his works into more than naval history is, of course, his invention of dual heroes, the bluff and ultracompetent Aubrey being always accompanied by his eccentric ship's surgeon, Stephen Maturin — a naval surgeon, yes, but also a highly regarded British intelligence agent, a former Irish radical, a multilingual polymath, a natural philosopher with a passion for beetles, sea creatures, birds and animals that often tempts him to linger on strange shores when the impatient Aubrey is urgent for the next battle. This character mix works so well, and all is written so beautifully, that O'Brian's worldwide fans have come to expect a new novel every year. "The Hundred Days" is this season's offering, and there is no doubt the fans will like it.

THE novel is set in the "hundred days" between Napoleon's escape from Elba and his final defeat at Waterloo in mid-1815, and our heroes must thwart dastardly efforts by Balkan mercenaries and North African potentates to assist a Bonapartist victory. Naval actions off the Adriatic coast, strenuous secret journeys into the interior North African wastes by Maturin and a decisive battle to seize a gold convoy attempting to run the Strait of Gibraltar are typical high points of this tale, though always interspersed with those special O'Brian features. As the creators of other paired characters like Holmes and Watson or Spencer and Hawk long ago discovered, once you have found a good fictional recipe, it doesn't pay to change it.

Is this, then, the end of the line for the O'Brian series? Napoleon, against whom Aubrey and Maturin have waged an almost personal battle through 19 works, is now en route — on a Royal Navy frigate — to lasting exile on St. Helena; and the "Great War" (as 19th-century Britons called it) is over. Yet, in the last paragraph, as Aubrey's warship casts off from Gibraltar on its passage home, he is urged to "liberate Chile." Since the real-life character whom it is thought Aubrey most resembles, the great frigate captain Thomas Cochrane, left the Royal Navy in 1814 and went on to fight for Chile and Peru against Spanish rule in South America, it seems a fair guess that our famous duo will shortly reappear in that very hemisphere for further adventures. □

Paul Kennedy is a professor of history at Yale University. His books include "The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery."

From the "laureate of the common man"*

CHARLES KURALT'S AMERICAN MOMENTS

A FAMILY ALBUM OF THE NATION

Charles Kuralt's final book is a celebration of the people and places that define our country's spirit. *The Keeper of the Flame on Liberty Island. Paul Bunyan's Hometown. Cowboy Hats. Ferris Wheels. Stone Skippers. The Howl of the Wolf.* It's a family album of the nation, filled with heartwarming stories and unforgettable photographs.

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—from the Foreword by Charles Osgood

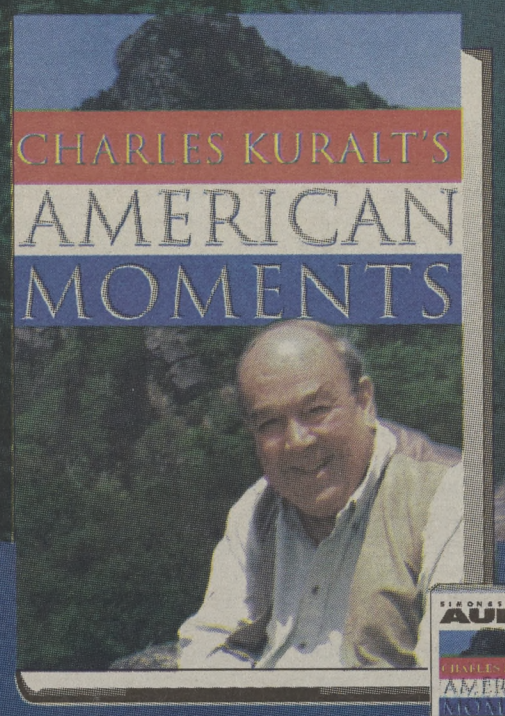
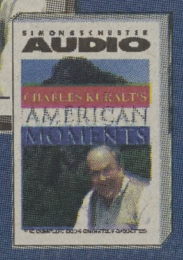


Photo © Hugh Morton



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*Time magazine

Crossing the Threshold

In Alice Munro's stories, characters are poised on the brink of a changing world.

THE LOVE OF A GOOD WOMAN
Stories.
By Alice Munro.
340 pp. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $24.

By Michael Gorra



ED MILIANO

HER subject has always been the lives of girls and women: their schooling and passions and troubles, their coming-of-age and the coming of age, the beginnings and more often the ends of their marriages, the raising of children and the ambiguous hold of the past. Men are, of course, a part of those lives, and yet she almost always presents her men as seen by women, an Other defined by the possibility of betrayal or violence or maybe by a simple stolid incapacity. But though she is no more interested in the lives of men than Conrad was in those of women, I would hesitate to call her a feminist writer. For she has the kind of creative androgyny that Virginia Woolf longingly evoked in "A Room of One's Own"; she writes "as a woman, but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman," and this gives her pages "that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself." Her work never feels as though it has had the question of gender thrust upon it, and in this she differs from writers like Doris Lessing or Angela Carter or Toni Morrison or indeed from Woolf herself. Though not perhaps from her acknowledged master, Flannery O'Connor, whose achievement she may now have outstripped.

That comparison is perhaps unfair. O'Connor died before she was 40, and Alice Munro has written richly on into her 60's, into a time when she stands as the only living writer in the English language to have made a major career out of short fiction alone. Munro is aware of her debts: "Save the Reaper," one of the best stories in this characteristically superb collection, both pays homage to and cunningly revises O'Connor's story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." Yet if the Ontario-born Munro shares the Georgian writer's powerful sense of regional identity, her work is nevertheless governed by a radically different formal imperative. O'Connor cracks her own Roman Catholicism across her characters' lives with a speed and ferocity for which not only they but the story itself often seems unprepared; and her endings always have the loud finality of a pistol shot. Munro's feel for her own characters is, in contrast, as pure as Chekhov's and as unviolated by any appeal to an external system of thought. Her early stories had conclusions as quietly sharp as the click of a pocket-watch lid, but she has long since abandoned that tidiness. With each book her stories have grown longer — this volume's 340 pages hold just eight stories — and their endings have become correspondingly open, even unruly, and yet somehow not inconclusive.

I say unviolated — but very far from unaware. "There is a change coming I think in the lives of girls and women. Yes. But it is up to us to make it come." So a woman says to her daughter in the line that gave Munro's best-known early book its title. Munro published those words in 1971, when that change had just begun to take hold, but her character speaks in the years immediately after World War II, and that gap or split is characteristic of her work as a whole. She writes from after the change about the world that was before. So the "little bride" narrator of "Cortes Island" notes that both she and her husband "came from homes where unmarried sex was held to be disgusting and unforgivable. . . . We were right at the end of the time of looking at things that way, though we didn't know it."

Another story describes how "30 years ago, a family was spending a holiday together on the east coast of Vancouver Island." But that family's young mother, Pauline, feels walled up by her schoolteacher husband and still more by his blustery parents. At home, she has begun an affair with the director of the local community theater, and when he now shows up she goes off with him, even though it means, as the story's title puts it, that "the children stay" behind. "So her life was falling forwards; she was becoming one of those people who ran away." And Munro's triumph lies in the force with which she suggests not only the inner logic of Pauline's decision but also its cost, the pain she must "carry along and get used to until it's only the past she's grieving for and not any possible present."

One can't say that Munro has opened new territory for herself here. These stories may stand on the same high plateau of achievement as the finest pieces in such early collections as "The Beggar Maid" and "The Progress of Love," but the moral geography of her fiction remains as familiar as its physical one. Nevertheless, "The Love of a Good Woman" does clarify one's sense of Munro's work as a whole. Only one of these stories is rooted in the present, and though an element of retrospection has always been prominent in her work, never before has she seemed so autumnal, so concerned with mediating between the way we live now and the way we lived then.

Most of these stories look back to the years around 1960. Read together, they so reinforce one another as to amount to nothing less than the portrait of a generation: a generation that came to adulthood with one set of rules and then found it could live with another; a generation of women through whom the great turn of our times first quickened into life. Not that Munro often makes such explicit public claims; it seems uncharacteristically blunt of her to call one of these stories "Before the Change." Nevertheless, that title works for her account of a harrowing liberation, the story of a young woman who doesn't realize that her doctor father is also an abortionist until she herself has had a child and given it up for adoption.

The dates tell me that this is Munro's own generation. But her stories never feel autobiographical. And yet nothing here looks like a performance, either, a voice put on or ventriloquized. Her work has a motion that seems as natural as walking. As natural? Better say as complicated, and then add that these stories walk not only forward but backward and sideways as well. They are never just about one character, one situation. They open out, always, into other lives and other moments. These are stories marked by shifts in time or point of view that one barely notices, so unforced do they seem, until one reads the last pages and realizes that the story hasn't taken the path it had at first appeared headed for, that its ostensible subject is not at all its real one.

The narrator of "Cortes Island" turns away from her own circumstances to describe the mystery in the lives of the elderly couple who live upstairs, the secrets contained in an old newspaper account of a fatal house fire. But then she casually and briefly evokes her own later married life —

Michael Gorra teaches English at Smith College. His most recent book is "After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie."

'Nonsense Is Only Another Language'

Penelope Fitzgerald uses fiction to examine an 18th-century German poet and his doomed love for a 12-year-old girl.

THE BLUE FLOWER

By Penelope Fitzgerald. 226 pp. Boston: Mariner Books/Houghton Mifflin Company. Paper, $12.

By Michael Hofmann

PENELOPE FITZGERALD'S first novel was published in 1977, when she was already 60. Since then, three of her nine novels have been short-listed for the Booker Prize in England, and her "Offshore" won the prize in 1979. She had a varied professional life before she took up novels. She had written a couple of biographies and, as she amiably stresses in biographical notes and interviews, brought up three children.

Her first five novels are all set in England, in the present or the recent past. Many of them make comedies of institutions: the British Museum, drama school, the BBC, an East Anglian village (although her village is more a *machine infernale* than an institution). The typical Fitzgerald protagonist is an innocent who is fed into these systems, pitting his or her own surprising resources of courage and determination against the equally surprising eccentricity — shading into monstrosity — of the surroundings. All her books might be called "Innocence," although only one is. The exceptions are her child characters, who are repositories of awful knowledge. These dry, shrewd, sympathetic and sharply economical books are almost disreputably enjoyable — serious cousins, as it might be, of P. G. Wodehouse or the children's writer Richmal Compton.

Then, through ambition or restlessness, or feeling that she'd exhausted her own immediate material, Ms. Fitzgerald set her next three books in different territories: in Italy in the 1950's, in prerevolutionary Russia, and in a Cambridge college in the Edwardian era. Her habitual insight and authority seemed to carry over effortlessly into these more imagined, historically complicated settings. One could set her Italy next to that of Cesare Pavese or Natalia Ginzburg, her Russia next to Mandelstam's "tossed salad of glass and wood and milk," her Cambridge by Gwen Raverat's, and not be any the worse for it. In "The Bookshop," for instance, there is this amusing little cultural aside: "Later middle age, for the upper-middle class in East Suffolk, marked a crisis, after which the majority became water-colorists, and painted landscapes." This is both fine and droll, a mixture of truth and exaggeration, and, in its mention of "the majority," subtly unsettling — whatever did the rest of them do? But in "Innocence," Ms. Fitzgerald writes, as parenthetically, but even better, of "Cesare, who shared the delusion of all Italian farmers that sacks are waterproof," which seems to me to have more strangeness, to show more affection and to be harder to know.

These fugitive scraps of insight and information — like single brushstrokes of vivid and true colors — convey more reality than any amount of impasto description and research. In Ms. Fitzgerald's books you can breathe the air and taste the water, just as "the Gaul" (the nag, the hack) does in her new novel, "The Blue Flower": "Between Rippach and Lützen he stopped where a stream crossed the road, to let the Gaul have a drink, although the horse usually had to wait for this until the end of the day. As Fritz loosened the girths, the Gaul breathed in enormously, as though he had scarcely known until that moment what air was. Fritz's valise, tied to the crupper, rose and fell with a sound like a drum on his broad quarters. Then, deflating little by little, he lowered his head to the water to find the warmest and muddiest part, sank his jaws to a line just below the nostrils, and began to drink with an alarming energy which he had never displayed on the journey from Wittenberg."

Good as the other books are, "The Blue Flower" is better. It is a quite astonishing book, a masterpiece, as a number of British critics have already said — from its epigraph from Novalis, "Novels arise out of the shortcomings of history," to the list of dates and deaths in its harshly affecting afterword. Set in provincial Saxony in the 1790's, this is, on the face of it, Ms. Fitzgerald's most recondite and challenging book. It is also her greatest triumph, as luminous and authentic a piece of imaginative writing about a writer, in this case a seminal German writer, as Georg Büchner's "Lenz," Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Letter of Lord Chandos" or Thomas Mann's tiny story about Schiller, "Weary Hour" — three of the great glories of German literature.

Her subject is Novalis, a German Romantic poet and man of wider genius, who lived from 1772 to 1801 and combined, roughly, the intense flaring life of a Keats with the intellectual breadth of a Coleridge. Or rather it is Novalis before he became Novalis and was merely Friedrich von Hardenberg, or Fritz, as in the passage quoted above. The novel covers the years from 1790 to 1797, years when he was a student of history, philosophy and law at the universities of Jena, Leipzig and Wittenberg, before he set out on his early professional life, first indentured to the regional administrator Coelestin Just and then assigned to a job in the Salt Mine Directorate, where his father also worked. The book evokes his homelife as the oldest son in a large, vivacious and affectionate family in a ramshackle house in a small town in Saxony, his meeting with the 12-year-old Sophie von Kühn in 1794, his unofficial engagement with her the following year, and her death two years later from tuberculosis. The afterword, as I intimated, is a list of further deaths, those of Fritz's siblings, in their teens and 20's, mainly also from tuberculosis.



RAY BARTKUS

It is hard to know where to begin to praise the book. First off, I can think of no better introduction to the Romantic era: its intellectual exaltation, its political ferment, its brilliant amateur self-scrutiny, its propensity for intense friendships and sibling relationships, its uncertain morals, its rumors and reputations and meetings, its innocence and its refusal of limits. Also, "The Blue Flower" is a wholly convincing account of that very difficult subject, genius. It is something Penelope Fitzgerald is interested in and has written about in earlier books — Jonathan in "At Freddie's," Dolly in "The Beginning of Spring." But here it is present in the whole younger generation of Hardenbergs, in their curiosity and abruptness and the way they imitate and learn from one another. Fritz's dissident understanding, his odd mixture of intellectual calm and excited curiosity ("Why not? Nonsense is only another language") is latent, made clear in the exchanges with his brothers and sisters in a way that is beyond what any biographer could achieve. Things written by the historical Novalis arise here naturally and seamlessly from the character of Fritz — for instance, "We could not feel love for God Himself if He did not need our help."

Similarly, Fritz's love for Sophie, a crux and a conundrum for the biographer, emerges beautifully in the novel, as in this little exchange: "Fritz persevered. 'I did not quite mean that. But Schlegel, too, is interested in transmigration. Should you like to be born again?'

"Sophie considered a little. 'Yes, if I could have fair hair.' " Inequality of age and intellect, yes, but compatibility!

THE quiddity of life in a remote place, at a remote time, is managed with characteristic brilliance by Ms. Fitzgerald: "Even Tennstedt had its fair, specializing in *Kesselfleisch* — the ears, snout and strips of fat from the pig's neck boiled with peppermint schnapps." Further, she uses tiny doses of German ("the *Gaul*," "the *Amtsrichter*") and of literally translated German expressions ("own-ness" and, very tellingly, for Fritz's little brother, "the Bernhard"). That and a barely detectable abruptness in some phrasings are enough to move the reader back 200 years to the various Romes and Athenses of Saxony. Hundreds of pages of gothic type wouldn't have been able to do it.

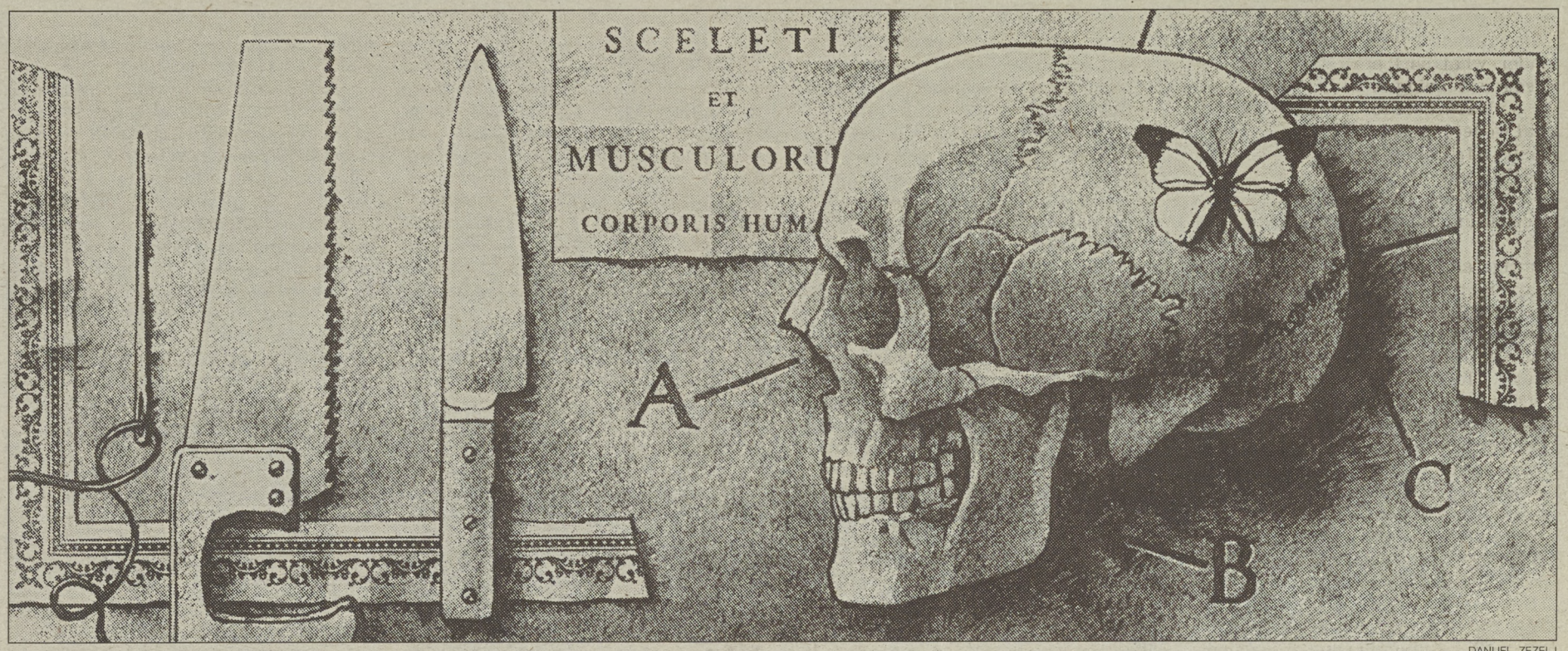
And, of course, like the masterpiece it is, "The Blue Flower" ranges far beyond itself. It is an interrogation of life, love, purpose, experience and horizons, which has found its perfect vehicle in a few years from the pitifully short life of a German youth about to become a great poet — one living in a period of intellectual and political upheaval, when even the prevailing medical orthodoxy "held that to be alive was not a natural state." □

Michael Hofmann's new collection of poems, "Approximately Nowhere," will be published next year. He is the translator of "The Man Who Disappeared" ("Amerika"), by Franz Kafka.

Michael Dirda in BookWorld also praised F'gerald for this--as if it shouldn't be an automatic bit of craft!

Heart of Ice

This first novel details the life of a brilliant 18th-century physician possessed of a startling lack of affect.



DANIJEL ZEZELJ

INGENIOUS PAIN

By Andrew Miller.
337 pp. New York:
Harcourt Brace & Company. $24.

By Patrick McGrath

A DOCTOR is reflecting upon his profession: "In truth, Mrs. Clarke, there is little enough we can do, very little. We are born too late and too early — between the secret arts of the old world and the discoveries of the age to come." The year is 1771, we are in England and the doctor is a man called James Dyer. "I had a certain genius, madam, mostly for the knife. But I never had . . . that quality of attention towards another's suffering which marks out the true healer."

Andrew Miller's extraordinary first novel, "Ingenious Pain," concerns the curious defect that seems to be the source of James Dyer's "genius" for the knife. It is an inability, since birth, to feel physical pain. Drive a pin through his hand, tear off a thumbnail, break his leg, flog him raw: he feels nothing, and his flesh heals over with astonishing rapidity. How can this have come about? While skating by night on a frozen river, his mother impulsively coupled with a stranger, and thus was the boy conceived. An ancient theory — not yet entirely discredited, despite this being the Age of Enlightenment — holds that by means of what is called the "forming faculty," which mediates in complex ways between mind and body, a pregnant woman's experience might somehow be imprinted upon her unborn child. A child conceived on ice would by this theory be cold.

So cold is the young James, so odd and mute, so impervious to pain, that he gives everyone including his mother the creeps. It's not long before he's taken up in best 18th-century manner by a roguish huckster called Marley Gummer (possibly his father), who calls him a "most delightful, cold-blooded monster of a boy." James is put to work at country fairs, promoting a quack nostrum for pain relief. A gentleman scientist named Canning watches the boy performing and quickly divines his secret. Soon enough, James has been whisked off to Mr. Canning's stately home, there to be studied along with other human oddities like the Siamese twins Ann and Anna, and what seems to be a mermaid: "A shape — a head? — skims just below the skin of the pool. There is a flash of bronze, a cry, gull-like, forlorn, awful. For an instant James sees it, outlined in the boil of its own movement; an eye, unmistakably human, unmistakably alien."

The 18th century had a strong appetite for the freaks and peculiarities of the natural world, and Andrew Miller has cleverly deployed his various specimens so as to draw out characteristic features of the period: the casual cruelty and sheer hard slog of life; the gullibility and superstition of the popular mind; but mostly the vigorous new spirit of scientific inquiry, particularly in the fields of medicine and anatomy, then sweeping away established patterns of thought. Here the author sinks his thematic probes and comes up with the question: What would it mean for a man of the Enlightenment to be spared the distorting effects of physical sensation? For reason to have total sway over the suffering, fallible flesh and all its attendant emotions? Or, as a clergyman puts it late in the story: "What does the world need most — a good, ordinary man, or one who is outstanding, albeit with a heart of ice?"

This question permeates the narrative, although it never for a second slows it down. Mr. Miller knows the intellectual temper of his period, but he also understands how it tells its stories. He has appropriated for his purposes the picaresque of Sterne and Smollett, an episodic genre teeming with ribaldry, gusto and a delight in villains and dupes, along with an implicit conviction that life is dominated by chance, greed, treachery and malice.

James Dyer certainly sees the seamy side of 18th-century life. He leaves Mr. Canning — having glimpsed that gentleman's own exotic physical secret — and returns to Marley Gummer and his companion, Grace Boylan, "former prostitute, though still available to those who favor a large, motherly sort of whore." After a night of serious drinking, Marley and James end up aboard a ship of the line, and thus, like Smollett's Roderick Random, does James begin his career in medicine, as assistant to a naval surgeon.

NOW his character begins properly to announce itself. He displays an utter disregard for physical danger and a callous indifference to the feelings of his fellows — both corollaries of his insensitivity to pain. His callousness serves him well when he takes over from the surgeon during a naval battle: "We brought the worst cases to him — dangling arms, crushed legs, gaping bellies — and he cut and sewed and pushed men's innards back into their natural cavities. I swear to you, Sir, he took pleasure in it, this demonstration of his genius, and I cannot believe any man ever cut human flesh with a cooler head or a steadier hand. . . . The last occasion on which I saw your friend was when I was carried past the dispensary and happened to look in with my one good eye and see him there apparently dissecting a human hand."

And it is here, in the very dawn of James's distinguished career, that we glimpse the novel's stark central paradox: to do good for others, it is not necessary to feel for them. A small but utterly chilling incident occurs a few pages on, when we see James back on dry land, at an inn in Bath, being propositioned by a maid. James feels her breast and finds two hard lumps. The girl tells him that her price is five shillings. He says he will not give sixpence for her. "In the gray rainlight of the passage she is already half ghost." But he is not interested in cutting lumps from a breast. He has bigger fish to fry. He will remove gallstones in near-record times. He will successfully perform a Caesarean section. He will trepan the skull of a man kicked in the head by a horse, then hand him back to his friends, "feeble, bewildered, but very much alive."

He will also shoot off a man's nose in a duel, and then design and fit a prosthetic replacement made of polished ivory, attached to a pair of spectacles. He tells his patient: "It will outlast you, sir, by some considerable margin. You shall be outlived by your nose." The patient is grateful. He bears James no ill will. "Between them is an odd complicity, peculiar perhaps to lovers, or to those who have offered each other death." Peculiar to lovers indeed: the duel was fought over the injured man's wife, with whom James had been conducting a torrid affair while living under their roof.

And so this peculiar, colorful, complicated story rattles on. James Dyer is hardly a sympathetic protagonist, but he is never dull. For at the heart of him is a splendidly intriguing mystery

Patrick McGrath's most recent novel is "Asylum."

BOOKS OF THE TIMES

Trying to Rescue the Old West From the Dustbin

By CHRISTOPHER LEHMANN-HAUPT

Trevanian's back, with a classic revenge tale.

You can't help thinking of Hannibal Lecter at the start of Trevanian's new novel, "Incident at Twenty-Mile," his first to be published in a decade and a half. The year is 1898 and in the maximum-security wing of the state prison in Laramie, Wyo., Guard Private John Tillman is touring the special cells to check on the so-called moonberries, local slang for the criminally insane.

Tillman starts with a man convicted for throwing acid in the faces of children. " 'If I don't do it . . .,' he had explained to the judge, '. . . who will?' " He passes "The Politician," who is arguing with the space in front of him. Then he comes to "the baddest of the bad," a brilliant and literate madman named Lieder who has maimed whole families in the cause of electing William Jennings Bryan president and saving the farmer and workingman from being crucified "on a Cross of Gold," but who never kills because he knows he would hang for it.

It's Lecter-like the way Lieder lures Guard Tillman into his cell by pretending to want to be saved by Christ, and then proceeds to strangle him and escape, taking along two other prisoners who happen to be sodomites. Yet surprisingly enough, there's an overtone of unseriousness too, just as there's an element of playfulness in all that follows, when Lieder and his gang descend upon and terrorize the tiny population of Twenty-Mile, a mere stopping-off place for silver miners looking for Saturday night fun, "so called because it was 20 miles from a spot 20 miles away."

Lieder is sadistic and vengeful. He shoots helpless animals. He paddles to death a former teacher of his. He tortures the owner of Twenty-Mile's whorehouse by making him remain in his chair until he urinates on himself. He threatens to rape the virginal town beauty. One's outrage with him grows and grows. But there is little hope that any of the town's mostly defective people will be able to stand up to him, including Matthew Dubchek, another stranger recently arrived in Twenty-Mile, who models himself after his literary hero, the Ringo Kid, but who tells a lot of lies and lapses into a stupor every now and then.

Although the story holds your attention completely, you don't take it quite seriously. The author has too much fun with language: "A susurrous scurry of sliding scree drew his attention to three men climbing up the slope toward him." Too many of the characters verge on parody, not least the town's three prostitutes: Frenchy, "a tall, lean, yellow-eyed black woman from New Orleans; Chinky, "a shy Chinese girl who spoke little English"; and Queeny, "a loud, laughing, sloshy-breasted old Irishwoman who was said to be able to drink anything that didn't eat the bottom out of a glass before she got to it." And the author has to know his story has been told many times before, from E. L. Doctorow's first novel, "Welcome to Hard Times," to films like "High Noon" and "Unforgiven," to mention only the most obvious. ("Incident" even contains what can be read as homages to its predecessors.)

So what exactly is going on here? In an interview sent along with the book's publicity material, Trevanian — recorded in Who's Who in America as the pen name of Rodney Whitaker, a former professor at the University of Texas — talks about his previous novels, "The Main," "The Eiger Sanction," "The Loo Sanction," "The Summer of Katya" and "Shibumi."

Although his readers have taken these books seriously enough as entertainment to make them international best sellers, the author insists they were written as spoofs of different genres as well as "spoofs of spoofs." (In fact, he says, the name Trevanian was originally intended for only those spoofs of what he calls "the derring-do/espionage/crotcharama genre," but legal complications forced him to use it for his subsequent novels.)

Is "Incident at Twenty-Mile" intended purely as a spoof of the western genre, then? Probably not. It is written with too much evocative detail. Its story holds you too closely in its grip. And in its concluding pages you discover that the details of its plot are taken from an actual event, and you learn of the delight the author took in enriching those details with the juices of his imagination (although at moments this postscript also reads like a spoof of a scholar at work).

So what you finally have in "Incident at Twenty-Mile" is more complicated than myth or parody. A piece of found art, it tries to rescue the western from the dustbin. For all its talk about the closing of the frontier, it suggests that some of the conflicts of this classic genre, those between effeminacy and virility, between escape from the self and self-renewal, are still going on in the West today. After all, Lieder's ultimate aim is to form a militia to fight what he sees as an international conspiracy to people America with immigrants from all over the world. He might as well be tilting at black helicopters.

"Incident," then, is a blend of classic revenge tale, nostalgia and parody, written by someone who says he believes that even the writer's voice and persona have to be confected. Reading it you can never rest comfortably with any single perspective. The result is slightly unsettling, but it works.

INCIDENT AT TWENTY-MILE

By Trevanian

308 pages. St. Martin's Press/Thomas Dunne Books. $24.95.

ON THE WEB

The best-seller lists from th
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BRIDGE

Alan Truscott

How to Button Your Lip
And Win Travel Exp

The American Contract Bridge League does not spend its resources on giving cash prizes for tournament performance, but once a year it is, rather unevenly, generous to some winners. Most of those who qualify for the national final of three North American Pair Championships hav
their expenses paid to the site of
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MUSIC REVIEW

On Golden Flute, Bach With Homey Touches

By ALLAN KOZINN

James Galway has explored virtually every major corner of the flute repertory, and quite a few minor ones, in his New York recitals over the last 20 years, and he has done his fair share of extending the repertory with commissioned works. Now and then he returns to some old favorites, and for his recital at Carnegie Hall on Tuesday evening, he revisited the sonatas of J. S. Bach.

The concert was a homey affair: Mr. Galway played the top line in four of the six works on the program, offering an amusing spoken introduction to each, and sharing the spotlight with his ensemble. Monica Huggett, the violinist, played the Sonata in E (BWV 1023), and Sarah Cunningham, a viola da gamba player, was the soloist in the Sonata in D (BWV 1028), which was prefaced with a brief lecture on the gamba. Philip Moll, Mr. Galway's longtime accompanist, played the ensemble at the piano and in the Trio Sonata in G (BWV 1039), Mr. Galway's wife, Jeanne Galway, played the second flute line.

The performances were as one would expect from players of this caliber. In the flute works, slow movements unfolded with a ruminative, songlike quality that was magnified by Mr. Galway's sweet, carefully shaped tone, and the fast movements had a lively sparkle. Finer distinctions were clear as well: the works composed for Frederick the Great — the Sonata in E (BWV 1035), for flute, and the Trio Sonata in C minor from "The Musical Offering" (BWV 1079), for flute and violin — had a courtliness that set them apart.

The readings were also nicely balanced, the only moments of muddiness occurring in the Trio Sonata for two flutes, when the flute lines sometimes blurred together.

There was less tension than one might have expected between the sound of Mr. Galway's modern, golden flute and the period instruments, complete with gut strings, played by his companions.



Rahav Segev

James Galway performing at Carnegie Hall on Tuesday evening.

MAKING BOOKS

Martin Arnold

A Culinary Fantasy Life

Once upon a time, in an empire long gone, Marcus Gabius Api- ent his last denarius on a alizing he had neither the he discipline to econo- ing, he committed sui- he did, this epicure A.D. wrote the k, "De Re Co- lling about tainly So what pub- ith d-

Cookbooks, like fashion, seem to appease wishfulness and the need for fantasy, that "one-day-I'll-buy-an-Armani" daydream. Which doesn't mean that all books go unused. But Judith Jones, senior editor at Knopf, who edits both novels and cookbooks, says that "a huge percentage of people who buy cookbooks don't cook — they dream that maybe they'll want to do this someday; they want to get a book to know about foods for that day; and the books now have lots of interesting stories about food, as well as recipes."

She has been the editor of "Mastering the Art of French Cooking," among other cookbooks, since it was conceived by Simone Beck, Louisette Bertholle and Julia Child in 1961, and has stayed with it through endless printings, now in two volumes. Com- ing from her next spring is "A Spoon- of Ginger" by Nina Simond, h will combine recipes with tra- Chinese medicine, enabling k a tasty dish that will cure

potential for food et been fully explored, reason they have that the larger tores carry titles, ac- hain's cook tributes a to tele-

American cookbooks, although not always the most fashionable, is "Joy of Cooking," first introduced in 1931 by Irma S. Rombauer. It has gone through countless editions, like a dynasty, with Ms. Rombauer being assisted by her daughter, Marion Rombauer Becker. More than 15 million copies have sold, making its backlist a literary oil well. The latest edition (Scribner), the first since 1975, was a year ago, revised partly by the founder's grandson, Ethan Becker, with the publisher fearlessly shipping more than a million copies in the first six weeks.

The book's editor, Maria Guarnaschelli , said this edition took three years to produce at a cost of $5 million, including the seven-figure advance, and that the expertise of about 120 food consultants was used to update the work and make it a bit more sophisticated.

The effort paid off. The book flew out of the publishing house "performing like a megahit novel," Ms. Guarnaschelli said, with joy, adding, "It's a reference book as well as a recipe book. You can learn about braising and how to bake custards in a water bath." Which, of course, is the only way to really manage the heat when cooking a simple custard or a crème brûlée.

Nach Waxman, owner of a Kitchen Arts and Letters, a bookstore in Manhattan specializing in food and wine, said that two-thirds of his customers were food professionals

The PEN AMERICAN CENTER NEWSLETTER

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1998-ISSUE #97

The Alien, the Guest, and the Spectre of Memory

"The Writer, the Work" showcases German writer W. G. Sebald in a provocative conversation with James Wood

BY CHRISTINE FRIEDLANDER

Early in 1996, New Directions asked me to read and report on a German book, *Die Ringe des Saturn*, by an author whose name was quite unfamiliar to me at the time, W. G. Sebald. I glanced at a few pages, felt puzzled by the mysterious illustrations, and, somewhat reluctantly, started to read. I soon discovered that it was impossible to go through the book quickly. Every sentence had to be savored. And it was a book I could not put down. I tried to remember the last time I had been so completely enthralled by a text, and my thoughts went back to my childhood and teenage years in Germany when I first discovered great tales told in wonderful prose by masterful story tellers.

Die Ringe des Saturn's interwoven tales about a small stretch of the English coastline—the vanished worlds of the last century when the far-flung British empire and its industry were at their height—haunted my imagination for weeks, and I found myself frustrated that I couldn't share what I had read with friends and family who don't read German. So I felt a sense of real happiness when I saw the enthusiastic reviews of

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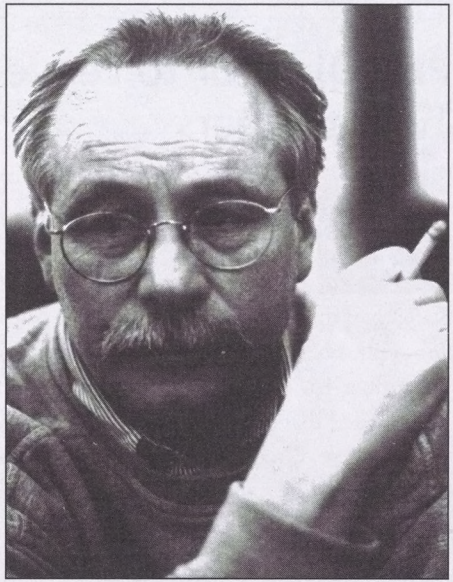


W. G. Sebald

From the President



Michael Scammell

PEN Director to Leave After Twenty Years

I had not expected my third column to be devoted to such a dramatic event, but it is my duty to report that after twenty years of service, PEN's Executive Director, Karen Kennerly, is resigning to seek pastures new. Karen had discussed her plans with me during the summer, and she announced her decision to the Board of Trustees at their meeting on September 15, 1997. The Trustees accepted her resignation, and it was decided that it would take effect at a time mutually to be agreed upon next year, most probably in the summer. The agreement was formalized in an exchange of letters dated September 15 and 17, 1997, and confirmed at the next Board meeting on October 6. (Rather than summarize the contents of those letters, I am reproducing them below.)

Confirmation came just too late for inclusion in the Novem-

and our membership numbers more than 2,600. Clearly, we will be looking for quite an exceptional person to carry on Karen's work.

By the time you read this, announcements of the vacancy will have already been sent to fellow institutions and organizations, and members are asked to send in their ideas and suggestions. Any Newsletter reader who has not done so already is hereby invited to do the same. The Search Committee expects to begin examining applications in mid-February and to have a shortlist of candidates within a month or so of that date. Since details still have to be worked out, I cannot be more precise about this. That means that, with luck, we will be able to announce the name of a new Executive Director sometime in the spring.

•

September 18, 1997
Dear Michael,

As the twentieth anniversary of my being Executive Director approaches, I have been thinking about the future, and in so doing, have decided to leave PEN. It is, I believe, an excellent time to make this change: the new governance is established; the Board is strong; the staff has never been so fine (with an excellent balance among the senior staff of longtime and new employees); and a new mix of generations in the membership is engaged in our work. As you know, it was my goal and my project to guide PEN through these changes; now that PEN is positioned to meet the challenges of the future, I am both pleased and eager to pass on the directorship. I will leave the organi-

The Spectre of Memory

continued from page 1

The Emigrants, the first of Sebald's books to be issued by New Directions, in an excellent translation by Michael Hulse. And, on October 7 at PEN Headquarters, I looked forward to meeting this German author who has written probably the most poignant and thought-provoking novel about the uprooting of human beings in this century.

James Wood was a superbly sensitive and intelligent partner in the dialogue with Sebald and asked the questions that must preoccupy every reader of the author's work. He recalled that Walter Benjamin once observed that all great works either found a new genre or dissolve an old one; for Wood, *The Emigrants* is a work of such greatness. He thought that Adalbert Stifter in the last century and Nabokov in *Speak, Memory* might be precursors, in creating so much visibility with their beautifully crafted language.

How, he asked Sebald, did the physical form of the book—the inclusion of the photos, the interweaving of the fictional and the factual—come about?

Sebald said that the idea of including photos with his writing had influenced him quite late in his career as an academic, when he was looking for something more satisfactory to do "in the potting shed," as he put it. "The process of writing was in many instances occasioned by pictures that I [had] stared at for some time and that contained some enigmatic elements that formed the instigation for the book. They tell their own story. It was my ambition to produce a kind of prose which has a degree of mutedness, and the photographs help you along the way." Sebald noted that a large number of the photos were authentic; that is, they came from photo albums owned by people described in the texts, and therefore they provided the addition of a direct testimony.

Wood went on to ask how Sebald elicited information from the people whose lives he wrote about in *The Emigrants*. He wondered whether the "fragmentariness" of information might have helped fictionally, since the book's uncanny quality is produced by something mysterious about the four lives it describes.

Sebald answered that it was sometimes difficult to elicit factual information, since the four people had all managed to escape the direct impact of persecution. "What particularly interested me," he remarked, "as I began to think about these lives was the delay between a vicarious catastrophe and the point at which it overtook these people very late in life. It was the recreation of the past in people's minds that interested me."

But in recreating the past, Wood said, the activity of memory works somewhat like fiction. "It raises the question of what is imagined and what is recalled."

Sebald replied, "I try fairly consciously to point up the sense of uncertainty between fact and fiction. The process of narration, along with the sense of reassurance that narration implies, must be brought into question and imparted to the reader."

Wood referred again to the photographs, which ask the reader to question which incidents in the book have been imagined or truly remembered, and which add an element of extra pathos in referring to something that is past and also to what is about to happen. But, Sebald asserted, "Photos are the *epitome* of memory. They have something curiously spectral about them, very much like ghosts, and it is that quality which attracts me."

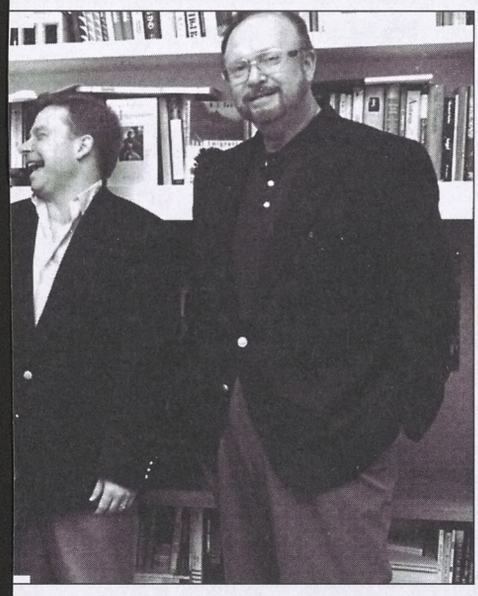
This particular quality of Sebald's work was illuminated when he spoke about the one story in *The Emigrants* that described the life of his great-uncle Adalbert, who emigrated to the United States at the beginning of this century and was employed as

companion to the son of a wealthy family, travelling with him all over the world. Adalbert's life ended in an insane asylum, and Sebald described how he reconstructed the story of his great-uncle's life by looking at old family photos and reading vintage travelogues of the period, eliciting as much information as was available through conversations with older relatives.

Wood noted that every reader of the book, either in German or in Michael Hulse's translation, would be struck by the author's exquisite control of language. "There exists," Wood said, "a kind of extremism of language running concurrently alongside the elusiveness of the material."

To Sebald, his extremism is, in a way, a tribute to the late Austrian author, Thomas Bernhard, whom Sebald himself admires. "Extremism indicates what sticks in your mind, and the telling of a tale is an exaggeration in itself." Referring to the translation, Sebald described the careful and complicated process of working with Hulse, and how he deplored the difficulties of working with editors who sometimes labor under unrealistic time pressures and who are not able to read the books they contract for in their original language.

As the conversation wound down, Wood asked Sebald about his reaction to his own emigration to England and his relation to his home country. Sebald answered that he came to England almost accidentally. He had left Germany at the age of twenty-one, when he felt that he was not able to pursue what he was interested in at the German university he attended. He first left Germany for the French-speaking part of Switzerland, where he could obtain the books he wanted to read, but at that time he had no idea he would not be returning to Germany. Travelling on to Manchester, where he had planned to spend only a year, he realized that he knew very little about England. But as he lingered on in this new country, he found himself appreciating more and more its absence of an authoritarian structure. Only in retrospect has Sebald come to understand that it was the presence of either the implicit or explicit authoritarian structure in the German university system of the 1960s that made him want to leave. Whenever he is in Germany now, he feels a curious mixture of wanting to belong and of knowing that he himself has become an alien there. ■



Peter Glassman, Paul Zindel (standing), and heir discussion at PEN's Headquarters.

questions were taken from an engaged and inquisitive audience. Among the topics raised were: the adaptation of fantasy books for film and television; where fantasy fits in with such adult literary forms as magical realism; and children's ability to distinguish between "reality" and "truth," bearing in mind parental concerns over a steady diet of fantasy in their children's reading habits. ■

Beating a Dead Mule, Partly for Fun, Partly for Hermeneutics

Continued From Page A13

dead mule," he said. "It's a live, blond shiksa." (For those unfamiliar with the technical term "shiksa," it describes a non-Jewish woman.)

Jack O'Connell, a novelist who edits the alumni magazine and teaches expository writing at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., is a serial signifier.

"If it's got a sweating amnesiac in a predatory city, it's film noir," he said. "If it's got adultery with a chamber maid in a haze of Gitanes smoke, it's French lit, and if it's got mother love, xenophobic ballads and cirrhosis, it's Irish lit."

Most signifiers — even the dead mule — are open to debate. But some cases are pretty strong. Sam Coale, an English professor at Wheaton College in Norton, Mass., and a Hawthorne scholar, said the presence of a minister in heat was essential for a New England novel. Lisa Hoagland, an English professor at the University of Cincinnati, said you could not have popular feminist fiction in the 1970's without a divorce.

Lauren Berlant of the University of Chicago, who studies "love and romance and their feminine genres, sentimentality and melodrama," said romance narrative tended to achieve a grand resolution — a dramatic speech, a great kiss or, classically, marriage. In the post-modern love plot ("The Bridges of Madison County," "The Crying Game," "My Best Friend's Wedding"), on the other hand, the ideal love is the one you can never have, she said.

Suggestions for Russian literature included a man weeping or a saintly peasant. But Nicholas Warner, a professor of literature at Claremont McKenna College in Claremont, Calif., was persuasive in arguing for the duel.

He notes that there are central duel scenes in Pushkin's "Eugene Onegin," Lermontov's "Hero of Our Time," Turgenev's "Fathers and Sons" and Tolstoy's "War and Peace," not to mention "The Shot" by Pushkin and "The Duel" by Chekhov, which are specifically about duels. Not content with mere literary signifying, both Pushkin and Lermontov died young in duels, he added.

"The duels worked so well because they were never just about two guys who disliked each other," Professor Warner said. "It was always about something more.""

The signifier for German literature, said Dieter Sevin, who teaches it at Vanderbilt University, is the forest.

He says that in children's literature ("Hansel and Gretel") and heavy lifting (Mann's "Magic Mountain"), in novels, poems and operas like "Tristan und Isolde," the forest came to stand for the powerful mystical currents in German life and thought. Especially in the German Romantic period, the forest came to symbolize a dark world full of nature's power — "the better world, the world beyond, a place of refuge not accessible to the average person."

Just as contemporary Southern life and literature are not quite so mule-centric as the literature of the 40's and 50's, you can follow the arc of German life by watching the forest diminish in centrality in contemporary German literature, Dr. Sevin said.



Corbis-Bettmann

Shakespeare had women play at being men, as in the duel from "Twelfth Night."

Fran Kaye, an English professor at the University of Nebraska and former editor of Great Plains Quarterly, says the signifier for the literature of the Great Plains : leaving the farm.

Often, she said, that takes the form of farm sales, as in the three novels of Sophus Keith Winthur, beginning with "Take All to Nebraska." Leaving, selling off or looting the farm is a consistent theme. Just as the dead mule reflects the degree to which the mule was a staple of the agrarian South, leaving the farm often reflects the degree to which many of the authors who wrote about the Great Plains did it from afar.

"A lot of the writers are people who left the land and are wondering what their relationship is with the land," Dr. Kaye said. "You don't picture Faulkner living in New York, whereas Willa Cather moves to New York."

The signifier for Shakespeare's plays is a confusion or playfulness about gender, said James C. Bulman, president of the Shakespeare Association of America and an English professor at Allegheny College.

In comedies ("As You Like It," "Taming of the Shrew," "Twelfth Night"), women play at being men, and in the tragedies ("Hamlet," "King Lear,"), men chastise themselves for behaving like women, he said.

There are, no doubt, many other signifiers, like an enclosed space (a Gothic castle or a jewel box) in Victorian women's literature, the border in American Latino literature and a dead mentor, dysfunctional family and personal disorder in confessional memoirs.

Dr. Mills, ever alert to academic fashion, concludes his piece by noting that dead mules, beyond being signifiers, may provide grist for further academic inquiry.

"Practitioners of hermaneutic exegesis may turn to an exploration of the epiphanic potentiality of the dead mule within its various interpretive and intertextual reticulations," he wrote. "Semioticists may determine that one person's mule is another's magnolia.

And while some will object to turning the South into a DMZ (dead mule zone), he said the risks of offending tender sensibilities were less perilous with Southern literature than with other literary forms.

"Everyone picks on the South, so we don't worry about it," he said.

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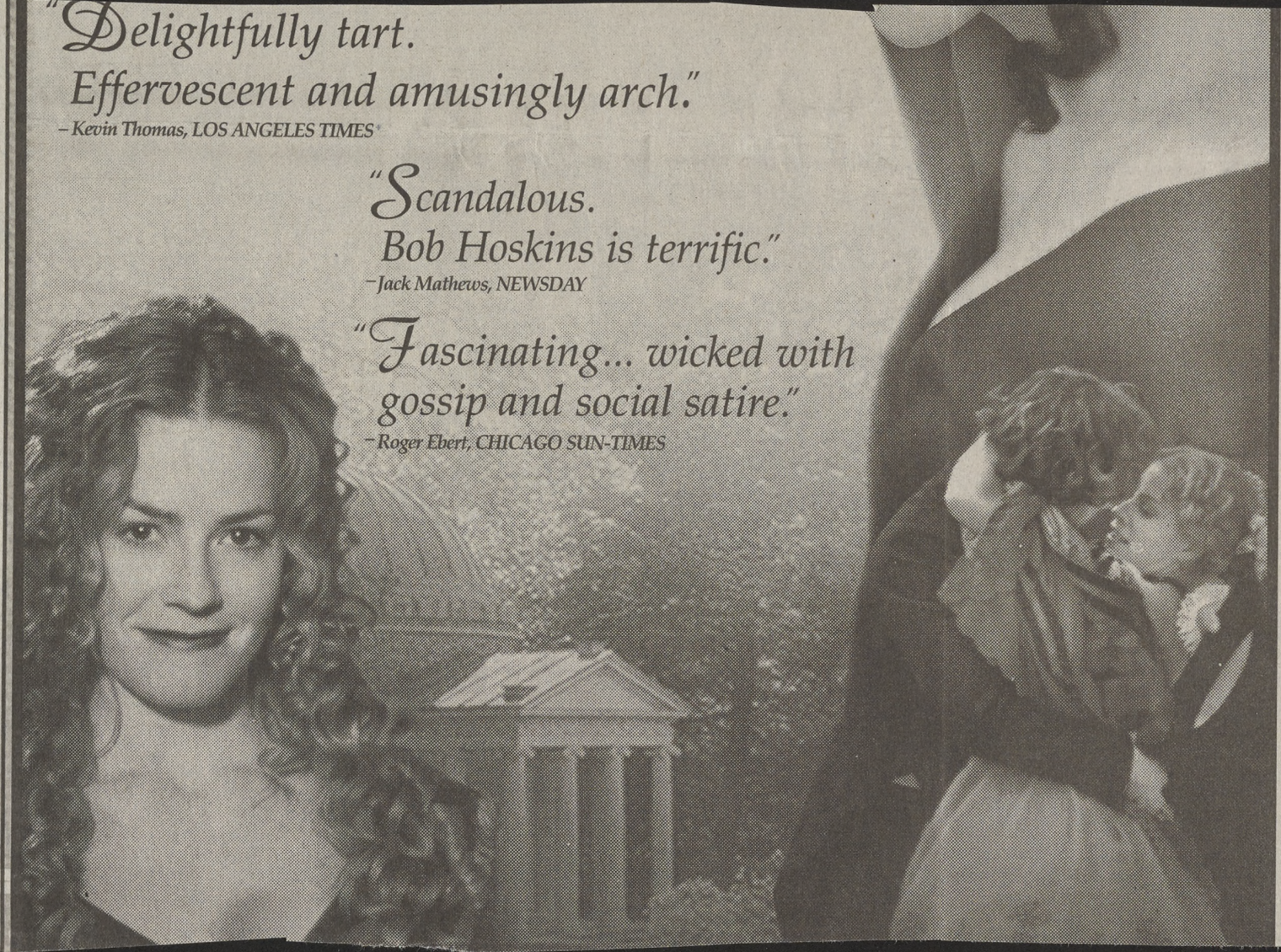

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NYT, June 13, 98



Culver Pictures

Beating a Dead Mule, Partly in Fun

By PETER APPLEBOME

They die from asphyxiation, rabies, drowning and falling off cliffs. They are hit by trains, worked to death, hanged, stabbed, shot and, in one Cormac McCarthy novel, decapitated by an irate opera singer.

Such is the fate of the mules of the South as recounted in a minor classic of mock scholarship entitled "Equine Gothic: The Dead Mule as Generic Signifier in Southern Literature in the 20th Century." It asked a simple question, "What makes Southern literature Southern?" and came up with a simpler answer. You can tell it's Southern if it has a dead mule in it.

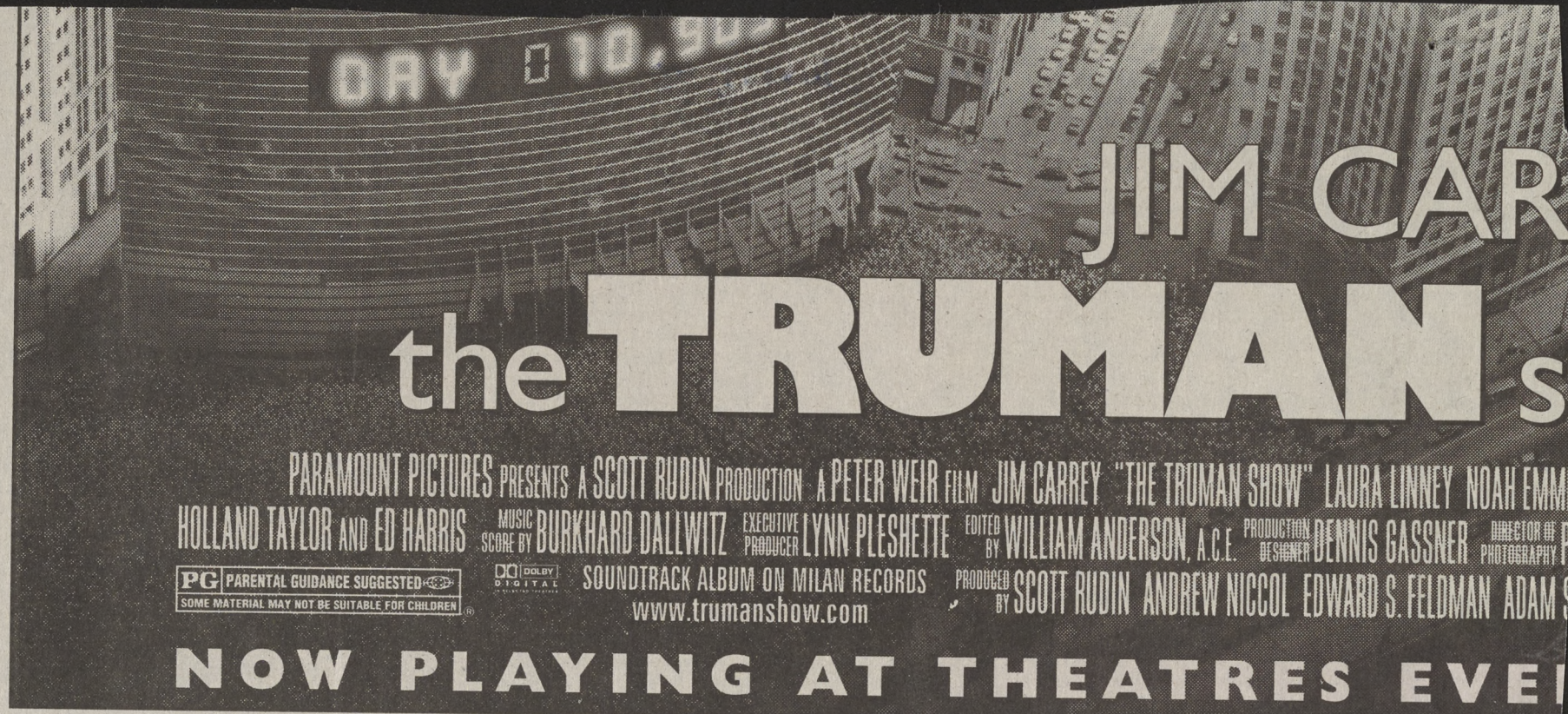
The paper, written by Jerry Leath Mills, a retired Renaissance scholar at the University of North Carolina, and published a year ago in The Southern Literary Journal, is both obsessive scholarship and a parody of academic literature. But beyond its own question and answer, it presented an intriguing thought for reflection: If the dead mule is the signifier for Southern literature, what is the element that makes French literature French or Irish literature Irish or film noir noir?

Dr. Mills, who began collecting dead mule references when he was a graduate student at Harvard in 1964, unearthed more than 200 examples of Equus caballus x asinus (defunctus), as he refers to them, in Southern literature. Among his citations are William Faulkner, Richard Wright, Erskine Caldwell and Truman Capote, including Doris Betts's "Dead Mule." They are all arranged "coroner-wise" by cause of death, and Mr. McCarthy, who killed off 59 mules in "Blood Meridien" alone, emerges as the king of Southern letters, mulewise at least, even though he's best known for his novels about West Texas and the border.

The search for other signifiers in a completely unscientific survey wasn't quite so simple, often descending to snippy lectures on what constitutes a genre and the depravity of cultural oversimplification. But since the generic signifier for academic literature is inscrutable terms like "generic signifier," maybe that's not surprising. Still, more than a few worthwhile contributions turned up.

Sanford Pinsker, an English professor and expert in Jewish American literature at Franklin and Marshall College had a similarly pithy signifier for modern Jewish novels — "Portnoy's Complaint" being the ultimate example — with their persistent concern about intermarriage. "The signifier isn't a

Continued on Page A15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