

PS
508
C6
T6

Kans. Doc. Col. Univ. cup 2

PS
508
.C6
T6
1962:
Spr.

UNIV.
ARCHIVES



1 Kansas State university
2

3

TOUCHSTONE

Spring 1962 35 cents

CA

Touchstone

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
STUDENT LITERARY MAGAZINE

Managing Editor

JEWELL LE MAHIEU

Prose Editors

RICHARD GUNN, *Chairman*

ROBERT JOHNSON

WILLIAM BRONSON

Poetry Editors

WILLIAM MARVEL, *Chairman*

KEITH LAQUEY

R. CLIFTON PANGBURN

Art Editor

PAT HARRISON

Business Manager

ELLIOTT PARKER

Faculty Advisor

ALWYN BERLAND

Cover Artist

DONALD M. MILLER

CONTENTS

PROSE

The New Neighbor, Robert Johnson	3
The Winner, Jim Hastings	13
Joseph Conrad's <i>Victory</i> , Charles Kempthorne	17
Cocktail Party, Brenda Fisher	24
Cheating in Our College Classrooms, Pat Kelly	45

POETRY

Poem, R. Clifton Pangburn	6
Mortality, William Williams	7
Failure, Alvin Bird	7
Vision of a Wel Maade Maide, Harold Booton	8
Poem III for B. A., David Sadkin	15
In a Late Autumn Rain, Dick Gunn	16
A Walk, Ralph Wareham	20
There Always Is a "Why?" Behind the "Why?", James G. Van Buren	21
In Quest of a Lame King, Keith LaQuey	22
Variation on a Theme, Melva Zimmerman	32
Song, for Rose-Mary, William Marvel	33
Horace I, xxxviii, William Marvel	33
In Parting, Rex Stephenson	34
Clouds of Interpretation, James M. Davis	36
V, Brenda Fisher	41
X, Brenda Fisher	41
Apres La Saison En Enfer, Keith LaQuey	42
Myopia, Keith Peters	44
Poem, Stan Deever	46

ART

Mrs. Barbara Laging, Art Gr	9
Lois Sayre, Art Gr	10
Elliott Parker, TJ Gr	11
Pat Harrison, Art Sr	12
Wes Mathis, Art Gr	37
Sandra Funk, Art Jr	38
Elliott Parker, TJ Gr	39
Shui S. Tse, Ar 02	40

UNIV
PS
508
Cb
T6
1962
Spr.

The New Neighbor

ROBERT JOHNSON

ME AN' JOHNNY BOLLES was playin' catch in my front yard when this huge truck stopped next door. Well, we quit playin' an' sneaked up behin' this prickly hedge, where we could watch without bein' seen. Purty soon a shiny, black car stopped in the driveway, so close we coulda reached out an' touched it if we wanted ta git all scratched up.

An old woman got out an' yelled all high an' squeaky over to this guy in the truck, "You can start unloading now. I'll go on in."

Johnny sorta bashed me in the ribs with his elbow an' said, "Is that ol' biddy movin' in there?"

I jist looked at 'im, tryin' ta show what a stupid question it was.

"She looks as bad as the las' one," he said.

Well, I din't really know. Some o' these real ol' people aren't so bad. She did look kinda nice, all spiffed up in this black dress that sorta changed ta green when she turned diff'rent ways. An' her hair was jist as white! An' clear up in back was this thing that looked sorta like a comb that was stuck there 'cause she din't have no pockets. She went into the house an' din't come right out, so me an' Johnny went back to playin' catch.

Purty soon Johnny gave me this real high fly, an' I started backin' up, makin' the ol' tough play look easy. I backed clear up to the wall an' saw that it was a sure home run, so I gave up. Besides them prickers was botherin' my hind-end some. The ball bounced in the driveway an' rolled right into the center of the new lady's yard. Well, I was scared to go over after it, but Johnny yelled that it'd be all right, so I trotted on aroun' the hedge an' walked real easy-like into her yard. I picked it up an' was jist turnin' aroun' when I heard the door slam.

"What're you sneaking around for?" she asked.

I looked back at her—her face all wrinkled like a witch—an' waited for her to let fly with whatever she was holdin' behin' her back—a switch or somethin'.

"Well?" she asked, real tough.

"Don' know, ma'am . . . jist after the ball," I said.

"What's the matter with coming after it like an honest man?" she asked.

Well, I din't really know, I told her, lookin' ta see if my sneakers was laced all right.

"I've got something for *you*," she said, smiling.

I sorta bent my head further so's she wouldn't be able to slug me in the face.

"Look me in the face, young man," she said.

I looked up real slow-like, ready to throw that ol' right arm over my face when she hit me.

She pulled her arm out from behin' her back an' there was this candy bar—a dime one.

"What?" I said.

"Well, what's the matter, don't you eat candy?" she asked.

"Uh . . . Sure . . . but what about . . .," I started.

"You're name's Jimmy, isn't it?" she asked.

"Uh . . . Yeah," I said. My name's Jimmy Forbes. James Forbes, Junior.

"Mine's Mrs. Adams. How do you do?" she said.

"Uh . . . good . . . How do *you* do?" I answered.

"Very nicely, thank you. Here." She gave me the candy bar. "Now run along and play, Jimmy," she said.

"Thank you . . . Mrs. Adams," I said.

Well I tore outta *there*. When I got to my yard an' looked back she was smilin' at me with that real frenly face of hers.

A couple days later I was out torturin' Commies by roastin' them over the fire when Mom called me. When *she* called I came. I messed with Dad awhile, but Mom wouldn't mess aroun'. So I dropped the whole sack o' caterpillars in the fire an' ran into the house.

"Mrs. Adams wants to talk to you," she tol' me.

"What about? I din't do nothin'," I said.

"Anything . . . I don't know what she wants. Go over and see," she said.

I wasn't none too anxious, but I went anyhow. I rang her bell—it went dong, ding, dong, ding—an' waited for her. Purty soon she opened the door. She still had on that same dress—at least I think so—but I couldn't see no green.

"Come in, Jimmy. Sit down," she said.

I went in an' set right up on the edge o' that chair, stayin' *real* straight.

"Oh, relax. Slouch back and be comfortable," she said.

I jist looked at her, not darin' to *really* relax.

"Oh, come on," she said, real nice, as if she really meant it.

I slouched back an' felt a little better about it.

"How old are you?" she asked.

I tol' her, "Twelve." I was *almost* twelve. I began to look aroun' real careful, so's she wouldn't see. It was all kinda tore up, with boxes all aroun' an' big sheets all over the furniture—all 'cept where we was.

She said, "It's awfully messy, isn't it? Haven't had time to straighten it out."

Well, since she caught me lookin' anyway, I jist stared at this huge picture over the fireplace. It was an ol' man, prob'ly over a hundred.

"That's my husband. He died about a year ago," she said, real quiet.

I looked away real quick an' said somethin' stupid like, "I'm sorry." That's what they're always sayin' on TV.

"I've got . . . some . . . lemonade for you," she said, kinda gaspin'.

She almost ran outta the room. Purty soon she came back smilin' sorta half-way, holdin' this tray with lemonade an' cookies on it.

"Here, take some," she said, holdin' the tray right there in front o' me. I couldn't help but take some.

She stared at me a long time an' watched me eat an' said, "We never had any children."

I wasn't goin' ta say nothin', 'cause I knew I'd jist say somethin' stupid, but she jist kep' lookin' at me like I do when I wanta work Mom out of a piece o' cake or somethin'. "I'll come over an' see ya whenever ya want me to," I tol' her, an' I meant it, too.

She looked at me for awhile an' said, "Would you? That'd be nice. Play in my yard, too. That's what yards are for, you know."

"Yes'm," I said.

Jist then she looked like maybe she'd been stung by a real weak bee, an' said, "Oh, I almost forgot. Your mother tells me you like to earn money. Is that right?"

"Yes'm," I said, only lyin' a little.

She smiled an' said, "Good. You know that terrible old hedge between your house and mine?"

"Yes'm," I said.

"Would you take it out for me?" she asked.

"But why?" I asked stupidly. It wasn't *my* hedge.

"It's ugly and a nuisance . . . Besides . . . Have you ever heard of Robert Frost?" she asked.

"No . . . But I heard o' *Jack* Frost," I said, knowin' right away I'd said somethin' *real* stupid.

She sorta giggled and coughed all at the same time. Then, she said, "Robert Frost is a poet. Do you like poetry?"

"Yes'm. Some of it," I said.

"Well, he wrote a poem called 'Mending Wall'. Let me get it," she said.

While she looked through this box on the floor, I finished off my las' cookie. Peanut butter.

"Here it is," she said, with this big smile on her face.

She read it an' I listened—*really*. It sounded real nice the way she read it.

"You see, Jimmy? Good fences *don't* make good neighbors, so I want to take out that thing," she said.

"Can Johnny Bolles help?" I asked.

She said, "Johnny Bolles? . . . Oh, of course. Will you do it?"

"Sure. We can start tomorrow," I said.

"That'll be fine . . . Would you like some more lemonade?" she asked, gittin' all set to dash to the kitchen.

I said, "No thanks," an' kinda looked over toward the door.

"You may go. Please come back," she said.

"Sure," I said. I got up an' she walked beside me to the door. She put her hand on my head an' sorta smoothed it, like I do with my dog when I'm not too happy.

"G'bye, Mrs. Adams," I said.
She looked at me, still holdin' her han' on my head, an' said, "Good-
bye, Jimmy. Thanks for coming."
I said, "Oh, sure," an' turned aroun' an' walked real slow down the
sidewalk so's she wouldn't think I was in a hurry to git away. I looked
back an' she was still standin' in the door, watchin' me.

Poem

R. CLIFTON PANGBURN

Is it I that condescends
to cast aside the shroud
of sweetened agony
morbid in penitence
to impiety undone?

Perhaps my restless vigil
by the grassless darkling plain
stands off surcease of sorrow
and whiter realms escape
to forest edge and burst to flower.

If I but could be beckoned
to a seminar beyond
and see all other days unfold
wherein my destiny be cast . . .
 lest dark shall cover light,
 the path elude my eye,
 the song of dusty laughter
 bred anew and free . . .

Must there be found
the abyss deeper still
for holding off the pure—
 the silver wing.

Mortality

WILLIAM WILLIAMS

The invisible, tasteless, odorless Thing
Falls from the heavens and makes our shroud.
The noble men talk and the common die loud.
But their real fault as human beings,
Was gossiping, quibbling, without seeing,
That they were being pushed around
And later must be trampled down.



Failure

ALVIN BIRD

Dreary dreams creep in; his mind wanders back
To the shaming sadness, failures, and tears.
He felt them all, trodding that long, lonely track
Where hope became sorrow overtaking the years.

Yes, a yearning, burning youth planning deeds
And toiling to teach the weeping world better ways.
Unlike others whose flowers wilted to weeds,
He shall rid the people of disastrous days!

New sparks sprang forth from his grindstone wheel,
Only to die and grow cold by another's hold.
Still the flame burned bright—refusing to kneel
To those forces fighting his cause so bold.

His futile efforts soon slowed to a stale pace
Like that of murky, crawling swamp bog.
His morals and ideals could not cling anyplace
And finally faded with the flimsy fog.

Not long did youth linger for him at the gate
Where fate finds fortune and a pleasing path.
All is gone; he can only remember and wait,
For his name will only appear as an epitaph.

Visioun of a Wel Maade Maide

HAROLD BOOTON

Y hav a visioun of a wel maade maide
That is yclept Amerikan Beaute, it is seyde
And she is of swich beaute fayre
Non of this worlde coude compare.

To tellen you of this swete visioun
Y shall given you this discripcioun.
(Onliche oon thing must I save,
Trewely, I kan nat telle hire age.)

Hire heres been so golden clere,
(Onliche hire heredresser woot for sure).
Hire eyen are of swych beaute swete
(She seys "Mabelline" is trewely grete).

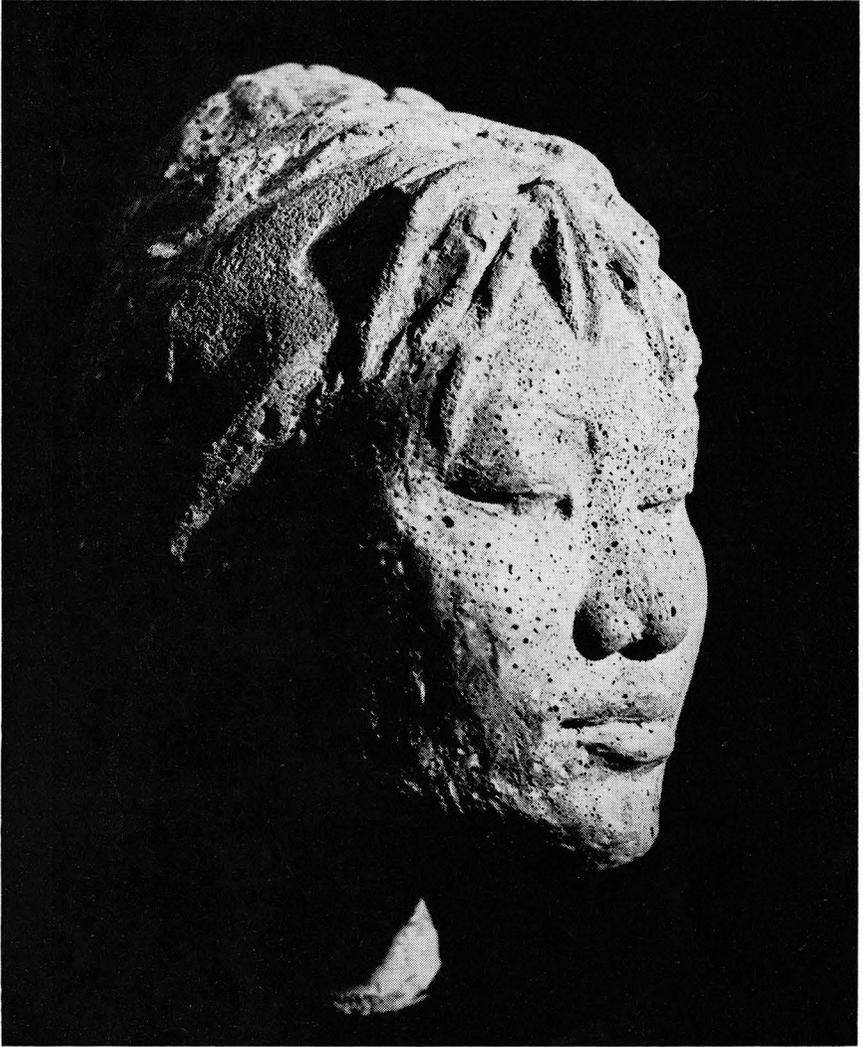
Hire mouth it is so cossing rede,
(Thonken been to "Revlon", it is seyde)
And hire complecioun maade is trewely white
(Covered are those pyples with "Avon" lite).

Hir body is of shap devine faire
Even more of beaute than is hir here.
She weren does swych dresses tighte,
She bulges wel in places righte.

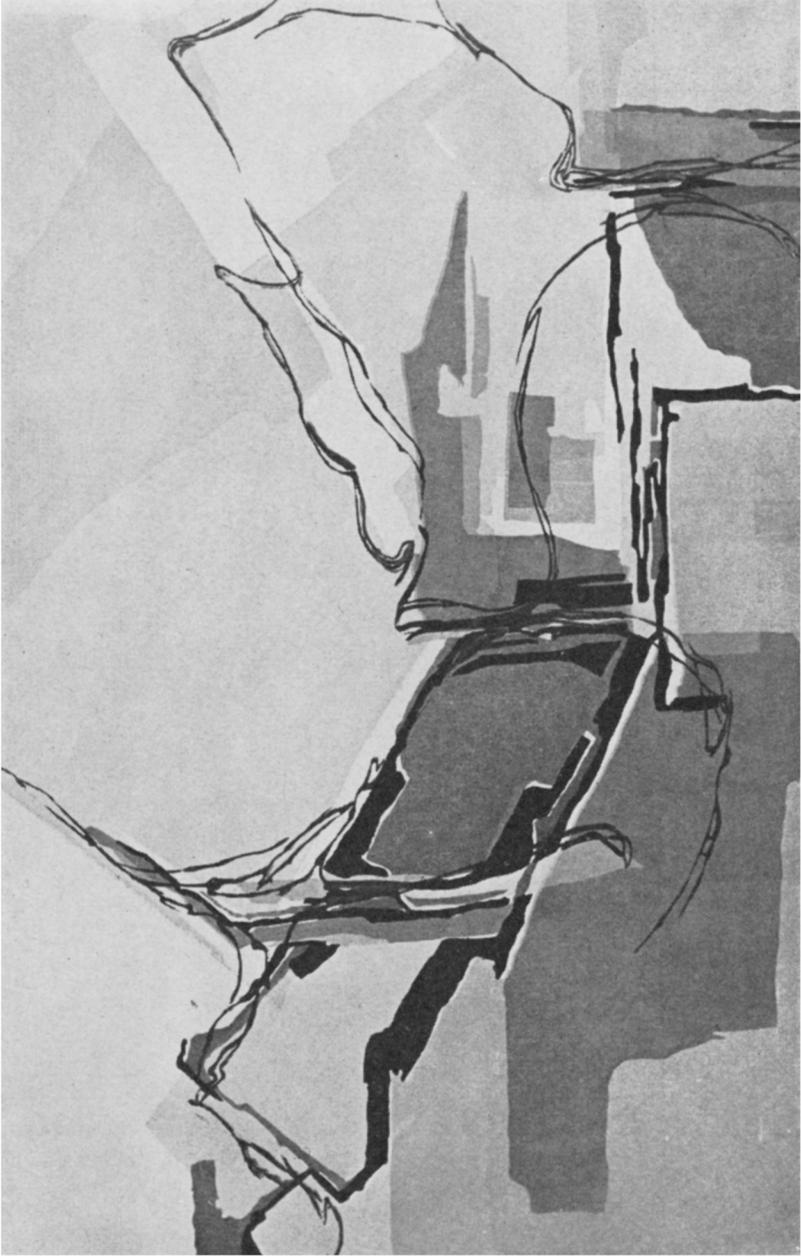
Hir bodice is of swich fother,
(“Maidenform” it is seyde, I ne care)
And hir girdilstede and hips are rounde
(Playtex girdles costen but a £).

Hire leges are a shape tan and lusty
(It is those stockings shere, I am trusty)
And hire skert it were so short,
Hire knees they stered, and Y embarrassed wert.

Hire shoes they hadde swich a pointe sharpe,
I upon hire would nevere harpe,
But as this is now too longe
Y thinken I must now begone.



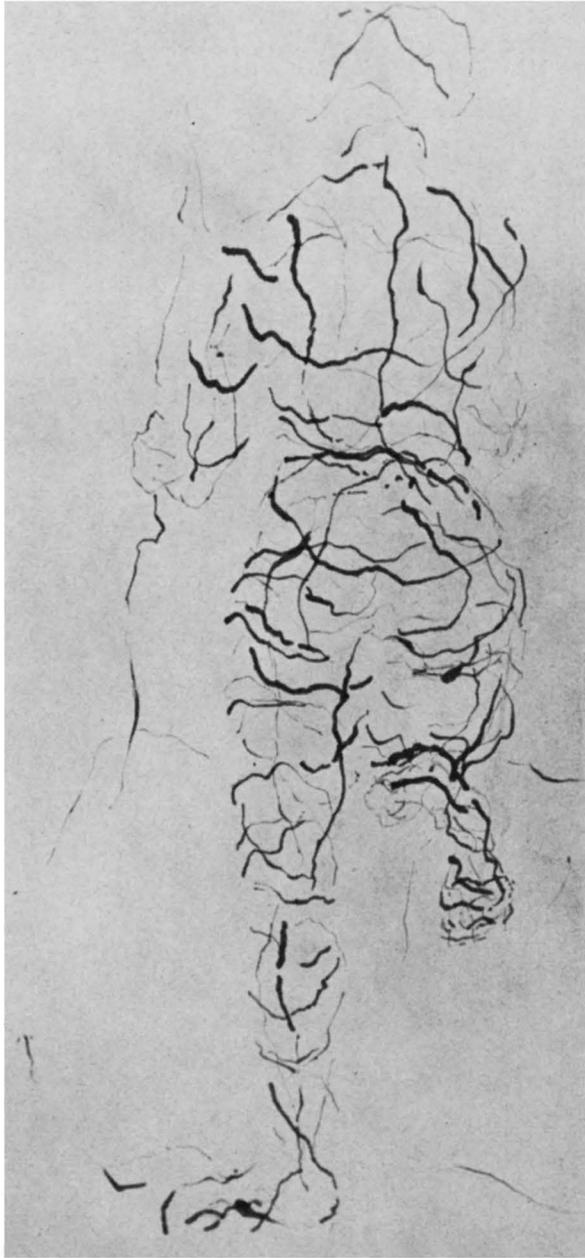
—MRS. BARBARA LAGING



—LOIS SAYRE



—ELLIOTT PARKER



—PAT HARRISON

The Winner

JIM HASTINGS



“. . . You see I was president of my senior class, and last year I was chosen Miss Sweetheart of my sorority. That was quite an accomplishment, don't you think; I mean, really, there were so many other girls that I didn't see how I could ever have been chosen the best one, but I was and boy, it sure was exciting.”

Sylvia stopped talking just long enough for me to collect my thoughts and pay the waiter. My gosh, I thought, what's she trying to do to me? I just happen to have a blind date, and I get stuck with this girl. She's really not bad looking and her figure is terrific, but she knows more about it than I want to hear. I even know her grandmother was Miss Honey Bushel of Prairie Smoke Village. “Look,” I said, getting up from the table, “maybe we'd better leave now.” She made a mad leap for me like I was Rock Hudson and wouldn't let go until we reached the car. I straightened my coat and tie and started the motor.

“Where are we going now, Honeykins?” she asked, scooting up real close to me and brushing her leg against mine. I turned into the street but didn't answer. I was much too busy thinking how I could get back to her sorority by the shortest route. On top of it all her perfume was driving me crazy, and she must have noticed my nose twitching because she asked me if I liked it.

“Smells all right,” I muttered, “sort of like insect repellent.” This must have made her all the more determined because she moved closer and closer until I was right against the door handle. “Look, Sylvia,” I pleaded, “it's getting rather hard to drive, so please move over.”

“But Honeykins,” she burred, “why don't you just stop the car? There's a park up there and it's nice and dark.”

I had no choice by then, for if I had driven another block I surely would have crashed. As it was I could barely see, let alone hold on to the steering wheel. No sooner did I stop than Sylvia started planting little kisses all over my neck and face. The next thing I knew she had pried loose my locked hands, and put my arms around her.

“That's better now, isn't it?” she cooed, as if she thought I was enjoying it all. “Now give me a big kiss like this.”

I ducked and managed to get my arms free again. If I lived through this it would be a miracle, I thought desperately. If Mother could see me now, she would be thoroughly ashamed. Her own Howard being manhandled by a woman. Why I was only nineteen and Sylvia couldn't have been more than twenty, but there were no two ways about it, I must stick up for us males. And with that I opened the car door and jumped out so fast that Sylvia fell out right on top of me. She gave out a little squeal as she landed.

“For crying out loud, get off me, will you?” I groaned. She rolled over, and I got up, brushing the dirt from my suit. For a moment she

just sat there and then she looked up at me with that dumb look on her face like she'd just been jilted out of matrimony. Then realizing what had happened, she started crying, just like a baby cries, first in little whimpers and then in big whimpers until she was crying pretty steadily. That's more like it, I thought. This is how it should have been at the first. No girl will ever manhandle me again. I gave her a tough look and ordered her to get into the car. "And hurry up," I growled, "before I decide to leave you here and make you walk back."

She got in, still crying, but not so much now, and I started the car again. My chest swelled out and I held my head high. "Yes sir," I said out loud, "no girl will ever get the best of me again. From now on Howard Douglas is master and don't you forget it." By the way she looked over at me, I could tell she knew I meant every word.

After we had been driving for about five minutes Sylvia stopped sniffing. "I'm sorry I acted the way I did, Howard. I don't know what came over me."

"That's all right," I answered. "We all make mistakes. You just have to know who you're up against." She looked up at me admiringly, and I held my head even higher.

I turned into her street and as we neared her house she started crying again. I stopped the car in front of the driveway and turned off the motor. "Now look, Sylvia, it's all over now. You had your little cry and it's all over."

"But Howard," she sobbed, "I feel like such a fool, and you were so nice to put up with me when I acted like I did. I don't even deserve to be walked to the door."

"Now hold on here," I started to say, "it's not as bad as all th . . ."

"Don't try to defend me, Howard," she interrupted, "you know how I acted; in fact a girl like me never deserved to be Miss Sweetheart," and with that she got out of the car and started for the house.

"Wait a minute, come back here," I shouted, but she had already shut the car door. The poor girl, I thought, I did pull a dirty trick scaring her like I did. I watched her as she walked across the lawn. Suddenly she fell. I rushed out of the car and as I got to her, she began to moan.

"My foot, Howard, it hurts. I think it's broken. You know, when I fell out of your car."

"Oh, you poor little thing," I blurted out, "and it's all my fault. Here now, put your arms around my neck and I'll get you to the house." I carried her up the steps and set her down on the porch. Kneeling down in the light I could see that her ankle was a little bruised, but nothing more than that. "It'll be all right in a few days," I said, looking up at her. . . . "You know something, Sylvia? Your eyes are beautiful when they're wet."

Poem III for B. A.

DAVID SADKIN

A flock of birds
Barreling through the air
Unbound, free,

S O A R I N G D I V I N G

T W I S T I N G

A R C H I N G

H e a r t s B U R S T I N G w i t h J O Y

F a l l i n g a l l o v e r t h e m s e l v e s w i t h

G I D D I N S S E N !

ARE YOU

In a Late Autumn Rain

DICK GUNN

Yes, I'll walk with you just a-ways,
Be careful though . . .
It's raining too gently
And it's not so dark
That I can't see you two, holding hands.
Please don't talk about other nights like this,
When you walked alone and together
Down other dripping side-streets
With wet, shiny pavement.
You see, I walked that way once myself
(She and I, that is)
And if I were to know anyone else
Who had done the same,
I might . . .
Please, be careful.
Tonight, I am so delicate,
I might be shattered
With the slightest jostling
And fall and be dissolved
Among the other damp scattered leaves.

Joseph Conrad's "Victory"

CHARLES KEMPTHORNE

JOSEPH CONRAD'S *Victory* was written nearly fifty years ago, but the vision of life expressed in it is as modern as any of those in the so-called *avant garde* novels of today. Like many modern novels, *Victory* is quite complicated, but for our purposes here its main theme can be divided into two basic beliefs. The first of these beliefs might be called a realistic—or if you prefer, a pessimistic—view of life. Life, Conrad says, is incomprehensible; involvement in it is painful and frustrating, and any involvement leads only to more involvement. The second basic belief is a conclusion drawn from the premises contained in the first: even if involvement in life is painful and frustrating, it is nevertheless man's sole source of happiness, and to have this happiness is the only way to "vanquish" death.

This theme is stated overtly throughout the novel. For example, the narrator, who for all practical purposes is Conrad, observes that ". . . every age is fed on illusions, lest men should renounce life early and the human race come to an end."¹ And Axel Heyst, the central character, in talking to his mistress, says very concisely that "Man on this earth is an unforeseen accident which does not stand close investigation." (185) This same belief is echoed by Heyst's father, who in his book has said that:

The most inexpressive of human beings must have said to himself, at one time or another: "Anything but this! . . ."

We all have our instants of clairvoyance. They are not very helpful. The character of the scheme does not permit that or anything else to be helpful. Properly speaking, its character, judged by the standards established by its victims, is infamous. (207)

Before Heyst becomes involved in life, we are told that, "In this scheme he had perceived the means of passing through life without suffering and almost without a single care in the world—invulnerable because elusive." (87) But after becoming a part of life, Heyst loses his invulnerability: "He suffered. He was hurt by the sight of his own life, which ought to have been a masterpiece of aloofness." (164) Though he does begin to suffer, he also begins to "live":

The girl he had come across, of whom he had possessed himself, to whose presence he was not yet accustomed, with whom he did not yet know how to live; that human being so near and still so strange, gave him a greater sense of his own reality than he had ever known in all his life. (189)

1. *Victory*, Modern Library edition, page 91. All subsequent page references are to this edition.

Heyst is becoming as involved in life as one can be: he is falling in love with another human being. But Lena returns Heyst's incipient love much more strongly, for in the ultimate act of involvement, she gives her life to save his. The victory of the title is hers: "The spirit of the girl which was passing away from under them clung to her triumph, convinced of the reality of her victory over death." (380) But for Heyst there is no victory, only insight into his failure. Almost his last words to Davidson are, ". . . woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love—and to put its trust in life!" (383)

Conrad's style strengthens parts of the same theme. The novel is, of course, wholly serious in tone, but occasionally a very cynical and unfunny kind of humor can be seen. For instance, he begins a chapter with the words: "Human nature being what it is, having a silly side to it as well as a mean side . . ." (20) The imagery, while just as harsh, is rich and striking. His images of nature convey a picture of a rugged, hostile, and beautiful world:

A great heat ascended from the sun-smitten ground, in an ever-rising wave, as if from some secret store of earth's fiery heart; for the sky was growing cooler already, and the sun had declined. . . . (307)

And here, perhaps the most intense image in the entire novel:

Beyond the headland of Diamond Bay, lying black on a purple sea, great masses of cloud stood piled up and bathed in a mist of blood. A crimson crack like an open wound zigzagged between them, with a piece of dark red sun showing at the bottom. Heyst cast an indifferent glance at the ill-omened chaos of the sky. (332)

These are beautiful images but they are not, certainly, a balm for the soul. Rather, they serve to reinforce Conrad's stoical view of the world.

The theme is reinforced also through the skillful and extensive use of symbols. Lena becomes a symbol of involvement in life and of victory over death through love of another human creature. She "trusts in life" instinctively, like many women, and she consequently knows much suffering and a little of the beauty and joy that it brings. She dies, but she dies knowing that she has lived, while Heyst dies knowing that he has *not* lived. Heyst stands for reflective man, for those who are unwilling to accept a rose-colored view of life. Words like "detached" and "aloof" are consistently associated with him. This is his heritage from his father, a philosopher whose observations were correct but whose conclusion was wrong. The father's philosophy of detachment, never carried out by himself, was followed all too well by the younger Heyst. In contrast to Heyst is his Chinese servant, Wang, who perhaps represents the Oriental's instinctive acceptance of life. The author says of him that:

... Heyst envied the Chinaman's obedience to his instincts, the powerful simplicity of purpose which made his existence appear almost automatic in the mysterious precision of its facts. (171)

The use of symbolism is evident also in the three thugs who come to Heyst's isolated island world. They represent the evil that befalls those who become involved in life. In talking to Lena, Heyst says of them: "Here they are before you—evil intelligence [Jones], instinctive savagery [Ricardo], arm in arm. The brute force [Pedro] is at the back." (308) That these characters function also as symbols is further borne out by the fact that words like "spectre," "cadaverous," and "evil" are consistently associated with Jones, "feline" and "feral" with Ricardo, and "strength" and "simian" with Pedro.

Conrad, then, states his theme explicitly and suggests it through style and symbols. But these are really only different ways of telling us something, rather than of demonstrating it. The "proof" of the theme is in the implications of the plot. This is the acid test; the other devices are merely persuasive. For if we do not believe the actions of the characters to be credible, and these actions are meant to "render" the theme, then certainly we should doubt the validity of the theme. Fortunately, the actions of Conrad's characters are for the most part, I think, credible, and they do render the theme. By tracing the career of the central character we can easily see what Conrad is trying to show us.

As a youth Heyst is convinced by his father not to involve himself in life. So he decides to drift, aloof and detached, through the world. And for fifteen years he does drift, until he meets the hapless Morrison and hears the sound of human suffering. Almost instinctively, he moves to help him. In doing so, he ultimately becomes involved with Morrison in the Tropical Belt Coal Company. Morrison, as an indirect result of his activities with the company, meets with death. Some of Heyst's fellows blame him for Morrison's death, and he even begins to feel some guilt about it himself. At Schomberg's hotel, he meets another sufferer, Lena, and almost without knowing what he is doing, whisks her off to his island. Once again he has gone against his father's advice and become involved. And again, he suffers; indeed, he eventually dies because of it. But between the time he brings Lena to the island and the time he dies, Heyst experiences, at least partially, the joy of love. Schomberg, anxious to be done with his dubious guests and outraged at Heyst's actions, reacts by sending Jones and his friends to Samburan to rob Heyst. In trying to defend her lover against these men, Lena dies in his arms; in despair of her death and of his realization that he has negated life for too long a time, Heyst destroys himself in a fire. This is, quite obviously, a dramatization of our theme: involvement in life brings more involvement and a good deal of pain, but most important of all, it brings happiness.

Not everyone is as realistic as was Joseph Conrad, but all will admit that much of what he says about life is true. Who has not felt some of life's frustration and pain? And who has not become involved and both regretted and loved it?

Conrad certainly did not mean that we can literally vanquish death. But by enjoying life, by accepting it, we can take some of the bitterness out of its inevitable end.

A Walk

RALPH WAREHAM

The surf rolled in with constant ease
As it has done for centuries on,
And walking 'long the sand-packed shore
I pondered how many tears had fallen,
Returning to the waves; which
Coming from a wrinkled green, roll and fall
And come ashore a frothy white—
Pure majesty of long-locked secrets,
Released from Prison's Penance.

And I walked on in pensive mood,
And the chill October winds fell warm upon my brow,
For the sea rose as the fevered realms
And warmed me in its countenance.

Remembering tears which had long since fallen,
I found a stronger consolation
In that last small tidal sheet which reaches out
As a hand extended warmly and with grace;
And, as though it had taken mine in hand,
It returned unto that boundless reach,
And tears streamed forth upon my cheek
To join their ancient brothers—
And the sea could understand them,
Lone and with memory.



There Always Is a "Why?"
Behind the "Why?"

JAMES G. VAN BUREN

There always is a "why?" behind the "why?"
And every lucid answer, calm and clear,
Gives echo of some other question near;
The diked sea yields small fields, but savage reigns
In spume-flung fury still.

To freeze in fact the quick plasticity,
The ever-shifting and elusive "real,"
To stamp it with our knowledge's proud seal,
Thwarts all our arts. We bleach—but mystery stains
Our starched facts 'gainst our will.

Longinus,
Playfully reaching with a stick,
Poking and stirring the inward parts,
Just for
Fun,
Became terribly disappointed and quickly lost his
Stomach as well as the stick.
And then Joseph,
Catching what was left,
And hurried off to Camelot on a many-legged tongue
Leaving the others some square nails,
Pieces of
Wood and scraps of cloth to sell to friends.
But soon old King!
(Ah, pure flame and bastard son)
Gloriously waving both sword and lance,
(Chaste unknown)
Hurdling broken walls and burning towers,
Stepping in wells,
Thigh deep, To sit with the wind
And baby-faced bats,
Thinking of questions.

Cocktail Party

BRENDA FISHER

Arty Howard

SURE, I got soused at the party. I always drink a lot at parties. I didn't figure it would be any different than any other; but it was.

I went by myself. Maxine, my wife, didn't want to go. She's a sweetheart, but I embarrass her. I like to have a good time and she's the quiet type. We're pretty different, but we're happy at home.

I wheeled up to the Smiths' house alone in my Ferrari. Boy, that car's a beauty. I guess you might say it's my weakness. When I get behind the wheel and feel all that power and smoothness, it's like another world.

Just about everyone was there by the time I arrived. Our neighborhood's been together for years and they think they know all there is about each other. Me? I have my doubts. They only see what's on the outside.

As I said, I was late. So I decided to make the big entrance. I racked up the Ferrari so they'd know who was coming, and let out my own roar when I banged through the door into the room. "OK, things can get rolling, Arty's here!"

They all laughed and some wise guy yelled, "At your age, Arty, you should be leaving by now, instead of getting started."

"Silence there," I shouted back. "I'll make the jokes around here."

The place was crowded, with a blue haze of smoke hanging over the room. Glasses were clinking and I headed straight for the bar. But I had a hell of a time getting there. It seemed like everyone wanted to slap me on the back. I'd gotten primed with a couple before I left home, but by the time I finally made the bar, I was sure ready for another. With that crowd, I stayed for three or four; it might have been hard to get back to it.

I was really getting in the mood when I saw Pete Gilmartin. Now, Pete is a funny guy. I don't mean humorous, just kind of strange. No one else seems to think so, but I can see this thing about him.

He was sitting by himself, so I wandered over to his corner of the room. I don't know why I went to talk to him exactly. Just wanted to see what was on his mind. We talked for awhile about the kids, my kids, that is. Pete's a bachelor. I can't understand why he never got married. He thinks a hell of a lot of my kids and I'd think he'd want a wife and family of his own. You don't really appreciate them unless they're yours.

He asked me about the Ferrari and sort of hinted that I should slow down. What an old maid! I couldn't tell him, and I didn't even try. Unless you've felt the thrill of cornering at 120, you can't possibly understand what it's like. You can feel the pull of the safety belt as you lean into a curve and you and the car are both one smooth powerful motion.

I felt uneasy being around Pete that night. I wasn't sure why at the time, but I think I know now. He seemed so completely alone, like there was a glass wall around him. I could see that he was right on the verge of something, but I couldn't pinpoint it. I began to feel the glow wearing off, so I left him.

I sat at the bar by myself for awhile. Just drinking and watching the people. It's funny, but when I'm drunk I see everything so clearly. It's like I can just look at someone and see inside of him. This second sight is really weird; it makes me feel as though I were even superior to myself. That's why I felt so uneasy being around Pete. There was something unnatural about him then, and I could feel it.

Karen Barnett walked near me. Gee, she's a pretty one. She looked worried and I tried to cheer her up. I called to her, "Karen, how goes it?"

"Hi," she said. She seemed absolutely haunted.

"You're looking especially beautiful this evening, dear lady. Stop and have a drink with old Arty."

She wouldn't smile and I could see that I wasn't getting through.

"Thanks, Arty, but I don't think I'd better drink any more." She only half paused. She seemed in a hurry to get away.

"Well, happy days," I called after her.

I was beginning to feel warm from all the smoke and people jammed together, so I slipped out onto the patio to get some air.

It was a beautiful night, not too cold, and the stars were sharp and bright, motionless and very near. God, I felt good. All these sad, mixed-up people and good old drunken Arty, right in the middle. One thing about me, I knew what I had and I appreciated it. I thought about Pete and his stupid worries about my fast driving, figuring I'd kill myself someday. He should have been worrying about himself—he'd never even lived.

I walked across the stone patio and my footsteps echoed behind me. The noise from the party made a low hum in the background. It's not easy to tell how I felt about myself and my drinking and about other people. But I was damned sorry for Pete, living a second-hand existence like he did. I had no way of telling him what he was missing out on by being alone all the time. You've got to know what life is before you realize that it's worth hanging onto.

There was a loud burst of laughter from the party. I like to be right in the thick of things, so I went back inside. There was some silly party game going on and I played. I'll bet I made quite a sight. The game was to have everyone stand around in a circle and then someone acted out a word. Well, when it got around to me, I had to step out in the middle and act out the word "banana". Now, how in the hell do you play like a banana? I was acting like I was slipping on a peeling, when there I went. I lost my balance, my drink flew out of my hand, and I went crashing to the floor. I just sat there, laughing like a fool. That sure brought down the house.

I got back in the circle, and I could see Pete, sitting all alone on the couch. The thought came to me to go and drag him into the group.

I shoved through a bunch of people, but when I got nearer, something made me stop. I had the strangest feeling about him, that I would be in trouble if I went any closer.

I could see him plainly. He was turned slightly to his right and his face had a dazed look on it. He was talking, nodding his head, gesturing with his hands, as though he were deeply involved in conversation with someone.

Karen Barnett

I didn't have a good time at the party. I really didn't want to go. If I had stayed home, I wouldn't have to remember that last talk with Pete.

Jim brought the car around to the front of the house so I wouldn't have far to walk. The baby was due in a few weeks and I was scared.

Jim tried his best to calm me down on the way to the party.

"Look, Karen, why don't you relax and try to have a good time? Women have been having babies for centuries and the doctor said everything was all right."

"I know it, Jim, but I can't help myself. I try to say that everything will be all right, but then I start thinking about Mother." I started to cry.

"For God's sake, don't cry again. I just can't understand you, Karen. You've never been sick a day in your life and now you act like our baby will be the end of everything. This is the beginning." He reached over and patted my shoulder awkwardly. I could see worry in his eyes, but he really couldn't understand. "We're going to a party, remember?"

"I'll try," I said. But that fear remained to haunt me.

At first the party helped—as long as I talked to people who took my mind away from myself. All those from our immediate group were there; everyone seemed so alive, so full of vitality . . . I made the rounds of them all. Then the knot came back into the pit of my stomach. I felt as though I were under a blanket of fear that wrapped itself more tightly minute by minute.

I thought if I could keep on talking, I could control myself. I had to for Jim's sake. I saw Pete Gilmartin sitting on a couch in the corner. We'd been friends for a long time. I could talk to him; he was always willing to listen. People were drawn to him like a magnet with their problems. I guess it was because he was always so easy-going. I envied him. He didn't seem to have a care in the world.

We sat together and I had another drink with him. I had already forced down two or three, thinking it might help. He asked me about the baby. I was afraid he would and by then I couldn't help myself. I broke down.

"Pete, I'm afraid. I know I'm going to die having the baby. And I don't want to die." I started to cry. "I don't want to die, Pete."

He gave a funny little laugh and I looked up at him. His face was very calm. He said, "Why be afraid of dying, Karen? I can't see that

it would really be so different from living.” His eyes had the strangest look when he said that, as though he really believed it. Suddenly, I was terrified. I had to get away from the crowd, away from Pete. I made some excuse and left him. Jim was talking on the other side of the room, too far away. I was heading for a bedroom when Arty Howard called to me. I barely spoke. Arty would understand even less.

I slipped through a door into the darkened bedroom. I didn't want to turn on a light. My God, I was afraid. I felt like death—it seemed inevitable. It's hard to explain when you first start to believe something that has grown and grown until suddenly it's there as though it had been always with you. No matter how you try to forget or think of something else, sooner or later it comes back and slips into the corner of your mind, and then again you're thinking about it, and it's still growing. That's the way I was about the baby. Nothing could make me change my mind.

I wanted so terribly hard to believe everything everyone told me, because I wanted to live. It's difficult to tell how I felt. I had tried to explain it to Jim, but he couldn't understand. He just looked puzzled and tried to reason with me. He hadn't felt it though. To know, to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that it happens, without any reason, it just happens. It was just the fact of knowing.

I was sitting there, alone in the dark, trying to stop shaking, when I felt a thump, deep inside. It was just a simple little kick; I'd felt movements before but this one was different, sort of urgent, almost aware. It felt so strange. I'd never thought before about the baby as a person, a living, breathing human being, but in that moment, when I felt that odd stirring inside of me, I knew it was alive; I knew it was real, flesh and blood, and not just some abstract concept of life as I'd always thought it.

I remembered Jim's face when I first told him about the baby. We had been married for several years and I knew how much he wanted a child.

He stared at me, blankly at first, and then his face changed. His eyes grew very tender and a smile of pure joy spread across his face.

“Karen, honey. My God, that's wonderful. That's terrific.”

Poor Jim. He had been so happy. I guess the past few months hadn't been very happy for him, though. I knew, like Jim, that I wanted it to be born.

I wanted it to hurry, now. There was so much for it to have in life, so much to see and do and hear and feel. I felt as though something had swiftly and cleanly cut out that knot of fear. I didn't feel that I wouldn't die, but I was strong, and I knew that I could. I didn't care at all, as long as the baby lived.

I remembered one perfect autumn day, shortly before Jim and I were married. We had driven to the country and stopped the car to walk through the woods. There was a little stream, rippling over the rocks, and the trees were a blaze of gold and green and scarlet. The sun was warm and the whole world seemed to be resting. We scarcely spoke, but there was a kind of communion between us. Perhaps death would be

that way. A peacefulness, a quiet drifting through a cloudy world. But I didn't mind, any more.

I thought of Pete, telling me not to fear death. I wondered why he didn't care about dying. I knew his reasons must have been different from mine, because his life was so different. He lived alone, and he joined in quietly with the group. But sometimes he seemed so lonely.

I wanted to tell him what I had found. He needed to know quickly. There had to be room in the world for a new life, and if my baby could take mine and know what I had known, I would be content.

I touched a light switch and caught sight of myself in the mirror. I looked so different . . . my face was calm and still. I hurried from the room.

The party was just as I had left it. Everyone was drinking and laughing and a cloud of smoke hung over the room. People were drifting into little groups. I wanted to find Pete. I had to push my way through a crowd of people to get to the other side of the room.

He wasn't sitting on the couch where we had talked, so I looked in the kitchen and near the bar and on the patio. Then someone told me Pete had gone.

Pete Gilmartin

It started out just like any other cocktail party given by the Smiths. The women in smart little black dresses were discussing babies, bridge, and bedroom color schemes, while the husbands were taking one martini too many and comparing golf scores. The room was bright with laughter and warmth and alcohol and the indirect lighting shed a smooth glow on a score of chattering people. I was a bystander, perched, so I thought, high and dry on the bank—an interloper in a family world, the perennial insider who isn't quite "in".

Let me introduce myself. My name's Pete—Pete Gilmartin. I was the only bachelor in that neighborhood and usually invited to all of the parties and dinners and barbecues to sort of round out the guest list and take care of any visiting sisters or other unattached females in the neighborhood. You're probably wondering why I lived in the suburbs—the land of the commuter, the PTA, and the Brooks Brothers suit—being single and all. Well, I'll tell you. I did the "Little flat in Greenwich Village" bit for a few years. Believe me, I had the whole routine. I wined and dined every blonde, brunette, and redhead that I met and I lived the proverbial carefree bachelor life. It seems that one day I took a look in the mirror—a close look—and I saw *two* gray hairs. That was it. I decided to get out while I was still relatively robust and my crew cut was still dark brown. So I left that life behind and started a new one. I bought a small house with a sprawling lawn and I had a dog to keep me company. I just liked the atmosphere out there—the family-type life. And the kids all adopted me. I think I was "Uncle

Pete" to every kid in the neighborhood. They all felt sorry for me because I didn't have a "mommy" at my house.

Back to the party. At the one I'm telling about, I was a free agent, so I simply mingled. I was standing in a corner, nursing a drink, when Karen Barnett walked over to me. Being obviously pregnant didn't keep her from being one of the prettiest women at the party. She was wearing a black smock of a shiny-type material that was cut wide at the neck to show her pretty shoulders. Her smooth blonde hair was shining and a drink or two had given a sort of rosy glow to her face.

"Good evening, Mrs. B and Junior," I said, making a low bow.

"Hi, Pete," she said with a wan smile. "Nice party, isn't it?" She stepped near and I could see that her face was drawn and there were dark smudges of fatigue under her eyes.

I took her hand and drew her to a seat in the corner. "Excuse me for one moment, my dear." I went into the kitchen and mixed her a drink.

"Here, Mrs. B. Let Dr. Gilmartin's old home remedy pep you up. That little potion is guaranteed to wipe the lines from your brow and bring a glowing smile to your lips." The comedy was weak, but it brought the smile I was trying for.

"Thanks, Pete. I really shouldn't, but . . ." She sipped her drink nervously for a minute and I studied her face. Tonight the bloom was hidden by a mask of nervous movements and a detached attitude.

"When's Junior due to arrive, Karen?"

She started and the mask slipped for a second, showing naked fear. I thought she was going to cry. She looked away quickly and then said, "In about a week, I guess. But you never can be sure—it could be early or late." She laughed nervously. "Maybe I just won't have one. Maybe it's all a big joke and I won't have a baby at all."

"Well," I said, "that would be a switch. By the way, how's old Jim taking all of this? Is he playing the nervous part of the expectant father? . . . you know, the old routine."

"Pete, no one could be more calm." She was angry. "Jim is acting as though the trip to the hospital will be nothing more than a Sunday drive in the country. I'm completely disgusted with him, because—" her voice dropped a note and she looked away from me, "—I'm scared to death."

"Well," I said boldly, "he's got a point there. You know as well as I do that there is absolutely nothing to it these days. Having a baby is as safe as going to church."

She sat silently for a moment and then looked at me as though I were a stranger. Her eyes were hollow and frightened. "Pete, my mother died in childbirth." Her voice began to shake. "I'll never have another baby. I can't eat or sleep any more and it's because I'm so afraid. For the last month I've had the most horrible fear that I'm going to die. I even dream about it. At night I feel like I'm floating above the delivery room—watching myself struggling and screaming and," her voice broke to a whisper, "dying." She shuddered and buried her face in her hands.

I tried then to tell her how I felt. "Why be afraid of dying, Karen? I can't see that it would be so different from living."

She was crying and when she looked up I could see amazement and disbelief with the tears on her face. She stood up swiftly. "I'll be all right; I'm just tired, I guess. I think I'll find a quiet corner and rest for a few minutes." She turned and walked away.

I thought back over what she had said and it worried me, almost as if I were involved. Karen was such a sweet kid that I'd always felt just a trace of envy for Jim. He worked so hard for promotions, was really making a place for himself in the company. Preparing for the future, I guess. I'd gotten sort of content with my status quo.

I was still trying to reassure myself about Karen—chalking it up to a good case of first-baby jitters—when Arty Howard walked into my little corner. Staggered would be a better word for it, because Arty was pretty drunk. Arty was a big man—big in stature and big in voice. For instance, he had an expensive sports car, a Ferrari, I think, that would come close to 170 on a long straight stretch. A dangerous toy. I'll have to admit that I always expected to hear about him piling it somewhere and ending up in the morgue.

He fell onto the couch beside me and slapped me on the shoulder, "Hi ya, Pete, ol' buddy."

I winced and managed a feeble hello.

"Great party, grea' party, I'll say."

"Yeah, sure. Say, where's Maxine tonight?"

He struggled for words. "Oh, her. She stayed home tonight. Said she knew I'd drink too much and didn't want to be em, emb . . . , embar . . . oh, hell, said she didn't want to feel like a fool again." He pulled out a large white handkerchief and began mopping his florid, shining face. "Guess I have had a li'l too much."

I never did like to look in on family troubles, so I said, "How's Jerry doing up at State this year?"

He slapped his knee and his face took on exuberant parental pride. "Great, Pete, just great. Gonna be the best damn doctor in the state when he gets through. Great kid, that Jerry. Made varsity football this year, Pete." Arty's face was glowing as he rambled on about his boy.

Feeling myself rapidly being lost, I cut in and said, "Still driving the Ferrari, Arty?"

A broad smile cut across his face. "Sure am, Pete ol' buddy. Love that car. Brought her with me tonight. Maxine didn't like that; she worries when I drive it. Thinks I'm going to have a wreck—kill myself someday, she says."

"She could be right, Arty," I said. "You should take it easy; you've got a lot to live for."

He looked at me sharply and clearly and for a minute, he didn't seem drunk at all. "I think I need another drink."

He rose carefully and walked off in the direction of the bar.

Man, I thought, what a character—a real wild one at times, but a proud family man. He sure talked a lot about his wife and kids. For

a minute, I felt lost and left out. I seemed to have a lot—friends, a house, but when it was all said and done, I really didn't have anyone special.

The doorbell rang, cutting in on my train of thought. No one else seemed to hear it, so I answered it. At the first glimpse of the stranger standing before me, my reaction was to shut the door again.

The porch light was on and it threw a shadow that divided his face—half was bathed in a deep shade and the other half was brightly illuminated. He was wearing a dark suit and he seemed to be melting into the shadows of the porch.

"This is the Smith residence?"

"It is," I said. "May I help you?"

"I'll just step in, if you don't mind." He moved toward me.

"Well . . ." I hesitated, "there's a party going on right now."

"Yes, I know." He opened the screen door and I stepped aside for him to enter.

He walked in, glanced around, and headed for the kitchen. I had never seen him before at any of the group gatherings, but he seemed to know what was going on. He walked purposefully through the crowd, smiling amiably at the guests, but never pausing to speak. There was something puzzling about him—I was pretty sure he was a stranger, but there was a familiar air about him.

He apparently knew where the drinks were being served because in a moment he was back with two of them, handed me one, and settled himself beside me on the couch. I felt pretty silly about my first apprehensions of him. He had looked weird at first, but it must have been that light on the porch because inside, he looked quite normal.

He seemed so perfectly at ease that I wondered if he had been around before and I had just missed him.

He was looking around the room, so I studied him for a moment. I supposed he was about middle age. He was rather tall and slender with an average face. But his eyes bothered me. They were black, but it was an odd flat black.

I was still watching him when the clatter of breaking glass startled me. We both looked around and there was Arty Howard, sitting on the floor, roaring with laughter.

"That's Arty, drunk again," I said. "It's kind of disgusting."

My companion looked at me. "He seems to be having a good time."

"Yeah," I said, "by making a fool of himself."

He didn't answer, just looked around us again. I can't say why, but I was beginning to kind of like the guy.

He pointed across the room. "Who's that young man over there? I don't believe I know him."

"That's Jim Barnett," I said.

"Oh, of course. Karen's husband. My, they're a handsome couple." He sighed. "It would be nice to be young like that."

I just nodded. He turned to me. "Are you enjoying the party?"

His look was sympathetic and I felt drawn to him, felt like confiding in him.

"Not really," I said. "Everyone's been coming to me with their problems and I'm so used to it that it doesn't even affect me any more. Karen Barnett's afraid she's going to die having her baby. It's silly, but what can you tell her? And Arty Howard, he might as well be dead. He's drunk most of the time and he seems hell-bent on killing himself the way he drives that car of his. I don't understand them."

The stranger looked at me questioningly and smiled.

Variation on a Theme

MELVA ZIMMERMAN

A feather flits by the window and I remember,
Such gray, cloudy day for such gay, light feather,
Such dismal day to recall him:
Him of light and merry heart, of soft, gentle heart,
Of laughing blue eyes and caressing hands.
He is not for such a day.
He is for wandering sunshine and reckless wind, for mad picnics
and rushing streams, for breathless dancing and ceaseless
talking, for people, for pleasure.
For loving and keeping.
No. Not for keeping or for returning.
Only for leaving, for flitting.

Song, for Rose-Mary

WILLIAM MARVEL

If I tell you I have seen snow
lie smooth as light rests on your face
and dared not touch it lest doing so
one touch a single perfect flake erase,
then what excuse for feet, hesitant, slow
to tread this page's empty space?

Thus though my poem compares you to a rose
(proving I read far better than I see),
forgive the wit that seldom goes
beyond the petal-wrapped rose's mystery
and receive the courter comes on timid toes
wearing threadbare imagery.

Horace I, xxxviii

WILLIAM MARVEL

Young Man, I hate all Persian luxury,
and wreaths of Linden-wood have my disdain;
forbear to pluck the late-lingering rose
for me.

I say no fuss! Leave plain myrtle plain.
If it can crown your labours lavishly,
then surely mine, some wine and shade,
make myrtle vain.

In Parting

REX STEPHENSON

And they kept running by, the endless
stream of horses
Drab and grey, very drab and grey.
All we did, all we could do, just sit
and hope
And listen to the women cry and moan.
Some prayed . . . not me!
I knew no hope

The wind blew very cold,
But the earth gave off an ominous
heat beneath my bare hand.
My clinching fist alternately betrayed
white,
Then blue knuckles.
The groans and cries of the women round
about us seemed to rush forth
Upon my half conscious being,
As the cold blustery wind would sigh and die
For fleeting moments at a time.

Yet they never stopped,
Going nowhere, coming from nowhere,
Never ending . . . the drab, even dirty, grey horses
Kept running on.
The choking dust from their impatient hooves
So near
But never violating my nostrils.

Why? I asked myself,
But received in answer only a vision
Of smoldering, burned-out stumps,
Of desolation inspired
Only by a humble, pitiful creature
on the brink of death,
Hoping for death
Praying for death,
Yet suffering the knowledge that life's
next moment
Holds only suffering intensified.
That the sweet peace of death is yet
One staggering step away,
One more endless yard to drag one's

paralyzed legs over sharp rocks and broken glass,
One more sickening, frustrating experience of
impotent old men with silly, eager young women.
The scream of a rabbit being slowly ground
into a superhighway.
A private bleeding to death in a foxhole.
A tiny bird falling from the warmth
of nest during God's merciless gale.

Why? I dared ask myself again,
But was allowed
Only to hear the sighs of the cold wind
over the groans of the women
And a slight glimpse proved the stream of greys
Slacked not all,
But intensified if anything.

Is everything out of harmony?
Has every rusty barbed wire fence
Snapped from the unseen, but terribly
felt tension?
Why are the loving, trusting puppies
From the kennel behind the garage so
terrified by my approach?
They futilely seek their refuge
From the rotting bones of the long dead bitch
Where the work of the maggots in her ghoulishly
sunken eyes seems only half-hearted.
Can it all be true?
Or will it automatically reject itself?

As the coin clinks deep into the bowels
of the brightly lit machine
And the push of a button creates life
Through sight and sound,
So does a glint of hope
Stir life in the soul of a man.
As the life-giving cool of the drought-breaking
rain,
As the deep warmth of the crackling fire on an icy
night,
As the knowledge of the nearness of God
in the moment of fear,
So we await their coming.

With each new day the sun returns
Swallowing the darkness of night
Seeking its old haunts overhead.

And as we watch God's sun appear
each day overhead,
So will we see your son seek his place
among our sons.
And the breezes will warm the hills
around them
And the cries of the women will be changed
to shouts of joy.
But the endless stream of horses
The drab and grey horses
Will still be running by.

Clouds of Interpretation

JAMES M. DAVIS

Plucked from the real
Set free to wander
In their mythical scope
Mystic
Mute
Concealing
Revealing
Aimless as the Shades of limbo
Yet they gather to hide Sol
All is dark
Obscure
Dim
Complex
Pure
With throat-lodged heart
Spinning mind
They present truth
Absolute
Absurd
Knowable
Unknowable

—WES MATHIS





—SANDRA FUNK



—ELLIOTT PARKER



—SHUI S. TSE

V

BRENDA FISHER

life is death
and people are brass,
cheap imitations that
tarnish at last.
sooner or later
it will come to pass
when people no longer
are molded from brass.
mudandclay
and sticks and grass
will walk the earth
instead of the brass.

X

BRENDA FISHER

Today I saw an old love of mine,
He hadn't changed at all.
His hair was still crisp and curly and golden,
His eyes were bright blue stars
That glimmered like diamond steel.
He walked along in
Tawny leopard rippling majesty.
We met upon a shaded walk
With cool dim shadows and trees;
We had known it centuries ago
As lovers.
His mouth looked warm and sweet and cruel,
He passed me by without speaking.

Après La Saison En Enfer

KEITH LAQUEY

"Plus de mots. J'ensevelis les morts dans mon ventre."
—A. Rimbaud.

From deep within your warm caves of green pillars and
Blue mist,
Of absinth and hashish, you come,
O terrible child.
Out of your golden halls into a world of cancered gods
And torpid senility;
A world of naked men, raped virgins, cannibal queens
And phallic christs.
You crawl, blinking your eyes,
And your mind vomits.

But you remember, you who were another remember the nights alone
And the days on fire.
And you remember the blood and golden flames; and you remember
Omega,
The violet ray of her eyes as she sat on your knees with
Heavy thighs,
Her magnificent body bursting beneath wounds of darkened blood.
But you found her bitter.
And you remember the crouching child, the dark puddle and tiny
Boat, as frail as the May butterfly;
The swaying flowerbells and spiderwebs, the orange lips, rainbows,
(they sometimes damned you)
And the clock which never struck. You remember the scarlet pigeons
And golden chains, the stars,
Banners of raw meat against the silk of her breasts,
(they do not exist)
And the pretty Crime howling in the mud of the street,
You remember.
The chariots of copper and silver, polar suns, and the eyes
Of panthers,
Star-Archipelagoes, blond-eyed birds and the colors of the vowels,
Too well.
And you remember when as a small boy,
A poet only seven,
You would pass through dark corridors
Sticking out your tongue.
And with your tiny fists thrust into your groin,
Forehead touching the sky,
You would see dots behind your blue-white eyes.
But now,

With that behind, left within the pillars of smoke,
 You come,
Wiping the rotted stumps of your teeth
 With a bloody sleeve,
You blink at the yellow sun and embrace your new world,
 You become lost
Within the blue black veins of your world,
 You become one
With the virgins cannibals and christs of your world,
 Today you are a man. . . .

Myopia

KEITH PETERS

Our tanglethoughts are prisms of hot-cold-ouch,
Planted in a glebe of black and frosted glass.
Crystalloid dogma, melted by freedom's warmth,
Warping *was* which has been distorted by
The weighted mask and the frantic swing—
Jeweled bearings caught in the race.

Dusky diversity in a swarm of stinging rebuke,
Reason lost beneath a smother of alpine pride.
George Washington Lincoln Madison Jones
Has always stooped under a platform of white
Hubris, bent by the boomerang of custom,
Prodded by the bleached handle of heritage,
And staggered by the staccato stabs of
Stiletto tongues, rabid with foaming insult.

Sheer plod passes no preference of place,
Produces no helium dream to lift
We and *they* to *us*.
Passivity partakes of quiet submission,
And still the bubble does not rise.

Breathe your outraged dark heat into
The plastic snow; cut the ice of
Inequality with acetylene voices.
Only then will truth trickle forth
Beneath the canopy of carbohydrates,
Ions, insecticides, and uranium shivers.

Cheating in Our College Classrooms

PAT KELLY

I HAVE among my possessions a piece of cardboard about four by eight inches in size, with gauze, or what amounts to cheesecloth, wrapped around about a dozen times. I've had this bolt of gauze for some time. I do not know its origin nor do I know its purpose. It was on the coffee table last night when my roommate came home from the library. He happened to notice it there on the table and the conversation went something like this:

"What's that?"

"I don't know," I replied.

"Whose is it?"

"Mine," I answered without looking at him.

"What's it for?" he asked.

Still not looking at him, I replied, "I don't know."

He couldn't understand why I would possess an apparently worthless roll of cheesecloth, not knowing its origin, function, or destination. At this point in the conversation I proceeded to leap all over his way of life by presenting my little philosophy to him as I intend to do now for you.

You see, I believe that not everything in this world should make absolute sense. Look around you. What do you see? Looking around my apartment, I see some books and a pair of scissors. What are they for? You say, books are for reading and possibly self-improvement and scissors are for cutting. How utterly dull! Nauseatingly orderly. Now, just think how interesting it would be if scissors were for reading and books were used as cutting tools. Think of the refreshing change of seeing a barber cutting hair with a book and seeing people in libraries sitting around diligently studying pairs of scissors. Or imagine yourself sitting in a barber chair reading some scissors and the barber cutting your hair with Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. This is not only an escape from the moldy rubber mold of everyday living but it also fulfills other inward desires. Let me explain. If this situation could be realized it would fulfill the following desires: one, the barber's desire to be recognized as a literate member of society; and two, your desire to observe the area between the two blades of the scissors, which is rather Freudian in itself.

This philosophy is not based upon nonsense, but rather on the phenomenon of syncopation, in that it is the unexpected that remains most vividly in our minds. For this reason, a person who practices this philosophy is termed a syncopate, not to be confused with the term psychopath. To be a syncopate, a person must develop a serious attitude towards the unreal. He must be able to point to a building and say,

"Look at the horse." He must be able to meet a person on the street and instead of mumbling the usual "How are you?" which is superficial anyway, a mere oral grunt of acknowledgement, should say, "What time does the next balloon go up?" He should say this providing the oncoming person is a bona fide syncopate. Otherwise, he wouldn't be understood and his personal greeting would go unappreciated.

If you feel that you're onto this syncopation already, let me give you some tips. First, you have to find someone who is also onto it, for what good is isolated creativity? If you think a friend of yours might be a syncopate, or at least, have the potential, here's how to make sure. Invite him to have some coffee with you. Sit down and very unassumingly pull out the tiniest piece of paper that you can hold between your thumb and index finger and look at it intently, concentrating upon it from every conceivable angle. Then ask him if he thinks it's genuine. If he sort of grunts and asks what's wrong with you, don't ever bring up the subject again. But, if he wigs (laughs wildly), you're in! You've found a fellow syncopater. Now you can have all kinds of wild times together. You've reached an esoteric relationship without being a "Welch" about it. If anyone is still with me, perhaps you're wondering about the title of this paper. I know that it has nothing to do with the unreal, but after all, I'm not essentially a criminologist, I'm a philosopher.

So you see, that bolt really does have a definite purpose. I keep it around to remind me that the most useless of articles have functions. The function of that bolt of cheesecloth is to be worthless. Likewise, the surreal is very real indeed—in the syncopated aspect, that is. So get a piece of cardboard with some cheesecloth wrapped around it and look at it when things become ridiculously repetitious. Think of its worthlessness and associate yourself with it. In conclusion, I would like to leave this thought with you to be used as a guide to daily living: It is swine-herding in the Alaskan tundra that is robbing ashtrays of their talented tap-dancers.

Poem

STAN DEEVER

in this corner
in black trunks
weighing in at
zero pounds
zero ounces
is death
(so far
undefeated)

his opponent
tonite is
you
the fight
is for
your
life
(are you
nervous)

shake hands
(have you
ever felt
anything
colder)
and come out
fighting

whether it
is over
quickly
with but one
explosively
brutal
blinding
blow

or lasts
longer
and goes
slowly
by inches
by tears
by cries
could not
make less
difference

the winner
as ever
is death

by a

knockout



K-State Libraries



A13408 459256

