THE WRITING LIFE

A twentysomething novelist steps forward to defend writing about what you don’t know.

By Jennifer Vanderbes

A few years ago, after I had begun work on my first novel, a family friend named Stuart took me aside at a backyard barbecue and said, “Listen, a last bit of advice—a dog—that’s your ticket.” Stuart was a retired chemical engineer, a gruff, rude, and not much of a fiction reader, but he felt a strong need to offer me a subject for my writing. I was 25 at the time, and Stuart knew my parents and thought that it’s okay to have a happy childhood to realize there was little hope of my doing up an autobiographical page-turner. In his mind, everybody liked lady detectives and everybody liked dogs—if I could put them both in one book, well, that would launch my career into orbit with the Grammans and Cornwells and Clarneys. Stuart left me with this: “And have her call the dog Watson.”

I had a lot of people offer me material during that time—stories of bitter divorces and battles with cancer, tales of wartime starvation and midnight border crossings. Write what you know—my nonwriter and even nonreader friends had all heard it, and they were trying their best to quickly fill my cup of experience. I heard the creosote, too, but as every writing class I’d ever taken, but had never liked it. Learning to “write” seemed a lot easier than sorting out “what you know.” What did I know? The question seemed so cosmic, so utterly deadly. All I knew was that I had no interest in writing autobiographically, partially because nothing in my past seemed to demand representation, and partially because I’d never been comfortable exploring my personal life in a public forum. So I crossed my fingers and thought: I’ll know anything about people, about emotions, and about life—surely it will see, or at least be interested in whatever material I could dig up, and that Stuart was actually on track. Not with the lady detective or the dog, but in suggesting that I pick material outside my experience. In the end, I would spend two years writing a novel set entirely before I was born, in a place I’d never been.

Easter Island was, in many ways, my own personal protest against the autobiographical first novel. Okay, it was an accidental protest. I chose to write about a time and place that interested me, without realizing that when it was published I would have to account for where it all came from. Why Easter Island? Why turn of the century? Why not write about something closer to home? To me, the answer was simple: I’d come across the journals of a 1914 archaeological expedition on the island that mentioned the strange arrival of a German navvies’ barrack train, which had pulled up at the settlement of Hanga Roa that was later sunk at the Battle of the Falklands; that detail, coupled with the knowledge that this was the most remote speck of land in the world, got my imagination going, and soon I was populating the island with fictional characters.

I immersed myself in history and anthropology texts, books on Edwardian fashion and Polynesian mythology. In the midst of it all, one of my characters, the veterinarian Dr. Louis Aronson, produced a couple of pages on ancient Polynesia—a subject leagues beyond my English major. I was a bit daunted, knowing, as I toiled away in my research, that so many great writers had begun their careers with semi-autobiographical fiction. Writing unwrapped an intertextuality, James Baldwin’s Go Tell It On the Mountain, R. Scott Fitzgerald’s This Side of Paradise, Henry Miller’s Tropic of Cancer, D.H. Lawrence’s Sons and Lovers. Men wrote their first books about, well, younger men in similar circumstances, women wrote of girls who looked and talked like them. And if they didn’t use autobiography, most of my literary idols had at least used familiar places. In The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway drew on his knowledge of Paris and Spain; Styron set Lie Down in Darkness in his native Newport News.

It seemed a rite of passage, a corner I was cutting that I would eventually have to justify. The result of this long tradition of autobiographical writers was to add even more layers to me. I already felt that I was writing for me, but also for the reader. If every book was a mirror, then I was looking in at myself as well as the reader. Whether in blood or experience, other novelists have inherited allegiances to particular voices, places or events. What I felt when writing was the responsibiltiy to find a tone to tell a story, a sense of studying a place, of letting the language and the characters do the work. My book—telling the story of two women who come of age at the same time, of the coming-of-age tale. But it was the story my imagination demanded I write—it didn’t seem like a choice.

I tried to encourage myself by remembering the writers whose first novels were sprawling or theme-thick: Umberto Eco’s The Name of the Rose, Joseph Conrad’s Almayer’s Folly, E.L. Doctorow’s Welcome to Hard Times. These novelists had reached well beyond their own lives for material (Eco set his story in the 12th century, Doctorow set his in the 19th century) and often did not consider the works of first time novelists who had the coming-of-age tale. But it was the story my imagination demanded I write—it didn’t seem like a choice.

Jennifer Vanderbes

For those of you who feel that writers, like wine, are better when aged—more piquant and mellow, richer for seasons of gusto and heartbreak—we offer Jennifer Vanderbes, who, at the tender age of 26, has been writing for (lo) 16 years. She began keeping a diary in the third grade, inspired by that byzantine of chroniclers, Anne Frank. Her father, a maker of travel documentaries, registered the girl’s fledgling interest and bought her a copy of Modern Rhetoric. Her mother, a writer of ad copy, loaned her The Elements of Style. So it was that growing up in Manhattan, shuttling between concrete and concrete, she began to depend on her imagination.

By 12, she had read Odyssey and The Count of Monte Cristo, which launched a passion for adventure. That was the year she began writing stories. At first, they were about boys, cats, space travel. But by the time she was 13, she was writing James’ Portrait of a Lady. behind her, the plot lines grew more mature: Man schemes to kill mistress. Or: Animal wanders onto road, causes wreck, alters the fate of many. At 13, she found a mentor. Her English teacher at the Dalton School had a love for literature that was downright infectious. “I was suddenly reading these big, ambitious novels,” Daniel Doronzoni by the time she turned the last page of George Eliot’s labylithine novel about love and prejudice, she had decided on a career.

At Yale, she enrolled in the infamous Daily Thoroughbred Theme course, in which students write 500 words a day, five days a week, month—with a new emphasis every 24 hours. The exercise, of rewriting her autobiographical novel, was more conclusive than she expected: once more it was a teacher who brought it alive: She credits a course with novelist Robert Stone as her turning point. “He was not only devoted to his students and available, he was willing to say the uncomfortable thing. ‘This is finely written, beautiful,’ he once told me, ‘but boring.’ By the end of the semester with him, I’d written 100 pages of solid stuff.”

After graduating from Yale, she took a job at the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, covering everything from films to funerals, but she was left with scant energy for “real” writing. Quit, went south to Beaumont, S.C., a picturesque shrinking town, got a job as a waitress, and began to devote herself to her work that mattered. At midnight, when she was finished waiting tables, she would make herself a pot of coffee and crack out stories until morning. “There were no distractions,” she says. “None at all.” Which was the problem. Without the camaraderie of a classroom, she couldn’t tell whether her work was any good. A year later, at 23, she enrolled in the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, where she began experimenting with stories that stretched beyond 30 pages.

Somewhere in the middle of her second year at Iowa, as she indulged a side interest in books about archeological expeditions, she stumbled on the little-known fact that a German fleet had anchored in the South Pacific in 1914. As she recounts above, this small detail became the inspiration for her novel, Easter Island, which she began then and there and finished two years later. As a Fiction Fellow at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, this year, she has met with enthusiastic notices. Reviewers have compared it to A.S. Byatt’s Possession. Andrea Barrett has noted it for something: “Splendid!”

So, what kind of writer would have the nerve to sit at her desk and tell stories before she’s had a chance to put a little dust on her shoes? It’s hard—very hard—to imagine.

—Maria Araña

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, told the tale of a Bowery prostitute. Here was a writer who at age 24 wrote one of the world’s great stories, “The Red Badge of Courage”—without ever having set foot on a battlefield. Among writers like myself, the write-what-you-know transgressors, Crane is our poster child. And I sometimes wonder if my college study of him influenced my writing. How I wish Hemingway had written a novel about his knowledge of Paris and Spain; Styron set Lie Down in Darkness in his native Newport News.

It seemed a rite of passage, a corner I was cutting that I would eventually have to justify. The result of this long tradition of autobiographical writers was to add even more layers to me. I already felt that I was writing for me, but also for the reader. If every book was a mirror, then I was looking in at myself as well as the reader. Whether in blood or experience, other novelists have inherited allegiances to particular voices, places or events. What I felt when writing was the responsibiltiy to find a tone to tell a story, a sense of studying a place, of letting the language and the characters do the work. My book—telling the story of two women who come of age at the same time, of the coming-of-age tale. But it was the story my imagination demanded I write—it didn’t seem like a choice.

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Fiction

STOCKS AND BONDS

When it comes to lifting the veil on elite New York law firms and their high-society partners, nobody does a better job than Louis Auchincloss, whose writing career has spanned an astonishing 56 years. The Scarlet Letters (Houghton Mifflin, $24), an expansion of a short story that appeared in last year’s Manhattan Monologues, shows he has not lost his touch. The story of Hawthorne in the title is a playful one: Yes, there are three adulteries in all, but the focus is on mergers, between companies and between individuals (also known as marriages).

His story begins in the early 1900s. Ambrose Vollard (old Knickerbocker stock) has a fine legal mind, which ensures his meteoric rise in his uncle’s firm. He makes a sensible marriage to Hetty, daughter of a wealthy Boston preacher (the discussion of money is quite open). She bears him three daughters, of whom his favorite is Winnie. In time Ambrose will hire her boyfriend (and later husband) Rodman Jessup, who will become the son Ambrose never had. The men share a fierce idealism, pricing legal ethics and their firm’s integrity. So it’s a major scandal when in 1933 Rod, supposedly Winnie’s devoted spouse, has a highly visible affair with a divorcée about-town and resigns from the firm.

But appearances deceive. Rod’s sole motivation has been to prevent Ambrose from finding out that his darling Winnie has been fooling around with another partner, Rod’s rival. Selflessness of this order may be hard to credit, but Auchincloss’s smoothly persuasive style carries us over the rough spots. Rod will marry again, upwardly, and there will be more plot twists before a climactic, albeit too compressed, showdown with his rival. In all this the author’s keen eye for the nexus of money and bloodlines, for rational and irrational prejudices in an increasingly cutthroat profession, never blinks.

STRIKE FORCES

Haymarket—Seven Stories ($24.95) is a spirited fictional reconstruction of the police-instigated Haymarket Square riot in Chicago in 1886. Historian and biographer Martin Duberman has stuck closely to the historical record while inventing the private lives of the principal figures.

The story begins in Texas in 1871, when Albert Parsons meets Lucy Gonzalez. Albert is white, while Lucy is Mexican and Creek Indian (her African blood is her secret). Stormy Lucy and even-tempered Albert fall in love. Texas being no place for an interracial couple, they move to the boom town of Chicago, where many workers are German, like their close friend and fellow-agitator August Spies. Albert takes to public speaking, preaching the eight-hour day and advancement through the ballot box. Whether workers should respond in kind to the violence of the state provokes fierce arguments; Albert is against it.

The crisis comes when police break up the peaceful Haymarket Square rally, leaving 14 dead and more than a hundred wounded. Because a lone bomb (perpetrator unknown) kills a cop, labor leaders are charged as “accessories” to the murder. What follows is a show trial. There are heroes (the mayor, the defense lawyer) and villains (the judge, the posse captain). In the end four men, including Albert and Spies, go to the gallows.

Albert and Lucy’s love story is subordinate to the political struggles, and maybe that’s for the best. They are not merely virtuous, but noble, and that can be tedious. Yet attention must be paid, and we should be grateful to Duberman for spotlighting a neglected chapter in the struggle for workplace rights and human dignity.

IN THE WOODS

The Taking (Ballantine, $24.95), a lonely young woman comes to a doomed valley and falls in love with a man she has never met. J.D. Landis’s third novel is a wispy New England love story with gothic touches, and shadowed at every turn by Emily Dickinson.

In 1838, 17-year-old Sarianna Renway arrives in a Massachusetts valley to tutor a minister’s son. The valley will soon be flooded to create a reservoir, but its death sentence only makes the valley more precious for Sarianna. She has always felt herself an outcast; her one great strength since junior high has been her love for Emily Dickinson’s poetry. Now she has new friends in the Treat family: minister Jeremy, his wife, Una, and son Jimmy. It is Una’s story that stirred Sarianna’s imagination: how she suddenly left her childhood sweetheart Ethan Vear to marry Jeremy. Sarianna’s newfound love for Una extends to the mysterious Ethan, who vanished the day of Una’s wedding. Ethan’s father, Simeon, a cranky recluse, lives in a forbidding stone house deep in the woods, and it will come as no surprise that Sarianna finds her way there and glimpses a young face in an upper window.

The gothic ambiance gives way to woodland trails as the ghostly, monosyllabic Ethan reveals himself to Sarianna as a hunter and trapper. Yet the teasing mystery, the author’s forte, persists. Is Ethan using Sarianna as a way back to Una? Is it possible that Jimmy is his child, and that Una is Simeon’s daughter? And does Jeremy have designs on Sarianna?

These puzzles are wrapped in an overwrought lyricism that steers clear of the erotic. Ethan and Sarianna sleep chastely side by side. Sarianna’s musings about Emily serve as a smokescreen for her true feelings. There is sex and there is death at the end, but the circumstances are so opaque that there is no narrative payoff.

GLOBE TROTTERS

Bad things happen to Jonathan Penner’s characters when they travel. Jenice gets caught in a hotel fire in Phoenix. The Robinsons find themselves in a war zone in the mythical

Reviewed by Peter Franck

Great Slatia. Asher returns from an African safari feeling diminished. Even Manny and Elsie, all bright-eyed on their luxury tour of India, suddenly find their marriage on the rocks.

This is the most discernible pattern in the 11 stories in This Is My Voice (Eastern Washington Univ., Paperback, $16.95). Penner’s uneven second collection, and too often you get less than meets the eye. Penner is an excellent travel writer—and that is part of the problem. The Slatia villagers in “The Groom’s Honeymoon” are wonderfully well observed and so much more interesting than Asher, the story’s central character, who is a mildly deceitful psychanalyst fusing over his relationship with his absent bride. The same is true of the “mishmash of squalor and beauty that is India in ‘The Trip of a Lifetime.’ One day out, Manny decides on flimsy evidence that Elsie has a lover. He punishes them both for 10 days until Elsie placates her foolishly hard-headed mate.

Penner does better on home ground. It’s refreshing, in “Rapture,” to come across an honest-to-God plot and a character with real energy, even if Rika makes all the wrong moves and suffers the consequences of selling her mother’s house to religious zealots. “The Way of All Flesh,” about corruption, is even better. Friedenthal, a single parent, discovers he can buy answers to the SAT for his son, Josh, Maddeningly honest, the young man refuses to accept them. But then he has a traumatic break-up with his girlfriend, and Friedenthal, sensing weakness, moves in for the kill. Now that resonates.

FAMILY PLOTS

Life is a battle. Protect your own. Kill if you must. For the title character in Jervey Tervalon’s Lita (Atlantic, $23), killing is a way of life—rules to live by. Lita Du Champ has enough anger to fuel a jet plane. Tervalon’s readers have encountered her already in Dead Above Ground, a dark tale of arson and murder roiling an African-American family in New Orleans. It’s 10 years later when we meet her again. She is living in Los Angeles with her husband, Winston (a good man but a wimp), their two little kids, and Lita’s sisters, the 16-year-old twins Ava and Ana. Overnight Ava turns into a luscious nymph. Lita has her hands full beating back Ava’s creepy suitors, though she still finds time to divorce Winston. Tervalon has a visceral understanding of fractious families. His fast-paced narrative leads to a wrenching climax in the first and stronger half of this novel. Ava elopes to Vegas; Lita gives chase to prevent a disastrous marriage, but then refrains from interfering and the sisters embrace. Lita learns to stop her righteous anger from boiling over into deadly rage.

The second half begins years later with Lita back in New Orleans, where there is unfinished business involving the family home. Her Daddy, whom she detests, is on his deathbed and wants her to stay in New Orleans for good. And then there are the doting aunts Odie and Dot (think of them as the Good Witch and the Wicked Witch), not to mention the ever-present spirit of Lita’s beloved mother. Before these haunted people can find peace, the dead must return to dispose of Lucien, a demonic figure who was their nemesis in the earlier novel. Unfortunately, Tervalon’s mingling of the real and spirit worlds is less than deft, and the last-minute return of these characters from Dead Above Ground may leave readers feeling they are snapping on leftovers.

Peter Franck is a writer living in New York City.
Brad Leithauser reviewing The Poems of Marianne Moore, NYTBR Jan. 4 '04:

"Her ethical rhetoric helped make her, more than any other poet I know, reliant upon 'is' and 'are'—those natural building blocks of the writer intending to speak of eternal verities."

--link this to Orwell's similar use of "is" and "was".
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Your days are short here;
this is the last of your springs.
And now in the serenity and quiet
of this lovely place, touch the depths
of truth, feel the hem of Heaven.
You will go away with old, good friends.
And don’t forget when you leave,
why you came.

Adlai Stevenson II, Law ’26

NU Alumni News, March ’57
An air of busyness has become the badge of success.

I don’t know when the cult of conspicuous busyness began, but it has swept up almost all the upwardly mobile, professional women I know. Already, it is getting hard to recall the days when, for example, “Let’s have lunch,” meant something other than “I’ve got more important things to do than talk to you right now.” There was even a time when people used to get together without the excuse of needing something to eat — when, in fact, it was considered rude to talk with your mouth full. In the old days, hardly anybody had an appointment book, and when people wanted to know what the day held in store for them, they consulted a horoscope.

It’s not only women, of course; for both sexes, busyness has become an important insignia of upper middle class status. Nobody, these days, admits to having a hobby, although two or more careers — say, neurosurgery and an art dealership — is not uncommon, and I am sure we will soon be hearing more about the tribulations of the four-paycheck couple. Even those who can manage only one occupation at a time would be embarrassed to be caught doing only one thing at a time. Those young men who jog with their headsets on are not, as you might innocently guess, rocking out, but are absorbing the principles of international finance law or a lecture on one-minute management. Even eating, I read recently, is giving way to “grazing” — the unconscious ingesting of unidentified foods while drafting a legal brief, cajoling a client on the phone and, in ambitious cases, doing calisthenics exercises under the desk.

But for women, there’s more at stake than conforming to another yuppie standard. If you want to attract men, for example, it no longer helps to be a bimbo with time on your hands. Upscale young men seem to go for the kind of woman who plays with a full deck of credit cards, who won’t cry when she’s knocked to the ground while trying to board the 6 o’clock Eastern shuttle, and whose schedule doesn’t allow for a sexual encounter lasting more than 12 minutes. Then there is the economic reality: Any woman who doesn’t want to wind up as a case study in the feminization of poverty has to be successful at something more demanding than fingernail maintenance or come-hither looks. Hence all the bustle, my busy friends would explain — they want to succeed.

But if success is the goal, it seems clear to me that the fast track is headed the wrong way. Think of the people who are genuinely successful — path-breaking scientists, best-selling novelists, and designers of major new software. They are not, on the whole, the kind of people who keep glancing shifty at their watches or making small lists entitled “To Do.” On the contrary, many of these people appear to be in a daze, like the distinguished professor I once had who, in the middle of a lecture on electron spin, became so fascinated by the dispersion properties of chalk dust that he could not go on. These truly successful people are childlike, easily distractable, very sort, whose usual demeanor resembles that of a recently-fed hobo on a warm evening.

The secret of the truly successful, I believe, is that they learned very early in life how not to be busy. They saw through that adage, repeated to me so often in childhood, that anything worth doing is worth doing well. The truth is, many things are worth doing only in the most slovenly, half-hearted fashion possible, and many other things are not worth doing at all. Balancing a checkbook, for example. For some reason, in our culture, this dreary exercise is regarded as the supreme test of personal maturity, business acumen, and the ability to cope with math anxiety. Yet it is a form of busyness which is exceeded in futility only by going to the additional trouble of computing one’s checking account — and that, in turn, is only slightly less silly than taking the time to discuss, with anyone, what brand of personal computer one owns, or is thinking of buying, or has heard of others using.

If the truly successful manager never to be busy, it is also true that many of the busiest people will never be successful. I know firsthand from my experience, many years ago, as a waitress. Any executive who thinks the ultimate in busyness consists of having two important phone calls on hold and a major deadline in 30 minutes, should be noticing six tablefuls of clients simultaneously demanding that you give them their checks, fresh coffee, a baby seat, and a warm, spontaneous smile. Even when she’s not busy, a waitress has to look busy — refilling the salt shakers and polishing all the chrome in sight — but the only reward is the minimum wage and any change that gets left on the tables. Much the same is true of other high-stress jobs, like working as a telephone operator, or doing data entry on one of the new machines that monitors your speed as you work: “Success” means surviving the shift.

Although busyness does not lead to success, I am willing to believe that success — especially when visited on the unprepared — can cause busyness. Anyone who has invented a better mousetrap, or the contemporary equivalent, can expect to be harried by strangers demanding that you read their unpublished manuscripts or undergo the humiliation of public speaking, usually on remote Midwestern campuses. But if it is true that success leads to more busyness and less time for worthwhile activities — like talking (and listening) to friends, reading novels, or putting in some volunteer time for a good cause — then who needs it? It would be sad to have come so far — or at least to have run so hard — only to lose each other.
Designer Rugs: A Way to Put Striking Graphics on Floors

By JOSEPH GIOVANNINI

To tread or not to tread on the carpet is the question. Over the last decade, a growing number of designer rugs or art rugs have appeared in New York stores, showrooms and galleries. Because of their artistic images and execution, they could as easily be hung on the wall as placed on the floor.

These include limited reissues of classic area rugs done in the 1920’s, 30’s and 40’s, and recently designed works by artists, craft artists and architects who normally work outside the commercial rug industry.

The rugs are named and signed, and have the visual presence of paintings. They are often made in limited editions and range from about $1,000 to $8,000. They provide a focus for a room in a way that most plain or evenly patterned wall-to-wall carpets do not. The rugs range in size from 2 by 3 feet to 8 by 12 feet.

The striking black and white “Pencilmarkings,” for example — a vigorously graphic 6-by-6-foot rug done this year by the New York architect Alan Buchbaum for the New York concern V’Soske — is not the rug for neutral, even space, such as an open office, but perhaps a rug for a small seating area.

With numerous visual elements and colors, such rugs give scale to a space, and help mark and define an area.

While the New York gallery Modern Master Tapestries has, since 1968, engaged such major American artists as Robert Motherwell and Roy Lichtenstein to design tapestries, many of which can be used as rugs, a strong new thrust has come from the carpet manufacturer V’Soske.

In 1979 the company commissioned the Princeton architect Michael Graves to design a rug that became the first in a series that now includes a second Graves, as well as rugs by Charles Gwathney, Shelton Mindel, Henry Smith-Miller/Laurie Hawkins Miller, Nob & Non and Todd Williams/Billie Tsien. The collection will include designs by Richard Meier, Steven Holl, Roger Ferrri, Michael Kalil and Debra Reiser. The New York interior designer Bar-

Continued on Page 19
COMRADE PAST & MISTER PRESENT
New Poems & a Journal.
By Andrei Codrescu.
110 pp. Minneapolis:
Coffee House Press. Paper, $8.95.

AS LONG AS YOU'RE HAPPY
By Jack Myers.
Cloth, $15. Paper, $8.

DUHAMEL
Ideas of Order in Little Canada.
By Bill Tremblay.
Cloth, $12.95. Paper, $6.95.

By Bruce Shlain

ANDREI CODRESCU came to the United States in 1966 from Rumania after his expulsion from the University of Bucharest, a Hungarian Jew who knew little English. He found himself a stranger in a most strange land, Greenwich Village, amid antiwar protest, the drug explosion and new sexual freedoms. Four years later, in 1870, he won the Big Table award for his first book of poems, "License to Carry a Gun." On the cover of that book he posed as a flamboyant street poet, with a cigarette dangling from his lip and one foot in a garbage can, consciously creating one of many subsequent myths about himself. In "License to Carry a Gun" he spun his persona off into three imaginary beings—a jailed Puerto Rican poet, an ex-beatnik who became some sort of "mythical Fascist" in Vietnam and a woman who wants to "touch something sensational / like the mind of a shark."

When one reads the young Codrescu, one imagines an artist who wants to burn the museums. But he has written 15 volumes of poetry and two autobiographical prose works. Today he teaches at Louisiana State University after a stint at Johns Hopkins and is a regular commentator on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered." In the contemporary world of accelerated pace and dislocation, his exquisitely sensitive and wonder and detachment seem ever more timely.

In "Comrade Past & MISTER Present," his splendid new collection of poetry, prose and journal entries, this perpetual outsider offers ample evidence that even as his life grows more settled, he continues to push at his own outer limits, all the while treating the derangement of his senses with uncommon spontaneity and wit. Perhaps Flaubert was right when he suggested in his letters that one should live as a bourgeois, so that one can be wild and free in one's art. In the title poem, he has successfully found a meeting place for his prose and poetry. He has left the characteristic movement of his earlier work, which was posing questions, taking them out of context and then allowing his diabolically dialectical mind to eat up the question itself. "Comrade Past" is an elliptical, extended poem with longer lines, designed like a series of opening doors or peeled-off layers. When the great urge to testify came pushing in like white water from all the rooms without central heating, and even the railroads,

Bruce Shlain, a co-author of "Acid Dreams: The CIA, LSD and the Sixties Rebellion," also writes for television and film.

Monsieur l’Ambassadeur wrapped himself in the blank gaze of speechless childhood and was carted off, the coward, into the virgin pages of a hospital. His revolver became soft and impotent, and the great hunts of truth that was in the world looking for means of expression became the generalized din of consumption, a Berlin wall of televisions, fridges, and stereo blaring out tears, pent-up sighs, wordless sentimentality, and something like physical symptoms, which the world appeared to be, to him, in him and to the watchers.

For Mr. Codrescu, images are embedded in language like anchovies in a pizza, as he puts it. He may play games, but if his intent is to take the reader’s head off, he gently unscrews it and places it in one’s lap. He shifts effortlessly from comic surrealism to naturalist, philosopher to saint to madman, but he is always the seeker after transcendence, in thrall to the unknown.

And so the mystery burns giving off on enough light for the enormous job of making oneself.

In Mr. Codrescu’s native Transylvania, poets are social spokesmen, and that perhaps explains his fearlessness of treading on the languages of philosophy, religion, politics, science or popular culture. His focus on a pet theme, oppression, is as much concerned with the private as with the public. He ominously begins the poem "Momently Bafflement With Return Home at Dawn": "Extremely logical circumstances are in effect / we are in danger of behaving as expected." Mr. Codrescu has a knack for bringing out dichotomies in matters moral, sexual and political, as when asking the perplexing question in the poem "Dear Masoch": "What do you do if you’re a masochist but have been placed / in a position of power?"

His journal entries, entitled "The Janata Diary: With Timely Reporters," range from remembrances of losing his virginity at the Museum of the Communist Party to explorations of "sleep linguistics" for a university of the future and reflections on those who have influenced his work (he eulogizes the late poet Ted Berigan, much venerated as the "Gulf Stream of Consciousness," as a mentor and a father). In this diary Mr. Codrescu also includes some of the rigorous intellectual gymnastics that find lyrical expression in the poems. Even when his sharp observations yield little more than dime store philosophy, it is most interesting and frequently dazzling dime store philosophy especially to one of our most prodigiously talented and magical writers.

Jack Myers, a product of the Iowa Writers Workshop, mines the psychological terrain of remembrance and regret in poems mostly concerned with distance — between past and present selves. His aim is not so much to redeem the past as to understand it. In his fifth volume of poetry, "As Long as You’re Happy," he begins "Where I’ve Been":

At last I am ready to report how so much of my time has been spent lost between thinking and feeling

Mr. Myers’s main strength is providing order and clarity for powerful emotions through a deceptively plain-speaking style. In "Coming to the Surface" he makes a random encounter on the street reminiscent of Rilke’s hypersensitized Malte Laurids Brigge in a most economical fashion:

Once in a while someone plagues you with his whole being coming back into a scream of forgetfulness, a command.

He’s going the other way.

Balancing the hard edge of many of these works, Mr. Myers displays on occasion a lighter side, as when he muses on the arbitrary machinations of the poetic process:

Okay, I think we’re ready to order now, please. We’ll have a #6, a quietly uplifting image of nature; and a 21, a smart summarijal remark; and I guess we’ll have a #7, an inconspicuous mental break-through.

If these poems have a fault, it is their insularity, their reflexive and self-absorbed qualities. In one instance, Mr. Myers describes writing down a thought and mailing it to himself, imagining that when the letter arrives it will intersect with some future thought. There are better reasons to wait for the mailman, and there are better subjects for poetry as well. More often than not, however, these well-crafted poems arrive through varied and circuitous routes at moments of true feeling.

Bill Tremblay’s "Duhamel: Ideas of Order in Little Canada" is a sequence set in the mid-1950s. Duhamel was a painter in a small New England town who steadily defended his right not to work in the mills like almost everyone else. He was frequently embroiled in fights and was jailed at times for being drunk and disorderly. He was found guilty from maladies brought on by his drinking. Through his evocation of Duhamel, Mr. Tremblay brings back the sights, smells and emotions of his boyhood. The houses and streets of the original neighborhood have to be reconstructed in dreams. Mr. Tremblay mirrors his own act of re-creation as Duhamel wrestles with his own angels and demons:

He’d stare into a blank canvas for hours like it was the ocean where the ship that would save him would show, him half-crazy with never sleeping, with never letting the bonfire go out.

Most of the poems add another angle to our vision of Duhamel; we have him painting in homage to Gauguin, dreaming, arguing with his common-law wife, talking with God, or falling ignominiously from uneasy grace when imprisoned:

Gray clang. Cellbars cut night into strips, his punishment enraging him into leaping up on the bars, spread-eagle, naked, shoking, howling, veins popped, going nowhere for a long, long time.

"Duhamel" inspires awe and pity, but the book ultimately is no larger than the sum of its parts. Unfortunately the poet’s well-realized memories surrounding the figure of Duhamel often obscure the painter’s anguished life as much as they illuminate it.
Inspired by Despair

The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad
Volume Two: 1889-1902.
Edited by Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies.
Illustrated. 483 pp. New York: Cambridge University Press. $44.50.

By Louis Menand

Joseph Conrad pursued the business of novel writing as though it required the same spirit of unremitting struggle against fate and the elements as the business of seamanship. "He had set himself to be a great writer, an artist in words," H. G. Wells recalled. "He had gone literary with a singleness and intensity of purpose that made the kindred concentration of Henry James seem lax and large and pale." The reader of these letters is not likely to feel that Wells was exaggerating. Of the more than 500 letters reprinted here, only a handful fail to touch on some literary project - a story just published, or a novel in progress, or (most often) a piece of writing agonizingly, hopelessly, disastrously stalled.

Every writer knows that melodramatic expressions of despair about the progress of composition can become a kind of fetish, relied on to ward off the onset of a genuinely catastrophic blockade. But in Conrad's case, despair seems to have been the condition for writing anything at all - a state of affairs he did his best to exacerbate by making a practice to borrow money from publishers against books he had not yet written, sit down for eight hours every day - and the sitting down is all," he complains in an utterly characteristic letter to the critic Edward Garnett. "In the course of that working day of 8 hours I write 3 sentences which I erase before leaving the table in despair... I assure you - speaking soberly and on my word of honour - that sometimes it takes all my resolution and power of self-control to refrain from butting my head against the wall... I would be thankful to be able to write anything, anything, any trash, any rotten thing - something to earn dishonestly and by false pretences the payment promised by a fool."

And yet the books got written. The period covered by this volume of letters (six more are scheduled to follow) was the most active and productive in Conrad's literary life. In the fall of 1888, he moved with his wife and infant son - the crew, as they are sometimes figured in the correspondence, of his unhappy ship, whose welfare depended on his heroic exertions - to Pent Farm in Kent. Though 60 miles from London, Conrad was by no means in cultural isolation: Wells lived nearby; so did Henry James and Stephen Crane and Rudyard Kipling, and so did the Garnetts, amid a cluster of émigré writers drawn to them because of their camaraderie.

The international character of the community was a token of the increasingly international character of modern literature - nicely emblematised in the fact that when Conrad the Pole and James the American discussed the future of the English novel together, they spoke in French.

Conrad's landlord at the Pent was Ford Madox Ford, and 1898 marks the beginning of their collaboration on a series of novels - an enterprise that seems to have astonished and perplexed nearly everyone who knew them. "Inconceivable," James is said to have remarked when he heard about it, "like a bad dream which one relates as a bad dream;" and Wells bicycled over to warn Conrad of his folly. But they persisted, eventually turning out three novels - the facile Ford doing (as Conrad had hoped) most of the writing. Ford later liked to point to the collaboration as a significant event in the history of English prose; but Conrad's letters to Ford - published here for the first time (though they have been often quoted) - tend to reinforce the suspicion that although Ford imagined he was engaged in the pursuit of literary excellence, Conrad imagined he was engaged in a strictly commercial venture, in which his byline combined with Ford's speed of production would induce publishers to part with fabulous advances. Neither ambition was fulfilled; and one feels that the story of the collaboration, in which mutually exclusive intentions contrived in great earnestness to produce a nullity, might have been drawn from one of Conrad's own fictions.

But 1898 was also, and more fruitfully, the year of the first appearance in Conrad's fiction of Marlow - the embodiment, as Zdzislaw Najder puts it in his unsurpassed life of Conrad, "of all that Conrad would wish to be if he were to become completely anglicized," and at the same time, since Conrad knew that he never could be fully anglicized, a figure of otherness. The invention of Marlow enabled Conrad to overcome one of the most serious of his creative impasses: Marlow provided a narrative voice he could at once identify with and remain critical of. And with this ingenious foil, he produced "Youth," "Heart of Darkness" and "Lord Jim" in the space of three years.

One of the advantages of this new collection - besides that of providing accurate texts of unpublished correspondence and of the many letters that have long been unavailable in unreliable editions - is that it enables us to appreciate the extent to which some of Conrad's letters are themselves part of his achievement as a prose writer. For they articulate the same world view that informs the fiction he produced.

The extreme materialism of late-19th century science, in which everything from raindrops to ideas was made reducible to a physicalist explanation, might seem poor soil for cultural growth, but some of the most fully realized pieces of late Romantic prose were conceived not in opposition to that science, but with full acceptance of its implications.

A few of Conrad's letters, particularly the remarkable series to the American historian and biographer R. B. Cunningham Graham - belong to this phenomenon. "The machine is thinner than air and as evanescent as a flash of lightning," runs one of them. "Of course reason is hateful - but why? Because it demonstrates (to those who have the courage) that we, living, are out of life - utterly out of it. The mysteries of a universe made of drops of fire and clods of mud do not concern us in the least. The fate of a humanity condemned ultimately to perish from cold is not worth troubling about. Life knows us not and we do not know life - we don't know even our own thoughts... Faith is a myth and beliefs shift like mists on the shore... only the string of my platitudes seems to have no end."

The orchestrated style of this lament, like the wonderfully mordant facetiousness that makes some of these letters very funny, is evidence of the strength of mind that enabled Conrad to compose stories whose disillusionment manages to be complete, but completely genuine.

Ideas Cut Sharp as Cameos

To Stephen Crane, January 1898

My Dear Crane

I hope You haven't been angry with me. Fact is my dear fellow I've been having a hell of a time - what with one thing and another. Had I come that day I would have been no good at all. I am hardly yet in a decent frame of mind.

I am curious to know Your idea; but I feel somehow that collaborating with you would be either cheating or deceiving You. In any case disappointing you. I have no dramatic gift. You have the terseness, the clear eye the easy imagination. You have all - and I have only the accursed faculty of dreaming. My ideas fade - Yours come out sharp cut as cameos - they come all living out of Your brain and bring images - and bring light. Mine bring only mist in which they are born, and die. I would be only a hindrance to you - I am afraid. And it seems presumptuous of me to think of helping You. You want no help. I have a perfect confidence in your power - and why should you share with me what it may be of profit and fame in the accomplished task?

But I want to know! Your idea is good - I am certain. Perhaps you, yourself, don't know how good it is. I ask you as a friend's favour to let me have a sketch of it when you have the time and in a moment of inclination. I shall - if you allow me to write You all I think of it, about it, around it. Then you shall see how worthless I would be to you. But if by any chance such was not your deliberate opinion - if you should really, honestly, artistically think I could be of some use - then my dear Crane I would be only too glad to work by Your side and with Your lead. And Quien sabe? Something perhaps would get itself shaped to be mangled by the scorn or the praise of the Philistines.

From "The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad."
A Poet’s Road Trip Along Main Street, U.S.A.

By FRANCIS X. CLINES

WASHINGTON, Dec. 8 — Sometimes he hits upon a lyrical scrap of haiku amid the hum of the crosstown subway. But essentially the Poet Laureate of the United States has put aside consulting his muse in favor of proselytizing Rotarians.

"I thought an interesting thing to do would be to go where poets don’t go," explained Robert Hass, heading into his final four months in one of the odder capital jobs, one that he has shaped to become more like a missionary drummer in the provinces of commerce than as a performing bard in celebrity coffeehouses.

"I thought the thing to talk about is not poetic ‘uplift,’” he said, “but the fact that basic literacy in this country is in a serious crisis.”

With that, Mr. Hass, a celebrated 55-year-old poet and critic, offered a vivid scholarly synopsis of the decline of American literacy as he paid a rare visit to his office at the Library of Congress. He celebrated the “heroic” literacy levels of a century ago, when there was a national hunger to read and general literacy was at 95 percent. He deplored the bleak evidence of current life that finds half the eighth graders in Texas reading at the fourth-grade level.

"This is the Office of Poetry and Literature; this has to stop," Mr. Hass said, in a desperate emphasis of his concern as he sat in solitude in his attic office overlooking the Capitol dome and described his attempt to be an activist laureate.

Ostensibly, he is one of the more powerless loners among the legions of appointees in Washington. But Mr. Hass chose to resort to the basic stuff of his art, mere words, and to spend much of the last two years in the laureate’s post traveling to business and civic meetings across the nation with a straight-prose alarum that literacy standards have been plummeting.

“One thing I found out about this country was that there are thousands of business and service organizations

Continued on Page 11, Column 4

Robert Hass, the nation’s poet laureate, is campaigning to improve education and increase literacy.
Anthony Lewis: Light in the darkness.
Bob Herbert: The safety net works.
William Safire: Above the law?

Editorials/Op-Ed A14-15
Editorials
New York as welfare model.
Shortchanged diplomacy.

Crossword B4
Bridge B5

A CUT ABOVE.
To know more about better lawns and gardens, apartments, food, fashion, health, parenting, concerts, education, the law and media (not to speak of all the international news), keep up with The Times.

The New York Times
A Poet Travels to Main Street, U.S.A.

Continued From Page A1

The message is not of poetic uplift, but of shrinking literacy standards.

The Laureate’s Work


It’s not the story though, not the

leaving toward you, saying

“And then I realized — ,”

which is the part of stories one

ever quite believes.

I had the idea that the world’s

so full of pain

it must sometimes make a kind

of singing.

And that the sequence helps, as

much as order helps —

First an ego, and then pain, and

then the singing.

sults thus far.

He prefers another genre he calls

“found haiku,” random snatches of

overheard dialogue from life that

serendipitously ring with the 17-syllable haiku formula.

“Two guys in $500 overcoats get on at

the Furragut North station,” he

recounted, merry-eyed at one gem.

“And one says to the other, ‘Well, if

he had been focused, he wouldn’t

even have considered it.’ Seventeen

syllables!”

The poet sounds more like a lepi-
dopterist in offering narrative
glimpses of what he sees and hears

in Washington life.

“Flying here, I see whole planes of

guys with laptops coming in, fur-

iously writing these arguments about,

you know, why you should keep let-

ting the hole in the ozone get bigger

for five more years,” he said. “I see

what the business is here. It’s the

hustle, the business of lobbying.”

The poet has had scant contact

with the city’s politicians, but when

they inevitably pump his hand and

croak, “Nice to see you!” Mr. Hass

thinks that he has fattened their art.

“They shine on each person they

meet.”

He was touched when one senator

suddenly admitted envy, taking the

poet aside. Mr. Hass recalled, to con-
fess: “I don’t have time to think, to

read. I’m just responding all the

time. I would love to have your life.”

As a roving missionary for litera-
cy, Mr. Hass can still flash the strik-
ing phrase. As a professor at the

University of California at Berkeley,

he cites reams of statistics on the fall

of his state’s public school standards

after the freezing of property taxes a
generation ago.

“They put a lot of disposable in-

come in peoples’ pockets,” he said.

“They generated a restaurant

boom. California cuisine was cre-

ated, smoked salmon and arugula,”

he continued in mock exultation, then

starkly drove his point home: “It’s

perfectly clear what happened. Peo-

ple were eating their children.”

Summarizing this blunt laureate’s

song, Mr. Hass said, “My mantra

was, capitalism makes networks.

It doesn’t make communities. Imagi-
nation makes communities.”

The poet will spread this word into

the spring and then quit his Rotarian

rounds. “Did it do any good?” he has

to ask. “Was I wasting my life?”

Should I have been home writing

poems? It’s like teaching. You have

no idea.”

Driver Dies in Bus Crash

EUREKA, Wash., Dec. 8 (AP) — A school bus and a tractor-trailer col-
lided on a rural highway in south-
estern Washington late Saturday,

killing the bus driver and injuring
dozens of students.

The bus driver, Ray Cornforth, 51,

of Pasco died of injuries he had re-
ceived in the accident, said Stephen

Ames, the coroner of Walla Walla

County.

The accident occurred on state

Highway 124 about 25 miles east of

Pasco at 5 P.M. Forty-one teenagers

were taken to a Pasco hospital. Most

were released.

The bus from the Country Haven

Academy, a Seventh-day Adventist

high school in Pasco, was returning

from an overnight choir trip to

Clarkston. The State Patrol said 50

people had been aboard.

REMEMBER THE NEEDIEST!
Air Safety Tries to Keep Up With Traffic Growth

Continued From Page A1

by Matthew L. Wald

The language gap is a critical issue in aviation safety. It is not just a matter of understanding instructions or reports; it can be a matter of life and death. The example of the crash of a Boeing 707 in Colombia serves as a stark reminder of the potential consequences of language barriers in aviation.

But with airplanes moving at hundreds of miles an hour in often crowded airspace, American safety experts worry about such practices. They say that nothing can substitute for the language abilities of the pilots and controllers themselves. After an American Airlines jet crashed in Colombia a year ago, the National Transportation Safety Board recommended that the Federal Aviation Administration do more to help improve the language proficiency of foreign controllers worldwide.

"It's certainly an issue that needs vigilance," said Barry M. Sweetler, the director of the office of safety recommendations at the board.

As the world grows smaller, Mr. Sweetler and others say they think that the language gap may grow larger because, he said, "air traffic will be expanding to nations that haven't had as great a need to have controllers proficient in English."

That description fits China. In early 1995, Delta Air Lines asked the Chinese authorities for permission to fly a new route into Beijing. Because the route would take the planes over Heilongjian, Jilin and Liaoning, three northeastern provinces where few controllers spoke English, the Civil Aviation Authority of China set a price: Delta would have to arrange to train controllers in English.

Delta sent them to Embry-Riddle, a 70-year-old institution that is the world's largest and oldest institution of higher learning dedicated to aviation. United Air Lines and Federal Express, which also want to expand their routes in China, have also sponsored such courses. Financing for Mr. Shu's group was provided by Federal Express. The airlines pay about $100,000 for each group of 15 students.

China will need hundreds more because the central government has said the D-1, 1998, as the date when controllers and pilots are to speak English to one another in all sectors with international traffic. This is a safety measure used all over the world, so that all pilots in a sector can listen in on all conversations and know the locations of all other planes.

Some of those listening are native speakers of English, but others are not. In the case of China, there are pilots of planes from Germany, Italy and other countries who are expecting the conversations to be intelligible in English.

Chen Yawen, the deputy director of the air traffic control department in the Chinese Civil Aviation Authority, who arrived here today for the graduation ceremonies, said in an interview that the change would have to be phased in gradually. Mr. Chen did not offer a timetable and said controllers would learn English in China.

The program at Embry-Riddle is the largest language-training effort for foreign controllers in the United States. The Federal Aviation Administration enrolls some students, primarily from the Middle East parts of Asia outside China, at the agency's academy in Oklahoma City, but it teaches them air traffic control, not English.

The Center for Aerospace Science, at the University of North Dakota, trained 120 Russian controllers in English in the early 1990's, and conducted one class of 21 Chinese in 1993, but such instruction has not been continued there. The students there appear to prefer Florida to North Dakota.

Students from China face special problems, because they have no common roots with English. They, in turn, recognize that the Chinese-speaking pilots, must master all its sounds. The teachers here simulated operations at Vero Beach, Fla., but the V and F sounds are both very difficult for Chinese speakers.
Two Friends and a Lover

SLOW DANCING
By Elizabeth Benedict.

By Andrea Barnet

A FRIENDSHIP between two women, especially two ambitious, liberal-minded Ivy Leaguers, is hardly untold fictional territory. Yet to Elizabeth Benedict’s credit, “Slow Dancing,” her well-knit first novel, adds some new variations to an increasingly popular theme.

When Lexi Steinmetz meets her roommate, Nell, at Barnard College in the early 1970’s, their idea of good time is a bag full of doughnuts and a night spent sharing accounts of their sexual exploits. Now, however, more than a decade later, though the two women still talk by telephone at least once a day — Lexi from her ramshackle house near Los Angeles, Nell from New York — the sexy stories they trade seem a little less funny. Nell’s most recent affair with a smug Manhattan music teacher has just gone sour, and for reasons she’s loath to admit, she can’t manage to face the book she is writing espousing the wonders of single womanhood. All the signs she knows seem to be “boring, perpetually stoned, perpetually married, or all three.”

Lexi has had her share of unsatisfactory lovers too. During the 10 years she has spent working as an immigration lawyer, she has mastered the “choreography of seduction” to a fault. She’s learned to live out suitcases, to sleep with strangers in posh hotels, to have casual sex with a colleague and then to call him without qualms for a appointment the next day. In her professional cool, she’s taught herself not to notice wedding bands, not to wait around for breakfast the morning after, not to think. Or care.

Yet she senses a dullness — and so does Nell. The only emotional depth in their lives is their involvement with each other, which is fueled, somewhat ironically, by their failures with men. What is problematic —

Andrea Barnet is a freelance writer and critic living in New York.

The Nazi Who Made a Comeback

ALBERT SPEER
The End of a Myth.

By Henry A. Turner Jr.

WHEN in 1945 the victorious Allies routed the surviving leaders of the Nazi regime out of the ruins of Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich, they found themselves with a collection of men who seemed for the most part to have come from another age or from some place quite alien to Western civilization. Sullen, arrogant and unrepentant, virtually all the Nazi chieftains proved defiant and uncommunicative even when placed before an international war-crimes tribunal and charged with a variety of capital offenses. One of the accused immediately stood out, however — Albert Speer, whom Hitler had first made his chief architect and then his phenomenally effective minister for economic mobilization during the war. Handsome, youthful and personable, Speer responded eagerly to questions put to him by the victors, explaining in great detail how the Nazi economic war machine had worked and divulging much information about the inner circles of the regime. Unlike the other defendants, he went out of his way to assume a share of what he characterized as the collective responsibility of the Nazi leadership for the crimes of the Third Reich.

Despite having occupied, in the estimation of knowledgeable observers, a position second in importance only to that of Hitler himself during the last half of the war, Speer escaped with his life when the Nuremberg tribunal sentenced him to 20 years’ imprisonment. While serving that sentence he began the memoir, published in English under the title “Inside the Third Reich,” that would become a best seller in several languages and make him a rich man after his release in 1966. The only major Nazi to stage a postwar comeback, he had, by the time of his death in 1981 at the age of 78, published two more books and become an international celebrity.

In “Albert Speer: The End of a Myth,” Matthias Schmidt, a young historian at West Berlin’s Free University, sets out to debunk what he sees as Speer’s self-generated image as a respectable Nazi. Through some resourceful research, he has compiled an impressive catalogue of discrepancies between Speer’s postwar versions of his career and the documented record, which Mr. Schmidt has augmented with some hitherto unused materials. For example, Speer insisted after the war that he had taken no part in the persecution of Jews. However, Mr. Schmidt provides photostatic copies of pages from the wartime log of Speer’s office that show his organization evicted some 75,000 Jewish Berliners from their homes to provide housing for so-called Aryan left homeless by Allied bombing raids. Unbelievably, when Speer learned, after having written about it in his memoirs, that this evidence existed, he conspired to suppress it. Mr. Schmidt further shows that, in the course of allocating construction materials, Speer received reports from subordinates on the barracks being constructed for inmates at Auschwitz and other extermination centers. Those reports, along with the cordial correspondence between Speer and the overlord of the Nazi extermination camps, the SS chief Heinrich Himmler, about quarters for the victims of the Final Solution of the Jewish Problem, undermine the plausibility of Speer’s protestsations of ignorance about the greatest crime of the Nazi regime — the mass murder of six million Jews.

Mr. Schmidt focuses much of his attack on Speer’s portrayal of himself as a nonpolitical expert, victimized, as he put it in his final statement at Nuremberg, by technology run amok. As Mr. Schmidt points out, for a university student of Speer’s privileged background to apply for membership in the Nazi party in January 1931, two years before Hitler’s installation as chancellor, a position of influence in the Nazi Party and its general gravity had to have taken place. By choosing as he did that time, Speer qualified after the Nazi takeover as one of the party’s “veteran warriors,” a distinction he exploited to the fullest until the regime’s collapse made that inexpedient. At that point, in 1945, he suddenly became a man...
Nazi's Comeback
Continued from preceding page

who in his youth had impulsively joined a party about whose goals he knew next to nothing.

As the author stated, Speer proved an adept practitioner of high-level Nazi political infighting, invoking his close ties with the Führer to crush party officials who got in his way. One such victim was the Nazi mayor of Berlin, who lost his job as a result of objecting to Speer’s high-handed methods in effecting preparations for his grandiose scheme to transform Berlin into “Germany,” a city of gigantic monumental buildings that would serve as the capital of the greater German empire Hitler's conquests would create. Later, during the war, Mr. Schmidt shows Speer assuming a prominent political role in the regime. Despite knowledge of Germany's increasingly hopeless military and economic plight, Speer exhorted the Germans to fight on and held out the spurious prospect of rescue by means of "miracle weapons" that turned out to be only the militarily insignificant V-2 rockets. By that time, he had succumbed to the allure of power to the extent of envisioning himself as Hitler's successor. Even after the regime's collapse, when he was under interrogation by the Allies, he believed he would soon become minister of reconstruction in a postwar German government.

At the Nuremberg trial Speer mounted a defense of subtle brilliance. Ingratiating himself with the American and British members of the tribunal at every opportunity, he sought to disarm them with his assumption of a share of collective responsibility. But, as Mr. Schmidt shows, he adroitly strove to avoid accepting any guilt for specific crimes of the regime he had so loyally served or portrayed himself as the stooge of the dethroned, as a victim of a purportedly autonomous technological and by offering warnings to humanity about its perilous, he directed attention away from the fact that he himself had excelled at harnessing technology and making it serve the criminal goals of the political party to which he had belonged since his student days. By demolishing Speer's carefully tailored image of himself, Matthias Schmidt has contributed to setting the record straight, even though he overestimates the extent to which historians have been influenced by the image. One wishes only that Mr. Schmidt had driven home with even greater force the lasting lesson of Speer's role. The Third Reich was without question a political role, it was not that of a fanatical Nazi, a true believer in that pernicious creed. Instead, Speer's politics were those of an opportunist, ever ready to advance his own interests by whatever methods he found would serve that purpose. His career serves to remind us that fascists such as Adolf Hitler and his disciples can cope with the complexities of the modern world only if they can call upon the talents of unscrupulous, self-serving men like Albert Speer.

About Books

Rereading and Other Excesses
By Anatole Broyard

Reading is an anti-social habit. If I kept it up, I'm not going to be invited out any more. It's a strange reading books has become a sort of addiction. If a book is really good, it deserves to be read again, and if it's great, it should be read at least three times.

It's not a question of paying homage to the book, but of doing it justice. In a first reading, you're distracted by pleasure, excitement, curiosity. The book may so satisfy you that you rush through it in a kind of delirium. In my own case, the more I like a book, the more slowly I read, and this has its distractions too. When you read slowly, as the speed-nudging course points out, you have time to free-associate to the material, and this blurs your recollection of it, confusing stimulus and response.

Yet I wouldn't want to give up these associations, this spontaneous talking back to a book, because it's one of the things that makes reading so valuable. In mingle your ideas and feelings with the author's, you raise and complicate the level of your own imagination.

Talk to someone who's read a book once and see how well he remembers it. Of course responses will vary, but I'll find in many cases that only the main outlines survive. Beautiful sentences, heartbreakingly scenes, gestures that sum up the history of our struggle to tame our instincts and civilize ourselves — are either missed or forgotten. Not necessarily because people are careless readers, but because a good or great book is a very subtle, intricate and demanding experience.

As the author states, however, the most extreme example of once-over-lightly reading that I ever ran across was the case of a man who had worked his way through Thomas Mann's "Magic Mountain" in an attempt to improve his mind. "That Hans Castorp," he said to me, "was really cool the way he dropped Claudia Chauchat after a one-night stand." I stared at him. "Dropped?" I said. "You're supposed to get it: a woman who gives you an X-ray picture of herself for a souvenir is bed news."

The problem with rereading is that it puts you out of sync with other people. They read the book in college and you reread it last week: there's bound to be some difference of opinion, and they won't love you for it. They'll look at you as if you were the kind of person who vandalizes graves, or peeks at a crib during an exam.

Then, to reread is to regress, to repeat yourself, to interrupt your glorious progress into the new. Life goes on, and I can't blame them for wanting to go with it. I just wish they wouldn't blame me for going the other way. I'm willing to say, when someone asks me, that I'm afraid my opinion is unreliable, because I've just reread the book and it unsettled my mind.

In anthropology now, the term "thick description" refers to a dense accumulation of ordinary information about a culture, as opposed to abstract or theoretical analysis. It means observing the details of life until they begin to coagulate or cohere into an interpretation.

It occurred to me that it might be interesting to look at fiction this way, to consider in novels and short stories the relation between the ordinary observation of people and places and the kind of dramatic behavior inferred from them by the author. Do his observations support or enhance his people's faces, or is the connection only casual? Is landscape character, as Henry James said, or only window dressing?

Fiction is not as rich in thick description as it once was. The 19th century was its heyday, and in the first half of the 20th we still had Joyce, Proust, Mann and Faulkner. Today in America thick description is the excep-
tion rather than the rule. When we think of it, John Updike and Saul Bellow are the best-known writers who readily come to mind. Kafka's are the best of the thin descriptions, like a drawing by Klee. Among current American writers, Raymond Carver and Ann Beattie are thin on principle, rather like a doctor who believes that a rich diet builds fat around your heart. Both Donald and Frederick Barthelmes are good thin describers, but closer to Saul Steinberg than to Klee.

I heard a story about a team of anthropologists who for an astonishingly long time failed to discern a cultural pattern of any kind in the primitive society they had come to study. I wonder whether they put their faith in thick description or resigned themselves to drawing conclusions without evidence, as some contemporary novelists and short-story writers seem to do.

I'd like to see thick description make a comeback. Apart from sheer sensuous pleasure, it gives you the comforting feeling that you're not altogether adrift, that at least you have an actual context to enter into and real things to grapple with. The protectors of the environment are a powerful group in the United States. Perhaps they should extend their concern to the country of the imagination.

Why are we so interested in Romanticism? The university presses keep bringing out books on the subject, as if it were generally thought that we had to be reminded of the Romantic. It seems as if the authors of these books are afraid it might be going out of style.

If modern literature has taught us anything, it is that happiness is insignificant and that it is our destiny, perhaps our duty, to be troubled. Romanticism might be defined as being troubled in a grand or operatic manner, to feel "the suction of the infinite," as Ernst Becker put it in "The Denial of Death." Romanticism might also be seen as part of "the panic inherent in being" — another of Becker's phrases. In "The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal," F. L. Lucas says that, for Goethe, "Romanticism is disease; Classicism is health." For Stendhal, Romanticism is, at any time, the art of the day. Other writers call it a mixture of the grotesque, the tragic and the sublime. It is "emotion against reason"; or, as George Sand said, "everything excessive is poetic."

Dreams and fantasy play a large part in Romanticism, which has led some writers to suggest that Romanticism is the voice of the unconscious. But this is not convincing, for psychoanalysis has shown us how drab the unconscious can be. By transcending the usual forms of Romanticism, Theodore Roszak redefine as it "sacramental consciousness." His description of poetry as "the therapeutic subversion of language by language" is certainly in the familiar romantic tradition.

In "The Rhetoric of Romanticism," the late Paul de Man calls Romanticism a "term of resistance and nostalgia." He also seems to see in it a runaway anthropomorphism which perhaps the best definition of Romanticism would be a chronic dissatisfaction with what is, a collection of sublime and imprecise complaints. It's our little flirtation with madness and with greatness.
Inside Lascaux: a Sublunar Experience

To the Editor:

Your July 20 Topics item about Jacques Marsal’s 1940 stumbling onto the Lascaux cave in southwestern France brought back a personal sublunar kind of experience on the day when Americans were marking the 20th anniversary of Apollo II’s landing on the moon.

It was on a bright sunny morning in 1957 that Jacques Marsal, with the bursting pride of a discoverer, and a patriotic eagerness, guided my wife and me through the painted wonders of the Lascaux cave on a private tour restricted to the three of us because we were the only people around, and I, an American, was connected with the French Government at the time. The sight of Lascaux’s beasts and primitive ways painted on the walls 16,000 years before did have, as I now recall, a desolate lunar aspect, perhaps the moon’s dark side.

I’m sure, however, that what we saw fell far short of what astounded the eyes of 20th-century man on his first visit to the moon in 1969. The times change, and we change with them.

NORMAN READER
Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y., July 21, 1989

To the Editor:

In the spring of 1987, I had the rare privilege of going into the Lascaux cave. (The French Government permits this periodically.) Our small group was shown through the cave by the best guide of all, Jacques Marsal.

I was particularly struck by one painting, and as I stared at it transfixed, I felt strong hands on my shoulders, turning me in a slightly different direction. It was Mr. Marsal and he said excitedly: “Look at it from this angle. Is it not extraordinary?”

I was struck by his total involvement, his boundless enthusiasm after almost 50 years of viewing Lascaux’s glorious art.

AMY R. HANAN
New York, July 26, 1989
great book
in San
Was Europe's fabulous cave art the start of the Information Age?
It came with a bang, apparently out of nowhere and with almost no foreshadowing in the archaeological record: the world's first and longest-lived art movement. One of the most spectacular developments in the human story unfolded during the Upper Paleolithic, the Stone Age span extending from about 80,000 to 10,000 years ago. After two or more million years of relatively sluggish evolution in the Homo line, after what has been called a period of "almost unimaginable monotony," art appeared all of a sudden, culminating in the magnificent cave paintings and engravings of Western Europe.

About 200 sites have been discovered there to date, some 90 percent located in France and Spain, in three major clusters: in the foothills of the central Pyrenees, along the Bay of Biscay coast of northern Spain and, the heaviest concentration, within a 20-mile radius of the village of Les Eyzies in southwestern France. I have been through at least 75 of the caves, a number of them half a dozen times, often negotiating several miles of galleries during visits lasting as long as seven or eight hours at a stretch. Some are easy "tourist" caves which you could enter in evening clothes, others so horrendous that you swear never to tackle them again.

My fellow explorers have been archaeologists, students, professional guides and veteran speleologists. The speleologists may go in for the excitement, driven by the ancient "because-it's-there" spirit. Most of the rest of us, however, are there chiefly for another reason. Although I for one enjoy excitement in reasonable doses, I would not be caught dead in certain of those twisting tunnels if it were not for the paintings and engravings up ahead, and if it were not for the overwhelming question: Why did they do it?

Why did people whose ancestors had lived quite happily through 2,000 artless millenniums and who had never done anything like that before, begin going deep into caves to draw pictures on the walls, equipped with ground-up earth pigments, flint chisels, limestone lamps fueled by animal fat and, presumably, scaffolding for decorating high walls and ceilings?

Recent archaeological research provides, if not a final answer, some highly significant leads. The Upper Paleolithic saw an unleashing of evolutionary forces that seem to have been dammed up for ages. It saw the emergence of people like us, members of the Homo sapiens sapiens subspecies, also widely known as Cro-Magnon people, and physically the most gracle of all human species. They were certainly considerably weaker than the species they replaced, the powerfully

Clay sculptures of bison inside Le Tuc d'Audoubert are considered among the finest in Paleolithic art.

*Photographs by Jean Vertut*
Cave art as information technology

Entrance to the Niaux cave frames the slopes of the Pyrenees. A Roman sandal print has been found inside.

built Neanderthals (who were two to three times stronger and who, for all the adverse publicity about their intelligence, had larger brains than ours).

The newcomers did not need all that muscle. They developed less strenuous ways of doing the same things, and a great deal more. Innovators supreme, they initiated a burst of change in practically every area of human activity, from the working of flint to weaponry and codes of behavior. Yet their very success must have brought new problems.

I believe that too much was happening too fast, too much new knowledge flowing in at an unprecedented and accelerating pace, nothing less than a full-fledged information explosion. Complexity and conflict were on the increase, and the earliest known art arose in response to the emergency. The times called for something beyond the traditional methods of passing information on from generation to generation—simply following one's parents on their daily rounds, observing and imitating, sitting around campfires and listening—something rather more formal and disciplined, the beginnings of myth and religion.

The crucial point is that our ancestors were not yet literate: the only way of storing knowledge was to memorize it. Before the Upper Paleolithic, the prodigious information-storing capacities of the brain had hardly been tapped. Now they would be.

It is my thesis that without writing, everything had

John Pfeiffer has returned again to the caves since he completed the text for his latest book, The Creative Explosion, published last fall by Harper and Row.
to be dramatized, and our ancestors proceeded to do just that. They organized ways of attaching emotion to information for memory’s sake, and the cave art helped to achieve that end. First clues to what they were doing came more than a generation ago from André Leroi-Gourhan of the University of Paris who went into the caves expecting to find “cultural chaos...works scattered over the walls in disorder by successive generations of hunters,” art for art’s sake executed by talented individuals acting inspirationally on their own. Instead he found something considerably more complex, and not all that personal. For him every cave was a composition in itself, the result of a master plan conceived in intense detail, according to a group effort and in response to group needs.

Studies conducted since then, and still under way, confirm Leroi-Gourhan’s insights. The more I have investigated the caves, the more obvious and elaborate and systematic the planning appears to me. It involved three stages: 1) leading the uninitiated through an eerie and difficult route, a kind of obstacle course to soften them up for indoctrination; 2) catching and holding their attention with shocking and frightening displays; and 3) finally, using every trick to imprint information intact and indelibly in memory.

The first stage, the softening-up process, takes full advantage of a phenomenon well known to brainwashers. To prepare people for indoctrination, it helps to thrust them abruptly into a strange environment, a hard and uncomfortable setting without landmarks of any sort and no warmth and no familiar faces: a place guaranteed to produce a feeling of loss and a craving for support. Caves certainly meet these specifications.

Staying underground for prolonged periods can be as effective as extreme fatigue or hypnosis or hallucinogenic drugs in creating a so-called altered state of consciousness.

_Tortuous paths to the inner sanctums_

The ways into caves generally involve a succession of physically demanding maneuvers, part ordeal and part suspenseful build-up. Our ancestors caught only fragmentary glimpses of rocks and shadow shapes by the flickering light of their lamps as they scrambled up steep slopes, slid into pits, sidled into narrow fissures and up chimney formations, crawled on hands and knees, and slithered snakewise flat on their stomachs along châtîères, cat-hole tunnels barely wide enough to squeeze through.

All this was preamble to the second stage, the creation of calculated surprise. Last summer I saw Labastide, a Pyrenean cave, for the first time from the top of a ridge in a forest, looking down into a ravine. The cave mouth is a huge jagged hole at the bottom where mist gathers like smoke from smoldering underground fires, a reasonable facsimile of the gates of hell. Jacques Omnes, one of France’s leading amateur archaeologists, reports about 200 paintings and engravings in a maze of galleries extending a third of a mile into the earth.

More than 80 of the figures are concentrated in an area about 200 yards from the entrance. In a second chamber deeper within the cave are about 60 engravings, including horses, bison, human figures, an ibex head and many other animals. But the outstanding work at Labastide is a polychrome horse more than six feet long, faded but not enough to obscure the graceful contours of head and body. Painted in red and black on a large boulder that blocks the passage in the very heart of the inner sanctum, it leaps like an apparition out of the darkness.

The most striking display of all is found in Lascaux in the Les Eyzies region, a cave discovered during World War II by four boys in search of buried treasure. You stand at the entrance to the main hall in pitch dark, waiting and wondering what to expect. Then the darkness is shattered as lights are switched on. Everything appears at once as if flashed onto a curving panoramic screen. You see a burst of animals painted in yellow and black and red, a procession dominated by huge creatures with horns and seeming to stream into a funnel-mouth leading to deeper galleries (pp. 44-45).

There are similar great moments—suddenly viewed panels of large animals—on the walls of a high-domed chamber in Niaux, another Pyrenean cave, and in...
Altamira on the northern coast of Spain, the first art cave discovered more than a century ago, which features a ceiling composition of two dozen animals, mostly bison (p. 42). Les Trois Frères, which runs into a hillside about 30 miles northwest of Niaux, contains one of the most widely reproduced cave paintings. A composite creature is bent over in a crouching position, head twisted to the left with wide-staring owl-like eyes, wearing antlers and some sort of animal skin (p. 42). Located high on the wall of a bell-shaped chamber, as if to overawe watchers below, he is known as the “sorcerer” or “horned god.”

One more adventure. I will never forget a difficult half-mile journey into Le Tuc d’Audoubert, a cave in the same hill as Lés Trois Frères. Robert Bégouën, owner of the site, was somewhere ahead and I was completely absorbed in keeping up, moving along in a slit of light, my lamp swung down to see the terrain underfoot and then up to avoid bumping my head. Suddenly I turned to a stage-whispered “C’est ici!” which came like a shout out of the silence. It was Bégouën, his lamp shining directly on two superbly sculpted clay bison (pp. 36-37), set in a small rotunda at the end of the cave.

The caves are full of images. They contain a conservatively estimated 15,000 paintings and engravings, a rich assortment of abstract signs as well as humans and other animals, some like the sorcerer looming high for all to see, others drawn in supersecret places. Only persons in the know could find the beautiful little horse seen by crawling into an alcove and twisting around; the face with eyes in black outline placed just around a zigzag turn; five reindeer, part of a panel of some two dozen engravings in a crevice so narrow that the figures appear only a few inches from your face; the fish painted near a spring and a pit 230 feet deep.

Every new study increases our appreciation of the [Image] These horses are among 60 on the walls of the famed cave at Lascaux. Meaning of abstract images is unclear.

This Lascaux horse, ten feet long, has been covered by calcite film. Branched symbol, right, baffles scholars.
cave artists as masters of special effects. J. Gonzales Echegaray, director of Spain's Altamira Museum and Research Center, while exploring a small cave recently, discovered an engraving which other archaeologists had missed completely. And no wonder. The engraving is more than six feet high, but it can be seen only under certain conditions. Echegaray himself missed it at first. He was playing his light back and forth across an apparently blank wall at the rear of a niche when suddenly, as if projected by the switching-on of a magic lantern, a figure appeared. It was magic, indeed. The figure, the head of a man drawn in profile and wearing what seems to be a beret, had been placed so that it becomes visible only if the light source is held in the right position. Move your lamp a few inches from that position, and the image vanishes. Such experiences are no longer rare, and we are discovering still subtler effects all the time.

Imagine the impact of moving through dark passages in a half trance, groping in a mental cloud of confusion and awe—and then stopping dead in your tracks, face to face with a figure or panel of figures. At such moments of maximum surprise, maximum shock, our ancestors were wide open to suggestion. They wanted to be spoken to, and what they heard came through with the force of cosmic truth, revelation. In short, they were ready for the third stage of the cave experience, indoctrination. It was in these caves, I believe, that the entire contents of the tribal encyclopedia was transferred, installment by installment, to the next generation. To ensure that the information was absorbed, everything had to be kept at high tension, peak excitement, in the way of people without writing. It seems reasonable that our ancestors would have used every possible device, including singing and dancing, to help get the message across. There is evidence for this, both in the caves themselves and in the customs of present-day hunter-gatherers.

**Memorizing water sources in the desert**

Consider the aborigines of Australia's central deserts, for example. Their main concern is water. The desert averages eight inches of rain a year, and unpredictable rain at that. It has a few widely scattered permanent water holes and a number of rain-dependent sources: claypans which hold water for a while, "soaks" where water must be dug for, billabongs or stream beds with a few standing pools, stagnant waters trapped in rock clefts and the crotches of trees. Place is critical in such an arid world. One must know precisely where thirst may be quenched, and be there before the supply dries up. For this there are sets of maps covering thousands of square miles of desert and locating water sources by the positions of such landmarks.
A painted bison lies curled in a depression in the ceiling of the Great Hall at Altamira, Spain.

A crouching figure, half human, half animal—the “sorcerer”—is in sanctuary at Les Trois Frères.

as sandy hills, rock outcrops, scrub trees, clumps of spiky grass. These are memorized maps, imprinted in the aboriginal brain as vividly as our four-color versions in atlases.

The desert, which appears so dead and monotonous to us, is a place of infinite variety to the aborigines. According to Richard Gould of Brown University, they see in every landmark traces of their mythology, heroic beings who assumed animal and human forms, roamed widely in the remote “dreamtime” past when all the world was young and green, and left tracks everywhere. For example, one tale concerns the totemic lizard, running west to east to escape a band of hunters, who found a hole and slid into it, leaving the tip of his tale protruding. The hunters tried to pull him out, but he pulled them in. They all turned to stone, and a slit in the ground low cliff that stands there today supposedly marks the spot.

This is one episode in an extended myth about the adventures of the dreamtime lizard. The myth is a series of many adventures, and each is seen as a section of a real feature of the desert. Gould followed the entire lizard track one day in an airplane, flying low over the landscape with an aborigine who pointed out hills, water sources, individual rocks and trees and other features along the way—recounting the tale associated with each. There are many such tracks, the tracks of the totemic kangaroo, dingo, bush turkey, bandicoot and so on, ancestors whose spirits are inert now and unmoving but alive and accessible through various rituals. Several thousand miles of tracks crisscross the desert, forming a network of routes and places as intricate as any road map.

Art plays a major role in learning the network. As part of their initiation into the sacred aspects of the culture, young men are conducted to isolated rock shelters and shady spots in deep canyons, and shown paintings and engravings, symbols representing actual features along dreamtime tracks in the desert. They learn the places associated with the symbols, and the myths associated with the places. They eventually learn many of the symbols carved on spear-throwers as well, and on sacred boards up to nine feet long, tribal records hidden in secret places, aboriginal “libraries.”

Furthermore, the same symbols may appear in body painting, and that points to new dimensions in the design of mnemonic ceremonies. Body painting is used in dances which may imitate the movements of dreamtime ancestors in animal guises, and often take place at night. And the dancers may move to the rhythm of spears tapped against spear-throwers, or sticks pounded against the ground in imitation of the thump-thumping of the tail of the totemic kangaroo. Singing and dancing also may be accompanied by the low throaty growl of bull-roarers—carved boards twirled on cords. Such performances are pure theater. Gould estimates that the average adult aborigine knows the locations of some 400 water sources which, of course, make up only part of the tribal encyclopedia. Learning among the men proceeds in ceremonies conducted throughout life, each conveying more detailed and advanced information. All the arts are mobilized.

Similar ceremonies were almost certainly arranged during the Upper Paleolithic. Several paintings of high-stepping figures, including the Les Trois Frères sorcerer, as well as patterns of footprints preserved on cave floors, suggest dancing of some sort. Soviet archaeologists digging northeast of Kiev have unearthed a
set of red-painted mammoth bones which may have been used as drums and other percussion instruments. Instruments resembling bull-roarers made of bone and ivory have been found in the caves, and one can only imagine how that unearthly noise would sound deep in the earth, bouncing and rebouncing off the walls of natural echo chambers.

People could hardly have remained silent in the midst of all that activity, especially since messages are better remembered sung than unsung, rhymed than unrhymed. I picture total psychological bombardment, a mass assault on the senses. Whatever the image of a bison was meant to convey, it must have been reinforced with a vengeance by words sung simultaneously to drumbeats imitating bison hoofbeats, music imitating the rush and panic of stampeded bison herds, dances imitating the movements of bison on the run.

Only in such a context could vast amounts of information be passed on from brain to brain without writing, held firmly in memory and for life. There is evidence that the Cro-Magnons, like the Australian aborigines and other present-day tribes, started their ceremonial pedagogy early. By my estimate about 1,000 footprints have been found in the art caves, and many of them were made by children.

Among other things, children learned about a brand-new style of hunting. Mass killing apparently became a regular practice during the Upper Paleolithic. Before that, hunters did most of their killing opportunistically. They were typical predators in the sense that they concentrated on young and old animals, and avoided animals in the prime of life and capable of putting up a good fight. The Cro-Magnons changed all that. They tended to go after animals of all ages, destroying large numbers.

**Hunting becomes a cooperative effort**

Mass killing made life enormously more complicated. Technologically, it called for new action-at-a-distance weapons which amplified the power of muscle, and for new tools to make the weapons. The Cro-Magnons invented spear-throwers which increased thrusting force and lethal range, and probably the bow and arrow as well. Planning and foresight became more important than ever before. It was a matter of organizing game drives, stampeding herds into corrals and dead-end canyons—operations demanding the combined efforts of a number of bands, able-bodied individuals placed at specified locations and with specified duties.

The biggest problems arose after the killing and the butchering. People had always lived in small nomadic bands. Now, probably looking back with nostalgia at the good old uncrowded days, they were living in much larger groups of perhaps 100 to 200, for limited periods
but staying together longer. That meant more conflict, an inevitable consequence of increasing group size, and the establishment of rules for maintaining the peace and punishments for breaking the rules. The Cro-Magnons embodied all this in their myths.

The contents of those myths, the story lines and adventures, may elude us forever. But not their tone, not the general structure. I would bet that they featured drama, a collection of well-told tales, and plenty of conflict—heroes frustrated by and eventually overcoming villains—all recounted to the accompaniment of music and song and dancing. Cave art provided the backdrops to the performances, analogous to the stained-glass windows and graven images in dark Gothic cathedrals, the man-made caves of a later day.

Prehistoric art marked a stage in human evolution, a sign of mounting social complexity. It appeared when the time was ripe, and not just in Europe. The archaeological record elsewhere is scanty. But we know that India had an Upper Paleolithic of its own, which may have started as early as 30,000 years ago. Stone tools resembling those found in Europe have been found there. And prehistoric cave and rock-shelter art in India may date back to this Upper Paleolithic age. Similar developments apparently took place in China and Australia.

New radiocarbon datings indicate that the rock-shelter art of southern Africa, represented by an estimated 6,000 San (more commonly labeled Bushman) sites and as many as 175,000 paintings, started at least 10,000 and perhaps more than 20,000 years ago. No complete census exists of New World art sites, but 90 percent of them lie west of the Mississippi, several thousand in California alone. That a great deal more remains to be discovered is suggested by the just-published report of a Tennessee cave decorated—much more recently—with animal and human figures as well as abstract signs.

Art and ceremony were as essential to the species as food and reproduction. The marks of early religion, they held society together in the face of mounting unrest, creating group loyalties extending beyond family and blood relatives. But the Cro-Magnons paid a price for survival, and we are still paying it. Hunter-gatherers had always lived by egalitarian traditions. Full-time leaders are unknown among the aborigines,
for example, and there is no trace of rank in the archaeological record—until the Upper Paleolithic. Then we get the first status burials—people laid to rest with luxury items: necklaces of pierced shells, ivory beads and spears, beautifully worked flints.

It was all done with the best intentions, of course, out of necessity. Planning requires planners, individuals with the authority to arrange ceremonies, create illusion and awe, and impart or withhold knowledge, purportedly for the common good. Power, which emerged in the name of resolving conflict, brought more conflict: it set the stage for the abuse of power, for divine kings and more recent megalomaniacs.

What happened 30,000 years ago is ancient history in terms of a human lifespan. But in terms of the evolution of the species, it is very recent, practically contemporary. The explosions of information and population which began in the Upper Paleolithic are the same ones which continue to plague us today as we careen toward the 21st century. The Cro-Magnons pioneered in trying to build stable societies out of individuals with a small-band, hunter-gatherer mentality. We are still trying.
concert was more strongly characterized. An admirable attempt was made at authentic pronunciation, both of the texts and of a connecting Christmas narration. There was a good instrumental realization of “Taunder naken,” perhaps the most ambitious of the young Henry VIII’s arrangements of popular tunes. Frederick Renz played “Queen Mary’s Dumpe” nicely on the harpsichord, though there was no need for viol and recorder to join him. But then the concert lapsed into folkiness, with a final group of Scottish songs: Mr. Renz twanged on the hurdy-gurdy, the singers took up a strange accent I would not like to pass judgment on, and the instrumentalists had fun with some Scots airs from a late-seventeenth-century manuscript.

I came away from all these concerts wishing that early-music groups would have a little more confidence in their music and put a little more faith in their audience. I feel sure that if ensembles narrowed the range of their search for novelty, so that in the course of one evening we could gradually make contact with one particular repertory of music from the past, audiences would not disappear.

—NICHOLAS KENYON

ROWING ACROSS THE DARK

my morphined father spent the Depression holed up in a hotel trying to become a writer but ended up spending forty years climbing ladders and at the top he took out his paintbrush and painted church steeples and water tanks count the winter nights he'd come home hands numb his gaunt face frozen afraid to say he'd been laid off
tonight in morphine dreams he rows across the dark where he lowers his line and while the black lake licks the sides of his solitary boat an eight-pound rainbow trout slaps through the air glistening in moonlight silver hook flashing through its upper lip

my father so far under he doesn't feel a thing

—FRANZ DOUSKEY

Peter Island offers nothing.

That's why people keep coming back. Certainly you can sail, snorkel, ride, fish, and play tennis. But you can also do nothing at all and enjoy it as never before.

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geor gris
The Latin-American Lottery

It is now almost twenty years since the first inklings—a name repeated here, an article there—of the sudden surge of hitherto unheard-of writers from Latin America began to be felt among readers in this country. By now, the more important of those writers’ works have been reassembled in English, through the laborious filter of translation, and, though their names may not all be household words, the writers have at least made their presence felt. The enthusiasm with which their work has been read in Latin America—they could be said to have brought a large reading public into being there—and the attention they have received both in Spain, where many of them were first published, and then, through translation, in the principal reading countries, led to their being regarded collectively as a literary phenomenon, eventually known as “The Boom.”

The Boom was a matter of more attention than of event, for in point of fact the writers who had set it in motion a generation earlier were variously recognized in Spanish. Jorge Luis Borges had published “Ficciones” in 1944, Miguel Ángel Asturias’ “El Señor Presidente” had appeared in 1946, Alejo Carpentier’s “El Reino de Este Mundo” in 1949, Juan Carlos Onetti’s “La Vida Breve” in 1950, and Juan Rulfo’s “Pedro Páramo” in 1955. All these were seminal works, different from the naturalistic regional novels that had occupied the center of the Latin-American literary stage. The writers were all aware of the existence of European avant-garde literature, and applied themselves in varying ways to finding a language equally innovative. Their efforts did much to liberate the novelists of the next generation—the novelists of the Boom—for they demonstrated the freedom of the writer to create his own fictive reality by implying that all notions of reality were in themselves fictions, and their work made it clear that literature was, above all, something made of language.

It was when the younger Latin-American novelists began to win literary prizes outside their own continent that we first heard of the Boom. Julio Cortázar, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Carlos Fuentes were the five novelists who came in for most attention during the sixties, and their work formed the backbone of the Boom. They had been preceded in international attention by two writers: Pablo Neruda, the Chilean poet, whose poetry permeated the South American continent, and who, by dint of being a Communist, was extensively translated into both Russian and Chinese, making him probably the most exposed poet in the history of the world; and Jorge Luis Borges, who, first in French and then in English, became an obtrusive influence on other writers and an acknowledged master. The novelists of the Boom owed much to Borges, but they struck off in such startlingly original directions of their own that their emerging novels caused publishers in this country to look to the Andes with the narrowed eyes of prospectors.

The Cuban Revolution provided much of the initial impulse for the Boom by creating the cultural institution Casa de las Américas, in Havana, whose literary review provided a forum for a new set of attitudes throughout Latin America, and a rallying point for writers. Previously, the disparate Spanish-speaking countries of the continent had had little to do with one another, but after the isolation occasioned by the Second World War, when Latin America turned in on itself, the question of a Latin American identity loomed large, especially among writers, who had at least the language in common, even though books did not then circulate easily across frontiers. Was there something common to Latin-American experience—something beyond national divisions? Neruda’s huge poem “Canto General” had posited just that, and Borges, in one sense the

“You’re cute—but you’re trespassing.”
most Argentine of writers, was recognized as a strong influence on other literatures. It was the idea of being read outside Latin America that helped to propel the Boom into being; and the magazine Mundo Nuevo, published in Paris between 1966 and 1968, by interviewing the writers themselves and publishing parts of work in progress, gave Latin-American literature a new coherence.

Books, however, do not always cross over into other languages comfortably. They may prove untranslatable for purely linguistic reasons—Cabrera Infante's wilder wordplays—or, more mysteriously, they may not survive cultural transplanting, as is the case, I think, with Miguel Angel Asturias' celebrated novel "Hombres de Maiz." They may also be so out of key with prevailing literary fashions in other countries as to receive scant attention in translation, as has been the case with José Lezama Lima's dense and audacious novel "Paradiso," acclaimed in Spanish and ignored in English. Or, worst of all, they may be so mauled in translation as to be killed by it, as has been the case with João Guimarães Rosa's masterpiece, "Grande Sertão: Veredas"—perhaps the most brilliantly inventive and encompassing Latin-American novel of our time. But one of the more unfortunate impediments to the reassembling of other literatures in English is, alas, the ignorance of publishers, who are not equipped to read works they must contract for until these have been translated, and so must rely on hearsay, on the opinions of appointed readers. Neither do publishers appear to go to much trouble to assemble lists of works in other languages which deserve to be translated. As a result, the whole business of translation remains something of a lottery, and the choice of Latin-American works has been characteristically haphazard; publishers have passed over, for example, most of the work of the Uruguayan novelist Juan Carlos Onetti, one of the most important ancestors of the Boom writers. The search for stars has obscured the firmament.

One book did measure up to the expectations of the book venders. In 1967, Gabriel García Márquez' "Cien Años de Soledad" made its first appearance, to become "One Hundred Years of Solitude" three years later. It proved to be the flagship of the Boom, selling out edition after edition throughout Latin America, and winning awards and lavish attention in translation. In the shortest feasible time, it was moved beyond criticism (though not beyond critical dissection) to the status of a classic. It had all the attributes, for while it could be read as a single running narrative of the rise and erosion of a family and a town through their layered history, it also contained microcosmically the emerging history of Colombia, and indeed of Latin America. Most successfully of all, García Márquez found an all-embracing language that preserved happenings in their wholeness, a storytelling wholeness that we lost with the intrusion of psychoanalytical thinking on the Western novel. "One Hundred Years of Solitude" was, moreover, the crowning example in language of what Alejo Carpentier had earlier called "la real maravilloso" ("the marvellous in the real")—to him, the intrinsic quality of Latin-American experience, in which the wondrous and inexplicable are an essential part of ordinary perception.

García Márquez' case is something of an exception to any rule, and is well documented by now, thanks to the universal attention his book has attracted. He has described in a variety of interviews how he grew up with the awareness that he carried a vast book inside him, a book that would contain the vanished wholeness of his childhood, which he spent in the town of Aracataca, in Colombia, in the care of his eccentric grandparents. He wrote four early books, which he could only look on as failures, until he found a manner appropriate to his vision, whereupon he wrote "One Hundred Years of Solitude" in a furious, eighteen-month stretch of work. Since its legendary dawning, he has completed one other novel, "The Autumn of the Patriarch," and a handful of stories; but he has of late turned to political journalism and shows little interest in fiction, apart from the fact that his newspaper columns often veer off in imaginative directions. The last of the early books to be translated—"In Evil Hour," translated by Gregory Rabassa (Harper & Row; $8.95)—completes the canon. I suspect that if it had crossed the publisher's desk on its own feet, and not on the coattails of "One Hundred Years of Solitude," it would have been summarily ushered out; readers will probably be disappointed by it, unless they have sufficient literary curiosity to be absorbed by attempts and failures, those inevitable stages in the writing process.

In 1956, when he was writing the book, García Márquez was in his twenties, living meagrely in Paris just after losing his job as correspondent for the Colombian paper El Espectador, which had been closed down by the dictator Rojas Pinilla. Earlier, in Bogota in 1948, García Márquez had experienced the outbreak of La Violencia, the unrest in Colombia which became an intermittent civil war lasting into the sixties. He was much preoccupied at the time, as were most of his writing contemporaries, with the question of political involvement, for Latin-American writers are, almost by definition, dissidents. Now, as a writer, García Márquez has remained rooted in, and faithful to, his primary experience—that of the world seen entirely within the context of a small town—and so it was inevitable that he translate his preoccupation with La Violencia into the happenings in such a place during a seventeen-day lull in the disorder of the time. Anonymous lampoons have been appearing mysteriously, like a plague, hinting at guilty secrets and upsetting the equilibrium of the place. As readers, we are not party to the lampoons—only to their disruptive effect, which is ultimately that of bringing on a further eruption of violence. Who writes the lampoons? The answer almost exactly recalls Lope de Vega's play "Fuentovejuna"—"It's everybody and it's nobody." The occurrence of the anonymous lampoons is an extended metaphor for literature itself, for its subversive effects, and for the book we are reading.

While he was writing "In Evil Hour"—the book was originally called "Este Pueblo de Mierda," a much more indicative title—one of García Márquez' characters, the old colonel who waits in dignified poverty and with quiet and hopeful humor for a pension that will never arrive, grew to such a degree as to break off from the narrative to occupy his own story: his own: the small masterpiece called "No One Writes to the Colonel." With his departure, "In Evil Hour" was left without a sympathetic character. The corrupt mayor and the hypocritical priest are caught between the oppressive outside authorities they
Represent and the inhabitants of the run-down, stagnant town. We are occasionally made to feel sorry for them, but they cannot carry the warm imaginative sympathy in which García Márquez likes to dress even his most eccentric characters. For him, imagination is the power by which people transform and humanize the unknown; and only the anonymous poor of the town who persist with the lampoons can come in for his sympathy. What we are left with is a setting peopled by lesser characters, and, for all its shifting, episodic skill, the book does not manage to warm us.

Another war was raging in García Márquez when he wrote this book, a war of style and manner. So far, he had not found the way beyond the realistic surface of his narrative, and that put considerable restraints on his bounding imagination. He was uncomfortable with the language of realism and its limitations; he had not yet found the single, running, all-embracing manner of the storyteller. The manner of the storyteller must have a certain imperviousness. His fictional reality must replace the real. Garcia Márquez was still exploring, by trial and error; and when the impervious storytelling manner did come to him, sweeping aside questions of political commitment and involvement, it brought with it total recall, so that in “One Hundred Years of Solitude” many elements—characters, happenings, anecdotes—from the early books are given their proper place, and the stagnant, lifeless period of the town in “In Evil Hour” becomes one stage in the whole unwinding of the more abundant town he calls Macondo.

García Márquez addicts can find extra diversion in noticing how many details foreshadow their eventual flowering in the larger novel. Nor need anyone with normal translation qualms have any qualms over this novel’s English existence. Not only does Gregory Rabassa give García Márquez the English his original asks for but, beyond that, he is clearly in tune with the original—something that should be a requirement preceding any act of translation, yet seldom is.

García Márquez, like Juan Rufio, has perfectly realized his vision in one encompassing book of mythic completeness. Quite the opposite is true of the two most important writers of the Boom: Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Julio Cortázar. Both are rooted in the shifting nature of language, whose makers and victims we are; both are experimenters and explorers, as was Borges before them. I think of them both as linguistic anarchists, redeemed by a wild humor that makes everything they write startling. They have been innovators not just in the Spanish language but in language itself, manic self-mockers at times, exploring the confines of language to find themselves enclosed by it, exiled at the center. Cumulatively, however, those Latin-American writers who have grown familiar to us more than justify Octavio Paz’ claim that “for the first time in our history, we are contemporaries of all mankind.”

ONE of the curious corollaries of the recent reading enthusiasm directed at Latin America is a relative inattention to Brazilian writing, for there are writers there who merit our reading as much as their Spanish-speaking counterparts. One can muster various reasons—that Brazil has had a different history and an independence that was granted rather than fought for, that Brazil is more firmly attached to European culture, that it is huge and self-consuming, that there are fewer translators from the Portuguese than from the Spanish, that Spain served as a conduit for the Spanish-American writers—but they do not sufficiently explain what seems to me an unlucky draw in the lottery of literary attention. Even Machado de Assis, the acknowledged master of the nineteenth century, does not exist sufficiently in English; and there are quantities of living writers open to a pioneering publisher. There have been beginnings, however. A year or so ago, a volume of stories appeared—“The Ex-Magician and Other Stories”—by Murilo Rubião, translated by Thomas Colchie (Harper & Row; $10)—which seemed to catch no one’s attention, whereas it ought to have been pounced on, for it has much of “lo real maravilloso” in it. Some of these stories had been published in 1947, but Murilo Rubião has recently been rediscovered in Brazil, and he is a germinal figure. The characters in his short, precisely worded stories go through magical transformations as a matter of course, against a realistic background that defeats them. Dragons invade a town, which, in time, grows used to them. Magic is always an unpredictable possibility, yet it does not transform reality but is subsumed by it. Murilo Rubião’s stories cast their happenings in a strange, ominous light that veers between the absurd and the
disquieting. His title story—about a magician who brings himself into being and then sheds his magic in disgust to become a civil servant—is a jewel, and something of a literary archetype. One would certainly have expected—as indeed the publisher must have expected—that the same voracious enthusiasm that engulfed García Márquez would devour Murilo Rubião, but cultural appetites remain incalculable.

The cumulative irony of the aperture brought about by the Latin-American writers is that in spite of the attention they have earned, political realities have worsened. Argentina, which, along with Mexico, was the important center of Latin-American publishing, has become under the blighted regime of President Videla a shadow of its former literate self. I recently received from Chile, by the hand of a friend who had been visiting there, a book of sorts, entitled “La Poesía Chilena.” It is contained in a black box, with a photograph of a prisoner’s shaved head on the cover. Inside is a book without text, containing facsimiles of the death certificates of Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda, Pablo de Rokha, and Vicente Huidobro, Chile’s most celebrated poets. The rest of the book consists of empty book slips from the National Library of Chile, with an interleaved paper Chilean flag. Enclosed is a small plastic packet of “earth from the Central Valley of Chile.” Chile has always been celebrated for its poets. They are all dead, this funereal book says; only the raw earth remains. It is something of a lugubrious monument to better days, but it introduces certain blunt realities into whatever illusions we may entertain about cultural flowerings in Latin America. Writers quite often exist, we ought to realize, in spite of their times.

—ALASTAIR REID

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

Rhine Journey, by Ann Schlee (Holt, Rinehart & Winston; $10.95). It is the summer of 1851, and an English family is on a sedate holiday excursion up the Rhine—a rigidly masterful Anglican clergyman, his half-invalid wife, their pretty seventeen-year-old daughter, and his forty-year-old spinster sister, Charlotte. Charlotte, who has long lived as her brother’s adoring dependent, has recently come into a
small legacy, and she is ashamed to find herself thinking of a life of her own and frightened by what she feels is rebellion. The daughter, too, has her forbidden fantasies—an eagerness for a decorous taste of romance. Near Cologne, the party encounters another English family, a husband and wife and their two young sons. There are cautious exchanges (is the husband quite a gentleman?), a careful acceptance of acquaintanceship, some seemly joint sightseeing junkets. Charlotte is strangely stirred by the husband: he reminds her of an almost imaginary love affair of twenty years ago. The undercurrents of repressed emotions gently stir and shift, there are minute but violent changes. This is Ann Schlee's first novel, but it is a first novel only in name. In its empathic evocation of period, in its understanding of people enchanted by piety and caste, in the bite and luminosity of its style, it is entirely mature, and a finished work of art.

GENERAL

LEONARDO THE SCIENTIST, by Carlo Zammattio, Augusto Marinoni, and Anna Maria Brizio (McGraw-Hill, $9.95). This extensively illustrated collection of essays about and excerpts from Leonardo da Vinci's scientific writings—along with two companion volumes, "The Inventor" and "The Artist," published last fall—makes a first-rate introduction to the life and ideas of that Renaissance genius. In fact, however, Leonardo's work can hardly be divided into science, invention, and art. For example, he undertook a study of the dynamics of moving water at a time when there was still no theory of hydrodynamics and, indeed, when he himself appears to have been relatively ignorant of the formal mathematics of his age. (He appears to have begun his studies only in his forties.) Leonardo's fascination with moving water translated itself into some of the most beautiful drawings of flowing and churning water ever made. Much of what we know about Leonardo can be traced back to two notebooks that were discovered in Madrid in 1965, but a careful restoration of other materials has also revealed unexpected treasures, including a drawing of what looks like a modern bicycle.

THE COLLECTIONS OF THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHANGING TASTE IN AMERICAN ANTIQUES, 1850-1930, by Elizabeth Stillinger (Knopf, $16.95). This wonderful illustrated history of American antiques is also the history of Americans' feelings about themselves. Americans of the early nineteenth century were interested only in historical memorabilia—objects associated (however doubtfully) with Washington or Lafayette or some local patriot. The spread of expatriation—for example, the centennial fair in Philadelphia in 1876—gave rise to the conviction that new was better than old, that machine-made was better than handmade. Then came the arts-and-crafts movement in England—William Morris's nostalgia for preindustrial culture—which affected Americans, too. The educated upper middle class bought American antiques, while the richest Americans bought European. Ethnic snobbery came into the business in the late nineteenth century, when prejudice against recent immigrants blossomed—appreciation of American antiques became a genteel expression of nativism—but by 1909 a contrasting impulse was evident in the landmark Hudson-Fulton exhibition, which stressed the contributions of non-English-speaking nationalities. At that point, museums enter the story (the Metropolitan, to begin with), and these relatively new institutions began to exert immense power in shaping American taste. Excellent illustrations.

JOHN MARSHALL: DEFENDER OF THE CONSTITUTION, by Francis N. Suthe (Little, Brown; $11.95). Marshall, the fourth, and historically the most important, Chief Justice of the United States, was born in Virginia in 1755 and served on the Court from 1801 until his death, in 1835. Like Washington (whom he revered), Marshall was a Virginian who acquired a loyalty to the United States as a nation—hence his national, rather than parochial, interpretation of the Constitution; hence also his incompatibility with Presidents Jefferson and Jackson. Most of Marshall's readings of the Constitution have stood. He seems to have aspired to a goal no higher than one he reached in his thirties—private law practice combined with a gentlemanly en-
The Grass on the Greener Side
by Margot Hentoff

Donald Barr, the headmaster or, as he is sometimes called by the mother of one of his students, the Captain Quean of the Dalain School, rumbled through the pages of the New York Times Magazine last Sunday with an article called "What Did We Do Wrong?" All about the disintegration of the upper-middle class kids who are involved with drugs, promiscuity, and so on. What was interesting about the article was not, God knows, what Barr had to say—which was that teachers and Presidents should be respect ed—even if they are bad, and that parents have been too permissive. But, reading between the lines, I began to wonder how bad things were at Dalain, and I thought of the rumors I have been hearing lately about suspensions and expulsions for pot traffic at many of the private schools around town. On the other hand, Barr may not have meant that these things were happening at his school. As anyone who has read Barr's article knows, he is not the type of man to just sit back and look at what's happening. Barr writes with the horror with which the principal of a girls' school discovered that three of her 15-year-old students were "spending their Friday evenings in a Greenwich Village dive."

That's nothing. My network tells me that the eighth grader at a very conservative girls' school are doubling as dealers and turning most of the high school on.

A few weeks ago a meeting was called at another private school to discuss the problem of pot smoking, and the conclusion was reached that that's exactly what the kids were doing, and there wasn't much anyone could do about it.

All of which leads me to think that enforcement of the laws against possession of pot is going to stop sooner than most of us expect. The law rarely acts in opposition to the community standards of the elite. Criminal law is, after all, largely directed toward containment of the poor. The middle class cannot long afford to have its children made part of a criminal subculture, vulnerable to a bust every time they light up.

The signs are already here, the aftermath of that hilarious teenage party in Connecticut at which the mother of the hostess ran back and forth looking for non-existent liquor and opening the windows to let out all that thick sweet smoke while the cops came in the door and arrested everyone, was that the arresting judge was amazed that the kids had been arrested, and the parents were reportedly "thinking of doing something" about the police action.

It has also occurred to me that possibly it was not totally without the interest of his children in mind that Dr. Goddard of the FDA came out so clearly for the removal of penalties for marijuana possession.

Of course, the kids from the slums have been using marijuana and getting busted since the day it was called many names. Without anyone worrying too much about cruel and unusual punishment for them. But there are some areas in which we demand higher standards of behavior from the poor.

The other day, I was talking to Larry Oate about the Lower East Side boys he works with in his LEAP school and comparing them with the middle class kids. "I was talking to a guy from the private school students are observed from nursery school on how they are tutored at the first sign of trouble, sent to psychologists and reading therapists; given every individual attention that can be bought—and yet the private schools have their own non-learners, their own disruptive children, their own drug problems."

"Yeah," Cole said, "and then there are the people who say to me about one of my kids, 'You mean you have had him for two years and he still sniffs glue?'"

VID Backs McCarthy
The Village Independent Democrats this week voted overwhelmingly to urge Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota to make the race for the Democratic Presidential nomination. "We think that the party should support the renomination of President Johnson. He stated that the source of opposition is the Left Wing in the Administration's 'reck less and immoral war policy.'"
books

NABOKOV: HIS LIFE IN ART

I have been a huge fan of Vladimir Nabokov’s work for many years. His books have been a constant source of inspiration and amusement for me. I recently had the opportunity to visit the book launch of "Nabokov: His Life in Art" and it was a fantastic experience.

The event was held in a beautiful venue with an impressive art collection. The audience was filled with enthusiasts of Nabokov’s work, myself included. The author of the book, Kurt Vonnegut, was also in attendance and gave a captivating speech about Nabokov’s life and work.

After his speech, we were treated to a reading of some of Nabokov’s most famous works. The performance was truly remarkable and left me in awe of Nabokov’s talent.

In the end, the experience was a testament to the enduring legacy of Nabokov’s work. It was a privilege to be a part of this special evening and I highly recommend "Nabokov: His Life in Art" to anyone who loves literature or Nabokov’s work.
BOOKS: NABOKOV

Continued from preceding page

(it one were allowed half a dozen) for his own work.

"Great writers invent their own world," but "minor writers merely ornament the commonplace"—and he would also refer to "minor readers," particularly those who (in uniquely Nabokovian mixture of delight and scorn) would come into his life "to identify with the characters."

(One should always hear this special tone of voice in the mind's ear when reading his sarcastic remarks about philistines, for he seemed even more amused, than disdainful of bourgeois vulgarity, and remarks that seem devastatingly acute in cold print seemed almost affectionate in his warm lectures. He particularly enjoyed reading bad literature aloud—"I can't stop quoting!"—he would chuckle in glee as he read from the masterpieces of socialist realism.)

"There are two million words in this course," Nabokov would say, explaining that the novels added up to a million words but that we were to read them "every single one of them." Twice, the first time merely to get such trivial concerns as "plot suspense" out of the way. I seem to recall a comparison to painting—one should approach a novel as one approaches a painting, not going from left to right but taking in, in a simultaneous totality of experience. But just to make sure, he made me point of giving away the plot in the first lecture so that the plot losses among us..."

"Puzzle box!" he would look up, mimicking surprise that we didn't know the word, then explain that it was a peculiarly Russian word (an untranslatable as "corky," with as many specific instances and as little specific "meaning" as "oszup"), a kind of subtle vulgarity, not crude or course, but verging on sensuality, sensitivity with a slight tinge of old-Oliver's "Hein"; for instance, with its "Frenchie" shtick as "or the great idea," or the novels of Thomas Mann. (We quickly learned that he was a master of the poetically profound, the seeming "inside" which is all the more devastating because the parenthesis gives it an irrefutable position in the sentence.)

Everyone is familiar with his description of Lawrence as "a porgographer," his disdains for Dostoevsky ("memories from a mousehole"), but his wildest anti-estimation was reserved for Hemingway: "I read a novel of his in 1940, I can't quite remember the title... "Bullet!" "Bullet!"")

But to return in the way to read novels: what makes a good reader, he would ask rhetorically, giving us a list of ten to choose from, beginning with "belegke to a book club" or "has seen the movie," and ending with "likes to browse in the dictionary." The proper answers, of course, were imagination and memory and the dictionary. And since this list was itself venerated on pohoshal (he flirted with the word not because he wanted to possess it but simply because he liked to see it have a good time) he would suddenly, vocally raise a forefinger, utter one of those epiphanies which seemed so ecumenical at the time (the weird juxtaposition of words caused no doubt, by the fact that he presumably doesn't know Hugos..."

continued on page 13

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Page Seven

NUMBERS

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BOOKS: NABOKOV

Continued from page 7

lish well") but which linger in the memory precisely because of their odd flavor: "let us worship the ape...the upper spine...the vertebrated tipped at the head with a divine function..."

(Im retrospect, it seems that Nabokov's "talking as you...should some day read his own novels, and telling us in a steady stream the history of his own life, that, but of course there are the two spires to my memory.

After the last pages, his classic good literature and good readers (the course was taught by Associate Professor Smith Hall, by the way, a fact which might be of interest to any one doing research into the sources of the names in "Pale Fire"). We were told to be sure to bring our copies of the novels to the next class, for the first lecture on each novel consisted largely of a long list of corrections of the whimsical transcriptions. "Turn to page 15, line eight, cross out 'violet' and write in 'purple.' "Nabokov, who might bring out in a kind of didactic glee, "Imagine, violet," would almost certainly quip in delight at the exquisite vulgarity of the translator's word-choice."

"Pages do not come from the bottom—change 'umbrella' to 'parasol.' " He would hold up the page from some book like something dampt and greenish found under the skel."

This wistfully reviews."

BOOKS: NABOKOV
Continued from preceding page
holding in on itself, timeliness in time—and articulated in such a way that the reader does not get at Nabokov’s "juice" but shove in his cotton.
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At every opportunity, Brooks leads the snake-eyes against Theresa. She goes to a bar to read a book (a gook figure) and meets her sadistic hoodlum; she goes into a bathroom and gets held up to buy cocaine; she takes, in all innocence, a Quaalude to come down from her coke high, and oversleeps—in retribution for which her schoolkids turn into hooligans and she discovers that her father may have cancer; or, as she swears, "This is it, my last night cruising bars," and she meets her ultimate Mr. Badbar. Granted, life ain't easy for a single girl in the big city, but some of these plagues were missing from Rossner's novel. They seem straight out of the Book of Job.

In real life, as reported by Lacey Fosburgh in a memorable New Times article, "Finding Mr. Goodbar" (October 17, 1975), the story was creepier, and more poetic. Fosburgh's narrative cuts back and forth, Capote-like, between Roseann and her murderer, a sensitive boy with a macho name he could never live up to—John Wayne Wilson—and follows their early lives as they move on parallel, then converging, tracks toward a common tragedy. Dalton Trumbo's famous phrase about the Hollywood blacklist applies to Fosburgh's story: there were no heroes or villains—only victims. After John Wayne had killed Roseann (a scene Brooks turns into a flickering porno film, and a comment on one), he was finally able to achieve an erection—and to fulfill, in Roseann's death, the erotic destiny he couldn't attain while she lived. After his arrest and confession for her murder, John Wayne hanged himself in his cell, while neighbor inmates called for unhearing guards. He was buried at the precise moment his estranged wife in Miami gave birth to a still-born child.

Brooks chooses to end the film with Theresa's death, to sidestep the post-mortem poetics of this bizarre case. Maybe it's because the events following the catastrophe prove only that Roseann's and John Wayne's story was unique, not horrifyingly universal. Or maybe it's because Brooks was too preoccupied with constructing a cathedral of male grotesques, with its tympanum of a virginal figure surrounded by Mr. Gargoyles.

Music/by Patrick Carr

Not Fade Away

At first, Love You Live sounds overbright, overfrenetic, and singularly thoughtless—the same old Stones tunes rearranged to meet the limitations imposed by performing in the oversized bathrooms that make up the world's big-time tour circuit; everything as professional as can be, but basically boring. It might be silly to expect anything else from a live Stones album today—it is indeed a technological and logistical miracle that on their scale of production, they manage to sound even vaguely like themselves—but why make an album of it? Ya-Ya was, after all, the basic live Stones record and Got Live proved that the Stones could play fast as well as dirty. We all know that the latter-day Stones can blow a crowd over with volume, speed, texture and visual thrills, but so what? Well done, boys. Now we know you're still around and we can relive those fancy moments spent with 30,000 of your other fans.

One problem here is that on the big concert sides (one, two and four), the Stones no longer seem to have a strong lead singer. Jagger's vocals are weird, quirky and often half-assed. This may be because he long ago abandoned the original dynamics of his material in favor of subsequent permutations, and it may be because on stage he has to dance and therefore can't put his all into singing. But mostly, I think, it's because Keith and Ronnie Wood have become the key figures in this kind of performance. Separated from each other by physical distance and unable to hear each other (let alone the rest of the band), they have evolved an extremely speedy, complex rhythm method as the only way of dealing with the situation. They succeed brilliantly—the band on these sides is almost unbelievably dense—but they have left themselves no room for the unpredictable. They are a train, and Mick has to ride it. Together, their task is to keep the crowd excited, leaving no ragged holes at all. What we have is a band album; Jagger almost doesn't matter, and that's a considerable shame.

Somewhere in the middle of side two, the initial shock of the Stones sounding like the most professional bunch of guitar-riffers (and little else) subsides, and the record becomes exciting. In this way it is very like their show: it's the communal experience that counts, and this record is well-grammed to duplicate it. Tension, density and craziness build, and the effects of smart pacing—and Keith's relentless battering ram—eventually convince you. It catches you up, and things go all wild and woolly. It works—no big deal, it ought to after all these years—and that, at least, is something.

But side three is something else. Side three was recorded this March in a club—the El Macombo Club in Toronto—and as soon as that needle goes down, you know you are there. If the other three sides (recorded in Paris in '76) are testimonials to the band's defeat of the acoustics of scale, the El Macombo side showcases today's Stones at their most basic level. Provided with a situation in which no one player is more than a few feet away from his mate, and a simple sound system through which all of them can actually hear the singer, the old dogs cook up a storm. It is on this side that we hear the proof of Keith's contention that in Woody he has at last found an ideal partner (check them out on their reggae number, "Crackin' Up"), and realize that Mick is not unconscious. Also, through beautifully convoluted versions of "Mannish Boy" and "Little Red Rooster," we get to hear the Stones as a blues band par excellence, playing like snakes.

It is only at this juncture that you realize that the Stones have not, in fact, decayed. Keith says that the band is now ready to go into the studio to record a new album of new material, and doubtless in the fullness of time we shall hear the results. On the basis of the four El Macombo tracks (ending, fittingly, with "Around and Around," one of their first records), it would seem that impatient drooling might just be the order of the day. Taken together, those tracks constitute the hardest, funniest, most inspiring rock and roll record in years. Amid the pretty boys, and lonely girls and disco dopes of the day, they reck of fire and toughness and humor, spinning us back to the time when our favorite music was still half black, mostly scary and wholly committed; here the Stones, grown-ups now, kick and moan and play with the delighted certainty that they have not lost their essence, but have instead enriched it. They cost a lot—four sides worth of daily bread—but there is no doubt, no doubt at all, that they are worth it. A morsel for we puppies.
The literature of affliction: read it and weep

Eyes, Etc.: A Memoir by Eleanor Clark. Pantheon (175 pp., $7.95).

Cesare Pavese wrote that “one ceases to be a child when one realizes that telling one’s trouble does not make it any better.” But then Pavese, ceasing to be a grown-up as well as a child, killed himself. The subject here is grief, the sharing of grief, the imposition of one’s grief upon another. The Jobs among our neighbors are pariahs indeed, not for their boils and bad luck, but for their complaints. We dream (and not entirely, I think, with dread) of the moment the bad news comes. Manipulating a breast, sitting jittery across the desk from a doctor, or simply feeling a hunch in the bones, a certainty damn it: how, we wonder, will we take it?

We hope well. And in this culture, at this time, we mean by “well” with dignity. No throwing up. No pounding of fists against the doctor’s desk, or face. No heading for the nearest saloon, there to weep into the sauce and lash a burden to the back of the boozers on a neighboring stool. Perhaps (and here the dream takes on some pleasant flavor of nobility) the newsreader will remain a news-reader, checking out clear of debts as well as baggage, leaving the world with an expression of surprise on its mug: What happened? Where did he go? Jesus! Already? I didn’t know, he never told me . . .

If this is a dream of life enhanced by one terminal affliction, a dream of a code of behavior characterized by modifiers such as “manly” and “stoic” and “graceful” and “valiant,” it is also a dream of unknown territory, a speculation. I think it was John Berryman who wrote (before he jumped from a bridge) that we live now in a place and during a time when a man (he didn’t speak for a woman, and neither will I) can pass through his life without ever having to discover whether he is brave. Is this why the certainty of our mortality and the fact of pain are sometimes bracing apprehensions? Berryman must have been speaking of the trials of youth; in the long run we all have the opportunity to learn what’s
ing woman to report her death was hateful. For the dying woman to report her death, from the discreet distance of formal narrative, could have been "grateful" and "palliative" and noble. Had she told her friends of her imminent passing face-to-face, and at length, she would have intolerably imposed upon them. Had she written this she could have been celebrated for her willingness to share mysteries with her survivors. (But God help her if she wrote her story badly, struck false notes of courage or desperate notes of terror.)

In his essay "Hic et ille," W.H. Auden is stringent and then some regarding affliction and the personal voice: "Rejoice with those that do rejoice. Certainly. But weep with them that weep. What good does that do? It is the decent side of us, not our harshness of bored and embarrassed at having to listen to the woes of others because, as a rule, we can do nothing to alleviate them. To be curious about suffering which we cannot alleviate . . . is Schadenfreude and nothing else. Literary confessors are contemptible, like beggars who exhibit their sores for money, but not so contemptible as the public that buys their books.

Our sufferings and weaknesses, in so far as they are personal, our sufferings, our weaknesses are of no literary interest whatsoever. They are only interesting in so far as we can see them as typical of the human condition. A suffering, a weakness, which cannot be expressed as an aphorism should not be mentioned."

Auden is perhaps less hard-hearted and hard-headed than he seems, but I'm not certain that he doesn't mean precisely what he says. It is difficult to dislike the plain talk and pluck and aggressive good health that characterize this passage, but much of it is wrong-headed. The hyperbole, and unreasoning generalization, of "contemptible" is itself contemptible, and I believe that Auden has uncharacteristically confused motive with effect in his judgment of the redeeming quality of a story "typical of the human condition."

It has been my experience that most autobiographical stories written to be read as exemplary are not. It is an error of voice and of character to presume that what is true for me is true as well for thee. Rather, the durable writer labors to tell the truth as best he can about his particular case, his afflictions as well as his ecstasies, and if he is lucky we will connect with his circumstances and with his will to shape and retain them, and his book will have an exemplary effect.

Examples from recent American writing: Frank Conroy's *Stop-Time* details an unhappy childhood susceptible of transformation into litera-

ture precisely because it was exotic, a life lived among ours that was nothing like ours. We connect with it, but not because it is "typical of the human condition." Who identifies with Frederick Exley drunk and beat-up and sitting in a movie theater utterly befuddled as everyone else laughs at what he does not? There is a drama in the contest between him and us: we are generous enough to make room for the upstream swimmer, and the upstream swimmer is generous enough to assume this, knowing as well that our hospitality is limited to his presence represented on a page of type, and does not extend to his substantial presence in our dining rooms. So, again, the duality: we will respectfully read what we will not hear or see, breathing face to breathing face.

The literature of candor, moreover, has different effects depending upon its setting. Joan Didion's domestic anxieties achieve a perfect intimacy pressed between the covers of *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, but discovered as magazine columns among the odds and ends of *Life* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, written to space and on deadline, they had to calculated an effect. I suspect that this is a problem not of the writer but of the beholder: when the late Stewart Alsop's account of his mortal cancer began to appear in his *Newswest* column in 1971, it struck me as an uninvited confidence, as somehow shameless. Like Auden I should be so lucky as to share more with him, I was wrong. But it wasn't till 1973, when I read the same material in a book, *Stay of Execution*, that I understand why I was wrong. In his preface, Alsop writes that he has "quite often wondered what it would be like to be told I had an inoperable and lethal cancer, and I suspect that a lot of other people have wondered the same thing. If a writer has had an unusual experience likely to interest a good many people, he has an instinct, and perhaps even a duty, to write about it . . . Death is, after all, the only universal experience except birth, and although a sensible person hopes to put it off as long as possible, it is, even in anticipation, an interesting experience."

Of course no one yet has brought news of death from the other shore, so it is dying we hear of, and all those metaphorical and not so metaphorical experiences of dying that we call afflictions: disease, pain, doubt, despair, grief. The affliction of a sudden but not quite absolute blindness is the subject of Eleanor Clark's *Eyes*, *Etc.* The author is as terse as her title. I first came to know her when I lived in Britanny and heard of that region, *The Oysters of Lommarigua*, a wonderful book, part history part zoology part sociology part memoir part something unlike any other book I have read. It is putatively about the oystermen and oysterwomen and oysterwomen around the Bay of Auray and the Gulf of Morbihan. It tells how oysters grow, and have been eaten and abused. It is a celebration, that is, of appetite, a witty and sunny book in many ways. But shadows fall continually across this sun, and when the book is most personally expressive it seems angry, sometimes almost enraged. The source of Clark's rage is artfully unspecified. Her deeply felt but by no means novel dislike of the displacement of old customs and artifacts by fabrications of plastic and vinyl is part of it. But the nature of Clark's anger is personal. She does not thrust herself upon her readers, preferring to reveal her voice and her passion in stories about the townspeople of Lommarigua, and with only a few exceptions the stories she chooses to tell are of people who have suffered, of a woman blocked from the fulfillment of her dreams by a pinched and spiteful mother and of a girl, spoiled by her selfless mother and grandmother, who drinks poison and dies in prolonged and awful pain.

Suicide is the exceptional outcome to grief among the people admired by Clark: "If the going is rough they will not think of trying their luck somewhere else but will dig in deeper." (She is preoccupied with suicide still, but contemptuous of it, calling it "the Sylvia Plath virus." ) And the going gets rougher and rougher, until the awful winter of 1962-63 kills that year's oyster business, and nearly starves the people who live by it, and invites Clark's controlled rage, and then you suddenly understand what makes her so mad. She is furious at cold weather, at the fragility of organisms, at dissolution and decay, at change, at ignorance, at the whole damned world. But *The Oysters of Lommarigua* is not memorable for its author's anger. *Eyes, Etc.* is almost nothing else but an expression of its author's anger. When she learned absolutely that she would for practical purposes, and meta-practical needs, be blind, Clark said: "But goddammit Doctor, can't you understand. I can't read! I can't read! Why should I want to live like that?"
The doctor had no answer, nor should he have. So this woman, now in her mid-sixties, supported by the extraordinary friendship and affection of her husband, Robert Penn Warren, and a son and daughter, a network of kinship and common taste that holds this discursive narrative like a web, journeys through her affliction to Odysseus journeys through the world.

Clark is as discreet as she is spare, so that few names or places are specified. Specific density is achieved
in Eyes, Etc. by its association with the Robert Fitzgerald translations of The Odyssey and The Iliad: all that Clark grievances of their own. A dramatic reference to a house in Vermont and another in Connecticut (in fact, Fairfield), and time is unimportant, save to seasonal flux. But Eyes, Etc. has a chronological spine, moving forward through successive readings aloud of blind Homer's most wonderfully specific accounts of affliction, code and endurance.

Clark, at first furious at her fate, still further maddens her rage, wanders the desert of her grief and anger till she finds her way home. Her love of Homer is the benign aspect of her belief in heroes, a belief whose shadowed and sometimes blind side is a division of the world's creatures into "us" and "them." We all do this, of course: anyone with sufficient character to assume responsibility must believe that acts count, that there is a distinction between good and bad, that some people, like some acts, are better than others.

Written on huge sketch pads with magic markers, this journal is a bid for self-salvation, and such a consequential bid requires relentless honesty, and Eyes, Etc. displays relentless honesty. It is often wearing, and always risky, to be honest; Clark shows us things about herself that were only implied in The Oysters of Locmariaquer: she can be shrill in her anger, she is a kind of snob capable of speaking of someone as "a nobody" and of another as having "done a little time in a third-rate college."

She is cocksure: "Anybody who's against birth control and abortion has to be a criminal idiot." She hates jargon and popular pastimes. She hates hard: hates dishonesty, pretension, thoughtlessness. When a counter girl at a cafeteria is impatient at Clark's clumsiness, these hatreds converge: "... you cringe before these people, when not wanting to beat the jeeesus out of them instead."

But then honesty pays its dividends, in the sentences that follow the contempt above: "But look who's complaining at their rudeness and unkindness. You wouldn't want to exchange your life and mind for theirs, would you? you think they have no grace of their own?" The grievances of others, if sometimes regarded from a presumptuously Olympian elevation, cause Clark finally to become "just not at all that interested" in her own affliction.

If Clark has Homer for consolation, she has Mike F. and his daughter for provocation. Mike F. is a family friend, a young lawyer with an infant daughter and a young man, and she was a baby girl. Now they are dead. He was mugged and killed in a New Haven alley, and she was hurt too, and suffered brain damage, and died. So Clark is, as she says, "barely a novice in affliction," but she also knows that other people's burdens do not lighten our own, and it must have been this reality—the futility of sharing grief and mourning the dead—that so irritated Auden. But if whining is a justly unheard melody, and if authentic sympathy—the crippled foot slipped into someone else's corrective shoe—is uncomfortable and even impossible, writing is a way into, through and out of grief.

It is a miracle, and I do not cease to wonder at it, how noble is one truth or another on the page. Under the eye of care and intelligence, of labor and taste, of prose that does not cheat or blink, there is no blindness. There is something under the sun that has been named and experienced: just as Job's affliction, or Mike's, or Clark's, or Auden's, is not Eleanor Clark's affliction, so is the experience of reading her narrative not her experience of writing it.

But both experiencers, distanced by form (that lexical kinsman of formality), achieve a kind of intimacy that voids considerations of shame and intrusion.

There is no formula, of course. The distance is the voice, and the voice is everything, but neither the writer nor the reader has at command a table of measures: you may come this close, but no closer. Holy the Firm is forever at an unmeasurable, unknowable, distance from its reader. Annie Dillard, the author of Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, writes about November days and nights on the northern shore of Puget Sound. She writes about the immolation of a moth in the flame of a candle, and the burning of a 7-year-old girl's face in a small plane accident. She writes about affliction. She writes about God.

Her prose is impacted, scrupulous, unsettlingly intense. Dillard writes as though the stakes were as pricey as life, and for her they are. She believes in God, and in design, and she believes also, I think, that if she writes with perfect (whatever "perfect" may mean) accuracy about the specifics of her belief, if she gets all that she knows right, we may see what she sees. This is how poetry works, but I don't think it is the way faith works, or not for me.

In her spare and exacting ambition to write no jot less nor more than her conviction, Dillard radiates away from the specific toward the abstract; a distance opens unintended, and faith lurches dizzy from study off its path into the shambles of theology. Eleanor Clark, whose own inclinations come joyfully toward the revealing tic ground in action, a code of behavior if you will, grouses in Eyes, Etc. about the institution of philosophy, asking, "Who needs a philosophy that doesn't ask the meaning of life but only how to lead a good one?"

Annie Dillard asks the meaning of life, and answers for herself her hard question, but her answer cannot travel across the vast distance that divides her from this disbelieving reader. Not that she uses her faith as a shield; on the contrary, she puts it to continual tests: "I came here to study hard things—rock mountain and salt sea—and to temper my spirit on their edges." And her studies are thought-mired and of microscopic intensity: the moth that flies into the flame of her candle is observed with an almost unbearable acuity, and Julie Norwich, her face consumed by a "gob of flung ignited vapor," is no abstract of affliction, lying there in her hospital bed: "Can you scream without lips? Yes." There is something softening, something that is the own cry of anger and pain: "God despises everything, apparently," but at that "apparently" she begins to outrun me, and to go where I have no wish to follow.

Dillard's mind resists the tug of homily and aphorism, and in this resistance is at its best, as I am able to experience its expression. So that in her meditation upon pain and bad luck she finds her way to the roadside beggar blind since birth who stumbled into Jesus. Christ was asked whether the man or his parents had sinned, to provoke such an affliction. "And Christ, who spat on the ground, made a mud of his spittle and clay, plastered the mud over the man's eyes, and gave him sight, answered: 'Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.'" To which Dillard fittingly responds: "Really? If we take this answer to refer to the affliction itself—and not the subsequent cure—as 'God's works made manifest,' then we have, along with 'Not as the world gives do I give unto you,' two meager, baffling, and infuriating answers to one of the few questions worth asking, to wit, What in the Sam Hill is going on here?"

That is, the rhetoric of the son of God cannot explain or ennoble affliction. Neither can rhetoric make a disbelief believe. Language has limits. Telling the truth on a page can work wonders, but it cannot do everything, cannot do anything. Concede to Auden the limits of self-examination: it cannot alleviate the physical manifestation of pain. Agree with him that tact matters: that the autobiographer should bind himself to the rules of confession to a priest: "Be brief, be blunt, be gone." But the good, the good, the good: "Be brief, be blunt, forget ... To forget affliction is to surrender to it.
MORTAL & SPLENDOR
The American Empire in Transition.

By Randall Rothenberg

WO-THIRDS of the way through his sweeping and studious gloss on recent American history, Walter Russell Mead, quoting Kipling, provides his book’s proper epigraph: “Far-called, our navies melt away;/On dune and headland sinks the fire:/Lo, all our pomp of yesterday! Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!”

Sad indeed seems “Mortal Splendor: The American Empire in Transition,” the first book by an earnest Yale graduate who surveys the modern landscape and sees—in our growing protectionist impulses, our isolationism and our divisive public culture—little but the rot of Rome and Britain. “The decline, and ultimately the fall, of the American Empire is the basic political fact of the present period in world history,” writes Walter Mead.

If such pessimism is unbecoming, it is also true that the author follows in the distinguished wake of Theodore H. White, who, in his final work, “America in Search of Itself,” likewise found the United States of the Carter and Reagan years bathing in a fading twilight. But, unlike White, Mr. Mead for the most part refuses to personalize his history, aiming not at Presidents and pundits but at contemporary doctrines and dogma. The result is a work that, for its occasional adding tenden- tiousness, pierces its targets with accuracy.

Rather than charge Jimmy Carter with the demise of liberalism during the last decade, as White was wont to do, Mr. Mead blames the creed itself. “Liberals do not recognize the possibility of the discovery of an absolute truth,” he writes, offering instead “freedom and tolerance—very good things, but not in themselves enough for human beings to live by.” Worse than liberal-ism’s wearying relativism is the warfare between progressives, with their optimistic faith in machines and men to forge a better future, and the protectors of the liberal status quo. The result: a stalemate “between those who wanted to stop and those who wanted to press forward.”

Conservatism, in Mr. Mead’s analysis, is equally bankrupt, and here he eloquently portrays the devil’s alliances forged during the Republican ascendency between Wall Street and Main Street, between populists and Tories. While defying the risk-takers, President Reagan nevertheless followed policies that destroyed the family farm and abetted the concentration of indus- try. “Conservative economics overthrews conservative order,” Mr. Mead writes with chilling conclusion; “this is the central paradox of the American right.”

I have some objection to the author’s dismissal of the economy’s entrepreneurial element, to his assertion that “the more businesses could be small and most folk could be independent some time in the last century.” He appears to follow slavishly John Ken- neth Galbraith’s notion, as expressed in “The New Indus- trial State,” that only “the large business organiza- tion can mobilize the requisite skills to run the Ameri- can economy.” Many political economists—notably Charles F. Sabel and Michael J. Piore of the Massachu- setts Institute of Technology and Pat Choate of TRW Inc.—see a trend toward (indeed, the necessity of) a more flexible, small-scale approach to economic manage- ment. What is more, the small-business role in creating jobs, although a controversial topic during the eight Reagan years, has not been refuted.

The author also suffers from a reflexive anti-Zion- ism that, fortunately, mars only a few portions of his text. And occasionally, the zeal of his argument betrays a youthful naïveté, as when he tries to present his pres- school alma mater, Groton, as the foundation of the entire modern Establishment, or cites “the impact of hal- lucinogenic drugs” for shifting the values of a whole generation.

B UT these flaws do not detract from a conclusion so powerful that, in this blossoming campaign season, “Mortal Splendor” should be required study for Democratic Presidential can- didates and their staffs. The internationalization of the economy requires not a circling of the protectionist wagons around a declining American industrial base, but the extension of “the politics of social compromise to a global scale.” If Americans insist on humane treat- ment and rising wages for third world workers, Mr. Mead argues, markets will continue to open in the United States and the other advanced countries. By extending our economic and intellectual re- sources, “we can in fact extend morality coincide, and enlightened American statesmanship has the oppor- tunity to advance the interests of the American people by making the world a safer and more humane place for all its peoples.” In the end, this dark and youthful book stands as a bright and mature statement of the principles of liberalism.

THE END IS ONLY IMAGINARY

IN THE COUNTRY OF LAST THINGS
By Paul Auster. 188 pp. New York: Viking. $15.95.

By Padgett Powell

O NE prepares, when picking up a novel that promises to be postapocalyptic, to change his critical kit bag. One prepares to find moral guidance and instructions for living in novels of the next world, in a way we’ve learned it is sophisti- cated not to find them in novels of this world. The as- sumption is that whatever horror is contained in the next world may, if we buy the prophecy and the route from here to there, serve to change our current impro- drent behavior and steer this unhappy world away from the unhappy one the novelist warns us is ahead.

The opening pages of Paul Auster’s “In the Country of Last Things” confirm that “last things” denotes an end-of-the-world-as-we-know-it, and one gets ready for those warnings and prophetic detour signals, and then stops. There is entirely too much in these pages about the world as we know it.

A sect of folk in this book is called the Runners: “You set out with your companions on the morning of the appointed day and run until you have escaped your

Padgett Powell is the author of “Edisto.” His new novel, “A Woman Named Down,” has just been published.

body, running and screaming until you have flown out of yourself. Eventually, your soul wriggles free, your body drops to the ground, and you are dead.” This is no bi- graphic account of anyone who has watched the lugubrious Iron Man Triathlon on television. And there are instruc- tions for living here, but they are not new or moral: “When you walk through the streets . . . you must re- member to take only one step at a time. . . . Your eyes must be constantly open, looking up, looking down, look- ing ahead, looking behind, on the watch for others, on your guard against the unforeseeable. To collide with someone can be fatal.” That is exactly: the way Greenwich Village friends instruct this provincial to walk in New York.

The setting, though unnamed, may without disloca- tion be thought of as New York, and the economy de- picted may be termed late service. An industrialist’s true nightmare: there are no current manufacturers, and most folk are involved in one form of rude salvage of the broken remnants of “last things.” The services are primarily the reclamation of the things and the gov- ernment collection, for fuel, of corpses and feces. The landscape is a rubbery-intense evocation of what could already be parts of the Bronx if buildings there were actually used. Mr. Auster’s trademark is a “glot,” and the government—what there is of it—changes hands rapidly. Along with body and waste collection, it makes a kind of main meal preparation. In all, the world is reminiscent of the Great Depres- sion, carried to about, say, the third power, and it is in-
habited, mostly, by a race of bag people. One Anna Blume comes into this “grimm” (one of her favorite words) scene looking for her brother, William, who, on journalistic assignment from an unencollaged world to the east (we may assume it is the Old World—and the fallen one the New), has disappeared. The novel is An- na’s letter home to an old friend from childhood.

Into this letter, this chronicle of unrelenting travel for Anna Blume, Mr. Auster, author of the highbrow mysteries of “The New York Trilogy,” proceeds at a trillogist’s pace and with a series of high-novel dilemmas. During an introductory anatomy of the bag world, a summary of how Anna comes to be looking for William and of the horrors confronting her—the very building William was said to be in is gone—we get no real, live characters on stage other than the narrator herself. When we do get some, on page 49 or so, they are doozies: the quintessence of bag people, precisely the denizens we might lazily expect following Anna’s anatomy of her bag world. Moreover, they are Isabel and Ferdinand. Ferdinand carries tiny ships that go into boats, a “li- liphipian fleet of sailing ships and schooners,” and cer- tain historic and mythic contours are set up. Anna Blume is become a latter-day Columbus in a world any- thing but New.

Ferdinand just happens to be reminiscent of Louis-Ferdinand Céline as well. “I eat better,” he says to Anna one night, “bragging about his accom- plishments as an artist. “Some day I’ll make a ship so small, with a single cabin and a sail, that they’ll write a book about me, I’ll be so famous. Then you’ll see what’s what, continued on next page
The End Is Imaginary
Continued from preceding page

my vicious little shut." Anna concludes, "One no sequitur after another, the only thing of him like some passion that had accumulated in his blood." That he inherited the very kind of world Céline seemed to prophesy is not lost on us.

These are daring touches, and they let us drop all notion of having to suffer a didactic, finger-wagging acc

 cient. Nor, Mr. Auster's game at all. What did happen? "Collapse" is the entire explanation offered - late in the book - again, the worst word conceivable for the free-enterprise believ

er, yet nowhere is there any suggestion that socialist order has prevailed. As if to further not let us worry on this score, Mr. Auster keeps on offering novelistic dar

He will try to surprise with the obvious, and he will advance the story with the madly (but somehow not madんでいる) coincidental. The boldness of these maneuvers - rather like the big lie - allows them to work. After searching for months for one Samuel Farr, who assumed her brother's journalistic post, Anna, fleeing riot police, runs "into a door that opened" before her. In this anonymous building, on the tenth (top) floor, she finds Sam Farr, falls in love with him, marries him, conceives (not done anymore, we are told); then, at

tempting to escape some men who would put her on a meat hook and freeze her, she jumps out of another building, shorting, convulsively, emitting convoluted (more or less) to the hospital of her re

covery and, one day, interviews for admission someone strangely familiar to her: Samuel Farr, presumably in a fire that ravaged the library in which they lived at about the time Anna was dancing out the window to avoid the meat hook boys. These are heavy chords that Mr. Auster gets away with, even if they are not, one feels, the main music; in fact, some of the large ac

tion here may satirize narrative action itself.

Upon disposing of Farr, a new tenant, someone mysteri

ously dies: "We had to create the illusion that Ferdi

nand was a Leaper... The dead Ferdinand was stand

ing between us, walking, like some giant windup toy -

hair blowing in the wind, pants sliding down his high

and that startled, horrid expression still on his face.

As we walked him toward the corner of the roof, his

knees kept buckling and dragging, and..."

The main music, sometimes while I pretended to know anything about books - your customers will educate you.

I was still a student at the New School when I started a secondhand bookshop in Greenwich Village after World War II. It was a good time for a bookshop because everything was out of print and the paperback revolution hadn't yet arrived. People had missed books during the war and there was a sense of reunion, like meeting old friends or lovers. Buying books was a popu

lar postwar thing to do. For young people who had just left home, books were like dolls or teddy bears, or family portraits, to populate a lonely room.

There were people in the Village, who had lots of books and little money and I appealed to them. Like

someone buying a dog, I assured them that I'd give their books a good home. But it was an unhappy busi

ness, because some of these people suffered from separation anxiety. Those who were depressed by let

ting them go tended to devalue their books, while others who were more in the hysterical mode asked such enormous sums that you knew it was their souls they were trying to sell. Pricing an out-of-print book is one of the most poignant forms of criti

class.

Seeing how young I was, everyone gave me advice. Get Christopher Caudwell, they said. Get Kenneth Burke, William Empson, F. R. Leavis, Paul Valery. Get Nathanael West, Céline, Unamuno, Italo Svevo, Hermann Broch, the Egyptian Book of the Dead. Above all, I was told to get Kafka. Kafka was as popular in the Vil

lage at that time as Dickens had been in Victorian Lon

don. People would rush in wild-eyed, almost foaming at the mouth, willing to pay anything for Kafka.

Literary criticism was enjoying a vogue. As Rand

all Jarrell said, some people consulted their favorite critic about the conduct of their lives as they had once consulted their doctor. The war had left a bitter taste, and literary criticism is the art of bitter tastes.

A hint: intense young man named Saul Silverman came to me: "shop and instructed me in bibliographic et

quettte. I asked," he said, "should have an almost

something to show for it all." Mr. Auster seems most interested in this problem of confrontation, which shall not be, or cannot be, limited: "I've been trying to fit everything in, trying to get to the end before it's late, but I see now how bad I've made this decision, that we do not allow such things. The closer you come to the end, the more there is to say. The end is only imaginary, a destination you invent to keep yourself going, but a point comes when you realize you will never get there. You might have to stop, but that is only because you have run out of time. You stop, but that does not mean you have come to the end. Words get smaller, so small that perhaps they are not even legible anymore. It makes me think of Ferdinand's boast, his illus
.tifant of cold on the head."

It is an asymptotic approach of expression to the nothing it finally defines, an infinite series of effables toward the ineffable. It is not simply objects that are disappearing. Human things are on the way too. Mr. Auster offers Anna nothing in the way of hope and wants her to make a generous, human account of it any

way. In light of this aim, if indeed it is Mr. Auster's, it is telling that (Louis-) Ferdinand is bumped off early, and that Anna, facing a world ever bleaker than Céline's, re

ains resilient, plucky, apologetic for uncivilized behavior necessary to survive, and hopeful yet. She promises to write more of her continuing search for William. But in the beginning there was the Word, she wants to say that in the end it will still be.

About Books

as a Lovely Year for a Bookstore.

By Anatole Broyard

Open a bookshop is one of the archetypal roman

nces or escapes, like sailing around the world or living off the land. The peculiar appeal

of a bookshop is that you have to know about any

thing about books - your customers will educate you.

I was still a student at the New School when I started a secondhand bookshop in Greenwich Village after World War II. It was a good time for a bookshop because everything was out of print and the paperback revolution hadn't yet arrived. People had missed books during the war and there was a sense of reunion, like meeting old friends or lovers. Buying books was a popu

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quettte. I asked," he said, "should have an almost
Beyond Nostalgia: What Was the Past Really Like?

Continued From Page 20

photographs from among the 30,000 glass-plate negatives left by Charles Van Schaick, photographer in the Wisconsin town of Black River Falls. His text comes primarily from news items printed in the Badger State Banner, a small-town paper with interpolations from the writings of Glenway Wescott and Hamlin Garland, excerpts from the medical records at the state insane asylum, and two mythical creatures: the town gossip and the local historian. His own comments are incisive but important—a brief introductory essay on method and a slightly longer conclusion directing us beyond the Wisconsin town to an urban world that was already outstripping it.

The photographs show a world of resolute plainness—funeral wreaths and baby coffins lined with white satin provide the most decorative note. Houses are small and undecorated, clothes are Spartan and heavily black. The people are uncomfortably real as they gaze solemnly at us from out of their lives; whatever message they give us through the detours of time and death isn’t one of unalloyed happiness. Fugitive moments of joy are recorded—a mother bathing a baby, a young couple laughing in the woods—but the nature of photography in the 1890s dictated the carefully posed picture, usually a formal portrait decided on only after much consideration. The over-all impression is of no single emotion but of a texture of life so dense with meaning that it refuses to yield to any attempt at simplification. In its resolute solemnity it resists the exercises of nostalgia.

The excerpts chosen by Lesy to accompany these pictures underlie the hardships of life in the declining towns of eastern Wisconsin when indiscriminate logging had destroyed the woods and the sandy soils could not support agriculture. People who could flee to the cities, while those who were left suffered from poverty and despair. Diphtheria epidemics regularly decimated the child population. Smallpox, scarlet fever, measles, whooping cough, consumption, and pneumonia were regular visitors and infant deaths a commonplace. Endemic malnutrition increased the death toll in a weakened population. Young men died in logging, railroading, and farming accidents; young women died in childbirth.

Perhaps not surprisingly, insanity was commonplace—women were crazed by the deaths of children, men went mad when they couldn’t get work, old people were driven insane by isolation. Violence was no stranger either. People killed themselves—there are suicides by hanging, drowning, poisoning, shooting, self-immolation, and drugs. Men killed their wives and turned the gun inward. Mothers poisoned their children, then drank down the rest of the arsenic.

Do newspapers tell all that happens in a community? Of course not. They print only what is unusual, not the commonplace. What’s more, Lesy has chosen only those items that report death and destruction; there isn’t anything about July 4th picnics or Memorial Day parades or golden wedding anniversary celebrations.

Granted. But Lesy has selected his materials to make a point about the past worth making—it was fully as difficult to live then as it is now, and to erase its horrors is to falsify it beyond useful recognition. He speaks out in his own

voice in the conclusion, which is an examination of the Old American myth of the rural life as somehow more wholesome than city life and the antidote to all our ills. It’s a myth still alive and kicking in the minds of young people building rural communes as well as all who look yearningly toward small towns and villages as repositories of automatic peace and happiness.

They weren’t in 1890 and they aren’t now. Lesy writes: “By the end of the Nineteenth Century, country towns had become charnel houses and the counties that surrounded them had become places of dry bones. The land and its farms were filled with the guilty voices of women mourning for their children and the aimless mutterings of men asking about jobs. . . . Between 1900 and 1920, 30 per cent of the people who lived on farms left the land. . . . because they could no longer bear its crushing responsibilities.”

Lesy’s fascinating excursion into psycho-history and his use of direct sources is a challenge to an idealization of the past that makes nostalgia a substitute for knowledge. The real past—where failure, poverty, insanity, and death were as powerful as success, wealth, happiness, and life—made the present that is our world, and, unless we can appreciate this, we will continue to misunderstand where we are and how we got here. The cautionary figure of Lot’s wife should remind us of the danger of that last sentimental glance backward.

[The Country and the City, By Raymond Williams. Oxford. 335 pages. $9.75.]

[Wisconsin Death Trip, By Michael Lesy. Pantheon. Unpaged. $5.95.]
pipeline has been undertaken. Exploration activities on the Nikolski region have been carried on for the past three years. Further exploration is needed to discover and develop major reserves to justify the construction of an additional pipeline, probably through the Cook Inlet. The question for now is: how long will the myth of "one pipeline or the other" prevail? How long will attempts to create doubt as to the feasibility or the necessity to build between our nation's critical need for energy and our Alaskan supply? We need the trans-Alaska pipeline now. Let's get on with it.

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Wide, Wide World of Books

At Last, the Real Anton Chekhov Emerges in Two Books of Letters

By Michele Murray

When he died in 1899, Anton Chekhov was barely known abroad but famous in his native Russia—first as a writer of humorous sketches published in his youth under the name Anna Khontolka, then as the creator of the superb stories that appeared in a dazzling stream from the mid-1880s until his last years, and finally as the writer of plays that the Moscow Art Theater interpreted to a large audience. Never mind that the interpretation was fiercely opposed by Chekhov himself. Plenty soon the Moscow Art would carry its version of Chekhov to Europe and America; translations of the stories would follow; interest in his work would rise after the abortive 1900 uprising and the 1918 revolution. By the time Katherine Mansfield was writing her stories of World War I, Chekhov was her hero and a bright star in Western letters.

Unfortunately, it was the Moscow Art Chekhov who alone, a pallid Chekhov, who wrote about people lost in a maze of self-pity and sloth, a Chekhov whose work was interpreted in the light of the revolution to reveal the boredom and failure of the ruling classes that supposedly led to Lenin's triumph. Chekhov's narrow range was compared unfavorably to Dostoevsky's power and Tolstoy's scope, his delicacy contrasted with their vigor. While his stories and plays were steadily appreciated, they were, for all their subtlety, melanchoic; well, the author didn't know what he was talking about—let's set him straight, and play them for buckets of beer.

Making a Comeback

As it happens, Chekhov's art has been honored to withstand the boredom of the last three decades of misinterpretation to emerge even more robust in the past dozen years. A. J. Smoller's biography, Robert de Closky's translations of stories from The Image of Chekhov, Sumitomo's Oxford Chekhov coming from England, and Randell Jarrett's new version of The Three Sisters have been only the most visible testimony of his continuing attraction. Now the simultaneous appearance of two collections of his letters and communications completes the circle to underline Chekhov's stature and to clarify the extent to which both man and work have been misunderstood.

Chekhov was an American insurance executive long resident in London. Married to an attractive, wealthy, and cold wife who had provided him two children, he was an overgrown American boy, never over to a bit of fun on the side. Miss Jackson, playing comedy with all the cool style and innocence of Hepburn, is a London divorcee and career woman. Also with two children, who wouldn't at all mind a more sympathetic affair, in long and hilarious sequence that builds from

Archibald Leach Move Over; Now It's Segal's Turn

By Michele Murray

George Segal, who for some time has been busily making films at a rate of three or more a year, is an actor in search of an identity. But if Blume in Love (Warner Bros.) and A Touch of Class (Avco Embassy) are any indication, he has found it in sophisticated comedy. Segal has the makings of an American-style Cary Grant, and that is something we could use. With Glenn Jackson, his costar in A Touch of Class, as his Katharine Hepburn, maybe we could once again enjoy the kind of comedy many of us fondly remember from the '30s and '40s.

A Touch of Class is, in fact, exactly that. Director Mervyn Frank, who wrote the screenplay with Jack Rose, has more than added a modern gloss to a classic Hollywood love story.

Segal plays an American insurance executive living in London. Married to an attractive, wealthy, and cold wife who has provided him two children, he is an overgrown American boy, never over to a bit of fun on the side. Miss Jackson, playing comedy with all the cool style and innocence of Hepburn, is a London divorcee and career woman. Also with two children, who wouldn't at all mind a more sympathetic affair, in long and hilarious sequence that builds from

Baking, Fishing, Dog Training, Scuba Diving, You Are There in Bourjaily's Essays

By Robert Oermann

Start with a fact. Vance Bourjaily is a good writer, and good writers can make a grocery list into something worth reading.

Style and grace are only part of the reason—mostly decoration. "Pretty" writing holds a reader just about as long as a pretty face holds a lover—and by pretty ones come along. Good writing, rather, comes largely from what a writer makes of his material. Exumski's first novel was a novel about a passionate, brutal, almost insane woman. The same kind of crimes are committed every day; the newspapers daily report them; and a lot of crime writers acquire quite a reputation in consequence. But who remembers yesterday's crime story?

The grocery list isn't a half-baked metaphor for human existence. It contains many of the essentials of life, and how dull life can be is clear to anyone who has written a letter describing the lived experiences of one day—or even one week. The words just are, as if you were bursting, not celebrating, a time you felt deeply.

Vance Bourjaily celebrates. If you've ever doubted it, take up his new collection of essays, Country Matters, and see how totally he writes about his subjects from the inside, as if they were in him and he a part of them. Trailing a dog or a neighborhood of New York by the horns of handling a jockey or a man washing the dishes,...
Beyond Nostalgia’s Pretty Picture

What Was the Past Really Like?

By Michele Murray

ONCE again, and not for the first time, Americans are nostalgic. Hardly a decade has faded into history without an inkling, a whisper, a fleeting image, that of a simpler time. The past has been reconstituted, reinterpreted, and paraded before us as a vision of the world that we desire to recapture. This is not new; it is a recurring theme that has been a part of our culture for centuries. But what does it mean to be nostalgic? What is the appeal of the past?

Nostalgia is a complex emotion that combines both longing and regret. It is the feeling ofmissing what was once familiar and comfortable. It is the desire to return to a time when life was simpler. It is the need to escape from the present and the problems that it brings. Nostalgia is a way of coping with the reality of the present.

There are many reasons why people are nostalgic. For some, it is a way of escaping from the pressures of modern life. For others, it is a way of connecting with their past and their roots. Nostalgia is often linked to a feeling of home and belonging. It is the desire to return to a place where we feel safe and secure.

But nostalgia can also be harmful. It can blind us to the reality of the present and prevent us from facing the challenges that we must overcome. It can also lead to a sense of inferiority and a feeling of being left behind.

The past is not always as idyllic as we would like to believe. It was a time of poverty, illness, and war. It was a time when people had to struggle just to survive. The present is not perfect, but it has its own challenges and opportunities.

In the end, nostalgia is a complex emotion that can be both healthy and harmful. It is a reminder that we should not forget our past, but we should not let it control our present. We should use our knowledge of the past to guide us in making the best decisions for our future.
Miles Davis: Theme With Restless Variations Built In

By JOHN ROCKWELL

In 1987 the jazz trumpeter and group leader Miles Davis attended a White House reception in honor of Ray Charles with his wife at the time, the actress Cicely Tyson. When a woman asked him what he had done to be invited, he answered: "Well, I've changed music four or five times. ... What have you done of any importance other than be white?"

Or so reports John Szwed, a jazz critic and professor of anthropology, African-American studies, music, and American studies at Yale, who has, with "So What," written the first Davis biography since Davis's death in 1991 at 65.

In his voluminous notes, Mr. Szwed attributes this quotation to Davis's autobiography ("Miles," written with the poet Quincy Troupe and published in 1989). But there, in a book widely criticized as flamboyantly inaccurate and self-mythologizing (though elsewhere admired for its sass and style and insights), Davis says he biographied: "Well, I've changed music five or six times, so I guess that's what I've done and I guess I don't believe in playing just white compositions. Now, tell me what have you done of any importance other than be white, and that ain't important to me, so tell me what your claim to fame is."

So, one might wonder, what? (This book's title actually derives from a famous track on one of Davis's most famous albums, "Kind of Blue.") Who really cares if he said four or five or six? Mr. Szwed certainly has a right to tighten up quotations, even shakily remembered ex-post-facto embellished quotations, and his version is punchier and pitier.

The discrepancy between the versions makes one a little apprehensive, however, since this new biography's chief value — despite some fresh interviews and Mr. Szwed's disclaimer to comprehensiveness — is that it pulls together pretty much everything ever written and filmed and recorded about Davis and offers a distilled, up-to-date recounting of his complex, brilliant, maddening and still tendentiously controversial life. So when funny little discrepancies crop up between the source and his version, one frets.

For all his fabled irascibility, of course, Davis was right about his own career accomplishments. Duke Ellington compared him to Picasso, in his constant musical reinventions. Yet those reinventions got him into constant trouble. Musicians, critics and fans cling to what they've come to know and too often regard change as betrayal. Davis changed a lot, and hence, in many people's eyes, he betrayed himself and them over and over. Especially since his was a life addled by drugs: heroin, and later alcohol and cocaine, as well as an endless round of prescription drugs to relieve him of the pain from his horrific illnesses and injuries. Fortunately for us (if not necessarily for him) his biggest, longest-lasting addiction was to music.

Whether you count his changes as four or five or six, he moved from the Juilliard School to bebop (as a young member of Charlie Parker's quintet in the 1940's), to cool jazz (helping on the fly to spawn West Coast cool jazz), to so-called modal jazz (abandoning traditional chord changes for improvisations based on modal scales), to jazz-rock and jazz-funk, to layered recordings built up from edited tracks, to open-ended explorations of rolling, murky sonic textures. Those later styles, which overlapped, continue to influence not only younger jazz musicians but also noise-rockers and ambient producers like Brian Eno.

Davis's entire career can be seen as prescient of all the arts' shift in the second half of the last century from Modernist hyper-complexity (in his case bebop) to post-modernist simplicity (in his case vamps and funk and even pop).

He was more of a musical thinker than a virtuoso. He constantly thought about how music could work, tending toward a minimalist removal of notes compared with the onslaugths of the bop pyrotechnicians. Yet constant throughout his shifting styles were his own rounded tone, wonderfully evocative of the human voice, and spare explorations of the trumpet's middle range.

Much of his evolution came through his interactions with collaborators and his odd indirect guidance of them. Aside from Parker, he was one of the great figures of midcentury jazz among his sidemen. There were his two famous quintets that, despite shifting personnel around the edges, consisted of himself plus John Coltrane, Red Garland, Paul Chambers and Philly Joe Jones in the mid-50's and Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams in the mid-60's.

There was his wonderful partnership with the composer and arranger Gil Evans and later his work with the innovative producer Teo Macero. Plus a panoply of jazz giants and, from the mid-60's on, rock and world musicians, sometimes near-unknovwns seemingly brought into recording sessions and even concerts with no rehearsal just to shake things up.

A lot of that later experimentation is slighted in the neo-conservative critical climate of jazz today, and particularly by the jazz orthodoxy promulgated by Wynton Marsalis (another Juilliard trumpeter) and the brain trust surrounding him at Jazz at Lincoln Center. Not to speak of Ken Burns's Wyntonian slant in his "Jazz" television series.

By and large, in this view, Davis is regarded as a wasted talent, selling out to rock and electronics in a pitiful, desperate effort to remain forever young. For them his drug use and pimpishness represent little more than a terrible example. But these things move in cycles, and the continuing influence of members of his 80's quintet and others (Keith Jarrett, for one) keeps alive an alternate view of jazz as something broader and more generous than that emanating from Lincoln Center.

Mr. Szwed's book is good on most of this, and valuable for trying to maintain an open mind on all of Davis's permutations. One might expect a respectful stance on the later eccentricity from a man who wrote a book on Sun Ra, but Mr. Szwed is really exemplary in his fairness. He doesn't accept all the failed scape and crippled technique and hair-brained follies as equally excellent. But he doesn't condemn them out of hand and sometimes finds beauty amidst the chaos.

The main problem with his book is that far too much of it reads like a recitation from stacks of laboriously assembled file cards (or their latter-day digital equivalents). From paragraph to paragraph we plod from cursory recounts of domestic incidents to recordings to sessions to concerts, with less numbing detail than true obsessives wallow in, perhaps, but too much unilluminating, under-explored listings of sidemen and takes. As a meditation on Miles Davis's life, as he calls it, this book isn't meditative enough.

Though no prose stylist, Mr. Szwed can stretch out when he chooses to, notably in a chapter called "Interlude." Here he sums up the Davis music and personality at that key moment in his and his jazz's history, 1959, when free jazz (Ornette Coleman) and rock (and its seduction of a record industry bedazzled by potentially huge profits) changed jazz forever. Mr. Szwed's references beyond jazz to classical music, literature, art, dance and philosophy are often very smart. My own favorite is his citation of the Marxist philosopher Theodor Adorno on late Beethoven, wherein ego dissolves into pure music in anticipation of death, to explain Davis's recessive role in some of his late recordings.

Anyone who cares about this tortured genius of a man — and many still do and many more should — will have to read this book, minor misquotations aside. There's ample information here that one can't get elsewhere under one cover. But the Davis-Troupe biography is way more fun.

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Q&A

Where Hip and Haute Are Intellectual Allies

New literary magazines don’t typically generate much attention. But a new monthly called The Believer just might have the right pedigree to attract both the hip and the highbrow. The Believer (at the Internet at www.believermag.com was created by Heidi Julavits, whose second novel, “The Effect of Living Backwards” (Parnassus), is being published next month; Ed Park, a senior editor at The Village Voice; and Vendela Vida, whose first novel, “And Now You Can Go” (Knopf), is due in August. They met in the mid-90’s in Columbia University’s graduate program in creative writing. But the reason their magazine is an instant contender for buzz is its affiliation with a fourth person: Dave Eggers.

Now 36-something, Mr. Eggers—who was married last month to Ms. Vida—became a literary celebrity among 20-somethings with the runaway success of his memoir, “A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius.” But he is also the successful independent publisher of McSweeney’s, a quirky sarcasm-rich literary quarterly. The Believer trio worked out a publishing deal with Mr. Eggers essentially to piggyback on McSweeney’s distribution network and editorial resources, but the magazine, of course, also benefits from his stardust.

And what exactly does The Believer believe in? Eric Messinger interviewed Ms. Julavits to find out.

Q

In the first issue of The Believer, you wrote a kind of manifesto that expressed a lot of disgruntlement over the state of book reviewing. What’s the problem?

A

I feel like the book review has largely become a thumb’s-up/thumb’s-down function, much like a consumer guide. And while that serves a purpose for some people, there’s another way to do it. That is to make a review a critical discussion between the reviewer and the reader.

This is the editorial caveat I deliver when I assign a new piece: I tell the writer that you certainly can be displeased with what you’ve read, but your essay should still be titillating and intriguing enough to make people want to go out and read the book to see who they agree with, basically. An interesting ambitious book, whatever its flaws, should still be written about in an interesting and fair way, and we give writers a lot of space to do that. We’re committed to having all the feature pieces be no less than 4,000 words. But honestly, if you want to write 10,000 words, and it’s merited, go for it.

As you know, though, it’s often the reviews you criticize as “snarky” and nasty that get people talking. You mention that even one of your favorite critics, James Wood, is not immune, as when he wrote a parody of zadie Smith’s work. If the occasional bloodbath generates such interest, is it really such a bad thing?

I’d agree that a bloodbath can be interesting to read, but I also think it’s the easiest way to be interesting. I guess what I’m also saying is that there are less bloody and ultimately more thought-provoking ways to discuss books and writers.

How would you characterize the magazine for people who haven’t seen it—Is it The New York Review of Books meets McSweeney’s?

It’s a hybrid, but I’m not sure of what. I don’t like the phrase literary journal because that just condemns it to being sold on the sidewalk next to an issue of Vogue from 1989. And what is interesting to me about books—which, again, I feel is not often reflected in the current reviewing culture—is that books should be treated as these inherently interdisciplinary objects: they spill out into cultural commentary, politics, movies, science, history, etcetera, as well as into the books that inspired them. So, hopefully, people will feel like the magazine is about all these other things as well.

And why did you put the Table of Contents on the back cover of the magazine?

If you think about it, that’s actually the easiest place to find it.

Besides the book reviews, the new issue includes an interview with the philosopher Judith Butler on relating to one’s enemies; the writer Rick Moody discussing the rock band Magnetic Fields; and a piece about how the latest incarnation of Est seminars is being used by major corporations. What makes these Believer stories?

You know what it really comes down to: it’s whatever we’re interested in. We know, for example, that we want an interview with a philosopher in every issue. And ditto for an ambitious reported piece like the Est story.

You also seem to have a feature in every issue about writers that you think people should know more about. In the new issue, it’s Gary Lutz, who, I have to admit, I’ve never heard of.

You and everyone else in the world. There are many excellent writers whose books barely have the shelf life of a magazine, and in part this is our way of counteracting the hot-new-it-writer thing that the industry obsesses on.

Weren’t you once one of those hot-new-it-writer things, receiving a six-figure advance for your first two novels?

Totally. And even when it was happening to me, I was horrified by the process, and I’ve spoken out before about how publishing is making the same mistake as hightech: it’s all about exciting start-ups. And meanwhile, how many people at 25 are writing at the top of their game? Not many.

Nowadays even serious issue-oriented or literary-minded publications get involved in all sorts of commercial endeavors. Salon.com has personal ads; The Nation sponsors tropical cruises; Bruce Springsteen just did a benefit concert for DoubleTake. I know you won’t be using advertisements, but how far does the anticommercial impulse extend?

It’s a good question, and the answer is, I don’t know. We haven’t talked about cruises yet, but I’d have to say that I’d love to go on a cruise, and maybe this would be a great way to get on one.
AMERICA'S TOP CRITICS ARE "UP WITH 'LOVE'!"

The New York Times
A.O. Scott

"THOROUGHLY CHARMING! A BUOYANT HOMAGE TO THE HUDSON-DAY PICTURES."

DAILY NEWS
Jack Mathews

"PURE ENCHANTMENT AND DELIGHT. UP WITH 'DOWN WITH LOVE.'"

The New York Times
Molly Haskell

"BRILLIANTLY LIFTS WHOLE PLOTS AND CHARACTERS... SHOWING JUST HOW UP-TO-DATE FUNNY THEY ARE."

TIME
Richard Corliss

"HAS A GENTLE HEART TO HUMANIZE ITS SHARP...WIT. LIKE DORIS DAY, WE FINALLY CAN'T SAY NO."

Ebert & Roeper
Entertainment Weekly
Owen Gleiberman

"TWO THUMBS UP! WINNING!"

BRIDGE
Alan Truscott

Meant Spade, Said Heart.
The Rest, Alas, Is History.

Accidents are not uncommon at the bridge table, although the double accident that occurred on the diamond is very rare. It happened during the U.J.A.-Federation Pro-Am charity game played on Tuesday at the Harmonie Club, 4 East 60th Street in Manhattan. There was no accident, however, in the organization by Marci Miron and an able team of volunteers. It was the 40th in a successful annual series and raised more than $85,000.

The players were in a happy mood after an excellent dinner, which may have accounted for some somnolence. Sitting South was Tom Smith, winner of many national titles, and after a pass on his right he intended to bid one spade. He actually announced "one heart" and failed to take advantage of the law that permits a correction "in the same breath."

He was in considerable difficulty when his partner, Cynthia Colvin, responded with one no-trump, forcing. He could not afford to show his spades, and had to consider passing.

He decided that a two-club rebid was the least evil and now heard his partner jump to three hearts, showing three-card support and inviting values. He tried three no-trump, praying that his partner would pass. She did, after some thought. If she had corrected to four hearts, as she might have, he would have gritted his teeth and surprised her by continuing to four no-trump.

It was now time for the second accident. West, remembering the flim three no-trump bid and forgetting the one no-trump response, produced the diamond deuce. Nobody noticed the slight irregularity. Smith was still shaken by his bidding accident, but if he had noticed what had happened, it would have made no difference. He would have exercised his option to accept the opening lead and become the declarer.

He won the first trick with dummy's diamond 10 and took a spade finesse. This lost to the king, and when West persevered with diamonds, playing the ace and another, Smith took the club finesse and made 11 tricks for a top score. Four spades, just making, was the normal result at other tables.

Consider what would have happened if East-West had remembered the bidding. It would have been East, not West, who would have led a diamond, and that would have defeated three no-trump. So would a low heart lead, but that was quite implausible.

With South as declarer, it would have taken a miracle to defeat the game. In the face of the opening bid, West would have had to lead a heart honor, the queen or 10, to be sure of neutralizing the nine in the discard hand and establishing the suit.

This astonishing result, together with some excellent play, enabled Smith and Colvin to win the U.J.A.-Federation event. A good time was had by all, except perhaps their East-West opponents.
The poem, new or old, should be able to help us, if only to help us by delivering the relief that something has been understood, or even seen, well.

--Robert Pinsky, *The Situation of Poetry*, quoted in *The Nation*, 7 April '84
The Making of a Writer

By GUY DAVENPORT

A

DOZEN years ago, during the only sabbatical I've had in 30 years of teaching, I tried my hand at writing fiction, to see what would happen. Decided 59 when he wrote "Robinson Crusoe," his first novel; I was only 43. My ambition was to achieve a text that would have in it something of the deft ironies of Donald Barthelme, the crazy brightness of Osip Mandelstam and the dark sanity of Kafka.

I chose a newspaper article of Kafka's to rewrite, appropriating his title, "The Aeroplanes at Brescia," and his sequence of events, which was merely a visit by Kafka and Max and Otto Brod to an exhibition of flying machines in 1903, and set out to imagine what could be made of these distant and unfamiliar things. What urged me on was knowing that I would get everything wrong, every detail, every emotion, every image. I would create by moving from mistake to mistake, so that the result would be a perfect blank if you compared it to reality (which can't be done) or to that official fiction, history. Shakespeare probably never set foot in Scotland, but he knew how to imagine the books huddled on a tower at twilight.

All art is a doubling. As in genetics, there is a harmonious fusion of two sets of inherited characteristics. (Each of these sets is in turn the product of two others, so that the history of art has a genealogy precisely as complex, and as interesting, as that of living creatures.) I had studied, and lectured on, literary heritages for years and knew that, however consciously I controlled the influences I was pedantically working into my text, traits encoded in the material would turn up, as they did on the bloody lab table of Herr Doktor Victor Frankenstein. (I've just walked across the library for that first name.) When Vincent Willem van Gogh painted his "Sunflowers" to welcome his fellow utopian, Gauguin, into a brotherhood of painters that he imagined they were founding in Arles, his intention was to allude symbolically to the Peruvian sun-worshiping past of Gauguin's Inca descent. Was he aware of the tradition of the sunflower in French painting from the time of Le Roi Soleil? What would he have thought of the Freudian implications of that acknowledgment of Gauguin's mastery over him? (After their awful quarrel, he painted Gauguin's empty chair: The king had abdicated his throne.) My sense that in writing about Kafka—a master in whose feet I have never found any clay: gold he is from head to toe—would helpfully include an invisible meaning, which I could myself never read (but others could), not only encouraged me but exhilarated me with all of Dr. Frankenstein's fanatic hubris.

The first thing to learn in trying to be a writer is that words are names. To get a brown horse out of reality and onto the wall of a cave, the neolithic artists of the Dordogne drew the horse. Or sculpted it in clay or wood or stone. We do not yet know if these people could also draw, as we can, the word horse. They did, in time, draw it (with the advantage that time itself could become part of the drawing, as well as space), so that they could then "draw" pictures free from the cave wall, directly upon other minds, with great flexibility in the drawing: "Once, many seasons ago, there was a horse and his name was Windbrother, and the only cousin he drank from the river were the chestnut tree, the yellow kestrel and the washer rat."

But why, with enemies to guard against, supper to be caught, hides to be stitched into clothes, should Continued on Page 30
**A Dream of Community**

**KIBBUTZ MAKOM**

*Report From an Israeli Kibbutz.*


By ALLAN E. SHAPIRO.

ANYONE who knows the kibbutz knows that it works. Over its 70-year history, it has proven its economic viability and its social stability. Without relinquishing its egalitarian ideals or communal structure, it has developed a sophisticated agro-industrial base and raised its third generation. In recent years, even though the kibbutz has lost its central importance in the scheme of Israel's national values and has even become an object of hostility for the nation's present political leadership and its hard-bat and Oriental constituencies, many kibbutz communities have achieved a measure of affluence.

The kibbutz is put in the hot seat in this study of a veteran communal village in Israel's Jezreel Valley by Amia Lieblich, a Hebrew University gestalt psychologist. This book, however, defies easy classification. Basically, it is a collection of interviews with a composite cross-section of the kibbutz community, including some former members, arranged chronologically from the founding period to the present day and following a topographical plan oriented to issues and problem areas. The author calls this oral history, but defines her primary interest as “not clearly defined subjects,” but individuals, the people themselves, their needs, wants, hopes, and thoughts.

A collective portrait emerges, the authenticity of which checks with experience. I found myself identifying the people presented, not in the real “Kibbutz Makom” (easily recognizable behind the thin facade of anonymity of a fictitious name), but rather in my own kibbutz.

Being true does not necessarily make the picture representative. Given differences in ethnic origin, social background and ideological bias, no kibbutz is typical. By selecting a kibbutz founded in 1928 by graduates of a native Israeli youth movement, the author in a sense missed the first generation of kibbutz experience, perhaps a crucial generation, as all founding generations are. Moreover, in her kibbutz the influence of the youth movement culture was probably more pervasive and persistent than in others.

The first section highlights the part of Makom’s founders in the development of the community and in immigration. Did this involvement in national missions, one wonders, not help preserve the youth movement ethic of self-denial and collective discipline? The problems of day-to-day life could be handled within the framework of the ideological imperatives, although the number of suicides in the early years shows that personal crises were not lacking. In some cases, leading members were forced to extended periods of service in far-off areas.

Dr. Lieblich states that “the majority of the second generation of the kibbutz tend to withdraw into their home and family.” Home and family have evidently not been extended to a communal scale in the consciousness of the individual, even if kibbutz women call their dwelling a room and their spouse their man. Continued on Page 27

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**The Possibilities of Parenthood**

**SOONER OR LATER**

*The Timing of Parenthood in Adult Lives.*


By CAROL TAVRIS.

SOME people choose children, some people tolerate children, and some people have children thrust upon them. In "Sooner or Later," developmental psychologist Pamela Daniels and clinical psychologist Kathy Weingarten explore the consequences to individuals and their marriages of the timing of parenthood. The title of the book does not refer, as you might think, to the idea that everyone "sooner or later" becomes (or ought to become) a parent, but to the comparison of experiences of men and women who choose parents sooner (in their early 20's) or later (in their early 30's or even 40's).

Daniels and Weingarten interviewed 72 couples who covered a range of occupations, incomes and religions. (This selection was not a representative sample of all American families, since the authors specifically wanted to interview both husbands and wives in particular age categories and in stable marriages.) Of these 72 couples, one-third were in their early 30's at the time of the interview, one-third were in their early 40's, and one-third in their early 50's; within each age group, half had had their first child at the average age of 21 1/2 ("early timing"), half at the average age of 30 1/2 ("late timing"). Having finished these interviews, Daniels and Weingarten realized that they had omitted a growing number of women and men who were having their first children in their late 30's and even early 40's; so they interviewed 14 of these "mid-life timing" couples.

The authors' basic question is, "What is the impact of timing on the experience of parenthood and on its developmental significance in adult lives?" How do people no longer follow traditional pathways — getting married, having children, becoming grandparents at biologically ordained intervals — does it matter that some couples are diapering new infants when their neighbors' kids are just off to college?

The answers provide a quiet indictment of some of the more popular "stage" theories of adult development, which argue that for biological or intrapsychic reasons we all go through predictable phases. As Daniels and Weingarten's research shows, psychological change in adulthood is not an inevitable maturational matter, but a result of the relationships and intense emotional experiences we have — or fail to have. Drawing on Erik Erikson's concepts of identity, intimacy and generativity, the authors observe that these stages no longer occur naturally at decade-long intervals, nor are they universal. Young people who marry at 18 and have a baby at 20, for example, have no time to develop independent identities or even the potential intimacy between husband and wife; they can barely catch their breath long enough to have kindly "generative" feelings toward the tiny offspring who is belowing in the next room. But they may find the time (and income) to discover the luxuries of identity and intimacy later in life, when their children are grown.

Carol Tavris, a social psychologist who writes frequently on adult development and sex differences, is the author of a forthcoming book on anger.

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Events more widely; they have time to develop a private identity, the leisure to be intimate, the mature appreciation of the problems and joys of parenthood.

This may be useful information to couples who are trying to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of delaying parenthood or getting on with it, but I don't think it's newsworthy. What do we learn? That if you have children when you are in your early 20's, you are likely (if you are a woman) to postpone your work life; or (if you are a man) to postpone your nurturing fatherly life. If you have children later, after establishing your work interests in your 20's, you are more likely to know yourself better, and your spouse as well.

On the other hand, if you have children early, you have uninterrupted years of your adult life in which to work, dance, play polo or climb mountains, once the children are in school and grown; if you wait until your late 30's, the arching curve of your professional life may take a dip, or plummet altogether — which may be fine with you or not, depending on how much your career tolerates interruption. Similarly, 40-year-old first-time parents differ from 20-year-old first-time parents in their worldliness, self-assurance, work experience and, lest we forget, the sheer number of years between parent and child. But these commonsense conclusions will be news, I suspect, only to people who have professional or political investments in ideas about the "proper" timing of motherhood. (Fatherhood has rarely evoked passionate theories about its proper timing.)

Daniels and Weingarten have made a heroic and worthy effort to portray their interviewees in all their human complexity, but that very complexity defeats their intention to find predictable or consistent answers to the question of when to become a parent. Not Continued on Page 36
in the Soviet Union where the snow is scarred with wire, in Salvador where the blood will never soak into the ground, everywhere and always go after that which is lost. There is a cyclone fence between ourselves and the slaughter and beneath it we hover in a calm protected world like netted fish, exactly like netted fish. It is either the beginning or the end of the world, and the choice is ourselves or nothing.

From "Our Selves or Nothing"

Where Josephine Jacobsen is circumspect and elliptical, Carolyn Forché is blunt, unremitting, candid. There may be readers who object to her somewhat abstract — and apotic — endorsement of grief too great to have been experienced by any individual ("all the mass graves of the century's dead will open into your early waking hours: / Belsen, Dachau, Sagon, Phnom Penh / and the one meaning Bridge of Ravens / Sao Paulo, Armagh, Calcutta, Salvador"), but her voice is never shrill or strident, and the horrific visions are nearly always contained within fully realized poems.

In Salvador, after a luxurious dinner, the dried ears of "rebels" are dropped playfully into a glass by a colonel who says, "Something for your poetry, no?" There are "reports of mice introduced into women, of men whose testicles are crushed like eggs"; visions of starving children "like a super scrap / filling with worms." It is unavoidable in poems so intensely political that names (Carolina, Francisco, Jara, Torres, etc.) are evoked that cannot communicate any particular meaning to the reader, and that the self-effacing tone barely produces an impersonal and at times rhetorical poetry. Can the language of poetry compete with the realism, one wonders, in limning the graphic outrages of mass shootings, mutilations, tortures? This is the country of "the razor, the live wire, / dry ice and concrete, gray rats," where a man's hands are chopped off by U.S. tanks and flung into a field; it is a nightmare country lucidly presented:

When Virea was burned we knew it had come to an end, his coffin rocking into the ground like a boat or a cradle.

I could take my heart, he said, and give it to a campesino and he would cut it up and give it back.

You can't eat heart in those four dark chambers where a man can be kept for years.

A boy soldier in the bone-hot sun works his knife to peel the face from a dead man.

and hang it from the branch of a tree flowering with such faces.

From "Because One Is Always Forgotten"

Carolyn Forché's first book, "Gathering the Tribes," a winner of the Yale Younger Poets award, introduced a poet of uncommon vigor and assurance. "The Country Between Us" is a distinct step forward. Though one tends to remember vivid fragments of poems rather than wholes, the cumulative power of the volume is considerable. "In what time do we live," the poet asks, "that it is too late to have children?" — a partial view, but no less compelling, no less authentic. One feels that the poet has earned her bleak and wintry vision:

We do not rid ourselves of these things even when we are cured of personal silence when for no reason one morning we begin to hear the noise of the world again.

From "City Walk-Up, Winter 1989"

Author's Query

For a paper dealing with the life and career of Helen Wills Moody, the outstanding women's tennis player of the 1920's and early 1930's, I would appreciate hearing from anyone with letters, reminiscences, anecdotes, photographs or other pertinent information.

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NYTWH 4/4/89
Guy Davenport

Continued from Page 13

there be a teller and an audience concerned with the doings of a horse many seasons ago? We can supply answers: Children, new to be taught, new horses, chestnut trees, kestrels and washer rats are kin; the horse is a god and must be honored for the good of all; it is a great pleasure to hear tales told, and to tell tales.

ROUST, tribal teller to the French, was initiated into his craft by reading the Mardrus translation of “The Thousand Nights and One Night,” a cycle of tales some of which in theme or plot are as old as the painted horses of the Dordogne caves. There are many family resemblances between Sheherazade’s tales and Proust’s, as between Joyce’s and Homer’s, Kafka’s and Hasidic fables, Eudora Welty’s and Ovid’s. It is not that the modern writer returns to myth, but that myth continues through the modern writer.

The tale is always integral to the people hearing it. Writers can know or be ignorant of what they’re telling. What matters is the charm of the telling.

I’m fairly certain that I came to write fiction because I had become acquainted with the tales of the tribe and had some confidence that I could retell some of the stories with enough differentiation of detail to make the effort worthwhile. In the collection of stories called “Tati!” the tales prompting mine are: The Invention of Wings (from Ovid), The Descent Into the Underworld (from Homer), A Visit to a Wise Man (from Plutarch), and Orpheus and Eurydice (Ovid). The first tale is told twice, as is the last, so the first two stories (“Tati!” and “The Aeroplanes at Brescia”) are both the tale of Icarus told in different styles, and the last two stories (“1839” and “The Dawn in Erewhon”) are both the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice.

But I wanted several transformations of each tale simultaneously, because we have reached this possibility. The story about Kafka, for instance, which follows his own account of the event, is based on a scene in Proust, where the aeroplanes are not at Brescia but at Le Bourget. It was Proust, not...
Young Man, Old Man

ALFRED KAZIN

1. Hemingway:
No Further Down the Stream

IN HIS LAST YEARS they called him “Papa”; he had a beard. The beard may have been grown, as Longfellow did his, to hide some physical damage—there had surely been a lot of damage. From boyhood on, he had suffered accidents that were grotesque in their violence to this body they did not kill. As a boy he fell and had a stick driven into the back of his throat, gouging out parts of both tonsils; once, while out fishing, he got a fishhook caught in his back; in 1918 when he was a Red Cross worker in Italy distributing supplies to soldiers, a mortar shell exploded more than twenty fragments into his legs, and he was then hit twice by machine-gun bullets while carrying a more seriously injured man to the rear; as a young writer in Paris during the twenties, he was clipped on the forehead by pieces of a sunlight that fell just as he was standing under it; in Wyoming, in 1930, his car turned over, and his right arm was pinned back by the top of the windshield and badly fractured, the bone sticking out of his muscle. Still another time, his brother Leicester reports, Hemingway shot a shark with a rifle, but the bullets split into several small pieces of hot lead that ricocheted into the calves of both legs. In 1940, while duck shooting in the marshes near Venice, he got a bit of shell wadding blown into his eye, and a serious infection developed; in 1953, he crash-landed in Africa, and the rescue plane that picked him up also crashed and burned; when he reached medical aid at Nairobi, just in time to read his obituaries, his internal organs had been wrenched out of place, his spine was injured, and he was bleeding from every orifice.

Like the beaten-up Colonel Cantwell in Across the River and Into the Trees, who examining his scarred, burned, and pitted body in the hotel mirror was relieved that “the gut is flat” and that “the chest is all right except where it contains the defective muscle,” Hemingway felt that he had honorable wounds and that his grizzled old warrior’s beard now dignified them. He was “Papa,” he had gone through his century’s wars in Italy, in Greece, in Spain, in Britain, he had had endless side adventures and campaigns, he had slain his thousands of beasts—yea, like Ninrood, he had been a mighty hunter before the Lord. Worn out with many countries, many hunts, many loves, he could even, as a universal celebrity, feel that he had been worn out by art, for he had certainly fathered the most admired, the most imitated literary prose of his generation. No other novelist between the two wars had had so many followers, imitators, disciples. Hemingway had become like Ford, the name of a product; like Lindbergh, of a unique daring. In every new generation, after the twenties, the young people who were the most ardent, the young writers who were most impatient with the worn-out language of their society, looked up to Hemingway as the personification of militancy in life and of freshness in literary art. Even in Russia, Hemingway has been the most admired of contemporary writers, particularly valued for the brusque, clipped, lyric directness of his work—peculiarly suitable, say Russians, to life in a fast-moving technical society. In Italy, Americans discovered to their amazement after the war, Hemingway was regarded as the greatest possible purifier of a literary language overgrown with rhetoric and exploited by literary posturers. Among revolutionary youth in all the Spanish-speaking countries, Hemingway was the great exemplar of a pugnaciously direct attitude toward life. In America even his admirers felt that Hemingway had exposed his sentimentality in For Whom the Bell Tolls. But when Fidel Castro was still merely a guerrilla leader in the Sierra Madre, his favorite book, which he carried around with him, was this romantic literary interpretation of the Spanish Civil War.

HEMINGWAY when still a young man could feel that he had become the “old man” of the revolution in modern literature. Only T. S. Eliot called out of students of literature so much anxious labor to trace, to pin down, to propagate what was now regarded as the model style and even a code by which to live. And Hemingway himself, from the time he became famous, was not slow to speak on art and life as one having authority. His manner, though carrying the clear implication that it was probably no use to express clearly what he had learned about men, cities, and books, also showed that a great deal was expected of Ernest Hemingway. There was an impatient, jeering bitterness to his pronouncements—he had been through experiences that he was quite sure other people had not. He had tested himself, he knew what life was all about and what was required in order to live. Papa spoke from experience. His own stories and novels documented the school of violence that he had been through—the world of “in our time,” of “men without women,” of “winner take nothing,” of a “lost generation” and of the empty repetition of time, in which the sun also rises, of a farewell to arms, of killers and cheating fathers, until finally all is nada, hãi nada, all is nada.

The early stories and novels read as if the author had sacrificed everything to express the age with the clarity and truth achievable only in art. Hemingway’s effect was to leave people with a distinct moral attitude, with a strategy for living. Not only did he handle words with a new austerity; he gave the reader confidence that he would be able to handle life from now on. Something...
There will come a day when you will remember History all too well. The deaths of kings and princes, shady politics at home, Cleopatra and her asp and why the Bastille fell.

You will, for once, look the American eagle in the eyes, And feel his vast, impersonal, amber stare As though you cannot know too much and still be counted wise.

Somewhere, perhaps in sleep, you stroked the lion’s mane And sensed the heavy, heavy coursing blood of time As it asserts its massive way through every sensual vein.

And you will ask yourself as you accelerate the brute intake Of classic myths relived without a sense of form If this could be by any chance the summer of last heartbeat.

You will be bold enough to stand as on an autumn plain, For autumn seems, in fact, to be the meat of History’s mood, And, in advance, relume the summer as one that will not come again.

In such a light the step beyond is calculated risk— Awakening the lion, flushing the bird, keeping the angry doors wide open, You never let the heart remind it is not equal to the task.

—Charles Edward Eaton

had been worked out in this school of violent experience, a code had been shaped, from now on one would know better how to meet the treacherous times. The century was the problem to which Hemingway’s work seemed to supply the solution. And when the writer, after his early stories and novels, turned to himself in Death in the Afternoon (1932), he spoke about his travels as one who had earned the right to pronounce: "We've seen it all go and we'll watch it go again. The great thing is to last and get your work done and see and hear and learn and understand; and write when there is something that you know; and not before; and not too damned much after. Let those who want to save the world if you can get to see it clear and as whole. Then any part you make will represent the whole if it's made truly."

By 1935, in Green Hills of Africa, the manner had become jeering. Kandisky, an Austrian with a car stalled in the depths of Africa, is excited to meet the famous Hemingway. But when he asks the Master about other writers, Hemingway explains that "I did not wish to destroy anything this man had, and so I did not go into these brilliant people in detail." Then he explains, about America, that "We do not have great writers. Something happens to our good writers at a certain age... You see we make our writers into something very strange... We destroy them in many ways." As for himself: "I am interested in other things. I have a good life but I must write because if I do not write a certain amount I do not enjoy the rest of my life." Kandisky: "And what do you want?" Hemingway: "To write as well as I can and learn as I go along. At the same time I have my life which I enjoy and which is a damned good life." "And you know what you want?" "Yes...." "And you know what you want?" Kandisky repeats. "Absolutely, and I get it all the time."

The inflated tone was heard in Hemingway’s preface, where he spoke of his attempt “to write an absolutely true book to see whether the shape of a country and the pattern of a month’s action can, if truly presented, compete with a work of the imagination.” There was a peculiar abstractness about this, coming from a writer who had a particular ability to render the natural world as concretely as possible. Ford Madox Ford, in the aptest tribute ever paid to Hemingway’s stories, said that “Hemingway’s words strike you, each one, as if they were pebbles fetched fresh from a brook. They live and shine, each in its place. So one of his pages has the effect of a brook-bottom into which you look down through the flowing water.” But Hemingway now sounded as if he were Faust aiming to conquer new worlds that only he knew about: “The kind of writing that can be done. How far prose can be carried if any one is serious and has luck. There is a fourth and fifth dimension that can be gotten.”

He was in his early thirties when he wrote that, but in his own mind he was already a weary old man on the sea of art, weary and alone with the skills that only he knew. Hemingway talking about other writers in Green Hills of Africa said that he knew the combination but that it could never be passed on; it is beyond anything and anyone. He can talk about it, for he has come close, but no one can really get it. Like the peak of Kilimanjaro in Hemingway’s later story, which the leopard dead on the mountainside perhaps had tried to reach, the summit of art is in sight but unreachable. And the more, in the ensuing years, Hemingway talked about “writing truly,” “well and truly,” the more he showed how abstract these lessons of art had become for him. Though the implication was that the old man, the old master, old Doc Hemingway, had nobody left to compete with, but himself, the truth is that Hemingway had in a sense been desolated by his own success. Everything that was valuable in his work, everything fresh and urgent that had made his words “live and shine, each in its place,” had come from the young man’s testing of himself on life, not from the bogus old man who was now at the center of the Hemingway legend. Hemingway had
passed that wondrously young man, he had fled him without outgrowing him.

Yet there had been no need for the writer in Hemingway to outgrow that young man, for the testing of himself under extreme conditions of stress—the cardinal situation of Hemingway’s best stories and novels—had created its sufficient drama, its sufficient heroism, its sufficient mortality. The wisdom that supposedly lies in age provides excellent aphorisms, but not the passion out of which the strong things come. Hemingway’s genius was personal, lyric, romantic: his work is rooted in a cycle of daring, revolt, and pain. All that is most authentic in Hemingway deals with the ordeal of some primary revolt against authority, some early wound to self-confidence that came with transgression. Hemingway’s style itself is really an attempt to render, without “cheating,” as he liked to say, the physical experience of initiation. Life to a boy spending long summers on the fringe of the last wilderness, “up in Michigan,” came in the form of blows. Hemingway’s deepest experiences were as a son, never as a father. His own father was a doctor in the respectable Chicago suburb of Oak Park—“the place where the saloons end and the churches begin.” The parents were cultivated, conscientious, and reacted irritably to Ernest’s restiveness. Hemingway was always in trouble with them, putting his exuberant sense of his own physical powers against this environment; it is not strange to think of those repeated accidents as tests of his own capacity for defiance, since despite his physical venturesomeness he was easily hurt, and seems in many of his escapades—he got himself to the Italian front when he was not yet eighteen—to have been testing his father’s ability to contain him.

In Hemingway’s first stories, In Our Time, the young hero, Nick Adams, undergoes a series of initiations that Hemingway’s prose significantly seeks to render as sensations. Everything that we know about life, Hemingway is saying, comes to us through early experience that later we try to escape or to rationalize or to theorize into high-sounding systems based on verbal in-

cantation. These acute early experiences are expressed as sensations, for they are of a piercing keenness that maturity can never duplicate—they are the real stuff of art. These experiences are not generalizable. They must be rendered as separate, apparently disconnected items. This inner world of physical sensation is man’s only real school of experience. Its lessons are stored up in the body; and for that reason images of it can be made into literature. Hemingway as a young man hanging around Chicago gymnasiums tried to sort out all the different smells. As an athlete and sportsman, he tried to make himself the body of his art. That is why his first stories, grounded in physical detail, make the reader feel them as personal exertions. They woke people up; they were disturbing; they made the reader fall in with rhythms in Hemingway’s prose that are vaguely ominous, that suggest that something has gone wrong, that the physical balance on which we unconsciously rely has been shaken.

Nowhere in Hemingway’s work is this fundamental theme of vulnerability given clearer indication than in the last story of In Our Time, “Big Two-Hearted River.” In this story the young man who in the other stories has been stoical to the point of incomunicability returns to a favorite trout stream in order to recover a sense of well-being that he has mysteriously lost. Where in the earlier stories the young man tested himself involuntarily and almost unconsciously, simply because he was a young man trying out his strength, in “Big Two-Hearted River” the self has become a critical issue: he has come back to see whether he can find his way back to his lost confidence. There is a hint of panic. Yet at the same time the wonderful web of detail that Hemingway puts into the look of the stream, the feel of the country, the hard walking, into the opening of cans and the heating of beans, the making of camp and the cleaning up of camp, conveys that peculiarly urgent drive to make order, to assert control, that is in the very spirit of Hemingway’s art. Nowhere as in this obsessive story of light and dark, of shadow and sunlight, did Hemingway's...
way create so wonderful a picture of the making of his art itself—an art where the placing and spacing and sheer tactile handling of words represents, in its subtly labored fitness, man's only triumph over uncertainty. "Nick looked down into the pool from the bridge. It was a hot day. A kingfisher flew up the stream. It was a long time since Nick had looked into a stream and seen trout. They were very satisfactory. As the shadow of the kingfisher moved up the stream, a big trout shot upstream in a long angle, only his shadow marking the angle, then lost his shadow as he came through the surface of the water, caught the sun, and then, as he went back into the stream under the surface, his shadow seemed to float down the stream with the current, unresisting, to his post under the bridge where he tightened facing up into the current.

"Nick's heart tightened as the trout moved. He felt all the old feeling."

At the end of the story, however, Nick decides not to follow the river into the swamp. "Nick did not want to go there now. He felt a reaction against deep wading with the water deepening up to his armpits, to hook big trout in places impossible to land them. In the swamp the banks were bare, the big cedars came together overhead, the sun did not come through, except in patches: in the fast deep water, in the half light, the fishing would be tragic. In the swamp fishing was a tragic adventure. Nick did not want it. He did not want to go down the stream any further today."

It is not fanciful, I think, to see in this story an image of Hemingway's compelling need to achieve a style constituted of conscious balances and achieved rhythms—a style that was learned in Paris from cubism and poetry, that became a model of invention in prose and a moral code with which to defy public treacheries. But so little could Hemingway, as a man, rest on the formal excellence of his own art that as his freshness left him, he turned the artful simplicities of his prose into cold, self-praise, and spoke of writing "well and truly." There was a nightmare: to be so famous, to be "Papa," the international character of Hemingway, and yet to rest all one's sensibility on one's victories as a young man. For the old hunter with the grizzled beard, though surely not worn out with many hunts, many travels, and many loves, was not wise—just sage—that was not his gift. When he spoke of other writers, it was always with bitterness. He was a king at Toots Shor's, in the gossip columns, to Gary Cooper and Marlene Dietrich, but kingship was not really his. He had no authority, he was too unsure; and everything achieved in his best work related to a single man, usually a young man, a son at last free of "culture," alone in the field or on the water. The young man eventually became an old man fishing alone on the sea; the old hunter now gratefully echoed Stonewall Jackson's saying before his death, "Let us cross the river and rest under the shade of the trees.

"These intimations of the final loneliness of old age could be lyrical and haunting: but there was still a young man in this old man waiting to be let out. All of Hemingway's panic at the end related to the young man who had saved his life but couldn't keep it. The freshness would last in his early work, but it couldn't be repeated."

2. Faulkner:

Faulkner slipped out of life with his usual indifference to what people thought. It was an unexpected, a totally private death, unrelated to the season and to what people might have counted on in the manner of death. In the summer of 1961 Hemingway shot himself to death—the shotgun was in his mouth and he just barely managed to get the trigger with his big toe: it made a scene that might have been written by Hemingway himself. But Faulkner slipped out of life, the next summer, as if dying was nobody's business but his own. Flen Snopes's wife in The Town shot herself out of sheer boredom. There was some unmistakable indifference about Faulkner's going—he had fallen off a horse some
weeks before, he had been laid up; suddenly he was gone.

Slipping out that way, just after a last, funny book, he made you think of how inaccessible he had always been, unassimilable, even when he had done all the usual things—written for Hollywood, for the Saturday Evening Post, had gone to Latin America and to Japan to spread the good tidings that America had culture. He had been inspirational at Stockholm, he had made a clever speech at the National Book Awards, he had been a visiting professor at Virginia. He had done all the usual things, he had not played the hermit—far from it. Yet never in the least had he been like anyone else. It was as if the individual the most difficult and unreadable of American novelists, he had suddenly, in an age that had caught up with his stark vision of life, become the most favored. In Cartier-Bresson's photograph, one now saw him standing in front of his pillared house in Oxford, looking every inch the privileged Southerner. He counted more than Hemingway did now, and Hemingway knew it. He even patronized Hemingway and called him timid as a writer.

Yet none of this external life mattered, except as another subject in the inner meditation of that private mind, William Faulkner. So the reader of Faulkner's novels senses that there is a soliloquy going on below and behind the dramatic action in these novels, that the frothing abstract words to which he always comes back, avatars and apotheosis, indomitable and implacable, furious, outraged and unappeased, are symbols in the continuous communion with himself. Faulkner's novels are the products of a deeply internalized sense of history; he will even open a story as if he were breaking off a meditation to address the reader. "There was a man and a dog too this time." This first line of The Bear orients the reader to these people, but the reference is to Faulkner's other work about this region—which in its totality represents Faulkner's attempts to put the whole human situation on the map of one county in northern Mississippi. Yet even as a totality, a human comedy that embraces hundreds of characters and that enumerates the whole history of the region from the Indian wilderness to the 1920s, the subject is only a reflection of human destiny. Not even his homeland has absolute interest for him.

Hemingway always writes straight at the reader as if his greatest aim were to present him with a picture. But Faulkner's books are parts of each other, like dreams of the same man. In some way he stands aside from the profession of books even as he writes them. Unlike Hemingway, who trained himself to write and then wrote, each time, like a champion who had to win, so that he fell apart when he could no longer write to his satisfaction, Faulkner gave the

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impression first of not writing for anybody, then of not knowing whether he had an audience, and finally of not caring what this audience thought. He stood apart, musing, questioning, engaged in a special sense, living not by the aesthetic will but by a surrender to his own thought in all its ramifications and contradictions. Wherever his thought took him, he would go; like Oxford, his own mind was a place he could always go back to. Even when he got up to address an audience, he would speak in an inaudible monotone like a man in prayer—he would address the audience, but by God he would not make any special effort to communicate with it. He just did not function by "communicating"; he could not put himself in the place of an audience or a reader.

Yet Faulkner’s extraordinary ability to suggest the inner consciousness of his characters would not have been possible without his own willingness to surrender to the vagaries of human thought, without his instinct for the mysterious logic of human consciousness. The concentrated effort that Hemingway made in the reader’s direction perhaps broke down because, like all excessive effort by the will, it represented mistrust of the man’s unconscious resources and so alienated him from himself. Faulkner often went in for private jokes and a rhetoric so self-indulgent that it was clownish. But when you grasp in The Sound and the Fury the actual life experience of Benjy and Quentin and Jason, in Light in August the dream obsessing Joe Christmas as he runs in a state of sleep ahead of the posse, you feel that for once fiction has expressed the unconscious strife of our lives, not a literary personification of the “unconscious.” There is no more moving expression of unarticulated suffering than the idiot Benjy’s description in The Sound and the Fury of frightening a girl on her way back from school. “I was trying to say, and I caught her, trying to say, and she screamed and I was trying to say and trying and the bright shapes began to stop and I tried to get out. I tried to get it off my face, but the bright shapes were going again. They were going up the hill to where it fell away and I tried to cry. But when I breathed in, I couldn’t breathe out again to cry and I tried to keep from falling off the hill and I fell off the hill into the bright, whirling shapes.” Each Compson, as he speaks, brings home the dream that is continually present in our consciousness. The relating of this dream to the dramatic world of human action is the function of literature. Faulkner at his best, in The Sound and the Fury, creates the sense of authenticity that comes only when form, style, and tone seem to grow out of each other. Even the breakdown of grammatical coherence becomes a whirlwind of inner creatingness that the reader wants to be equal to. In Faulkner all sentences are really the moments of a single sentence. All history makes up a single past. This past is completed, but its reverberations inside the human mind are continuous. All one’s effort as a man must be to understand what has been done, what is the meaning of the saga that must be lived out before it can be told.

I n the beginning was the deed. Man was given “one anonymous chance to perform something passionate and brave and austere not just in but into man’s enduring chronicle . . . in gratitude for the gift of time in it.” He could realize his experience, but only after he had lived it. The doing and the realizing are inaccessible to each other, and this is the human tragedy—the heart is blind, hot, passionate, and ambitious beyond anything we can admit or express, much less control and have to acquire. Man explodes himself in the service of his passions, his ambition constantly destroys the society he thinks the foundation of moral order. Yet once the deed is done, it is irrevocable, he has to put the story together by thought—the unwavering thought of the artist or chronicler going back into the havoc created by the past.

Faulkner’s idea of the relation between thought and action is surely an apology for the South. In The Bear the saintly hunter Ike McCaslin and his cousin McCaslin Edmonds, going over the records of the eccentric twin uncles in slave times who did try to alleviate the condi-
tion of their slaves, agree with each other that slavery put a curse on the land that had been given to man as God’s free gift. Man rushed slaves into the South with the same heedlessness and pride with which he tried to claim the land itself—the land which the Indians knew they did not really own. The act of appropriation in Faulkner, whether it is the individual’s act or the collective act of the race, is blind; it is the blood speaking, and over this act heedless and proud, as Faulkner would say, the actor later stands amazed. Action and recognition are fatally separate: man is a creature of passions over which his rational will has no dominion. But the retrospect of history is man’s only real power of understanding. And the humility and charity that come with this awareness, symbolized in Ike McCaslin’s development from the boy eager to play an honorable role in the hunt to the old Ike who detaches himself from all ties and comes to love the wilderness for its own sake, constitute Faulkner’s deepest belief, which is that virtue is powerless, that virtue intervenes only when power is gone. The South before the Civil War, at the peak of its glory, is unconscious of the burdens of memory which its grandchildren will be struggling with all their lives. Faulkner, a descendant of the slavocracy, feels older to himself than his grandfathers do, for his burden of awareness makes him a seasoned old man by temperament, contemplative and alone, by contrast with the Jeb Stuarts and other romantic Confederate leaders who in his work appear dashing, young, suicidally romantic and innocent. They rushed into war, they took on an opponent clearly stronger than themselves, they were magnificent in their folly. They rode about being dashing and brave as if civil war, their war, could prove the advantage of “character” over iron and steel.

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“As a distasteful necessity,” the parliament of Ghana the other day slapped an amendment onto the constitution allowing Nkrumah’s government to place prisoners under detention for up to another 5 years after they have served 5-year sentences. Some Ghanaian MPs confessed their repugnance for the act, saying it put them in mind of the things that go on in South Africa. Limit of detention in South Africa: 90 days. Limit of detention in Ghana: 5 years.”

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LINUS PAULING

teen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it's still not two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863, the brigades are in position behind the rail fence, the guns are laid and ready in the woods and the furled flags are already loosened to break out and Pickett himself with his long oiled ringlets and his hat in one hand probably and his sword in the other looking up the hill waiting for Longstreet to give the word and it’s all in the balance, it hasn’t happened yet ... “ The deepest expression of this longing to re-voke the past is put into the mouth of poor Mrs. Hines, grandmother of the murderer Joe Christmas, when she says in Light in August: “I am not saying that he never did what they say he did. Ought not to suffer for it like he made them that loved and lost suffer. But if folks could maybe just let him for one day. Like it hadn’t happened yet. Like the world never had anything against him yet. If it could be like that for one day.” So intense is Faulkner's belief that thought is rumination over a past completed, final, irrevocable, that in the famous middle section of The Bear, incidents of slave-keeping are recited from the uncles' account books by their descendants, Ike McCaslin and McCaslin Edmonds, who go over the records together as if they were chanting the past in wonder and grief. Moby Dick, that other great "hunting" story in our literature, represents man's will to dominate nature, but The Bear suggests that history is only retrospective, and that man must tell over and again the story of his fate until he finds the missing thread that will explain the past to him. The Bear is a story about time, which is man's only chance for understanding himself. At any point, as happens in this middle section of The Bear, a man can take down the ledgers of the past and uncover the story. But though the past can be stopped like a movie reel and rerun like film, over and again, it cannot be changed, it can only be meditated and retold. Each of us, as we review the past, becomes as old as thought itself, as we look at our younger selves blindly rushing through the past. And this is what makes the final moral development of Ike McCaslin in The Bear so beautiful a legend itself, for admitting that slavery was a curse, Ike lightens himself of its burden; he becomes his own redeemer. This growth is possible only when the chronicle of man's past lives in a man's mind as if he had lived all of it and were now responsible to all of it.

Surely it is this that explains the attempt, in The Bear, to make a single sentence out of many pages. Faulkner's writing, as in this famous instance, is often accountable only to the laws of his own thought, and there are single units in his writing—sentences, paragraphs, pages—which are great waves of passion, retribution, anguish, and doubt, beating, perhaps to no avail, against the fatal rock of man's past. For there was a great guilt incurred in the South, a curse was put on the land that was given to all men freely to enjoy. Faulkner does not excuse this guilt, he does not apologize for it, he does not evade it—man must live with himself. Man's immortal-ity, if he can be said to have one at all, reaches into the past, not into the future: it lies in a tragic sense of history, not in the hope offered by religion. The peculiar parallels to Christ that Faulkner finds in certain of his characters, like Benji in The Sound and the Fury or Joe Christmas in Light in August, refer to those who have escaped the common guilt by reason of some disability—those who have never lived they have been entirely victims of other people. Those who act, who have acted, those who in imagination one can still see riding across the screen of history, can never alter the course of action. Jean-Paul Sartre was right when he said that Faulkner cuts off the future. That is his only significant fault, for to see the past as unchangeable is really to confess that one is bound up too much with it, that one is too loyal to the past, that one must be forever old in spirit in order not to betray those who were rash in their youth. In no other writer does this obligation to the past betray its rigidity so much as in this greatest Southern writer—who more than most writers has interrogated the Southern past and has not been able to escape it in one moment of thought.
A woman who fears cancer is instructed to watch ‘Terms of Endearment’ repeatedly. A man who can’t face being in a car is told to drive down a dark wet road at night.

me. “That’s what messed me up in the first place, the assumption my parents and society have always had that I should win and overcome.” Pamela’s solution was to totally give in. “I realized,” she says, “that my anxiety was a product of this achieving mindset, and I decided not to push myself.” To that end, Pamela gave up public speaking for a while. “Who says I have to be great?” she asks. “Who says I can’t be mediocre and scared? For me, this was the real revolution.”

Still, Barlow has success rates that match or beat other competing nonpharmacological interventions. Most of his patients get better in 12 weeks or fewer, and his data suggest they stay better up to two years after treatment, beyond which point he has not yet compiled further data. As to his claim to be able to make some of his patients symptom-free in a mere five to eight days, he offers several videotapes to make his case. One tape follows a fearful flier prior to treatment as she purposefully hyperventilates her way, back and forth, between Boston and New York. Some $2,500 and 124 hours’ worth of treatment later, she is completely at ease. The film is grueling and convincing.

FOR HOMEWORK, Ben, the poet, is instructed to stand on a busy city street and read his work to all who rush past. A woman who fears cancer to the point of paralysis is instructed to drink three cups of coffee while watching “Terms of Endearment” repeatedly. A man who can’t face being in a car is told to drive down a dark wet road at night. Jeff, a claustrophobic businessman, has the assignment of shutting himself in a small space for as long as he can stand it. When I spoke with Jeff about his treatment, he explained that he had decided to lock himself in the trunk of his car. The first time, he lasted only three minutes, in an intense state of anxiety. He curled up in a fetal position and balled his fist up near his mouth. Eventually he conditioned himself to last up to a half-hour in the trunk. By the last time, he says, “I was bored.”

Every one of Barlow’s clients is bearing his cross with courage. And that fact reflects his core belief: not just anxiety but all mental illness (with the possible exception of psychosis) is ultimately a problem not of pain itself but of a person’s relationship to his pain. Barlow is currently working on taking his treatment to those suffering from everything from depression to substance abuse. “It’s far too early to tell if this will work,” he says. But he has begun treating a small group of depressed patients by teaching them to accept, and even seek out, their sadness. According to Barlow, attempts to suppress painful emotion lie at the heart of most pathology; the struggle involved in suppression only tightens the noose on an already vulnerable neck. So first sit still, Barlow says. Second, begin to act exactly counter to how you feel. (“Even the act of smiling can change our brain chemistry,” Barlow remarks, “so it’s definitely O.K. to force a grin.”) Third, and most controversial, court the causes of your depression as a means of desensitizing yourself to them.

“When you fight your own internal censors, you’re giving them too much power,” says Reid Wilson, who employs Barlow’s methods in his practice. “You’re saying they’re worth the fight. Guess what? They aren’t. There are some limitations to cognitive restructuring, because it’s just like teaching relaxation. It sends the message that negative thoughts are bad, can even kill you. We practice the provocative approach of getting a person to confront repeatedly what they fear until they’re so used to it that it ceases to mean a thing.”

I, however, am not convinced. After all, depression is precisely a problem of meaninglessness, whereas anxiety, one might say, is a problem of excess meaning. What good would it do to teach a melancholic patient that his thoughts are null and void? He already believes that acutely. Furthermore, those in a state of severe sadness would probably lack the high, hopeful motivation that characterizes Barlow’s anxiety patients. You can get a jittery, willful guy like Jeff to shut himself in his car, but could a depressed person really find the energy to care?

At the end of 12 weeks, all but one of the patients in the group I observed are functioning effectively. They are free to write and read poetry, fly across the country, visit oncology wards, drive down wet roads in the middle of the night. Jeff, who tried drugs and meditation training before finally coming in desperation to Barlow’s clinic, says: “I’m not going to say I don’t feel fear anymore. I do. But I can say that I’m able to now live somewhat of a normal life. I can do what I want. My fear is there, but I handle it.” He pauses, then he says, “I consider that a cure.”

And in its own way, it is a cure. Barlow claims to have carved out new territory in the world of mental health and to have moved the field of psychology and its allied professions a significant step forward in the actual practice of helping people. If he is able to generalize successfully from anxiety to other forms of mental distress, like depression, with the same success rates, he will have given us something as essential as antibiotics.

For all his contributions, though, Barlow may remain a figure on the edge of mainstream recognition, and perhaps understandably so: he’s asking us to accept a treatment that does not consist of soothing medicine in a plastic cup. He’s asking people to accept that a cure not only hurts, but that it’s also terrifying, and that’s not an easy sell. It could be that Barlow has such high success rates because there’s an element of preselection going on. Perhaps only certain types are willing to tolerate his regimen, and clinicians, after all, have to play to their crowd, a crowd in need of something softer. We want comfort, a hand held out, while someone else—not us—soldiers on.
In the Shadow of the Patriarch

The author has been in lifelong conversation with the novels of Gabriel García Márquez. So what to say when he is finally invited to meet him?

By Francisco Goldman

My get-away-from-New-York place, my hole-up-and-write place, is an apartment I've kept for the last seven years in Mexico City, in a rundown but sturdy two-story building on a tree-shaded street near a park. The apartment has four large rooms with soft, creaky, dun-hued wooden floors and French windows with disintegrating wood frames and missing panes that let the rain, insects and even birds in. It is furnished with just a bed, bookshelves and two adjoining wooden tables where I work. Here I find concentration and long writing days as I do nowhere else, though that placid routine was turned upside down this summer when Mauricio Montiel rented the apartment next door and it became "Montiel's Cave," where a group of youngish Mexico City writers and journalists gathered regularly at night to talk, over tequila, about books and movies, sometimes until nearly dawn or later. I would drop in to say hello and then find it impossible to leave.

Montiel, a 35-year-old fiction writer and editor with several books published, was the cultural-page editor of Cambio, a Mexican weekly magazine informally directed by Gabriel García Márquez. — Mexico City has been his primary residence since the 60's — until its owner unexpectedly shut it down last year. It's the sister publication of the original Cambio published in Bogotá, in García Márquez's native Colombia, the one he owns. But now, Montiel told me one day, the magazine had a new owner, and García Márquez had phoned with the good news that he could have his old job back. Except Montiel was going to say no. He, along with a number of his friends, had recently committed to a new magazine that another friend was starting. He was excited about it, but felt guilty about turning down García Márquez. He, like some of those same friends, owed their starts in journalism to García Márquez's Mexican Cambio. Montiel told me that García Márquez often spent hours in the magazine's offices huddled with young journalists, discussing projects and correcting and editing their work.

"Really, he sat with you and edited your pieces?" I asked, betraying, no doubt, a touch of provincial amazement. But I have to admit that it still always amazes me whenever I encounter people

García Márquez outside his home in Mexico City last month. Photograph by Judith Joy Ross
who know Gabriel García Márquez, the one writer who, especially in my youth, meant more to me than any other, in a manner that transcended merely a love of his literature. Meeting people who personally know him, who speak casually of their connections to him — as so many I’ve met in Mexico City do — can leave me dumbstruck with vicarious shyness and wonder. Sometimes it even astonishes me that my friend Gonzalo García speaks so casually of knowing García Márquez, even though Gonzalo is his son. The prospect of meeting any other writer, or any celebrity, does not affect me like this, not in the least.

But Montiel understood and stopped that when he was hired at Cambio, he hadn’t really let himself acknowledge what a rare opportunity it was until another young Mexican writer exclaimed: “Don’t you realize what this means? It’s as if you’re going to work with William Faulkner or Charles Dickens!”

Now Montiel was headed to lunch with the paradoxically living equivalent of a Faulkner or Dickens to tell him he wasn’t coming back to work for his magazine. As José Martí once versified: “A rose bush raises a rose/A flowerpot a carnation/And a father raises a daughter/Not knowing who she is for.” Youth takes what it needs and, grateful or not, moves on; it’s a law of life, especially regarding young writers. Montiel doesn’t hide his gratitude and high regard for García Márquez. He was anxious about the lunch, though, about the man’s legendary charm and powers of persuasion. But he and his friends were determined to start their own magazine ingway, one of his masters, from across a Parisian street rather than try to speak to him. If I was more than satisfied with the García Márquez I could imagine from his writings, why meet the other one?

I first heard the name Gabriel García Márquez some three decades ago on a day when I stayed home sick from school. I was in 9th or 10th grade, and my mother came into my bedroom to read out loud to me, in Spanish, from “Cien Años de Soledad” (“One Hundred Years of Solitude”). That book, published in Buenos Aires a couple of years before, in 1967, had swiftly taken Latin America by storm and was now embarked on its unrivaled conquering of the universe: published in every conceivable language, selling millions of copies. No South American writer or literary novel from South America had ever had such an impact. “One Hundred Years of Solitude” became one of those extremely rare books that affected people’s ideas about the contemporary novel and also their sense of reality. This became true not only for his readers but also for the many more who eventually received such information, diluted and dispersed into popular culture, without being aware of its source. (A recent newspaper poll in Spain found “One Hundred Years of Solitude” ranked just after the Bible and “Don Quixote” in universal historical importance — surely the voters

I had still never met García Márquez. Gonzalo’s house, his father’s tangible presence took me by surprise

I overheard Gonzalo’s son Mateo immersed in a long of Nintendo over the telephone and realized he was speaking

just as García Márquez had done with his own friends as a struggling young journalist in Barranquilla, Colombia, back in the 50’s.

Montiel once told me a story he had heard from García Márquez. For a while there were plans to make a film of his novel “The Autumn of the Patriarch,” in which Marlon Brando was to play the dictator. When people involved in the movie’s planning came to Mexico to meet with the author in his home, they were accompanied by a tall, pale, taciturn man who sat through the meeting without speaking a word or even introducing himself. Later García Márquez asked about the mysterious visitor and was told that he was J.M. Coetzee, the South African novelist. García Márquez was astounded because he had long regarded Coetzee as one of his favorite contemporary novelists. (That enthusiasm is no secret: another friend told me that after Coetzee won this year’s Nobel Prize, García Márquez joked that he had received so many congratulatory messages that he felt as if he had won the prize for a second time.) When the famously publicity-spurning Coetzee was in Mexico City for a literary congress in 1998, I had heard him read. I don’t know what inspired that incognito visit to the house, but I could imagine myself doing the same. It seemed a perfect way to satisfy your curiosity about a writer’s flesh-and-blood incarnation without interrupting the conversation you have long been having with his books or exposing your own baffling timidity.

Until this summer, whenever faced with even the possibility of meeting García Márquez in Mexico City, I had always invoked an essay of his in which he recounted how he had preferred to wave and salute Ernest Hem
Alas, it was not nostalgia that brought my mother to my room to read to me that day. I was probably pretending to be sick. Whenever my mother wanted to reprimand me for laziness or malinger, she often launched into a cautionary tale about her sad, lazy but amiable Uncle Guayo, who had squandered his life in that same isolated, backward Guatemalan village that reminded her of García Márquez’s. Uncle Guayo had tended his little store there, drinking too much, cohabiting with a local woman whom he never married — though this last detail, out of pride and prudishness, was never a part of her jeremiad.

Supposedly I met Uncle Guayo once before he died, though all I re-}


talgic. Her mother’s family came from the rural Pacific lowlands of Guatemala. Macondo, the now mythological locus of García Márquez’s literary world inspired by his own childhood along the Caribbean coast of Colombia, had obviously reminded her of that part of Guatemala. Many of our family legends and anecdotes were set there: the deaf-mute village diviner whose ambiguous interpretation of fortunetelling cards propelled my then-impovertised middle-aged great-grandfather into cattle ranching. Later, a miraculous roadside healing of his sick baby son led to his extravagant devotion to the Virgin of Lourdes, to whom he built shrines everywhere. And there was the story of my grandmother’s arrival in the capital as an orphaned country girl with only a dowry trunk (the boys got the ranches) and sufficient inheritance to pay for her board with a pair of French spinsters who ran a small school.

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member is a visit we made to that pueblo: my mother’s brother, Tío Hugo, at the wheel of the car, a handkerchief tied over his nose and mouth against the clouds of burning sand billowing in through the open windows as we drove into town; a green coconut in my lap out of which I sipped the fruit’s warm soapy milk through a straw; people standing in the doorways of little houses of sun-blasted whitewash and zinc roofs that looked as if they radiated heat up into the air, browning the palm fronds; and a wiry man dressed in rags, gnarly belly exposed, wildly reeling along a drainage canal. It was explained to me that he walked like that because he was a bolo, a drunkard, though he was not Tío Guayo.

Impovertised, smelly, lethargic, the village outwardly resembled any other lowland village in Latin America. Had the world ever cared much about life in those backwaters? García Márquez discovered that a child’s memories of such a place could seem more convincingly real than its outward reality. Before, Colombian novelists had usually described such places with anthropological or political earnestness, giving the greatest importance to what seemed most obvious: local customs, the hardship of life and so on. García Márquez in “One Hundred Years of Solitude” narrated phantasmal and radiant inner lives and childhood memories as if they were more concrete than their surroundings, poetically fusing these to the cycles of local and universal history and nature and creating something both biblical-seeming and lavishly new and strange. He found a place for the tropical village at the heart of world literature, and readers of all levels of sophistication found themselves remembering “that distant afternoon” when they were also taken by their father “to discover ice.”

I was reminded of all this, of my mother’s inadvertent lesson, while reading García Márquez’s latest book, a memoir titled “Living to Tell the Tale.” Already an international best seller, it will be published in English this week. In it, he recounts his return, in his early 20’s, with his mother to the town of his childhood in order to sell his grandparents’ house, and he describes his shock at the scorched town’s decrepitude, so at odds with the memories that he simultaneously narrates. To one familiar with his novels and stories, these pages are uncanny: García Márquez reveals the real-life people and incidents underlying even his most fantastic fiction, until it becomes hard to think of anything he has left out. When he returns from the trip, he rushes to the Banranquilla newspaper office where he works and begins a novel. “I’m writing the novel of my life,” he tells a friend. That was in 1950.

AT THE TIME I entered college, in the early 70’s, the so-called boom in Latin American literature, at least from the perspective of a student in the United States, was still at its zenith. Among my prized artifacts from that epoch is my old Harper Colophon paperback copy, missing its back cover, of “Into the Mainstream,” a 1967 collection of essay-interviews with Latin American writers by a pair of amateur literary enthusiasts. It is a reminder of the variety of fictional styles employed by the writers included, from the surrealist-inspired Parisian sophistication of Julio Cortázar to the ambitious, polyphonic urban realism of the young Carlos Fuentes and Mario Vargas Llosa. Nowhere in that prologue, or even in the chapter on García Márquez — who at the time of his interview was earning his living writing movies in Mexico City and hadn’t even begun “One Hundred Years of Solitude” — do the words “magic realism” appear. Only in the chapter on the urbane Cuban Alejo Carpentier do we read that “the dictate of Breton, that ‘nothing but the marvelous is beautiful’ . . . opened [Carpentier’s] eyes to the authentic wonders of his homeland . . . that ‘magic realism’ that in his view expresses the continent.”

García Márquez does tell the interviewers, “What gives literary value is mystery,” and says that he tries to tap “the magic in commonplace events.” Referring to the young writers soon to form the core of the Latin American boom, the collection’s editors write, “Like the other members of the Group, García Márquez is aware of the fact that he is bearing the banner of progress — he says the esquillence of the Latin-American novel is the only answer today to the sterility of the French nouveaux romans — and he is fiercely proud of it. At the same time, eternally self-questioning, he worries and wonders about himself.”

I was in my first year at the University of Michigan when Jorge Luis Borges came to speak. I sat on the floor of a packed auditorium and remember the moment during the questions and answers when a graduate student rose to voice his vehement request for Borges to unequivocally denounce the realist novel. Borges, with his soft, blind stare, resembled an elegant saint levitating in an English suit as he answered, “Young man, whether we are talking about Henry James or Flaubert, Conrad or Beckett, all of literature is part of the same dream and one of the few pleasures allowed to us on this earth.”

A few years later, after I had moved to New York City and was living on the Lower East Side, I learned that Carlos Fuentes was giving a “Great Novels” course at Columbia’s School of International Affairs. It was a very early class, 8 in the morning, I think, which to me seemed like dawn. Carrying the special bound notebook that I had made at a photocopy shop where I worked, I would sneak into his class. Fuentes once imitated the snarling-hissing ghost cats he had heard in the air over Kafka’s grave in Prague. During his lecture on “Swann’s Way,” when he described Swann’s recapturing lost time by biting into the madeleine cookie, a student — of international affairs, I suppose — tapped his wristwatch with a finger and protested that no matter what, the seconds ticking off were lost forever. With an air of wounded exasperation, Fuentes responded: “Young man, this is a literature class. We are talking about the imagination.” My favorite authors were people you could actually meet! Eventually I saw and sometimes met them all: Julio Cortázar, Jose Donoso, Guillermo Cabrera Infante.

In 1979, I returned to Guatemala City, immersed in civil war and a military dictatorship’s unprecedented reign of terror. I lived in my uncle’s house, in a room across the garden from the main house, trying to write the
short stories I needed to apply to creative-writing programs. Soon after, when I was back in New York, one of those stories was published by an American magazine, which also offered me the chance to write nonfiction and to return to Guatemala. For the next 12 years, I lived there on and off, writing freelance journalism. During that time, the wars of Central America were the core of my life.

My fiction writing, however, soon ground to a halt. How to transform so much violence, tragedy, sadness, anger and guilt into fiction, and why? That problem has confounded aspiring writers forever. One day in a Guatemala City bookstore, I bought Mario Vargas Llosa’s “García Márquez: Historia de un decíduo,” his staggering 650-page study of García Márquez and of “One Hundred Years of Solitude.” One chapter describes the younger García Márquez’s struggles with “the historical demon” of political violence in Colombia—300,000 had been killed in under 10 years—and the pressures he and other fiction writers were under to write about it in a politically “responsible” and “realistic” manner. In an essay addressed to those with whom he might have shared political convictions but not literary ones, García Márquez wrote that to write about the violence in the manner that others demanded would be to produce “a catalog of cadavers.” Literature was read by the living, he wrote, not by the dead. People needed something more from a novel than just a description of the reality they already knew too well. It took me years just to begin to understand and resolve some of the riddles posed by those wonderful words, such a rebuke to self-importance, so full of respect for readers.

A few years later I read a riveting novel called “La diosa para,” by the young Salvadoran Horacio Castellanos Moya, which fictionalized the Salvadoran civil war with a hilarious pop-on Both-your-houses venoms: it said things I agreed with but hadn’t dared to say myself. It was the first novel I read by a Latin American of my own age, and it showed me that young writers were finding their own ways of renewing the novel, free of magic realism and any other obvious influence. Castellanos Moya, now with an international reputation, is one of the friends who drop by Montiel’s cave.

So is Jose Manuel Prieto, a Cuban living in Mexico City, whose last novel, published in translation as “Nocturnal Butterflies of the Russian Empire,” is certainly among the most accomplished written by a Latin American under 40. In adolescence he was sent by the Cuban government to study engineering at a university in Siberia, though he wanted to be a writer. He had devoted “One Hundred Years of Solitude” in Spanish, but wondered how it would translate into Russian. He reread “One Hundred Years of Solitude” in Russian three times.

Recalling this not long ago, he told me that you undertake such a dismantling of another work to stop being mystified by it, not so that you can imitate it but so you can avoid doing so even accidentally. In Spanish, he said, it is hard to free yourself from the spell cast by García Márquez’s hyperbolic, vernacular prose. In Russian, Prieto told me, it was hard to hear that voice, and instead he found himself mesmerized by García Márquez’s formal narrative mastery and by the universality of his vision, which opens you to the wonders of everyday existence, whether you are a Cuban seeing a Siberian winter for the first time and thinking that it is just like that distant afternoon when Aureliano Buendia’s father took him to discover ice or an American reading about Aureliano endlessly making little gold fishes in his workroom and recalling his own late father’s life spent making false teeth.

Literary influences are perhaps most interesting when they jump borders and languages. García Márquez always listed Faulkner, Kafka and Virginia Woolf among his major influences, along with Latin Americans like Juan Rulfo. In the now familiar logic of Harold Bloom’s “Anxiety of Influence,” originality in literature is usually a matter of combining at least two unlikely influences. All over the world, García Márquez seems to have provided a part of that equation for writers like Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison and Ben Okri as well as U.S. Latinos like Oscar Hijuelos. One scholar wrote recently that García Márquez is the most influential writer in contemporary Chinese fiction; in a story by the exiled Iraqi writer Najem Wali, a character rediscovers his city of Basra in Macondo.

For ambitious Latin American writers, the effect was inevitably the opposite: they understood from the start that originality meant writing as little like García Márquez as possible. Yet last year an article appeared in Newsweek under the headline “Is Magical Realism Dead?” that claimed to introduce a new generation of Latin American writers writing in a new gritty urban way that was represented as a trailblazing rejection of García Márquez’s “magical realism,” alluded to as “fairy dust.” But that article, which incited a flurry of similar ones in the U.S. media, was based on a fraudulent assumption. Of the major boom writers of his generation, only García Márquez was a true magic realist, and not even in all his books. It would be difficult to find a “grittier” urban novel than Vargas Llosa’s “Conversation in the Cathedral.” Virtually no major Latin American writer has written magic realism after García Márquez.

For nearly four

magic realism is the authentic expression rather misrepresents manner

though he has had no end of popular imitators and artificial sweeteners. The writers truly confronted with defining themselves against his overwhelming popularity and influence are now entering their 60’s — like the Colombian Fernando Vallejo, author of “Our Lady of the Assassins” and winner of this year’s Romulo Gallegos Prize, Latin America’s most prestigious.

Montiel and the others who gathered in his apartment to talk about books with so much ebullient conviction had their own literary enthusiasm a mix of contemporary and earlier writers like W.G. Schab, Haruki Murakami, Martin Amis, Thomas Bernhard, Joseph Roth, Denis Johnson and Edwidge Danticat, along with Vallejo — who also lives in Mexico City and walks his shaggy, arthritic dog past my building every day. But they especially admired the Chilean Roberto Bolaño, who died this summer at age 50. Bolaño, it seemed to me, hovers over many young Latin American writers, even those in their 40’s, the way García Márquez must have over his generation and the following one. Bolaño wrote somewhat in the manner that Martin Amis calls the “higher autobiography” — with
the high-voltage first-person braininess of a Saul Bellow and an extreme and subversive personal vision of his own.

For nearly four decades, the stereotype has persisted in the United States that magic realism is the authentic and predominant Latin American form of literary expression rather than one singular author’s astoundingly seductive and often misrepresented manner of transforming life into fiction. That is probably why a writer like Bolano, acclaimed throughout the world, remained unknown in the United States. If that Newsweek article and others like it open the way for more Latin American writers to be published here, those young writers will merit gratitude. But it would be sad if one false stereotype — that Latin Americans write only magic realism — were now to be replaced by another: now they write gritty urban realism, in rejection of Gabriel García Márquez’s “fairy dust.”

García Márquez’s magic realism, derived from the surrealism of tyranny and empty stomachs, is also the massacre that people pretend never happened because it can’t be addressed in the newspapers or courts; it is unanswerable power’s extravagant appetites; it is the foretold murder an entire town is nightmarishly powerless to prevent. In societies without free expression or recourse to justice, solitary imaginative flights and haunted inner lives are also the voices of the community. In that sense, García Márquez, in his devotion to the profession of journalism and the nurturing of young journalists, and especially in his role as founder of the New Journalism Foundation, which has a school in Cartagena, Colombia, and sponsors workshops and scholarships throughout Latin America, is doing what he can to make the world that inspired much of his fiction obsolete. His refusal to speak out against his old friend Fidel Castro has been a source of controversy, especially in the United States. But it is also significant that the New Journalism Foundation has never taken a workshop to Cuba. Last December, when I gave a lecture, the students and faculty were asked to be polite. I hope it is not because you are a poet and a writer, but because of your politics. The United States is now in such a state, García Márquez was saying, leaning forward, that only good journalists can save it. I could only nod.

But I don’t regret having lost my voice that day. There is nothing I wish decades, the stereotype has persisted in the U.S. that and predominant Latin American form of literary than one singular author’s astoundingly seductive and often of transforming life into fiction.

now that I had said. A curiosity that I had been either fearful or shy of satisfying had been satisfied. Nothing significant had changed, though I was far from disillusioned. It was wonderful to see Gonzalo seated between his father and the friend who is like a second father to him and to see those two loving patriarchs showing off for him and to see him giddily responding as he must have when he was a boy.

It brought back a memory of cold football stadiums and sitting between my father and his best friend, Uncle Mattie. He was such an indefatigable storyteller — his World War II stories and the adventures of his dog, Moot — that when I was 10 or so, as if to be worthy of his esteem, I fell into the vice of telling serial tall tales about myself, which Uncle Mattie and my father listened to as if they were true. I went on embellishing until one day I committed such an obvious blunder that the spell was broken and my face burned with embarrassment — an early lesson in the perils of the craft, a story I would maybe find a way to recount later, when I regained my voice, back at Montiel’s.
 IRAQ  
Continued from Page 33

Kurds fled their homes in northern Iraq and needed both emergency relief and protection from Saddam Hussein. This operation, led by Garner, had succeeded brilliantly. American planners in 2003 imagined (and planned for) a similar emergency taking place. There were plans drawn up for housing and feeding Iraqi refugees. But there was little thought given to other contingencies — like widespread looting.

Garner told me that while he had expected Iraqis to loot the symbols of the old regime, like Hussein's palaces, he had been utterly unprepared for the systematic looting and destruction of practically every public building in Baghdad. In fairness to Garner, many of the Iraqis I spoke with during my trips were also caught by surprise. One mullah in Sadr City observed to me caustically that he had never seen such wickedness. “People can be weak,” he said. “I knew this before, of course, but I did not know how weak. But while I do not say it is the Americans’ fault, I simply cannot understand how your soldiers could have stood by and watched. Maybe they are weak too. Or maybe they are wicked.”

One reason for the looting in Baghdad was that there were too many intact buildings to loot. In contrast to their strategy in the first Gulf war, American war planners had been careful not to attack Iraqi infrastructure. This was partly because of their understanding of the laws of war and partly because of their desire to get Iraq back up and running as quickly and smoothly as possible. They seem to have imagined that once Hussein fell, things would go back to normal fairly quickly. But on the ground, the looting and the violence went on and on, and for the most part American forces largely did nothing.

Or rather, they did only one thing — station troops to protect the Iraqi Oil Ministry. This decision to protect only the Oil Ministry — the National Museum, not the National Library, not the Health Ministry — probably did more than anything else to convince Iraqis uneasy with the occupation that the United States was in Iraq only for the oil. “It is not that they could not protect everything, as they say,” a leader in the Hawa, the Shii religious authority, told me. “It’s that they protected nothing else. The Oil Ministry is not off by itself. It’s surrounded by other ministries, all of which the Americans allowed to be looted. So what else do you want us to think except that you want our oil?”

As Istrabadi, the Iraqi-American lawyer from the Future of Iraq Project, says, “When the Oil Ministry is the only thing you protect, what do you expect people to think?” And, he adds: “It can’t be that U.S. troops didn’t know where the

National Museum was. All you have to do is follow the signs — they’re in English! — to Museum Square.”

For its part, the Hawza could do little to protect the 17 out of 23 Iraqi ministries that were gutted by looters, or the National Library, or the National Museum (though sheiks repeatedly called on looters to return the stolen artifacts). But it was the Hawza, and not American forces, that protected many of Baghdad’s hospitals from looters — which Hawza leaders never fail to point out when asked whether they would concede that the United States is now doing a great deal of good in Iraq. The memory of this looting is like a bone in Iraq’s collective throat and has given rise to conspiracy theories about American motives and actions.

“The U.S. thinks of Iraq as a big cake,” one young Iraqi journalist told me. “By letting people loot — and don’t tell me they couldn’t have stopped the looters if they’d wanted to; look at the war — they were arranging to get more profits for Mr. Cheney, for Bechtel, for all American corporations.”

4. The Troops: Too Few, Too Constricted

On Feb. 25, the Army’s chief of staff, Gen. Eric Shinseki, and Gen. Condoleezza Rice, that most of Iraq would require a commitment of “several hundred thousand” U.S. troops. Shinseki’s estimate was dismissed out of hand by Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and other civilian officials at the Pentagon, where war plans called for a smaller, more agile force than had been used in the first Gulf war. Wolfowitz, for example, told Congress on Feb. 27 that Shinseki’s number was “wildly off the mark,” adding, “It’s hard to conceive that it would take more forces to provide stability in post-Saddam Iraq than it would take to conduct the war itself and secure the surrender of Saddam’s security force and his army.” Shinseki retired soon afterward.

But Shinseki wasn’t the only official who thought there were going to be insufficient troops on the ground to police Iraq in the aftermath of the war. The lack of adequate personnel in the military’s plan, especially the military police needed for postconflict work, was pointed out by both senior members of the uniformed military and by seasoned peacekeeping officials in the United Nations secretariat.

Former Ambassador Carney, recalling his first days in Iraq with ORHA, puts it this way, with surprising bitterness: The U.S. military “simply did not understand or give enough priority to the transition from their military mission to our political military mission.”

The Department of Defense did not lack for military and civilian officials — men and women who supported the war — counseling in private that policing a country militarily would not be easy. As Robert Perito recalls: “The military was warned there would be looting. There has been major looting in every important postconflict situation of the past decade. The looting in Panama City in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion did more damage to the Panamanian economy than the war itself. And there was vast looting and disorder in Kosovo. We know this.”

Securing Iraq militarily after victory on the battlefield was, in the Pentagon’s parlance, Phase IV of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Phases I through III were the various stages of the invasion itself. Phase IV involved so-called stability and support operations — in other words, the postwar. The military itself, six months into the occupation, is willing to acknowledge — at least to itself — that it did not plan sufficiently for Phase IV. In its secret report “Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategic Lessons Learned,” a draft of which was obtained by The Washington Times in August, the Department of Defense concedes that “late formation of Department of Defense [Phase IV] organizations limited time available for the development of detailed plans and pre-deployment coordination.”

The planning stages of the invasion itself were marked by detailed preparations and frequent rehearsals. Lt. Col. Scott Rutter is a highly decorated U.S. battalion commander whose unit, the Second Battalion, Seventh Infantry of the Third Infantry Division, helped take the Baghdad airport. He says that individual units rehearsed their own roles and that Phase IV involved them in a way they might face over and over again. By contrast, the lack of postwar planning made the difficulties the United States faced almost inevitable. “We knew what the tactical end state was supposed to be at the end of the war, but we were never told what the end state, the goal was, for the postwar,” Rutter said. (Rutter was on active duty when I spoke to him, but he is scheduled to retire this month.)

Rutter’s unit controlled a section of Baghdad in the immediate postwar period, and he was forced to make decisions on his own on everything from how to deal with looters to whether to distribute food. When I asked him in Baghdad in September whether he had rehearsed this or, indeed, whether he received any instructions from up the chain of command, he simply smiled and shook his head.

Rutter’s view is confirmed by the “After Action” report of the Third Infantry Division, a document that is available on an Army Web site but that has received little attention. Running 293 pages and marked “official use only,” it is a comprehensive evaluation of the division’s performance during the war in Iraq, covering every aspect of operations, from the initial invasion to the postwar period. The tone of the report is mostly self-congratulatory. “Operating considerably beyond existing doctrine,” it begins, “the Third Infantry Division (Mechanized) proved that a lethal, flexible and disciplined mechanized force could conduct continuous offensive operations over extended distances for 21 days.”

If the report con-
How Dickens Added Bah! to Humbug!

Charles Dickens dashed off "A Christmas Carol" in six weeks in the fall of 1843. He needed money quickly because sales of his serialized "Martin Chuzzlewit" were slack and the demands of his growing family (eventually 10) were not. The Christmas story netted far less than he hoped, but it remains his best known and best selling. Today there are fewer than 60 English-language editions in print.

Dickens, then 31, had already written "Oliver Twist," "Nicholas Nickleby" and "The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club." He was midway through the 19 monthly installments of "Chuzzlewit" and told a friend that he thought it "immeasurably the best of my stories." The public did not agree. He blamed his publisher and, soon got another.

In early October, Dickens went up to Manchester to visit one of the free Ragged schools for poor children at the request of his wealthy friend Angela Burdett-Coutts, with whom he frequently collaborated on charitable works. His biographer, Edgar Johnson, reports that Dickens came away with "the inspiration for a cheerful, glowing, heart-moving story."

He started writing in mid-October and finished in late November. As he would do with other stories, he borrowed generously from an earlier work, in this case "Pickwick." Those "papers" tell of one Gabriel Grub, church sexton, an "ill-conditioned, cross-grained, surly fellow - a morose and lonely man, who associated with nobody but himself." In "A Christmas Carol" Ebenezer Scrooge is cut from the same chilly cloth: "hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out gener-

Yet he wanted it priced inexpensively, to reach a wide audience.

Beyond the disappointing profit from the book itself, pirated printings and theater stagings rarely paid him anything at all. Within two months of the original publication, there were eight theatrical adaptations. Dickens had sanctioned only one. In the 150-odd years since there have been who-knows-how-many more, and at least 11 films.

There was, however, one hugely profitable spinoff, Dickens's readings to paying audiences. On the night of Dec. 27, 1853, he read "A Christmas Carol" to an audience of 2,000 in Birmingham Town Hall for the benefit of the Birmingham and Manchester Institute.

At first the readings took three hours, even though he pressed the story. Eventually he got it down to less than two hours. The New York Public Library owns the book from which he read for 12 years, with cues to himself scribbled in the margins: "cheerful" when Scrooge's nephew burst into the office on Christmas Eve, "tone to mystery" when Scrooge takes his "melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern" and "pathos" when the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come takes him to "poor Bob Cratchit's house."

In some 470 public readings, all but 27 for money, he most often did excerpts from "Pickwick" and "A Christmas Carol," so often that he knew them by heart. Sometimes he improvised. After a performance in Paris he wrote to a friend, "I got things out of the old 'Carol' - effects, I mean - so entirely new and so very strong, that I quite amazed myself and wondered where Marley's ghost: A page from the original manuscript of "A Christmas Carol."

Marley's ghost. David Legge/The Pierpont Morgan Library

I was going next."

Audiences loved him in his bright red vest and gold chains, even in the United States, where he had stirred some resentment with his critical "American Notes." Scalpers were said to get as much as $25 for a $2 ticket to hear him. In New York City, his hotel near Gramercy Park reserved a stairway for him and posted a guard outside his door. The New York Times critic called him "one of the best living actors," citing his "free use of gesticulation" when Mrs. Cratchit stirred gravy, mashed potatoes and sniffed the Christmas pudding.

Dickens died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1870, exhausted by the strenuous regimen of readings. He was 58. For his final performance he did the "Pickwick" excerpt and "A Christmas Carol" one more time. At the end he told the audience, "From these garish lights I vanish now forevermore, with a heartful, grateful, respectful and affectionate farewell." He died three months later and was laid to rest in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, attended by 12 people instructed by him in his will to wear no black bow, long habit and other "revolting absurdity" of Victorian mourning.
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"The Lyttleton Hart-Davis Letters," Volume Three (Academy Chicago), edited by Rupert Hart-Davis, continued one of the better 20th-century British correspondences. Here Mr. Hart-Davis proposes an ingenious theory to explain Henry James’s choice of names for his characters.

At intervals throughout the notebooks James jotted down lists of proper names, taken it seems mostly from the front page of The Times, on which he afterwards drew for his characters. One list, for instance, begins: "Chattle — Voyt — Podd — Tant — Murrum — Glibbery," and continues in that style for five lines. What emerges is that when James came to select from these lists he tended more and more to choose a particular kind of name — gritty, aseptic, impersonal — Stant, Verver, Theale, Croy, Strether, Densher, Stransom. Was he determined to avoid the overtones which hung about his contemporaries; in Hardy the romantic-pastoral (Yeobright, Oak, Winterborne, Everdene); in Meredith the flamboyant-aristocratic (Patterne, Feverel, Wentworth, Beauchamp)? Was he deliberately seeking names which might be as near algebraic symbols as possible and yet remain names? Certainly few heroines have been saddled with such rebarbative syllables as Fleda Vetch.

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No Rough Winds for the Sonnet, Unshaken in Style Since the 1200's

By DINITA SMITH

A Tough Form for Tender Thoughts

A sonnet typically has 14 lines with strict rhyme and meter. There are two principal types, each with variations. The Petrarchan sonnet has an octave and a sestet, with a rhyme scheme of abba abba cdcde e. The Shakespearean has three quatrains, abab cdcd efef, and ends with a couplet, gg.

In the exhibit at the New York Public Library, "Passion's Discipline: The History of the Sonnet in the British Isles and America" Shakespeare is represented by the second edition of his sonnets, printed in 1669 by Th. Cotes in surprisingly clear Gothic type. The edition is opened to Sonnet 138.

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her (though I know she lies)
That she might think me some untutor'd youth,
Vainfyl'full in the worlds false forgeries.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although I know my yeres be past the best.
I smiling, credit her false speaking tongue,
Outfacing faults in Love, with loves ill rest.
But wherefore says my love that she is young?
And wherefore say not I, that I am old?
O, Loves best habit is a soothing tongue,
And Age (in love) loves not to have yeres told.
Therefore Be lie with Love, and Love with me,
Since that our faults in Love thus smother'd be.

"Passion's Discipline" on display in the New halls of the New York Public Library through Aug. 2.

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Near the Dante is a sumptuously illustrated Petrarch manuscript from the mid-14th century. The initials are gold, the background is a green landscape with cherubs, showing Divine transformed into a laurel tree and a golden rain falling. It is Petrarca's first sonnet to his unyielding love Laura:

In my heart I feel ashamed— alas,
That I ought but shame my vanities have bred,
And pance, and the knowledge of clear mind
That earthly joys are dreams that swiftly pass.

But for Petrarca, Laura is not simply an angel, as Beatrice was for Dante. Petrarca acknowledges his contradictory feelings and admits that the pain of unrequited love also gives him pleasure. It was a very modern idea, Mr. Gewirtz notes.

Another rarity in the exhibition is the Westmoreland Manuscript of Donne's sonnets. The manuscript is one of the most important sources for all modern editions and was written by Rowland Woodward, around 1605, from Donne's own text. It shows the sonnet "At the round earth's imagined corners blow" with the correct line: "All who warr, death, age, aques, tyranines." Other manuscripts have the incorrect "death" instead of "dearth."
THE NEW YORK TIMES

“The great American stories have always been nuanced; they can have poetry and they can have dark shadows. They can combine a love of country with an implicit criticism of it. Gary Ross’ adaptation of Laura Hillenbrand’s ‘Seabiscuit’ could prove to be the redeeming Hollywood entertainment of this year.”

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NEWSWEEK

“Nothing can stop this story from putting a lump in your throat. ...the races have stomach-tightening suspense and the victories stir up a sweet surge of elation. You can say about Ross’ epic what you can say about the horse it celebrates: it comes through in the stretch.”

DAVID ANSEN

LAURA HILLENBRAND
AUTHOR OF THE NATIONAL BESTSELLER
SEABISCUIT:
AN AMERICAN LEGEND
ence of *Sex in the City* and *Murder She Wrote.*" The first is due out in 2004.

**BIO:** Fashion do-it-all *Ralph Lauren* invited his friend *Michael Gross*, a columnist for the New York Daily News, to write a Lauren biography.

The result is *Genuine Authentic: The Real Life of Ralph Lauren,* and the two men are no longer friends. Book magazine quotes Gross: “It goes with the territory. If you do this job right, there are going to be people who don’t like that you do it.”

**BUSY:** *Barbara Mertz,* 73, is the author of 64 books. She also uses the name Barbara Michaels. Under the name Elizabeth Peters, she has written 15 mysteries starring Amelia Peabody. The latest novel about Peabody is *Children of the Storm.*

According to Book magazine, Mertz is wild about Egyptology. She tries to visit that country and its archaeological digs every year. “A good excavator is careful,” she told Book. “You don’t throw anything away, keep every scrap, and you have to keep good records.” Sounds like some writers, doesn’t it?

**CONFIDENT:** *Winston Churchill* once said, “History will be kind to me if I intend to write it.”

**THE HOT ONES:** Publishers Weekly says that in 2002 a total of 15 first novels sold more than 100,000 copies. In 2001 there were only four first novels that outshined that mark.

*John Grisham*’s *The Summons* was 2002’s best-selling novel, with 2.6 million copies sold.

Lemony Snicket’s *The Carnival of the UNAuthoritative Biography* by Brett Helquist topped the list for children. Four in his series, *Unfortunate Events,* were in the top 10. All nine in that series, plus the *Unauthorized Biography,* sold more than 3.3 million copies in 2002. Take that, Harry Potter.

**PHONE BOOK:** HarperCollins is offering telephone conversations with its authors to book clubs. *Ann Patchett,* author of *Bel Canto,* was the first to take the plunge. She told Book magazine, “I love the idea of being able to do a book group while I’m still in bed.”

*Wally Lamb,* author of *She’s Come Undone* and *I Know This Much Is True,* was offered up second.

**A BOOK IS BORN:** *Ken Kalfus*’s idea for his novel, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment,* came from the final chapter of *Henri Troyat*’s biography *Tolstoy.* The spectacle of Tolstoy’s last days in a railway station in 1910 caused Kalfus to think about “the society we live in, this empire of images and propaganda.”

Kalfus, 48, lives in Philadelphia. He told The New York Times that his novel grew out of four years he spent in Moscow, beginning in 1994, when his wife, Inga Saffron, was the correspondent there for The Philadelphia Inquirer. “I was determined that a book would come out of it,” he said.

After college, Kalfus worked as a copy editor and book reviewer and sold a few stories to small literary magazines. After one of his stories appeared in Harper’s, he got a call at one a.m. in Moscow from Milkweed, a small publishing house in Minneapolis. The editor wanted to know if he had any more stories. He had a whole book of them that had been rejected by more than 20 publishers. He sent them to Minneapolis, where they became his first book, *Thirst,* in 1998. The story that had run in Harper’s, *Pu-239,* about a Russian nuclear accident, became the title story of his second collection.


Hustvedt told Publishers Weekly, “The one thing I knew after I finished my first two books was that the next time around I was going to be a man.” That book, *What I Loved,* was published in March.

Hustvedt said, “Women hear men speaking our whole lives. Writing as a man wasn’t as hard as getting this particular man’s voice right and striking the right tone for the book. It took six years; I rewrote it four times completely from scratch, starting on a blank page.”

Hustvedt is the wife of novelist *Paul Auster.* They live with their 15-year-old daughter in Brooklyn.

**MANUAL:** Jane Yolen is the author of *Take Joy: A Book for Writers,* 11 essays on writing. In the last almost-40 years, Yolen has written more than 200 books. The chapters have headings like “Out with Outlines,” “The Alphabets of Story,” “Killing the King” and “Beginnings and Endings.”

Yolen observes that she herself writes “with a regularity that an octogenarian would envy. Like an athlete or a dancer, I am uncomfortable—and even damaged—by a day away from my work.”

**CONVERSATION:** Woodrow Wilson once said, “I would never read a book if it were possible for me to talk half an hour with the man who wrote it.”

**IN THE BEGINNING:** Can’t get started? There’s an odd little pamphlet entitled *In the Beginning: Great First Lines from Your Favorite Books,* collected by Hans Bauer. It provides more than 300 such curiosities from authors both immortal and trendy.

Some samples: “All children, except one, grow up” is from *J. M. Barrie’s Peter Pan.* “In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly-fishing” is from *Norman Maclean*’s *A River Runs Through It.* “Under certain circumstances there are few hours in life
more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea" is the opening line from Henry James’s The Portrait of a Lady. “Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins” gets Vladimir Nabokov’s Lolita off to a sexy start.

OUCH: A book entitled Bad Press quotes some nasty reviews, including this verdict by Virginia Woolf on Katherine Mansfield: “Her mind is very thin soil, lain an inch or two upon very barren rock.”

LOSER BY A NOSE: Virginia Woolf has been very much in the news because of the movie version of Michael Cunningham’s The Hours. Nicole Kidman won an Oscar for her portrayal of the writer, but not everyone was pleased.

Jane Marcus, the author of three volumes of essays on Woolf, told The New York Times: “Ugh. Imagine the great brilliance of Virginia Woolf to be turned into this absolutely maimed fool with a really ugly nose.”

Martha Musgrove, a lecturer at the University of Ottawa, offered the following comment: “Nicole Kidman wore a permanent frown and looked cross-eyed throughout the film, clearly distressed at this Thing in the middle of her face. Were Woolf’s contemporaries preoccupied with her nose? It never really occurred to me that her proboscis was the defining feature, so to speak, of Woolf’s appearance.”

In her lifetime, Virginia and her sister Vanessa Stephens Bell were considered great beauties. Her photograph appeared in Vogue London, and British photographer Cecil Beaton included her portrait in his 1930 Book of Beauty.

HOUSE ORGAN: Starting with the May/June issue, Book magazine is called “Barnes & Noble Presents Book.” One result is that Borders will no longer carry the magazine.

Other independent booksellers are expected to drop the magazine too.

Book’s publisher Mark J. Gleason explained that he believes joining with Barnes & Noble “will make the magazine even stronger: with more readers, advertisers and eventually, we hope, issues [going from bimonthly to monthly].”

Michael Zibart, president of BookPage, a 14-year-old newsletter about books, told The New York Times, “When I walk into a Barnes & Noble store, I know there’s a reason why those books are in the front.” Zibart believes that there will also be a suspicion that the books and authors being profiled in Book magazine are the result of promotional deals with publishers.

TOY MAKER: Cerulean Sins is Laurell Hamilton’s 11th Anita Blake book in 10 years. Hamilton told Publishers Weekly, “When I sat down to create Anita and her world, I wanted a series that I would enjoy enough to write indefinitely. . . . I noticed in most series that the writer tended to get tired around book five or eight. How to avoid this problem? Answer, give yourself enough imaginary toys to play with so you won’t get bored.”

Hamilton listed as toys: guns, private detectives, the police, murderer, clues, vampires, zombies, werewolves, magic and romance.

PRAYERFUL: Peter Benchley, the novelist who hit it big with Jaws, once offered the following advice: “You have to keep writing, keep submitting, and keep praying to the god of whimsy that some editor will respond favorably.”

LIKE MOTHER: According to The New York Times, there are 37 million Latinos in the U.S., and a new novel, The Dirty Girls Social Club by Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez, was published in the hope that her book will be for Hispanics what Terry McMillan’s Waiting to Exhale was for African-Americans. The first printing is 125,000 copies, plus 10,000 in Spanish.

Valdes-Rodriguez, a former journalist for The Boston Globe and The Los Angeles Times, credits her mother with making her a writer. Her mother, Maxine Conant, was nominated for a Pushcart Prize for a story she published.

Five publishers bid for Dirty Girls, and the author was paid a $475,000 advance by St. Martin’s. They were not the highest bidder. Valdes-Rodriguez told the Times, but “they saw it as a mainstream book. They looked at me as an American, not just Hispanic.”

LISTENERS: Authors have no more serious critics than long-distance truck drivers. Suzanne Patton Wilson and her husband John drive an 18-wheeler. The first book she listened to while on the road was Larry McMurtry’s Lonesome Dove, 21 tapes long. She has also listened to Little Women, Anne of Green Gables and Mark Twain’s Mississippi books. “Those books put you in a warm, fuzzy place,” Wilson told The New York Times.

Mary Hartigan enjoys horror books. “When you’re driving, you don’t want a lullaby,” she said. When she wants to feel serene, she likes Barbara Kingsolver novels. “They clear your mind of traffic and bills and hectic situations, and you feel them in your heart,” she said.

Don Hiser grew up dreaming that he would become a cowboy, and he drives often from Little Rock, Ark., to South Texas. He said he likes westerns by Max Brand and Zane Grey. “I can imagine I have one of my heroes sitting in that other seat over there,” he said, “and we’re having a conversation all night long.”

Ina Daly, who hauls freight between Arizona and New Mexico, said, “If you can get your hands on
THE SUMMER OF KATYA, by Trevanian--

pp. 76-7: "Our conversation ranged freely, shallow and deep, now and ago, serious and light-hearted, personal and global..."

(book falters at the end, but until then it's a study in writing a page-turner)
THE SUM
are iminical to human vanity. I would attach it also to a modern incapacity for wholeness, for synthesis. The power of a work of art ultimately derives not from classifiable components but from an enigmatic quality of synthesis, which does not lend itself to analysis. We do not know why art should exist or why a few beings should be capable of producing it and even fewer of doing so with enduring excellence. We are often unable even to discern such gifts clearly during an artist's lifetime.

To return from these heights to my own case: I may say that I have found that a great deal of literary discussion seeks to impose consistency for the purpose of proposing "patterns." Of course, some writers work according to a more readily recognizable method than others do. Yet I think that each author's approach — and to each of his own works — will differ. Writers share common difficulties, but they nurture individual ways of contending with them. Similarly, in the work itself, I think that "form" means little unless the quality brought to it can seize it as an opportunity. Like style, form is after all simply the idiosyncratic way one has discovered to convey one's idea.

For me, the ear has an essential role in literary meaning. The arrangement of words, phrases, sentences should sound on the mental ear as effectively as possible, in the silence of the writer's intimacy with his or her reader. For both writer and reader, this is a sensibility refined by reading — that is, through love of literature. For the writer it is often intuitively present in the work — if by intuition we understand a synthesis of intelligence, understanding and feeling. And it will be intuitively felt and enjoyed by the reader if it is effective. These matters are not devices to pull the wool over the reader's eyes: They are attempts to regain that shared root of life of which Yeats wrote. The other question most asked of a novelist is to what extent he or she is autobiographically present in the work. Much modern fiction particularly invites that inquiry. Again, any reliable answer will vary greatly from one author to another. And I should add — there are rather few reliable answers: Authors are unlikely to lay all their cards on the table; there is no reason why they should. For myself, I feel that I drew more on private and even subjective experience when I was first writing and that this diminished as time went on. Even in the first stories I wrote, whole lives and scenes came into my imagination without apparent basis in my acquaintance with life. When we speak of "writing from experience," we usually define experience as whatever has happened directly — or merely to ourselves. That was to some extent my youthful view. As I got older my experience became more and more what I observed in others, what I imagined of other lives, what I could divine of the infinite range of human possibilities. Thus one may come to speak of writing from experience without simply referring to events and sensations directly affecting oneself.

The author reveals himself, to some degree, in almost any work of fiction, whether intentionally or inadvertently; whether in incidental disclosures or in a gradual emancipation of personality. There seems no need for esthetic or "moral" regulation of this — even though it has been a subject of critical "decrees." I enjoy what Byron called the author's "addresses from the throne" if they are done well enough and are seen as part of an inspired whole — as in Dickens or George Eliot or Hardy or Conrad, where author's asides are numerous. Again, it seems to me a question of the order of talent. Anything whatever may be achieved by genius. Or, at the least, the scope and power of genius may make acceptable to us features that are intolerable in lesser talents.

The last theme I would like to touch on is the context in which work is produced. The attempt to touch truth through a work of imagination requires an inner center of privacy and solitude. We all need silence — both external and interior — in order to find out what we truly think. I have come more and more to value the view of Ortega y Gasset that "without a certain margin of tranquility, truth succumbs." However passionate the writer's material, some distance and detachment are needed before the context can be realized. In our time, the writer can expect little or nothing in the way of silence, privacy or removal from the deafening clamor of "communications," with all its disturbing and superficial information. In addition, novelty and the merely up-to-date are urged on writers not only in the name of innovation but virtually as some new form of moral obligation, while critical explanation hovers like a vulture. Social continuity and social order — or even the illusion of these — are so disrupted as to have almost gone out of business. The sense of territory and the identity of one's readers are similarly obscured or dispersed. The necessary margin of tranquility for creative work must now presumably be developed somehow in the writer's own consciousness. That involves the exclusion of many other claims — including rightful ones, no doubt — if one is to preserve some inwardness amid the din.

The poet Montale, whom I mentioned earlier, spoke not long before his recent death of the modern rejection of solitude and singularity, saying that "the wish to huddle in groups, to create noise, and to escape from thought is a sign of desperation and despair." He said that the need to accept group ideology and generational conformity is contrary to the nature of art and of poetry. Similarly, for the artist, Montale said that the subordination to a method of thinking that one has not worked toward oneself implies a surrender to uniformity, to officiousism: "Only the man who lives in solitude can speak of the fatal isolation we all suffer under the human mass-produced communication. Being in fashion and famous now seems the only accepted role for the contemporary artist. ... And I ask myself where this absurd absence of judgment will lead us."

This brings me round to my starting point. There is at least one immense truth which we can still adhere to and make central to our lives — responsibility to the accurate word. It is through literature that the word has been preserved and nourished, and it is in literature that we find the candor and refreshment of truth. In the words of Jean Cocteau, the good and rightful tears of the reader are drawn simultaneously by an emotion evoked through literature, and by the experience of seeing a word in place.

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Julie Ellis

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LETTERS

Under 40?

To the Editor:
I read with interest John Irving’s glowing recommendation of Craig Nova’s “The Good Son” (Oct. 3), but I am befuddled by the last sentence in the review: “It is the richest and most expert novel I know of this season.” My review of the same novel appeared in the Review in June. It was a reasonable book by a writer aged 41! What novels by writers “sub-40” does he have in mind? Why is he recommending a writer who is four years younger than the one he reviewed in June?

C. DAVID HEYMANN
New York City

‘Eugene Onegin’

To the Editor:
In his review of D. M. Thomas’s translation of Pushkin (Sept. 26), Simon Karsky says: “The various translations of ‘Eugene Onegin’ in rhymed English tetrameter (e.g., the recent one by Sir Charles Johnson [sic] undeservedly overpraised by critics, to my mind) produce on a person closely familiar with the original the effect of a Chopin nocturne played in the tempo of a military march.” (My italics.)

My translation of “Eugene Onegin” was in fact not addressed to the very few people in the English-speaking world who are “closely familiar with the original.” On the contrary, my aim was to convey to the hundreds of thousands who know Pushkin’s poem by reputation — and who long for a closer acquaintance with it — some faint inkling of its original magic. Certain critics in the United States and in Britain were good enough to say that I had to a certain extent achieved this. But in holding his negative opinion, Professor Karlinsky is in good company: his view is shared by Dmitri Nabokov, with whom, in The Times Literary Supplement, I am at this moment conducting a high-spirited correspondence about his father’s version of “Eugene Onegin.”

Incidentally, I am interested by Professor Karlinsky’s choice of language: undeservedly overpraised. This is a fascinating bit of English usage. Can someone be deservedly overpraised? Perhaps in California?

CHARLES JOHNSTON
London, England

Mussolini’s Son

To the Editor:
Leslie Epstein’s informative and, in many ways, moving article “Round Up the Usual Suspects” (Oct. 10) contains a significant error which, in the interest of historical truth, requires correction. In castigating the beautification of violence, transmuting murder into “a branch of esthetics,” Mr. Epstein writes: “A famous example is Mussolini’s son-in-law, Count Ciano. It is rather was Mussolini’s own son (I believe his name was Bruno) who wrote these words, indulging both in his hatred and its enormous beautification. The late dictator’s son may still be alive today. His whereabouts notwithstanding, the enjoyment of one’s own or a terror group’s sadistic actions is a most serious problem in our times. How many terrorists who throw bombs into crowded restaurants or fire submachine guns at innocent worshippers leaving a

synagogue . . . are without feeling or regret? Much of it, psychogenetically speaking, certainly goes back to the Nazi Holocaust, when such actions were sanctified by the proclamations of the Fuhrer and, during the Ethiopian war, glorified by the cruel son’s equally cruel father, the fascist dictator.

WILLIAM G. NIEDERLAND, M.D.
Englewod, N.J.

Courteous Librarian

To the Editor:
I am writing to express my shock and strong disapproval of Leslie Epstein’s portrayal of YIVO’s librarian, Miss Abramowicz, in his article, “Round Up the Usual Suspects.” I have found Miss Abramowicz to be most courteous and helpful in all of my encounters with her at the library.

MRS. M. VICTOR
New York City

Correction

In a letter from James McNally (Oct. 31), statistics for the Russian and Finnish losses in the 100 Day or Winter War were incorrectly cited. The pertinent sentences in Mr. McNally’s letter should have read: “The Society of Military History, Helsinki, states that the U.S.S.R. reported its losses as 217,500 men. . . . It reported Finnish losses as 22,900 dead or missing.”

The Times welcomes letters from readers. Letters for publication should include the writer’s name, address and daytime telephone number and should be addressed to The Editor, The New York Times Book Review, 229 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. We regret that because of the large volume of mail received, we are unable to acknowledge or return unpublished letters.
We Need Silence to Find Out What We Think

By SHIRLEY HAZZARD

EVERYONE who writes is asked at some stage Why? Some writers give replies to that question, but I wonder if it is truly answerable. If there is a worthy response, it would to my mind have to do with a wish to close the discrepancy between human experience, with all its strangeness of the mind, as it is known to each of us, and as it is generally expressed. We live in a time when past concepts of an order larger than the self are dwindling away or have disappeared — the deferral of the human species and of societies to nature and to the universe, to religions, to nationhood, to social systems. The testimony of the accurate word is perhaps the last great mystery to which we can make ourselves accessible, to which we can still subscribe.

Horace wrote that strong men had lived before Agamemnon, but they lacked a poet to commemorate them and thus passed into oblivion. A modern Italian poet, Eugenio Montale, reminds us, however, that memory existed as a literary genre before writing was invented: Men who lived before Agamemnon were not in their time unreported or unengaged. Articulation is central to human survival and self-determination, not only in its commemorative and descriptive functions but in relieving the soul of incoherence. Insofar as expression has been matched to sensation and perception, human nature has seemed to retain consciousness. A sense of deliverance plays its part in the pleasure we feel in all the arts and perhaps most of all in literature.

I say most of all in literature because language, unlike other arts, is a medium through which we all deal continuously in daily life. William Butler Yeats said that “if we understand our own minds, and the things that are striving to utter themselves through our minds, we move others, not because we have thought about those others, but because all life has the same root.” In its preoccupation with the root of life, language has special responsibilities. Its manipulation, and deviation from true meaning, can be more influential than in the case of other arts. And there are always new variations on old impostures, adapted to the special receptivity of the times. In our era, even the multiple possibilities for valid approaches to truth through language are themselves circuitous and increasingly insistent on their successive claims to be “definitive.” In repudiating such pretensions from the Realists and other self-styled “schools,” Flaubert said, “There is no true. There are merely different ways of perceiving truth.”

Through art, as in dreams, we can experience this truth, this root of life, as Yeats calls it. Through art, we can respond ideally to truth as we cannot in life. To suggest the nature of that truth — which is the writer’s material — I should like to go outside literature for a moment and draw on the view of a painter — Veronese, who in 1572 was called before the Holy Office at Venice to explain why, in a painting of the Last Supper, he had included figures of looters, passers-by, people scratching themselves, deformed people, a man having a nosebleed and so on: details then held unfit to appear in a holy subject. When this grave charge of blasphemy was pressed on Veronese by the examiners, who asked him why he had shown such profane matters in a holy picture, he replied, “I thought these things might happen.”

Despite the many convoluted theories expounded on the novelist’s material, its essence is in those words. Paraphrasing a text from Revelation, W.H. Auden wrote, in his poem “The Novelist,” that the novelist must “among the Just / Be just, among the Filthy, filthy too, / And in his own weak person, if he can, / Must suffer dully all the woes of Man.”

The task of the poet or novelist is to convey states of mind and of being as immediately as possible, through language. Immediateacy of language is not always or necessarily simplicity, although simplicity is a highly desirable and immensely difficult literary instrument. Valéry says that of two words, we should always choose the lesser. But we don’t always have a lesser word that meets our need — although it can be said that veracity tends to express itself with an eminent simplicity, in art as in life, just as discursiveness can often be an index of falsehood.

Without diminishing the merits and advantages of brevity, however, literature cannot be looked on as a competition to employ as few words as possible. Rather it is a matter of seeking accurate words to convey a human condition. And of deploying words so that tone, context, sound and syntax are ideally combined, without a show of contrivance. That is the proper and agonizing business of literature, in which much of the writer’s suffering originates: “the intolerable to wrestle with,” as T.S. Eliot called it. Every writer who is serious about his craft experiences a sense of profaning pure meaning with unworthy words.

Flaubert told George Sand: “When I come on a bad assonance or a repetition in my sentences, I’m sure I’m floundering in the false. By searching I find the proper expression, which was always the only one, and which is also harmonious. The word is never lacking which one possesses the idea. Is there not, in this precise fitting of parts, something eternal, like a principle? If not, why should there be a relation between the right word and the musical word? Or why should the greatest compression of thought always result in a line of poetry?”

Great practitioners of language have supplied new words and new usages when, in the literal sense, words failed them. In most cases, we echo their innovations unthinkingly, because they satisfy, they meet the case. At other times they bear the maker’s seal so distinctly that they can’t be uttered without a mental nod in the author’s direction. But these great innovators cannot provide a pattern for lesser talents; as Jacques Barzun has said, magnitude creates its own space. More usually, the writer works with words in common use, developing as great a range and as original and independent a voice as possible.

Some writers will bring the whole weight of considered language to their task. (Dr. Johnson said that he could have compiled his dictionary from Bacon’s works alone.) Some build their impression in single strokes — whether light or powerful. For the imaginative writer, words must be the measure of talent — to an extent not necessarily true for writers dealing in information and “ideas.” The intentions of a novelist or

Shirley Hazzard is the author of “Transit of Venus.”

Continued on Page 28
In the Wings, Wilde's Ghost

BERNARD SHAW
AND ALFRED DOUGLAS

A Correspondence.
Edited by Mary Hyde.

By RICHARD ELLMANN

If the greatest love affairs are the most disastrous, then that of Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas takes pride of place in the Victorian period. It had the distinction of destroying both men. How Wilde, accused of pederasty by Douglas's father, the Marquess of Queensberry, sought suit for libel and of course lost it is a familiar tale. There followed his arrest and conviction for indecent acts with men. After two years' imprisonment at hard labor he was released and died ignominiously in Paris four years afterward.

Douglas's luck was not to die but to live on, a 90's character long out of date. Whatever guilt he deserves for prodding Wilde's attack his father, his later behavior was unquestionably worse. More his father's son than he admitted, he viciously exposed Wilde's literary executor, Robert Ross, as also a homosexual. Then he wrote a book on Wilde and himself, incriminating his friend and excoriating himself, though he was at least as blameworthy. After some years he wrote a series of books in which he took back bit by bit some of his more scurrilous statements. Meanwhile he became notorious for bringing or threatening to bring libel charges and living on the damages.

In 1953 he fell victim to his own ferocity, however, and had to serve six months for criminally libeling Winston Churchill. Prison did not chaste him: He savagely attacked William Butler Yeats and T. S. Eliot and as savagely praised Hitler and the earlier atrocities of the Black and Tans in Ireland. Literature offers few richer blends of knave and fool. The wonder is that he retained a circle of admirers and friends who half accepted his own view of himself as a victim of circumstances and a poetic genius. As he grew older — and he did not die until 1949 — his much revised account of his life took on a kind of historical glamour.

Richard Ellmann, whose "James Joyce" has just been reissued in a revised edition, is writing a biography of Oscar Wilde.

A Context For Poems

The Second Life of Art

Selected Essays.
By Eugenio Montale.

By M. L. ROSENTHAL

Great poets usually write a compelling prose. Their verse, Eugenio Montale observed in his Nobel Prize speech in 1975, is the "result of silence and accumulation." So is their other writing, as Jonathan Galassi's thoughtfully selected, translated and annotated edition of Montale's essays demonstrates. These pieces show a good deal about the mind — brooding and whimsical, sardonic and affectionate, now magnanimous and now harshly dismissive — behind the books of poems that emerged so infrequently but to such effect between 1925 and 1977.

For one thing, they show the spirit that held its own quietly but sturdily during the Mussolini years. Although no activist, Montale signed Benedetto Croce's anti-Fascist manifesto of 1925, stood openly by such persecuted friends as the part-Jewish poet Umberto Saba and refused to join the Fascist Party — for which reason he had to resign his library curatorship in 1939. Also, the essays show his faithfulness to the idea of a "pure" poetry, open to every pressure of experience and awareness and insistent on the discovery, rather than the imposition, of form. And in general they show a mind of brilliantly keen intensities, volatile, analytical and self-disciplining.

This book carries out Mr. Galassi's important aim of "providing the rudiments of a context in which to view Montale's greatest work, his poetry." Yet I could wish he had not arranged the essays under such thematic headings as "On Culture and Society," "On Italian Writers," "On Other Writers." In the first place, some of these headings are vague, and they overlap. More important, this arrangement forces the reader to veer back and forth in time and lose a clear view of the poet's developing critical awareness. A simple chronological ordering of all the way through would have been preferable, I think: a piece or two by the young Montale, followed by the half-dozen or so essays Mr. Galassi takes from the two Fascist decades, then those from the immediate postwar years and finally those written since 1947 (which make up two-thirds of this book), during Montale's maturity, when he developed a number of styles, including a merrily slashing one that is at once deferentially "appreciative" and devastating. (See, for instance, the little sketches of Malraux and Brancusi and some of the side-swipes at figures such as Pound and Eliot, whose work he truly admired.)

The essential emphasis of Montale's criticism from beginning to end was on "pure" poetry in the sense I have described. In 1925, just before he turned 30, he was already writing about the "thankless work, dark and joyful," that lay ahead for those who wished to create a climate for such poetry in Italy. That was the year Fascism came to power, and so Montale's words...
tion of the railways and the postal system and a hundred other enthusiasms were all mere distractions from the main purpose.

Even in his Dorset Street home, where he had his coach-house and six-stall stables pulled down and two floors of strong, fireproof workshops constructed, lathes installed and a separate dust-free sanctuary built to house his Calculating Engine, Babbage, tough theoretical economist, allowed himself to be swindled by his technicians and outwitted by his dishonest machine-maker, who more or less wrecked the enterprise.

With the Difference Engine incomplete (great invention though it was— even the very construction of the small part that does exist led to a revolution in machine-tool making), Babbage petitioned the Government for more money and for the further funding of a yet more advanced idea, the Analytical Engine, which, mostly conceived in 1836, his annus mirabilis, is the recognizable forebear of the modern computer.

The Government was forgivably bewildered, and the money was not forthcoming, the concept never realized.

### Shaw/Douglas

Continued from Page 12

Shaw was romantic enough to find the merit. (Most modern readers agree with W. H. Auden that it is drivel.) Praise for his poetry always disarmed Douglas, but he did not allow himself to be won at once. His objections exasperated Shaw, who applied to him such epithets as "darned fool," "blasted idiot," "silly" with "the brains of a grasshopper." His most frequent charge, that Douglas was still a "squalling baby," was one that Douglas enthusiastically accepted as unintended praise. "All real poets have an infantile complex," he announced. Shaw addressed letters to him as "Childe Alfred." He had to make elderly concessions regarding Harris to this prickly infant but not many, for his hide was tough enough to bear all the burrs and Douglas could never penetrate it as he had penetrated Wilde's, his father's and Robert Louis's. As time went on they exchanged letters about other subjects, the deaths of their wives, Shakespeare's sonnets, the nature of poetry and their respective infirmities. When they would pull out, they did. Shaw even offered Douglas a complete structural revision of a book on Wilde only to have Douglas happily reject it.

ALWAYS Shaw bore in mind that his irritating junior was "a fellow mortal," and the continuation of their correspondences over many years is a tribute to his humanity. In the wings the ghost of Wilde must have obsessed with amusement Douglas's relentless pestering of another Irishman. But Shaw had the sense to recognize that Douglas's "flowery beauty" was "a horrible handicap," rather to be pitied than adored. Mary Hyde makes the difficult relationship of the two men expertly available.

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—Publishers Weekly

Shirley Hazzard
Continued from Page 11

afflicted in this way. Along with
the transforming powers of
technology and mass society,
there developed in the 19th cen-
tury a sort of Industrial Revolu-
tion in human expression—an
increasing tendency to ren-
ounce personal opinion in
favor of generalized or official
opinion and to evade self-knowl-
dge and self-commitment
through use of abstractions:
a wish, in fact, to believe in some
process of feeling more efficient
than the human soul. There was
also an associated new phe-
nomenon of mass communi-
cations and mass advertising—
that is, of new words and usage
not spontaneously but spe-
cially brought into wide circu-
lation as a means of profitably
directing human impulse. (The
word "jargon," incidentally,
anthetically derives from the twit-
tering of geese.)

This measure of renunciation of
independent and eccentric views
that accompanied the
growth of mass culture has in-
evitably infected esthetic
matters. The public has been
encouraged, in some quarters,
to put its faith in a self-ap-
pointed critical authority that,
in the words of one modern
critic, will "deal expertly" with
literature and other arts, relie-
ving readers of time-consuming
burdens of private response and
private choice. While commen-
tary and scholarly attention
have always been directed to-
ard literature and always will
be, an entirely new modern indus-
yry has grown up of "inter-
pretation." (I make this distinc-
tion with the past in the same
spirit that a certain schoolma-
ster in England used to tell his
students: "Remember that the
intuitive is to the scholar as
the cad once was to the gentle-
man.")

A BODY of attitudes has
developed that seeks to
neutralize the very di-
rectness to life that is nurtured
by art, and to sever the private
bond, the immortal intimacy,
that has existed between reader
and writer. The great writers
do not write as if through in-
termediaries. The new phenom-
one is notably one of explication
rather than comprehension—
the concept of art as a discipline
to be contained within consist-
tent laws, the seductive promise
of a technology to be mastered
by those who will then be
equipped to dictate and regi-
ment taste. All this turns on
what W. H. Auden called the
in-
ability of certain critics to ac-
knowledge that works of art can
be more important than any-
thing critics can say about
them. As an ominous result we
are getting, in literature, an in-
creasing response not to poems
and novels but to interpreta-
tions. Not to the thing but to
the
self. While the students of such
interpreters can—and do—ex-
 pand their mentors' views by
the hour, it has become very
rare to hear them spontane-
ously quote a line of poetry.

It is always tempting, of
course, to impose one's view
rather than to undergo the sub-
mission required by art—a sub-
mission, akin to that of gener-
osity or love, that evokes the
private response rather than
the authorized one. But art is not
technology and cannot be "mas-
tered." It is an endless access
to revelatory states of mind, a vast
extension of living experience
and a way of commingling with
the dead. An intimacy with
truth, through which, however
much instruction is provided
and absorbed, each of us must
pass alone.

The degradation of language
in the extreme versions of these
current explicatory approaches
to the arts should be the first
concern of anyone wishing to
penetrate them. The supposedly
"clinical" approach to art ne-
cessitates a dehumanized and
labored vocabulary and a tone
of infectious claims to higher
seriousness—a seriousness
that proposes itself as superior
to art. The unconscious of the
modern critical body deserves
some exploration, if only to
probe its effects on the life of
the imagination and to discover
why criteria of this kind so sel-
dom step aside to allow art to
speak, inimitably, for itself—
art frequently appearing in
their discussions as "mere ma-
terial" for dissection and classi-
fication, and for self-advance-
ment.

EVERY child knows that it is
easier to dismantle a complex
creation than to reassemble it.

Of similar pedants, Seneca
wrote that "No one lets hu-
manity down quite so much as
those who study knowledge as if
it were a negotiable skill." And
it may be that what we suffer
from now is simply a new stage
of the immutable attempt to
exorcise great mysteries that
When the Rocket veered north he left a
telling trail across the super-starry sky.
The National Football League and its me-
dia mascots called him greedy, misguided
and perhaps not quite man enough to face
the challenge of the Big Frat. Most every
other non-Canadian with an opinion dubbed
Raghib Ismail merely greedy, but found
that entirely appropriate in a time of Bo
Jackson and Cahill Road. Take the money
and run, before the game takes your legs.
Only a sportswriter would tell you to do it
for love.

And just when we’re hungry for heroes
again. If Stormin’ Norman tosses his hel-
met into the ring, and if Kevin Costner
dances with anything else, we will have to
dip back into the arena for role models. And
look who’s there. Pete Rose twists in a field
of dreams between jail and the Hall of Fame.
George Foreman is playing his
comeback as a lounge-act Muhammad Ali
with no agenda except the next fat payday.
George Steinbrenner cries on the stand,
apparently unaware that the brief era of
the Sensitive Male is over. Is it Michael
Jordan or Mars Blackmon whose shoes
we’re supposed to kill for? Wade Boggs and
Jose Canseco are both hitting. What are
they doing, and whom are they doing it
with? Will Mike Tyson get a date? Will
Charles Barkley undergo exorcism after
the playoffs? What are we to make of all
this?

Who knows?
Ho knows.

“... I believe in all the clichés,” said Howard
Cosell. “I am a sports fan.”

This was at the Friars Club in Manhattan
the other night at the official opening of the
selling season for “What’s Wrong With
Sports” (Simon & Schuster, 1991), Cosell’s
fourth volume of meditations, this one writ-
ten with Shelby Whitfield, the director of
sports and executive producer of the ABC
radio network. Irony there. Cosell is barely
on the air anymore. The man whose
strength was that he couldn’t pipe down has
been shut up. Most sportswriters don’t miss
him because his outrage made it hard to
skim and glide.

When Cosell holds forth on Pete Rose’s
lack of character, the N.F.L. as a shadow
government, the cynicism of hiring Jim
Valvano as a TV analyst (I say, why not? G.
Gordon Liddy has a security firm), the
media’s pandering to illegal sports gam-

 Two heroes, forever
linked, made the
Rocket’s trajectory
understandable.

bling and Lawrence Taylor’s sleights of
hand with Bible Belt urine, it becomes silly
to keep pretending that SportsWorld is
merely a sweaty Oz. And yet, Cosell’s out-
rage sprang from his belief in the clichés.
Tell it like it is, the man’s a sports fan. In his
fashion.

That’s why he was able to reach beyond
the stereotypical Joe Sixpack audience by
dramatizing the political, moral and per-
sonal nuances of the game, most effectively
in pro football and boxing. Frequently, he
gilded junk. At his best, he helped raise the
consciousness of the country by giving
clear, fair electronic voice to Muhammad
Ali as charmer, hustler, religionist, super-
star and the illegitimate target of politi-
cians. Two curious heroes, forever linked,
made the Rocket’s trajectory possible and
understandable.

Ali has little of interest to say about
football. He played it briefly as a youngster
and was appalled. More than 20 years ago,
he said: “They gave me the ball and tack-
led me. POW. No, sir. You’ve got to get hit
in that game. Toooo rough. You don’t have
to get hit in boxing. People don’t understand
that.”

Or irony. (It’s the Pencilhead’s equiva-
 lent of taking a pitch on the butt. Gets you
on base, no matter how ignominiously.)
There are few former football players be-
side Darryl Stingley who can make us catch
our breath as can Ali, so sweetly slow of
word and step. In his reduced physical and
fiscal circumstances, Ali is no longer
threatening. He makes people feel just sad
enough to feel good. He is lovable now.
Incredibly, the universal child will be 50
years old next year. Cosell is 73.

They are both, in this season of come-
backs, returning to us. Cosell’s new book,
shrewd and loud and pompous and prin-
ced, like the man, is a smart review of the
past decade in sports. Ali will be represent-
ed in coming months by a number of films,
TV shows and books, the most promising so
far being Thomas Hauser’s authorized oral
history, which captures Ali and his times in
rich, often revisionary detail.

The Rocket is no hero yet, just a Buppie
ballcarrier making all the right moves,
waiting for his own book about how he
punched a hole in the corporate veneer of
the N.F.L., which has always tried to sell
The Game rather than individual stars, then
now after one year with Bruce McNall,
the Great Gretzky and Uncle Buck, he
exercised the reported escape clause in his
Toronto Argonauts contract and joined the
Los Angeles Raiders.

That would put the Rocket in the pocket
of Al Davis, the great city sacker who wrote
the introduction to Cosell’s new book. See?
Ho knows.
SLOW STARTERS

By JACK CURRY

Special to The New York Times

NEW YORK, April 25 — Two of their best starters have yet to throw a pitch, their only left-handed starter is on the verge of going 11 days without pitching, their fifth starter is waiting to be released or traded and the ace of the staff has a 5.40 earned run average.

Please excuse the mess, but the Yankees’ starting rotation is likely to be in disarray for a while. As ugly as the starters’ e.r.a. has been (5.31, worst in the league) and as scattered as their starts have been, it is a wonder the Yankees have limped to even a 5-8 record.

Establishing a pattern is always crucial for starters in the first month of the season. They want to pitch every fifth day and maintain a routine that will carry them through September. A day off today and two rainouts since Sunday have disrupted any continuity the Yankees might have had.

Rainy Days and Then Some

“It’s a problem and we can’t control it,” Manager Stump Merrill said. “We have to live with it.”

The muddled picture goes beyond bad weather. The Yankees don’t have Mike Witt or Pascual Pérez because of injuries. They don’t want Andy Hawkins because of past performance, and they have not given Chuck Cary, the lefthander who is supposed to have the best stuff on the staff, a chance to pitch very often. Those searching for a read on what this crew can provide should check back later in the season.

“It’s early,” said Tim Leary (2-0), the ace with the 5.40 e.r.a. who opposes Greg Hibbard (2-0) tonight when the Yankees open a series in Chicago. “It might take two or three months before we have a full idea of what our staff is going to be like.”

Leary is right because it will be at least a month before Witt recovers from his inflamed left elbow and returns to the majors. Pérez, who has not pitched for the Yankees in a year because of a torn rotator cuff, is expected in three weeks. The 33-year-old had an excellent outing in spring training Wednesday and struck out six batters and runs in three innings.

Stand By for Tough Decks

If Pérez and Witt are here, will he be questions for Mendoza? Where does he remove from the accommodate two pitchers' price tag of $4.6 million each? Dave Eiland and Cary are the candidates, but why a young pitcher who is not major and Cary is the only starter on the team. Both are young and are eager to pitch again.

“I plan to make that tough as possible for them to pitch,” said Cary. “I’m proven to be tough.

“I just need to pitch.”

“I’d pitch every day if I could,” Cary said.

Cary allowed one run in innings against the White Sox on May 16, but a rainout Wednesday means his next scheduled start is Sunday. He threw seven scoreless innings in Detroit last Tuesday, until next Tuesday.

“Every start is magnified by the year,” Cary said.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slow Starters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tim Leary</td>
<td>2-0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chuck Cary</td>
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<td>Scott Sanderson</td>
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<td>Dave Eiland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andy Hawkins</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Vincent Rendeau, left, and Glen Featherstone crash into net goal by North Stars’ Mike Modano during first period Wednesday.
Notes From Underground

The ostensible recollections of an Italian terrorist from the 1970's.

MEMOIRS OF AN ITALIAN TERRORIST
By Giorgio.
Translated by Antony Shugaar.

By Richard Eder

ORGANIZING a terrorist action "has much more in common with the approach of a scrupulous accountant than that of a guerrilla fighter," writes the author of "Memoirs of an Italian Terrorist." He continues: "I imagine that few wars or guerrilla campaigns or armed uprisings, call it what you like, have required the level of drudgery work, routine or rat race that is so much a part of ours."

In 1980, in the waning days of a decade of terrorism that gripped Italy and claimed hundreds of victims, including the former prime minister Aldo Moro, a manuscript arrived at a small Italian publishing house. The vague note that accompanied it was signed "Yours in Communism, Giorgio." Pseudonymous memoirs court justifiable suspicion. The publishers acknowledged the risk but went ahead in the belief that the work was authentic. "Memoirs," sold widely in Italy and other parts of Europe.

Questions of authenticity may have been one reason that only now has the book been published in the United States, translated and with an introduction by Antony Shugaar. Another reason may be that the book veils most of the details about the actions it refers to. Essentially, "Memoirs" is about a solitary state of mind and method of living. It is both desolate and instructive — all the more so today when the facts about terrorism are more or less known, while its ecology, mental and emotional, remains a frightening mystery. In this sense the memoirs of the man who calls himself Giorgio are more timely for an American reader than they would have been two decades ago.

"What I write here can't be true, it can only be truthful," Giorgio declares at the start; reticent with specifics and frank about having blurred them. As the British journalist and author Neal Ascherson suggests in a foreword, their very paucity seems appropriate to someone seeking to remain clandestine. A fiction writer would have no reason not to fill in a few of the more awkward silences. Giorgio is, or has created (most likely both), the figure of man alone: cocky, even playful at first, then gradually and imperceptibly breaking apart, though not — at least as declared here — abandoning his lethal drudgery. The main narrative line is Giorgio's step-by-step evolution (dissolution, a reader may think, noting the darkening of the narrator's morale) as he goes from a gregarious, middle-class young activists to a cut-off, total clandestinity and meticulously planned assassinations.

There is absurd comedy in the early days. "I was very, very much of a spontaneous," he says of the period when he and his fellow would-be revolutionaries rejected the boring rigidities of the Communist Party and the stifling hierarchies and puritan ideologies of various clandestine groups to its left. "We wanted the opposite; we are all for the excess, we used to say. We wanted everything. We didn't just want bread. At that point, someone would say, 'We want roses.' 'No,' I said during one discussion. 'Let's eat cake! Marie Antoinette was right.' Everybody liked that a lot. And so we decided to expropriate some blue jeans."

What followed this posturing was a raid on a fancy boutique. Indignant when the newspapers reported it as a simple robbery and failed to recognize its political message, the group printed fliers.

Comedy dwindled. Giorgio and a companion burgled a friend's apartment, took money from the mother's bureau (first reading her adulterous love letters), bought a pistol, fired it at a demonstration, disarmed a security guard and tied him up. At that point Giorgio was approached by an armed underground group, unnamed. It was not the Red Brigades; it may have been the less rigid though equally violent Prima Linea. (Coincidentally or not, Giorgio submitted his manuscript just as Prima Linea was being crushed by the police.) His clandestine life began. It was mostly solitary, except for specific missions and, once, for an extended stay with three others preparing for a complex operation. The operation is not described. What is vividly rendered are the sour tensions, approaching violence, among the four.

Giorgio was ordered to forsake other reading for an intensive study of II Sole 24 Ore, a leading financial newspaper (it depressed him almost to tears), in order to acquaint himself with the capitalist structures targeted by his organization. "The meaning of the death of an oppressor," the slogan went, "is written in the pages of II Sole 24 Ore."

Eventually a middle manager in a large Venice factory was selected. Giorgio shadowed him every day from home to work and back, only to discover that the man occasionally strayed off route for a rendezvous with a family friend. This, the organization decided, made him riskily unpredictable and, the wages of sin being life, the hit was canceled.

The human factor won out on other occasions: once on a streetcar, when Giorgio was so repelled by the after-shave lotion of a detective he was to help kill that he abruptly got off. A successful hit, where we get little but a terse phrase about the target "dropping." What crosses across with growing insistence is the silence and solitude: a leaching agent that eats away the narrator's ability to speak of himself with anything but a cold, depressive detachment. He is weary, he writes. At the start there is a beautifully written evocation of childhood vacation; a passage of color before the screen goes black and gray.

He writes with bleak rage about his bourgeois mother, but toward the end a scruple makes itself felt, an emotional armistice during a week spent with his family (they think he is doing art in Rome). Anna, his girlfriend, whom he manages to see occasionally, is finally weary of his silences and disappearances. Too frozen up to be able to write of her with any feeling, he offers, instead, a last letter from her. Evoking a ghost of love, she tentatively affirms the freedom his harsh distance has forced on her: "Sometimes, I feel so happy that I feel guilty toward you. In some sense, for me to exist, you had to disappear.

He all but memorized the letter, he tells us. To a reader and perhaps to himself, it is the only part of his life that the underground has not caused to vanish.

Richard Eder writes book reviews and articles for The Times.
When a book is...

delicious

“A great heroine, steamy
Savannah setting, a hunky
chef, antiques galore, and an
intriguing mystery. It doesn’t
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N O W I N P A P E R B A C K


Rube Goldberg Variations

The language of a British poet is marked by a hurtling unpredictability.

SOFT SIFT
By Mark Ford.
49 pp. Orlando, Fla.:
Harcourt. $23.

By Albert Mobilio

“W
HERE will you ride in this
minute that stretches / Its
wings,” Mark Ford asks at the
beginning of his poem
“Misguided Angel,” a minute that “soars aloft,
and turns into / An unplanned, devilish interval?”
Given the effervescent, careering unpredict-
dictability of his poems, he could be describing a
moment spent reading his work. Ford’s imagi-
nation is indeed genuinely propulsive, its syntax
and permissive, associative logic set in motion
“Serial / Misadventures” that caper across the
with the verve of a Las Vegas showstopper.
Within the loose bounds of this kinetic con-
sciousness “enigma / Swarm at the brink of
the five senses” and “there is no control-
/ One’s renegade thoughts.”

It comes as no surprise that Ford has writ-
ten a biography of the French avant-garde writer
Raymond Roussel. In “Raymond Roussel and
the Republic of Dreams,” he celebrates Rou-
sell’s compulsive wordplay and taste for the Rube
Goldberg-like miraculous, which influenced
Georges Perec, Harry Mathews, John Ashbery,
and clearly Ford himself. Something approxi-
mating Roussel’s hyperspeed visual tourism un-
reeled in “He Aims”:

As a child’s tongue probes a wobbly
milk-tooth,
one is drawn to the far-flung, imperishable
scenes featured
in a company calendar: veldt, ice-foes,
desert, miles

of prairie. Under the gentle aegis of a wide-
angled lens, earth and sky exchange
elaborate favours. The greyish remains of an unlucky
midge

streak the aureate canyons of Death Valley.
A herd
of startled anteelope gallop into the sunset:
out
of frame a lion pursues, because his name
is lion.

Ford’s avid eye moves heedlessly from mi-
cro to macro, from facsimile to fact, from one
tycoon to another as if the viewer were either
omniscient or hallucinating. Still, its movement
is strategically paced and the imagery as precise
(“remains of an unlucky midge... streak the au-
reate canyons”) as it is elusive (how easily we
slide behind an imagined camera’s lens). A
Rousselian note is heard in the last line’s conclu-
sion that name precedes essence. Language, for
this poet, doesn’t mirror or represent reality but
instead is reality.

Even so, Ford is not without emotional ur-
gency — he manages the art of beautiful phrase-
making for phrasemaking’s sake while suggesting
(not broadcasting) strong feelings in lovely,
un-
typical ways: “I wanted to punctuate or somehow
refute my own / Breathing.” Or, “I slept under
strips of frayed curtain, in a room / that lacked
furniture, and resembled a false -/ bottomed
suite; at length I relaxed, only / then to discover
how many of my treasures, once / chronic ill-
ments had either blistered or burst.” These spea-
kers are not recognizable types from the poetry-hir-
ing hails: moist-suited nostalgacists, reluctant lovers
or wiseful depressives. They do not cast up oh-so-
telling anecdotes about our very humanness. And
they do not unburden themselves of twilit-sky
epiphanies or hard-earned bits of wisdom. Ford’s
speakers don’t always make sense, or certainly
not in any readily apprehensible way. What does it
mean to refute your own breathing? But this ap-
parent incoherence in no way impedes the poetic
sense, the senecio intellectual bristle of these
lines. This is not a poem of incident and handly
derived precis but rather of choreographed ten-
sion and inspired utterance.

Gertrude Stein once said of the pedagogically
inclined Ezra Pound that he was “a village ex-
plainer, excellent if you were a village, but if you
were not, not.” Fortunately, we all are blessed
with an army of sense-makers who hold forth from
editorial pages, self-help best sellers, the nightly
news and pulps. Yet any number of contempo-
rary poets, it seems, wish to join this chorus and
teach us. Ford’s “cloudy strategies” are a wel-
come relief from the family-photobook clarity of
the many prosaic dramas currently tricked out with
quirky line breaks. Coming perilously close to a di-
rect statement, Ford writes in “One Figures,” “I
hate to lie, but unfortunately have come to loathe
/ the insatiable, unshaved claws of truth.”
He isn’t writing for a village but rather for readers
with an equally idiosyncratic regard for the world.

Dirty fingernails in August, and just
The amount of lightning threatened; superb
Courtiers sweep through the various
precincts

Fingering each other’s beads in the jagged
dusk.

I myself went and left like a moron, but heard
The rumours nevertheless — meanwhile
the wind

Pounds this shack with wifful abandon, then
inquires,
As it cases, just exactly how many spliffs
there were

Stashed that night in the cicada-coloured
Pencil case tucked in the side pocket of her
satchel.

Again, there is much strange beauty here as
well as much that’s quite inapplicable. It is merely
—as if such a thing were easily attainable — “an
unplanned, devilish interval,” an on-the-run inven-
tory of a mind alive with recombinatory possibility.

“Soft Sift” contains only 30 poems, yet it of-
fers a generous amount of Ford’s fancifully lim-
ber sensibility. There are, to be sure, less than
winning moments: the yoking of an offhand tone
to ornate, near-burlesque mention — his bread
and-butter move — doesn’t always work, and
when it doesn’t we register the strain of a stage-
managed dream. But Ford is on target more of-
ten than not. His game, lucidly opaque verse re-
minds us that poetry needn’t toe barges and
bales of verisimilitude to lift some meaning from
the real.
A proposal for the cover of Kerouac’s “On the Road,” at the New York Public Library.

Writings That Defy Time’s Toll

By MICHAEL FRANK

In Italian there are a number of vivid words for odd mixtures of things. A minestrone is of course a soup of assorted vegetables; a polpettone is a meatloaf of different ingredients; accozzaglia suggests a certain melange of elements drawn from hither and thither and generally unmatched, or incommutable. Much of this nomenclature originates in the kitchen, where, as so often in Italy, disparate elements are artfully combined into the makings of a feast.

Something similar might be said of “Victorians, Moderns and Beats: New in the Berg Collection, 1894-2001,” an exhibition that opens today at the New York Public Library. The title is a little misleading: among the manuscripts, letters, books, juvenilia and realia on display, Victorian material is modest, modern prolific, Beat largely weighted toward Jack Kerouac. There is no particular story being told here, other than that of a shopping spree, seven years long — but it is shopping of a culturally significant variety, as the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature grows and stretches to preserve larger and larger swaths of the tangible record of our literary past.

Time is the great unstated theme present in these glass and steel cases. Time as one measure of a writer’s reputation, and endurance. Time as the prison warden to all sentient beings, whose ideas about sexuality, politics, mental illness and justice are often painfully limited by the thinking of a particular moment, or context. Time as both an instigator of and liberator from pain that can be human, relational or professional (if only young, anxious Jack Kerouac had known the fate of “On the Road”; if only John Cheever...
With Beacon's mayor, Clara Lou Gould, and its schools superintendent, Vito DiCesare, the developer has created the Beacon Cultural Project, an initiative to revitalize Beacon and the Hudson Valley. "Once I knew Dia was a done deal, I ran around Beacon and bought everything I could," Mr. Ehrlich said. "I'm now Beacon's largest taxpayer."

David A. Ross, the former director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum, will be the executive director of the Beacon Cultural Project. "David will be the impresario for culture," Mr. Ehrlich said. "This gives him the opportunity to invent new programming, nurture artists and have a hands-on relationship with the community."

Among the projects Mr. Ehrlich is planning is the Beacon Art Society, a 150,000-square-foot complex of six buildings being transformed into fancy storage spaces, including a 20,000-square-foot exhibition area. On site will be a registrar, an art handler, a conservator and a restorer. Gucci-man Mayner Architects, the New York firm that designed the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh and the Georgia O'Keefe Museum in Santa Fe, N.M., will design the project. (Jeevon Sonnabend, the Chelsea art dealer, has already bought 12,000 square feet of storage space in the complex.)

Mr. Ehrlich plans to transform the former Dibble Opera House into a nonprofit space for contemporary dance, music, theater and media arts. He is also planning to start the Project Space, a gallery for contemporary art projects that will be in an old storefront on Main Street. Future plans include building hotels, restaurants and conference centers. "It's a new way of approaching adaptive reuse," Mr. Ehrlich said, "a public and private marriage where everybody wins."

Assignment: Istanbul

Dan Cameron, senior curator at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in SoHo, has been named the curator of the eighth Istanbul Biennial, organized by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts. "This Biennial brings the international art world and the Turkish art world together," Mr. Cameron said. He estimates that the show, which runs from September through November 2001, will include 90 to 80 artists, with a heavy emphasis on the young and the emerging.

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Spanish Art
A Collection of Casual Writings That Defy Time's Toll

Continued From Weekend Page 27

had realized he didn’t need to envy, he wouldn’t have held his breath in the competition; if only Dylan and Caitlin Thomas had stopped fighting to hug their sister.

Time imposing an often heart-rending poignancy on this whole enterprise of looking back: at the girl who filled the empty seat, making tender drawings for her sick brother (of herself she says: “She is the one who smiles, and is always polite”), at Vanessa Bell perceiving young Virginia Woolf’s fragility; at E. B. White having an insight about New York City so prescient as to make one’s chest tighten at the mystery and the power of perception.

A certain amount of time has to happen before these scraps of paper are deemed worthy of being collected. How does one know — of contemporary writers — when their mother has come? “This is something that goes on in the head of every curator,” says Isaac Gewertz, who has been the Berg’s custodian since last fall. “You pay attention to how they talk. You think of the established areas of concentration. You read and develop your own interests. Curators will say you never regret what you’ve bought — you regret what you haven’t.”

Time (or rather timing), economics, scholarship, intuition: these are the criteria that mold any collection. And then there are circumstances and coincidences, an “Aspen Papers”-like congruence of human behavior and want, detective work and atti- cularly, you find a friend, biog- rapher and editor of Walt Whit- ying. The letters of an external present; read their letters and notes from the vantage point of an outsider, differently informed future.

You feel this gap with special aches — a dearth of letters between John and to Aurora Cilberto, his Italian translator, on the subject of her translations. “Though reason tells me that eventually a homeworker is to be in sin,” he writes to Cilberto, “I must honestly say that I have never had any feelings of guilt about the matter, nor felt in any way ‘alienated’ from normal people. But then I am in the fortunate position of having a vocation in life which is more important to me than personal relations.”

This is Auden in one frame of mind. In another he writes to his brother that he is going to a psychoan- y other, and will not think of the impact that he was on the army who were the age of 17, the age when a boy first begins to “take notice” of his dad. It is hard not to read these letters without wondering how Auden would think about his sexual nature in what is surely a much more enlightened, and accepting, social and psychologi- cal moment.

The Pleasure of Hindsight

A different kind of ache comes forward as we read Vanessa Bell (whose family nickname at the time was Goat) took with their father, when she saw a woman on a bicycle collide with a cart: “The poor old Goat was in a dreadful state as you may think, and now she wants me to give up riding altogether, which of course I shan’t do. It’s very unlucky that it should always be the Goat who sees accidents.” The un- luckiness of Virginia always seeing the accidents: there’s foresight for you.

Hindsight brings on a wry smile elsewhere. At Aldous Huxley, when he raises the carbon dioxide levels in his blood, which results in “swirling coloured patterns — followed by a wonderful sense of detachment,” as he writes to Raymond Mortimer. (We recognize this as just one of his many experiments with hallucinogenic drugs). At Anaïs Nin, who, in a reproachful (and most likely unenthusiastic) letter to her lover Henry Miller, com- plains, “When you were writing the erotic and said you must stop be- cause of your integrity you didn’t think of my integrity — you should have.” Isn’t this a case of the kettle and the pot? (“Delta of Venus” and Nin’s own erotica and her most com- mercially successful book, was published posthumously in 1977.) Then there’s Cheever, who pits himself first against Irwin Shaw (the “writes 17 pages a day, but he can’t ski as well as I can”) and next against J. D. Salinger. After being asked by William Shawn to trim one of his New Yorker short stories, while Salinger is allowed to go on at length, Cheever calls Shawn up, he reports in a letter to a friend, and says: “You can get that Goddamn sixth-rate Salinger to write your God- damned short stories but don’t expect anything more out of me. If you want to slam a door on someone’s genitals find yourself another vic- tim.” To this we want to say (after “ouch”), “Dear Mr. C.: Not to worry, it turns out that there are three of you on our reading docket.”

The documents that stand most outside of time here are those that reveal writers thinking about their craft or at work on it, and they are among the richest. For example, S. S. Pritchett we hear that his real inter- est has been in “character, and to reveal character layers by layer.” For his stories, he writes, “are very com- pressed; so that by a word, a line or an image I can express what goes into a novel at great length, crystalized and intensified by being in the short form.” From Ginsberg we hear that “Normal speech has great rhythms” and that “Certain impulses like howling or screeching, & certain material, demands its own form.”

Lawrence Durrell, differentiating himself from Nin, observes that “in my case I prefer not to go too explicit, I feel I like to operate from the unconscious and not run the risk of writing theories.”

Kerouac the Reviser

The writer as reviser, or annota- tor, always compiles. The myth of Kerouac’s composition of “On the Road” — written in three exhilarating, sleepless weeks on a single 120-foot scroll — is here dispelled by examples of both pre- and post-printing fragments of abandonment, extensively edited or rewritten typescripts. This material is part of the Kerouac’s recently con- siderable Kerouac archive, organized by the author himself, that joins pre- viously collected material and now appears to include almost everything of significance but the scroll.

The latter was bought at auction last year by James Irisy, owner of the Indianapolis Colts. In the inter- ests of scholarship, it can only be hoped, he will one day see it to that the scroll joins its brothers at the Berg.

Plath’s copy of T. S. Eliot’s “Four Quarters” shows her to be the most diligent of students. “In 1958 there is an annotation on virtually every line. Eliot himself revises his opinion of Thomas Hardy’s letter to Roy Morrell, a fellow director of Faber and Faber), though of Hardy’s poetry he says he should have been put down his collection to the best.”

The poet Louis Zukovsky writes “rubbish” next to one of his own images, and from Saul Bellow there is an instructive example of the revising writer. In a fragment from “Humboldt’s Gift,” the text reads: “Much later I visited the Isolcom, the scene of Humboldt’s death,” Mr. Bellow changes the final phrase to “to see where Humboldt died,” thereby retaining the narrator, Charlie Citrine, as the agent of the sen- tence, and action.

“The place was tacky, a sewer sink coming from the pipes,” Mr. Bellow changes “a sewer sink” to “sewer- gusto.” The phrase is less obvious — “a sewer-gusto” — but it changes “a sewer sink” to “sewer-gusto.” The phrase is less obvious — “a sewer-gusto” — but it
A selective listing of new or noteworthy cabaret shows in Manhattan this weekend. ★ denotes a highly recommended show.

★ BLOOMSBURY DEAR, Danny’s Skylight Room, 348 West 46th Street, Clinton, (212) 206-8133. Back on the New York cabaret stage after a two-year absence, this wry, satirical minimalism has never sounded better. An ageless singer and pianist, she brings a light but knowing touch to songs like “The Ladies Who Lunch” and the Dave Frishberg classic “Fold Me a Crapshaw” and “I’m Flip.” And her own ballad “Bye-bye Country Boy,” with lyrics by Jack Segal, deserves to be a standard. A Brazilian piano animates many of the arrangements. Tonight and tomorrow night at 7. Sunday at 6:15 p.m. Cover: $30, with a $15 minimum; a $14.50 dinner and show package is available. Also at Danny’s: tonight at 8 and 10, Robert Martin, singer; tonight at 11, Michael Penton, singer; tomorrow night at 8-10, Eliza Kubik, singer; at 11, “Next! The Musical!” Sunday night from 8 to midnight, Scott Alling, singer. Cover: none to $25; two-drink minimum.

★ DAVE FRISBERG, the Oak Room of the Algonquin Hotel, 59 West 44th Street, (212) 889-6000. Throughout such acerbic commentaries as “Quality Time,” “The Wheels and Dealers,” “My Attorney Bernie” and “Blizzard of Lies,” Mr. Frishberg has established himself as the no-907 plus ultra of scathing pop-jazz songwriting wits. At once hip and professorial, he

Dave Frishberg, songwriting wit, performs at the Oak Room.

is also his own best interpreter, bringing a raw sardonicism (along with flashes of tenderness in the occasional ballad) to his performances. Tonight and tomorrow night at 8 and 11:30. Cover: $30, $15 minimum for the late shows tonight and tomorrow night; $80 prix fixe dinner for the other performances.

★ JAMES NAUGHTON, Cafe Carlyle, Carlyle Hotel, 35 East 76th Street, (212) 714-6500. The same 56-year-old singer and actor has a resonant baritone voice that harks back to the heyday of Bing Crosby, especially when he croons ballads like “You Are Too Beautiful” and “I Concentrate on You.” But Mr. Naughton also swings not insidiously in light pop-jazz and punchy pop-blues modes. The theme of the show is the battle of the sexes (in its frontier and more romantic manifestations). The high points include dramatic monologues by Lyle Lovett (“She’s No Lady”), Randy Newman (“Martie”) and Tom Waits (“Invitation to the Blues”). Tonight and tomorrow night at 8:45 and 10:45. Cover: $60; $50 for the late show tonight.

★ OUR SINATRA, Regis Room at Dillon’s, 245 West 56th Street, (212) 239-4200. The rising young cabaret star Eric Comstock is in the mold of those who call the hidden gems and orphan songs that Sinatra made popular. Paul Greenwood, a pianist and singer, concentrates on the mature Sinatra, joined by Tom Postiglione, who emceed the dreamy 1940’s singer of ballads, and Hillary Kole, a perky swinger, bridging the gap. This memorable show proves there are still young singers good enough to keep the tradition alive. Tonight and tomorrow night at 8; Sunday at 3 and 7:30; Monday and Tuesday at 8, Wednesday at 3:30. Tickets: $30 and $35; ringside, $75 and $80.

BEMPENN BAR, Carlyle Hotel, 35 East 76th Street, (212) 744-6000. Loston Harris, singer. Tonight and tomorrow night at 9-3:30. Cover: $15 at tables; $10 at the bar; no minimum.


DON’T TELL MAMA, 343 West 44th Street, Clinton, (212) 737-0778. Tonight at 8 and 10. “The Stand-Up Comedy Experience.” At 7, Jennifer Aquino and Julie Zinkiewicz, singers; at 11, “Ca’z Paw Cabaret,” a puppet show. Tomorrow night at 8, Alexis Levitt; at 8:30, “Poole Party,” a comedy variety show with Rose Poole; at 11, Tommy Femia as Judy Garland.

Photography by Richard Termine for The New York Times

Sunday at 6 p.m., Terri Noel, singer; at 8:30, Sharon Gristman, singer; at 9, Lennie Watts, singer. Cover: none to $25; two-drink minimum. No credit cards.

JERRY’S, 180 Eighth Avenue, at 18th Street, Chelsea, (212) 809-510. Tonight and Sunday night at 8 and 10. Diana Templeton, singer; tomorrow night at 8:30, Judy Krost, singer, with David Lahn. Cover: Varies; $10 minimum.

THE SEARCH FOR LIFE

...ARE WE ALONE?

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WRITTEN BY ANN DRAZAN AND STEVEN SOTER
MUSIC BY STEPHEN ENDELMAN
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Please direct questions about this program to: OU Press Graduate Student 2000 Program, 1005 Asp Avenue, Norman, OK 73019-6051.
American Indians outside Oklahoma. He was aided by the Brookings Institution, which contributed 625 volumes on American Indians that had been collected in the 1920s to aid the work of the Merriam Commission, of which Dale was a member. Other acquisitions were serendipitous but to Dale no less important. In 1933, for example, he purchased three trunks of letters and what became the Ridge-Watie-Boudinot family papers for $350 from a woman in Grove, Oklahoma. Along with the Indian-Pioneer Papers and the Brookings Institution volumes, Dale considered this collection the most important acquisition during his tenure as director, which lasted a quarter of a century, from 1927 to 1952. When Dale retired, the collection he had built contained 8,500 books and pamphlets, 30,000 manuscripts, 4,500 photographs, and a wide assortment of typescripts, maps, and newspapers.

In 1948, four years before Dale's retirement, the University of Oklahoma received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation that set in motion the evolution of the Phillips Collection into the Western History Collections. The Rockefeller grant established a Division of Manuscripts. Maintained separately from the Phillips Collection, the Division of Manuscripts nonetheless had strong personal ties to the Phillips Collection through appointment of its first archivist. University librarian Arthur McAnally appointed Gaston Litton, one of Dale's former students, as archivist for the Division of Manuscripts that year, and Litton proved to be capable and aggressive. He collected many important personal papers, maps, and photographs, and by the time he left the university in 1956 the Division of Manuscripts rivaled the Phillips Collection as a resource for historians.

The Division of Manuscripts and the Phillips Collection continued to operate independently, but in 1957, the University of Oklahoma appointed noted historian Arrell Morgan Gibson as curator of the Frank Phillips Collection and head of the Division of Manuscripts. Fundraising problems persisted, but the two collections were under one director as a result. And ten years later, in 1967, they were combined and established as the Western History Collections.

Since then, the holdings of the Western History Collections have grown dramatically. They now include the Mary P. Jayne Papers, which chronicle the activities of one of the first missionaries to serve among the Plains Indians; the official papers of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek nations; the personal papers of many notable Indian leaders; and the Indian Pioneer Papers, a Depression-era oral history project consisting of 166 bound volumes of interviews.

The Western History Collections is particularly rich in material pertaining to the range cattle industry, agriculture, oil, banking, frontier trading, and other industries. Researchers interested in regions beyond the borders of Oklahoma also find plentiful material. The library offers strong holdings of microfilmed records from the U.S. National Archives, the Mexican and Spanish archives of New Mexico, and from Mexican and Spanish archives related to the northern provinces of New Spain and New Mexico. Holdings of other universities are also available on microfilm. In addition to standard works on Oklahoma and American Indians, the library contains numerous published government reports, including those of the Bureau of American Ethnology as well as issues of many scholarly journals on the West.

Other parts of the Western History Collections have captured attention across the nation as well. Its photographic archives, frequently used in television productions and scholarly research, contain more than 800,000 glass plate and acetate negatives from the entire West. The cartographic section offers more than 5,000 maps related to Indian Territory,

continued on page 57
What Price
Researching and
Owing the Only Girl
Who Afford a Good

By J.S. Holliday

How should this story be judged?
As that of an author’s stubborn perseverance leading to final success,
with his book’s publication by Simon & Schuster in 1981—or as a record
of his failure to keep his promises

(over a period of twenty-nine years) to his patient, forbearing editors at Houghton Mifflin? That question—judgment—has tormented my conscience through the last three decades.

More than the answer to that question is to be found in this narrative. As suggested by Chuck Rankin, editor-in-chief at the University of Oklahoma Press, my experience encompasses, maybe epitomizes, the intellectual and emotional contradictions known to authors and publishers in their often complex relationships.

The story begins in fall 1946, when, after three years in the U.S. Navy, I returned to civilian life as a student at Yale University. In considering my future after graduation, I expected to follow in the long-established tradition of Holliday men—work in our family business (steel fabrication), founded in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1859. Instead, the diary of a New York farmer would divert me from that comfortable business career into a far different life.

That diversion started in February 1947, when I met Edward Eberstadt, pre-eminent dealer in the records of our nation’s westward expansion: diaries and letters of fur trappers, settlers, and miners; maps of explorers; account books of mine owners and stagecoach operators, gathered far and wide and sold to the nation’s collectors of western Americana.

Sixty-four years of age, in his words “an old widower,” Ed Eberstadt lived in an apartment on Riverside Drive in New York City where I often found lodging when I went there on weekends. He welcomed my company and we became close friends. Without my awareness, during our many hours of conversation he slowly, slyly eased me into thinking that maybe my interest in American history (strengthened by courses at Yale taught by such illustrious historians as Samuel Flagg Bemis, Ralph Gabriel, and David Potter) could lead to a career. But such weekend musings faded when I spent the summer of 1947 working at our company, learning the business “from the ground up.”

During the fall of 1947, my last semester at Yale, Ed often came to the university library to deliver ever more books and manuscripts that he had acquired for William R. Coe, the donor of the magnificent collection that bore his name. On one such visit he took me to the great room on an upper floor where the Coe Collection was housed. Standing amid crates and stacks and shelves of thousands of published and handwritten records of the nation’s westward expansion, listening to Ed’s recollections of how he outfoxed another dealer to obtain a trapper’s diary, how he found a unique copy of the Virginia City, Nevada, Territorial Enterprise, I felt the presence of the past, the wonder of our nation’s continental conquest.

When I graduated in February 1948, Ed attended the rather perfunctory ceremonies and that evening we talked of my plans: first a vacation and then the preordained commitment to work at W. J. Holliday & Company. I sensed that Ed had more on his mind than my well-known future. He started to tell a story similar to many others that amusingly recalled his misadventures. This one soon took on a serious tone, revealing how he searched for many years to find a diary, finally traced to the village of Youngstown in upstate New York, in the possession of Sara Sabrina Swain, an elderly spinster who had proudly preserved her father’s 1849 diary of his California gold rush experiences. At first she refused to sell the diary or her father’s letters sent home from California’s mining camps. When she finally agreed to Ed’s offer, she required more than money. Ed had to promise he would publish William Swain’s story, based on his diary and letters. For that prospect Miss Swain reluctantly parted with her treasures—but she refused all entreaties to give up the letters her mother
had written to her father, which he had brought back from California. These, she insisted, were too intimate for others to read.

At the end I knew what Ed had in mind. Through the years—since that purchase in 1938—the demands of his business, death of his wife, and ill health had combined to prevent work on the Swain book. Now he felt the burden of guilt, ever more heavy as Miss Swain waited, aged eighty-eight in 1948. Would I fulfill his promise? Of course, though for me to undertake the work of a historian seemed outlandish. But for Ed I would do it.

The next day we went back to the Coe Collection, and Ed reached up to a shelf jammed with books and packets of papers and brought down William Swain’s diary, two four-by-six-inch leather-bound notebooks. Almost in a whisper, as if sharing a secret, he advised me that all of the hundreds of diaries written by the men known as “forty-niners” who had rushed to California from the thirty United States and from around the world, these pages contained the most detailed, most revealing, most graphic personal record. “Jim, read some of these entries.”

I turned a few pages, amazed that this hundred-year-old document had survived in what seemed almost perfect condition. On most pages, still tightly stitched to the spine, the handwriting, in brown ink or lead pencil, was clearly legible, with only here and there a smudge or blot and each day’s entry boldly dated. When I found a page dense with lines neatly crowded together, I imagined Swain by an evening campfire carefully recounting that day’s events. On other pages the writing was scrawled carelessly across the narrow space, and I thought of him weary and hurried, with only a few moments to spare for his daily record.

I read aloud a few entries. Ed commented on the quality of language, the graphic detail, the discipline required to maintain such a vivid report, month after month—from leaving home on April 11, 1849, to October 30, 1849, when surviving a Sierra blizzard demanded all his attention. As we looked at other gold rush diaries, some published as early as 1849 and more in the 1850s, Ed reasserted that few, if any, had the power to hold a reader’s interest, had the revelatory quality of Swain’s introspective comments and the sustained ability to describe the sights and circumstances of life on that two thousand-mile trek. Indeed, these two little volumes offered a unique recounting of that monumental event.

As we left that room where I would soon spend so many months, Ed smiled, gave me a poke in the ribs, and in a conspiratorial tone assured me that as a follow-up to the letter I would write my future employer (advising him of my decision to postpone—surely for no longer than a year—my arrival in Indianapolis, ready for work), he would telephone “your old man” and assure him of the great rewards soon to unfold consequent to the application of “your son’s literary talents.”

More reassuring, Ed promised to be of help in my challenging task. To that purpose, on leaving for New York City, he gave me a copy of a gold rush diary he had edited and published in 1926, titled Way Sketches: Containing Incidents of Travel across the Plains... in 1850, by Lorenzo Sawyer. He confidently proposed that I produce a similar book, by editing in the same fashion the diary and letters of William Swain.

Having rented a room in a small boarding house in New Haven and having been assigned a desk in the Coe Collection room (thanks to James Babb, university librarian, who took an interest in my alliance with the great Edward Eberstadt), my new life—brief as it was scheduled to be—awaited me.

First, I read Swain’s diary and letters three, maybe four times, increasingly aware that I
William Swain

1949

One evening I took Sara to dinner at a hotel overlooking Niagara Falls. We shared a bottle of champagne. We danced. She eighty-nine, I twenty-five. I felt a true affection for this plump, five-foot-four retired schoolteacher and now dear friend.

How eager she was to escape her room, to show me the cobblestone house on the banks of the Niagara River where she was born in 1860 and where her mother and sister and other family members waited for William to return.

Two days of “seeing the sights” wearied her not at all. One evening I took Sara to dinner at a hotel overlooking Niagara Falls. We shared a bottle of champagne. We danced. She eighty-nine, I twenty-five. I felt a true affection for this plump, five-foot-four retired schoolteacher and now dear friend.

After a close look at my hundreds of pages of typescript and a study of our book’s outline, she expressed satisfaction and gave me a fat file of genealogical information about the Swain family. But, no—I could not have the letters. As I said goodbye, she agreed that maybe, later, she might.

As I drove back to New Haven, I realized that Sara intended to use those letters as insurance that I would return and provide more “adventures” to break the boredom of “home care.”

I did return, in October 1949 and again in January 1950, when she helped me gain access to an attic in Youngstown where I found documents needed for my understanding of William’s financial affairs. This time, without my pleading, Miss Swain gave me her long-protected packet of letters, not only those written by her mother but also many by William’s brother, who had stayed at home.

I felt a genuine sadness when we said goodbye. Sara patted my cheek and smiled bravely. We both sensed that she would not see the book in print. A poignant moment. The first of many.

Back at my desk amid the Coe Collection I worked that winter and spring of 1950 with the zeal of a man whose last reprieve would soon expire. In dealing with Indianapolis, my powerful ally, Ed Eberstadt, had failed to gain me one more extension. My job at W. J. Holliday & Company would be available until September 1. Come to work by then or goodbye.

By early August I had completed weaving hundreds of interpolations into the first nine chapters, which carried Swain from Youngstown across the wilderness half of the continent to the Sacramento Valley. The next three, maybe four chapters, describing life and

wanted to know more than Swain reported, that only part of the story was being told. And so it was with the scores of diaries in the Coe Collection. I read them all and took careful notes and month by month knew that the book I planned to create would differ in method and scope from what Ed envisioned—would differ, as well, from the established tradition and rules of scholarly editing of historical records whereby, despite scores of footnotes to explain and augment, the reader was restricted to reading, experiencing only as much of the great event as a single diarist or letter-writer felt like recounting. Perhaps the writer was sick or just too weary to write more than cursory entries for days, even weeks, and perhaps on reaching California he gave up his diary, as did so many goldseekers. Even Swain, remarkably observant and disciplined, sometimes lapsed into minimal comments, repetitive observations, and concentrated on himself to the exclusion of those around him.

The more I immersed myself in the journey to California, the mining camps of the Sierra foothills, the burgeoning cities of California, and, too, in the return home—back to “the States”—via the jungled Isthmus of Panama, the more I wanted to use the best of all the eyewitness accounts to enlarge and strengthen Swain’s reporting. I determined to select sentences and paragraphs penned by other diarists and letter-writers who—at the same place and time as Swain—wrote more descriptively, more revealingly, more encompassingly than Swain. These quotations I would weave into Swain’s writing as interpolations, thereby creating for the reader a more vivid, more omnis-

icient sense of “being there.”

Overly ambitious, naive? Probably. But that’s what, year by year, I sought to achieve, by searching through more and more eyewitness accounts, any one of which might offer me new interpolations: specific scenes more vividly described than those already found; confessions that revealed emotions previously hidden. I never knew what I might find. For such enrichment I searched—from New York to Los Angeles—in libraries, great and small; in historical societies and private collections and microfilms of newspapers and attic trunks and long-forgotten chests of drawers. There were so many riches to be found, I could be seeking and unearthing to this day.

My searching during 1948–50—those first years of my perseverance—included my discovering in Ann Arbor, Michigan, a remarkably enriching collection of diaries and letters written by several men who traveled with William Swain on his overland journey to California and continued to write from their mining camps in the Sierra foothills. Inspired by this “strike,” I was more than ever impatient to meet Miss Sara Swain, to show her my great progress in developing her father’s story and to persuade her to give me those letters written by her mother to William while he was in California—those letters “too intimate” to be seen by Ed Eberstadt or anyone else. Think how valuable they might be in revealing the untold story of anxieties and sorrows suffered by thousands of families “back home” waiting for years for their men to return—some never to know what happened to fathers, husbands, and sons. I realized that the gold rush should be understood for what it was—a time of national fear and hope, as in wartime.

Because of her illnesses, Miss Swain postponed several times our planned meeting in 1948. She admitted that her pride would not allow me to meet her until she might be “at my best.” In her letters and abundantly in her presence, the dear lady had spirit!

In May 1949 I drove to Youngstown, where Miss Swain lived in a facility that provided “home care.” What a greeting she gave me!
times in California’s camps and cities, were in pretty good shape. The last portions I had only partially developed.

So much accomplished, yet more to be done. Obviously, the time had come for serious, critical judgment. None could be more respected than that of the historian I most admired—Bernard DeVoto. Through friends, my name and project were brought to his attention.

In mid-August 1950 I telephoned Mr. DeVoto at his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I told him of my admiration for his books, especially The Year of Decision. His gruff response forewarned that here was a man who spoke his mind. He accepted my proposed date for our meeting at his home. I arrived on time. He served his famous martinis. I felt more comfortable. Time to leave. I presented him with the first five chapters, which he promised to read.

Two weeks after our meeting I was in Indianapolis. Fearful and a little depressed, I stupidly became impatient. I telephoned Mr. DeVoto to ask if he had read my manuscript. Before I completed my question, I heard a cascade of angry words. I begged forgiveness, appalled that I had ruined my greatest opportunity.

As of September, I was a full-time employee at W. J. Holliday & Company, only slightly interested in my job. What if Mr. DeVoto dismissed my book, or worse ignored it? Would I have the gumption to revive my ambitions? On September 11, 1950, I received his letter, a full page, typed, single-spaced, filled with kindness and patience and generous assistance. Hallelujah!

The essential sentences read as follows: “I am afraid you are being rather young about all this. You are in good hands—relax. I have told you that I will carefully read your ms. as soon as I can and will report to Houghton Mifflin . . . and I have told Alfred Knopf about you in case HMC should say no.”

Good to his word, he wrote to me on September 16 a four-page, single-spaced typescript critique of my manuscript. The first three sentences read:

“I am making a carbon of this and will send it to Houghton Mifflin with your manuscript. I am convinced that your basic idea is sound and that an excellent book, far more interesting than most overland journals, can be made of this material. You have, however, encumbered your basic idea with unnecessary weaknesses and your editorial machinery is frequently clumsy.

There followed scores of carefully reasoned criticisms directed to specific passages in all five chapters. With astonishing care, he focused on the smallest details, exhorting that I simplify my text. He set forth rules and advice directed both to details and to the book’s overall concept.

You have far too many interpolations in the text. . . . Get rid of repetitions. When you have said a thing once, never say it again. Some times you are almost ecstasy superfluous. . . . You have acquired an enormous amount of information. Determine what is irrelevant and leave it out. . . . Never interrupt a narrative passage. Let the scene at hand come to its natural end before you amplify it with other material. . . . Your job is to make a book that will be interesting to the general reader while at the same time exercising unimpeachable scholarship. The scholarship is easy, the other part isn’t.”—Bernard DeVoto

As you know, Mr. DeVoto recently submitted to us your manuscript. We have read it with extreme interest. I wonder if it would be convenient for you to come to Boston so that we could talk over the suggestions which Mr. DeVoto made to you and a few more which have occurred to us. We feel that, without a great deal of work, you will have an extremely interesting and important book to publish.

How amazing. There I was, a nobody, one of thousands of writers who hoped to be published, and out of the blue one of the premier publishers in the world judged my manuscript to be “extremely interesting and important.”

To Boston I flew, signed my contract, spent a delightful night as guest of Craig and Angie Wylie at their home in the lovely village of Sudbury, and returned to Indianapolis less interested than ever in my job, a feeling reinforced by a letter from my publisher asking me to fill out an “Author’s Questionnaire” and to send a photograph of myself “for use on the back jacket and in newspapers and magazines.”

Through December more letters came from Craig Wylie, one advising that sample pages of the book were being set in type. I wondered how I had been swept along so quickly toward publication when, in fact, I felt that large sections of my book were not yet completed. Slowly, reluctantly, I realized that Craig and his associates were fully prepared to publish my book using only the first nine chapters telling of Swain’s overland journey to California. That intention (presumably based on Bernard DeVoto’s enthusiasm) would require my making rapid progress in revising chapters six through nine. What a dilemma. My editor was ready to publish, confident of my cooperation,
and I was not able to meet that expectation.

Through the winter of 1950-51 letters from Boston told of plans and expectations, until in August 1951 I wrote to Craig to confess that I could not advance my work as rapidly as scheduled. My explanation for this sorrowful delay—the demands of my job—seemed pitiful. I resented my circumstances. What a letdown from the grandeur of last November.

A year rushed past. In March 1952 Craig mixed pathos with humor. "Miss Swain's nephew called me yesterday. He says the old lady is hanging on to life with the one hope of seeing your book in print. Since I somewhat share her feelings, I wonder if you have any idea when Miss Swain and I can die in peace?" (Miss Swain died in June 1953, aged ninety-three.)

With the book haunting me every day and guilt nagging my every night, I faced the inevitable. In July 1952 I resigned from W. J. Holliday & Company, breaking free from the trap of tradition. That fall found me at the University of California, Berkeley, enrolled as a graduate student in the history department. That transformation had been greatly facilitated by letters from James Babb and Ed Eberstadt, who had friends among the history professors.

It was the book that took me from Indianapolis to Berkeley. Where better to make progress than in the university's Bancroft Library? There I settled at a desk near an ever larger collection of gold rush diaries, letters, newspapers, and photographs—a new source of riches.

Once again Craig Wylie's big heart spoke to me. In September 1952 he wrote, "What a man, what a man! You have done a very courageous thing and in my book, a very intelligent one. . . . Of course the decision is very good for us because we have no doubt that you are going to write extremely good books and we hope we are going to publish them. Meantime, I shall look forward eagerly to the arrival of The Work. . . . Why don't you bring the manuscript in your hands when it is finished and pay us a visit in Sudbury?"

Craig and I should have known that the demands of graduate school would allow too few hours to finish "The Work." Craig's always kind letters deepened my sense of guilt. On December 31, 1953, he wrote: "I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and that 1954 will see your name on the title page of a superb book."

Instead, my name appeared on a marriage license in 1954. Despite new responsibilities and increasing academic challenges, I made progress with my manuscript, and in February 1955 Craig wrote: "It's an extremely good job. . . . Let's plan to publish next January, which would mean having the final manuscript by this May."

There followed, the same old story. "I am sorry that the book has been delayed once again," Craig wrote on May 3, 1955. "But I suppose that was to be expected, said without too much cynicism. . . . If I have a completed ms. by August 8, we could publish next spring, though other considerations enter in, such as book club possibilities, etc." Book club possibilities! How remarkable that Houghton Mifflin remained so positive.

During 1956 our exchange of letters carried excuses from Berkeley and exhortations from Boston. In March 1957 I passed the written examinations for my Ph.D. degree and in June my oral examination—and received a research fellowship at the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California, where I would be expected to complete my Ph.D. dissertation. To all of which Craig responded in August: "My congratulations. . . . but it is almost impossible to believe that once again the book is delayed. . . . Will you please telegraph me when you think you will be finished?" My telegram offered only another delay, another predicted date of completion, which he accepted with his usual patience.

In July 1958 Craig's tone turned more serious. "Jim, I really think if you do not send us a completed manuscript by the end of this summer, I shall at long last lose faith. For God's sake don't do that to me."

To reread Craig's letter, to feel once again his frustration and my torment (whether to give in and submit my manuscript as HMC so urgently requested or to continue with my plans for an ever more informative, more vicarious experience for the reader) is hurtful even to this day.

When I turned for advice from my old friend Ed Eberstadt, I learned that his ailments had sapped his strength and worn away his interest in living. He died that summer of '58.

I determined to stay with my ambition and hopes, which were nurtured by my year-long fellowship at the Huntington Library where manuscript diaries and letters yielded rich material for my book. My progress was rewarded in August 1958 by a wonderful letter from Craig.

I have read the manuscript you sent. It is all so very damn good that the feeling of frustration at not being able to believe we shall have the completed book within my lifetime is absolutely maddening."—Craig Wylie

But I could not "send it in." Ironically, Craig's laudatory letter gave me new confidence, new incentive to expand my already lengthy chapters describing life and times in mining camps, in San Francisco and Sacramento (1850-51), and to make my recounting of the return home via Panama a more important part of the story. Adding to the consequent delay, I had accepted employment as assistant director of the Bancroft Library in September 1958. In returning to that great resource I hoped to have time to fulfill my final ambitions for the book.

In summer 1959 Craig Wylie and his wife Angie spent a weekend with my wife Nancy, our three children, and me at our home near Berkeley. When he saw the room where, I promised, hard work would soon produce...
"finis," he felt reassured. But those hopes faded. On October 3, 1960, he wrote:

Really, Jim, don’t you think it is about time to publish what you have now? The whole thing must be an enormous block to you and a weight on your mind and a barrier to your thinking of other good books for the future. I am in no way joking when I say that there is a real danger that you will never publish this book... Not only could you die (I don’t mean prematurely) with this book unfinished, but your daily job could always be hampered by the nagging thought that you had unfinished business on the record.

I read that letter and thought: what a temptation, to escape from that great weight, to please my wonderful editor, to please my wife and my boss and everyone I knew! What a sense of freedom I could enjoy: no longer having to make excuses, offer explanations, no longer accosted at history and library conventions by the annual question, “When will you ever finish that book?” Obviously, it would also be satisfying to have the book in print.

But somehow I knew that such an escape, such a finish would not bring me the satisfaction, the honest inner acceptance I craved. I knew, more than ever, that if my book were published “as is,” before I had completed my final enrichment of chapters 1-12 and developed chapter 13 as the previously untold story of thousands of ex-miners returning home like veterans after a war, my life would be pestered by a longing for “what might have been.”

When Paul Brooks, editor-in-chief at Houghton Mifflin, advised me that he wanted to meet with me when he visited the Bay Area in October 1960, my response included this paragraph:

I realize full well that I have failed to keep my promises, my best assurances—my contract with you. There is every reason, after all these years, to cancel Holliday from Houghton Mifflin’s plans.

Brooks wrote back on October 17, 1960: “We haven’t the slightest intention of cancelling our plans or changing our expectations.”

On March 14, 1961, I advised Craig of my resignation as assistant director of the Bancroft Library, thereby to concentrate on my obligation to him—and to myself. That summer I sent him the full text of chapter 10 and promised that 11 and 12 would follow soon.

But then circumstances required my accepting a teaching position as assistant professor in the Department of History at San Francisco State College, where my classes would start in February 1962. That forced another interruption in the book’s progress and caused me to admit to Craig that I expected, at long last, to lose faith in Holliday. Responding in March, he wrote: “I think you might as well question the faith of the Archbishop of Canterbury as mine.” What a man!

Through 1962 and into ’63 our letters were sadly comparable to those of the previous decade: Craig Wyile always patient but never acquiescent and (most important) always my friend. After receiving another batch of my revisions, he wrote in March 1963: “For the love of heaven, let nothing stop you this time. . . You must not allow yourself to explore new material [as I admitted doing]. This sort of thing has no end.”

But I could not resist exploring more diaries, letters, and newspapers wherein I found quotations for numerous new interpolations to strengthen the text, even that of the first nine chapters, which had long been declared sacrosanct. My visit with the Wylies in Sudbury in summer 1964 and to Craig’s HMC office in that fine old building on Park Street (with its birdcage elevator) refreshed my promises and Craig’s confidence.

During 1965 I sent more revisions and expansions of all chapters. In exchange, Craig returned to me old copies, a process that caused him to complain in February 1966: “I hope this time you will return to me a complete manuscript without fiddling around with the book any longer. It has run through being amusing, annoying and now ludicrous.”

In summer 1967 I resigned my faculty position at San Francisco State College to accept appointment as executive director of the Oakland Museum, a newly constructed square block of exhibit halls, auditoria, and surrounding gardens with soaring trees. My task was to direct the preparation and completion of exhibits depicting the natural science, history, and art of California, in time for the museum’s opening in fall 1969.

Letters of regret and determination reflecting new delays in 1968–69 preceded a major shock. In October 1969 I was “fired” by the museum’s five commissioners (the governing agency) for what they described as my “insubordination.” Newspaper articles and editorials (including the New York Times) leveled severe criticism at the commissioners for their opposition to my policy of including the city’s black community in the museum’s “family.” Letters from Houghton Mifflin told of their reaction to “the most amazing story we have ever read.” At least this turn of events could mean “more time for the book.”

Nineteen seventy did see major progress and, too, another revelation of HMC’s big heart. An August letter from the new editor-in-chief, Richard B. McAdoo, reported “how excited we are about the manuscript you have put in our hands. It is a stunning piece of work... We would like to move right ahead with the steps of getting it to the printer.”

So the story unfolded, like a serialized Dickens novel, with twists of fate and sorrows that wound... [my letter] to Craig recalled with poignancy... [H]ow long ago it all started, when DeVoto was alive and we were all young.
Sudbury, and he was no longer working full-time at his office. Increasingly, I would be working with new people at HMC. I thought of Sara Swain, Bernard DeVoto (d. 1955), and Ed Eberstadt. Would I ever finish?

Letters from McAdoo in October and December 1970 reported plans for publication by “October 1971” or a month earlier, but by the end of 1970 I had accepted appointment as executive director of the California Historical Society, with headquarters (library, exhibits, publications) in San Francisco and facilities in Los Angeles. Once more, an interruption of progress, this time announced by a new (surely exasperating) range of excuses from Holliday. Suppressing what must have been his true feelings, Richard McAdoo wrote in February 1971: “It was great fun to have that evening with you in San Francisco. . . . Do let me have the maps and illustrations and, please, anything else you may have to show us, even if not entirely in final shape.”

In 1972 Craig Wylie, my invaluable friend, patient, forbearing and loyal, retired from his long and distinguished career at Houghton Mifflin. He was succeeded by Ruth Hapgood, who wrote to me after I had dared to visit those Park Street offices earlier that month of October. “Such a pleasure to meet you at last. You were beginning to verge on the mythical.”

And so we entered another era of progress and delay, of my revising chapter 13 (the return home), and my sending more “final” versions of the previous twelve, along with new prefaces for each. Ruth welcomed “these new signs of life.” Her letter of January 2, 1973, concluded: “You have written a gorgeous book and we still want to publish it. Since it’s all complete except for some back matter, let us proceed. If you are twenty-three years tenacious, so are we.”

We had only one exchange of letters in 1974 because a variety of demands commanded my attention, and 1975 yielded equally paltry progress, largely because it was a rough year for me. My mother died, and my wife and I decided a divorce would be best. “Amicable.” That word described our separation, though after twenty-one years the wrench was severe. I moved to an apartment in San Francisco and tried to reestablish my library-workplace where I could return to productive work on the damned book. I did receive one letter from Ruth in 1975, in June, accompanied by “a very handsome set of sample pages . . . from our production department.” Talk about tenacious.

During 1976 I slipped into a slough of despair, ready to sink into final obscurity. News of Craig Wylie’s death hurt me deeply. I had truly failed him, despite his indefatigable patience. More than anyone, myself included, he should have seen William Swain in print.

Silence in 1977, followed in June 1978 with a letter about my dying, just as Craig had warned. Referring to the book’s working title, Ruth wrote: “I really think we ought to get something definite settled about A Pocketful of Rocks.”

After all, it has been under contract since November 1950 and almost 100 percent complete since 1970. If you had died, we would have had a few remaining details fixed up by another scholar and would have

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published it (with considerable enthusiasm) as a monument to your name. . . . Perhaps that is what we should do on this project. In fact, some publishers have that clause in their contracts, that they will make any needed revisions and charge you for them. Is that what you would like us to do, take over and have the book finished and pay for that out of royalties? Some how, some way, this book is going to be born.

Talk about exasperation—but no more than my own, expressed by my realization (predicted by Craig) that I could not live with my job and my book constantly competing for my attention. Therefore, effective February 28, 1978, I resigned—retired from the California Historical Society with the honored title of director emeritus. Free at last, and that freedom I committed to finishing the book. What else? This time I set a deadline of October 15, 1978.

The latest revisions, additions, polishing, and excisions were sent—late as always—in early December 1978. Ruth responded on December 27: “I read your chapters over Christmas and they are tremendous! This is going to be a super history book... Hurry, hurry, hurry and a happy ’79.”

Hard to believe, but on July 2, 1979, I sent Ruth a four-page, single-spaced, detailed report explaining the causes for the latest delays (deaths, house sale, financial problems) and reviewing what had been accomplished since the last report, including many valuable changes and additions, evidencing far more than the fiddling that Craig had scorned. In truth, I had reached a new status—a sense of my own satisfaction with my book.

As we rushed to the end, the final, final end, I received Ruth’s letter of July 9, 1979, in which she noted that “you have removed a couple of layers of substructure, an immense job of streamlining which will help the book greatly.” More praise came for my maps and suggested illustrations. Swain was about to go to press.

But then . . .

Saturday afternoon, July 14, found me enjoying a gin and tonic at the Bohemian Club’s annual encampment under the majestic redwoods along the Russian River, north of San Francisco. Casually and then with greater interest, I talked with one of my campmate’s guests. His light-hearted anec-

dotes, contrasted with his shrewd observations, held my attention. Slowly we eased away from the crowded bar, the better to converse. His name, John Dodds; his business, West Coast editor for the publisher Simon & Schuster. Later, at dinner, his inquiries led me to mention the imminent publication of my long-delayed book. He expressed serious interest, said he would like to see a few chapters, maybe be of help. I explained that the book was practically finished. I wanted no more fiddling with the damned manuscript. He understood but emphasized that his experience might be of value in the final process.

Should I accept his interest? Maybe his advice could speed resolution of any last-minute problems. He obviously knew the publishing business, had edited a number of prominent authors. I agreed to show him my manuscript and accepted his invitation to dinner that coming Monday.

When I arrived at his house on the north shore of San Francisco Bay, the evening quickly focused on my book. His insightful comments and revelations of several authors’ experiences comparable to mine created for me a sense of freedom, of confidence to share recollections of how my ambitions for the book had matured and how, as a consequence, publication by Houghton Mifflin had been delayed, again and again. When I said goodnight, I left a heavy box labeled A Pocketful of Rocks.

A few days later John called to say—with amazing candor—that he had found serious faults with my manuscript, that I should undertake major “cuts,” that in its present form the book would be a disappointment.

For the first time in twenty-nine years I heard criticism, even what seemed like rejection. At first I felt disbelief. Then a strong burst of resentment. Who the hell does he think he is? A great historian and a leading publishing house had endorsed and praised my book. No one had ever found fault. To hell with Dodds.

John called back and urged me to give him a chance to show why and how I should improve the book before its publication by Houghton Mifflin.

It may seem inconceivable that I would listen to a newcomer, even consider such a source of guidance after Houghton Mifflin’s record of nursing me, sustaining me for a generation.

I vividly recall my thinking. My one and only purpose through all those years had been to produce the best book possible. On many dates I could have released the manuscript for publication. Instead, despite embarrassment, humiliation (I have not mentioned my father’s dismissive scorn for my endless failure to be published), and professional doubts about my expectations, I had held fast to my belief that one day, one day, I would have a book that represented my highest hopes, my best efforts.

That July of 1979, I realized that I had never been criticized by Houghton Mifflin, probably because they thought such analysis would create more delay, weaken my resolve to release the manuscript. They did not know or sense my need for criticism, my intuition that thoughtful criticism is the most certain guide to success. Which was why I had responded so positively to Bernard DeVoto’s four pages of criticism, way back in 1950.

Thus it was that John Dodd’s harsh judgments came to me like a temptation, a lure for which I had no defense. The more I considered his statements, the less I felt resentful. Rather, I began to think—maybe he’s right! Why would he deliver such an unequivocally negative assessment unless well-founded? As an outsider, he came with an objective viewpoint.

When we met, he showed me scores of examples where the text could be smoothed, where my interpolations interrupted the narrative of Swain’s diary. I recalled DeVoto’s exhortation never to interrupt the flow of narrative. John’s criticism stunned me. I could see that he was right, that my interpolations and footnotes and “enrichments” burdened the reader with far too much detail, so much as to overwhelm Swain’s story.

“After all, it has been under contract since November 1950 and almost 100 percent complete since 1970. If you had died, we would have had a few remaining details fixed up by another scholar and would have published it . . . as a monument to your name”—Ruth Hapgood
room where I wept, whether with joy at his news or with grief at what I had done, I did not know.

Not long after I returned to San Francisco, I signed, with John’s encouragement, a contract with Simon & Schuster. And yet, by his standards, the book was far from finished. What had I done?

Fearfully yet deliberately I had turned from Houghton Mifflin. Now I faced Simon & Schuster in circumstances all too familiar. But my new editor, John Dodds, knew the work that remained. As well (as if to sum up the book’s transformation), in December we agreed on a new title, from a phrase in my text: The World Rushed In, with The California Gold Rush Experience as the subtitle.

Through the winter and into the spring and summer of 1980 I worked, free from any competing job, reporting on a regular schedule to John, who had moved his residence to New York City. One by one, as I completed each chapter’s cuts and carefully stitched together the segments, I sent truly final texts to John, including that much-debated chapter 13, now revised to read as a fast-paced conclusion.

On October 26, 1980, John telephoned. With astonishing sangfroid, he told me that he had been forced to resign from Simon & Schuster. He would be moving to another New York publisher, William Morrow.

I was alone. Silence from Simon & Schuster. Had my book been forgotten? Had it been dropped from the 1981 publishing schedule? What could I do?

In early December a call came from a secretary at Simon & Schuster. She said a senior editor, Jonathan Coleman, wanted to speak to me. He sounded young and impatient. He would be my new editor and would expect to receive—soon—all parts of the book not completed. I asked Mr. Coleman if I could meet him and talk about my book. No, that would not be useful. What would be useful would be completion of those elements of the book not sent to John Dodds.

Given my past experience of patience, this contrast challenged my already flagging confidence. My work production slowed, so much so that I spent some two weeks fussing over and rewriting a simple introduction to the book’s appendix.

My letter to Jonathan in January 1981 opened with appreciation for his interest and then summarized what needed to be completed, including new maps, selection of illustrations, epilogue, and more, all of which seemed to me to require that we meet. In late January, we did have that meeting, and I felt greatly encouraged.

More letters, more mailings, and on March 12, 1981, a letter from Jonathan listed those parts of the book not yet received, followed by this admonition. “If you want to see this book finally get published, it would be nice if you supplied us with the rest of the material.” On April 2 I sent Jonathan another package.

The next day he telephoned to tell me he would be leaving Simon & Schuster “tomorrow.” He had accepted an offer at CBS Radio/Television in New York. Appalled, I heard him wish me good luck and success for the book.

My God, what was happening? First Dodds, now Coleman. Was this an omen?

I gathered my strength. Dammit, I would not be sidetracked. I thought of the people I’d met at Simon & Schuster, especially Edith Fowler, in charge of designing my book, and people in the publicity department who had expressed enthusiasm for promoting it. I made phone calls to these people, and with their reassurances I went back to work, wondering who would be my third editor in six months.

Tom Wallace called in early May, apologetic for the latest disruption but sounding confident and well informed about the status of the book.

With frantic effort, fearful of another surprise, I spent the month of June attending to last-minute details. On the 9th I arrived at Simon & Schuster’s offices, where Edith Fowler—bless her heart—allowed me for four days to work at her side, deciding on exact placement of maps and illustrations. We found ourselves in comfortable agreement, including my last-minute revisions of the captions. Next, I spent four

In the early 1970s, curator John Ezell and assistant curator Jack Haley organized several friends of the Western History Collections into a small support group. Known as the Associates of the Western History Collections, the organization has grown to approximately 125 members and provided the Western History Collections with its own endowment. The Associates purchase rare books, photographs, and manuscripts for the library and support the publication of guides such as the Guide to Manuscripts in the Western History Collections of the University of Oklahoma and the Guide to Photographs in the Western History Collections of the University of Oklahoma. The Western History Collections still depends heavily on state support, but private donors have made an enormous difference in the acquisitions program and the visibility of the library throughout the state.

All special collections pass through phases. They begin as the dream of a few academics and non-academics who value the past. These founders search for a secure home for the core documents and for the staff to catalog and administer those documents. They seek outside donors and hire archivists and curators who have the energy and talent to maintain the collections and manage an acquisitions program. The Western History Collections has followed this pattern. Much has changed during the seventy-five year history of the Western History Collections. What began as a specialized library of secondary literature has blossomed into a library and archive for all types of documentation of our past.

Donald J. Pisani is Merrick Chair of Western American History, University of Oklahoma. Donald L. DeWitt is Curator, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.
I received ... via air freight, four copies of *The World Rushed In*. My old life ended, my new one began.

intense days reading galley proofs and found wonderfully few errors. And then Edith and I agreed that the book needed photographs of Swain's diary and pages from his letters and those of his wife—the letters that Sara had given me decades ago.

I rushed to New Haven, to the Yale University Library, where I begged for favors and obtained quality negatives, which Edith (racing against the clock) inserted in the sequence of illustrations.

Meetings with Tom Wallace settled other “is it too late?” decisions. I spent a day or two writing copy for the book's dust jacket. Exhilarating. Nothing could intervene now. The book would be published.

On October 24, 1981, I received in San Francisco, via air freight, four copies of *The World Rushed In*. My old life ended, my new one began.

Hard to believe, but on October 28, 1981, Tom Wallace telephoned to tell me that he was leaving Simon & Schuster, headed to another publisher. How lucky that this disruption came too late to trip the book's dash to the finish line.

In contrast to the confusion of three editors in one year, my fourth Simon & Schuster editor—Frederic W. Hills—cared for and directed continuous reprints (hardbound and quality paperback) of *The World Rushed In* for twenty years: October 1981 to October 2001. At that latter date Fred kindly arranged for me to obtain all rights to the book so that I could sign a contract for a second edition of *The World Rushed In*, to be published in fall 2002 by the University of Oklahoma Press.

In contrast to its problematic thirty-three years of germination, *The World Rushed In* achieved considerable success during its twenty years as a Simon & Schuster imprint.

**J. S. Holliday,** former Executive Director of the California Historical Society and Associate Professor of History, California State University, San Francisco, lives in Carmel, California. He was the principal commentator on “The Speck of the Future” episode of Ken Burns’s ten-part PBS series, *The West* (1996).

### Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>three printings in hardcover, by Simon &amp; Schuster</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>History Book Club (alternate selection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Literary Guild (bonus selection)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Victor Gollantz Ltd. edition (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>first printing as a Touchstone paperback, Simon &amp; Schuster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>tenth printing as a Touchstone paperback, Simon &amp; Schuster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>second edition, University of Oklahoma Press</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Try to attain language which makes a shimmer behind the story: the appeal, the wonder, of the vernacular itself coming thru.

My business is to turn days into words. Whether this is a worthwhile proposition is not definite, but the days would turn into something else anyway.

Mariah p'back cover: the basic Yellowstone Park experience (meeting up w/buffalo)
  --Moiese buffalo range bulletin board, clips of gored Frenchman

I like to see an author's investment there on the page.

why not move back to Montana: James Joyce's reply when asked if he'd ever return to Dublin: "Have I ever left it?"
  --Joyce's father's occupation: "Enterer of contests"

Mistah Chekov, he dead.

Vincent Canby once said abt a John Travolta move, the plot is "less complicated than War and Peace but somewhat more difficult to follow."

You can be skilled and yet sloppy; but not a craftsman and sloppy.
The Bago as time machine.

motorhome haiku: Itasca, Tioga, Winnebago, Southwind, Bluebird Wanderlodge

title rhythm from Linda Bierds' poem, "The Ghost, the Animal":
"Run with me, darling, the meadows, the lost day."

love and work and life and death; dreams are born, dreams are torn apart, dreams change.

I don't believe you have to goose the reader in the ribs every 45 seconds--huh, here comes an ax murder! huh, here comes an Iraqi submarine! huh, here comes the killer comet from outer space! Life itself is vivid; look into what time and history do to people.

Jick: I wish he was me, but Marlow wasn't Joseph Conrad.

head off bad questions: I don't know about that, but if you were to ask me...
--That's very interesting, but I don't see how it changes (my point)...

Russell Martin, in Writers of the Purple Sage: prose "meant to be heard while it tells its story." Sure, you bet; that's what Shakespeare was up to.

John Clare, rural poet of early 19th c.: "A language that is ever green"
Stegner: Jim Hill "built the lives of an awful lot of people into his (rr) empire." (Stegner's among them)
Maclean: Anybody who didn't kiss the behind of the Anaconda Co. was a dead duck.
My dad and the big ranches.
It's not just theory *with* or a Western with us.

Stegner on how to get published: write good books.

In the beginning is the language: the alpha, the omega, and all between.

The richness of Montana lingo: "Still able to sit up and take nourishment."

Toussaint: "Say on." *March: Zammo*

drink toasts, thru the 3 books
songs

newspaper people turned literary: Hemingway, *Star; Djuna Barnes, Booklyn Eagle; William Kennedy; Katherine Anne Porter*
"The classic is the local fully realized, words marked by a place."

My grandmother, Annie Campbell Doig, born in Perth, in old age wd go to bed for a few hours after supper, then get up to listen Harry Lauder when he came on the radio.

--The staying power of old tunes and rhymes: my dad cd barely carry a tune, yet he knew the words of Loch Lomond, and for that matter, When It's Springtime in the Rockies. There were a lot of stray bits firmly in his memory; his knack for storytelling, for instance, and the day on the Resvtn when he and I were in the pickup or the Jeep and conversation about what I was doing in school somehow led him to begin reciting "Hiawatha."

--I of course used this with Angus in Dancing, his headful of poetry.
the insides of language: some properties or elements avbl to writer of English prose

---private languages (slang): language trying to enliven itself, or excel itself.

Every group with some kind of common interest or occupation does this.
---Pacific Pipeline, picker and packers.
---students, Ace-Bullet-C (hook)-Death-Flag
---in Eng Crk, USFS vocabulary: emergency firefighters are EFFs
    smokechasers
    kelleygrams (a play on telegrams)

dialects
---ranch vocabulary: pp. 221-223, how the hay hands say hello

---saloon vocabulary: 3 generations of drinking toasts---
    "Here's how" & "Here's lead in your pencil"
    "Broth to the ill, stilts to the lame."
    "We'll have another round of jelly sandwiches."

---drinks themselves: with water called a ditch, s
    Jick: scotch ditch
    Mariah: Canadian whiskey called Lord Calvert, thus a Lord ditch.
Every group has its own lingo. Student slang...

OK, in the Sea Runners...characters of the 19th century: how do they talk?

--Proverbs: (read 10 March '81 jnl entry)
--cussing: rough guys (Journal of Verbal Abuse)
--signatures of each character's talk: Wennberg's double contractions
  p. 45--shouldn't've
  p. 252--I'd've
I also knew that they would use proverbs a lot. There's this entry from the journal I kept during the writing of The Sea Runners:

(Entry excerpt on next p.)

Beyond what you do as a writer with the voice of time in a book—its setting, its tone—and the voices of your characters, you can also work the specific sounds there on the page. To me, part of the writer's job is to make sounds on paper. You as the reader maybe hear them with your eye rather than your ear (but let me show you a few examples of details on the page that help make the sounds of the story, as the reader hears it.) (Whose woods these are I think I know..."

—p. 70: "...to those who sneak about the streets at night." Slow that down a little

—p. 70, escape from New Archangel: Palong! Palong! (not Bong! Bong!—

I went to Sitka, I heard those chimes at midnight...)

Blake lines on board, from preface of his poem on Milton. (blue sheet)

—p. 117, later in the escape, one of the sea runners—Wennberg—is sneaking along the shore as shampooing he goes out to smash a canoe of an Indian tribe they've stumbled into on their downcoast voyage. (read the "much" sentence)

Notice that "much". It sticks out of that sentence, just as a bit of Wennberg's anatomy shows above those logs and rocks.

A last point I'd like to make that the "poetry under the prose"—the writer's imaginative magic with the language—can give you an unexpected dimension in a book. A Holy Land, a Twilight Zone, a place where the Force is with you, that you otherwise wouldn't have. Here in The Sea Runners, I hope my language brought about a fifth character in the book: the Northwest Coast itself as a character. A force, with a life of its own, a story of its own, its own set of analogies, metaphors, characteristics. Here are a couple of paragraphs where I hope this happens, that the tone of the language the coast to life: (p.95, "here downcoast..."