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ON THE COVER

Steve Garner's *Trout in Trees* is a 24" x 18" watercolor (2003). Garner, formerly of the University of North Dakota, lives in Simpsonville, South Carolina.

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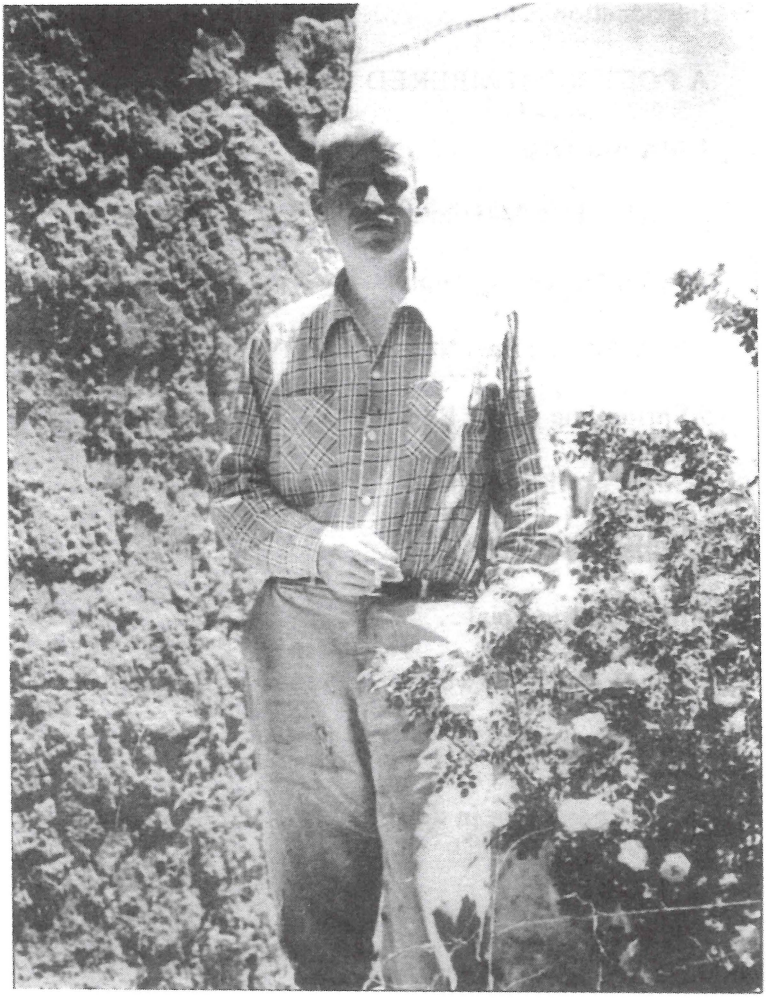

Norman Macleod, Santa Fe, New Mexico, ca. 1951.

DOUGLAS WIXSON

Growing Up Radical in Missoula and Butte: Norman Macleod, Poet, Editor, Novelist (1906-1985)

". . . my wild and irregular life."

A decade of deprivation and labor-capital conflict had scarcely closed when Americans began tooling up for World War II. Workers who had stood in breadlines now streamed into wartime factories. The shadow of hard times lifted and new horizons of expectation appeared, altering people's lives and tastes. One effect of changing national priorities was to sideline radical writers like Norman Macleod from publication and exclude their work from critical judgment, not for reasons having to do with intrinsic literary worth necessarily but for their stubborn insistence that the war would consolidate the capitalist order they held responsible for society's ills.

In the shadow of Cold War politics and despite the billowy lift of post-war affluence Norman Macleod and others of his generation of literary radicals fell into near-obscurity. Critics, including the New York intellectuals, who had embraced pre-war leftist causes and then renounced them, together with those who espoused the New Criticism, set the terms of literary reception hostile to the ill defined "proletarian writers" of the Depression era. Implicit in editorial policy and evaluative criteria was the notion that critical realism had lost its appeal. In place of class conflict and the "common man" as literary subjects the postwar era favored "hard-boiled" tales of violence (Mickey Spillane), existential Angst (Sartre, Kafka) and disaffected "beats" (Ginsberg, Kerouac). Notwithstanding its aim to depersonalize art, as famously argued by T. S. Eliot, literary modernism proved congenial to reactionary practices. Macleod and fellow literary radicals had sought a connection between the revolution of the word and the revolution of the world.[1] Their hope for that connection faded

with America's emergence as superpower, threatened, as Senator Joseph McCarthy claimed, by "enemies within."

New Critical analysis and the study of literary modernism were staples of my own education; I'm not the less for it. A few years after leaving university I met Jack Conroy (1898-1990), author of *The Disinherited* (1933) and former editor of *The Anvil*. With Jack as mentor I began a "post-graduate education" in subjects entirely absent from university curricula. Drawing from his dog-eared file of addresses Conroy directed me to writers of his generation he had known personally or edited and who were still alive. My interest in the neglected and in some cases maligned literary radicals of the 1930s grew as I came to know poets and writers such as Conroy, Meridel LeSueur, Sanora Babb, Nelson Algren, Tillie Olsen, Paul Corey, and Norman Macleod.

Bedridden in a Greenville, North Carolina, nursing home, crippled by, as he said, five major diseases, Norman had lost little of the fiery temperament and radical convictions that reminded me of the romantic revolutionary John Reed—absent the legend. Macleod's temperamental, erratic behavior and drinking habits often irritated his leftist friends.[2] To the Communists, on the other hand, he was a "bohemian," talented but not to be counted upon. The more orthodox of the Party's cultural critics dismissed his poems as vague, diffuse, lacking the optimistic fire of assured victory. One after the other his marriages failed. He never stayed long in one place, yet he never forgot where he had been and whom he had met there. His deep commitment to literature never wavered. Long past most of his contemporaries he remained active as poet and editor.

Widely published during his lifetime, Macleod is among the most frequently cited in Hoffman, Allen and Ulrich's authoritative *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography*. His founding of the 92nd Street (YHMA) Poetry Center in New York left a permanent and important legacy. His life and work, one might argue, embraced both the strengths and weaknesses of literary radicalism between the two great wars.

My acquaintance with Conroy, Babb, LeSueur, Macleod, and others led me on a further expedition, to chronicle their lives and assess their significance. I was curious to learn how they became writers and acquired their radical convictions, in every case through personal experience. Their stories, I came to believe, must not be lost to future generations when once again, as Jack Conroy wrote in the preface to the 1982 edition of *The Disinherited*, ". . . some of those who now lose their pride and stoop low may rise up angry. . . ."

1.

By the late nineteenth century in the mining West former frontier boomtowns had yielded to new industrial cities, and large corporate

interests had absorbed the small mine enterprises. Abundant mineral resources created an aggressive capitalist order that predictably gave rise to radical dissent and led to the formation of labor organizations like the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). For all the passions it evoked and the role it played in the West's economic development the story of radical unionism receives little attention in the popular histories of the West. Tales of Indian warfare, hardy pioneers, cattle drives, and flamboyant figures like Buffalo Bill and Calamity Jane serve rather to define the uniqueness of the American West.

Coming relatively late, labor strife was all the more vigorous and spontaneous than that of its Eastern counterparts. The workers, many of them foreign nationals—Irish, Italians, English—brought to Western mining towns traditions of labor protest and union organization that melded with the cranky and colorful anarchism of the IWW, whose members were mainly American-born (Dubofsky 142). Violence and labor unrest followed in the wake of infamous radicalizing events such as the Ludlow massacre, the "Big Bill' Haywood (WFM leader) trial, and the Butte, Montana, mine strikes. The intense conflicts between powerful mine owners and workers fostered, as Melvyn Dubofsky illustrates, class divisions that "followed the class Marxian pattern of development" (139).

One young Westerner who was alert to the deeper-lying significance of the social and economic structure of the new capitalist order was Norman Macleod, born in 1906, three years before Helen Gurley Flynn spoke before crowds in Missoula, rallying people in one of the IWW's earliest free-speech demonstrations. Flynn was a gifted orator and colorful figure like fellow Wobblies Joe Hill, Ralph Chaplin, and William Haywood. Montana's anti-sedition laws were not written until 1918. The city fathers were unable to remove Flynn from the corner of Higgins and Front Streets where she spoke against the extortionist practices of labor agents who recruited migrant workers for underpaid jobs. If the Wobblies' freewheeling spirit, manifested in their songs and poetry, made riding the rails seem adventuresome to young people of romantic inclination, then industrial mining towns like Butte provided a gritty practicum in class struggle and labor politics.

Increasing antagonism between labor and capital in Butte led to the dynamiting of the old Butte Miners' Union building, the lynching of an IWW organizer named Frank Little, and a general strike in 1917, which ultimately failed to improve the miners' working conditions. Technological advances and new management practices had begun to reduce the miners to the status of casual laborers, subject to itinerancy and marginalization. Moreover, the Butte miners were increasingly the target of treason charges, justifying the use of Federal troops in suppressing strikes in order to aid the war effort.

Here then was a school for young rebels, romantics, and revolutionaries like Norman Macleod—or for reactionaries who feared threats to the established order, an order that permitted a few immensely wealthy "Copper Kings" and monopolies like Phelps-Dodge Company and the American Smelting and Refining Company to create a class of disenfranchised workers that was little distinct from its Eastern counterparts. How one responded to the bitter conflict between labor and capital marked the divide between the two separate "educations." Either way in Macleod's day western Montana was, in K. Ross Toole's words, "a state of extremes."

It was in this setting of natural grandeur and bitter class warfare, occurring just miles away, that Norman Macleod came of age. The story I wish to tell of his "growing up radical" shows how the particularities of time, place, education, and temperament shape human consciousness and how in turn our own individual consciousnesses are shaped in part through the experiences of others made available to us through memory expressing itself in art.

2.

A thick blanket of fog covered the Five Valleys on the February day in 1998 when I arrived for the first time in Missoula, on an aged, visibly worn Boeing 707. I had come to explore the locales and landmarks that Norman Macleod knew as a youth, the setting for his novel, *The Bitter Roots*, published in 1941. By 4:30, the sun had begun to tuck behind the Bitterroot Mountains. In the evening Missoula's dirty, slushy streets turned to ice, piling up in frozen chunks against the curb. Frigid air descended from the mountains, chilling life in the valleys. On a street corner a boy dressed in a thin jacket, without hat or gloves, held a sign advertising pizzas, stamping his feet to keep warm. The streets in downtown Missoula were empty; the city had moved out for the night to the malls and private homes in the suburbs.

The novel *The Bitter Roots* evokes the period, ca. 1917-1922, of Macleod's adolescence in Missoula, setting the world of his fictional characters, a loose-knit group of young boys, in counterpoint to broader themes drawn from contemporary social and political history. I knew from conversations with Macleod that his parents were educated people and that he had been raised in genteel circumstances. I was curious to learn therefore what had sensitized him from an early age to labor issues, to the plight of mine workers in nearby Butte, and drawn him close politically and temperamentally to the Industrial Workers of the World, a radical labor organization. The IWW had a strong following in the West during the early years of the twentieth century, especially among migrant harvest hands and

timber workers until its opposition to America's entry into World War I made it the target of government suppression.

Norman had talked often of the mining town of Butte, its history of labor solidarity, and the terrible events preceding America's entry into World War I. He recalled his admiration for William Dunne, the bold, independent editor of the embattled *Butte Bulletin*, who defended the miners' interests against a hostile press controlled by the overarching Anaconda Mining Company. Dunne and the IWW organizers, whose anti-war views he often represented in his paper, faced the violent wrath of super-patriots and mining company thugs who terrorized strikers and murdered "Wobbly" organizer Frank Little.

Macleod came of age in an era when labor-capital issues occupied the nation's attention. These issues deeply impressed Macleod and others of his generation who, having experienced the suppression of speech and repression of dissent under Wilson's presidency, followed by the anti-labor governments of Harding and Coolidge and the Sacco-Vanzetti executions, were quick to accept *New Masses* editor Mike Gold's exhortation in 1929, "Go Left, Young Writers."

Macleod was a very ill man, as mentioned earlier, when I met him in the early 1980s. Despite pulmonary obstructions, blood clots, emphysema, and asthma, he remained fiercely, passionately connected to his literary endeavors lying beyond the sterile confines of the North Carolina nursing home. Beset with infirmities that would have quickly finished someone of weaker resolve, Norman lingered on until his death in 1985, writing poems, sending them out for publication, raging against the inadequacies of nursing-home care, consoling his roommates, and penning letters in large, scrawled script to his many correspondents. A risk taker of fiery temperament, charismatic, possessed of a prodigious memory, Macleod seemed determined to spend his remaining energies creatively while sharing his vast repertoire of memories with me and others who then might tell his story and continue his commitments. That story, which I summarize here, reveals a complex and intriguing individual whose editorial skills and poetic talent aligned him with the most important literary currents of the twentieth century, radical and modernist, yet whose restless, independent spirit and political convictions served to undermine the recognition his work deserves.

3.

His curly hair and pale blue eyes made Norman appear the very embodiment of a beautiful English child, except that he was no longer in England but in western Montana, where physical beauty was generally held to be a female attribute. Norman and his mother, Alice Wicklund, had

bumped down the social scale from life in an English manor to anxious subsistence in a walk-up, cold-water flat in Evanston, Illinois. The year was 1912. Alice, with a Master's degree in speech from Northwestern University in hand, had accepted a teaching post at the University of Montana in Missoula. After her marriage failed, she had returned to America from England, obtained her teaching credentials, and now hoped to rebuild her life in the American West, as her pioneering grandparents, Joseph and Estella Wicklund, had done, trekking across the Great Plains in a covered wagon some sixty years earlier.

The father, who remained in England, was Norman William Macleod, born on the Isle of Raasay, Inner Hebrides, Scotland, in 1870. As a young man, Norman William had gone to Richfield, Utah, to edit a newspaper and to break his drinking habit by removing himself from temptation; in the small Mormon community there were no taverns. Alice, back home in Monroe, Utah, after college in Oregon, met and married Norman. Alice was seven months pregnant when Norman William accepted a job in New York as an investment broker. She went to live with friends in Salem, Oregon, where Norman was born on October 1, 1906. Scarcely two weeks old, Norman traveled east on the train with his mother to join the father. Norman William had begun to drink again. The first night of their reunion, at the Madison Square Hotel in midtown New York City, Norman William suspended his terrified infant son by the feet from the window, some twenty stories above the sidewalk. Alice was aghast. Alcohol made a madman of her husband who, when sober, was a generous provider and a gentleman.

In the fall of 1908, the Macleods embarked on the SS *Mauritania* for England where Norman William assumed a new position as representative of a Wall Street brokerage firm. Their London home was a luxurious twenty-three room mansion with five servants, and Alice had furs and jewelry to wear on her frequent trips to the Continent. She traveled alone; Norman William was occupied with his work. In rural Utah his Scots heritage and worldliness had swept her off her feet, but now in London Alice was restless and homesick.

Their son Norman was raised by a governess, a young woman who had tutored the children of the Hohenzollern nobility in Germany. Despite the amenities—expensive clothes, a governess, servants, long stays on the Continent—Alice was unhappy. When a wealthy Philadelphia widow whom Alice had befriended lost a great deal of money investing in a Nevada silver mine on William's advice, Alice decided to leave him. She had never felt love for him, only admiration; now that was gone.

In the summer of 1910, not long after the death of Edward VII, Alice and her son Norman boarded the SS *Lusitania* for New York. Alice had

lifted Norman up so he could watch Edward's funeral procession. For many it symbolized the end of an era that had begun with Victoria's accession to the throne in 1837. It was one of many historic occasions that Norman would witness during his lifetime, fixing in his mind an intimate connection, an "entwinement," as he liked to say, with contemporary history.

A boy raised amidst wealth and privilege in London's Tooting-Bec Gardens was an oddity in Missoula in 1912. The frontier had closed some twenty years earlier, yet it held on long afterwards in western Montana. At the crossroads of early timber, mining, and commercial development, Missoula had grown quickly from its origins as a sawmill in the 1860s, located next to Rattlesnake Creek and the Clark Fork River. By 1910, however, its population had begun to level around 13,000, not counting students who added some fifteen hundred to the number when the University, founded fifteen years earlier, reconvened each September. The town had built an imposing courthouse, and on Higgins Avenue, despite mud streets and board sidewalks, new structures like the First National Bank, two comfortable hotels, and the Hammond Building lent an impression of prosperity. Nonetheless, the town's finish was still rough and the joints ill fitting.

It was a tough place for young boys, especially a "pretty child" like Norman Wicklund Macleod, who retained traces of his English upbringing. Gangs of youth charted their "territory," daring rival gangs to intrude. After school, boys raced their horses on the flats west of town, the winner claiming the horse that finished last. The object of occasional taunts in the Evanston, Illinois, school he had attended one year, Norman was determined to make his way in Missoula, adapting as best he could, and when that proved impossible, improvising.

Three years at Roosevelt Elementary School passed uneventfully. Alice and Norman lived in the Rozale Apartments on 6th and Chestnut, then moved to a duplex on University Avenue close by the campus the following year. In 1918, Alice married Dr. William Mills, a wealthy physician thirty years her senior. The family moved to Mills' two-storey home on Stephen Avenue. Mills loved hunting, fishing, and their son, Robert, born in 1920, but displayed a frosty indifference towards Norman.

In search of excitement to displace the loneliness he felt at home, Norman made friends with a gang of Missoula schoolboys. His initiation to their group occurred when he began to deliver newspapers for the *Daily Missoulian*. Lying in wait were "Wild Bill" Kelly, Eddie O'Rourke, and a host of other newsboys who proceeded to pin him down, pounding the soles of Norman's feet until he could scarcely walk. "The youngsters were tough in Missoula," he recalled in a 1974 memoir:

> Most of them were ruggedly individualistic, had a kind of pioneering vigor, I believe, that was not characteristic of kids in the Middle West. The gaunt mountains had something to do with it and the fact that Montana in those years was still culturally expressive of the wild violence of the frontier. The loud lustiness of lumberjacks and the anger of miners in the copper mines of Butte, the mythology of the Plummer gang and other road agents of the past, the visible agony of the rigid mountain peaks, and the free-for-all economic warfare that had resulted in the making of so many Montana millionaires in one generation were all a living reality to the boys I knew in Missoula ("I Never Lost" 39).

The brashness and youthful bravado of the Missoula youths deeply impressed Norman, despite his lagging efforts to keep pace with them. "During my grade school and high school years in Missoula," he reflected in the same memoir, "I wanted to be an athlete, which I would never become; a tough masculine wayfarer in an environment of dangerous action, quick with my fists; a rough fellow ready with all of the girls; vaguely affluent. Almost anybody could have told me that I could never become that kind of person." Failing to earn an athletic award, Norman formed his own sports team, the "Sataspians," enlisting some of the high school toughs, including several boys who did excel at sports: Wild Bill Kelly, Eddie O'Rourke, and Paul Maclean.

Paul Maclean was a special case in classmate Norman's eyes: a talented rival who excelled without apparent effort. A standout as student and athlete, Paul was a fair-haired Missoula boy who seemed exempt from the reputation for youthful mischief that the Sataspians had earned. His father was the Reverend John N. Maclean, pastor of Missoula's Presbyterian Church. Paul's older brother, Norman, was called "the preacher" by his admiring classmates. He had won honors and recognition as an athlete and a writer two years before, scoring the winning touchdown against Missoula's traditional rival, Butte High School, during his senior year, and publishing his poetry in the high school annual, *The Bitter Root*, which he helped edit. Norman Maclean (the name is easily confused with Macleod) also won a state contest for an essay on patriotism. People said that he would become a writer of note. In the course of my searches I discovered that the lives, genealogy, and careers of the Missoula Macleans and the Macleods trace jointly to a remote island off the coast of Scotland a thousand years ago. Destiny or happenstance drew the two rival clans together again in Missoula: Paul became Norman's Doppelgänger figure in *The Bitter Roots*; Norman Maclean achieved, almost by accident, the literary renown that eluded Norman Macleod.[3]

Pauly, as Paul Maclean was called, was the unacknowledged leader of the Sastaspians; he had the self-confidence that Norman Macleod seemed

to lack. They were not a gang, really, since each of the boys went his own way, except when they met to play pool or basketball or to "ride the blinds" (catch an unpaid ride on a freight train) to Butte or Kalispell. With small change that Pauly pinched from the Sunday church collection, the boys rented a pool table in the halls on Front Street. Norman Macleod was a gangly, awkward youth. He possessed one athletic skill, however, achieved by hours of determined practice on the court: from a fixed position he could shoot a basketball with considerable accuracy. His single athletic feat paid off in a game that Norman organized against the Salish Indians on the Flathead Reservation and later memorialized in his poem, "We Played the Flatheads at Arlee."

Norman scored the winning shot, standing stock still as he had practiced by himself countless hours. Paul expressed his amazement to Norman for his accomplishment. Afterwards, Norman bought an orange sweater and fashioned his own letter to wear. Not so fortunate for Norman was the outcome of a declamation contest the same year. He lost, despite the coaching that Alice, whose speciality was public speaking, had given him. The victor was Paul Maclean, reciting Vachel Lindsay's poem, "The Congo," which had gained notoriety through Lindsay's own public recitations. It was a good choice for a declamation contest in 1922. The "Presbyterian minister's son," Norman remembered without bitterness, "usually got whatever he set out to get" ("I Never Lost" 57).

Two railroads, the Milwaukee and the Northern Pacific, linked Missoula to Butte, a hundred miles to the east, the tracks running on opposite sides of the Clark Fork River. Looking for a rumble in Butte, Macleod, Kelly, O'Rourke, and several of the other boys rode the blinds of a freight train up through Hellgate Canyon and down into the broad valley past Anaconda into Butte, a mining town built on the side of Butte hill, shadowed in the morning by the Continental Divide just to the east. Butte hill is an enormous mineral lode, principally copper; on its steep southern flank an industrial town rose in the late nineteenth century. Butte and Anaconda, the site of a huge copper smelter, were founded by "copper kings" A. Augustus Heinze, Marcus Daly, and William Andrews Clark, renowned for their power and ruthlessness. In the years leading up to World War I, they were company towns controlled by the powerful Anaconda Copper Mining Company. No less renowned, at least in the eyes of the Missoula boys who jumped from the freight as it pulled into Butte, were the youth of Butte, the miners' kids.

Butte was mainly working-class Irish, a cultural enclave that had little in common with other Western communities. It was no place for the faint-hearted. Apart from its barren landscape, sulphur and arsenic fumes, Butte boasted some 300 saloons, numerous brothels, and so-called "infidel

clubs" for lapsed Catholics. Street fighting, gambling, drunkenness, hustling, prostitution, and labor radicalism shaped its reputation. Yet the miners were a settled, socialized people, devoted to their families, boxing, Miners' Union Day, and the miners' band. Demanding, hazardous mining conditions imposed a strict regimen that contained even the boldest and rowdiest of men. The rigors of mining life, signaled by the mine whistle, and the close-knit community of Irish miners and their families, exiled from their homeland, formed an intense loyalty that revealed itself in their associations, both as workers and citizens of Butte.

The miners and their families struggled for existence under the harshest of conditions. Their male children were reckless, plucky survivors whose childhoods terminated abruptly when they entered the mines. Mine accidents and silicosis circumscribed their lives; few miners lived longer than fifty years. Schooled in cold, drafty rooms, the miners' sons expended their energy and imagination on mischief, plotting against rival gangs and engaging in sports with a Jesuit-like dedication.

Emboldened in the company of "Wild Bill" Kelly, who had grown up across the tracks in Missoula and could handle himself ably in a fight with the Butte kids, Norman went along on the gang's Butte rumbles. On one occasion, however, deciding that discretion was "the better part of valor," he slipped away as the ranks closed between the rival gangs. A fault line ran through Norman's adolescence: the desire for acceptance according to others' standards and a curiosity about people who, like himself, had been knocked about by life. He went to Butte looking for trouble, hoping to prove himself among his schoolmates, but after a few such excursions to Butte he grew interested in the plight of the miners. From such ambivalences he drew strength. In Butte Macleod received his earliest political education.

Butte was called "the Gibralter of unionism," but in fact the Butte Miners' Union never called a strike from its founding in 1893 until its demise in 1914. More radical was the Western Federation of Miners that organized Butte miners, and still more radical was a splinter group, the Industrial Workers of the World, that had separated from the WFM. The Butte miners were loyal to the Anaconda Copper Mining Company; the Company had provided them with steady work and certain benefits, better than anything the immigrant Irish had known at home. The Butte miners became skilled workers in their trade, building a labor aristocracy of skilled miners, conservative in their attitudes and rooted in their industrial community. Theirs was not the ambition of the striving shopkeeper or land-hungry farmer; they wished only to preserve (and improve) the well-being of their families and the communal form of life they enjoyed with its picnics, celebrations, and warm tavern fellowship. They were politically

conscious as workers but not radical. All this began to change in the 1870s, however, with the influx of new immigrants, workers of Slovak and Polish origin, who formed their own communities and accepted lower wages. Importing workers, creating a surplus, and closing down the mines when labor protest occurred, the Company wielded crushing power over the miners. Dissolved was the old Butte Miners' Union's informal agreement with the Company, as well as the status of the "labor aristocracy."

The Irish miners were fierce Irish nationalists; their wrath against the English who had colonized their country was seemingly boundless. They sought to make common cause with Germany because Germany was at war with England. The enemy of my enemy is my friend, was the reasoning. The miners sent money home to support nationalist causes and expressed their opposition to America's intervention in the war. By fighting Germany, England and France were pitting workingman against workingman. "The real war was going on in Butte," Bill Dunne, iconoclast newspaper editor in Butte, says in Macleod's novel, *The Bitter Roots* (240). "That stuff in the Argonne had been a sideshow."

Reinforcing the anti-war feeling among the Butte miners were members of the Industrial Workers of the World, which employed direct action "at the point of production" and oratory as its main weapons in behalf of migrant harvest hands, miners, and timber workers. The IWW posed a threat both to established unions as well as to the mine owners and eastern bankers. In Butte its chief spokesperson was William Dunne, a courageous, shrewd, independent-minded newspaperman who edited the *Butte Bulletin*. Dunne's *Bulletin* was an embattled voice defending the interests of workers and exposing war as class struggle. All but one of the major newspapers in Montana were owned by the Company as part of its arsenal to control the legislature and protect the Company's wealth. Like the infamous Hearst press, whose inflammatory journalism practices supported imperialist ambitions during the Spanish-American War, the Company newspapers fed a mood of patriotic hysteria and paranoia that helped precipitate the darkest period in Montana's short history.

Dunne was a heroic figure to Norman who, in the absence of his own father, discovered in the editor a worthy role model. Together with one of his Missoula classmates, whose uncle was Dunne's co-worker, Norman visited Dunne in Butte. Dunne's courage as a journalist defying the hysteria of the "patriots" and the hegemony of the Company won the admiration even of those who opposed him. Few Montana editors risked printing news that revealed sympathy for the miners' dilemma. Dunne took even greater risks in printing accounts of the Wobblies who suffered frequent vigilante attacks and finally federal suppression after World War I.

Increasing antagonism between labor and capital in Butte led to the dynamiting of the old Butte Miners' Union building, the lynching of an IWW organizer named Frank Little, and a general strike in 1917, which ultimately failed to improve the miners' working conditions. Technological advances and new management techniques had begun to reduce the miners to the status of casual laborers, subject to itinerancy and marginalization. Moreover, the Butte miners were increasingly the target of treason charges, justifying the use of Federal troops in suppressing strikes in order to aid the war effort. Despite disappointment over Ulster's division, the Butte Irish felt some satisfaction in learning that Ireland had won independence from British rule in 1922.

Norman continued to follow news of Butte's labor troubles and the war in Europe, published in the *Daily Missoulian*, posted on the bulletin board of the paper's office on west Main Street where he worked as a newsboy. Its editor was Martin Hutchens.[4] Hutchens and his family, including a son, John, arrived in Missoula in 1917, shortly before America entered the war and during the period in which the Butte miners were struggling to preserve their livelihoods and community. John and Norman soon found that they shared a common interest in writing.

To the disappointment of progressive-minded people in Missoula, Martin Hutchens' newspaper yielded to the patriot's game, attacking the "subversives" in Butte who were talking revolution. Hutchens, however, was considerably less virulent in his editorials than editors like William J. Campbell of the *Helena Independent*, whose editorializing was unashamedly irresponsible. Campbell boosted the war, and, in turn, the war boosted the sale of copper, timber, and other Company products. Harsh punishment fell to those who opposed the war and to labor organizations like the IWW, which were viewed as seditious. The mood was very ugly and did not improve after Armistice. Mining company newspapers made generous use of inflammatory rhetoric to convey their message.

In the passion and paranoia of war fervor, people feared imminent German invasion. (The absurdity is apparent when one considers Montana's location.) Sightings of German planes were alleged, the German language was dropped from the school curriculum, and German words were excised from textbooks. Citizens with German surnames fell under suspicion. The Company forced the University of Montana to suspend an economics professor named Levine when his research showed that Montana's tax laws favored mining interests, a fact that astonished few.

The low point in this time of extremism occurred when Montana politicians legalized a vigilante Council of Defense and Home Guard commissioned to root out "seditious talk," draft evaders, and "treasonable"

activity such as Wobbly demonstrations. A trainload of private detectives—paid thugs—attacked a shack village erected by the Wobblies at the Company's Bonner lumber mill near Missoula, killing several demonstrators. In Butte, "patriots" emboldened by the newly enacted Sedition Act and Criminal Syndicalism Act of 1918 raided Dunne's *Bulletin* offices. The Council issued "orders," making illegal the right, assured in the U. S. Constitution, to assemble, and attached criminal charges to unemployment. Constitutional principles and right reason had their defenders, fortunately, in the person of Judge George M. Bourquin, Senator B. K. Wheeler, and William Dunne, among others, whose cool, impassioned defense of basic freedoms before the Council elicited the admiration of their inquisitors.

It bears repeating that responsible in great part for the hysteria and inquisitional mood were many of Montana's leading newspapers and their editors. Ironically, after his attack on Missoula's Mayor Beacom failed, Hutchens left to work for a Butte newspaper, from which place he editorialized against the Company, his former employer who had wanted him out of local political fights. He died in 1928, remembered by John H. Toole, *Daily Missoulian* historian, as a great editor and promoter of the town whose ferocious editorials were in the line of duty directed by his employer, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company (*Red Ribbons* 113).

Montana was not out of the woods yet despite war's end, which at least removed the threat of "attack" from the "huns" and from internal subversion by the "reds." Excess patriotic zeal and "red hunting" fed growing intolerance. The Ku Klux Klan threatened violence despite the absence of black people to persecute. Prohibition inspired a thriving commerce in bootlegging. By 1920, following years of drought and falling farm prices, the state's economy was in woeful condition. Anti-labor legislation by the Federal government undermined organized labor, and harsh, repressive measures quashed the IWW and the Non-Partisan League, organized in North Dakota to aid bankrupted farmers. The Council of Defense collapsed and died, a victim of overwrought nerves and impoverishment occasioned by the lack of ideas. Nonetheless, the Company maintained its silent hegemony. "Never in the history of America," Toole writes, "has a business corporation so completely controlled a sovereign state as Anaconda now controlled Montana" (*Red Ribbons* 112). Another historian calls the period roughly coinciding with Hutchens' editorship of the *Daily Missoulian* (1917-1921) "Montana's Agony" (see Gutfield).

It is this period and its "agony" that informed Norman Macleod's subsequent convictions as a writer and provided material for *The Bitter Roots*.

John Hutchens was Macleod's classmate throughout high school. Their mutual interest in writing might have brought them together, yet the two never became close friends. "It was sex, athletic events, fishing and hunting or camping in the Blue Mountains," Norman recalled, "that engaged the interest of kids I met in Montana. I never felt that any of them were friends of mine" ("I Never Lost" 59). John hung around the offices of the *Daily Missoulian*, learning journalistic skills and listening to stories about the colorful early days of statehood—the Plummer gang of vigilantes, Custer's defeat at the battle of Little Big Horn, the copper kings, and Chief Charlot of the Flathead Indians who refused to move his people from their homes in the Bitterroot Valley to the barren valley plain north of Missoula.

The grandeur of western Montana's setting and the tumult of its politics provided subjects for writers who, like Macleod, attended Missoula High School beginning in 1917 or soon thereafter: John Hutchens' *One Man's Montana*; Norman Maclean's *A River Runs through It*; and the historical studies of K. Ross Toole and John H. Toole. Over the ensuing years Missoula has produced or attracted novelists, historians, and poets out of proportion to its size and remote setting. Little in the town's cultural life or the outer-directedness induced by its spectacular setting would appear to welcome literary endeavor. Yet in 1920, H. G. Merriam founded his celebrated regional magazine, *The Frontier*, in Missoula, and established one of the earliest university creative writing programs in the country.[5] Perhaps the searing ambivalences and troubled "agony" of Missoula's early history set against the magnificent solemnity of the environment is a combination that writers find irresistible. Such was unquestionably the case for Norman Macleod.

4.

In February, winter blows downcanyon in western Montana and fans out over the broad flat of Missoula valley. The last of the great glacial ages 10,000 years ago created a lake 900 feet deep. This lake drained and filled again as glaciers downstream melted, leaving scars on Mount Sentinel, just to the east of the University of Montana campus. The scars are horizontal ridges made visible by lines of snow against the brown flank sloping down to Missoula at its foot. Such was the force of the melting glacial water in the five connecting valleys that meet near Missoula that it carved out of rock the Clark Fork and Flathead River basins and scoured river channels to the sea through eastern Washington.

Some 6,000 years ago, Indians, the "children of Coyote," mythic benefactor created by the Sun, hunted and camped in these valleys. One of the earliest tribes in the Bitterroot valley to the south of Missoula were the

Flatheads (Salish), root-gatherers and hunters. By the time the first trappers arrived in the late eighteenth century, the Flatheads had become expert horsemen whose only real threat was the Blackfeet and Crow Indians who invaded their hunting grounds. The Flatheads greeted the Discovery Expedition, led by Lewis and Clark, in 1805, as they passed west in search of a northwest passage, providing them with horses and directing them up Lolo Creek, the Indian trail to the west through the rugged Bitterroot Range.

Central to the Flatheads' diet and religious beliefs were the bitterroot and camas plants. They venerated the bitterroot for its healing qualities. To the men of the Discovery Expedition it was inedible. For Norman Macleod, it symbolized the experience of his early years in Missoula that furnished material for his writing the rest of his long, turbulent life.

In the summer of 1981, Macleod, remembered by his Pembroke University students as a tall, intense, sandy-haired man who carried his books and papers about in a bowling bag, was dying. Deteriorating bone mass had reduced his body to a gaunt frame. A prisoner of age and decrepitude in a sun-baked, concrete block building next to a desolate highway, Norman was reckoning with the prospect of imminent death. On my last visit I found him sitting on the edge of his bed with a nun at his side, reciting a prayer. He looked at me sheepishly, announcing that, on daughter's urging, he had converted to Catholicism. In a last minute gamble he decided to accept Pascal's wager.

5.

The story of Norman Macleod is a story of his many connections: his friendships, colleagues, collaborators, encounters, and relationships. Like the Wobblies he had known as a youngster in Montana, he was anarchic by temperament, a free spirit, yet collaborative and democratic. A child of his beloved West, he wrote of the land, the Native Americans, the life of small towns, lumber camps, and of human desire and conflict. "Alive as an Indian in the desert," William Carlos Williams wrote of Macleod's early poetry collection, *Horizons of Death* (1934). "Macleod carries it [his poetry] up out of cliff-dwellers past to the cities of the world and the deaths of which they are largely constituted. Inevitably it goes over into a revolt reaching to a man's very guts at the spectacle" (28). A witness to Montana's period of political extremism and irresponsible journalism, Macleod devoted his life as an editor and a writer to creating a literature worthy of a free and open democracy.

When Norman first traveled there in 1923, Glacier Park in northern Montana was a mountain wilderness; a tortuous road called "Going-to-the-

Sun" had only recently been built through the mountains. Macleod worked in Glacier Park as a ranger, and later in the Petrified Forest in Arizona, where in 1929, newly married to Catherine Stuart, he published his earliest poetry and edited a little magazine called *Palo Verde*. Offshoots of the left's cultural movement of the 1930s, the little magazines, usually short-lived, welcomed new, untested writers and encouraged literary experimentation while reflecting contemporary social concerns.

Macleod was one of the most prolific contributors to the little magazines of the 1930s and an editor for nearly fifty years of (successively) *Palo Verde, The Morada, Front, Maryland Quarterly, Briarcliff Quarterly*, and the *Pembroke Quarterly*. Each was eclectic in approach, internationalist in scope, and included modernist and politically engaged writing by authors as diverse as Ezra Pound, Louis Zukofsky, Paul Bowles, John Dos Passos, and Jack Conroy.

Macleod founded *The Morada* (1929-30) while completing his studies at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Inspired by a group of Santa Fe writers and editors including Willard "Spud" Johnson, editor of *Laughing Horse*, and Witter Bynner, who were devoted to giving literary expression to the American Southwest, Macleod devoted a number of poems to Navajo life and culture. "I have an immense admiration for the Navajo," he wrote, "who has stamped with his impress the country even more, perhaps, than has the Pueblo. His poetry is of a higher order than that of any American Indian. He is self-sustained and sure. His rhythms are the country's rhythms. His philosophy that of rock and sand, sunset and lightning, color and sound, rain and drouth, and inner well-being" ("Notes" 457).

Macleod's contacts included Paris-based editors Robert McAlmon and Harold J. Salemson whose literary magazines, *Contact* and *Tambour* respectively, attracted both European and American contributors. Macleod agreed with Salemson who said that contemporary writers were too preoccupied with form and craft, failing to give adequate expression to observation and experience. In Santa Fe Macleod became acquainted with a number of leftist writers, editors, and artists, including the New York editor, Helen Black, Mike Gold's former girlfriend. These contacts led to publication in Gold's *New Masses*, and for one issue, to editorial duties, when Norman substituted for the managing editor, Walt Carmon. Macleod's literary contributions earned him a warm welcome by Communist intellectuals in New York upon his arrival in 1931. His choice of subjects—Navajo Indians, Grand Canyon, Penitentes—however, caused consternation. "What does this have to do with workers?" they asked.

Macleod's relationship with the left was stormy: impetuous and individualistic, he was considered a "literary bohemian," one who, as

Conroy said, "ran with the hares and hunted with the hounds." His radical poems and reportage on mine strikes and Alabama steel workers appeared in *New Masses* and other leftist publications at the same time that his modernist poems were finding homes in avant-garde magazines. "I never felt myself to be a part of any intellectual crowd or the eastern or middlewestern sections of this country," Norman wrote me in 1984. "I always felt myself to be a Rocky Mountain Westerner . . ." (letter to author, 19 June 1984).

During this period (1930-31) Macleod edited the trilingual *Front* in collaboration with Sonja Prins in Holland and Xavier Abril in Spain. Macleod was never long in any one locale; in 1931 he moved his family to Los Angeles where he helped organize a John Reed Club, a meeting place for radical writers connected to the left's cultural movement in the early 1930s. At a Malibu beach house party in 1932, attended by screenwriters and liberal patrons of the arts, Norman decided impulsively to accompany Lady Mary Cameron (a.k.a. Dorothy Fletcher), daughter of an English vicar, to the First International Congress Against War and Fascism in Amsterdam. The eccentric, bibulous Lady Cameron had written a memoir entitled *Merrily I'll Go to Hell*, detailing her life of aristocratic abandon. The two writers found comradeship in their mutual fondness for drink. On the SS *Staatendamm* en route to France, however, Lady Cameron tested Norman's capacity for alcohol and found it wanting. Norman indulged his gargantuan appetite for experience as freely as he poured his energy into literary work, an intoxication which rivaled his passion for drink but did not compete with it until a few years later during a period of despondency and lack of productivity. By the time he arrived in Paris Norman was sobered up and eager to make contacts with European editors and writers.

Norman looked up Edward Titus, American expatriate editor of *This Quarter*. Titus, who had published Macleod's poetry, took Norman to lunch at the Café Dôme to meet André Breton and René Crevel. The meeting with the two surrealists proved auspicious for Norman. He found surrealism attractive in part because he perceived it as an international movement. Moreover, surrealism encouraged spontaneous flights of imagination and freedom to choose from a wildly diverse arsenal of source materials compatible with his rebellious temperament and eclectic spirit. Meeting with Breton and Crevel spurred Macleod's interest in contemporary French writers, some of whom he would later publish in English translation.

The Paris meetings left Norman in an expansive mood. During a late-night drinking bout Norman confessed to one of his companions that he had no means to pay his return passage. One of his companions, a young French socialist, suggested that by singing "l'Internationale" in front of a

gendarmerie he would be expelled from France and his passage home paid. The stunt landed him in "la grande salle" where the American poet, E. E. Cummings, who wrote of the experience in his memoir *The Enormous Room*, had been incarcerated for his anti-war commentary. Released from "la Maison d'Arrêt de la Santé" after two weeks, broke and discouraged, Macleod visited the offices of the Union Internationale des Écrivains and Artistes. Paul Nizan, head of the Union, provided his train fare to the Congress in Amsterdam. In Amsterdam, Norman went directly to see Sonja Prins, the European editor of *Front*, who lived with her Scots-born mother, Ina Willekes-Macdonald. The two hit it off immediately, perhaps because of their shared Scots connection. After several days of lively discussion, Ina volunteered to pay Norman's ship passage home following the Congress.

Broke again in New York City during the leanest years of the Great Depression, separated from Catherine Stuart, who had returned to her childhood home in Alabama with their daughter Jocelyn, Macleod found temporary work cleaning stencils for a publishing company. New York's Union Square was the cynosure of radical activity at that time when labor organizers and revolutionary poets rubbed shoulders. Walt Carmon, managing editor of *New Masses*, anxious that Macleod's editorial and writing abilities not be wasted, arranged for him to join the staff of the *Moscow Daily News*.

Norman felt a special identification with the American journalist John Reed whose eyewitness reports of the Spanish-American war, the Patterson textile strike, and the Russian Revolution, source of his famous memoir, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (1919), had created a new genre of journalistic writing. For Macleod's generation, Reed was the embodiment of a "romantic revolutionary," whose personal life equalled, sometimes excelled, his journalistic subjects in flamboyant adventure. Young radical poets of the 1930s like Macleod sensed continuity between their generation and the earlier generation of radical writers, like Reed, associated with the famous *Masses* group before the Great War. But conditions in the 1930s were much different from those of the pre-war era in which famous-name writers, Debsian Socialists, intellectuals, and artists submitted their work to *The Masses*, prompted by moral protest against injustice and by the cultural exuberance of a rapidly growing nation. Their revolt, cut short by government repression and jingoist sentiment, was marked by irreverent humor and caustic satire directed at prudish behavior and bourgeois hypocrisy. But there was little to laugh about in the Great Crash of 1929, and moral indignation was out of place in the spectacle of bread lines and hungry children.

On May Day, 1933, Norman's ship landed in Bremerhaven where almost immediately he felt the oppressive grip of fascism that strangled free expression. At a movie theater where he passed time before taking a late train to Berlin, a newsreel showed the burning of books in German cities. One could hear a pin drop, Macleod recalled. Joining Hannah Rile (a.k.a. Ann Landis), whom he had known in New York, he witnessed Nazis parading along Berlin's Unter der Linden and listened to Hitler's shrill exhortations over loudspeakers. Hannah, a German-speaking Quaker from Pennsylvania turned Communist, translated: "If it takes the last drop of German blood," Hitler swore, "the honor of the Third Reich will be vindicated."

Macleod and Rile were anxious to leave Hitler's Germany, booking train seats the next day for Moscow. At the New Moscow Hotel they met poet Langston Hughes and other American writers visiting the USSR. In the offices of the *Moscow Daily News* Norman met Agnes Smedley and Anna Louis Strong, who had recently come from China where as journalists and political activists they had joined the struggling revolutionary movement. Smedley and Strong, together with another American journalist, Edgar Snow, gained unequalled access to the Chinese revolutionaries. Their firsthand knowledge of China, ignored by the US State Department in formulating its ill-conceived China policy, became an early casualty of Cold War hysteria.

Sympathetic generally with Party aims, Macleod found life in the Soviet Union uncongenial to his restless, anarchic temperament. Stalin had begun to expel foreigners, and in several notable cases, liquidate those, such as Alexander Macleod, Norman's distant cousin, who had come to the USSR to help build the "workers' paradise." Some 50,000 American citizens had been hired to build dams and roads in the Soviet Union. Alexander, a mining engineer, headed a gold mine extraction project. Hearing through a relative that Norman was in Moscow, Alexander arranged a meeting in Moscow. Despite Walt Carmon's warning that such a visit might put them in jeopardy, the cousins met for a day in Moscow. Several years later Alexander was purged in Stalin's show trials for reasons unconnected with their meeting. Yet the news was unsettling. In a poem entitled "Item, Alexander Macleod, Soviet Citizen," Norman wrote:

> They have carried the old Bolsheviks
> In neat squares like peat to the fire:
> I wonder what happened to Lydia
> Who spied on leftwing foreigners? (Selected Poems 30)

Chastened by what he had seen and confused by the complexity of the Soviet experience, Norman returned to New York City, with Hannah in tow, late in the summer of 1933. In "Journey to Russia: 1933," Macleod again expresses wonder toward the Russian nation and its people and disillusionment following his visit there:

> And so returning to Fifth
> Avenue, the emerald lights preventing our passage
> To the future planned,
> We gradually came to the subway of a dream.
> The world became a nightmare and I
> A spasm in the tomb of sleep. (Distance 40)

In a dive near Washington Square, where Norman had rented a room, Macleod met John Reed's widow, Louise Bryant. Bryant, a talented poet and actress, was at loose ends and distraught since Reed's death of typhus in Moscow in 1920, at age thirty-three. A hopeless soak, she had managed to alienate even her close friends. At the bar Bryant sat alone nursing a quart bottle of whiskey. A gangster had frightened her, she told Norman, in an attempt to extort money. Norman offered to let her stay in his one-room efficiency until she felt safe to leave. The entire night in his apartment Louise lay fully clothed on Macleod's bed clutching the whiskey bottle, murmuring how Jack (Reed) had loved her long black hair. In the morning when Macleod awoke on the couch that served as an extra bed, Bryant had gone—no explanation or goodbye. Soon afterwards, Norman read of her death in Paris. "The remembrance of that still depresses me," Macleod wrote me, "because I suddenly realized more than I ever had before how my whole life from the time I watched the funeral procession of King Edward the VII in London and returned from London to NYC on the SS *Lusitania* in 1911, etc., had been inextricably entwined with the wars of the century and the Russian Revolution and its consequences" (letter to author, 2 Feb. 1982).

The years up to America's entry into the war were especially turbulent yet productive years for Norman. He published three collections of poetry and two novels, yet felt, as he wrote, "friction in my veins." "Insubordination is my middle name. Always getting into difficulties. Being quiet for many weeks and then exploding the locked cells of my brain" ("Walking" 195-97). One such explosion cost him his job as editor for the government-funded New York Writers' Project, which employed impecunious writers to write guidebooks and collect oral histories. Divorced from Catherine, he met and married the distinguished literary critic, Vivienne Koch, in 1942. Improvident and impetuous, Macleod leaned heavily upon his successive wives for stability.

The experiences of this troubled period, including a brief stint as state editor of the New Mexico Writers' Project, provided Macleod material for his first novel, *You Get What You Ask For* (1939), which fictionalizes his up-and-down relationship with the left movement, struggles with alcoholism, and bouts of mental instability. It was during one of his stays (1939) in New York City that Macleod founded the 92nd Street YMHA Poetry Center, mentioned earlier, where both young and renowned English-language poets continue to give readings. His professional life had begun to improve, but his personal life once again was in shambles. His marriage to Vivienne was dissolved shortly before Norman left to accept a teaching position at the University of Maryland late in 1943.

His new duties included editing *The Maryland Quarterly* (1944-45), which subsequently became *The Briarcliff Quarterly* (1945-47). "What a wild man he was," his collaborator Bill Peden wrote me, "and one of the really fine little magazine editors. . . ." (letter to author, 13 Oct. 1984).[6] The January 1946 issue of *Briarcliff Quarterly* was devoted to English translations of wartime French writing, with contributions by Paul Valéry, Jacques Prévert, André Gide, Jules Supervielle, Louis Aragon, Paul Claudel, François Mauriac, and others. Networker and literary herald, Macleod sought to attract American readers' attention to the brilliant milieu of French writers liberated from Nazi repression and censorship.

If his literary work sustained him financially and emotionally, his personal life continued to stagger forward by fits and starts. His marriage to Ann Clarke in 1950 produced two children, Norman Griffith and Skye Wicklund. Divorced again in 1956, he embarked on yet another marriage, to Fran Bowen, a divorced student in his writing class. Her tell-all memoir of Macleod, *Write Your Own Books, Baby*, the title drawn from a remark he made to her in an exasperated moment, chronicles their improvident existence together. Both a tribute to the poet and a record of his failings as a husband, Bowen's account details the happy and raucous nine years of their madcap marriage.

During the last twenty years of his life, Macleod taught at a small American Indian college in North Carolina where he founded *Pembroke Quarterly*. Under his editorship this magazine bore the special imprint of Macleod's abilities and interests: an openness to diverse currents of thought and expression, sensitivity to literature, and access to a wide circle of literary contacts that included William Carlos Williams, Hugh MacDiarmid, Archibald Macleish, Erskine Caldwell, Robert McAlmon, Richard Ball, and Kay Boyle, all of whom contributed to his magazine.

Brash, rebellious, generous, a poet of public conscience and private symbolisms, an amphibian who moved easily among diverse literary movements, Macleod remained to the end in "revolt against the guardians

of public taste" (Hoffman 4), belying the commonplace that young rebels become old reactionaries.

Shortly before his death, on 5 June 1985, Norman sent me a sheaf of new poems, asking me to type them and mail them out for publication. He wrote that he had seen a televised rerun of the film *Reds*, based on the lives of John Reed and Louise Bryant, and liked it very much. In his last letter to me, 7 May 1985, he included a poem, asking my opinion of it. "I seem to be thinking these days mainly about what happened in 1932," he wrote, "when I met Fletcher at Malibu and then went to Paris with her." The poem was titled "Lady Mary Cameron Was a Classy Babe."

Notes

[1]Macleod refused to place modernism and literary radicalism in conflict. He was among the few to do so. Letter to author, 10 June 1984.

[2]Letter to author, 10 June 1984. Macleod moved freely among literary movements and alignments, taking what he wanted for his own work, yet remaining committed to ideals of social and economic justice, constitutional freedoms, tolerance, and environmental protection.

[3]The figure of "Pauly" in Macleod's *The Bitter Roots* is of course based upon the same Paul Maclean, the older brother who appears in Norman Maclean's *A River Runs through It*.

[4]Originally from Chicago, Martin Hutchens gave Ben Hecht his first job on a Chicago paper. The mining troubles in Montana and the free speech struggles of World War I were feature articles in Hutchens's *Daily Missoulian*. Hutchens' son, John, Macleod's high school classmate in Missoula, later worked for the *New York Herald-Tribune*.

[5]Merriam fostered the early careers of writers including Macleod, A. B. Guthrie, Jr., H. L. Davis, Wallace Stegner, William Saroyan, H. E. Bates, and Alan Swallow.

[6]Short-story writer and editor, Peden subsequently founded the writers' school at the University of Missouri where he was Professor of English.

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H. R. STONEBACK

Song for Rosa Parks

(On her last ride: Detroit, 25 October 2005)

In 1955 I was too poor to ride a bus
and when I had a nickel for school busfare
I saved it, walked four miles to junior high.
I knew even then I'd give you my seat
if I had one, give you the bus if I could.

A poor white kid living in a northern slum,
I watched the world and I wasn't so dumb
I didn't see what you did and how it changed things.
And I remember how it made me sing.
And how it made me feel about walking.

Our school had bad troubles and race-rumbles
but still we played ball, made music together.
When I went to the homes of my black friends
it didn't matter that their houses were nicer,
they wore better clothes, their parents had cars,

TVs, and telephones we didn't have.
They never made me feel ashamed of being poor
(like suburban kids at summer camp did).
My good friend in '55 was Vincent Cream.
His father was Jersey Joe Walcott, heavyweight champion

of the world. (You'd change your name too wouldn't you?)
Vince lived on the good side of town, across the tracks.
At his house he had a TV and we watched Rosa Parks,
pictures from far away in Montgomery,
the beginning of a new song on TV.

And I'll never forget the words of Jersey Joe Walcott.
Looking at the screen, the champ said: "Lady's got guts."
Repeat after me: the champ said twice—*she's got guts*.
I don't remember much else from way back then.
I moved south, lived hard and fast, it all passed

sooner than a song. I lived in Alabama,
I liked almost everybody there, white and black.
Even those who warned me not to sing certain songs.
I sang in places from Anniston to Dothan,
Sang Hank in Montgomery, sang Gospel, sang Freedom Songs.

For a spell, I was a traveling salesman,
making signs and selling felt-tip pens and magic
ink to country stores and supermarkets—
Piggly Wigglies and Jitney Jungles
and nameless country crossroads shacks—

and all those people were kind and good to me.
Then I worked in the woods outside Wedowee—
some locals thought I was a little crazy:
a kid from nowhere building a log cabin the old way,
skinning pinelogs, notching everything into place,

talking about writing the Great American Novel
while his wife worked long hours at the City Café.
All song, all the best poetry, is testimony,
witness: So this is just to say, Rosa Parks,
at least one poorwhite kid in a northern slum

was moved and changed by what you'd done, and how
you did it. (Like the headlines say, quiet courage
and dignity trump anger, outlast rage.)
You moved north, I moved south, and Alabama
moved with us. When I left for New Orleans

(then Hawaii, Nashville, Paris, China, New York)
Alabama went with me. You did too.
I remember, just before I left,
how the deputy sheriff (that my friend from up north
called a thinlipped redneck racist) told me:

"Alabama would be a better place
if we had more Rosa Parkses. Yessir,
it's people like her what make this a great state.
Some day coming. And don't quit singing
them songs you was born to sing, kid."

I knew then Alabama would be all right.
I knew things would be worse in Camden and Detroit.
That was 1962. The long walk of memory
always yearns toward a boycott of the past.
I had almost forgotten, the way I forgot

what I wrote and left behind in the log cabin
I never saw again. Later, I heard
some locals saw my handwritten poems
on the mantel over the fireplace
in a rundown house up the red-dirt road

from my cabin—"ol' Jim's place," they said,
"that *kellered* feller worked at the sawmill,
his wife a-setting there, stitching that quilt
in that rocking chair, saying them poems"—
or maybe I only dreamed that, Miz Rosa,

like some old song we sang on a bus ride
like some old freedom-dream you gave a kid.

Remembering April 1968 Over Morning Coffee in Another Century

On April 4, 2006, I write these words,
remembering an old April that I hold
in ways I had almost forgotten:
Thirty-eight years ago today they shot
Martin Luther King in Memphis. I studied late
and alone on the deserted Vanderbilt
campus—like most graduate students
I heard no news. Didn't hear the muted
sound of riots in the streets. Didn't know
he'd been shot. Then the old janitor rolled
his trashcart into my silent TA den
in the dim basement of Old Central.

—(Do I have to say that Vanderbilt's in
Nashville, in the South, and they shot Mr. King
down the road, and Old Central's where Agrarians
pondered *I'll Take My Stand* and segregation,
and the janitor was a black man of great
dignity, a friend who taught me much about
the trees and plants and other things that grew on campus)—

He told me. Wordless silence wound around us.
We listened to excited voices on
his scratchy portable radio. Dawn
was a long way off: sirens, tanks came closer.
We said nothing. Then he almost whispered:
"Things always gets bad before they get better.
Pray Jesus we all get better together."
We shook hands. He put his hand on my shoulder
the way a wise old man knows how to do,
said: "Get home safe, be careful where you go."
I climbed into midnight stillness, West End
Avenue eerie and empty, only the wind:

Took my usual route through Centennial Park,
then saw all the troops and trucks, kept walking
until they seized me by the concrete Parthenon.
Held two hours by National Guard in Athens
of the South. Many tanks, soldiers in jeeps:
I was in forbidden terrain, in deep,
a space-and-curfew violator. They checked
me out, walkie-talkies crackling, finally let
me go home to my place in the blacked-out street.

Not much else happened that April. I passed
my PhD orals. Bobby came to town,
then they shot another Kennedy down.
Then there was Gene, that season of my last
campaign—I'm still glad I sang for McCarthy,
the right one, though some said the wrong party.
(Years later, when I saw Gene give a keynote
at Princeton, on Fitzgerald, his literate wit
confirmed my old choice.) In China, Cultural
Revolution raged. In France, radicals
shut down the country. In Prague, the tanks came.
Later, leaders and victims of all those games
would become my friends, in all those places
and more, bound by Soixante-Huit's horror and grace.

But what I remember most, and hold tight today
is the way old Moses the *janitor* prayed
we'd all get better together and his hand
on my shoulder, his voice, the Promised Land
shining beyond fire and flood to the *Keeper*
of the Door, the voice that keeps repeating:
Things get real bad before they get better.
We're strong at the broken places together.

FRED ARROYO

Of Palaces and Stations: Towards the Shelter of Innocence

We do not have states of being; we have states of dreaming.
—Jean Toomer, *Essentials*

I. *Palaces*

In her book of essays and reports *As They Were*, M. F. K. Fisher begins "Palaces, Etcetera" with these evocative words concerning the power of places and memories:

> Somewhere there must surely be a folk saying, not in *Poor Richard's Almanack* perhaps, but of equal logic and simplicity, about how every life has at least one fairy palace in its span. Usually these miracles happen when a person is young, but still wide-eyed enough to catch the magic that older people have forgotten or pushed away. For countless children, Disneyland has it, like Tivoli in Copenhagen. For both tourists and natives, the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace does well . . . prancing horses, flashing sabers, plumes and capes and trumpets in the fog . . . the Palace is in safe hands, a solid dream.
>
> Sometimes people can know two palaces before Lady Luck calls it quits, but of course they are never of equal enchantments. This happened to me, and all of it before I was about ten. It was early proof of my good fortune. (24)

The magic and power of those places and memories we return to are found in our "palaces," what Fisher describes as those "miracles" of wonder and dream that we cannot forget or push aside. Fisher then writes and remembers in loving detail a most essential palace, the Riverside Mission Inn. "That magical place will always be for me a dream, awesome but built of pure delight" (26). The dream and delight of the Riverside Mission Inn were discovered in the freedom Fisher and her sister, Anne, were given; they had an hour to wander the Inn, and "off [they'd] go, to step softly once again into the true, the real, the *only* palace" (27). Part of what entrances Fisher is the Inn's "amazing structure, all quirky and unexpected," where

she was delighted to discover a hidden patio; a fountain plashing on a wall; winding staircases; vast corridors filled with chests, armoires, and "a grave golden Buddha with soft lights shining"; old Spanish and Mexican portraits hung on whitewashed adobe walls; and the stage of a theatre "where 'An Hour of Sabbath Meditation' was going on" (27, 28). Throughout this palace Fisher evokes a labyrinth splashed in the golden-brown light of wood, the cool white of adobe walls, and the unexpected discoveries of the new and suddenly sacred objects and spaces of memory. And as one follows along her maze of memory, wonder, and imagination, quick bright shafts of sunlight strike a patio, illumine a dark and shiny banister, the light slanted like a long Spanish sword against a wall.

What I find most compelling in Fisher's evocation of this palace, in her "good fortune" to have experienced and remembered it, is how the Mission Inn stays with her and how it writes the ways she desires and dreams the world. Throughout this small palace of memory writing, Fisher steps into the narrative to reflect on how the Riverside Mission Inn may have shaped her life. She asks (parenthetically), "(Is this why I have always loved circular staircases and longed to live with one?)" (28). The Inn's tiles have a lasting effect Fisher cannot let pass by. She tells us,

> [T]here were glittering or softly glowing tiles everywhere in the Mission Inn, even on the steep steps of the circular staircases. The wide corridors had rugs laid over the tiles, all from Spain, Morocco, Mexico. They felt cool. We walked softly on them, as if they might chip or crack. (And that may be why I have chosen for much of my life to stay in houses with tiled floors. And of course many of the walls of the inn were plastered adobe, whitewashed, so that even now I can look at paintings most easily when they hang against some such surface.) (29)

Though Fisher tries to write with "wide-eyed enough" prose so as "to catch the magic that older people have forgotten or pushed away" (and does so with great power), there is, of course, the unmistakable presence of an older Fisher who cannot simply recall or evoke a palace and all its objects *as they were*. Fisher must also come to terms with how she sees the world *now*, with what is important to her now, as well as with why she decides to write and remember certain places and events now. It seems that for Fisher her written reports and memories don't strive to represent a verifiable truth but what she *believes*.

Fisher's sense of truth and belief is suggested in her "Prejudice, Hate, and the First World War." In the preface to this essay she describes "The Wind-Chill Factor," and she proposes what her memory and her report of

that solitary winter experience on Long Island "taught" her.[1] Fisher tells us, "'The Wind-Chill Factor' taught me that there is a difference between what is true and what one believes is the truth. I depicted the storm in as bare a way as I could, since it happened only to *me*. During the strange ordeal there was nobody else, to observe or even survive. It was a true catharsis" (5). The truth one believes is not found in what the past was, nor do historical dates, artifacts, documents, or a detailed reality verify the truth. We cannot know the truth of the Riverside Mission Inn no matter how much historical evidence we accumulate. Thus Fisher tells us:

> It would be easy to verify a few things like dates: when Old Man Miller started the Mission Inn; who were some of his legendary guests. But this report is a private matter, and I know what I know about magical places, both good and evil. And what I know about this good one is more real than any statistics can ever tell me. (30)

Fisher struggles with her memory throughout *As They Were*, and she seems to continually ask, *How can I return to those things, those memories, and palaces as they were?* Yet she also works towards the mystery and power of her "private matters," what she "knows," and what she calls the "more real," the personal act of writing, imagining, remembering, and dreaming the significance of what she believes. She knows it's "almost impossible for an older person to report such things [as childhood, or even a more recent lonely time on the dunes in a ravishing storm] without coloring them, twisting, invading the story, to make a more vivid or self-flattering report" (5). She knows as well that she cannot lose her older self, who she has become. But Fisher believes she can return; she believes she can write about the past as it was for her then; and she also believes she can come to terms with her *private matter*. She writes, "I wanted to suddenly write about *my* first years, for some unknown reason, and I saw, after the wind on the dunes, that nobody but a child can write what has just happened to him" (5). And then a little later she writes of the task of going back in time, in memory. "I tried to go as far back as I could into the life I honestly *believed* I had lived when I was four, or even ten. It was a sweaty job, at times painful" (6; my emphasis).

It is this act of belief—this sweaty, painful job of writing, discovery, and invention—I want to argue, which underlies the palaces we design in writing. These palaces are surely fraught with delicate cracks, the vulnerable work of memory and imagination, truth and belief. I cherish this work, this writing, though, and I find great possibilities and joy when this work is at its most difficult, delicate, and vulnerable. I might just as well concede, nevertheless, that the writing of palaces is impossible—yet, I

know as well it is a necessary imaginative act. That's what Fisher seems to suggest as well. "And that is what I wanted to write about in Sag Harbor: the way it *was*, not the way I have come to see it. I wish there were time to try again" (7).

Perhaps the only solace palace writers have is the hope for "more time to try again." The writing—the private matter—is sweaty and painful, and, nevertheless, essential. I always search for ways to try again, to create more time to shape the relations of memory and imagination, truth and belief. More time, more time, to write my palaces.

Fisher's evocation of palaces includes a remembrance of other places.[2] Instead of thinking of idealized places, such as Fisher's examples of Disneyland and Buckingham Palace, I imagine the often chaotic, inexplicable yet undeniable and lasting power places have in our lives. As we move further along into the story that is our life, we develop a way of seeing, a set of beliefs, truths, and values that tell us we can never return to our palaces. At the same time, the story that is life is filled with the lasting dream of returning to our palaces. If every first novel seems to be about the home one can never return to, as well as the home one dreams one can return to, can't we imagine our palaces in similar terms? This is exactly what I find so truthful *and* believable about Fisher's palace: it's a place that stays with her, that lasts, that she cannot deny because it helps her to discover the truth and belief of her writing.

Consider this: In our memories we seem to store and differentiate words, particularly their pronunciation and meaning. This part of our mind and memory, where linguistic signs—words: oral and written, as well as representations and images—are housed and recalled, is our linguistic memory. We return to our linguistic memory for specific words in order to recall how a word was pronounced or used properly, so we can express that word meaningfully in a situation. Meaning doesn't simply arise from memory, however; the demands of the present situation, the private matter of making meaning in that situation, is just as important to consider. In addition, our linguistic memory must include various experiences, moments, and places that recall and emphasize the power—both the negative and the positive—language can have in our lives.[3] These linguistic memories are, therefore, both an essential and generative force; they help us to continually invent meaning. Rather than seeing linguistic memories as an overdetermining, unified force or essence, I envision linguistic memories as filled with continuity and change, remembrance and possibility, a kind of conversation between the past and the present, memory and imagination, we need to participate within in order to use language to make the most of our lives. We all have linguistic memories

influencing our relationships with language and the world—whether we recognize them or not. Palaces and places, as I have been exploring them through Fisher, are also important linguistic memories that need to be acknowledged.[4]

Imagine, for a moment, that language is a palace. Though I may never step into the same palace over time, every time I inhabit my palace there is a constant essence or force that belongs to my palace that makes my palace *palace*. I feel and believe in this palatiousness. In my belief I understand that within the palace of language there is another invisible, magical, and dreamlike palace, which is, nevertheless, tangible. In my palace's various rooms, down banisters, in the cold midday shadows of a patio, in the rusted broken hinge of a door, in the dust found on the edge of a windowsill, on a yellow leaf floating in a cistern, there in the ruby throat of a hummingbird fluttering in and out the kitchen door—there I feel and find the presence of that other palace. As Fisher suggests, no matter how much I may be progressing as a writer, perhaps seemingly so because I'm growing older and learning more, my palace returns to shape my sense of truth and belief. The underlying constant force within my palace, regardless of the details or facts I recall or verify, accentuates the past and the present, memory and imagination, truth and belief. The essence or force Fisher struggles with—for most writers—is what makes writing "sweaty" and "painful"—and, it's what makes writing such an intellectual and emotional joy; it makes writing *writing*, language *language*. M. F. K. Fisher's evocation of the Riverside Mission Inn is a linguistic memory—a palace—she needs to remember to know what she knows, what she believes, and what she needs to write.[5]

To discover those moments when the things we write about and the writing itself come together—that is, unify into their own self-erecting palace—that is one of the joys of writing. This discovery is part of an intuitive process; it is experienced in writing; it is what one strives for over and over again through practice, ambition, determination, and creation: and, if one is lucky, and continues to believe, one is graced with the presence of wonder on the page. In his "Foreword to *A House for Mr. Biswas*," V. S. Naipaul writes of not returning to read *A House* for many many years (twenty to be exact). One day, at a friend's house in Cyprus, he heard a BBC installment of the novel, albeit an abridged reading that included transitional words that were not his own. Nevertheless, as Naipaul listened to the words he started to weep. He had been expecting to hear a news program, and suddenly *A House* came back to him with great emotion. He remembered the writing of the novel. He felt emotions he had tried to avoid, he felt for the things he wrote about, and he felt for the

writing itself. That writing—the forces of ambition, work, memory, and creation—came back to him unexpectedly and powerfully.

> I listened. And in no time, though the installment was comic, though the book had inevitably been much abridged, and the linking words were not always mine, I was in tears, swamped by emotions I had tried to shield myself from for twenty years. *Lacrimae rerum*, "*The tears of things*," the tears in things: to the feeling of things written about—the passions and nerves of my early life—there was added a feeling for the time of writing—the ambition, the tenacity, the innocence. My literary ambition had grown out of my early life; the two were intertwined; the tears were for double innocence. (128-29)

How even to explain this feeling, this "double innocence." "Innocence" speaks of Naipaul's remembrance of writing from the past to some extent—but the full impact of feeling within the living energy of imagination and memory is not named. To know that feeling, to arrive there with surprise and awe, to travel the journey a book is, is to touch with words the shape—the fits of starts and stops, the inexplicable long moments of sustained seeing, composing, and understanding—of what writing is. The innocence one needs to begin each book, a feeling Naipaul has tried to describe but that is not often expressed to others—well, its expression and recognition comes about by writing.[6]

I am not trying to suggest that writing is a solitary act of will or genius. And though I will argue for the importance of linguistic memories in this essay, I do not claim that linguistic memories verify an essential truth for one's writing. In a very profound way, however, Naipaul helps us to hear the importance of his linguistic memories, *the feeling for things written about* as well as *a feeling for the time of writing*. In turning to my own palaces and linguistic memories in the next part of this essay, I will show why one needs to contemplate and acknowledge the continuity and change at the center of linguistic memories; this contemplation and acknowledgement will help us recognize how the seemingly discreet parts of life—work, family, drinking, generations; education and life; what one writes about and one's writing—can come together so we can make the most of our writing and lives. I write these words as stones I can step upon during my long journey back towards my feeling for writing and the things I write about, my long journey back to the shelter of innocence.

II. *Stations*

Kevin McIlvoy's *The Fifth Station: A Novel* is a palace that helps to substantiate my memory, what I believe, and what I write. *The Fifth Station* helps me to remember and dream. Oddly, I can't recall how I even came to

own the book. There are some clues, and there are some undistinguished memories, but I'm not sure how conclusive they are.

Inside the front cover, on the title page, I find that the book is from the LaSalle Branch Library, 3232 W. Ardmore Trail, South Bend, Indiana, 45628. I can see that this information was stamped on the page, and then a black marker was run over the top of the lettering, as if it could all be erased. Just a little lower on the page is a blue oval circle, and within its circumference: Public Library May 16, 1988 South Bend, Indiana. Inside the back cover there's a bluish gray square, and I read that "This book has been withdrawn from the St. Joseph County Public Library due to"—and then there follows a small list of possible reasons. There's a penciled check mark next to the last possibility, "excess copies/reduced demand." Someone named "JM" completed the withdrawal of *The Fifth Station* from the library on "3/91." I must have picked up the book, it seems, at a library sale.

At the time I would've been 25, working the night shift, six to six on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday, with an added Tuesday every other week, at Mastic's in South Bend, Indiana; and I was also beginning my first classes as a full-time student at the local university. I would soon quit my job, after being there six years, and move from South Bend to West Lafayette to attend Purdue University and begin a dream: I hoped to leave behind the only life I knew, the sweat, the exhaustion, the long bouts of drinking, and the mind-numbing repetition of physical labor. In part my dream was created by a recent discovery: I had discovered some calm in my life by writing brief paragraphs in a ruled notebook. Certain memories and places would suddenly appear, and for some reason I believed they deserved greater attention, that I should write them down because they came from *me*. They were often quite simple. My grandmother cooking in her kitchen, for example, steam rising from her stove alongside the song she hums. Abuela dances and sways to her song, moving back and forth from the table to the stove. I'm maybe seven years old, and I watch the banana leaves shaking in the wind outside the kitchen door. There are shadows on the white tiled floor that shake with the wind. Abuela works between the morning's shadow and sun: she chops garlic, onions, cilantro, and tomatoes, and then adds them to a pan of rice. She pours achiote oil into the pan, the rice turning a deep yellow. Lightly she rubs the side of my cheek with the back of her hand, smiles, and we then watch a hummingbird flutter for a moment in the doorway, its purple throat pulsing to the fast whir of its dark green wings.

Somehow small writings like this (along with my class work and, most importantly, the support of Jill, who would later become my wife) helped

me to dream a life away from my past, to attend school full-time without working a nightshift in a factory, and to take a step further into what I was beginning to experience as my lovely work with words. Now, what exactly unhinged this dream is vague. I had saved barely $3,000 to go to Purdue, perhaps enough to survive a semester.

Before the calm of those brief paragraphs, before I dreamed of leaving, the past years had been a repetitive cycle of ups and downs—sometimes overtime every month; months of easy somewhat pleasant work; months of hard tiring work without sleep; and then the months when production slowed, the economy went into a recession, and there were layoffs. I had spent most of my life witnessing my father shift from factory to factory, from drunkenness to sobriety, from months at home on the couch without a job to long periods when he wasn't around. It was a life I thought I could never escape. You worked hard and as much as possible, hoping for some big pay-off, as if all the overtime might add up to something more that could take you away. But then there were moments when you weren't working, even if only for a month or two, and then you were playing catch up, just trying to stay afloat economically. And then there was the drinking. You learned that to start drinking on Friday night, to drink through the weekend, meant you enjoyed life, that you could be happy. It felt good. It helped you to forget. But when the drinking spilled over into work, when you were tired, unfocused, even sometimes a little drunk, you dropped heavy tools on the floor, your hands getting a little too close to the running machinery.

I don't recall when I finally started reading *The Fifth Station*, but I know my sense of drinking and work became more real and spoke to me with greater authority once I read the following passage:

> Pulling our gas masks over our faces, we began building the first floor of scaffolding to bring us into the stack. The heat and the vapor from the slab-oven floor made the dust on our glasses shimmer and even our own arms and hands kind of wavered before us. The thick wooden soles buckled onto our work shoes were awkward, and we could have taken them off after walking through the oven, but we forgot. When we tried fitting a pipe section diagonally into our scaffolding, my section hit the floor. Afraid of the smoking sparks that burst into the air, we both jumped back with that slow, exaggerated movement you make in deep water. We bumped into each other. Through our masks the laughter sounded like it wasn't ours, like a third person stood somewhere near who laughed for us. Matthew tugged his mask down and shouted, "Edna's tequila." (74)

These McWelt brothers had been drinking before work, and here inside a smokestack that bottle of tequila they shared—"Edna's tequila"—returns. The McWelts—Michael, the older brother and narrator, and Matthew—are working to break the bricks out of a nine-story smokestack, a "high risk" job, and, according to the foreman, a job that is perhaps "done every thirty years or so" (1, 2). Yet the "Old-timers at the mill said they never heard of it being done ever" (2). They might make "a hundred and fifty-some bucks total for the night if they double us over," Matthew says (2). As the McWelt brothers sit "in the bar You Dam Right after the four-to-twelve shift discussing whether [they] wanted to volunteer for the job the next day," Michael thinks of the extra money, of their "plans to open a sign-painting shop all our own somewhere away from the steel mill that ground my father and his father and grandfather into just enough dust to bury us too" (2). The McWelts need to work one more year and then maybe they'll have enough money to escape; they can then meet up with their older brother, Luke, in New Mexico. There is a larger story of work, family, place, and memory influencing their fate, however, and so they also find escape in drinking, which they often saw their father do, and, together, drink and work can create tragedy. The McWelt brothers are taking a chance to complete the work in the smokestack; they need this chance so they can take one more step towards the dream of leaving southern Illinois and the steel mill. That step becomes a catastrophe, though, as Matthew dies—much too young—within the smokestack.

I can't recall much of my own dream back then when I discovered *The Fifth Station*. What I remember the most is the noise and heat of work—the slamming punches, the hiss and suck of the air compressors, the wavering, warm air of smoke drifting off the extruders, the honking forklifts, the whirring sawdust and flying resin, the rumbling cement under my feet, the heat of production running along the floor like a steady current, the sharp searing pain of my forearms burning on the hot dies when I worked on my machine. We made vinyl siding and accessories for homes, and our work was economically tied to the corridor of prefabricated mobile homes produced on a long thin line of labor along the Indiana-Michigan border. There were hard and endless nights; twelve hours on my feet fighting hot vinyl, some small unidentifiable variable that wouldn't let me form a piece of siding. Yet there were also many nights that seemed much easier. I was an operator, and a pretty good one, and for close to thirteen dollars an hour I'd sit on a stool and read Garcia Marquez, Faulkner, Silko, Chaucer, Keats, the Bible. Once six A.M. hit, whether the night had been easy or difficult, I'd drive to my apartment in the cold blue dawn, lie down and sleep for four hours, and then awaken to my numb

hands and feet, my eyes heavy with the desire for more sleep, my mind still shaped by smoke and noise and heat. Soon I had to get to class.

Though I can't recall where I bought *The Fifth Station*, I must have picked it up because it was a small book, perhaps 6" by 4," and that's important. I had read somewhere that the best books should fit in one's coat pocket, and I often walked between places reading a book I had pulled from my pocket. I had also chosen *The Fifth Station* because of its title. Though I was Catholic I had never formally attended church, and, as a result, I didn't know enough about Catholicism to understand that the title referred to the Stations of the Cross, to sin, faith, death, and the possibility of forgiveness, powerful forces found at the novel's dramatic and emotional center. I must have chosen the book because "the fifth station" was my memory: I had grown up for a time on the corner of Day and Fifth Streets, in Niles, Michigan, right alongside the train tracks, next to a 19th-century train station and the Fifth Street Hotel. There was a wondrous viaduct at the time over the tracks, and our apartment, which my parents rented from my mother's father, was literally in the viaduct's shadows. *My shadows. My fifth station.* I often played under the viaduct, running my hands back and forth between black shadows and gold light, running up the embankment to the viaduct's cold gray steel, the dust of coal and dirt powdering my fingertips. Sometimes I'd just sit and listen to the cars clank and rumble overhead as they crossed the viaduct, the grinding squeal of steel shiny in my ears as a freight train passed by: Union Pacific, Canadian Pacific, Southern Pacific etched in my memory as names I could always sing. Sometimes I entered the station, sat on one of the lobby's wooden benches and watched the people buying tickets from the black man behind the barred window. I remember the light in the station was yellowed, shiny from the glare of the tiled floor, colored by old wood, a particular set of tan and black luggage on the floor near the edge of a bench. Standing just off the tracks on a winter night was the best, thick bands of snow falling all around me, the top of each car on the long evening train headed for Chicago covered with a thick strip of snow, the train's windows brightly lit golden squares, steam hissing and rising up as snow melted and slipped down on the tracks, the steam turning to shapes of warmth I began to design in my mind.

Then the whistle blew. Lights flashed, bells clanged, and the rail guards descended on Fifth Street. I started home from the station while looking up at the viaduct—a long curve of silver steel and white lights starkly defined by the falling snow—rising above me. The train slowly headed west. I picked up my pace, and then I was running alongside the train, slipping in the snow, running without looking down, my eyes captivated by the blue

and silver of the train appearing through clouds of steam. I stopped and stood still, my arms slowly swaying at my side, my hands warm with sweat. For a moment it was as if the train had stopped, as if the snowflakes were stilled by the gold of a window. Sitting across from each other at a table were a couple, their figures sharp and perfect in the window, the light. The man wore a blue sport coat, his shirt open at the neck, a light blue collar resting on his lapel. A green sweater was draped over the woman's shoulders, her hair pulled back into a bun, a string of pearls around her neck. Their hands were folded on the table as if in prayer, and next to their hands were short clear glasses filled with a brilliant colored liquid broken by ice cubes. They passed by in the thick slowness of snow-filled time, the train beginning to pick up speed. Looking up into the falling snow I felt my face was clean and new. My eyes filled with snow as I pinpointed one final flake to focus on, a crystal pattern of white and silver becoming distinct just before the flake hit my eye. I blinked. Down the tracks the train disappeared into the woods before it crossed the river, one small red light verifying the truth of what I had seen.

The night became quiet, the bells stopping and the gates rising. My hands trembled in front of me, and I thought that if I could quiet the noise of my heart in my throat, I'd hear the jangle and rumble of steel as the train crossed the river, and then for the briefest of moments find myself crossing that river too, on my way to Chicago. I raised my hands in the air. Across the tracks, at the Fifth Street Hotel, there was a lone window lit by smoky light, a tattered curtain fluttering in and out the window. I couldn't tell if the window was open, or if the glass had been broken. In between the curtains in and out dancing, I thought I heard the faint wail of a trumpet.

Somewhere, at a book sale, on a table sagging from the weight of cardboard boxes and oddly piled books, I must have seen *The Fifth Station* and picked it up without understanding the meaning, memory, and dream of my act. I do remember how the language on the back cover describing the novel immediately struck me; how the characters struggle to live and work with honor and grace within a community they care for. They live lives fully shaped by history, and yet they strive to live by the decisions they make regardless of that history. The story sounded beautiful and dramatic, filled with love and pain, and the sad affliction that permeates families caught in the web of labor, alcohol, and a political economy they can only contribute to when "times are good," when their sweat, muscle, and hours are needed to raise the profits and capital of the many who distance themselves from the personal affect of work.

I opened the back cover and something like hope arose for me. There was a picture of Kevin McIlvoy leaning against a large piece of stone,

smiling with genuine happiness. He wore a pair of jeans, a white shirt, a thin striped tie, and in his shirt pocket there was a pen. Below the picture I read that McIlvoy had grown up in Granite City, Illinois, had attended three universities, and was a teacher of writing. I repeated New Mexico, Las Cruces, and the words were magical, liberating; I imagined a long journey, and I dreamed of being more than I was. McIlvoy is from the peoples, places, and work he writes of. I thought of my own sense of family, work, and memory; it all seemed too sad and painful, guided by forces I couldn't control, that I thought I might not ever understand. I was searching for a way to escape and forget that past. Yet McIlvoy seemed confident, at ease, and working without forgetting those formative forces of family, physical labor, and class that America continuously tries to overlook and push away. I started to see that McIlvoy and I (and many others) were part of a long story. An old story written into the American landscape. A story of poverty, of generations, of change. The loss of memory and history. Yet maybe of resilience and hope too, the hope of memory and continuity, and the belief that we have the right to work for dignified lives. I, too, could keep working like McIlvoy. Maybe, in an inexplicable way, I may have begun to think I could become a teacher, especially as I considered my newfound hunger for books and the unexplainable power reading was beginning to have for my life. Maybe I could write. *New Mexico. Las Cruces*. Maybe I wrote them in my mind in a language I was beginning to love.

Surely I had no way of knowing then all this possibility. In fact, I had grown up with the long memory of my father having to quit school in third grade to go to work in Puerto Rico. I grew up in a bilingual household, never seemed to do well in school, and barely graduated from high school. We didn't own books nor bookshelves I could dream of filling. My younger years in a small provincial town in southwestern lower Michigan—its banality, small-mindedness, and a form of mean-spiritedness fostered by competitiveness—never prepared me to even imagine the possibility of spending a part of each day writing. There was something complex, generative, and extraordinary taking place through my small writings and the possession of *The Fifth Station*. With some pain and regret, I realized that my past didn't allow for the right mix needed to foster the kind of wondrous possibilities that were suddenly set in motion.

When I actually began to read *The Fifth Station* (and for some reason I remember sitting at the small table of an outdoor café; it's sunny, and a cool Lake Michigan breeze brushes my face), I recall getting caught up in a small paragraph on the copyright page. Here McIlvoy thanks others for their help as he wrote the novel, and then he thanks "The Family Inn, for

the table in the corner and the refills." If I continued to write I wouldn't have to go it alone; even though the past years (and most of my life) had been filled with much loneliness, my writing life could be supported and sustained by the presence of others. And even though I didn't fully realize then the sweaty and painful job of writing, I imagined the pleasure of sitting in a diner or café, a warm cup of coffee on the table, as I composed brief paragraphs I believed in. It was an odd feeling I can't name, almost as if some kind of strange, almost silent music began to tremble inside my body, my palms and fingers trembling with the chance to release that music. I suddenly felt that writing wasn't done just by geniuses, the highly educated, the well traveled and well cultured, or even the wealthy. There must be another kind of writing, a form or pattern or narrative, waiting to be discovered in order to include where I came from, who I was, and who I was dreaming.

There are peoples, stories, and memories engrained into the American landscape—maybe, just maybe, I am a part of that landscape. Kevin McIlvoy's *The Fifth Station* adds to the grain, it works against the forgetting of work and class by acknowledging the struggle and dignity and hope working-people contribute to what the promise of America can be. McIlvoy helps me to believe that I might contribute to America's still emerging grain. He helps me to understand the necessity to discover and listen to the powerful forces written in one's blood. He writes:

> As he had all his adult life, Luke slept hard for about two hours and woke and caught only moments of rest from then until morning. The steel mill shift work of three generations of McWelt men was in his blood; he slept this way because his dreams were only the length of certain tasks. In them he shouted in order to be heard above the din of machinery. When he awoke, unable to breathe, his neck glistening with sweat, he knew it was from the close heat of gray-red ingots and the smothering dust of cooling steel sheets gliding overhead on magnetic cranes. (47)

Luke, the oldest of the McWelt brothers, left southern Illinois and the steel mills for a life in Las Almas, New Mexico, after his "dad died from injuries in a car accident on his way home from the midnight shift. After ten years at the blast furnace, Luke simply quit and, on short notice, said goodbye to everyone" (35). Luke said he had a job at a bakery when he arrived, but he's been a hobo in New Mexico for nine years. His brothers had meant to follow him and start a sign-painting shop; but Matthew died, and Michael, filled with too much grief and memory, drinks too much. Luke isn't simply a hobo, though: he performs magical tricks with his basketball, godlike tricks; he helps out two other hobos, one who is deathly

sick; he lives a dignified life with food, fire, and a home, albeit an adobe hut; he's a caring brother, brother-in-law, and uncle; and by the novel's end he develops a loving relationship with a woman, and he has a stronger relationship with his brother as they come to terms with their mutual past. And this seems truthful; nothing of Luke's past suggests the life of a hobo. Becoming a hobo is a conscious act for Luke. McIlvoy tells us,

> Luke understood better how it was that he had become a hobo. No man was meant to be shut up in a smothering warehouse, trying to have all the qualities of steel itself, asking himself, "What am I making?"
>
> His dad had wanted to make more than the steel of corrugated roofs and bridge forms, garages and barns, warehouses and stadiums high as Babel. (83)

Once again, Luke identifies work as passed down through generations, as in one's blood, as a line—like steel—running between him and his father. Luke's decision to become a hobo is influenced by his memory of work, by his father's (as well as his grandfather's) sense of work and dream. Because this novel is so much about work, especially how historically particular generations, like the McWelt men, have had to confront the ways labor creates continuity and change within a family, what Luke identifies is a form of memory that is being passed down, that is written in his blood.

What McIlvoy suggests through Luke (and within the drama of this novel) is compelling, and it's essential for our time. Though it seems that an awareness of manual labor and class is "ending" in America, due to the incredible growth of technological and service sector jobs, as well as a belief of prosperity for all, McIlvoy imagines how the memory and force of manual labor and class can continue within America's memory. Even though many steel mills, their culture and their ways of life seemed to have died in the late 80s and 90s in America's steel mill communities, McIlvoy represents how that culture and way of life continues on, how it stays with Luke even in a place so far away and different as New Mexico. And McIlvoy goes even further in exploring how this memory of class and work and family will last; he suggests that as steel workers like Luke and his brother Michael are displaced and migrate away from their community, they discover others who are displaced as well, who share similar forms of memory and ways of life, and together they can help each other create new, meaningful ways for living.

Memories, stories, and relations are best represented in *The Fifth Station* through Luke and Marvin's conversation and friendship. Perhaps, McIlvoy suggests, a former steel worker from Meltenville, Illinois, Luke,

and a Native American from New Mexico, Marvin, can create community, even if only briefly, since Marvin has a brain tumor and will soon die. In reading the following scene it is important to keep in mind that Luke's brother Michael is married to Ruth, a Native American. And in reading this scene I'm emphasizing the way Luke and Marvin's conversation seems to break down and yet begins to create meaning, how their conversation is about the relations of generations and blood, the power of memories to continue on. We find Luke and Marvin sitting outside a cotton gin on a wagon, taking a brief rest, from their walk to downtown Las Almas, because of Marvin's pain. McIlvoy writes:

> Losing his balance as he lay back, Marvin bumped his head. He laughed at himself, and he cursed in another language.
>
> "Who would think of it?" Luke said. "I mean, I forget you're Indian sometimes, Marvin."
>
> "Not much of one, Luke. I'm like you. You say you were steel mill people. That's born into you, I think—I don't know—like blood. I'm Antelope Clan. The clan of the cacique leaders," he said. "Your brother's wife, his baby—they're Tewa." He closed his eyes so tightly his face tensed into a wince. "Oh," he said, the faint word compressed with pain.
>
> "Clair?" Luke said. "She's—"
>
> "All Tewa," said Marvin. "Look again at her." He pulled his knees to his chest.
>
> "Are you going to be all right?"
>
> Marvin released his legs like a grasshopper just unboxed. "In a while." Half an hour later, Marvin fished in his pocket for the sleeping pills and pushed them from his palm into his mouth. "That—about blood relations."
>
> Luke scooted from the wagon to the ground. "What is that exactly?"
>
> "Don't know," Marvin said. He took Luke's forearms and eased off the wagon. "We are not brothers. But I have this feeling like they pull at us in our blood." He lightly tamped his feet on the ground. "You know about that?" (103)

Marvin is trying to express the powers of what is born within us, what creates our blood relations, as well as how we contend with and use these powers to make the most of our lives. But Luke—and by extension the audience—struggles with what Marvin is suggesting through his "broken," brief thoughts and words: "their conversation [was] broken into moments as short as the moments the sunlight burned through breaks in the clouds" (102). Luke asks, "What is that exactly?" And we wonder as well. Marvin says, "Don't know," and yet he also comes to a kind of conclusion that "they pull at us in our blood." What is that *they*? One possibility is to

consider those forces of memory, place, and peoples that are born into us. A second possibility is found in our relations. And a third possibility is that *they*—that "pull at us in our blood"—are our brothers (both blood and invented). Though it may seem like Marvin is working to a distinct answer, he cannot distinguish—exactly—the various forces at work. Yet these forces are alive, and they shape our memories, how we see the world, and how we create relations with others.

In the previous scene, as Luke and Marvin walk towards Las Almas, we find Luke trying to get Marvin to continue talking. Marvin questions why he talks so much to Luke, and so Luke asks Marvin to tell him "anything, then. Tell me just one thing" (101). Marvin has a difficult time telling Luke "just one thing" because he has "a good memory," and his "grandfather was a storyteller" and Marvin was a "listener," as was his mother (101). Marvin seems to know the larger, complex relations of life and story, storyteller and listener. And so that is all Marvin can do: he tells Luke a story, a story filled with a memory, learning, and relations; and this story leads to other memories and the importance of listening. The force of this story makes Luke realize that "It's not exactly fair"(102); that is, that he asked for "just one thing," and, as well, it's not fair where Marvin stops the story. Luke now needs to hear more; he wants to listen to more than "just one thing" because in his listening he begins to discover all that is *more*.

Luke is a hobo but he still continues to work by doing basketball tricks for donations, and for this work he travels from the fields—cotton, chile, pecan—outside Las Almas to the downtown mall. He also travels between the past and the present, and in between one place and the other he runs into family, life, and the inevitable changes our stories and memories undergo. Although Luke seems to have created separate "stations" in his life, they begin to merge into each other—like Luke and Marvin's life—to create all that is *more*. He cannot, to put this a little differently, keep the stations apart. They are the *Stations of the Cross*, and they have to be taken together, they can't be separated; there is not just one station Luke must struggle through.

Later in the novel, Luke confronts his brother Michael in his trailer; Ruth has left him and brought Clare to live with Luke. Michael hasn't left the trailer in some time, and, all alone, he tries to come to terms with his grief and memory by writing their story. Michael tells Luke, "It's a trick, Hoop. You bank everything on the ball landing on the yardstick and staying. Dad banked everything on a job he hated, right? Mom bets everything on God's—on His what? Mercy? Matthew and I, we thought if we could make a little more money. . . ." (122-23). Michael suggests that

we often "bank" our dreams on *one* "trick," one station or part of our lives. Luke questions Michael's sense of individual effort. He asks, "So, what do I do, Michael? Leave the soldier in his bunker? Make you shower and sleep and bring you food when you need it so you don't get sick [as you try to write our story]?" (123). Michael says, "'How far does the Cyrenian help Jesus? In the stations, when he helps Jesus, does he help him all the way? Well? Well, it doesn't say, does it?'" (123). Luke tells Michael he's not Jesus, and then they begin to laugh and come to some kind of understanding. We don't have to make it or work all alone, and so we don't have to "bank everything" on just one thing or our individual efforts. For too long the McWelt brothers tried to keep the parts of their life—work, family, drinking, dreaming—distinctly separate. What they might have done, instead, is remember and bring together those seemingly distinct parts within a larger tapestry of memory and story, a tapestry they need to recognize and acknowledge to help them through the stations of the past and the present, continuation and change, life and death. Perhaps a tapestry of memory and story created in a quilt: "a quilt my mother took twelve years to make," Michael tells us (9). "Barely contained in each large white panel of it is a whorl of blossoming American Red Rose" (9). That image is important; how the blossoming rose is not "contained in each large white panel," how it blossoms over to create more.

There's a wonderful image and memory of Luke's that illuminates the *more* he must come to terms with. McIlvoy writes,

> When Luke had first come to Las Almas he had walked these chile and cotton farms; the first afternoon, he had gotten on all fours in the center of one of the fields, felt the winter earth on his palms and knees and on the tops of his feet, felt the sun full on his back. It was the first time he understood how the gritty wind, the sun—as well as every shunted snakeskin, leaf corpse, cactus needle, coyote jaw, tumbleweed, devil's claw—all hone the desert and the earth of the Rio Grande valley. Rounded stones become dull blades, broken clods of earth break into shards. A man could hold himself to the earth here and feel the husk cutting away from the seed. (83)

Luke is alone in this moment within the newness of Las Almas. It is winter, and Luke, the center of this field (the center of the universe), feels the sun, earth, and wind, and along with them come so much more: snakeskins, the corpses of leaves, cactus needles, coyote jaws, tumbleweeds, and devil's claws. I see these things in the plural because they are written over time within the memory, story, and blood of the Rio Grande valley. To see and touch and smell the desert and the earth of the valley is to be in the presence of the sun and wind's age; the essence of things past and present;

the landscape's memory and story of life and death. It is to feel things change: "stones become dull blades, broken clods of earth break into shards." It is to feel how things are a part of each other: Luke can "feel the husk cutting away from the seed," but the husk and the seed are from the earth Luke kneels upon; the husk and the seed don't fully cut away from each other—they, instead, remember each other. Things change. Luke's brother, Matthew, tragically dies. Luke lives far away from Meltenville, Illinois, and the land where generations of men like him gave their sweat and bodies and memories to the steel mills. Life continues on, and the earth continues to remember us all.

III. *Palaces and Stations*

As I contemplate the relations of palaces and stations I find myself with an imaginary gain I cannot deny. I need to inhabit a place that includes the obsessions and issues I've discovered in *The Fifth Station* and *As They Were*; these obsessions and issues help me to make meaning, and they help me to sit down and write brief paragraphs I believe in. M. F. K. Fisher is correct to think of our palaces as our private matter, those places that were real to us at one point in our lives, though they *now* have greater imaginative meaning because they shape our memory and writing, because they help to substantiate the truth and belief of our writing. My childhood fifth station—such a place of poverty, temporary housing, and the feeling of sudden transition—was my palace, a place where I began to inhabit my memory and imagination as a child, where I now return to see certain shadows and light, the contrast of silver and rust, and where I listen to trains leaving for other places while remembering all that is still there along those Fifth Street tracks. And I often need to verify that a book—like Kevin McIlvoy's *The Fifth Station*—is a palace: books do substantiate my memory and imagination in a way that help me to bear the stations I must as a writer.

The late Wright Morris continues to help me work within the *real losses* and *imaginary gains* that are a writer's life. A brilliant novelist and memoirist, as well as a gifted photographer, Morris helps me to come to terms with many complex ideas, emotions, and memories I may have not even attempted had it not been for his example. He has always suggested to me, moreover, that I must remember that too much love for words will distance or abstract writing from life. Furthermore, because I can only consider myself a writer within the space and shape of a writing life, I'm enchanted with Morris's reflection on his own writing life and how he doesn't separate his work on emotion and memory, words and images, as well as travel and photography, in reflecting on his life of writing. Morris's

Writing My Life: An Autobiography has become a personal palace and station of memory and dream. Throughout *Writing My Life* I appreciate how Morris's development as a writer is presented as a kind of whistling in the dark, a lovely romance of chance, accident, and wonder. This romance, Morris suggests, is essential for all art. And I'm most impressed with how in all of his work Morris struggles with change and continuity, and those objects, things, peoples, and places that don't seem to ever have the chance of being remembered as palaces or stations. Those places that to the eye of quick observation are only filled with dust and loss, a decay of years that must be viewed without regret—these begin to spin memory and imagination into a state of dreaming for Morris.

A recurring image, memory, and theme of Morris's is found in one of his black and white photographs. It is of a bedroom's interior. The atmosphere and space of the room is dark. There is an open window, and a bright white curtain tucked into the bed's headboard. The wood of the bed is dark. The wood floor is bare except for a rug with a (Turkish?) pattern. On the edge of the rug is a pair of very worn boots; their toes are visible, the leather puckered and wrinkled, perhaps from rain, sweat, and work, but the rest of the boots bleed into the black space underneath the bed. A white sheet seems spread across the bed. The material doesn't seem thick enough to be a blanket, and the multi-striped pattern makes it look like gingham. A blanket draped over the end of the bed (I imagine a washed gray or blue or faded yellow) accentuates the dark patterns of the photograph's composition. The bedroom seems bare and clean and empty—yet it is clearly a bedroom that has been inhabited. The bed has been shaped by the presence of a body over time, just as the boots have. This is Morris's theme: though the room looks empty, we can see the presence of use and wear, we can perceive that someone has inhabited—slept, dreamt, awoken, and dressed within—this room; in our "reading" we can *inhabit* this room's space and time, its shapes and impressions and objects, so we can see and feel the grain of memory and life.

The image I'm looking at is from Morris's *God's Country and My People*, and the text that accompanies the photo tells us

> There's little to see, but things leave an impression. It's a matter of time and repetition. As something old wears thin or out, something new wears in. The handle of the pump, the crank on the churn, the dipper floating in the bucket, the latch on the screen, the door on the privy, the fender on the stove, the knees of the pants and the seat of the chair, the handle of the brush and the lid on the pot exist in time but outside taste; they wear in more than they wear out. It can't be helped. It's neither good nor bad. It's the nature of life. (71)

Yes, *the remembrance of things past*, and yet with variation. Objects have their lives and uses in time though they are also outside of time; they continue on with change, with a "wearing in," a becoming *more* rather than just being one thing. I like to think of these objects—the handle of the pump, the crank on the churn, the dipper floating in the bucket, and so on—working, laboring, and doing so with a kind of repetition that helps them become what they are. And they become what they are in relation to other things; Morris describes the handle *and* the pump, the crank *and* the churn, the dipper *and* the bucket, the latch *and* the screen, the door *and* the privy, the fender *and* the stove, the knees *and* the pants, the seat *and* the chair, the handle *and* the brush, and the lid *and* the pot. The churn cannot become what the churn is without the crank, and vice versa. To return to the photograph of the bedroom, then, we cannot understand the bed unless we remember the outline, impression, imprint, and wear of the man who has slept in this bed.

In time things—a train station, a viaduct, a window; a palace, a station, a childhood; memories, stories, and dreams—will disappear. Some of us will do all we can to show, illustrate, and explain these things. We cannot bear the burden of their disappearance.[7] More importantly, though, is the work of remembering how writing can bear the burden of their repetition and time, the nature of their impressions: palaces and stations can become the grain impressed within the past and present, memory and imagination, truth and belief. Writing is a sweaty job of pain, of real losses and imaginary gains, the work, for me, of remembering those palaces and stations I believe in, those palaces and stations I need to write. The journey back is long, the innocence returned to a dream to strive for.

Notes

[1]"Prejudice, Hate, and the First World War" and "The Wind-Chill Factor" are both included in *As They Were*.

[2]At times, on a subtle level, Fisher conflates palaces and places, and perhaps this is partially explained in her desire that *As They Were* be titled *Other Places*. For a better understanding of the importance of other places for Fisher, see *A Life in Letters: Correspondence 1929-1991*, as well as Joan Reardon's biography *Poet of the Appetites: The Lives and Loves of M. F. K. Fisher*. In the former, for instance, Fisher writes, "Speaking of bad wording reminds me of a little game I'm playing with the title of the new book (May 24). It's no good: *As They Were*. A cruel friend has suggested that it be called *Whom Were We Anyway?* I feel that my counter suggestion is better: *Like We Was*. [. . . .] (I wanted to call the thing *Other Places*, or something like that)" (432).

[3]See Steven G. Kellman's excellent *The Translingual Imagination* for a similar view. Kellman illustrates how many writers creatively challenge Benjamin Lee

Whorf's thesis of linguistic determinism: "We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages" (Kellman 24).

[4]Fisher expressed an understanding of linguistic memories in her memoir *Among Friends*, where she tells us the following: "Most minds have someplace in them a scrappy collection of phrases that are there, caught like gnats in the honey of memory . . . flies in amber. Seldom does one know how long they have been there" (22). But they are there and we return to them.

[5]For further discussion of linguistic memories see Azade Seyhan's *Writing Outside the Nation*. In this brief essay I cannot explore the larger context of linguistic memories. In a book length manuscript, "Between Genres and Generations: From Literacy Narratives to Geographies of Remembrance," I analyze in detail the linguistic memories that shape Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, John Philip Santos's *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation*, Pablo Medina's *Exiled Memories: A Cuban Childhood*, and Elias Canetti's *The Tongue Set Free*. Linguistic memories are creative, metaphorical, sophisticated, and necessary for understanding my life of reading and writing. Though I write in English my writing is always marked or accented by my memories of the Spanish language and culture, and by an ancient memory of peoples, places, and practices I shall never fully know. For many writers of the 20th century (and beyond), who must contend with the forces of exile, migration, the loss of languages and ways of life, linguistic memories mark the place where we begin to understand and come to terms with the power our writing has to imagine, compose, express, and remember.

[6]See, for example, Naipaul's Nobel Lecture: "Two Worlds" (also included in *Literary Occasions* 182).

[7]I'm purposefully echoing the Morris epigraph to *God's Country and My People* where he quotes Samuel Beckett. "Let me try to explain. From things about to disappear I turn away in time. To watch them out of sight, no, I can't do it."

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JAMES MORRISON

Help

In the months before Christmas, one by one, all her mother's friends were suddenly dying. For Audrey, though she would not have said so, the time was anything but convenient. It troubled her that she should think of these deaths—catastrophes, surely, for others—mostly as impediments. At the first funeral, confronted by the real tears of mourners, her mother among them, Audrey too had cried. It was not because she shared the mourners' grief. It was because she had known that she could not. The separateness of people: that was the saddest thing.

Still, Christmas was coming, there were gifts to buy, celebrations to prepare, and to make matters worse her husband was away again, out of the country on business, and her son off at college. It was all hers to do alone. So when her mother called the next week, with more bad news, and requests for favors, Audrey felt these pangs of untimeliness more keenly, perhaps, than she would have hoped of herself.

Another friend had died, Luddy Sabistone. Audrey remembered her from childhood. A dutiful wife and mother, lingering silently in corners of rooms, or bearing plates of food that seemed to outweigh her—pale, slight, wanly pretty: that kind of woman. There was little about her to suggest the passions of devotion, but she'd lived her quiet life at her husband's side, and there was never any reason to doubt that she'd loved her children. When Audrey tried to remember anything she'd ever heard Luddy say during her lifetime, all she could bring to mind were breathlessly murmured apologies. But what had Luddy Sabistone to be sorry for? Try as she might, Audrey could not, in her memory, give substance to these apologies. They lingered there, sensed, but not grasped, like mist.

Luddy had been quiet, pretty, yet plain. Audrey had not thought of her in years. There had been no reason to. Once Audrey had come into her own—her own home, husband, child—then her mother's friends, so present to her childhood, had faded from view. In childhood they'd been emblematic, yet mysterious; why, Audrey had wondered as a girl, should her mother have friends? Weren't she and her father enough? For Audrey,

they had been models, images—apart from her mother—of what she herself, Audrey, could be. Which of them had she hoped most to be like? Not Luddy, surely.

On the phone her mother was telling Audrey of all there was to do. There was the service to arrange, the flowers, the reception. The casket. "Oh, and Audrey, let me tell you—these funeral people, they're worse than *car* salesmen! You got to watch them like a hawk every minute. It's the biggest racket you ever saw." She lowered her voice to a conspiratorial whisper, as if she feared an undertaker might be eavesdropping.

Between the planning of the first funeral and, now, this one, Audrey had seen little of her mother these past weeks, but all the activity had seemed to energize her. Even in her grief, at the last funeral, she had seemed strangely buoyant. Luddy had outlived her husband, and it was not clear what role the children were playing, but it was very clear that Audrey's mother thrived on the feeling that she was honoring her friend's memory in helping with the arrangements. Maybe the question of why her mother should have friends, after all these years, was finally answered. It was so that she could go back to them, perhaps, in the end. Maybe that was what it was, in spite of everything, that made her seem happy now.

"I just got one little favor to ask you," said Audrey's mother. She'd hit on a tone that aptly suggested she did not take her daughter's consent as a foregone conclusion.

"Of course I'll do it," Audrey said immediately.

"Why, you don't even know what it is yet, dear!" her mother protested. "And I know what a time it is—Christmas coming and Tom away."

"I'll do whatever you need," said Audrey. It made her feel better to know that this was true.

In retrospect, though, the request seemed a bit much.

Another friend was coming for the funeral and needed a place to stay. The Pratts would be staying with Audrey's mother, and that left no more room there. Could she, this other friend, stay with Audrey? Audrey recalled this other friend from childhood too, though in name only. Audrey had never met her, but she had always sent their family a Christmas card, year after year. Audrey remembered this because it was the only card she could recall to arrive annually with a single name inside, and the solitary name was always engraved in bright red letters: MRS. GERTRUDE M. WYATT. The fact of the engraving had cast an aura of dignity around the name. It was so different from the cheerfully scrawled greetings of all the other cards from families. One year Audrey's mother happened to mention that Mrs. Wyatt had never married. Then why, Audrey had wanted to know, did she sign her name as "Mrs."? "Mrs." meant you were married, nothing more or less, and if you were not married, then it was supposed to be

"Miss." What different days those had been, Audrey reflected. Such innocence! Audrey had been told not to be so forward, but she could not understand, then, what had been forward about her question.

Yes: a bit much. But there was no going back now. Nor could she recall, now, just when her mother had begun to call her "dear." Her mother, without complaint, was starting to sound elderly—as if she had long ago accepted the fact of age but only now showed it. "Oh, thank you, dear," her mother said, ringing off briskly to return to the business of commemoration. "You're such a *help*."

On the day the guest was meant to arrive, it was nearly cold enough for snow, but instead a hard, steady rain fell. Audrey had done her shopping in the morning and put off her other errands to the next day so that the afternoon could be devoted to the welcoming of Mrs. Wyatt. The forceful patter of the rain, like the constant, sober drone of time slipping away, made the wait worse. To keep herself busy, Audrey searched for things to do around the house, but Mrs. Humes, the cleaning woman, had been in only that morning, and Audrey found herself glancing out the front windows every few minutes, strangely agitated with anticipation. The house, a spacious Tudor, was set on a rise, and when it rained hard, the water swirled in wild furrows along the street as it streamed down the hill. Audrey watched these torrents, troubling and calming at the same time, and went on ironing shirts her husband would not wear for weeks. The time of the guest's scheduled arrival came and went. Another hour passed, and then another.

When the bell finally rang, Audrey was not at all favorably disposed toward Mrs. Wyatt. Courtesy demanded restraint, of course, but it must have been this unfavorable disposition, as much as the truth of the matter, that led to the unkindness of Audrey's first thought when she opened the door and saw the old woman standing out on the stoop, the rain sweeping behind her. Mrs. Wyatt's head, seemingly neckless, was set deep in the loop-knit trim of her polyester coat. Her head tilted backward, emphasizing a remarkably long, narrow-lipped line of mouth, thrust forward due to the tilt of the head, with little benefit of chin to bolster it. Mrs. Wyatt croaked a loud greeting, rendered inscrutable by the combined forces of its unnatural volume, its raspy timbre, and the noise of the rain. She opened her mouth, as wide as if it were held in check only by an unbound hinge, so that the top of her head assumed an odd angle perpendicular to her jaw when she spoke. The old woman pulled Audrey out onto the stoop, to embrace her. In the embrace, Mrs. Wyatt smelled of perfume and horehound. Despite the grayness of the day she wore wraparound sungoggles that ran parallel to the long line of mouth below, with rims

along the edges of the goggles to insulate the eyes from any trace of sun. The unwanted intimacy of the embrace caused the sungoggles to press against Audrey's face, biting into her cheek. The unkind thought Audrey had had on seeing Mrs. Wyatt was that she looked like a frog.

Audrey hoped that she would seem less like a frog when she took off her coat. But underneath was a pant suit of much the same ilk. It had short sleeves that showed thin arms wattled with loose skin above the elbows but bony below, down to the spotted webs of the hands. Audrey saw that the woman's eyes, without the sungoggles, were the color of her hair. They suggested a past of disappointed happiness that had somehow failed to quell all hope. With a slight stiff-legged limp, Mrs. Wyatt retrieved from the stoop a small suitcase and a box wrapped in bright, wet gift-paper and festooned with an extravagant pink bow. Though lusterless, Mrs. Wyatt's eyes were brimming in anticipation, Audrey assumed, of the presentation of this gift. Holding the box in both hands, Mrs. Wyatt kicked the door shut behind her, leaving little clumps of mud in her wake.

"You shouldn't have," Audrey said mildly. She glanced at Mrs. Wyatt's rain-slick suitcase in the foyer, dripping on the custom flooring.

"Never you mind," the old woman answered sharply.

Inside the box was a stuffed linen goose, clad in a bonnet and an apron of pink gingham and wearing plastic, gold-painted spectacles poised on the tip of the beak. The goose had about it an air of whimsy and benign indulgence. It was, apparently, Mother Goose. That would have explained the apron, anyway, the bonnet and the spectacles. Its wooden legs were sturdy enough for it to stand on.

"My," said Audrey.

"When I got me the run of the place I'll help think out where to put it," said Mrs. Wyatt. She scanned the room broadly. It was only barely conceivable that she would not be able to see how ill-suited the goose would look there amid the tasteful appointments of the room. But she exclaimed, "What say we try it out right here!" She snatched up the goose and sauntered to a corner of the room where she crouched down to place the goose squarely, and then she turned to beam at Audrey again. "Now isn't that cute?"

Audrey smiled distantly. The horror of the room's new adornment somehow had the pleasing effect of reminding her just how temporary this visit would be. Two days, three at the most. Still, she could not bring herself to thank her visitor for the gift. "Mrs. Wyatt —" she began.

"Trudy!" cried the old woman, slapping the back of Audrey's hand. She repeated urgently: "It's *Trudy*."

Audrey rubbed the back of her hand where the sting of the slap prickled. She glanced at Mrs. Wyatt and saw that the mistiness of the eyes

had turned suddenly severe. What had she meant—*the run of the place?* "I'll have to show you your room and then, I'm afraid, excuse myself," said Audrey. "You see, I expected you much earlier, and I'm afraid I've let things slip."

"Don't think a thing about it," answered her guest. There was a trace of harshness in her voice.

"You'll find a housekey on top of the bureau," Audrey went on, "so you can come and go as you please."

"Don't give it a thought," said Mrs. Wyatt. "If there's one thing life's got me used to it's being left to do on my own."

The next morning the rain had stopped. The sun was considerably brighter than it had reason to be. It shone into Audrey's eyes, waking her. In her discomposure it seemed she'd forgotten to draw the drapes. Awakened, Audrey lay in bed, listening. The night had been rife with discomfiting noise. Every time Audrey had managed to slip into a mild doze, she'd been startled by the sound of her guest, shuffling to the bathroom, slamming the door, performing unimaginable ablutions, and then padding back down the hall. Audrey could hear, all the while, what she thought were the sounds of the woman whispering to herself, a muted, rasping stream of syllables, as she navigated the dark hallway, and every time, she had bumped loudly into one of the side tables along the way. Whatever courtesy was signified in Mrs. Wyatt's refraining from turning on the lights in the hall was belied by her throwing wide the bathroom door, each and every time, before she flushed the toilet. And each and every time, the ruckus of the flush itself was shocking: the initial roar, like a watery detonation, the whoosh, the strident gurgle, the long, sibilant hum as the evacuated tank slowly refilled. By the time Audrey had lost count of the recurrences of this ritual, it was hard to imagine that they were not somehow deliberate.

The hall looked relatively undisturbed considering the traffic of the night just past. The only sign was a ridge of the Persian runner where someone must have tripped on it. This was easy enough to smooth out with a flick of the toe. As Audrey was performing this manipulation, though, she noticed that the tassels at either end of the rug were markedly askew, multidirectional and deranged, rather than neatly combed and uniformly arrayed, as they had certainly been the day before when the cleaning woman left. It was possible that such dishevelment occurred routinely in the natural course of things, though Audrey had not taken note of it before, but she could not escape the suspicion that the fringes had been ruffled on purpose. The door to the guest room, at the end of the hall, remained closed. Bending to smooth the tassels, Audrey trained her ear. The noise that had followed in seemingly unbroken sequence the night before had

abated, and nothing but silence emanated from beyond the door. Mrs. Wyatt struck Audrey as just the kind of woman who would bustle about all night and then sleep the morning away.

Over her coffee, though, by mid-morning, Audrey felt that she could gain a new perspective on the matter. Sipping the tonic French roast and gazing at the stuffed goose still propped in the corner of the room, Audrey reminded herself that Mrs. Wyatt was her mother's friend, after all—though the nature of the friendship could scarcely be guessed at—and that her visit would be brief. In its way the goose was amusing, or at least could be thought so; Audrey would laugh over it, with her mother or her husband, long after Mrs. Wyatt was gone. A history of entertaining bad guests made Audrey aware that such encounters, troubling as they were, could later be turned into stories, comical anecdotes to be related in better company with a humor that would outlast the guests' vulgarity. Besides, Audrey knew Mrs. Wyatt even less than she had known Luddy Sabistone. Why, then, nurse such uncharitable thoughts about her? Audrey was just not used to being alone, and that was surely what accounted for her attitude toward the poor old woman—alone, Audrey thought, all her life—who had come to remember her friend. In a spirit of renewed cordiality, Audrey poured the last of the coffee down the drain, rinsed the carafe, stowed it in the dishwasher, wiped the sparkling countertop, and swept a few stray grains of coffee into the disposal. It was far enough into the morning, nearly noon, that Audrey felt she could decently knock at the bedroom door with a late, last call for breakfast. After she knocked a third time, she felt licensed to enter. But the room was empty.

All this had gotten the day off to a disconcerting start, no question about it, but the afternoon could still be salvaged. Mrs. Wyatt, it turned out, certainly *did* feel at liberty to come and go as she liked. Obviously she'd gone out early leaving Audrey to fret unnecessarily about a wasted morning's hospitality. Now it was time for Audrey to get about her own business. Carefully checking the difference in time zones, she reached Tom's secretary by phone but was told that he was indisposed and would have to call her back. The secretary's voice was sharp, very different from the deferential tones of the receptionist in the home office, mousy Ms. Murchison. This secretary did not even bother to ask when would be a convenient time to call. Audrey telephoned her son's room at the dormitory but his roommate answered, a brusque, ill-mannered boy who never asked if he could take a message. The thought that it had been days since she had spoken to either of the men in her life gave her an unpleasant, slightly queasy feeling.

Driving out Glenwood Boulevard on the way to the mall, Audrey stopped at a light beside the freeway entrance where, day after day for

weeks, a homeless couple had staked out the traffic island, holding up cardboard signs scribbled with messages asking for help and money. The man had a dirty gray beard and stared straight ahead with a sad air of insulted dignity. Beside him, the woman was very animated, waving her arms and moving her lips as if she were bent on furiously explaining something important even though no one was listening. Their breath hung in the cold air. They had to be somewhere, Audrey supposed, but she did not know why it had to be there. She would have thought after all this time someone would tell them to move along. Her radio sputtered with static and she snapped it off. When she looked up, she saw the homeless man gazing at her, and she quickly looked away. Then the light changed.

She had hoped the mall would be just the thing, that the sights and sounds of the holiday would lift her spirits, the crowds buoy her. But the crowds were much denser than she would have liked, and there were nasty, pungent smells hovering in the mall's main corridor that combined with an arid, stagnant heat to make the atmosphere oppressive. Audrey decided to complete her business quickly, and this resolve would ordinarily have been enough to cheer her—with its sense that she was getting things done, that she really was an effective person after all—but she kept losing stride, mistaking the locations of stores, doubling back and retracing steps she'd already taken. Weary, pallid faces floated about her as if on currents of tinny sound. She tried to ignore them and concentrate on her tasks, but she kept imagining, imposed over these faces, the sad stare of the homeless man, or the square, angry face of the woman, or the hard accusatory look of Mrs. Wyatt.

Mrs. Wyatt's car, a worn, late-model Oldsmobile, was parked on the street in front of the house when Audrey got home early that evening. Audrey could hardly bear the thought of having to deal with her again. She felt too nervously exhausted even to carry all her own parcels, so she left them in the trunk of the car. She took a deep breath, bracing herself, and unlatched the back door.

Immediately on entering, Audrey noticed that things were amiss in the kitchen. A section of the countertop was streaked with speckles of something that looked like flour, and there was a red stain, shaped like a crescent, amid the speckles. A kitchen towel lay in a damp, dirty mound on the table. A used tissue lay wadded in the middle of the floor, several feet from the trash receptacle. A dizziness came over Audrey at once. She placed a hand on the countertop, at a distance from the speckles, to keep herself steady. The elements out of place did not exactly constitute a wreckage, she was well aware, but they did suggest a blatant carelessness, maybe even some sort of contempt. But what in the world could this woman possibly have against her? And what business had she in the

kitchen in the first place? Audrey disposed of the tissue, folded the towel, wiped away the flour—or whatever it was—and made a mental note to take a dilution of Clorox to the stain.

Nothing else seemed significantly awry, though fresh clumps of mud on the living room carpet radiated in spoke-like patterns outward from the foyer, and the upstairs runner was in the same state of disarray in which Audrey had found it that morning. There seemed no point in setting it back to rights again as long as her visitor was in the house. Mrs. Humes would certainly have her work cut out for her the next week! Audrey listened at the guest-room door and, hearing nothing, knocked gently. Tired of feeling cowed in her own house, she knocked harder. Still no answer.

Audrey had planned a beef burgundy for dinner, and though she did not feel up to it, she forged ahead as scheduled. The stain on the countertop was almost certainly wine, and as Audrey selected a nice red for the burgundy, she tallied the empty slots in the wine rack, wondering if there was a bottle missing. She was still wondering as she sliced the vegetables when Mrs. Wyatt padded into the room.

"Sorry, dear," said Mrs. Wyatt, restraining a yawn. She was wearing a leopard-skin top and black nylon stretch-pants. "I was having a nap. Didn't mean to give you a start."

"Mrs. Wyatt," said Audrey. She chose a neutral tone that left open the possibility she might have more to say. Should she deny having been startled? It occurred to her that she should certainly raise the issue of the stain on the countertop right away.

Mrs. Wyatt frowned at the chopped vegetables. "I should help out," she said. "I'm used to pulling my own weight."

"Not at all. Please. Dinner will be ready in an hour." Audrey thought of adding that Mrs. Wyatt should make herself at home but decided she needed no further encouragement along those lines. As Mrs. Wyatt withdrew, Audrey sniffed discreetly. She thought there was a whiff of alcohol in the air. Then it occurred to her that it was the wine from the burgundy.

An hour later they settled awkwardly at the table.

"I don't know as I can eat that," Mrs. Wyatt said, squinting down at the platter of food.

"Oh," gasped Audrey. She placed her palms on the tabletop and pushed her chair back, not knowing what to do. "What shall I—?"

Mrs. Wyatt waved her hand. "No, no," she said tersely. "Don't trouble yourself." She scooped three spoonfuls of the burgundy onto her plate and looked down at it with pointed distaste. "I'll make do," she said.

They ate in silence for a moment. Audrey searched her memory to see if she could recall ever having had a ruder guest. She would have thought her mother might at least have mentioned something about it, to prepare

her. She should have put on some music to absorb the silence, she thought, but Mrs. Wyatt, pushing food around her plate with her fork, seemed undisturbed.

"I hope you're enjoying your stay," Audrey said finally. "I can't help feeling I've been neglecting you! But it *is* such a busy time of the year, you know. And this morning, why, you were up and out before I knew what I was about!"

"I went to the viewing." Mrs. Wyatt was methodically chewing her fourth small bite of the burgundy as she spoke, and her tone was gruff.

"The viewing?"

"The funeral home." Mrs. Wyatt shot Audrey an ambiguous glance. "That's what I'm here for," she added, looking back down at her plate.

"Of course," Audrey said. She hoped Mrs. Wyatt would not go on talking about the viewing. It seemed unsuitable dinner conversation. Audrey felt rebuked but thought perhaps there was some justice in it. It *was* what she was there for. Then Audrey thought of something. "Was my mother there?" she asked.

"It brought back lots and lots of old times," said Mrs. Wyatt. "So, so sad—all those long gone times." She put down her fork and leaned back in her chair, fingering the tortoise-shell pendant that hung around her neck. "Did your mother ever tell you about that time we all went out to California?"

Audrey recalled hearing of it. It would have been some time before she was born. She smiled vaguely.

"Oh, that was such a time! The four of us, your mother and Luddy and me and this other girl, Francie. We drove all the ways in a old jalopy and never even gave it a thought, and this was back before there was highways to speak of, too. Back then there was just Route 66 and it went all the way and we just talked and sang and sang and talked and laughed the whole ways. 'Get your kicks on Route 66!' And then when we got there, oh, the palm trees, and the sun everywheres." She clucked her tongue. "And the movie stars, the movie stars! Not like them ones now neither. These was *real* movie stars. William Holden and Lucille Ball and Dorothy McGuire and Elizabeth Taylor and that Jean Arthur, we saw all their homes. Oh, the places they lived. And pizza! That was the very first time any of us ever had pizza because this was back when pizza was just first coming out. Such grand times. Our whole lives in front of us."

Audrey imagined her mother, looking radiant and happy in a sleek convertible in the California sun. The image gave her a pang, not a completely unpleasant one. There was no reason that this thought of her mother's past happiness should trouble her, though she pictured her mother, she realized, as she looked now. To imagine her as she might have

been then, Audrey had to make a conscious effort, recalling the old photos she'd seen, and she could not at all picture Mrs. Wyatt in her youth.

"Now that Francie," Mrs. Wyatt went on musing. "What in the world ever happened to that Francie? She went to a different school from Luddy and me and your mother, but I was the one that knew her and I was the one that brung her along. They didn't mind. It was all for one and one for all in them days. Luddy and your mother and me, we used to call ourselves the Three Musketeers, you know, back then. We didn't need boys. We had each other. Oh, and Francie was just like one of the gang by the time it was all said and done! Then the years went by and your mother got married and Luddy got married and Francie and me, we just went our separate ways. So many years ago. Where is she now I wonder? Funny how things works. So much water under the bridge."

The stain came up easily, as it turned out, and Audrey felt a measure of relief beyond what she would have supposed, or what seemed appropriate. In fact, she felt a tremor at the heart of her, as if she would weep. There was no telling why this woman threw Audrey off balance as she did, but the funeral was the next morning, and tomorrow it would all be over. Audrey thought of calling her mother but it was near eleven, much too late, and she realized anyway that she would have felt awkward being asked about Mrs. Wyatt, or being called on to speak of her. Audrey poured herself a slosh of the wine left over from the burgundy and downed it quickly. Then she rinsed the glass, turned on the night-light, and gave the kitchen a final once-over, satisfied with its condition.

Entering the dining room, Audrey thought she heard a rustling on the stairs. She'd assumed Mrs. Wyatt had gone to bed hours ago, but she understood enough by now already to know that fact alone was no guarantee of peace and quiet. In the very same moment, Audrey noticed that the goose—the gingham-clad goose that Mrs. Wyatt had given her—was gone, missing from its corner. This absence might have come as another relief, if it did not so clearly signal, in its way, yet another oblique reproof. A floorboard creaked upstairs, and what might have been a stealthy footfall sounded. The footfalls, if that is what they were, seemed uneven, and Audrey remembered Mrs. Wyatt's limp. Was it really possible that the old woman was up and about again, secretly, roving the house in the middle of the night, snatching up her silly gifts and leaving wicked little messes in every nook and cranny? Audrey listened and realized with a slow, nauseous perception that if the sounds of the footfalls above were to be trusted, then Mrs. Wyatt was, at that moment, in Audrey's bedroom.

In her room! Audrey caught her breath and placed a hand over her mouth. The thought of Mrs. Wyatt in her *room*—creeping around her

private spaces, turning a cold gaze on Audrey's most cherished possessions, rifling through her things. In search of what, and for what unintelligible reason? It was too much to think of. Audrey listened, barely able to distinguish the beating of her heart from whatever telltale sounds came from upstairs. Then another floorboard creaked—proof positive—and in a flash, Audrey bolted across the room and hurried up the stairs. In a flash: but Audrey's sudden advance still caused enough preliminary commotion to alert Mrs. Wyatt to her approach and allow plenty of time for a lithe retreat. That was what must have happened, why she wasn't there—though the bedroom door that Audrey thought she had secured so carefully was now ajar—and Audrey was sure she had heard, just as she reached the top of the stairs, the surreptitious click of the door to the guest room being drawn to. The click, the sound of footsteps, the open door: the intrusion was nearly undeniable, and it could certainly not be tolerated. Whatever fear Audrey might have felt crystallized into indignation. She stood her ground outside the guest room.

"Mrs. Wyatt," she called sternly through the door.

There was no reply, but an expectant hostility hung in the air, and then Audrey heard, distinctly, a sharp, dry cough, or perhaps it was an under-the-breath cackle. It was, in any case, a clear stirring—an expression of the intruder's waking presence just beyond the door, to let Audrey know that she did not answer because she chose not to. There were, it seemed, no limits to the woman's nerve, and there was no point in persevering, unless Audrey were willing without compunction to throw wide the door and stride into the room, face to face with the trespasser.

Her earrings, an expensive pair she'd set aside specially, were gone. In her bedroom Audrey turned on the overhead light, one she rarely used, preferring the dimmer light of the lamps in the corners or on the nightstands. But now she needed a harsh light that forgave or concealed nothing, and she saw at once, in this wash of light, the empty space on the bureau in the dressing cove where, no less than two weeks before, she was certain she had placed these earrings in the bower of a silken paisley kerchief. Now the kerchief was oddly rumpled and held nothing. Just to be sure, she unlocked the jewel box and searched it. The earrings—a prized pair of diamond-studs—were not there. There could be, then, no doubt of it. Her houseguest, the nondescript Mrs. Wyatt, the old woman lurking behind a door down the hall, her mother's lifelong friend, was little more than a common thief.

The telephone woke Audrey from fitful sleep early the next morning. It was Tom, with his endearing knack for always calling at just the wrong time. Of course she was glad to hear his voice, and they talked as cheerfully as Audrey could manage. Then she told him she had to get ready

for Luddy Sabistone's funeral, but she did not mention Mrs. Wyatt. It seemed too complicated, too unresolved and too—somehow—private. He didn't mention her either; had Audrey told him she was coming? She couldn't recall. He was usually so attuned to what was happening in Audrey's life, even during his times away—especially then, it sometimes seemed. He expressed awkward sympathy about Luddy. Audrey hoped she did not seem to be rushing him off the phone. She felt his absence deeply, and she would tell him so later. She assured him that everything was fine.

Audrey showered and dressed for the funeral quickly and was downstairs before Mrs. Wyatt. She would confront her at once, and she would not back down. Of course Mrs. Wyatt dilly-dallied, shambling about upstairs, perhaps knowing what was in store for her. By the time she came down Audrey was positively at her wit's end.

"Who *was* that on the phone so early?" Mrs. Wyatt brayed even before she had reached the bottom of the stairs, loping down sideways to spare her bad leg.

The insolence! Audrey wrung her hands. The woman's gambit was transparent—to put Audrey on the defensive. It could not be countenanced. The thing to do was to ignore the question or challenge Mrs. Wyatt's right to ask it. Either tack would have been perfectly justified. Audrey was too well-mannered for her own good. "It was my husband calling, from overseas," said Audrey, flushing mildly. "I tell him and tell him not to call so early but you know how people are."

"Don't I ever," answered Mrs. Wyatt. "There's some it goes in one ear and out the other." She was wearing a big black hat. A little swatch of tattered-seeming veil hung down from the wide brim over her forehead, and two big black flaps on the sides covered her ears. Was it possible that she was wearing the earrings, even now, under the flaps? Audrey had a moment's thought of lunging at her and pulling the ridiculous hat off her head. "There's some you can't tell a thing no matter what," Mrs. Wyatt went on. "Overseas, was it? Well. But still, it's not so bad to be woke up at the crack of dawn on a day like today. It needs time to cotton to a day like this, such a sad, sad day. I don't feel myself at all. How about you, dear?"

"Yes, the day is very sad." Audrey crossed the room with some deliberation and stood between a Stiffel floor lamp and a large sandstone jug with three tall peacock feathers rising out of it. This was where the goose had stood, and Audrey could see from the look on Mrs. Wyatt's face that this significance was not lost on her. Mrs. Wyatt opened her cumbersome handbag and started rooting around inside it. "I'd like to have a word with you, Mrs. Wyatt," said Audrey, "if you would."

"Of course, dear," said Mrs. Wyatt. She pulled the wraparound glasses out of the bag. "It'll have to wait, though. I'm afraid I'm already a little

behind my time." She put on the sungoggles and looked at Audrey bluntly, her jaw set: the thick black line of the glasses and, below, the long hard parallel line of the mouth, a clear defiance.

Audrey persisted. "I've noticed things missing, Mrs. Wyatt."

"Missing?" Audrey could barely see the woman's eyes gazing steadily at her from behind the dark glasses. "Well, dear, *I* can't keep track of every little thing myself. I wouldn't fret about it so if I was you."

"That's not exactly it. What I should have said is—*taken*. Things have been *taken*, Mrs. Wyatt. I think you know what I mean."

With her slight stiff-legged limp, Mrs. Wyatt approached Audrey. Audrey's hands were folded in front of her, tensed, and Mrs. Wyatt placed her own hand on Audrey's. Her hand felt soft and warm. "Yes, Audrey, I do," Mrs. Wyatt said with a sigh. "But I'll tell you what. I took it back because I saw you didn't like it any, and I didn't like to embarrass you bringing it up. I could see it wasn't right neither, but what with this and that I'm a little bit out of my element, don't you know! I like them cute little gee-gaws and you don't and that is all there is to that. You go for these classier knickknacks. But I wanted to give you *some*thing for all your help and kindness and all, and I wanted it to be right, and it will, just you wait and see. I took it back because I thought it was the best thing but I can see it's got you upset. Well, we'll talk about it later, dear." She patted Audrey's hand. Then she turned and went out.

Upstairs, Audrey entered the guest room for the first time since Mrs. Wyatt had descended on the house. She was not surprised to find the room transformed, by no means for the better. The bed was tumultuously unmade, with black underthings scattered across the blankets like shed skins that had shriveled over time. Mrs. Wyatt's suitcase was open on the floor beside the bed, her clothes spread carelessly around it. The goose lay on its side next to the suitcase. Toiletries cluttered the tabletops, dime-store bottles standing in colored puddles of their own spilled contents, uncapped tubes exuding dribbles of wormlike gels or slimy resins. A terrible reek hung over everything. For a minute Audrey had almost let herself be fooled, but the state of the room was clear and final evidence of a disturbed mind. She searched the room quickly but thoroughly—she even checked the little pockets in the apron of the goose—but the earrings were nowhere to be found.

On top of everything else, Audrey got lost on the way to the funeral home, even though it was the same place as the last time. When she finally arrived there, she slipped quietly into the back of the hall, thinking the service would be underway. The room was crowded. Audrey had never imagined there could be so many people who cared about Luddy

Sabistone. She scanned the room in search of familiar faces. All that was familiar was the sadness in the expressions of the mourners and the hushed murmur that gave it voice. Across the room Audrey saw a couple that might have been the Pratts—it had been years since she'd seen them—but when she waved they averted their eyes. The service had not begun. People were starting to take their seats, but the rows of chairs were still mostly empty. Abandoned coats lay across the chairs with scattered missals here and there. On one of the chairs Audrey saw, with a start, Mrs. Wyatt's hat, that preposterous hat she'd worn to cover up her ears. Audrey pushed through the rows to get to it, and she snatched it up and clutched it to her. Now, she thought, now, if only she could find her, and see her without the hat, then she would be able to know for sure.

She craned her neck, trying to see above the bowed heads of the mourners. Near the casket stood a group of elderly women. Their disposition was such that they all seemed, somehow, as one, and Audrey could not make out any one of them plainly. They were moving oddly in unison, congregants, circling one another in a bright streak of light. Where was it coming from, this light, and what were they up to? Their heads bobbing, their bodies weaving, they appeared to be chanting with a secret knowledge. Nobody else paid any attention to them, as if their machinations were ordinary. Audrey gazed at them as they turned and turned, cheek by jowl, interchangeably—a mysterious dance, a ritual, or something like a child's game—widening and tapering in their convolutions but never breaking the strict circle in which they were embraced. Was their advent in grief or in joy? And why didn't someone stop them? Clutching the hat, Audrey squinted through the shaft of light that seemed now to encompass her as well, bending her gaze to the circle of women, trying to see through all the other people around her who went on as though nothing were happening. And she did see. Narrowing her vision through a force of will into an intensity of sight, she saw in succession all the blemishes of age, the dimmed eyes and sapped energies, the porous, veiny noses, the erupted skins, the calcified ointments, the weakened chins, the reddish cysts and raw-boned coruscations. She saw it all as if through a lens that pitilessly focused one horrible detail after another, as if in an oval of light. Yet they went on, went on in their heedless churnings; and then, into the oval of light, it came—what she was looking for, glinting amid the ferment, dangling from a withered earlobe.

For an instant Audrey felt a charge of triumph. The earrings were there, they were there, just as she had imagined, and she was justified. But in the next instant the scope of her vision enlarged, and the face that came into view was not at all the one she expected, disfigured with malice and envy. It was the face of her mother, gentle, and lovely, smiling at Audrey sadly,

with some of the recognition she had hoped for. And Audrey remembered, at once, why she had put aside the earrings. It was because her mother had asked to borrow them. How could she have forgotten?

Her mother came to her through the crowd of mourners. "Audrey," she said. "Are you all right?"

"I'm fine," said Audrey. "Of course I'm fine."

"Trudy said you weren't well. And then when you were late, well, we worried."

"No," said Audrey. "No." But she did not know herself what she was denying. *Not well*: what could Mrs. Wyatt have meant? More people were taking their seats, and beyond her mother, in the group of women standing still together near the front of the room, Audrey glimpsed Mrs. Wyatt, her face streaked with tears, stricken with a sadness that was, she now saw, real and proven and pure. Their eyes met, and Audrey saw something of herself, in a shock of perception, reflected in the woman's look—a sorrow and a hunger. She clutched Mrs. Wyatt's hat closer to her, as if it could keep her moored. Mrs. Wyatt's look showed a force of conviction that left Audrey aside. It hinted at the way a woman was missed who had been known for herself; but that was what they all were there for. They were there in honor of a woman who had died, a woman they had loved, and when Audrey too began to cry, just as she had at that first funeral, she knew once again that she had less right to her grief than any of the rest of them. Her mother, standing before her, murmured her name, in comfort, and moved toward her. Audrey was crying for Luddy. She was; but also for the sad old woman across the room, who was now turning away from her; and for her mother, and all the others of the circle, the mothers and wives she did not know, all nearing death, all so alone; and for something hidden in herself that, it seemed, would soon be revealed to her—and she could not say what, then, would remain of her happiness. But that was still to come. For now, her own mother was taking her into her arms, holding her—the old woman's hat pressed between them—and telling her that everything would be all right.

WENDY MNOOKIN

Wimbledon

It's the middle of the night, so I work the ringing of the phone into my dream. In the dream, the phone does not yet announce anything specific, but there are hints, and they're all good—light through a window, the smell of something sugary—so I'm not in any hurry to wake myself. When the phone keeps ringing, whatever is baking in the oven begins to burn. As I struggle awake I'm more annoyed than frightened, which shows the hold of dreams. In life I'd be good and scared. I look over at the clock. Who calls at two in the morning?

My mother. To tell me my father is in the hospital, he's dying, there are holes in his liver (did she say holes? can people get holes in their liver?) and what should she do, oh what should she do.

She should go home and try to get some sleep, and I should get on the first morning plane. Which means finding someone to watch the kids. Which means calling my mother-in-law halfway across the country.

My husband stays with the kids till noon the next day, when my mother-in-law arrives. By then I'm gone. That's the way I have to do things that involve leaving: fast, without thinking too much. Think too long about leaving my son, who's six, and my daughter, nine months old, and I'd be phoning in my support to my parents. Better to leave without saying good-bye.

Better for me.

For them? The only story I hear when I return, a week later—and I hear this one over and over—is about the drive to the store. With the baby buckled into her car seat, my son gives his grandmother directions to the market—she couldn't have asked my husband? she had to ask a six-year-old?—and when he says, "Turn left!" she does, responding no doubt to the urgency in his voice, the seriousness with which he took his assignment.

Unfortunately, she turns into a field.

He says, "I meant, turn left at the *road*."

None of us was feeling very safe.

My days take on a routine. First thing, I go to the high school track and jog a few times around. When I attended high school, I never used the track. I never did anything remotely involved with a sport, unless you count trying out for the cheerleading team, which I didn't make. So being back there, on the track, seems like progress. Even if I am running in circles.

I think about my kids, what they're doing right now. I miss my husband for a while. I calculate the minutes until I arrive at Café Coffee for my first hot startling jolt of caffeine. And I find myself crying, *Don't die, don't die*. I wasn't planning on another child, but, expert that I am on new ways to torture myself, I wonder, if I get pregnant as soon as I return home, will my father live long enough to see his new grandchild?

After Café Coffee, I sit with my father in his hospital room. My mother works, and everyone has encouraged her to stay with it, to keep some structure in her life, so it's pretty much me, and the occasional friend. Most of my father's friends have reached the age where hospitals remind them of where they're going to end up. His being there reminds them it could be soon. They don't stay long.

Mostly this is OK. My father is not in pain, just very tired. And thin. The skin covering his body hardly has a job to do. It lies in wrinkled folds, confused. Are there really holes in his liver? If there are, what does that mean?

When a doctor is in the room being reassuring, I'm terrified. Why is the doctor so kind and comforting? Why does he place his hand so solicitously on my father's arm and talk in tones usually reserved for a small child? Why, unless my father is dying?

It's better when it's just the two of us. I read to him for a while, from whatever newspaper or magazine I've picked up downstairs. He falls asleep and wakes up an hour later and knows exactly where we left off.

"You already read about the capability of cruise missiles," he says. I did? I can hardly say *capability*. Isn't he the one who's supposed to be groggy? *Capability* has too many syllables for July, in a hospital, where everything is pale green or metal and the many beeping machines sound like they're on the verge of panic.

"Can cruise missiles replace the B-1 or not, that's where we were."

You know what, I don't care. I do care about Charlotte Grosse, abducted from Girl Scout Camp in Sarasota, Florida, but I care so much I can't read about her. Surely her parents thought their daughter was safe in camp. In Girl Scout Camp, for god's sake. I want to call my mother-in-law and make sure she knows where my kids are, every minute. She shouldn't be lulled by flowers in the garden. By sun.

I switch to weather, but neither of us is interested in the drought in Los Angeles, where we've never been, and people shouldn't live there anyway,

or at least not in the desert, which keeps burning, or on those cliffs, which keep falling into the ocean.

We settle on Wimbledon. The Englishwoman, Virginia Wade, beat the American, Chris Evert, by a score of 6-2, 4-6, 6-1 in the women's semi-finals. My father enjoys the story of the match. This surprises me. Wouldn't he root for the American? And he's always been so admiring of Evert's icy determination. "See," he'd point out when we watched a match together. "She doesn't give up when she's winning. She doesn't worry about making her opponent feel bad."

As opposed to me.

My father's efforts to teach me tennis had stumbled not only on my basic lack of athletic ability, but on my character. I suppose to boost my spirits, he'd let me win a few games, and then, a few volleys away from winning a match, I'd start thinking about how he was going to feel if I won. I'd miss an easy return or double-fault on my serve, and soon enough, I had lost. There. Now he didn't need to feel bad.

Of course he was furious.

Why couldn't he have been supportive? Or at least understanding? So I didn't have a drive to win. My ability to empathize, to understand the other person's point of view, must have been good for something. Whatever that was, maybe I could have done that, instead of tennis.

Now my father has discarded his once-beloved Evert, and her will to win, at least for the moment. It turns out that today, in this hospital bed, he's feeling about twice as old as he is. Today, age trumps everything else. And Wade is more than ten years older than Evert.

"Good for her," my father says, as if she has finally listened to him, while I have not. "Good for her."

At night, I sleep in my father's bed, next to my mother. After a day of work and an evening visit with my father—"they do know how to make Jell-O in a hospital, don't they?"— she doesn't seem tired at all.

"He has cancer," she says.

I, on the other hand, am very tired after my day of doing nothing. Almost nothing, if you count my run. "We don't know that," I say, staring resolutely at the ceiling.

"Oh, we do, we do. And cancer of the liver, well. . . ." She is brushing the cat, who is strangely calm. Usually he won't let anyone brush him, but now he sits quietly, allowing his fur to be roused into waves of static electricity.

"Mom, the doctors don't know. Let's not make it worse than it is."

But she is sure. She is sure because, in truth, the doctors have said that cancer is the most likely diagnosis. And because she knows that if things can get worse, they will.

She talks about what they have done together. Trips they have taken. The time they rented a hotel room on their anniversary and ordered, for dinner, champagne and a chocolate cake. Recalcitrant adolescent that I always am in this home, I find myself wanting to argue even with this, her own memories. At least now I know enough to argue silently. But it takes a toll, this self control. I hear myself say, "You've been married a long time." Implying what, that it's been long enough?

She stares at me and stops brushing the cat. He nudges her hand with his head, more, more.

On the sixth day of my visit my father is diagnosed with a flare-up of an Army illness aggravated by hepatitis he had decades ago. There are new drugs: he will recover. I will spend another day and go home.

My mind no longer manages a vigilant restraint over my feelings. Now that the news is good, I am soft and weepy. I radiate a hazy aura of goodwill that suffuses everything around me—the tender red light on the breathing machine, the sturdy plastic dome over the tuna sandwich. I'm impressed by the curtain that so cleverly wraps around my father's bed. When the nurse with plastic clogs gives a cheerful "Hello" and whips around the room with her usual grating efficiency, I am generous—effortlessly generous. Isn't she trying? Aren't we all? I find myself smiling at the attendant in the hospital's information kiosk. So what if he's stingy with guest passes, he has a job to do, yes? The waitress at Café Coffee, her hair pulled back in a net, perspiration in a light film across her forehead, receives a bountiful tip. I love the orderly who removes the lunch tray, the woman with the book cart. Life can change in an instant, and in this instant it has handed me a reprieve, a sunset, the first warm spring day. Every cliché I can think of is suddenly real and true. I love my father, with his demands, and my mother, with her fears. I love my children, even their neediness. Especially their neediness. I love my husband. I love the friend who calls each night to run down my day. I love my boyfriend from fifth grade who let me run his model train set. I love the man I was seeing when I met my husband. Life is short, you can get holes in your liver at any time, I must call him. I must call this man and tell him that at one time he was important to me. As I stand here loving the dust motes shining heavily in the sunlight from the streaked lobby window, I need to tell him that our love counts for something.

I have a moment of doubt when his secretary asks, in an officious tone, who's calling, but it's not, after all, a trick question. When he picks up the phone, I'm breathless with all I have to say—about my father's illness, and the brevity of everything, and how I feel it so clearly now, how everyone we've ever loved stays part of the fabric of our lives, connected, vital—

He interrupts. "Is everything OK in your marriage?" he asks.
"What?" I say.
"Is everything OK in your marriage?"

On the way back to my father's room, I pick up a newspaper. My father will be pleased to know that Wade has now won the finals, beating Betty Stove 4-6, 6-3, 6-1. After I read the article to him, I will call home. My husband will ask how we're doing, how I'm doing. My son will tell me he's fine, and report the day's mishaps. I will say into the receiver, held to my daughter's ear, "Soon, sweetie, soon," and listen to her chortle. My mother will come to the hospital and exclaim over the Jell-O with even more enthusiasm than usual. I will sleep next to her, and I will not say anything to suggest I am nicer, or kinder, or smarter than she is. I will try. Although dusk has arrived, pulling with it the last natural light, leaving harsh shadows cast by the fluorescent tubing, it is, after all, the Wimbledon centenary and the Queen's jubilee year. And my father will live to see it.

To present the trophy, Queen Elizabeth wore a pink dress and coat, a matching hat, and white gloves. The crowd broke into spontaneous cheer, singing "For she's a jolly good fellow." For Wade or the Queen, it doesn't matter. I report it, and my father grins and clutches his hands above his head in a sign of victory.

NATALIE HARRIS

The Pursuit of Pregnancy

The Specialist

The Specialist is drawn to infertility. Other problems of the endocrine system fascinate him, too, but his bread and butter, his meat and potatoes, his Chardonnay and Ferrari are malfunctioning luteinizing hormones and follicle-stimulating hormones and temporary ovarian failures due to screw-ups in some sex gland or other. He is grateful for these screw-ups. They bring many screwed-up females to his office. His favorites are the slim and attractive ones in their late twenties and early thirties. They don't eat much, these slim and attractive women looking for their fertility, and the Specialist chides them gently for this. You really should put on twenty pounds, he says, smiling apologetically. They gasp, their mouths flying open. Then they press their lips shut tight, like terrified children harboring toothaches at the dentist's. He sympathizes. Even ten would help. No body fat, no babies. But privately he hopes they don't add a single ounce to their 95% fat-free bodies. Their gauntness pleases him. He tells his favored ones they're great just as they are. They are in a temporary dry spell is all, things will likely kick in on their own, just check in with me again in a few months. Why, my wife stopped ovulating for twelve years, then at forty, she started up again just like that. He opens his palms to the sky, positioned to catch more of heaven's miracles, should they drop down to him. But isn't that late to start having babies? they ask. Oh, we didn't want children. He thinks of his wife at forty, running lined fingers through silver strands in her hair, saying now or never, honey. He changed the kitty litter box, then took a ride on his horse. He smiles and tells his patients they had cats and horses instead. They're separated now.

Geri: The Specialist's Patient

Other doctors call them "johnnys." But not Geri's Specialist. Just slip into a gown, Geri, and I'll be right in. His voice is silky, with a hint of the South in it—maybe Virginia—someplace where people are gracious, move slowly. It feels as if he's offering her a black negligee from Victoria's Secret

instead of a blue and white cotton hospital johnny made to accommodate women huge as circus elephants.

Geri's Specialist is trim and well-tended, little flecks of gray just starting to dust his light brown hair and mustache (he's 45; his wife, he's told Geri, is five years older). At first, he placed his hand on her shoulder at the end of her appointment, a paternal gesture, sweet. When they got better acquainted, he gave her a quick hug before she left. Now, whenever Geri enters his inner office, tucked between the waiting room and examining room, he greets her with smiling hazel eyes and a warm embrace. It lets her know how friendly they've become, how much affection he feels. She craves it, his affection, like Butterfingers bars. He draws her close to him, then the two of them wrap their arms around each other. She's thin enough that his wrap way around. For a few moments, they disappear into each other. When they uncoil, he looks so grateful to see her she wonders if she should come more often, just to give him a lift. Maybe she could get a discount on those extra days. She glimpses, occasionally and briefly, the depressed and lonely man who lurks just beneath his elegant silk suits—the one who's holding the depressed and lonely woman skulking behind Geri's short, snappy dresses.

In the examining room her Specialist covers his dark Christian Dior shirt with a white cotton doctor's jacket, transforming himself into a figure whose mission is to minister to the needs of women, to her. Having slinked into the massive, shapeless piece of cloth he's given her, Geri ascends the examining table. Polite and respectful, he seems one of those rare doctors who doesn't simply service body parts. Geri feels like she's on a pedestal. Why, one day he seemed ready to kiss her feet. She told him her feet were always cold—her husband complains about it frequently in bed. The Specialist looked deeply into her eyes and nodded knowingly. Raynaud's Phenomenon. Then he gave each foot a turn in his hands, cradling and stroking and blowing on each of them with breath warm and fruity with wine from lunch. Puzzling to her, these unexpected gestures of attention and fondness, pleasing all the same. Tell your husband to do this, he said; it's a pleasure and a privilege. Yeah, right, I'll tell him, she said, but, of course, she didn't, though she doesn't forget, a pleasure and a privilege.

Geri's Husband Runs

Murray is panting and sweating profusely from one of his eight-milers, his glasses fogged. When he's logging his times and plotting his workout schedule, he's not apt to notice whether Geri's around or not, but she's taped a note to the fridge. At the doctor's. See you later. Murray thinks it's odd to go to a fertility specialist for three years without something happening. Don't they do anything? he asks her repeatedly. This laissez-

faire approach escapes him. Nature works in her own mysterious ways, Geri tells him. I'm not interested in mysteries, Murray says. I'm interested in results. He's desperate for children. He loves them. He teaches them (fourth grade). He's one of them. When he joins in their tetherball games at recess, they're elated. When he misplaces his pencil or his pad of hallway passes, they giggle, charmed. When he makes a rule-breaker stay after school, he is looked up to for maintaining his clear and simple behavior code. First infraction, a warning. Second, stay after school. Clear slate the next day. No child, to Murray, is irredeemable, no wrongdoing such that the perpetrator can't be understood and given a fresh start.

His devotion to children is clear. It comes naturally. Whereas his devotion to Geri these days is work. She's in another world and he doesn't know the way there. There seems to be less and less of her available, in more ways than one. Have you lost weight? he asks, scowling at her skinny legs. Maybe your eyes have gotten narrower, she suggests. He's not amused. Murray complains that he's married to a realtor who runs all over the place finding houses for other people to buy while the two of them keep renting. Geri says her aim is to pare herself down, down, down to her barest essence, and taking on a house isn't part of the barest essence plan. Plus, she says they don't know their needs yet. Meaning children—two? one? none? Geri's free-floating approach to life worries him. He sees it as a character flaw, flakiness, and a lack of commitment, to him. He wants to SETTLE DOWN. He bends over to unlace his Pumas. His toes are jammed in so tight he can't even wiggle them. They've gone numb. He yanks at the shoes, peels off his socks, and massages each toe until feeling returns.

What Does Geri Want?

Geri likes taking people through houses and helping them visualize the lives they might lead in them. A tiny den she sees as a place that would welcome a peach plush rug, a love seat on which a couple might comfortably snuggle with long, meaty novels selected from the built-in bookshelves, a shared blanket thrown over their feet on a chilly winter evening. In a large modern kitchen with both an island and a peninsula, she tells her clients they are in a tropical paradise. This works best when the seller has placed a full bowl of fruit on each land mass. Sometimes she steals bits of food from the places she shows—a banana from the fruit bowl, a stray bit of chocolate left on a TV table. Usually she throws it away later. In a house with a pink-blanketed crib, fish mobile dangling above it, Geri imagines the little occupant who's been whisked away so the house can be viewed without baby cries, smells, or messes. She smiles at the bald little bundle pictured on the stranger's mantelpiece. But back at home, when Murray says, What do you want? a baby's not the first thing. She

wants Murray to stop scrutinizing her and start seeing her. And not simply as an egg that's had its center blown out for decorative painting. Her next doctor's appointment—that's something she wants, too. Her Specialist's welcoming arms, approving smile, soothing voice, knowing touch. The examining room is a place she can see herself fitting into. Murray says she should definitely ask him this time what we should do. So she tells him: he says you should hold my feet and warm them. Murray's eyes widen. And that will make you pregnant? It's a new approach, she says, holding and warming. God knows what might come of it.

All of Geri's Mother's Friends

All of Geri's mother's friends, of course, are grandmas now. Geri's mother has told her about her friend, Edith, whose daughter, Betty, has just had a new daughter, Joy. Geri's mother shows up at the door, holding Joy in her arms, Edith at her side. We're baby-sitting for a while today, Geri's mother says, angling the baby so Geri can see its little scrunched up face. Geri bends close enough to take in the seductive new baby smells. That's what a baby is—Geri's mother tells Edith for Geri's benefit—joy. Want to hold her, Geri? You don't have to throw your bundle of joy in my face, Mom. It's not like I'm not trying to get pregnant. Of course, of course, Geri's mother says, handing the baby oh so carefully over to Geri, who offers the cradle of her arms. A lightweight, Geri exclaims approvingly. She plants a quick little kiss on the baby's forehead. Geri walks to the window with the baby, conjuring up the gentle touch of the Specialist's hands on her belly and the soft tones of his voice, which float in her memory over the grating sounds of these probing women. I have a good doctor, Geri says. She peeks beneath the blanket at the baby's tiny toes, all there, ten pink little piggies. Well, we'll see, her mother says. By the way, have you put on any weight? Geri doesn't answer, but she can almost imagine it, her flat stomach filling.

The Next Appointment

Geri is in the Specialist's office, they've chatted, and it's just about time to glide into the examining room and slip into her gown. The phone rings. Not right now, he says, his voice even softer than usual. I've got some work to take care of. She, presumably, is the work. He stands behind his desk lightly tapping a pencil as his nostrils begin, occasionally but noticeably, to twitch. He's cornered, this elegant, twitching man. He'd vamoose but the phone seems glued to his ear so the best he can do is shift around on his feet, trying to get unstuck wherever he can. Geri, no dummy, can tell it's a woman. Talk to you later, he half-whispers into the receiver, then hangs up so smoothly and silently Geri can almost convince herself he'd never been talking at all. But even when he fixes his gaze on her, his look so intent she

can imagine she's the only one he wishes to see, even then, in the back of her mind, she asks, *Who was on the other end? Where will they be talking later? Will it be talking or what? How late?* It isn't any business of hers, of course. She is his patient, his married patient; he is her attentive and sympathetic doctor, her handsome doctor, whose words go down like Cointreau, whose touch is silk.

Who Was on the Other End

She's younger than Geri. Skinnier. Not married. A patient. She calls the Specialist frequently at work to keep him from work. She knows what shenanigans he might be up to in that little examining room of his. Sometimes she stops by during her lunch hour to say *hi* and to survey the waiting room. It's exhausting to do this. But eating up her lunch hour helps her avoid eating lunch. By the time she's ridden the subway to the hospital and back, it's time for work. Another meal avoided. Later, when they meet at the bar, he'll have an extremely dry martini and urge her, his shiny, well-filed fingernails touching her bony wrist, to have a little something to eat. She'll tell him she had a positively enormous lunch, humungus, in fact, holding a hand against her concave tummy to emphasize how stuffed she is. His eyes will twinkle. The Specialist is special. He knows her secret and smiles it away. He's so sweet when he drinks. Nothing ruffles him.

He Doesn't Know What to Do

He likes these women and all. They're such fragile, lost souls. But he doesn't know what to do with them. The collection overwhelms the collector. Sometimes they're comforting to have around. Like his kitties. Easier to maintain than his horses. But they make it tough on him. Jean appearing at the hospital and rushing up to him when he opens the door to the waiting room, no matter who's there. Calling his private emergency number in the middle of appointments. Still, she cooks such great meals, all for him. He coaxes her to enjoy the lovely things she makes—veal piccata with buttered noodles, salmon with dill sauce and parsleyed new potatoes. But she takes two bites and pushes her plate away, saying she's full from tasting while cooking. She never passes up dessert, though, like a child. They're all like children. He smiles dreamily as he finishes his martini. They look up to him. Doctor knows best. He is a creative hybrid, a doctor-father-lover, though he really prefers to avoid sex. It's not what he's best at. The more he drinks, which he's very good at, the less his thermostat rises. That's why he and his patients get along so well. Most of their sex drives are on the fritz. But they're still exploding with need, need, need. And who do they look to? Their Specialist. I was born to be in a helping profession, he muses. A great specialty—lean women in need.

The Specialist's Wife Was One of Them

Until she couldn't stand the person she'd become. Shrill, demanding, jealous. She got thinner and thinner, trying to rid herself of the person she didn't like. But hunger and fatigue made her all the grumpier. It was a losing game. The real problem, she came to see, was her loser of a husband, who treated her as if she were a crabby child. This treatment galled her, she his senior. The less time she spent around him, the more empowered she became to ask important questions, like why let her life be ruined by a person she didn't even much like anymore? So she gave up the cats, took one of the horses, and left. All behind her now, she sighs. Almost fifty. Free! Yippee! For what? Having eaten too many sour grapes, her teeth are on edge.

Back in the Examining Room

Geri perches on the table, awaiting his entrance. He never intrudes with a knock, nor does he drag a nurse along to crowd the room. He enters alone, moving almost imperceptibly to the head of the examining table, where he reaches for her hands, clasps them in his and seems to be examining her fingers. He looks at them closely, thoughtfully. They're cold, he says. Raynaud's, she reminds him. Then he sidles up to the other end of the table and grasps her feet. So, Geri, no changes since last time? His voice is a mesmerizing hum, making an eternity of infertility seem highly desirable. No—just that I'm three months older, she says. Ah, don't worry about that. You look great. You might think about putting on a few pounds if you really want to get pregnant, but that's up to you. We know Murray's sperm count is okay, nothing to rave about, but okay. We've tried the Clomid. So we could go the aggressive route with dynamite drugs, but I know you don't want to end up with a litter. A what? she asks. Really, you've got plenty of time, he says, responding to the horror on her face. She'll be thirty-five next month. When Murray's not saying it, she's thinking it—they don't have forever. And when Murray's not bursting with it, there's space for her to feel it—desire for a child. But desire is a slippery surface angling in various directions, and much of the time she finds herself simply and aimlessly sliding. Maybe this is all in my head, Geri says haltingly, worried that her Specialist will agree. Maybe I should see a shrink. Do you really want to go mucking around in the past? he asks, squinting. Geri thinks about muck—her suffocating mother, cold father, disgustingly successful brother, husband obsessed with having a house and child, her own mania to be thin—and shakes her head. You need to accept yourself, Geri, he says, squeezing her hand, just as you are. It doesn't occur to her, not then, that she wouldn't be there if she were a-okay just as she was. What would she need four trips a year to the Specialist for? How could she justify them?

Four Trips a Year to the Specialist?

Why, Murray wonders, does she need four trips a year to the Specialist? He's tried to be patient with her. And to take an active approach to the situation even though his sperm, thank goodness, isn't the problem. He saw them when he was tested, cute little buggers, swimming their brains out. He's religiously avoided hot tubs. But Geri won't budge. It galls him when she picks at her food, it feels like she's starving their baby. He nudges her lightly with his elbow whenever a young couple passes by with children, hoping to show her all they could have if only, if only, if only, she would *do* something or other. She doesn't want fertility treatments. Not yet, she says, the stuff is too strong. When, then? Murray asks. If not now, when? If we don't act for ourselves, then who will act for us? This doctor is making a bundle doing nothing for you, Murray tells Geri. He's monitoring my condition, she says. We can monitor your condition, Murray says. You know how good I was at charting your temperature curves and marking our prime times on the calendar. I have no problem monitoring your condition. The trick is to do something about it. Why don't you do something about your own condition? Geri snarls. Murray wishes he could. His condition, he hates to admit it, is depression. All that wards it off are physical activity and the kids at school. He feels as if all his dreams are slipping away. The children they'd looked forward to when they got married. The house he'd been so eager to hunt for with Geri. She used to love taking him around looking, just for fun. And she'd make the funniest cracks about the stuff people had in their houses—plaster birds, thousands of toy soldiers (a couple without children), bowls filled with wax grapes, vases of metal flowers, couches that never got released from their fitted plastic covers. Geri always loved to laugh. Where has her sense of humor gone? Why can't she relax a little? If she'd only relax a little, goddamnit, she might be able to get pregnant. He keeps telling her: RELAX!!!

Time for a Drink

You just need to relax, the Specialist says. Have you got time for a drink? She's his last patient of the day. The prize slot. Sure, I've got all the time in the world. I'm only 35, she says. He laughs. Ha-ha-ha. Geri is his funny one. Jean is always so serious. Jean's heavy heart is weighing him down. His spirit seeks lightness, the lighter the better, and Geri's humor gives him a lift. Higher and higher, she's liftin' him higher and higher. Her short, crisp haircut, her narrow hips and long slim legs, her bright eyes, always alert. She reminds him of how his wife used to be, before she got so bitter. It wasn't all his fault they didn't have children. She could have pushed harder, but she just gave up and rode her horse all the time. He used to feel for his wife when she was simply unhappy, before she stiffened into

grievance. Now he's seduced by Geri's sadness in much the same way. And her wit. Maybe he was a clever, lonely, barren female in a previous life.

He feels a little anxious being in the bar with Geri. It's dark, yes, but he's been here with other patient-friends. They're insecure types. Jean is on his trail so often he can sniff her Chantilly scent from the moment she's set out on a stalking session. Whereas Geri's more like light entertainment and relaxation. His fondness for her rises with each sip of his smooth, cool, clear drink. How about a nice Pouilly-Fuissé at my place? he suggests. Yeah, maybe a glass would be nice, she says.

Nice

Before she knows it they're admiring the horses outside and the cats inside, and they're drinking wine and he's caressing her feet and they're in bed. He's so gentle, so undriven by goals. No urgency, no calendar calculations, just languorous stroking. She's in charge of the plays here, she loves him for this, she kisses him all over, gets on top of him and leads him, barely hard enough to make it (softness is his nature, she thinks fondly) into her. In a moment of unwonted clarity, Geri sees that her Specialist and pregnancy are incompatible.

Or So She Thought

It's a miracle, he sings. Murray's delighted—absolutely thrilled—that Geri's pregnant. We may have to give the doctor some credit, she mutters. Can we look for a house now? he asks, raising her up to the sky even though she's already put on five pounds. He imagines a white fence around a yard large enough for a swing-set, a kiddy pool, and a patio with a grill where he'll barbecue such succulent lamb, juicy inside and crackly outside, even Geri won't be able to resist. A modest room for himself with weights and a NordicTrack. In a recent dream, Murray sees himself standing beside Murray Jr., showing his son the wrist-flicking motion that puts the most steam on a baseball. He wakes with a smile. His dream, now, will finally come true. But he's baffled and hurt by Geri's reaction to the pregnancy. She smiles vacantly and seems to look right through him. She shows no interest in discussing names. Thank goodness you can stop all the visits to the Specialist now, Murray tells her. I wonder if I should tell him the news, Geri mutters.

The News

Murray's elbow topples his water glass as he sprawls over the newspaper article, reading. I knew I didn't like that sleaze-bag, he mumbles to himself, righting the empty glass and grabbing some napkins to soak up the spill. Geri walks up behind him and starts to read over his shoulder. Jean

has charged the Specialist with sexual harassment. She's asking other patients to step forward if they experienced any sexual indiscretions while under his care. She says she knows her case is not an isolated event. She saw him in a bar with a woman she recognized from the waiting room as another patient. Geri stops reading and starts thinking, smoothing her shirt over her stomach. It could have been anyone with him in the bar, she thinks, trying to remember some of the waiting room faces. It wasn't even necessarily me. Maybe he has a secret room off his office filled with hungry women. It's okay, Murray says, noticing how pale his wife looks, how slack her face has gone. We don't need the jerk any more. Despite him, we're getting what we want. Precisely because of him, Geri thinks, you're getting what you want. But what does she want? She wants Murray to think he's the father. She wants the Specialist to disappear. She wants to have the baby. She wants Murray to love her as much as he loves the idea of a baby.

What a Crock, the Specialist Responds

Just between him and his kittens, he wishes he'd resigned himself to them for his strokes. Little furry things that purr, that don't go scratching at you, shrieking from every street corner of the silly missteps you've taken. The Specialist knows, he can avoid it no longer, that drink has carried him down this dark path, so he has made a pact to have ONLY ONE. One measly martini without vermouth to cope with all this stress, and he's almost finished it. The phone calls alone would drive anyone to drink. He tells himself he'll turn to AA when all this blows over. He'll have plenty of time for meetings, that's for sure, when his practice is gone. Another martini might invite him to philosophize on the meaning of his life, but before he can get himself one, the doorbell rings.

That's what I get for taking the phone off the hook, he mutters, the damn doorbell rings. Well, let 'em ring. But the ringing stops and the door opens. His estranged wife walks in, looking more wrinkled around the eyes and mouth than he remembers. She points at his empty glass. Don't you think it's time to chuck the sauce? Absolutely, he says, do come in, I'm joining AA. It has already struck him that AA would be a great spot for meeting damaged, needy women, sister spirits to his own who might draw out his already proven skills as a healer. You just had to go after an anorexic teeny-bopper, huh? You couldn't humiliate yourself and me in a more interesting and original way? You've always been so kind, he says. Make yourself at home. You know where everything is. Not your brains, she says. Could you show me to your brains? They're scrambled, he admits. It's time for a divorce, she says. One lawsuit is all I can manage at the moment, he says, not that I wouldn't love to fit you in. He's been

thinking of Geri. What he's been thinking is that she doesn't seem the type to join a hunting party. Still, he's not feeling all that strong in his judgments. His mind turns like the wheels of his Ferrari sliding on an ice patch.

Geri Phones the Accuser

When was it that you saw him in a bar with another patient, if you wouldn't mind saying? Geri asks. Was it you? Jean probes. Look, my husband doesn't know anything, Geri whispers into the phone, hoping Murray is watching basketball or football or some kind of ball that's loud on TV. You have a moral obligation, Jean says emphatically, to speak out against that impersonator of a doctor. Geri reaches her arm around to scratch an itch in the middle of her back, but she can't seem to get at the spot. We need to do all we can to see that he's stopped, Jean continues. We? It's not your fault, Jean tells her. He's the oppressor, he's the one misusing male power. Geri doesn't like Jean one bit—her lingo and her whining. I'm thirty-five, Geri says, and nobody forced me to do anything. Don't make me into some mealy victim here. Sexual harassment is never a private issue, Jean says. Oh get off it, Geri interrupts, you're jealous because you caught him with someone else. I know how you feel: I'd like to spit upon the eminent doctor and send both of you sailing. Jean hangs up. But that's not the end of it. Geri is haunted by two things: (1) the unknown number of women touched and hurt by the Specialist, and (2) Jean's neediness and dishonesty, her lack of fiber. If that's what he was drawn to, what is she to think of herself?

Geri Gets a New Doctor

An OB-GYN this time. A woman. Geri puts on weight, and more weight, until she wonders if she might be carrying twins. Maybe one will look like Murray and the other like the Specialist. But it's not twins, and she isn't even that big—she just isn't accustomed to flesh around her middle. Surprisingly, she likes it though, the way her body is reconfiguring itself. She feels full, and bursting with promise, as she hasn't ever since she and Murray began pursuing pregnancy. Imagining the new life taking form inside her makes her smile knowingly, calmly, as if she possesses a deeply bewitching secret.

The new doctor has had trouble getting Geri's records sent over by the Specialist's office. When they come, she exclaims, Never have I seen such a mess called records—unreadable scribbles, no dates. Was he on drugs? She has a scratchy voice and speaks with a strange accent. Turkish? Armenian? She says "varginia" for "vagina." She pokes all around Geri's abdomen, presses her cold instruments against Geri's now perpetually warm body, ignores her feet. The fluorescent lights glare down at Geri, making a constant hissing noise. For a few moments, she misses her Specialist.

Murray comes with her now to the doctor's office. You never wanted me to come before, he says, clearly hurt. Did that sleaze ever try any funny business with you? he asks, as if the possibility has just occurred to him. She thinks of the Specialist's hugs, his foot massages, his bed. He seemed a little odd, Geri says, hoping this will do it, her face filling with the heat of hell. This new one's odd, too, Murray whispers as they leave the office, both of them mimicking her "varginia." What did he do that was odd? Murray continues. His interest would interest Geri, even please her, if she weren't harboring a lie. Nothing, really, she says, feeling sick at heart. Murray puts his arm around Geri. Sick to your stomach, huh? he asks. That's to be expected.

Geri Calls Jean Again

Questions nag at her. Did he stroke other women's feet, too? Was he the same with everyone? It kills her to think that when his hands were moving over her body, his mind might have been elsewhere, with a patient lovelier? wittier? emptier? than she.

But Jean is willing only to discuss matters she considers of political significance. How come you're so riled up about this stuff now, Geri asks, and weren't then? Jean credits her lawyer, a feminist, for wising her up. In fact, she says, they've started going out. She's had it with men.

Geri is ready to plead with this woman to respect her privacy. She even tries out Jean's language in hopes of clicking the right buttons. If this surfaces, Geri says, I will be victimized by two men: the Specialist, whose inappropriate behavior will ruin my marriage, and my husband, who will leave me and cause my child to be brought up in a single-parent household with a working mother. You have a child? Jean asks, surprised. I'm pregnant, Geri says, pride and shame both aswirl in her. Whose child? Jean blurts out. Mine, Geri replies. If that schmuck is the father of your child, we've got a bonanza here, Jean says excitedly. Your kid's college will be paid for, Ivy League. It's not his, Geri lies, which momentarily deflates Jean's balloon. But only momentarily. He knows, of course, you're pregnant? Jean asks. Well, uh, no, Geri mumbles, he's not my doctor anymore. Don't worry, Jean says, we'll let him know.

Murray Is Crying

Murray is in the living room, slumped down in a chair near the TV, the set turned off, the phone on his lap. He's crying. Geri walks in. He's cried in front of her only two other times—once, when his father dropped dead from a heart attack and, another time, when a little girl in his class got hit by a car. To Murray this is another version of those times: he feels as if he's been smashed in the heart by an unseen, swiftly moving vehicle containing the woman he thought was his wife and her Specialist. Geri bends over,

touches his knee, and asks what's wrong. Does she think he's a complete nitwit? Is he supposed to be laughing? Some way to treat infertility, he snaps. Who's the father?

It's your child, she says limply. He doesn't believe her. We're going to have a child, she says quietly. It seems like that's all you've been wanting. He stares at her. Is this some crazy person he's married to? Whose child? he yells. I wanted *our* child, not *a* child, not that asshole's child. He gets up, walks toward the doorway, then stands there, back to Geri. I thought we were in this together, he says, head hanging. I thought it meant something that we were married. Geri comes up behind him and lightly rests her fingers on the back of his neck. He won't look at her. It did mean something, she says, but I gradually forgot what. It got to where it didn't feel like we were in much of anything together except for a desperate pursuit of pregnancy. Murray looks at Geri for a moment, shakes his head, then stomps out, slamming the door behind him. Around the block again and again and again.

The Specialist's Estranged Wife Speaks

No surprise, she says. He's been a guzzler for years. It was bound to get him. The Specialist's estranged wife speaks freely to her interviewer while puffing on a Virginia Slims, an untouched salad sitting before her. She is studying to become a paralegal. And she is taking formal steps to end their marriage. He's not great at consummating anything, she says, not even a divorce. If the truth be told, my husband really couldn't get it up much. And what with my periods running from scanty to nothing, she confesses that their chances at parenthood were slim, slimmer, slimmest. I think he privately always wanted a daughter, she says. His patients are surrogates. Odd kind of fathering, isn't it? I wondered sometimes, she says off the record, if he was gay.

The Specialist Dries Out and Considers Options

He tries to remember that one he really liked, besides Jean and Geri, from years back. Georgia? Virginia? Or maybe it was a month. June? April? Alcohol has blasted his memory bank. He's trying to remember so he can rectify his heart (he's been reading books on healing which say the big thing is rectifying your heart), and also so he can prepare the lawyer. He's been reading books about mid-life career changes, too, and is considering becoming a writer. Memoirs sell, and he sees himself reaching quite a wide range of readers—alcoholics (current and former), animal-lovers, doctors who become overinvested (a word he's come across a lot in his recent reading) in their patients, divorcées, participants in sexual harassment suits. The book idea appeals to him, drawing on his lifelong impulse to heal, and promising to help with his legal bills. When he thinks of all the

men in high office who have sex with young women, his own transgressions seem slight. He hardly ever actually did it, strictly speaking, and it wasn't as if he'd get anyone pregnant, ha-ha, a fringe benefit of having his particular clientele.

He Got a Woman Pregnant?

He's never confessed to anyone, not even his wife before she became estranged, his doubts that he could get a woman pregnant. He'd never felt man enough, somehow. And now, without even trying, he's done it! He feels a surge of potency, possibility. He sees a great opportunity presenting itself, a way to turn his life around, redeem himself: he'll claim the baby and become a knockout daddy, a single father who devotes his life to his second chance, this child. Maybe he'll even write a book about it. Geri, he realizes, might well be a problem. But how could her husband want a child that isn't even his? My turn now for a lawsuit, a paternity claim, he thinks with satisfaction, picking up the phone to call Geri.

Murray Picks Up

He's been having revenge fantasies. Joining forces with Jean and going after the creep in a big way. Paternity charges. Monthly payments for the child's upkeep. But no, that would keep the swine in the picture, make him the child's father. And Murray wants to be the father. He's been counting on it. Adoption was an option he'd thought about before; this could be kind of like that only without the paperwork, and the child wouldn't have to know, and maybe with some luck he'd look like Geri. The sleaze-bag will not be allowed to grace their doorstep.

The phone rings. It's the sleaze-bag himself! What do *you* want? Murray sputters. I want my child, the Specialist answers. You what? I want the child. Is this some kind of joke? Murray asks, hoping. Or a blackmail scheme? Murray has never been very quick at picking up the intricacies of crime plots so his mind circles frantically, trying to think what the Specialist might have to gain. What Murray has to lose is clear: their long-awaited chance for a child. He's so consumed with rage at this inveigling man that there's little room left for anger at Geri who walks into the room and mouths the words "Who is it?" It's my child, the Specialist says, asking to speak to Geri. Murray hands his wife the phone, not sure he can bear to stand there and listen. Everything, he sees, can be lost.

Who Says?

Who says you're the father? Geri asks. I do, he answers hesitantly. And you and Jean said so, too. I didn't say any such thing, Geri claims. In fact, I said you *weren't* the father. Hasn't it occurred to you that Jean has something to

gain here? I can see that, he says, sounding as if it hadn't even occurred to him. But, you know, Geri, if it's my child, I want her. I'll take what's coming to me, for good and ill. What's coming to you is ill, I hope. You're a miserable excuse for a doctor and I'll thank you to bug off. DNA tests can be done on the baby to verify the identity of the father, he informs her. Geri hadn't thought of that, a worry to shelve for later. Fine, she says, but you wouldn't get the baby even if it *were* yours. Which it isn't. It gives her a strange kind of pleasure to lie with such authority in her voice. Murray is at her side, looking almost convinced her words are true. Of course, the truth is that Murray will never be quite sure of anything Geri says, and the baby will wiggle between them like a question mark.

Cold Feet

I hate these chills, she cries out to Murray, yanking the bedclothes up to her neck and exposing her white toes; the chills are worse than the pain. He sits at her bedside, reaches out to her feet and starts warming them. There are crescents of shadow beneath his blue-gray eyes. Geri moistens her chapped lips with her tongue. Okay, push, she's told when episiotomy time is over. She grunts, she bears down, she roars. It scares and impresses Murray, the force of that roar. Before long, a head emerges, covered by little wisps of fuzz, then the rest, wet and slippery, slides out. The baby cries. Geri extends her arms toward the pink, wrinkled face. The baby cries. Murray cuts the cord. The baby cries. It's a girl.

The Baby Girl Cries

BRAD McDUFFIE

Waiting for the Vaporetto at San Marco

The sky goes pigeon-grey over Giudecca
As we wait for the vaporetto at the mouth of the Grand
Canal. Across the way Santa Maria's
Dome lies in state, under scaffold.
The tourists do not photograph where Pound
Hid in the nest with Olga and watched
The sun set on his last Canto.
Lightning ripples across Venezia's exiled
Terraces. The water taxis wake white shadows
Across the aqua-eyed waters. A pre-rain
Wind trembles through the sinking city, already begining
to will its last rites to weekend expatriate window-shoppers.
At night I listen to the water
Fold up on the stones of San Marco: drawing the curtains on the theater.

Returning to New York from Venice, July 5, 2007

Everywhere, / giant finned cars nose forward like fish . . .
—Robert Lowell, "For the Union Dead"

From my room above the *Gelateria* in campo
San Stefano I listen to voices crest the theaters
Of Venezia, troughing the canal waters
Through the night. Ezra walks San Servelo

Ex cathedra, humming Cantos to rising tides.
I dream my daughter fishing the Wallkill
As the sun sets on Mohonk. Her reel
Spins a bass; she speaks to me in tongues.

Her voice is a wind upon the curtains,
Water endlessly kissing stone.
Waking, my wife seems a thousand years
Away, every woman a *Carnival*.

Landing in New York we're trapped in Moses'
Highway maze coming out of JFK.
The Whitestone drowns us in the Yanks'
Extra-inning traffic. A win. Sterling's

Overjoyed. A haze burns low on City
Island—gypsy cabs port fares downriver, by the stadium.
In exile, the prophet vow'd silence, humm'd
Myth. Her tears baptizing his caged hands, Moidile

Planted something beyond beautiful in Brunnenburg.
I dream a white city "bent bough over bough"
That night and remember the Old World to Racine.
She whispers that our third child will be a son.

JOHN N. MUGAAS

An Unspoken Eulogy

The insistent ringing of the phone hammered my ears. I struggled to overcome the sticky paralysis of sleep and floundered toward wakefulness. The bedside clock read 5:00 A.M., January 12. I knew who was calling, and why, and I dreaded it. I cleared my throat and mumbled, "Hello."

My mother's voice, clear and sharp, said, "Your father died about two hours ago."

My father, the fourth of nine children, was born April 5, 1908, on a homestead in Renville County, North Dakota. His Norwegian immigrant parents christened him Magnus, but in Dillon, Montana, where he died 92 years later, everyone called him Mac.

He came to Dillon in 1932, a depression-era drifter looking for work and opportunity. He found both and stayed on for 68 years. In 1937, he married a local girl, my mother. They had two children, and he made his living as a barber until his retirement in 1974. Unfortunately, during the last years of his life, the slow insidious pall of dementia cast an ever lengthening shadow over his awareness of the present. It pushed his reality back in time, far beyond our shared memories, to the homestead years of his youth and young manhood.

In December, just two weeks before he died, I spent ten days with him. When I first saw him on that last visit, it shocked me to see how much he had failed since August and how imminent death seemed.

In August, I could occasionally coax him into conversation. Not about the news, or something we had done together, or the folly of a friend or relative, but conversation about his boyhood and young manhood on the North Dakota prairie. Conversation about boys called on at an early age to do men's work. Boys who shivered in the thin, colorless, predawn light as they prepared their horses for the day's labor; powerful, massive draft horses stomping, tossing their heads, rolling their eyes and snorting. Boys ministering to their horses with soft reassuring voices, firm gentle hands, curry combs, brushes, harnesses, and the morning's ration of grain, hay and

water. Boys and their horses sweating together in the fields plowing, harrowing, sowing, and, if enough rain fell and hail or grasshoppers didn't destroy their crop, harvesting in the golden days of late summer and autumn. Boys and horses in winter enduring the long cold days spent hauling the harvest by wagon to grain elevators at distant railroad stops. Conversations about life in a society where men gave more care to their horses than to themselves and taught their sons that same ethic. You could tell from the way he talked about them that he loved those horses—their strong, pungent aroma, their giant feet, their silky noses and soft nibbling lips that hid their big yellow teeth.

During the last ten bittersweet days I spent with him, I could still get him to talk once in a while if I asked him about the horses. But his answers came in a whispered mumble that I could not understand. This frustrated me. I wanted to know what he had to say about the horses, the work in the fields, their crops, his family, or the winter storms that swept over him and his team as they plodded, numb with cold, between home and the grain elevators. After he finished these whispered soliloquies, he would look at me with a sweet, tender smile that brought a lump to my throat.

The hardest of those ten days came when I had to leave him and return to my home in West Virginia. I sat in front of his wheelchair, held his hands and told him I loved him. He had never been a huggy-kissy kind of guy, but I hugged him anyway, kissed his cheek and said my last goodbye. He pulled me a little closer, whispered something to me and smiled. It occurred to me then, maybe he wasn't talking to me in that mumbled whisper, maybe he was talking to those who would soon be caring for him, and that sweet smile was his way of saying, "It's all right, I'm ready. Don't worry about me. I'll be in good hands."

On the bleak, dismal day before my father's funeral I brooded, my mood as gloomy as the thick clouds holding the sun at bay. I sulked, not only about the fact that I had not been with my father when he died, but also about how his dementia had robbed him of the ability to fully share the last years of his life with us. All day long, cold gusty winds rattled the house, and occasional brief violent snow flurries squeezed visibility to near zero and deepened my melancholy.

That night we gathered for the wake. The winds moderated. The snow flurries stopped. A few stars peeked at us through ragged holes in the scudding remnants of shredded clouds. Standing by his casket I studied my father's face, held his folded hands and reflected on our last ten days together. Had he known me? Where in time had his mind settled? I didn't know the answers to these questions. But it didn't matter. We had spent those days together. That had meant a lot to both of us. These thoughts dispelled some of the gloom that haunted me.

The next day a winter sun rose over the snow-covered landscape. It blazed in a cloudless sky of deepest morning-glory blue, producing the kind of day my father had loved. Early that morning, members of the family gathered to attend the final viewing and funeral Mass. We left the comfortable warmth of my parents' home. The frigid glare of the sun-dazzled snow anointed and purified us. For an instant, the intense light stunned me. It captured me in a brilliant icy crystal, blinding me to everything but its lustrous white light. Time retired, and the freezing air, honed to a perfect cutting edge, pierced me and pared away layer upon layer of vanity and self pity.

After the Mass, our little funeral procession wound through town and then turned onto Sweet Water Road; it would take us the mile and a half to the cemetery. Snow-covered fields on either side of the road shimmered like liquid fire under the searing glare of the sun. My mother sighed and exclaimed with delight at how fresh and clean everything looked. It was then that we saw the horses off to our right. Twenty or so of them came trotting across the field toward our slow-moving procession. Their hooves stirred the light powdery snow, and the gusting winds flung it around them in a glittering white cloud. When they neared the road, the horses changed direction in a graceful arc until they drew alongside our procession, becoming a part of it, quickening their pace to stay abreast of the hearse, a cortege of flying hooves. Manes and tails flowed in the whirling snow. I thought, "Wow! Dad must love this." I feared the horses would stop, or turn away and run to the far side of the field. But to our delight, they kept up with us. A lighthearted playfulness animated their movements and turned their determined march into a kind of joyful frolic. They kept pace with the hearse, their progress marked by the glittering cloud of wind-whipped flying snow that, like spume blown from a wave, swirled over them and us.

About an eighth of a mile from the entrance to the cemetery, a fence, perpendicular to the road, blocked any further advance of the horses. As we swept past it, they swerved to the right and vanished as suddenly as they had appeared. If the fence hadn't blocked them, I believe they would have followed the hearse to the grave site and joined in the burial service.

When we returned to town, the horses stood on the far side of the field feeding on hay that had been scattered for them. They paid no attention to us. Again and again I looked in their direction, longing to see a repeat of their performance. But deep in my heart I knew their tribute was complete, and I drew great solace from their elegant eulogy.

FREDRICK ZYDEK

The Longest Shadow

It's catching up to me again. I must always
decide to weather its respite from the light
or keep moving in an attempt to dodge it.

There are times when it is the only cure, when
owning your own shadow is more important
than any form of light you might hope to reflect

or wear or seek after. This is a shadow that
knows how to grow limp and stingy. Some
have knees so calloused they can kneel beside

you for weeks at a time. Others try to remind
us they are only shadows and not the darkest
night. The longest shadow can be even more

appealing. It comes wrapped in the garments
of peace and the colors of rest. Not all of this
is true. Bits and pieces of it know things you

may not want to remember, carry messages
you have long ago sealed away in darkness.
I do not know if they are hoping to be scattered

into the light or simply want to remind us of work
that needs to be done or how far behind we
have left them in our quest to keep up with the sun.

Wordless Dreams

In some dreams words are less than half
the matter. They know better than I,
it is the journey which surrounds them
that speaks. Sometimes I wander into

dreams where time is self-begetting,
every hour repeats itself like clockwork.
I do not age in such dreams. Age is not
a part of such dreams. Time, that chameleon

of the seasons, is like a snake eating
its own tail. Some dreams have walls built
of enormous stones. They are often piled
like monuments on the heart. Sometimes

they are even laid out like the family silver.
I seldom take the time to polish them.
I'm too busy learning the silent language
that waits between what vibrates from one

stone to the other. Wordless lessons wait
in the seams of such encounters. Listen
to music. It knows. There is no single word
that can repeat all that should be found there.

About This Life

I have lived here since the world began.
I have dreams of being eaten alive,
of living between rocks and dark warm
places. The energy that is now me has
been a million places. It has danced with
cats, been all the colors of space, a chariot
drawn by painted horses, the slant of light

in early September that signals the leaves
to shed their green magic and let the wind
have its way with them. I have been a swish
of nuns chanting their way down a stone
hallway, the erotic value of trees, thirty-two
cardinals and a single crow, the journey
the prodigal took on his way to sensual joys,

She who is. Now is such a thin slice of
eternity—it's hard to keep up with it. This
life is about knowing the shore can never be
the meadow, that shadows are the result
of light and that the image of a brown paper
bag being blown down an empty street
should be enough to inspire art in anyone.

JOLEE JOSEPHS

Killing Descartes

So much pain. The words pushed to the surface as I lay in the dark, trying to keep my mind from revisiting the horrors that danced in my mind. So much pain.

How would they say that, I wondered, hoping the act of translation would prevent the memories from surfacing. Tanto . . . dolor.

I rolled over on my back and pulled the covers around me. Now I was cold. Tanto dolor.

I turned over again.

I had never worked at a zoo before. I didn't have a degree in biology or zootechny. They offered me the job because I had been an avid volunteer, working full weekend shifts in the hot Florida sun. I thought I knew what went on behind the scenes.

They hired me as the bird keeper. I knew nothing about birds. I had no idea that cockatoos were clever and conniving. I wouldn't have thought an ostrich could kill someone. And in my wildest dreams, I never imagined a baby swan would bring me to my knees.

"She's definitely on eggs. You'll need to pull them."

One of the first things my supervisor taught me was that trumpeter swans, in captivity, were not good mothers. We had to pull the eggs and put them in an incubator to insure they were cared for properly.

I rowed a small boat to the trumpeter's island. The two swans quickly surmised that I had come without food and that I was heading toward their nest. Trumpeters stand four feet tall when they're not angry. They seem to grow when they rush at you with seven feet of flailing wings. I went home that evening with dark bruises on my arms and legs, but I went to sleep knowing that the eggs were safe in the incubator.

Did I make the right decision? What's the verb? Hacer. What's the past tense? It's irregular. Um. Hice. Okay. ¿Hice la decisión derecha? Would they use derecho*? No sé. I don't know.*

Since the zoo in Gulf Breeze was small, there were more animals under the care of the "bird keeper" than just birds. The two-toed sloths were my responsibility. The female had a terrible abscess on her chin. It looked awful before the vet lanced it. It looked even worse after the sloth had spent the evening trying to dig it out of her face, plugging her long claws into the lanced swelling, getting blood all over herself, all over her recovery cage, and all over the clinic floor. I didn't mind cleaning up the mess. What I minded was the pain I saw in her eyes.

I know animals feel pain. I abhor stories about 17th-century scientists who nailed dogs to wooden tables so they could vivisect them. I hold Descartes responsible for such atrocities. He claimed that animals could not experience pain because they had no souls. Their cries when beaten were simply mechanical responses, like springs in a clock.

I thought we were beyond that kind of thinking. I knew the sloth was in pain. I wasn't projecting my own feelings on her. You could see it in her eyes. Any parent who has seen a child with a bloody knee. Any kid who has seen a playmate hit in the face with a baseball. Any person who has seen a friend in tears over the death of a loved one. Those people know what pain looks like. There's a depth to the stare. An intensity. A flash of bare soul. I would say we all know that look of pain. If we haven't seen it in someone else's face, we've seen it in our own.

The sloth was in pain.

When I asked the curator if we could give her something to ease her discomfort, she shrugged.

"If you want to take time out of your rounds to come here and give her Tylenol, you're welcome to it."

I think what shocked me more than the coldness in her voice was the laughter behind her words. Not only did she not care that the sloth was hurting, she also thought I was silly for wanting to prevent it, for wanting to waste my time.

I had to walk past the primate exhibit to get to the clinic. So four times each day I passed Martin, a chimpanzee who had been raised by a private individual. When he became too much trouble, he was donated to the zoo. In the safari house, I had seen pictures of Martin in diapers with his arms wrapped around his "mommy." He looked happy in those pictures.

The animal behind the cage barely resembled the one in the photos. He rocked back and forth with his thumb in his mouth, staring into space like an autistic child. I tried to talk to him, but he never seemed to pay attention. Maybe he heard the words I spoke. Maybe he was too far gone to even know I was there.

"Do not touch him," I was told.

"He was raised like a human child. Doesn't he ever get physical attention?"

"No. He's too dangerous."

It didn't take much imagination for me to picture what a human child would be like if caged and refused physical contact, but I have to admit that I stopped trying to communicate with Martin after a few days. I walked by with my head down, not wanting to see the loneliness in his eyes.

What's the word for coward? Cobarde. I was a cobarde. Soy cobarde.

The blue macaw kept my free hours occupied. While the other parrots were taken from their cages and put on poles and trees within the park, the blue macaw refused to be touched. He would not put his feet on a stick, let alone your arm. When the keepers entered the walk-in cage, he climbed to the highest point, as far away as he could get.

"Just get a broom and beat him down. Once he's on the ground, you can get him on the stick and put him out."

I think my heart skipped a beat at the casual suggestion. I stepped into the cage, and the macaw hurried to the top of the chain-link enclosure. Good for you, I thought. I'd run too.

I spent the next week talking to him. I didn't enter his cage. I brought bananas instead of a stick. He watched me peel the bananas with increasing interest. I would hold pieces through the cage while I talked to him. One day he didn't race to the top of the enclosure. He just sat on his perch and looked at me.

I opened the cage and walked inside. He started to the top, but stopped. He eyed the banana I was holding, then turned his head to the side so he could focus one of his eyes on me. He climbed down one inch at a time. I tried not to move. As he drew closer to my outstretched hand, his feathers ruffled. When he opened his curved beak, I swallowed hard. I had read that macaws could break open Brazil nuts with the strength of their bite. Finger bones couldn't be much harder.

He grabbed my finger instead of the banana. The pressure above my knuckle hurt, but I forced myself to remain steady. He released me after a moment and clung to the side of the cage, looking at me with what I estimated was either curiosity or frustration.

My finger had a small bubble of blood from where the macaw had bit me, but I was not deterred. I offered him the banana again. When he opened his beak, I cringed. But this time he took the fruit.

We spent the next three weeks working on trust. I would try to stroke his chest. He would bite me. I would give him a slice of banana. I would try to touch his head. He would bite me. I would give him a slice of banana.

He never drew blood again, and his bites became less and less painful. When I was finally able to touch the velvety feathers around his face, I felt giddy. We had become friends.

What will happen to him now? Qué . . . Qué . . . What's the verb for happen? Is it pasar? No. It's something else. Acon . . . Acon . . . it's acon something. Acon . . . tecer. Yes, Acontecer. Okay. Let's see. Future tense. Qué le acontecerá ahora. I think that's right. If I could only forget about this. Let my mind rest. At least Carlos understands what I must do.

I met Carlos in front of the tiger exhibit. He was talking to his friends, rattling off something I found incomprehensible. His hands kept time with the jumble of words that flowed from his mouth. I had taken two years of Spanish in high school, which meant that I could say "Hola" and "Adiós" but not much more. Still, I could tell he was angry.

One of his friends caught me eavesdropping. He pointed my way and motioned for the others to follow him. Carlos nodded but didn't move. He lingered by the cage as he watched his friends leave for the bear exhibit. On an impulse, I walked over.

"You seemed upset," I said.

He spoke with a thick accent, but his English sounded beautiful to me. "Look at him," he said, pointing to the white Bengal. "The tiger has lost his pride. He is given no respect. He paces in his cage. The wild is just a dream for him. He has no trees now, only bars."

I didn't know what to say, so I said nothing. I stood there with words in my throat, watching the tiger pace. For the first time I noticed the dirt path his pacing had created. Back and forth. Back and forth. That was his day. That was his life.

Carlos eyed my keeper's uniform and the keys dangling from my belt. His silky black hair fell over his eyes. He brushed it back. His dark skin and Indian features told me he must be Latin American, probably Mexican. For the first time I noticed the letters on his shirt—GEMA. Grupo Ecologista del Mayab. I was familiar with the name.

I pointed to his shirt. "You're an environmentalist. Don't you want to save all species from extinction?"

"GEMA wants to see animals in their natural habitat. Not locked up for human entertainment."

"Bengals are practically extinct in the wild," I managed to say. "Is it not better to have them in captivity than see them vanish forever?"

Perhaps he saw something in my eyes, something that gave away the doubt in my heart. I don't know. I do know I accepted his dinner invitation.

Carlos put down his fork. "I don't object to zoos that strive to give animals the space they need and a habitat they are comfortable with. I do

object to zoos, like yours, that cage animals for show, that put gorillas in concrete pens and snow leopards behind iron bars. It's not right."

"We give them a chance at life, a chance they would not have otherwise." I didn't sound convincing, even to myself.

"Perhaps. But when animals are cramped and caged, they are unable to . . . *gozar la vida*."

"To what?"

"Enjoy life."

The next day I bought a Spanish workbook.

I ate my lunch while studying verbs and memorizing vocabulary. I wanted to be able to understand Carlos, to speak to him in his magical tongue that seemed to hold in its very rhythm the secrets of the Amazon. I began practicing my pronunciation with the animals. They couldn't make fun of me, at least not in any way I could comprehend. I talked a lot to the trumpeter eggs. And I talked to the sick baby deer whose life I was determined to save.

He was so soft, so fragile. Suave. Muy suave.

The mother had given birth and walked away. Under normal circumstances, the supervisor would have waited to see if the mother would return to nurture her offspring. But the wildebeest was harassing the baby. So the hoof-stock keeper pulled the deer from the preserve.

When the baby arrived in the clinic, she was sick and near death. She wouldn't suckle, so she wouldn't take a bottle. She couldn't stand. Her eyes looked glassy. I asked if I could care for her.

"There's nothing you can do."

"I can try."

For the next couple of days, I fed the baby every two hours, putting formula in her mouth with a syringe and massaging her throat until she swallowed. Instead of leaving the deer in the clinic at night, I took her home in the afternoon. Carlos made enchiladas so I didn't have to cook.

At night, the baby deer slept on my stomach where I could feel her delicate breathing and the warmth of her small body. I didn't sleep much those evenings. In between feedings, I lay in the dark, stroking her back and willing her to live.

After the second day, the baby looked better. She was able to stand on her own, though not for long periods of time, and I was able to feed her more formula. She still refused the bottle, but she had begun to suckle my finger. I was confident that she would eventually latch on to the nipple.

The hoof-stock keeper pulled me aside on the third day.

"What's her progress?"

"She's doing better. She's taking more formula."

"So she started a bottle?"

"No. I'm still feeding her with a syringe."

"Two milliliters at a time?"

"Yes." I smiled. "It's slow, but I think it's working."

"Sounds too slow to me. I'm going to tube feed her this afternoon. If you would like to observe the process, meet me in the clinic at two."

I watched the hoof-stock keeper slip a rubber tube down the deer's throat and begin filling her stomach with formula. I thought she was giving her too much. It was just a feeling. But I was new. I didn't want to offend a woman who had been working with animals for the last eight years.

¿Por qué? Why didn't I just open my mouth? ¿Por qué no dije yo algo? I pressed the palms of my hands against my forehead. My eyes were wide open now, and they stung from lack of sleep.

I returned to the clinic at 3:30. The deer was lying on her side. There was nothing strange about her position, but something didn't seem right. When I drew closer, I noticed the white, milky liquid on her nose. I jumped into the pen, nearly tripping over the gate. I lifted the deer up, but her head lolled to the side. Milk dripped from her mouth. A knot formed in my throat. I wasn't ready to give her up.

I held her mouth closed and blew into her nose. Her chest rose with the air I pushed into her. I did it again. And again. I could taste the milk. I put my mouth around her nose and blew another breath into the small creature. And I prayed.

But nothing worked.

I sat in the pen for some time, holding the deer to my chest as I had done for the last two days. And I said I was sorry. I had promised her life, but I had failed her.

I'm so sorry, my little deer. Lo siento.

I had the strength to watch the autopsy, though the curator asked me at one point if I needed to leave the room. The baby deer died from asphyxiation. Her little stomach couldn't handle that much milk. She regurgitated the liquid and was too weak to keep it from entering her lungs.

I took my mind off the deer by concentrating on the trumpeter swan eggs and preparing for the hatching.

Los huevos del cisne.

Eggs in an incubator have to touch because the chicks listen to each other. They tap on the inside of their shells when they are ready to hatch. When I checked on the incubator that day, I heard little clicking sounds coming from the eggs. By the next day, the two gray cygnets had emerged from their shells. One was strong and hopping around. The other wasn't.

He looked as if he had the equivalent of muscular dystrophy. He could stand, but his head flopped from side to side. When he didn't fight to straighten his neck, his head would fall to the ground next to his feet. Everyone expected him to die.

He didn't.

He ate. He drank. He got around. He grew bigger.

When I held him under my chin, he was quiet. It was the only time he seemed content. Under my chin, he didn't have to struggle against his own long neck. I held him there as much as I could. And I encouraged him. Surely, I thought, when he grows stronger he will be able to control his muscles.

When a parrot is born with twisted feet, the veterinarian devises a type of brace that the parrot wears until his feet take on a normal shape. I assumed the same could be done for my trumpeter.

"No," the curator said. "If he doesn't improve in a day or two, we'll have to put him down."

Put him down. Is there a way to say that in Spanish? A politically correct way to say matar*?*

I knew my little trumpeter was a fighter. As difficult as it was for him to move with his head flopping around, he refused to give in. He was going on the purest instinct of all—survival. And he was making it.

I made a cardboard brace from a toilet-paper roll and scotch tape. To my surprise, when I put the brace around his neck, his condition improved. He could finally hold up his head. For the first time, he was able to look around without struggling.

In my excitement, I ran to find the curator. She congratulated me on my ingenuity.

"But we're still going to put him down next week. Clearly he has a genetic abnormality. We cannot allow him to grow up and breed, passing the trait to other swans."

I didn't cry that day. The tears would come later. I thought killing the swan would fall to me, and that was a job I did not want. I would have thought differently if I had known.

But what could I have done? ¿Pero qué podría . . . ? How would you say that?

I kicked off the covers and sat up. My back was damp with sweat. I looked at the clock. Son las tres y media de la mañana. 3:30 A.M. My head felt swimmy. There was pressure behind my eyes. I turned on the light and reached for my Spanish book.

What could I have done?

¿Qué podría haber hecho yo?

I had the weekend off. I tried not to think of my little swan. I considered smuggling him out of the zoo and keeping him as a pet. But I knew that wasn't an option. A trumpeter needed space, not an apartment. He needed to be with his own kind. Besides, it would have been illegal.

Illegal. And what of cruelty? ¿No debe ser la crueldad ilegal?

When I went back to work on Monday the swan was gone. I stared at the remaining healthy cygnet and took a deep breath. My relief was mixed with guilt. If the baby swan had to die, I should have been there to hold him under my chin while he gave up his life.

When I left the incubatory, a volunteer stopped me.

"You should know what happened to the swan."

"I already know," I said. "They told me they were going to put him down last week."

"You don't understand."

"What?"

The girl kicked at the ground. "They, um . . ."

"They what?"

I rolled over again, fighting the memory. I couldn't decide if I was hot or cold. I pulled up the covers. My arms had goose bumps, but I was sweating. My head hurt. I couldn't stop thinking. I couldn't keep my mind from the memories or the Spanish. ¡Chíngale! All I wanted to do was rest!

I stepped toward the volunteer. "What did they do?"

"They fed the swan to the lions. And he was alive."

I don't remember if I said anything. I do remember walking out the front gate. When I got to my car, the tears came. I pictured the little swan struggling to hold up his head while the lions batted at him with their heavy paws. I imagined the swan under my chin, the feel of his soft down, the way he became quiet when I held him. I saw the curious look in his eyes when I put the makeshift brace on his neck. I thought about the soft clicking of the egg. And I cried.

Yo lloré. The tears came again with the memory. I closed my eyes. I was cold. Frío. Tengo frío. Yes. I was very cold.

I awoke at 6:30, not knowing what time I had eventually fallen asleep. My head still felt fuzzy. I took a shower, got dressed, and made coffee. While sipping my caffeine, I toyed with the white envelope. It was the right thing.

La cosa derecha? No. La cosa correcta. Yes. That was it.

I walked into the curator's office at 8:00 A.M. and dropped the white envelope on her desk.

"What's this?"

"It's my two-week notice."

Later that day I asked one of my fellow keepers how she continued to work there with the horrors I had observed over the last three months.

"The animals need me," she said. "And they need you too."

I knew then I truly was a coward. I didn't want to see the bad things. I wanted to pretend they didn't exist. In the end, for all my talk of loving animals, I wasn't strong enough to endure the sight of their captivity, the site of their suffering. So I left them there.

As I drove my car out the gate, I thought about the blue macaw and wondered if he would miss my company. I thought about Martin rocking back and forth. I thought about the baby deer sleeping on my stomach. I thought about my swan's horrific death. And I thought about the first day I met Carlos.

La tierra virgin es apenas un sueño para él. El no tiene árboles ahora, sólo barras.

And I wondered when the bars that imprison the body finally kill the soul.

CLAUDIA RICCI

Needled

At the worst moments of the chemo, after she throws up into the basin and forces herself to eat some cherry Jello and maybe a few bites of banana, Anna plays the flamenco, drifting perhaps into a *soleares*, a sweet lament that starts slow and then pulls up tempo. And when the *soleares* stops working, and no longer transports her, she shifts to a tango or even a fandango.

And then comes the day that she steps inside the doctor's office in the black and red satin dress. It rustles as she walks, and the luscious tail of the *bata de cola* trails behind her. Anna picks up a fistful of ruffles in the train and enters the examining room. Her nailed shoes, tied at the ankles in ribbons, clatter on the waxed floor. Her black hair is sleek, almost wet looking, pulled tight to her head and knotted at back in a donut. She hugs a black lacy shawl to her shoulders and in her free hand she is pumping a red flowered fan.

The nurse enters behind her. Oblivious. She opens Anna's medical file—three inches thick—and asks Anna to step on a scale against the wall.

"Must I?" Anna sneers. The nurse hesitates.

"Must I get the doctor?" the nurse asks.

Anna's eyes narrow. Still holding the ruffles, she steps on the scale, and the nurse records Anna's weight.

"Remember to subtract for the dress," Anna says.

The nurse starts to say something. Stops. She asks Anna to turn around and stand against the wall. Anna sighs, then swivels. As she steps against the wall, she lifts her head with all the dignity of a Castilian queen.

"Five feet ten and one half with those heels," the nurse says, wrinkling her nose ever so slightly as she eyes the shoes. Then she turns to Anna's right arm. "Now, how about the veins today? How are they?"

"My veins." Anna pauses. Sneers. "Are the same as always."

Thrusting one arm overhead in the manner of the great *bailoras*, Anna locks herself in the dancer's stance. She looks as if she could be plucking a ripe orange—*sevillana*—off a tree. Twisting one wrist, she pulls the imaginary lush globe of fruit tightly to her bosom.

"I am glad you are so limber, Anna." The nurse crosses her arms. "But would you mind sitting down? This will go a lot faster if you do."

Anna glares, sits down, and arranges the dress around her. Then she thrusts one arm forward, exposing a pale blue vein.

"That one looks like it will work," the nurse muses, reaching up and snapping one finger against the inside of Anna's arm.

"Please," Anna snarls, pulling her arm back. "Please be gentle."

"I'm sorry," the nurse says. Her voice softens. "I really *am* sorry."

Anna turns away, as if the nurse's sudden kindness has made it so much worse. "Do you know how many times that my arm has been needled? Do you realize what you do to me every week? And do you realize how important these arms are to my dance?"

The nurse bites her lip. "I'm sorry. I forget sometimes. I know there are days when . . . when they, when we . . . have . . . considerable trouble getting in."

Anna draws her shawl closer around her shoulders. A single tear dribbles out of one eye. She ignores it and sitting up straighter, she lifts her chin in the manner of the Iberian royals, casting a decidedly unfriendly glance at the nurse. Then she thrusts her arm forward again.

The nurse anchors Anna's arm on the armrest and prepares the needle. "Here we go," she whispers. Anna flinches as the needle passes into the crotch of her arm, but the nurse has tight hold of her hand.

At first Anna and her pert red lips turn away, but soon she can't help herself: she is tipping backward to look, drawn to staring at the syringe, particularly the small butterfly spread of sky-blue plastic attached to the needle. Anna brightens. "Ah, you see, my fan has blue butterflies too." She flicks open her red fan again with her right hand, showing off the intricate design: a red background, swatches of yellow and orange flowers, and blue and black butterflies dancing here and there.

The nurse glances at the fan but is more preoccupied with the needle. She jiggles it. "I think this vein may be blocked."

Anna blinks. Looks away. As the nurse pokes the needle in farther, Anna's eyes open wider and begin to water. Then she rapidly fans her face. The fan is a hot-blooded color, and the blue of the fan's butterflies is exactly the same blue as the butterfly of the needle, the needle which the nurse is now pushing even deeper into Anna's skin.

"Oh, *Dios mio*, PLEASE NO!" Anna yelps. Her face is chalky and as sweaty as it is when she dances the *farruca*.

"I am sorry I am hurting you, Anna, I really am."

Anna sighs. Keeps fanning. "Yes, I should say so." Her voice breaks. She fans faster. "How much longer must this go on?" She chews into her lower lip, and her teeth pick up some of the berry-colored lipstick glazing her mouth.

The nurse wiggles the needle ever so slightly. She sighs. Exhales. "It's just that I have to get a blood return on this one, and I'm not getting it."

Anna closes her eyes and stops fanning. At moments like these, when it gets particularly difficult, she always resorts to intense mental rehearsal: she goes through the newest *alegria* in her head. She can count it better than the *seguiryas*, or even the *sevillanas* or the *malagueña*.

She starts counting, but a moment later is interrupted. The nurse sighs, slides the needle out. "I guess this one won't work," she says. "Sorry." She applies a tiny circle of a Bandaid over the hole in Anna's arm.

"I'm going to have to get some back up. See if someone else can help."

Anna blinks. "Yes, well, and I think I am going to need my prescription now," she mumbles, her fingers trembling slightly as she reaches into the ruffled bosom of her dress. Inside is a tiny vial of pills. Before the nurse can say anything, Anna has two tiny white pills in her hand and she is popping them under her tongue. "This will help."

The nurse looks embarrassed. "Look, I am really sorry to put you through this. But I . . . "

" . . . But I don't want to hear it," Anna says curtly. "I really don't want to hear it." She smiles her thinnest, tightest grin. "Just go ahead, please, find someone. Someone who won't hurt me. And get it over with." Anna inhales, saying a small prayer that the pills will work their miracles once again.

The nurse leaves and returns almost immediately with another nurse. A young man. Slim and very tall and dark-skinned. He smiles and Anna looks into his eyes and her first thoughts are that he is not at all handsome, but he is very kind. And that he would make a suitable partner.

He takes Anna's hand and for a moment she expects him to kiss it. But he simply rubs his long brown fingers over the surface of her skin. "I hear we are turning you into a pin cushion today," he says very quietly. The way he says pin: *peen*. And cushion: *cooshun*. His accent is . . . what? Latin? Indian? Iranian? She cannot tell, and well, what does it matter? He grows more handsome by the moment.

He keeps sliding his fingers over the back of her hand. "So how are the veins here?"

Anna closes her eyes, smiles, and gracefully pulls up her hand. Her blood-red nails glitter. "My hands . . . are magnificent," she whispers, opening her eyes again.

He smiles, bashfully. Anna notices the intense silkiness of his black hair. The giant oily pearls that are his eyes. She sighs. The other nurse, who now stands in the corner of the examining room, arches one eyebrow, then turns and leaves the room, making the door smack shut as she goes.

The young man looks up. Meets Anna's eyes. Clearing his throat, he takes Anna's outstretched hand and pulls close to examine it again. "Well,

these don't look as ravaged as the ones in your arm. I see what these treatments have done to torture your poor arm."

"Ah, and not just my arm," Anna shoots back. Her voice croaks. The man lifts his eyes and Anna returns the look. In it is an odd combination of fire and ice. Sorrow and fatigue. Fortitude and resignation. Pride and shame and, mostly, relief. She watches in silence while he proceeds to wrap a rubber tourniquet around her wrist, making the veins in her hand bulge slightly.

"So, would you mind if I played my CD?" Anna asks, her eyelashes fluttering. Her vision is beginning to swerve. Hard shapes and straight lines are turning to butter.

"Oh, no problem," the nurse says. "Do you need help?"

"Not a bit," Anna says. "I have done this all before." She uses her free hand to reach into a satin bag for a pair of headphones. One-handed, she slips the headphones over her sleek hairdo. By now there are several stray black hairs at her moist brow. Anna switches on the CD player, and so when the needle vanishes into a vein in the back of Anna's left hand this time, she is listening to a *cantador* singing a woeful tale of his lost gypsy.

Anna closes her eyes as a *bailora* joins in, dancing in the background; there, now, she can hear her feet clacking rapidly on wood. Besides that, there is a set of castanets rattling and a clang of the *martinetes*, the ironsmiths' metal hammering against metal. The *cantador*'s voice rings up to a prolonged trill just as the young man gets his blood return.

"That will do it," the young man says, filling a small clear tube with Anna's ruby blood. "Now we just need to put the radioactive tracer into the vein and we'll be all set to do your scan."

Anna looks up from her CD, a docile smile on her lips. Her head feels loose, as if it's coming unattached from her shoulders, which are now bare of the shawl. The fan sits closed up in her lap. She blinks, sinking ever deeper into the music.

"Did you know, young man, that *duende* eases all of our pain?" She whispers this, and her words are slightly slurred. He nods.

"Please," she says. "Please state your name?" He hesitates.

"Arturo." He pats her hand once more and starts to pull away. Anna wants to hold his hand there, but her grip comes too slow. He leaves the room, and she goes limp, sinking listlessly into her chair. The pills have taken hold, no doubt, because now she is yawning, and smiling broadly, and dancing on a brightly lit stage that is rising into the air. She laughs. After all this is over she will call her sister, Margarita, and tell her this: that it isn't hard to dance when you are rising toward heaven, because there you can freely pluck oranges and apples from the Garden of Eden. And because you are on chemo, and because everyone feels sorry for you—even God—

He doesn't care one bit that you are there stealing His fruit. And eating it right there in the Garden.

Anna laughs. When the tall young man returns with a small lead box, the one that contains the radioactive isotope, she reaches out to take his hand. He puts the box down and staring hard into her eyes, he readily accepts her hand—and his role in the dance.

Anna watches him, a placid smile on her lips. And then the music turns fiery, and the moment comes. The stage clears and he steps into the white circle of light. His elbows lifted to each side, and his narrow hips immobile, he tips his head back proudly and begins pounding his heels in perfect unison with the *compás*, the rhythm of the music. Ah, but what a pair of legs Arturo has, thundering now against the floor. Yes, she thinks: he is more talented than any partner I have had before.

Now it is her turn to spin: the young man reaches out one hand to her. Mustering all of her grace and dignity, she lifts herself off the chair and thrusts her torso forward. Her bosom swells fully into the satin fluff and ruffles. Moving slowly at first, she begins swiveling and tapping, all the while holding one armful of ruffles at her hips. The other arm stands overhead. Her movements quicken, and soon her hips are twisting, and her feet hammering like a sewing machine. And there, there are her wrists and fingers, all bent at odd angles, giving her hands the look of branches, branches on an orange tree, a tree from which she always plucks her imaginary fruit.

She pauses, out of breath. The two of them—she and her amazing Arturo. They are holding hands, and now, suddenly, they are bowing. Surely it cannot be over already? Together they occupy the stage light. Staring blissfully into the darkness behind her eyes, she feels her heart pump as quickly as her fan, as the young man whispers, "Anna, you were just wonderful."

"Thank you," she whispers back. And then she waits, patiently, for all the clapping to stop. And for the needle to be withdrawn and for the curtain, finally, to fall on all of this.

Dancing.

ANIS SHIVANI

Publisher's Reader's Notes on Recent Submission: "Jane Eyre" by Charlotte Brontë

I don't for a minute buy Jane Eyre's character. Is she saint or mortal? Decide. That business about splitting up her fortune four ways? Implausible. And the forgiveness business—her dead aunt, anyone who crosses her, sooner or later Jane must forgive. So tiresome. How does it square with her stand-up-for-myself persona? Basic inconsistency here. What does this book remind you of, another book that's done it all, with *soooo* much greater conviction—and far less verbiage about gloomy British moors and insufferable madwomen? *The Nanny Diaries!* Now, there's a pair of writers Ms. Bronte might learn some lessons in craft from. If Jane Eyre had a tenth of that kind of ability to draw the reader in, by making the heroine more sympathetic, someone we could fully identify with! I got sick of that "Master" stuff long before the end. Rochester is a villain who plays on little Jane's sympathies, exploits her plainness. And is it necessary to make plainness such a virtue? *Puh-lease*. I like to get an expensive haircut once in a while, and an unnecessary facial—Ms. Bronte would have me trembling with guilt every time I spend money except for a noble purpose. I won't even get into the persistent racism, the objectification of numerous Others, the vilification of the mentally challenged and the colonized peoples—there's enough of that to keep us busy with lawsuits and vitriol, should we ever publish such a book. And it's too long by at least a third. The entire middle part could go. The book gets easier to read once Jane is on the streets, begging, starving, destitute, but then St. John Rivers's tiresome character enters to spoil our identification with Jane. Another impossibly romantic, unworldly, abstract type. Has the writer heard of characters with flesh-and-blood interests? Do any of these characters play sports? Do they like to hunt and fish? And why can't we see them have sex? One can be discreet and yet descriptive. My basic problem with this maddening book is that I just couldn't get totally

interested in Jane's fate. I didn't really care. Perhaps if the writer had made Jane prettier. Why is the writer so hung up about plainness? *Both* the hero *and* heroine ugly? How do we propose selling that to our marketing people? Where would Barnes and Noble place that on their shelves? The anti-self-help manual for those proud of their immunity to plastic surgery? But I suspect even making Jane more attractive wouldn't have helped. The book is in the end unsalvageable because of Jane's fussy, fusty, finicky character. Every moral issue has to be split a hundred ways. We're told we're privy to what goes on in her mind and heart, but this reader at least could never fully enter it. I thought there was an incalculable distance keeping me away from Jane's inner core, whatever that is, because of the supremely high esteem Ms. Bronte holds the character of Jane Eyre in. Maybe the writer struggled too much with the semi-autobiographical aspect when she introduced fantastical elements along with the harsh realism. The madwoman in the attic, the last-minute revelation of Rochester's existing marriage, Jane popping up at her cousins' doorstep, of all the places in England—these are all clumsy plot manipulations not worthy of a writer otherwise as promising as Ms. Bronte. For there is real talent here, some genuine ability to be sympathetic to the working class, the travails of orphaned girls at charity schools, and so on—but the ornate dialogue, the inability to decide between realism and fantasy, the noble construction of Jane Eyre's character, the inherent masochism implied in attraction to Rochester's manipulations, these would all have to go. The writer needs to know: the publishing industry is not in the business of constructing ideal (read, impossible) characters, great role models, if you will. Leave that to our new Christian, evangelical sections. Simply to paint the world as it is is enough.

Decision: Pass, with nice note to writer, encouraging future submissions.

VIET DINH

Conspiracy

On Sundays, Gerald re-examines the evidence.

I know it's his ritual, something he knows, something he can rely on. These hours put him at ease. He sits cross-legged on the living room carpet, leaning forward, belly resting in his lap, and moves scraps of paper in patterns visible only to him. The paper covers most of the floor. He scratches out notes in a shorthand that looks like a cardiogram: wavy lines, blips, dots. The pages are torn out of police notebooks—he grabbed a cartonful before retirement—fringed perforation dangling across the top. It's like assembling a jigsaw puzzle, one of words and reports and interviews, without the nooks and niches to indicate where each piece goes or if any are missing. He has evidence, reports, photographs.

Here are the facts on record:

On May 13 around 10:53 PM, the seventh-floor resident advisor of Barton Hall in Mount Holyoke University received a complaint about loud music. She was on duty downstairs, however, and wouldn't get the message until she had returned to her room, less than an hour later.

Ted Redding arrived at his room, #709, near 11:10. The exact time remains unclear—Gerald has determined that it could have been no earlier than 11:07 and no later than 11:14, given how much time had elapsed on the CD—but in any case, the music was deafening. Ted discovered the door opened no wider than an inch. He reported to the police that it felt as if someone were pushing it closed from the inside. After kicking and heaving his weight against the door, he managed to enter. He noticed his roommate blocking the door with his legs. Since his roommate was a prankster, Ted thought nothing of it. Once his roommate had penny-locked him in the room, wedging pennies between the door and the doorframe, making it nearly impossible to withdraw the lock. And this was on a test day.

Ted turned the music down before noticing his roommate stooped in the closet. Upon closer examination, he saw both ends of a shoelace tied to the closet rod, forming a thin, pendulous U; his roommate was suspended

at the bottom of that U. At first, Ted thought his roommate was fooling around, but when Ted nudged him, to tell him that the game was through, he found his roommate cold and stiff.

Cold and stiff. Gerald has highlighted that part.

He notified campus security. They received the call at 11:18. Lionel Morgan, the head of campus security, arrived at 11:21, felt the roommate's neck, then started a crime scene. Morgan notified Bridgeport police, who arrived at 11:30. No ambulance was called. A representative from the Medical Examiner's Office arrived at 1:24 AM, May 14, and officially declared David Samuel Bayliss, age 22, our son, dead.

I have my own evidence. Nothing physical or concrete—some things I just know. Like this: David was terrible at knot-tying. Terrible. It was the only Boy Scout badge he couldn't earn, though he tried again and again. Gerald told him, "Why do you want to tie knots? That's for sailors," but he spoke privately with the Scoutmaster, because soon after, David received an honorary badge.

I remember David when he was twelve trying to suspend two model airplanes from the ceiling. Gerald had informed him that these sets were particularly complex, meant for 15- and 16-year-olds, and David immediately rebuffed any offers of help. He spent hours cutting out the plastic, winnowing the edges smooth, attaching and gluing delicately, tenderly. He trimmed a brush down to a single hair to trace a thin racing stripe down the side of the Spitfire. One kit came without an axle, so he snipped a small wire for it instead.

David spent so long in his room that I was afraid that he might be sniffing glue; the news mentioned kids who try it once and spend the rest of their lives comatose. But Gerald reassured me, "I've seen plenty of kids who've huffed. Our son isn't huffing." He told me about a teenager who glued his nostrils shut, then got his index finger stuck trying to reopen them. "The more he tried to get them unstuck," Gerald said, "the more his hands got caught. It looked like he was trying to shove his whole hand up his nose." Gerald's police stories always made me laugh.

Once David had finished the models, he wanted to portray the planes dogfighting. He stretched fishing string over his bed, tying the ends to two nails on either side of his room. He wanted to wake up seeing pursuit, a cotton contrail of smoke issuing from the tail of the Zero. But the knots were so weak that the whole set-up crashed to the floor, breaking the landing gear of one and chipping the machine gun of the other.

That night, David shut himself in his room. The next morning, after he'd left for school, I let myself into his room. He put up the planes after all. The string was pulled taut across the ceiling; on either side, he had

wound the string around the nail a hundred times—so tight it would never unravel. Then he had doused the coiled mass with Elmer's glue until it had encrusted hard and white—twin cocoons.

This is not to say that David was incapable of tying those shoelaces in order to hang himself. But I knew my son. He was as stubborn as his father. He would keep trying until he got it right.

The university was so kind after his death. The president and board of regents sent flowers, bouquets in somber colors. David's friends and professors sent condolences. It took me a month to finish the thank-you notes. For David's final viewing, the university provided a shuttle from campus to the funeral home. I couldn't think beyond the minute then; I couldn't live beyond the minute. Not five feet from me, lit from behind with soft white lights—all that was left. I couldn't bring myself to see David—it wasn't him, I kept reminding myself. I had spent years fearing Gerald's death in the line of duty; I had steeled myself for it. That resolve was being put to use now. I wanted to scream, but didn't.

It was Gerald who lost control. He had been crouching beside the coffin; he was like that before the pastor came and didn't budge during the eulogy. But, as if an idea had overtaken him, his head snapped up. Old friends from the force were patting his shoulders, reassuring him; even they were taken aback by the intensity in his eyes. He sprinted out of the church, footfalls thudding on carpet and, less than a minute later, returned with a camera in hand. He snapped pictures of David's body: flash pops and shutter clicks, the battery recharging, the whirring of some inner mechanism. He went through an entire roll in a morbid fervor, and then, without explanation, walked out. No one understood what was happening, least of all me. But now I know: it was the start of the photographic evidence.

Next came the wrangling with the university. Gerald contacted Morgan, the head of security, for copies of the dorm security camera tapes. But Morgan said that there was no need. The case was closed. We were in Morgan's office when he told us this. "We have a protocol for suicides," Morgan explained. I wondered how many times he had done this. Tell the parents.

"Just because something walks like a duck and quacks like a duck doesn't mean it's a duck," Gerald said. He pressed his fists against Morgan's desk, knuckles white. "You want to sweep this into your campus statistics, but this is my son. *My son*." Morgan's desk scraped the floor. I'd never witnessed this part of Gerald before, the part he left at the station house. I knew it existed—he interrogated criminals almost daily—but I thought it had been retired along with his badge. While David was growing up, Gerald had nothing but funny stories for us: the Channel 8 weatherman busted with a ten-pound brick of marijuana, city council members caught

soliciting prostitutes. But there with Morgan: rage, anger—an insatiable need to know. In the end, Gerald obtained the videotape through the Freedom of Information Act.

More evidence: the tape showed the seventh floor hallway every half minute, but at 10:59:07 PM, Gerald noticed a quick movement at the bottom of the screen, a split-second blur. He went over that tape frame by frame, and it was there: a male, face marred by poor resolution, walking towards the stairs.

That's who Gerald is looking for, this mystery man.

Shortly after receiving the tape, Gerald issued the first batch of campus flyers—a plea for information—and installed a tip hotline. The phone sat enshrined on a table of its own. We got eight calls in the first three days, five of them saying how sorry they were, how they knew David, how great a guy he was. Stories about David: once he had been asleep in class, and the professor threw an eraser at his head. For the rest of the day, he walked around, proud of the dusty white rectangle in his hair. The other three callers couldn't provide any information. It was as if they were calling for kicks. After those few calls, silence, a strangling stillness.

Gerald kept a notebook at all times, and during dinner, we ate staring at the phone. When it finally rang, for a moment, we were paralyzed. It was like hearing an air raid siren: I didn't know whether it was a test or if it was real; I could only listen to it wail. Gerald simultaneously picked a pen and the receiver, quick as reflex. By the time he said hello, I hadn't moved.

"You have some information? That's great. Go ahead."

His face looked so hopeful, like he was receiving Communion. His hand bobbled over the paper, and what he considered to be words appeared, looping up and down. Everything moved excruciatingly slow, as if the connection between my eyes and my brain had been misplaced. Then his expression foundered, went from expectant to flat to disgusted. It choked any hope I may have had.

"What are you saying about my son? Who is this?"

I froze. I didn't set my fork down but felt the metal press against my fingers. Even my wedding ring felt heavy.

Gerald spoke calmly, his hand ready to snap the receiver in two. "Listen to me. If I ever find out who you are, I will personally rip your head from its socket. You understand me?" He stormed away and later traced the call to a pay phone in the middle of campus. I wanted to ask who that was, what he had to say, what that was all about—but I already knew.

The night before we cleaned out David's dorm room—only a week after his funeral—I was in his old room at home, straightening. I didn't know whether to pack everything or leave it as it was. The model airplanes were still above his bed, the cotton gray from dust, more like the dirty

smoke of an engine fire than ever. Looking at everything he had—ticket stubs, marbles, dried flowers, telephone numbers on scraps of paper—I thought I could reconstruct his life, fill the void his absence created. I pulled out the drawers in his desk and found: erasers in the shape of robots, handwritten notes about how photosynthesis works, commemorative pens from his days on the Forensics team, a certificate of perfect attendance. I also noticed something tucked in the very back. It was a pair of white briefs, folded into a rigid, white square. It had to be old, because David insisted on wearing boxers since high school. I shook them, and something fell out and lay on the ground like a brick thrown through a window. I knew it meant no good. I was afraid to pick it up. A mother should never see her grown son naked—or dead. But those pictures were David, unmistakable, nude, his clothes in a pile on the floor. His hair was wild and unkempt, as if he'd just wakened up. I didn't recognize the room. Two voices clamored in my head: one screamed, "*Burn them! Burn them!*"; the other examined those Polaroids dispassionately, saying "When was the last time he washed those sheets?" and "I don't know why he doesn't shave more often." Someone had taken those pictures. Someone knew my son intimately: in one, an arm, hairy, reaching to touch him, a gold wristwatch, and David smiling, laughing. Gerald would never know about those pictures—because I would never tell him. I had to be strong for the both of us.

When we went to pick up David's things from his dorm room, Ted told us about the trouble David had gotten himself into. Two weeks before his death, David had left a message on the answering machine of Professor Laurent Daumail, the faculty sponsor of Mount Holyoke's homosexual group. It was a joke, Ted said. They had made plenty of crank calls before. Their favorite: "Hello, China Lion, we have order ready. Very hot, very good. You pick up now."

For Daumail, David said, "Hello, Rectal Rooter. Don't worry about your plumbing problem. We can solve all your problems with a toilet plunger." Daumail had interpreted the call as a threat and reported David. The university put David on probation and ordered him to get counseling. David had appealed, saying that it was only a joke, but the university had not yet acted on the appeal. Daumail, meanwhile, had contacted the Bridgeport D.A.'s office. Weeks later, Gerald finally obtained a copy of the summons. "My God," Gerald muttered, "harassment by communication, criminal conspiracy. How could he have been so stupid?" Gerald's hands shook, as if the sheet was a granite slate. The hearing was to have taken place on May 18, five days after he killed himself. "He should have known better than to call from his own room."

As I gathered David's things from his dorm room, Gerald put Ted through a barrage of questions: *Was Daumail stalking him? Were they enemies? If so, why? Had anyone been lurking around the room? Who would want to hurt him?*

I've seen pictures of Daumail. For an English professor, he looks like a foreigner: skinny, an overabundance of earth tones, goatee of someone trying to look twenty years younger, glasses that hang precariously on the tip of his nose. David was a good 50 pounds heavier, a varsity wrestler in his junior year of high school. If you look at the pictures of them together, there's no connection whatsoever, no possible link between them.

I could tell that Gerald didn't entirely trust Ted. David's posters were off the walls, books in boxes, papers and files ready for pick-up. "He could have misplaced some evidence!" Gerald hissed to me. David's clothes had been folded and stacked in his laundry basket, and, on top, the Bible Gerald had given him as a gift. Gerald had stuck a hundred dollar bill somewhere between the gilt-edged pages; he'd gotten the idea from *Reader's Digest*. David's presence had begun to fade from Ted's life; a new roommate was scheduled to move in. So soon. How could David disappear so fast?

As Gerald brought boxes out to the car, I picked up an essay that David had written for his composition class, a description of his winter holiday. I recognized the printer we had bought four years ago. It skipped lines randomly, wedging small horizontal gaps into the letters. It began: *Christmas is usually a time for coming together, for sharing*—and I started sniffling. Ted stood next to me, uncomfortable, but I wasn't going to cry in front of Ted. I had never cried in front of David. Once, when Gerald and I fought—I don't remember what now, something minor—David came into the room with an armful of dirty dishes. He set them down between us, sat against the wall, and said, "Unless you start throwing things, it's no fun." David knew how to smooth the rough spots between Gerald and me.

When Gerald returned to the dorm room, he took the paper from my hands and read it. He put his arm around me and said, "Honey, it doesn't mean anything. When I was 21, I felt like my parents didn't understand me either. Hell, I'm 56 and still feel that way." Ted came over with a tissue, and Gerald said, "Thank you, Ted." Ted looked at me, as if I had answers. I had none.

Our station wagon, parked temporarily in front of the dorm, sagged from David's belongings. Gerald insisted that we make one more on-campus stop: Daumail's office.

"Nothing adds up," Gerald said. "That Daumail guy is wrapped up in it somehow." I told him that this wasn't going to help, that this didn't mean anything, but Gerald insisted, "Once I get a copy of the coroner's report, I can confirm some suspicions. There's a cover-up going on here. I know it."

On campus, students spread themselves out in the grass, catching sun. A few classes were being held outside, a ring of students around a standing professor. The year was almost over. Neither Gerald nor I had gone to college; we married right after high school. I got my elementary teaching certificate, and Gerald entered the police academy. The day was warm and beautiful—and I wanted to believe that David hadn't killed himself, that we were taking a tour of campus, the three of us. Whenever Gerald held my hand or gave me a peck on the cheek, David made gagging noises from behind us. "Get a room," he said. Maybe Gerald was thinking about this too, because he walked apart from me, with just enough space to let one person through. Gerald mumbled: *Cover up. Conspiracy.*

The meeting with Daumail didn't go well. Gerald was yelling before he walked through the office door: "What did you know about it? What are you hiding?" Gerald had switched into police mode: the voice of authority, of threat. Daumail crouched behind his desk. I tugged at Gerald's shirt, but he shrugged me off, and the interrogation continued. I wished David were there to carry in a sinkload of dirty dishes. He could temper Gerald better than I. Daumail alerted campus security, and they escorted us back to our car. On the windshield, a parking ticket. Already, we had overstayed our welcome.

By the time Gerald received the coroner's report, we were banned from campus—Daumail filed a restraining order against Gerald. And when the report arrived, it meant that none of his old friends in the police department had any more obligations to him: all his favors had been called in. He had pestered them for new leads, new information, photocopies of files, and one by one, they stopped feeling sorry for him. This report was their goodbye note.

Gerald was preparing to smother the campus with a second batch of flyers now that summer break was over. "I still need more information," he said. "Nothing makes sense. Just one piece will make everything fit. Someone must know something."

He spent a week with that report, non-stop. He brought it to the dinner table. He sat in bed reading. He took it with him into the bathroom. He chewed highlighters as he read, gnawing them down to their inky core. His reading glasses were smudged nearly opaque, as if he were too busy to clean them; they magnified his bloodshot eyes, the circles. When I suggested that he take a break, he shook his head. "I'm so close. I can feel it."

I hadn't told him: our son was gay, our son was unhappy—so instead I said, "It doesn't tell us anything we don't already know, does it?" We knew David's blood alcohol level was nearly twice the legal limit that night. We knew how he died.

"Suicides follow a script," Gerald said. "They telegraph their reasons. They write notes. But David still went to classes. He worked his cafeteria job."

"The summons," I said. "He was scared. He didn't want to testify."

"For instance," Gerald continued, "he had undigested pizza in his stomach. A suicide doesn't eat before he kills himself. And he was already cold and stiff when Ted found him," Gerald said. "That places his time of death earlier than 11." He had that highlighted in yellow neon: *time of death approx. 11 PM.* "What if someone smothered him with a pillow while he was drunk and then moved his body?"

"Gerald," I said. I felt it: this investigation was going to kill him, and I had to tell him about our son.

"Listen," he continued. "His tongue was swollen. That's not inconsistent with smothering—plus, the shoelace. I tested it. It broke at 145 pounds. David weighed 197. The coroner's report said that it left a furrow in his neck, but it should have *cut* into his neck."

"That's not the answer," I said. I didn't want to be meek, but as Gerald grew fervent, I only shrank. There was no more balance.

Gerald reached into his folder marked "David" and waved the pictures he had taken at the funeral. "Look. The cut on his lip. How did that get there? There are bruises on his fingers. I didn't notice them before. He was fighting someone off. The coroner didn't find anything *because he wasn't looking*. It looked like a suicide, so he assumed it was one. But it doesn't add up. When you put it together, it makes sense! Look!"

And there, in those pictures, was the truth: my son had been made grotesque, the flash reflecting off the cakey powder, his body so still when what I remembered of him was motion: mowing the lawn; waving to me from his Jeep; swimming in the ocean with nose burned red; standing on a mountaintop with his back to the sun, mouthing, *Wish you were here*. The pictures I had of David were pictures of him moving. And now, here he was: motionless. It was my evidence: *Our son is dead*, the proof I needed to mourn. On the glossy photograph, I traced David's head with my finger. "Yes," I said. "Maybe there is something." And I cried because David wasn't there to tell a joke, to make everything seem trivial. I cried because now Gerald and I would have to rely on each other. And I cried because I had, indeed, discovered something: Gerald had looked everywhere and missed the obvious. I flipped the picture over. On the back, faint gray words, slanted, repeating, *A Kodak Memory*. There was something else, too—my other option, my answer: the blank possibility of never knowing. I would never tell Gerald what I knew. I looked into Gerald's eyes—strained as if a vessel had burst in his head—and told him, "I believe you." It was the only thing that would keep him sane. I wiped the tears with my sleeve, clutching David's snapshot. Gerald moved his jaw, and the years of accumulated scars and wrinkles moved with it, as if sighing.

"I can't do this without you," he said.

We were on our way to campus, a thousand new flyers in the back seat, rubberbanded together. Gerald drove with the window down a crack, a breeze ruffling the pages, and I played with the stapler, popping it open and running my fingers down the row of staples, raised like vertebrae.

Our third batch of flyers. We only had a hundred in the first batch, but those lingered on campus for a while. With the second batch, we saturated the campus, plastering bulletin boards, covering telephone poles, leaving stacks in the cafeterias, slipping them into lockers, dropping piles into mailboxes with a note, "Please distribute!" My hand cramped from stapling: post, punch, post, punch. Gerald interviewed anybody who might have known something, been in the area. We worked furtively, because we were still banned from campus. Yet in one week—all gone. Gerald said that the university was trying to suppress the truth to protect Professor Daumail.

Our last good picture of David was photocopied on these flyers. It was Christmas, and the decorations strewn around the house had been reduced to an empty two-inch by two-inch square. Even though we cropped the photo, you could see part of Gerald's arm around David; David, in turn, was giving his father rabbit ears. It was David's oldest trick; I was holding the camera, trying not to laugh. We hardly had any pictures where he isn't giving one or the other of us rabbit ears. We were supposed to be on our guard. David was smiling—not the face of someone hiding some deep, inner depression. You can see depression in the eyes, Gerald told me, a dark hole that buries you alive as you try to dig out. David's eyes glittered—even in the grainy reproduction, on the flat, dead surface, he looked alive.

Another thing I've never told Gerald: during that second flyer distribution, I stopped by Professor Daumail's office. He reached for the phone, but I reassured him that I was only there to return something.

I handed him the nude Polaroids of David. "I believe these are yours," I said.

He shuffled through them and he closed his eyes, as if flipping through memories. "Let me explain," he said. He opened a drawer and tucked the pictures away. "Your son—" he began. He took a deep breath. "We'd just broken up badly and—"

"I don't want to know," I said. I left his office, but not before letting a flyer fall onto the ground.

On this new flyer, we added a reward: $10,000 for information "leading up to the arrest and conviction of the subject believed to be involved in the death of our son, David S. Bayliss." It was the money we had saved for his graduation gift; David had hinted since high school that he wanted a motorcycle.

Suddenly Gerald slowed the car as we passed two guys walking together on the other side of the street, and his head swiveled. He swore to me later that the shirt of the one on the left looked almost exactly like the shirt of the man on the videotape, that the colors matched almost precisely. To me, the tape seemed filmed in a fuzzy electric blue, ten thousand shades of it. "But remember," he told me, "the wall was green and the carpet was brown, so if you take those as your points of reference, he's wearing a shirt that's striped yellow and gray." I could never judge color in black-and-white movies. It made me wish that you could turn a knob to put color back into television, the way you can take the color out. He also swore that he saw them holding hands. From my vantage, it looked like they had been walking shoulder-to-shoulder, not in any particularly suspicious way.

Gerald cranked his window down and screamed, "Fucking faggots! I'll smash your goddamn brains in!" and his body tilted as he grabbed for something under the seat. I broke out in a cold sweat. There wasn't even a moment to hope that I wasn't too late. I grabbed his free arm and told him to stop, because we needed to get to campus before it closed, so that the security guards wouldn't throw us out. He didn't stop the car, but paused, and said, "You're right." I looked behind us: the two guys stood perplexed, their faces receding.

I dropped my purse on the floor, a pretense to reach under the seat and move whatever he had been going for—baseball bat? gun?—out of his grasp. The carpet was sticky from spilled drinks, matted from when Gerald had forgotten to roll up the windows before a rainstorm. I found candy wrappers, bottle caps, loose change, pens. Without taking his eyes from the road, Gerald asked, "What are you looking for?"

He looked so old. He never used to hunch over the wheel; before, he sat with his back straight as a soldier's. And now, he stooped. He squinted when there was no sun. Even his gray hair seemed older, hairs dingy, discolored.

"Nothing," I said. "I'm not looking for anything." There was nothing under the seat.

We drove in silence for a while. Then, as if he'd been holding it in, he beat the steering wheel with his fists. The keys jangled in the ignition. "It's not true," he said, teeth clenched. Gerald wheezed, his face heart-attack red, "It's not true." He grabbed the wheel; the whole column shook, as if he were pulling it out. I was afraid the car would swerve, crash into a telephone pole, but it stayed straight.

I realized: all this time I had been wrong. I thought I was protecting him from the truth, but he already knew. He wasn't able to say it—he might never be able to say it—but he knew how David died. We had failed our son, and the investigation was not how he died, but why. We each had our

evidence, but it led to the same conclusion; I couldn't take Gerald's conspiracy from him.

I put my hand on Gerald's lap.

"We'll get to the bottom of this," I said.

For now, we had balance.

Gerald took a deep breath.

"We should get to campus," he said.

In the backseat, David's flyers fluttered, an animated flipbook. It looked as if his lips were moving, but I couldn't make out what he was saying.

There's one piece missing. I see Gerald murmur it. He deliberates long and intense, and comes up blank. I clear the dishes, wash them, put them away, and he's still there in the living room, rocking back and forth. I go into the bedroom and turn on the television, keeping the volume low so that his concentration isn't broken. It's well after the news and the late show and the late late show and the news again before he comes in, exhausted. I move over as he climbs into bed, silent, falling asleep almost immediately. I don't sleep as easily as he; instead, my head propped on a pillow, I watch the moon. It's a hook in the sky, suspended by wires and nails unseen. When he starts snoring, an unrested, grumbling discontent, I begin to sink. Even then, especially then, I sense one piece is missing as well, but the more we reach for it, the more it eludes us, like a man stepping out of camera range.

E. M. SNOW

Dolor

To get it right without trying, do not think
of Keats's coughing, of lucid flashmarks, of dusk
caught in heartwood and distance. Try to stay out
of Dickinson's heavy white perfumes,
honeysuckle tangles where I am the fly
in her Venus trap of disquiet. Staring into light
makes a web, and dot by dot, water gems,
squares of her letters, ghosts.

For Anna Akhmatova, take care; do not float
above her stove. Look into the sparks—these
were her papers, three years of history, now
ashes. Like dark moths they fall on snow.
Dear grandmother, why do I try to keep congress
with poets on the other side? The leaves
flame lime to yellow, then scarlet
caught, coming down.

Broken Garden

I was old enough to know better. Not
to have spread the dining room chairs all over
the room. I leapt from lily pad to lily pad, until one

ripped out its muddy root, carried me with it
skimming across the varnished water
and crashed into the china cabinet.

The last family heirloom: stained dark, clawed feet,
two elongated lions showing their angry tongues,
Mayan gods of the underworld.

It was there before the Civil War and after
my great-grandmother's only son disappeared
in the Pacific. I was there to watch her

when she cried over it, ninety-four years old and not
a crier. She sobbed into her muddy garden boots
anyway, lugged the shovel out to the shed.

The money in the coffee can couldn't fix
the cabinet. The antique man in *Noah's Ark* sat silent.
Not enough cash for shipping, for Italian masters,

for their healing furnaces, for each open palm
to deliver the pane to Abbeville
where the brass knocker waited on her front door.

Back in the dining room, the curved side glass
cracked. A green light came out of it
and suddenly I knew how the man

in the broken submarine must have felt. The groan
of the entire ocean, already against
his lungs.

Four Trains a Day

Trains? What trains? The landlords lived here
so long, couldn't hear them anymore.
Here it comes. No, it doesn't—
the smell of rain

for someone who lives
through the wet season where dirt
blends to mud, releases darkness,
and even daylight, its humidity, is a cloud.

How long must one live
in a quiet country to hear
the trains again?

How long, without rain,
to miss the thunder? To sense
the loss of water? To call it drought.

Leaf in the Pool

The chair, a paper, creased once
and left open, soaks in the night.

Simple origami of the diver
and the walls at the shallow end.

Song of water jets. Song of a door
that opens, drowns, opens. Song

of the Sirens. Gray sky—
white paint on rollers—ashes

on bunched cloth tapped a ceiling.
Song of rain on leaves, loose taps

on shoes—they walk on the pool.
Color of the cloudless sky. Plastic

outdoor lanterns and one fog light,
the pool fish, risen to the surface

as the forecast predicted. Small song
of rain, of leaf. Of fireflies,

flambeaus in the wooded hillside,
an enemy camp. The boy

too young for war. Still time
for him to sleep through the night.

FU-JEN CHEN

Trauma as Trope in Japanese-American Literature: The Aim and the End

In the beginning, there was trauma: the Genesis story in the Bible "marks subsequent history as post-traumatic" (Woolfork 233); psychoanalytically speaking, everyone has been traumatized from the start of life. Lacanian psychoanalysis assumes that each person is first traumatized by the primordial loss of eternal life on the level of the organism (Verhaeghe 81), then by an encounter with sexuality, and next by "the wound of language" (Apollon 105). As the living being is traumatized linguistically, so is the subject being constituted. Inasmuch as there is a structural and logical limitation of language, there is always an excess, a surplus. The inevitability of the signifying structure predetermines an alienated symbolic identity (leaving no possibility of wholeness or synthesis). Such a trauma is structural, cultural, and universal since one is always caught in a network of signifiers, either in written or spoken form. Though the symbolic or signification varies from culture to culture, we all share the same causality and starting point. We speak as an effect of trauma, our being centering on this traumatic *thing*. As "the beyond-of-the-signified," the traumatic *thing*, "characterized by the fact that it is impossible for us to imagine it," becomes "the cause of the most fundamental human passion."[1] While every human subject starts with a structurally caused trauma, there might be accidental real traumas later on top of this structurally determined trauma. The interaction between external, real traumas, and internal, structural traumas, complicates the constructive process of individual subjectivity. More than individual identity, a collective forming or giving of real and structural traumas sustains national and human history. As for the "Nation-Thing," Slavoj Žižek argues that what unites a nation is not simply a shared set of values or beliefs but "a shared relation toward the [traumatic] *Thing*" (*Tarrying* 201). Likewise, human history, in the words

of Cathy Caruth, can be seen as "precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (24).

Besides trauma as a structural inevitability, what does *trauma* literally mean? Trauma conjures up many meanings: it extends generally from a body wound or injury produced by violence or any extrinsic agent, through physical impact specifically to the chest, head, or elsewhere in somatic medicine (e.g., orthopaedic trauma), to a complex history of ideas in relation to hysteria, shell shock, war neurosis, and the currently fashionable concept of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Though the idea of trauma as a single event is featured in the DSM-III criteria (American Psychiatric Association), an event can no longer ever capture all the meaning of the term. Trauma is not simply another word for disaster since not all disasters are traumatic; a trauma does not always require a dreadful cause, though it produces tremendous effects. Even the tremendous effects produced by trauma cannot be applied to all victims. Psychologist D. M. Magids in her findings concludes that "traumas of the Holocaust may not have had pathological effects on all the survivors" and "the experience may have had the opposite effect on some" (252). Her study supports the observation that "some survivors of the Holocaust not only managed to resume their lives but tended to be more successful than other U.S.-born Jews of a comparable age" (Waxman 62).

To traumatized victims, then, what is the determinant or the condition that turns an event into a trauma? Since the cause of a trauma, however, is inaccessible to language, any description of it has been only a symbolic representation of its effects—not causes. Rather than revealing the cause of the trauma, Žižek defines its key feature as an already established fact: "The essence of the trauma is precisely that it is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe. All we have to do is to mark repeatedly the trauma as such" (*Know* 272-73). Although the cause of the trauma is inaccessible, its immense effects make the trauma itself a great trope. It is one frequently employed by filmmakers, writers, critics, analysts, historians, and many others in different social praxis as an access point not only to unspeakable but unforgettable histories in a social-political context but also to haunting memories that always return in each individual life. In historical and individual contexts, the traumatic history of Japanese-American (as well as Japanese-Canadian) internment is also explored as a trope for the recovery of history and individual treatment for "health." Using Japanese-American literature (including works by Japanese-Canadians) about the internment, I shall examine how the trope of the trauma of the internment is approached historically and clinically. My examination of the tension evoked by the two modalities—historical and national; clinical and individual—attempts to answer the

questions: What is the aim of the trope of trauma and where does the trauma "end"?

Three months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 9102 on March 18, 1942 "Establishing the War Relocation Authority in the Executive Office of the President and Defining Its Functions and Duties." This Act made it legal for the United States to "relocate" Japanese-American families from their homes, mainly on the West Coast, and forced them into concentration camps, also known as relocation camps, in Idaho, Arizona, Utah, California, Arkansas, Colorado, Wyoming, and North Dakota.[2] Living in barracks with the barest essentials, approximately 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, though less than one-tenth of one percent of the total U. S. population, inspired fear and hatred in the rest of the American people. They were seen as "enemy aliens" or, worse, "the enemy" in their homeland. This act committed by the American government was justified simply for the sake of national security. Like the United States, immediately after the outbreak of World War II in the Pacific, Canada passed the "Order in council PC 1486" and proceeded to announce a policy of mass evacuation of Japanese Canadians from the so-called coastal zone. The Canadian government removed 23,000 persons of Japanese ancestry, seventy-five percent of them Canadian citizens, from a designated protected zone within a one-hundred-mile radius of British Columbia. The Canadian "Interior Housing Project" was more cruel and drastic than the United States "relocation." Unlike Japanese Americans in the United States, whose families were generally kept together, male Japanese Canadians, separated from their families, were sent to road camps in the British Columbia interior, to sugar beet farms on the prairies, or to internment in a Prisoner-of-War camp in Ontario. At the same time, women, children, and older people were moved inland to internment camps in the interior of British Columbia, many of which were derelict ghost towns from a former gold rush. Unlike Japanese Americans, Japanese Canadians were not allowed to join the military until after 1945 and, despite the end of the war, until 1949 it was illegal for the Japanese Canadians to return to Vancouver or western Canada.[3]

Both the United States and Canada are nations of immigrants as well as multiracial societies. But their history of internment camps during World War II—along with other issues, notably black slavery and racism directed toward non-white minorities—undermines the oftstated commitment of both nations to a multicultural society—to America as "melting pot" and Canada as "cultural mosaic." Until a movement toward redress in the 1980s, people in both nations had been unwilling to face the

existence of "concentration camps" in their own lands. Even Japanese internees lulled themselves into believing the propaganda of the 1940s in order to sustain an idealized image of a benevolent and protective nation. Both consciously and unconsciously, people, either witnesses or targets of historical catastrophe, all refused to be reminded of the trauma so that they might continue to regard their nations as likable, realizing only their idealized form as worthy of admiration.

Such repressed traumas not only maintain the ontological consistency of these and other democratic nations, but also constitute the center of national history around which language keeps circling. As a core of national history, trauma can be "ideologically manipulated, reinforced and exploited" (Farrell 7). As an interpretive strategy in reference to the "inaccessible" and "unspeakable," trauma may become an excuse to avoid the need to visualize or verbalize since it has been already beyond imagination and symbolization. The use of trauma as a trope to represent the inaccessible and unspeakable explains the obscurity of many early narratives on the Japanese-American internment. For example, first appearing in 1957, John Okada's only published work of fiction, *No-No Boy*, had been ignored for two decades by the American public and unwelcome in the Japanese-American community. In 1976, in the afterword of the second edition of the novel, Frank Chin said that he "got the impression his family was ashamed of the book" (256). Chin further mentioned that after Okada's death (1923-1971), his widow wanted to offer all of his manuscripts to the Japanese-American Research Project at UCLA, but the manuscripts were rejected and the widow was even encouraged to destroy the papers (256). The silencing of this novel demonstrates how the trope of trauma represents an "unspeakable" *thing*. Indeed, the novel deals with numerous ineffable *things* including madness, racism, the relocation camps, the taboo of "no-no," and ethnic characteristics of "Japaneseness." These *things* were haunting not only to the writer and the characters in the novel, but also to the American public, the Japanese-American community, and readers, who had refused to see or hear. Thus, in regard to trauma as "unspeakable," it is easy to understand why very little academic research based on personal interviews, unlike Okada's fictional characters, of the Japanese-American Draft Resisters in World War II has come out since then. Published in 2001, Muller's *Free to Die for Their Country* is composed of court cases, government records, internment camp newspapers, and, more important, interviews of eleven resisters. Labeled as no-no boys, these resisters still face criticism from their families, communities, and Japanese-American veterans and shamefully remain silent even today.

Moreover, historical narratives on the trauma of internment vary along with their different relations toward Symbolic master signifiers such as

"Nation," "Class," "Ethnicity," "Gender," and so on. Both appealing to children of nine to twelve, Shizuye Takashima's *A Child in Prison Camp* and Yoshiko Uchida's *Journey to Topaz* clearly show how the trope of the trauma is exploited differently in children's literature about the traumatic history of the internment. The titles of these two books immediately reveal the writer's ideological manipulation: *A Child in Prison Camp* directly accuses the Canadian government of casting "children" into "camp" or, rather, "prison camp"; yet, *Journey to Topaz* merely suggests a trip to a place (especially if readers don't know about the historical background of the Japanese-American internment). Moreover, the beginning scene in each book also shows their different elaboration of the trope of trauma according to their position toward the traumatic *thing*. *A Child in Prison Camp* opens with the narrator expressing intense emotions toward a violent scene of the evacuation of Japanese-Americans to internment camps:

> An empty bottle is tossed in the air.
> I stand away, hold my mother's hand.
> Angry, dark curses, a scream. A train window is broken.
>
> Most of the men have been drinking.
> An angry man is shouting.
> The men are dragged violently into the trains. (149)

In striking contrast, *Journey to Topaz* begins with a depiction of a happy American family life on a Sunday, in December, a time when the child narrator feels "the tingling excitement of Christmas in the air" (1). Father, Mother, Son, Daughter, and two pets comprise a picture of an ideal American family: Father is working in the garden, Mother is preparing a Sunday dinner, Son is studying in the University library, and Daughter is playing around with her pets, named Salt and Pepper. The entire picture of a harmonious life is presented in *Journey to Topaz* before a "trip" to the camp.

Clearly, the titles and the opening scenes immediately disclose how disparate are the personal and social relations toward verbalizing the Traumatic *thing*. First, the Takashima family of working-class background in *A Child in Prison Camp* is distinct from the Sakane family of middle-class background in *Journey to Topaz*. Whereas Mr. Takashima works as a farmer, one later called a troublemaker in the intern camp, Mr. Sakane, employed by one of Japan's largest business firms, works with the Caucasian administrative staff in the camp. Their professions indicate just how different the political positions are held, on the one hand, by the Japanese nationalists and, on the other, by the assimilationists. Whereas *A Child in Prison Camp* expresses more sympathy with the Japanese

nationalists' actions and feelings, *Journey to Topaz* identifies more with social integration and assimilation. Thus, it is not surprising that *Journey to Topaz* ends with another "journey," one back to the happier world outside the camp. Nor is it surprising that, in an epilogue and an afterword, *A Child in Prison Camp* ends with a speech from 1964 in which Prime Minister Lester first admitted that the Japanese-Canadian internment was "a black mark," and with the official apology in 1988 in which Prime Minister Brian Mulroney mentions financial redress (96).

In addition to class and nationality, the targeted reader (children or adults) and the representation of the trauma (visual or verbal) also shift the focus on the use of trauma as trope in Asian-American literature about the internment. Targeting preschoolers and first-graders, picture books about the internment tend to employ the trauma as trope on the level of iconic images. Since the psychic life of children is predominantly imagistic, traumatic experiences involve intense visual, spatial, and somatic elements, and their traumatized memories appear more as iconic images than descriptive narratives. In the light of Lacanian theory, for children (especially preschoolers) traumatic memories tend to be stored in the perceptual field as a picture through which they experience and organize traumatic events. For children, traumatic stories are made more accessible not by episodic narratives but by visual images. In a child's book on a traumatic phenomenon, pictures capture the mind of child-audiences in a perceptual process that incorporates the images in the book and children's own traumas into a subtle modification in hopes that a visual gestalt is established. That is, haunting traumatic phenomena, once retained in a spotty, incomplete manner, are better located in space and visualized as a whole, as a unity that contains the flux of the traumatic *thing* and helps facilitate self-agency, self-coherence, and self-integrity.

For example, appealing to audiences under eight, *Home of the Brave* centers on children (many children appear in the story) and offers comparatively few narratives but presents large and eye-catching paintings. In *Home of the Brave*, renowned author and illustrator Allen Say presents a dreamlike journey through which the central character, a man of Japanese ancestry, symbolically confronts the trauma of his family's incarceration in a Japanese-American internment camp during World War II.[4] Throughout the book, the watercolor "illustrations," rather than descriptive narratives, function as anchoring points to quilt a "picture" of trauma, the realm of physical-visual-spatial orientation which is closely related to our sense of bodily coherence and identity in space. In the picture on the front cover (which appears again on page nineteen), we first encounter a man and two interned children, or, rather, two small "dark figures" at a far distance from a row of identical wooden houses set against a stormy sky. The overwhelming background constitutes a threat to one's

(especially a child's) sense of bodily coherence and unity. Even as early as the front cover, the traumatic effect is visually presented in spatial and physical terms.[5] To further "master" the traumatic *thing*, older children move on to the linguistic field. There, language provides a "proper" context to turn the traumatic *thing* into a "meaningful" narrative: as the *thing* is meaningful, it becomes bearable.

The gender of the narrator or the writer also greatly alters the shape of the verbalization of the trauma about the internment. Many stories on the internment narrated through a girl's (or a woman's) perspective tend to situate the historical trauma in the domestic setting, the place that sometimes provides support (*Nisei Daughter*, *Obasan*, *Naomi's Road*, *Journey to Topaz*, *The Bracelet*, and *Desert Exile*) and yet sometimes becomes another source to traumatize the family members, especially children (*Farewell to Manzanar*, *A Child in Prison Camp*, and *Obasan*). In these stories, the historical trauma is interwoven with domestic and personal traumatic events, for example, child sexual abuse, a tyrannical father, fire scenes, deaths of animals and people, life-threatening illness or accidents. By contrast, a boy's or man's account of the trauma of the internment emphasizes the voice of an individual, one either as a victim (*No-No Boy*), a hero (*Baseball Saved Us*), or an adventurer (*Home of the Brave*). When a girl or a woman looks for comfort in family or friendship (such as a "Bracelet," a symbol of friendship in *The Bracelet*), a boy or man may look for a redemptive journey or a heroic act (a winning home run in *Baseball Saved Us*).

Neither numeration, verbalization, nor visualization escape the meaning imposed by the Other since figures, words, or images about the trauma of internment are from the Other, about the Other, and for the Other—they remain subject to the Symbolic Other. Statistics tend to distract our attention from seeing internment as a traumatic thing: numbers, not sufferings, are considered; calculation, not judgment, is involved. The "facts" of dates, names, times, and numbers try to integrate the trauma into our universe at little expense and block our way to confronting the event as the traumatic *thing*. Allen Say explains in the epilogue what motivated him to work on *Home of the Brave*, a book about children and the trauma of a family's incarceration in the internment camp:

> During the retrospective show of my work at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, I had the opportunity to see its exhibition of the World War II internment camps in the United States. Some ***facts*** and ***numbers*** were familiar to me—more than ***120,000*** Japanese Americans interned in ***ten*** camps in ***six*** western states—but now the ***statistics*** took on ***a human face and voice***. I stared and listened. And what I saw and heard turned into yet another personal journey. This is that story. [Emphasis mine]

Indeed, Say's *Home of the Brave* becomes a story of "a human face and voice," *humanizing* the traumatic *thing*, and turning historical facts or statistics into narratives and pictures.

Yet words and images cannot avoid running the risk of neutralizing and depoliticizing the traumatic event in a historical context. The trauma of the internment can be easily dissolved within a story. For example, based on an actual memoir (not the writer's),[6] Eve Bunting's *So Far from the Sea* depicts a seven-year-old girl who with her family visits Grandfather's grave at the Manzanar internment camp. There her father had been interned at her age and there her grandfather died in 1942, so far from the sea. Her father's traumatic memory is gradually revealed—the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the evacuation bus, the scenes behind barbed wire, watchtowers with searchlights, and crowded schoolrooms at the camp. Paralleled with the girl narrator's depiction at the present time of the family's final visit to the site, the traumatic memory is gentrified by its use of realistic documentary depictions and the use of a metonymy at the end of the book. In honor of her grandfather, the girl leaves a neckerchief in the shape of a sailboat on his grave. The symbol offers a metonymical shift and suggests "moving on," a movement that implies not only "freedom" but also an act of letting go the past: the family pays a last visit to the site before moving across the country to Boston. The process of re-inscripting the historical event depoliticizes the traumatic *thing* by turning it into objective, natural facts and quilting it within existing significations of ideology such as "freedom" or "progression."

Similarly, in Ken Mochizuki's *Baseball Saved Us*, the recount of the dehumanizing effects of the internment is gentrified by a celebration of American heroism and individualism. The narrator, "Shorty," a Japanese-American boy in the camp, emerges as a heroic figure by hitting a championship-winning home run; once an "easy out," Shorty gains his self-worth during and after the war by his heroic deeds on the field. Again, beginning with fulfillment of an immigrant family's "American dream," Yoshiko Uchida's *Journey to Topaz* ends with another "journey," one in hope back to the ideal American life. Though used to contrast with the cruel treatment at the camp, the notion of the American dream that prevails throughout the story, however, neutralizes the traumatic accident with a linear narrative of two "journeys" back and forth. In short, verbalization or visualization of the trauma is always in danger of subjugating it to hegemonic ideology (even genocide or slavery can be incorporated into a national myth). Further, to transcribe the traumatic *thing* into a historical fact within a lineal time frame is subject to forgetting what has been remembered: remembering becomes a form of forgetting.

Rather than transforming the trauma into a neutral, objective fact, we should take advice from Žižek to "*encircle* again and again the site of the [traumatic] Thing, to mark it in its very impossibility [, and] in its non-integrated horror" (*Know* 272; emphasis in the original). To encircle the trauma and avoid its gentrification and depoliticization, we should keep mobilizing the trope of trauma in order to mark it repeatedly. The mobilization of the traumatic *thing*, however, is never enough. We face two dilemmas. First, the mobilization of the traumatic *thing* enacts a tension between a need to ceaselessly remember the trauma in the historical context and the danger of re-traumatizing its victims in the clinical setting. Though an insistence on mobilizing the traumatic *thing* helps to politicize the historical trauma of internment, the same act jeopardizes its victims by destabilizing their entire existences and re-evoking their utmost suffering and anxiety. For traumatized children, the relative stability of the haunting *thing* in the controllable dimension is greatly demanded. Regulated with a fixed visual-spatial picture or a verbal-sequential narrative, the trauma is temporarily located and the sense of mastery of the traumatic *thing* facilitates self-agency, self-coherence, and self-integrity. A failure to contain the flux of the traumatic *thing* will impede the formation of ego. Second, though the mobilization of the traumatic *thing* opens an unlimited space, the recovery of historical facts will not foster any fundamental change of the Other; in a similar vein, analysands in the clinical setting won't change just because they are offered loads of explanations or interpretations about their traumatic past (Dunand 243-56). Verbalization and visualization merely unveil the traumatic *thing*, but do not disturb the core: the traumatic *thing* remains active and is subject to returning.

Facing the above dilemmas—the danger of re-traumatizing victims while the *thing* is always present without a fundamental change in the clinical and historical sense—we recognize that a mere verbalization or visualization of the trauma is not enough. How do we employ the trope of the trauma, without re-traumatizing its victims, and produce a political, social, and psychological change? This question leads us to the end of Lacan's theory regarding the aim of analysis. The analytic treatment in Lacan can be first delineated in terms of what is *not*. Different from therapy, Lacanian analysis does *not* aim to "cure," that is, to provide medicalization or emotional support, suggest an ideal model for identification, re-educate some social norms, and ultimately help traumatized survivors to reform relationships of trust with the Other. From a therapist's viewpoint, the recovery of traumatized victims within the existing structure of power indicates a sign of successful healing and the end of therapy. Within the therapeutic framework, John Okada's *No-No Boy*, as in most readings of it in the 1970s through the 1980s, becomes a

narrative of a "redemptive" journey in which the fragmented protagonist searches for "wholeness." The progression of healing emphasizes the hopeful ending and the transformation of the protagonist, Ichiro, from a "no-no boy" to one saying "yes" to the future through his re-identification with "correct" figures and his re-adaptation to the dominant Other in terms of the practice of exclusion of "Japaneseness" and inclusion of "Americanness."[7] As suggested in my earlier remarks, Yoshiko Uchida's *Journey to Topaz* apparently starts on a similar progressive journey toward recovery of the American dream that functions as a panacea for the wound caused by the traumatic incident of the internment.

The "ideal" outcome of therapeutic treatment is well demonstrated by a character in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, Stephen, who appears as a model with whom a traumatized survivor is expected and encouraged to identify at the end of therapy. Completely assimilating himself into the dominant Symbolic, Stephen regulates his desire—to desire the Other's desire—accepts a new symbolic position assigned by the Other, and eradicates any trace of Japanese culture in the economy of his psyche's structure. Marrying a woman of English as well as French blood, Stephen, an internationally acclaimed concert pianist, is "always uncomfortable when any *Thing* is 'too Japanese'" (261; emphasis mine), makes "himself unfamiliar with speaking Japanese" (277), dislikes the Japanese food Obasan offers, and further avoids Obasan and anyone else who embodies too much Japaneseness. His "success" and his "recovery" from the traumatic past are achieved at the expense of the negation of his Japanese heritage and his own desire. To *survive*—to stay *healthy* and *happy*—Stephen is encouraged (or forced) to align himself with the Symbolic of Canada. To rationalize and justify his own traumatic experience (as a victim of Canadian racism and the internment) as politically necessary or even protective, he may indeed turn prison camps into the "Interior Housing Projects" the Canadian government claims them to be.

In contrast to the case of Stephen as a "success," the protagonist's mother in *No-No Boy* is definitely a failure who represents the result a therapist endeavors to prevent from happening to his or her patients. Throughout the novel, the mother, a Japanese immigrant who carries no subjective signifiers in the new Symbolic, hardly speaks on her own. Instead, she is always referred to as "the mother" rather than by her name, a name that appears only in chapter six when her husband recalls their lives in Japan. Indeed, only in Japan is the mother positioned as a symbolic subject with a proper name; in the New World, she loses her voice as well as her name and is reduced to a limited set of symbolic or stereotypical features. Reacting to racial oppression and traumatic experiences in the United States, the mother turns to fanatically embracing Japanese

nationalism. Strongly believing that Japan is unconquerable and Japan's glorious victory in the war will bring her eventual return to Japan, the mother withdraws from the Symbolic, regresses to a condition of "psychosis," and finally commits suicide. Hers is an act resulting from her "inappropriate" identification with the Imaginary other of Japan, her refusal to go through a therapeutic process of re-adaptation to the dominant Other and to desire as the Other desires.

Opposite to the aim of therapy—to stay "happy" and "healthy"—the goal of Lacanian psychoanalysis is to bring into existence the subject who does not need to live up to the demands of the Other and thus is no longer subjected to the Other. It is "the subject of jouissance" who has traversed his or her most basic fantasy and is "living out the drive" (Fink 205-17; Lacan, *Seminar XI* 46). The new Lacanian subject is the enjoying subject or the "posttraditional subject" who is oriented to jouissance and "den[ies] constraints of castration and aim[s] beyond the pleasure principle" (Mellard 396). No longer attached to the deficiency of the Other by trying to answer, fulfill, repress, or avoid it, the subject of jouissance is able to recognize the existence of a fundamental lack in the Symbolic as the necessary primal condition for the existence of the subject. Yet to recognize the lack of the Symbolic does not mean submitting oneself to social and political inequality. It means, rather, that the new recognition of the lacking, desiring Other stops one's blind pursuit of the fantasy of "complete" or "whole" being—whether as an American or a Canadian. Neither security, wholeness, nor closure exists, and being American or Canadian, for ethnic minorities, does not mean "whole." The subject is nothing but a "place holder" (Dunand 248); Canada or the United States is anything but a kingdom of totality and sufficiency. Both the subject and the Other are lacking, desiring, and inconsistent.

This recognition of the lack of the Other is the first step the subject must take in order to remain psychologically mobile without remaining stuck in the Other's desire or demand. It thus opens the possibility for the subject to take a new position relative to the traumatic *thing*. When the subject of jouissance is able to face and symbolize the *thing*, it may establish a new link between thoughts and feelings and ultimately identify with that jouissance which the *thing* evokes. Such identification does not suggest one must "enjoy the humiliation." Rather, it takes the place of what is forever lacking and provides the subject with a unique organization of jouissance to emerge as the agent of a particular desire to live on. The subject begins to speak as "I" instead of "me." He or she may still be victimized, but he or she is no longer a victim. He or she is able to say "I was," "I did," "I will," or "I want to" rather than blaming others or the Other or excusing himself or herself by saying "It just happened to me,"

"Who did this to me?" or "That is my fate" (Fink 62). The subject, as Žižek suggests, can finally experience his or her life "as a fully subjectivized, positive 'yes!' to [his or her] life" and "make [oneself be] seen as the Thing" (*Ticklish* 149-50, 301).

In Japanese-American and Japanese-Canadian literature about the internment, the fully developed subject of jouissance is rarely depicted, and protagonists demonstrate only a potential transformation, such as, notably, Ichiro in *No-No Boy* or Naomi in *Obasan*. Gary, a minor character only sketchily depicted in *No-No Boy*, but vividly characterized as the subject of jouissance, is the one who indicates the end and the aim of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Unlike Emily in *Obasan* or other no-no boys in *No-No Boy*, Gary does not bury himself in blaming the Other. Unlike Obasan, Gary does not commit the conspiracy of silence by repressing the traumatic experiences via the practice of conscious and unconscious amnesia. Unlike Stephen or many "yes-yes" boys, Gary does not desire as the Other desires nor rationalize the traumatic past in the eye of the Other. Unlike the mother in *No-No Boy*, Gary does not regress into a pre-symbolic stage. Rather, he assumes the traumatic *thing* as the nucleus of his being, both creating his particular symptoms and identifying with the particular form of his jouissance. He *enjoys* those symptoms of his own that provide him consistency and jouissance.

Before the war, Gary, like many minority youths, was unable to move on or take any action, and was stuck in the Other's desire as well as demand. He wished to be an artist but just could not act: "Before, it was talk [. . .], talking about life and sex and philosophy and history and music and real art [. . .] but never moving and continuing to talk and dream [. . .] It wasn't once in a while. It was all the time. Weeks, months, years, talking and squirming [. . .] I wasted a lot of time" (223). After years in prison during the war, he tells Ichiro that "I got the talk out of my system. I died in prison. And when I came back to life, all that really mattered for me was to make a painting [. . .] It gives me peace and satisfaction" (223-24). After the war, Gary gains access to the truth of his desire, subjectifies the cause of his own desire, and, further, enjoys his desire. His identification with the traumatic "no-no" *thing* enables him first to recognize the lack of the Other. The label "no-no" marks him and many other no-no boys as social outcasts or, rather, as themselves the unspeakable *thing*. But Gary recognizes that he and many others serve as the *thing* that holds together the Symbolic, America, and offers a fantasy of "America" as a consistent entity without contradictions and as a realm of totality without lack. A painter, Gary later confesses, "I don't blame them one bit for not hesitating to kill us. You [Ichiro] and I are big, black *marks*" (228; emphasis added). As such marks, Gary and other no-no boys represent a "stain" in the

harmonious picture, a "stain" in Japanese-American communities, and a "stain" in the big Other (the American public). It is, however, the stain that, paradoxically, keeps the picture "harmonious," "consistent," and "whole."

While Gary assumes the traumatic *thing* as the nucleus of his being and creates his particular symptoms, his identification with this particular form of jouissance frees him from the Other and gains him access to the truth of his desire. Purging his system of "talk," Gary buries himself in his art, living to create. Reassuming his cause of desire—*the thing*—Gary works to produce a new metaphor that brings out a new configuration of thoughts and modifies his subjective position with respect to the cause of his desire rather than that of the Other. Gary confesses that he feels "like a guy that's come back from the dead," and he is not bothered "one single bit" by the world (226). Gary says that "What was unfortunate"—*the thing*—for Ichiro "was the best Thing that ever happened" to him (224). A "no-no" that becomes the *thing* organizes his unique form of enjoyment; the subjectification of no-no separates Gary from the Other's demand as well as the Other's desire, and further reconstitutes his being in relation to the *thing* that produces consistency and jouissance. In addition to literary characters like Gary, traumatized victims in real life also demonstrate the subject of jouissance. Slavoj Žižek tells us of two, one "a Polish Jew who survived Auschwitz and, despite the pressure of Communist power, refused to leave for the West. Asked by journalists about the reasons for his insistence," the survivor "answered that every time he makes a visit to the site of the camp, he notices a concrete block, a remainder of some camp building—he is himself like this mute concrete block, the only important thing is that he returns, that he is there." Žižek suggests that "Claude Lanzmann did the same in his holocaust documentary *Shoah*: he renounced in advance every attempt to reconstruct the 'reality' of the Holocaust." Instead, says Žižek, "by means of numerous interviews with survivors, with peasants who today live on the site of Auschwitz, by means of shots of desolated remnants of the camp, [Lanzmann] encircled the impossible place of the Catastrophe" (*Know* 272).

CODA

Applied to individual treatment or literary study, Lacan's psychoanalysis also speaks for and to social pathology, treating the world as a textual clinic, and directing social, political, and cultural operations. His theory operates in relation to both individual subjects and society as a whole. In Lacan, a real social change is brought about by the interrogation of social-cultural operations, the exposure of the hidden cause of social-cultural desire, and the emergence of new master signifiers. Mark Bracher explains

that "any real social change must involve not just changes in laws and public policy but alterations in the ideals, desires, and jouissance of a significant number of individual subjects—precisely the sorts of alteration that psychoanalytic treatment involves" (73). The Other must confront the *thing*—the issue, for instance, of no-no and concentration camps—during World War II. It is a forbidden object of jouissance as well as an unrepresentable trauma that the American public must verbalize and the Japanese-American community must assume as the cause of desire. As I have suggested above, endless exposition and critique of traumatic history won't foster fundamental change in the Other or prevent a similar *thing* from happening again (as, for instance, America's treatment of Arab-Americans following the attack of September 11, 2001). If the core of the traumatic *thing* is merely unveiled but not disturbed and assumed, no fundamental change in a nation's Symbolic can occur.

We must not merely aim at recovering the "fact" of the traumatic past, but we must aim to "end" the *thing* and make a change so that returned memories about the event are no longer traumatic and the individual's and the Other's desire are restructured and reorganized. The trauma does not "end" just because loads of readings have been produced and a fundamental change won't happen when the *thing* is objectified at a distance. The *thing* ends due to assumption, not accusation, and social change occurs due to operation as pure cause, not as domination. The end and the aim cannot be achieved by a mere acknowledgment of its existence or extend an act of verbalization, visualization, and confrontation. Clinically, traumatized victims prefer to talk rather than to listen to the *thing*. But, actually, so does the Other. In a study, J. W. Pennebaker observes this preference to confront rather than be confronted by the trauma, even if the confrontation involves merely hearing about it. Likewise, the Other would rather choose to confront the *thing*, to bury itself in transforming the trauma into a neutral fact in a controllable context so as to maintain a critical distance and establish a boundary between the past and the present. Either for individual victims or the Other, such an active role and the compulsion toward conscious control stop an initiation of the assumption of the traumatic *thing* as the nucleus of being and the core of the Other. Only when the analysand or the Other dares to listen and be confronted by the *thing* does the trauma "end" and change begin to happen. Meanwhile, the analysand is promoted to the status of the analyst, the agent with "the desire of the analyst" (not identifying with the analyst as a person or his or her ego or super-ego), and the Other operates as the discourse of the analyst.[8] Thus, Gayatri Spivak's oft-quoted statement—"Who should Speak?"—is much less crucial than the rephrased question: "Who listens?"

Notes

[1]See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book VII. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-60*, trans. Dennis Porter, London: Routledge, 1992, 54; 125; 97.

[2]While the vast majority of people of Japanese ancestry were interned in the ten WRA centers, there were others detained at Department of Justice camps located in Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Texas, and North Dakota. For a detailed discussion on the Department of Justice camp in North Dakota, see Christgau and Burton.

[3]For a detailed and recent discussion on the internment, see Inada, Yancey, and Dempster.

[4]It opens with a man at the edge of a shore ready to embark on a kayak trip; he is then immediately thrust into rapids, swept into an underground river, and enclosed in a dark cave without his vessel, paddle, helmet, or life vest. He has only a ladder leading to light. As he climbs, he unexpectedly emerges in a desert where he encounters two girls in the distance sitting against a wall. Around their necks, the two girls wear tags with Japanese-American names, and they explain to the man that they are from the "camp" and "Waiting to go home" (14). The three struggle through a dust storm to the "camp," a row of abandoned identical wooden houses. In one of them, the man is dismayed to find a tag with his name on it; at the same time, outside, a large group of children, like "one large body with many eyes" (22), is chanting with their mouths open and rounded: "Take us home!" (22). Suddenly, searchlights from watchtowers scatter the children into darkness. Left alone, the horrified man finds another name tag, this one bearing the name of his mother and reminding him he had been named after his mother's father. He climbs back down into the cave and falls asleep. He awakens to find himself in another "camp," stared at by another group of children. The final painting pictures a symbolic act: together, they release "name tags" that, magically, like birds, swirl into the air.

> "They went home," said a child.
>
> "Yes, they went home," the man said.
>
> And the children nodded.

While the story ends with an understanding among characters, much remains mysterious to the reader.

[5]The sense of self-disorientation is not restored until the last two paintings. In the last painting, a change of visual and spatial orientation affirming a sense of integrity and self-agency is more obvious: there is a broader expanse of the azure sky and the children, as well as the man, stand with feet wide apart and face upward. Like birds magically swirling into the air, "name tags" amplify a sense of agility and bodily movement. As hundreds of "birds" flying upward to the sky manifest bodily mastery, identification with the movement enhances the ego's sense of visual and spatial integrity and body unity. Although the "story" ends with a restoration of self-agency and self-coherence visually presented in the last two paintings, there is yet one more picture before our reading of the book ends—the back cover painting. There we encounter again a row of identical wooden houses set against a stormy sky such as the front cover displays, but here it is a setting without the man and the two children. From cover to cover, the book directs one to a traumatic image, a sky threatening and intimidating to our sense of bodily ego.

Nevertheless, the man and two children missing from the back cover remove the contrast between an overwhelming background and tiny human figures on the front cover. The absence of the contrast on the back cover may suggest the purpose of the book. Reading this picture book, one hopes, helps ground the relative stability of the haunting *Thing* within a fixed visual-spatial field. And since we have fixed the *Thing* in space, we no longer need to be "present" in the time when we kept reliving it in thoughts, feelings, or actions.

[6]Bunting once made this claim in an interview, but she did not specify the memoirist's name.

[7]For the discussion of *No-No Boy* as a redemptive journey, see McDonald, Inada, and Kim.

[8]Lacan at the end of *Seminar XI* refers to "the desire of the analyst as a desire to obtain absolute difference" (276).

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TRACY DEBRINCAT

Superbaby Saves Slugville

By the time my little brother showed up, everyone was pretty much sick and tired of the whole baby thing. The Teamsters were on strike, so our dad was walking picket lines up and down the California coast instead of delivering meat to North Beach and Chinatown butcher shops in his blood-stinky van. Mom had one foot in a hospital slipper and the other in a black leather pump. Her secretarial job had been held open while she popped the little bugger out, and she was tickled pink to take the streetcar downtown for much-needed overtime and martinis with the "kids," which is what she called anyone her age without kids of their own. Our grandmother had just gotten word that the Archbishop's dispensation for her divorce had finally received the papal blessing. According to our mom, once that came through, it was as though her mother's maternal instinct had just rolled over and stuck all four legs straight up in the air. Now, instead of spending her after-school hours in the park with my brother, the way she had with me, the way she had with each of her own brats, Grandma spent her afternoons hell-bent on losing the nest egg at Bingo and shopping for dresses that shot off sparks when she did the rumba or the cha-cha. Grandpa had been pretty scarce since the pope's postcard, but he dropped his red face in every now and then to scare the crap out of us, borrow a sawbuck, and then sail away in his beautiful Checker cab #584, which gleamed like a yellow submarine. My youthful, plentiful aunts and uncle were busy wasting time and pocket money on the so-called Summer of Love, so the chore of babysitting my brother naturally fell to me.

Together, we spent our afternoons in Grandma's front yard. Like a jailbird, I separated rocks from dirt clods and dirt from turds in the dried-up cement square while my brother keened for hours on end in a small wooden box in a shady corner. At first, our antics attracted a slew of visitors. The Hinterlanders, whom our uncle dubbed the Weiners, complained they couldn't hear Merv Griffin over my brother's caterwauls. The Bossanovachiks claimed rearranging the turds confused their dog Maxie (whom our uncle called Muttonhead), which gave her the runs.

Bonnie J., who had just recently moved in and didn't know too much about our family, came over to introduce me to her dolly (big whoop!), and brought gifts of candy for my brother, which I instantly confiscated, announcing that his allergy to sugar might be fatal.

After a few months, my brother's all-out hollering subsided to an incessant whine. The Hinterlanders turned up the TV. The Bossanovachiks switched Maxie's dog food. Cobwebs collected in my brother's ears and pigeons came to roost on him when the fog broke and the sun came through just right. It was hell cleaning their snow-white shit from his playsuit; the acid devoured the polyester nearly clear through to his skin.

About six months in, my brother got hip to the idea that the standard baby bullshit wasn't going to fly at our house and that extraordinary measures would be required in order to get any attention. It was on towards winter now, and our pleasant hours in the rock pile had been forcibly relocated indoors. One rainy afternoon, our aunts and I were all home, watching my brother in his cage in the corner of the living room. The crying and whining had ceased; now all my brother did was sit, wobble from side to side, and chew on the end of a raggedy blanky.

"Do you think he's hungry?" one aunt asked.

"Maybe he's sleepy," suggested another.

"He looks like he's gotta go," said a third.

"I think he's spying on us," said the fourth.

I was watching Merv Griffin and plucking the gold threads from the arm of Grandma's scratchy chesterfield. I said nothing.

After watching my brother became totally boring, our aunts left the room to smoke a cigarette or make a phone call to a boy- or girlfriend to complain about my brother's boring behavior. When they returned, my brother was out of his cage, on his back in the middle of the floor.

"What happened?" they asked.

"Merv sang," I said, braiding the gold threads into a wristband.

"No," they said, "your brother."

He was lying on his back, blanky akimbo, glowing in a kind of stunned silence, for once not eating or shitting or sleeping or boring the crap out of us. We picked him up from the floor, returned him to his cage, then went back to ruining our lives and the furniture. A few minutes later, we all turned around again. Presto! There he was on the floor. No one saw him do it or heard him land. Naturally, we accused each other of helping him perform this gymnastic escapade. We locked ourselves in the bathroom to prove our innocence, eyeing each other suspiciously in mirrors. When we came out, he was on the floor again, red-faced and radiant in our awe at his trick. We tossed him back in, and this time we stayed there to watch.

With the furrowed concentration of a clairvoyant, my brother closed his big eyes and curled his tiny fists. He scrunched up his face, sucked in

a huge breath, then held it until his cheeks were tomatoes. With an existential moan not unlike the sound our Grandpa made while pushing a conked-out #584 up our steep, dead-end street, my brother shivered violently, then levitated and hurled himself over the bars of his cage.

"Wow," one aunt breathed, nudging his pajama-covered foot with her toe. "He's a Superbaby."

Initially, he was. Superbaby was our shiny new toy, a plaything that delighted our craven appetites for fun. After a few days of amusing the neighbors and scaring their pets, after heated intramural debates over freak vs. miracle, nature vs. nurture, roller derby vs. football, Raiders vs. 49ers, the best we could figure was Superbaby was ticked off and he wanted some goddamn attention. This emotion gathered in him a kind of metaphysical strength whereby he was able to propel himself short distances. Big whoop. We grew accustomed to Superbaby holding court from the floor. Most of us even learned to step over him. We were effective ignorers. It was in our DNA.

Superbaby's next manipulation transpired in the spring after a few brave and hearty weeds pushed their green heads through the rock pile. It was one aunt's chore to wash his rotten, stinking diapers every other day and to add the perfect amount of bleach that would remove the crap stains, eliminate germs, and give Superbaby's sensitive bottom just the right amount of irritation it deserved. Now, historically, Superbaby was a fantastic crapper. His habits of elimination combined Swiss-clock precision with the visceral nose punch of a Texas cattle ranch. His dirty diaper output kept our aunt's chore on an exacting schedule, one that allowed her greasy boyfriend to hop over the fence every other day so they could make out while she tended the diapers. Like all families in our neighborhood, the washing contraption was kept in a dark shed with cracked and dusty windows which let in just enough light to encourage the copulations of black widows and teenagers.

But on this particular washday, our aunt was surprised when Superbaby's diaper barrel was empty. No diapers, no load. No load, no washing. No washing, no making out in the shed. After five days of an empty barrel, our aunt was nose-diving toward a hormonal holocaust. It became all too apparent that Superbaby was holding it.

Like dust bunnies under a bed, we were trapped in Superbaby's master plan. We held a meeting and agreed we *had* noticed he was growing. He was now shaped like a septic tank, and our uncle used him as an ottoman to hold his TV dinner while watching the war on the nighttime news. It occurred to us that Superbaby was in danger of exploding. Action was

required. We set a date for a house party and called the neighbors in to have a look. Obedient slaves we were, puppets on twine, milling around with deviled eggs and Cheese Whiz on crackers, ooh-ing and aah-ing at our monument of perseverance and perversity. Mr. and Mrs. Hinterlander suggested an enema. The Bossanovachiks thought a plumber might do the trick. Superbaby lay there beaming like a Buddha, receiving boatloads of attention from his devoted acolytes.

Grandma announced it was time for dessert and stood at Superbaby's side with a carton of Rocky Road. We surrounded her like seagulls, clutching our bowls. Finally, Superbaby was dead center. A drum roll of flatulence sounded, and we responded to its seismic symphony instantly, nostrils aquiver. A green cloud of noxious vapor gathered over our heads and pelted us with acid rain. We clapped our hands over our faces, but the main event was yet to come. And come Superbaby's supercrap did. A predatory masterpiece, it hissed like a python, threatening to smother us in its deadly embrace. It wound its way around our ankles until we found ourselves chained to the family members or neighbors we despised most. It snatched the Rocky Road from my grandmother's hands, slithered down the front stairs, and disappeared into a crack in the sidewalk where it seeped into the concrete and found its home in a natural spring that was incubating below our home. Once we unchained ourselves from each other, we replaced the ruined carpet, vowed never again to eat Rocky Road, and, most importantly, took turns giving Superbaby enemas if ever he deviated from his scheduled deposits by more than thirty seconds.

It was the first time we'd ever seen him smile.

Finally, summertime. It was freezing cold in San Francisco with a fierce wind-chill factor. Over the months, the rich, primordial stew of Superbaby's supercrap had mated with our dormant spring, which bubbled up from the crack in the sidewalk and created at the bottom of our front stairs the most beautiful river of green slime we had ever seen. We loved it so much we named it. The Pississlippi rendered every foray into the world, and equally every homecoming, a harrowing adventure that threatened life and limb. Better still, thanks to the Pississlippi, what used to be a dry, wizened square of rocks and turds was now a verdant valley, a veritable Nile delta of magical mud that smelled vaguely of shit. Mud that sucked at your feet. Mud that swallowed toys and shoes. Mud that held its shape for building castles and bridges and slabs for virgin sacrifices.

Rampant in all this beautiful mud were extended families of banana slugs. Big mustard granddaddies with foreskin hoods, shapely mothers with high-pitched, come-hither screams, horny teenagers with BB guns

and cigarettes, and babies no bigger than French fries. Although Superbaby was Slugville's inadvertent creator, under my rule, he became its archenemy. The slugs went to war against their dastardly Gulliver. They crossed oceans of mud to colonize him with their flags. They captured him, cut off his legs, dropped them into their volcano, then melted the rest of him with their flesh-eating slime. It was a marvelous summer.

Until Grandpa started to visit again. At first, he'd show up on Wednesdays when he knew Grandma would be at the hairdresser's. His uniform reeked of cheap Tenderloin perfume, a motley fragrance of cooking oil, ladies' lingerie, and WD-40. He brought consolation prizes for us all: leftover bags from Cheetah's, his daily diner haunt. The bags usually contained half of something: a cheeseburger, an order of onion rings, the infrequent grilled liver steak with real half-strips of bacon. He'd hand me the bags to disburse among the aunts and uncle, although mostly they just piled up in the crisper. Then he'd stand at the bottom of the stairs, smoking a cigarette and commenting loudly on the disgraceful condition of the Pississlippi and Slugville. "If I were still living here, I'd concrete this whole mess over," he'd propose. "Then you could play on it real nice." Grandpa always had grandiose beautification plans. At various times before the divorce, he had promised to drive a tractor through the garage to clear out Grandma's newspaper collection (it dated all the way back to the late fifties), to saw off our uncle's bedroom and put it on a raft in the Bay, and to install some nice iron bars on the windows of our aunts' rooms to keep out the boys.

This time when Grandpa pulled up, it wasn't a Wednesday at all. It was a Saturday, Grandma's birthday, and there was a party inside the house. The Hinterlanders had donated old *TV Guides* as party favors for everyone. The Bossanovachiks brought their prize poodle's puppies in a box. The Bingo team had arrived en masse, and there were even rumors of the return of deviled eggs and Rocky Road. Superbaby and I were dressed for the occasion with Saran Wrap bound around our Sunday shoes while we pounded out the next chapter in Slugville's violent history. In fact, Superbaby might have been overdressed. He'd had the sniffles the past month or so; now the only way he could play outdoors was in a pale blue puffed-up snowsuit that made him look like the Michelin Man. His brown eyes bugged out like a frog's under his pale blue snow cap with the ear flaps, pompoms, and crocheted chinstrap. He was one cool Hindenburg of a customer with the perfect innocent guise to enact his devious escape plan.

I had in my possession four prized and highly forbidden kitchen matches which I was going to use to light a possibly defunct sparkler left over from our July Fourth extravaganza in hopes of unleashing a decent volcano on the unwary citizens of Slugville. I was packing dirty Kleenex

into the volcano's crater for kindling when a dark shadow crossed the Pississlippi.

With his hands on his hips, a shiny name tag, and his hat pushed back on his high, pink forehead, Grandpa was like a giant redwood tree, a forest of grandfather, looking down on me and Superbaby, squatting in the outskirts of Slugville. "How's my number-one grandson?" Grandpa picked up Superbaby and twirled him over his head.

Superbaby didn't make a sound. He was sneaky that way.

"How about a jaunt around the block?" Grandpa carried Superbaby under his arm like the Sunday paper and put him in the front seat of his Checker. Number 584 purred like a bright yellow panther; her chrome gleamed under a sudden shaft of sunlight that cracked through the foggy sky like a flash of lightning. "Fifty bucks and a jaunt around the block with my number-one grandson." Grandpa rubbed his hands together and slammed the car door so hard you could hear the eyes of all the cats and dogs on our whole block click open from their naps.

Grandpa lit up a Chesterfield as he strolled back to Slugville. My first match had blown out in a weak whisper of wind. I cupped my hands around the second match, and was praying before striking it against the side of its box. This was no regular old flame I desired. I wanted a flame as hot as the dickens, one whose searing heat came straight from holy hell.

"This place is disgusting," Grandpa stated, interrupting my prayer. "What you need here is a nice lawn. For five bucks, I could roll out some sod and put up a nice swing set."

A lawn? A swing set? What did he think we were, a bunch of babies? "We already have swings on a lawn at the park," I muttered, trying not to sound ungrateful without losing my place in my prayer. If we lost Slugville, we lost everything.

It didn't matter; he wasn't listening. "How about you, Eileen?" Grandpa hollered up at the house. "You wanna go for a jaunt with me and the boy?" He twirled his cap on the index finger of his free hand.

Everyone upstairs was peeking out from behind the curtains, chewing their deviled eggs or sucking on spoons of Rocky Road to separate the marshmallows and walnuts from the ice cream. No one noticed Superbaby sitting in the cab or that #584's motor was running.

Grandpa inhaled his cigarette so hard it burned all the way down to the filter, which he then flicked into Slugville's tributary where it plopped and sizzled menacingly. He swiftly forded the Pississlippi in his heavy black leather boots, leaving wet, green prints as he climbed the stairs up to the front door. Grandpa knocked the knocker till one of our aunts cracked the door while I quickly hid the soggy butt in my coat pocket.

There was an abomination of curses as Grandpa pushed his way indoors, and the yelling started almost instantly. Even as I was focusing on striking the match and catching its small, bug-sized flame to a soggy corner of Kleenex, I knew that our dad and Mr. Hinterlander and Mr. Bossanovachik and probably even our uncle and the Bingo team, too, had surrounded Grandpa and pushed him back out the door, which got shut again so hard you could hear the little peephole door on the inside clang open and closed from the force. "All I need is fifty bucks," Grandpa bellowed, his lips at the peephole. "Fifty lousy bucks!"

Grandpa's face was red when he turned to face the street. He walked heavily down the stairs, making sure each footstep was loud and scary and made the wood slats creak. He stopped at the bottom stair and began to whistle, clear and loud and pitch-perfect. "Good night, Eileen. Eileen, good night." He lit a fresh cigarette, repositioned his hat just so on his head. "I'll be damned!" he said, before lunging back up the stairs with his tree-long legs, whistling all the while. The old fart was going back in. Sure, they said no to fifty; maybe they'd be good for twenty-five, just to get him to leave. It had worked before.

As Grandpa was working up to another knock, back in #584 Superbaby's plan was falling into place. He tried to stand up at the window to wave bye-bye, cute little sap that he was, but the puffed-up snowsuit monkeyed with his balance. His eyes got bigger as he fell backwards away from the window and onto the taxi's long bench front seat. I could just barely hear his muffled laughter over the engine's lopsided rumble. Superbaby climbed back to his feet, grabbing onto the steering wheel for leverage, then continued to pull himself up by grabbing the gearstick that poked out from behind. The clunk was decisive as the engine's rumble straightened out, and it shifted into reverse.

Grandpa turned from the front door toward the street just as the taxi began to inch backwards. Superbaby was waving wildly in the window as the taxi rolled down the hill away from our house.

"Who's driving that car?" Grandpa cried out, but of course, I ignored him.

If my brother wanted to leave, I thought he should good and well be able to. It was no surprise to me that he would want to get the hell out. I struck another match and this one caught just fine. I was able to light both the Kleenex and the sparkler, and I screamed with delight as silver sparks shot out of Slugville's volcano and tiny plumes of grey smoke rose from the pink Kleenex lava. Now it was time for a rainstorm. I dumped a jar of murky, brown water into the volcano's crater. The water cut a trail through Slugville's main road, taking a couple of houses with it, as well as the fire station that had already been demolished by an earthquake caused by the

spaceship landing and subsequent pillaging by the evil serial killers. The carnage was comprehensive, satisfactory.

Grandpa stepped his size-fourteen boot into the middle of Slugville's main square and grabbed my arm. "I said who took your goddamned brother, and you better answer me before I take this goddamn pile of mud and dump it into the bay." He yelled it with the kind of growl that only came out when he was about to whale on our uncle.

"Nobody," I yelled back. "He's escaping all by himself." I pointed down the hill, past the Hinterlanders' with the gingerbread trim that made you think a giant cuckoo was going to pop out of the front door. "And goddamn it, you're messing up Slugville!"

Grandpa turned white as though a shade pulled down over his face. He took off running, and it was kind of funny how his expression changed when his muddy boots hit the Pississlippi and lost all traction. His tree legs flew up and his whole body became an airborne "V," which was how we drew birds in art class sometimes when we were in a hurry to get to the good stuff like the wars and the battlefields and the nurses and the sex. He hit the ground hard on his bottom and out came a word I'd only seen written on a bathroom wall till then. More importantly, Slugville was safe from disaster.

Meanwhile, the taxi's big chrome grille was shrinking; it was already past the Bossanovachiks' with the gated front yard where Maxie furiously guarded the house and her puppies from intruders both real and imagined. Its back end was veering toward the middle of the street.

At the bottom of the hill at the end of the block, Mrs. J.'s big yellow station wagon turned the corner and was starting to climb. Probably bringing Bonnie J. home from ballet lessons so they could come to Grandma's party, Bonnie J. with the tutu who never wanted to play in Slugville. The last time she came over, she just gave her dolly the bottle to make her wet her diaper. Bonnie J. changed that dolly's underwear so much, I offered to toss it into our volcano to teach it a lesson. I could see Bonnie J.'s queer-shaped head in the backseat, like a tiny Mr. Peanut. Now Mrs. J. was blowing the horn. Number 584, which had picked up alarming speed, was heading straight for her.

This looked promising. I stuffed the last match in my pocket and ran yelling past Grandpa, who sat paralyzed in the Pississlippi, scratching his head in shock. I was halfway to catching up when Mrs. J. laid on the horn a long one. I could see her big, round eyeballs and the white teeth in the back of her mouth. Mrs. J. careened away from me, the station wagon jumped the curb, and smacked into the fire hydrant in front of her own house.

A geyser of brown water, which I imagine came from our underground lake, shot into the air and made a long arc that ended in a mist over the Hinterlanders' front yard, making hundreds of millions of rainbows. It was the best thing that ever happened on our block, and it was all thanks to Superbaby.

Bonnie J. leaped out of the backseat and ran over to me. I grabbed her hands and we began jumping and screaming, jumping and screaming, jumping and screaming, jumping and screaming, jumping and screaming.

Number 584 had continued down the hill and already turned a corner. Superbaby was probably across the Golden Gate Bridge by now, or on his way to Canada, or Mexico, or some other place where people would appreciate his amazing talents for catapulting out of cages, or filling a house with a carpet of crap, or popping out his brown eyes when we tied the Michelin snowsuit cap under his third chin.

JOHN MANESIS

The Embarkation

Beside the Yangtze flowing out to sea,
you anxious lovers waiting on the shore,
have you been told about the island lore,
Chang and his beloved wife, Koong-Se,
who were unkindly treated by the fates?
Many generations ago, they perished
but to the present day the two are cherished,
the story told on willow pattern plates.

Along this waterway their spirits wing,
as if they drank from some eternal spring.
Listen, you will hear them calling low.
Their sampan's ready, it is time to go.
Don't fear the journey, love's uncertainty,
the winding river now will set you free.

A Final Refrain

Into the pool he gazed, bedazzled by
that face so long a time he pined away.
Did he not see the pallor, the weary eye,
was ardor waning on his final day?
And as he sank into the peat and moss,
could he not hear the nymphal iteration
behind him in the glade, the mirrored loss,
her last lament disguised as adoration?

Looking for herself, she also came
to stare into the water, saw no one there,
saw no one there, and could not speak his name,
or any name, her silence everywhere,
awaiting someone else, another voice,
awaiting someone else, another voice.

A Wisp of Smoke

All the neighbors said he was a bad
provider, as if they understood my dad.
He left behind a cup, a wooden leg,
moonshine whiskey in his favorite keg,
a pair of leather breeches, very worn,
the feather bed with all the lining torn,
a half a candle stick, a coffee pot—
according to these folks, a worthless lot.

But when I light his pipe, he's always near—
the scent of his tobacco draws him here.
I am a boy again, he's in his glory,
about to tell another favorite story.
A wisp of smoke, his shadow's on the wall
and I can hear the wolves and coyotes call.

ROBERT WEXELBLATT

Fein on Villainy

> The noble type of man regards himself as a determiner of values; he does not require to be approved of; he passes the judgment: "What is injurious to me is injurious in itself"; he knows that it is he himself who confers honor on things; he is a creator of values . . . . The noble man honors in himself the powerful one, him also who has power over himself, who knows how to speak and how to keep silence, who takes pleasure in subjecting himself to severity and hardness, and reverence for all that is severe and hard . . . .
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The welcome task laid on me by Maya Nunfi Fein was to go through her father's papers and prepare those I deemed substantial and finished enough for publication. It is not surprising that sometimes these posthumous papers should have a bearing on one another, especially those Fein probably did not write for the public but only for himself. This is the case with the curious piece that appears below which concerns Fein's childhood friend Paul Mandelbaum.

Fein and Mandelbaum were classmates in elementary school in Philadelphia. Fein spent two days of August 1976 with Mandelbaum. By then the latter was in considerable psychological distress, so far gone that two months later he committed suicide. His wife had left him in February and he was drinking hard. Most of all Mandelbaum was convinced his work had failed. Fein wrote about his visit with his old friend and reached various conclusions about his condition. For example, he wrote: "Paul had made a mess of his life by putting it in order. In clearing the decks for his writing he had swept everything overboard."[1]

Over the years, the two men had seen each other from time to time, and they exchanged a few letters about their work and other matters. They could not be called close but neither did they lose touch. Both had unhappy marriages. Fein's dissolved in January 1974. Mandelbaum's was childless.

When I found the following piece in Fein's folder for the year 1975 I thought it intriguing but less than comprehensible. Its occasion, as I eventually discovered, was Fein's first stint as a visiting professor the year before.[2] He was appointed, on the strength of his first book, to teach a course in ethical philosophy, but he also took on a section of logic. The meaning of these fragments only became clear to me when I happened on Mandelbaum's letter and his little story in a bunch of correspondence from the year 1974, mixed in with paid invoices, family letters, and bank statements. The best place to begin is with Mandelbaum's letter.

August 21, 1974

Dear Sid,

Thanks for the post card. It's a fine thing to be thought of in the Old World and it's reassuring to see that Venice is still keeping its rotting head above the putrid water. The place looks as decadent as ever, still going for the title of longest decline without a fall. Glug-glug. Aschenbach on the beach with his rouged cheeks thinking of the *Phaedrus*, Teutons and pigeons all over St. Mark's with its Italian fiddlers pumping out Strauss. *Jawohl*.

I appreciate your choosing a shot of the Grand Canal that includes the Palazzo Vendramin—speaking of Tods, or toads. Did you know Wagner actually went there for his *health*?

I trust you and Maya enjoyed your Henry James Memorial Grand Tour. I hope it cheered the both of you up. Very sorry to hear your marriage exploded. Yours is the third break-up I've heard about this month alone. At least you're completely *au courant*. Do you think it's the Women's Lib stuff or just the headless chickens of the last decade coming home to roost? I can't claim Rosalind and I are in the clear, though I do see her every morning at breakfast and, most nights, we sleep in the same bed.

My agent's pissed off, Rosalind's pissed off, and so am I. But we do agree on one thing because we're all pissed off at me. I'm still staring at paper every day. I write down a word and sometimes a second or even a third. Fame is the spur?

So, you're going to take the Brandeis gig. Am I now obliged to call you Herr Doktor Professor, even if you're not actually a doctor and the professorship will last just nine months? Am I resentful, jealous? I'm not sure. Perhaps it's just that you agree with the poet's plea:

'Mongst all these stirs of discontented strife
O, let me lead an academic life.

You mentioned that they want you to teach ethical phillerphobby. Good choice, I suppose, for such an upright guy. Lots of answers to the same old questions. In physics and chemistry they're always asking new questions. At least I think so. This must be because there are answers for physicists and chemists, final ones, I mean. Maybe that's what guys like you and me didn't like about science, the sheer precision of it. No essay questions.

Well, enough out of me. I'm enclosing a bit of *Kleinkunst*. Not only is it always nice to have a reader, especially an intelligent one, but I thought it apropos of your subject and that it might interest you a little.

Comme Toujours,
PM

VILLAINY

by Paul Mandelbaum

"We sit here below, stuck in the narrow alleys of our virtue. It's unjust that we have to look up to him but that's how it is," said the doctor last night, carried away by indignation but also a sort of poetic resignation. *The narrow alleys of our virtue* really is almost a little poem by itself. You can hear our valley in it, the hills pressing in on either side of the tight grid of houses, churches, stores, lanes, and schools.

Virtue is supposed to be a good thing, so why did the doctor make it sound so disconsolate? And why should everyone have nodded when he said what he did? What did he really mean? Is there some kind of virtue under virtue then, a sort that monster, who lives above our town when he is not flying around the world, possesses and we lack?

His mansion was built more than a century back. The first owner of the mill erected it on the hill as an emblem of his relationship to our forebears. All that remains of the mill is a broken wall of red brick next to the railroad, but the mansion on the hill still looms over us. When the doctor spoke of having to look up it was a literal truth. The ancient respect for

elevation persists and so, simply by purchasing the old manor, he took on the character of an aristocrat and became lordly. He is a tall, handsome man, with smooth black hair and a bearing that might be called seigniorial.

In evil he is an artist and any artist is apt to be defined by something less than his finest work so long as people find in it a decisive gesture, an original contribution to the human repertoire of nastiness. For us it is the episode of the valedictorian that is most indelible, though any of us could adduce more ingenious, vile, elegant, or shameful incidents in his infamous career.

She was just eighteen. Her beauty was dark, like his, and her body precociously ripe; she moved in a way that struck us as both provocative and stern. Her intelligence was no less imposing than her looks. In her, spirit and body had conspired in some miraculous fashion to make her shine whichever way you looked at her, whatever she said. A diamond in our worn-out vein of coal. Her parents adored her so much that they hardly knew what to do with her and behaved toward her like peasants visited by a princess. Still, she was not in the least spoiled, and her self-possession was inviolable. She treated her family with restrained affection, ignoring their deference. This could not have been easy. Her father got into the habit of walking a bit behind her in the street; he would even ask her opinion at the hardware store. No one would have blamed him had he puffed himself up for having sired such a daughter, but he was too humbled to boast of her, as if she really were a regal visitor with only an accidental connection to his family. It was more or less the same with her mother and sister. They regarded her with something like superstitious awe. Perhaps because her family declined the credit of her excellence, the whole town felt free to take pride in her, more content to be geese for having brought forth this swan.

From the moment she began to bloom we kept our eyes on her, but our gaze was more furtive than fixed. We watched her intently throughout her high school years, anxious not to disturb a perfection we assumed to be fragile, looking on her as a gardener might a promising sapling, anxious about frost, anticipating the fruit, finding relief in each spring's tender leaves. By sixteen she had the sort of beauty that makes you take a step backwards, as if it were a wind. Almost superstitiously, no one spoke of it.

In her next to last year she won the top prize at the Science Fair and was elected class president. We were amused by the way the boys fell over one another when she passed by. They had our sympathy; who wouldn't smile at their sudden clumsiness? Adoration collected around her like a cloud she really seemed not to notice. She never abused her power to

intimidate because to cow her peers required no act of will. She was like a child holding a grenade.

The day of her graduation was a temperate one in June. Wispy clouds sailed over the athletic field. The grandstand faced south so we would have had to turn around to see the mansion up on the hill. The whole town was gathered behind the graduates who sat in rows of folding chairs on the field, clad in blue robes that elevated the giggles and acne and lent them the dignity of a brood of theologians or a tragic chorus.

Her valedictorian's robe was immaculately white. Against it lay her long dark hair, too thick to be disturbed by the breeze. We were full of anticipation, but what could we be expecting? A speech we might not quite understand perhaps, yet one that would edify, raise us up, words that would dazzle our souls as her white gown did our eyes in the June sunlight. She was the best we had. Naturally, we knew a graduation address is no occasion for originality, that we were there for a ritual and not a treatise. Nevertheless, we who had been observing her for years, we who were all in love with her in one fashion or another, who had numbered her perfections and sighed to think how far away her life was bound to carry her, awaited her speech almost as an apotheosis.

She began oddly, by telling a kind of fairy tale. Even if what occurred later had not happened we would still have remembered this story, if only for the sake of the melodious voice that related it. She seemed to be summing up her life among us, or telling us how we all were meant to live, offering a simple truth she had learned from us about living equably and decently, yet a truth she herself was to forsake. Some claimed later to have detected in this parable a cautionary tale and maybe they were right. The advice one gives to others may be good whether one follows it oneself or not; the truth one is on the point of betraying is nonetheless a truth, perhaps it is all the more precious.

"Once upon a time, a man and a woman were dragged before the king. The king looked on the young couple with pity; however, the evidence against them was convincing and the law clear. Not even the king could go above the law and so he delivered his verdict with a heavy heart, mitigating the sentence in the only way the law permitted. Not far from the castle was a chasm, wide and fearfully deep. The king ordered a rope stretched across it. The couple were condemned to walk across the rope, first the woman and then the man. In the unlikely event that one or both should manage to make it across they would be pardoned.

"Everything was done just as the king ordered and all the people gathered to watch. The young woman climbed bravely onto the rope. Slowly, one step after the other, she crossed the gorge. The young man,

who had scarcely taken a breath as he watched his love, shouted over: 'My dear, tell me how you managed to do it.' 'I don't know,' she called back. 'All I know is that whenever I felt myself toppling over to the left I leaned to the right, and whenever I started to fall to the right I leaned to the left.'"

The rest of her speech, though eloquent, was more conventional. She laid out for her classmates the best of life's possibilities and thanked the town for its support.

That very afternoon she vanished, not on a fiery chariot and not into thin air. He must have kept his engine idling all through her address, the awarding of prizes, through the roll of sixty-five names, the minister's benediction, the cheers, hugs, snapshots—through all this he would have sat, patient as a spider.

We saw her embrace her parents, clutch her sister, wave to her friends; then suddenly she was running, the white robe streaming behind her as she fled over the grass, and, before anyone could think of stopping her, she leapt into his car.

FEIN ON VILLAINY

PM's social proclivities are to tease the people he knows best while with strangers he is formal, correct, almost regimental. Both, I believe, are ways of holding off the world like a long-limbed boxer who stiff-arms a shorter man on the forehead. I mean that both his courtesy and his teasing serve the same self-protective purpose without entirely cutting him off. Even as a child he contrived to be both the shyest among us and the class clown.

I fear his resolution to live by his writing—and Rosalind's paychecks—may be undermining him. Literature has not been good for him; it has ended by making him literary so that it is now books that form the semi-permeable membrane between him and the world. For him, Venice belongs to Thomas Mann, not the Italian Republic. Only a man far gone in books could quote verses by the Elizabethan Bishop of Norwich at me, or expect me to pick up the reference. In fact, I had to look it up. The poem is impressively if prosaically titled "The Discontent of Men with Their Condition."

Literature has been bad for PM but he has not been bad for it. His work is always interesting and yet it isn't made to be successful. And he desperately craves success. Perhaps he knows this but can do nothing about it as he pushes words across the paper. That must be a terrible source of discontent.

PM is even less fitted to academic life than I am. He is one of those who believes literature is a wild animal and the universities so many corrals. He wants more than the Bishop, who continues in this vein:

> To know much, and to think for nothing, know
> Nothing to have, yet think we have enow.

Genteel but wise poverty might be good for him, if he could stomach it or had the taste for it, let alone the discipline. But he doesn't. Moreover, he's contemptuous of philosophy; as a maker of narratives and images, he distrusts ideas. He dislikes philosophy's narrowness and disagrees with Keats' unexpected estimation that poetry "is not so fine a thing as philosophy—for the same reason an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth." PM would go for the eagles every time. Despite being a good critic, he dislikes seeing the suggestive images of a story translated into the discursive language of ideas. Thus, the mockery of "phillerphobby." A story opens its palms to disclose a whole handful of possibilities whereas philosophy usually tightens its fist on just one.

Last year I was busy preparing for my first course, so I hardly glanced at "Villainy." I noticed the stock characters, smiled at the ending, and took it personally. I thought of it as a not terribly interesting, rather ironic jibe at me for setting up to teach moral philosophy. I let my friend down, since what he wanted was an intelligent reading. But, now I've looked at it again, I see that what I took to be simple and trite is neither.

I felt pleasure when my book was published. Was this pleasure the sensation of power? Perhaps the sense of power was even my chief sensation—but that's a thought one normally keeps to oneself, perhaps even from oneself.

There's quite a difference between saying that pleasure is the sensation of power and saying that the sensation of power is one sort of pleasure. It's the difference between the extremism of demanding everything of and for oneself, and accepting a medium-sized basket with many eggs in it. *Das Wille zur Macht*? Well, Nietzsche had to sound extreme; he's always trying to attract our attention and so he shouts louder and louder, more and more desperately: the weak should go to the wall, Christ is a big black spider, the bible is unclean, Socrates was a buffoon, Kant a Tartuffe. He's brilliant and theatrical. Though all his dramatic hollering suggests overcompensation, it's precisely as theater that the *Übermensch* is compelling, albeit that theater is in Bayreuth which even Nietzsche couldn't stomach in the end. (As PM reminds me, it was in Venice that Richard Wagner died.) Anyway, PM's story has started me thinking about Nietzsche. I am thinking of the

"hard" Nietzsche, though my experience as a professor last year made me realize that he is so various and inconsistent that everybody can have his very own Nietzsche.

PM believes his work has failed, that he's mediocre. He is too noble to extol mediocrity, recast it as virtue and stamp everything superior as evil. But neither can he reconcile himself to his sensation of impotence. Perhaps something of this sort underlies his story.

The word *villain* derives from the Latin for farm servant. Villains were originally low-lifes. Even today, in England a villain is still just a common criminal. In democratic America, however, villains are almost always upper-crust, deceitful gentlemen, often with stage moustaches. PM is playing with this melodramatic American villain and that is what first misled me into taking it with too much levity, kept me from seeing that the story is deliberately set up to provoke a reader—an "intelligent" one, at least—into questioning its assumptions. Is the town really virtuous or is it only pinched and predictable, like its grid of lanes? Is the sublime girl succumbing to a blackguard's blandishments or escaping from a suffocating watchfulness, expectancy, and pride? Is the plutocratic lord of the manor exercising some kind of outrageous *droit de seigneur* or might he actually love the girl and/or she him? Could *they* be the couple crossing that chasm and not, as the collective narrator seems to presume, the decent people of the town, advised by a sinner to go on walking the straight and narrow between death and devil?

What exactly is villainy? Who is the villain? Is it that "monster" on the hill making off with the girl, or is it the girl because of her abandonment of her town, family, class, and everybody's expectations? Could the village be the villain, as etymology nearly hints, villainous in its smugness, inferiority, and resentment? It seems to me now that PM chose his title so as to maximize ambiguity and show me what storytellers set as much store by as philosophers do consistency. "Villainy" ties itself up and then, if you re-read it, unties itself; it's a tale that's all *dénouement* so that you are left with a tangle of rope at your feet, like the one stretched across the chasm.

PM has written a Nietzschean story in more ways than one. Nietzsche considered that everybody from Moses and Socrates to Mill and Marx had gotten things just backwards. (PM's message to me: your whole syllabus is a botch.) From this point of view, it's the town full of petty "slave moralists" who are in the wrong, traducing their betters with loaded words like "evil" and "villain."

> According to slave-morality . . . the "evil" man arouses fear; according to master-morality, it is precisely the "good" man who arouses fear and seeks to arouse it, while the bad man is the despicable being.

So Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Good is bad, bad is good, values were transvalued and need to be transvalued back. "At the commencement," he thunders, waving his arms, "the noble caste was always the barbarian caste." But Nietzsche's truth is not only historical; it is even more psychological, since what preceded civilization must still lie beneath it: " . . . all spontaneous motives, all new, future and stronger motives, are still extant . . . ." Well, if so, that stage villain up on the hill might just as well incarnate the frustrated motives of the old men and abashed boys of the town, watching the girl walk by like Susannah. As for the females, they must be thrilled to see a girl living fully and dangerously on that tightrope, crossing the abyss for the sake of a handsome, wealthy man complete with a limousine and a mansion. Well, it is almost like a woman's novel, isn't it, like *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca*. But the heroine is anything but a plain Jane. In fact, the valedictorian, who fittingly (here's PM being literary again) bids farewell to the town on her graduation day, is beautiful and dark, exactly like the villain; she is nubile to a fault and, like Lucifer, a lot brighter than her classmates. The town "takes pride" in her just because, like her family, they sense she doesn't belong with them. She's a changeling or a princess in disguise, a cygnet who doesn't even make the geese wish they were swans. "One law for the lion and the ox is tyranny," wrote Blake and Nietzsche turned that infernal proverb into a principle. Aren't all Nietzsche's masters solitary predators? Aren't all his slaves jumpy herds of prey?

Is the girl a monster because she chooses to run off with a man the town considers one? That the townspeople desire to think she's a victim proves nothing. For them it's the most comfortable hypothesis, but the story undermines this as well. For example, there is her "inviolable self-possession" which doesn't make it seem as though she could be easily seduced. Even the narrator has to allow that her fragility is merely a presumption, an unlikely one given her solid achievements. She's no mere romantic; the girl won the prize at the Science Fair. Her innocence, if she actually has any, is at once oblivious and powerful. She "cows" her peers without trying to do so. In one of the story's least forgettable images she is compared to "a child holding a grenade." But what if she knows all about grenades? What if she's perfectly aware of her potential for "villainy"; that is, what if the girl really knows her own strength? Is that strength good or bad?

Sorry not even to have mentioned the doctor, the sole individual whose reflections we get to hear.

The physician's views receive the emphasis of precedence. Those two opening sentences are crucial, not just because of PM's confessed difficulty in coming up with first sentences, but because it's the town *doctor* who's speaking—an educated man, a man of science, a man who has to make diagnoses every day. I suspect PM identifies with this doctor to some degree. From all I gather of his condition of discontent he too feels stuck in a cul-de-sac. The doctor protests the injustice of things but, unlike the girl, he has resigned himself to them. His eloquence is static, fixed as the landscape it expresses. Hierarchy, claims Nietzsche, is natural. "Life *is* appropriation," he says, a food chain, what the life-denying philosophers call "immoral." Even for vegetarians, not to exploit is to die.

The collective narrator (a Continental device, by the way, which I can't recall PM using before) questions the doctor's melancholy capitulation. If virtue is good, why is it "disconsolate"? A fair question that leads to an even better, more subversive one: "Is there some kind of virtue under virtue"—one the "monster" has and they lack? According to Nietzsche there is. Virtue once signified power, military prowess. Achilles was virtuous in this original sense. It was Socrates who cleverly appropriated the word to moral uses at his trial, comparing himself to the hero of the *Iliad* and thereby supplanting him—insidiously, Nietzsche says. Thereafter, in effect, to behave like Achilles was to be, well, a villain.

This narrator is not really at odds with the doctor, whose first word, after all, is *we*, but a continuation and specification of the town's consensus. The place conceives itself as part New England mill town, part feudal estate. What is left of the mill is a ruin, "a broken wall of red brick." The economic relations that once bound the lord of the manor to the town have dissolved, and all that remains, the narrator says poignantly, is "the ancient respect for elevation." The story obsesses over this ambiguity of above/below. The guilty couple must avoid tumbling into a chasm. The doctor complains of having "to look up" at the mansion and its proprietor; the narrator later reminds us that this is "a literal truth," thereby provoking us to think of a truth that isn't literal. He speaks of "the *ancient* respect for elevation" and this resonates with his similarly archaic word *seigniorial* to enlarge the story's associations, covering the terrain of both *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, but with more sinister overtones: "In evil he is an artist . . . ."

An artist. Here, I think, is another hint of PM's oscillating identification; this time it is with the "villain." As a writer known for his

reviews rather than his fiction, it is his misfortune to feel he too is "defined by something less than his finest work" and that his career is "infamous"—that is, *not* famous ("Fame is the spur?"). Poor PM suffers from a combination of abjection and aspiration. Perhaps this is so for all artists, certainly the unsuccessful ones. It's hard not to think that the town's verdict on the "monster" points to the critics' dismissal of PM's labors. Maybe the splendid girl even symbolizes the fame he longs to wrest from the public. Or perhaps it's her escape from the middling to the heights that PM yearns to emulate? Probably he himself couldn't say. He is a fabulist who revels in and depends on unconscious motives and meanings. This makes him hostile to the "phillerphobbers" who pride themselves on having eliminated such things from their work where everything must appear to be rational and transparent—incidentally, a boast Nietzsche has enormous fun mocking. How indignant would Aristotle be if he were told he thinks exactly like a Stagirite on the make, a middle-class kid irritated by the idealism of an Athenian aristocrat with a trust fund?

The meaning of the girl's tightrope story is elusive. The temptation is to nail it down but it isn't solid enough and keeps floating away. The key elements are transgression, frustrated mercy, punishment, an abyss and the balance that can safely pass over it. The castle suggests the mansion, the chasm the distance between it and the town. The couple makes one think of the girl and the "spider" waiting for her, but the theme of balance seems to point in another direction, since moderation is hardly to be associated with the "monster" or the sort of life he carries on up at his mansion. In the story, though, it's only the female who makes it across; we aren't told her lover's fate. So perhaps the girl's story is a statement of intent, her valedictory promise that *she*, at least, will maintain her moral equilibrium amidst "the possibilities of life" she is about to choose. On the other hand, the story is a confession of having done something illicit, so maybe it is also a cautionary tale, the moral being that it's best for oxen not to act like lions. The story may also be one of PM's many parables of the human condition, his opinion of which is always being revised. A final possibility: this is PM reminding me yet again that in the world of "phillerphobby" these possibilities exclude one another, while in the world of fiction they don't.

I am quite taken with the blurry one-sentence last paragraph which concludes PM's little tale. With those seven active verbs, it's like watching a tracking shot. Also, it's clever of PM to recapitulate the girl's biography, beginning with the family's embrace and ending with her leaping into the black car, all in sight of the townsfolk, before the tragic chorus of her peers.

This finale is satisfying in a way that philosophical writing seldom is, except for the most literary—Plato, Kierkegaard. That last sentence has the just-so feel of a well-made top fitting on a well-made box, or a well-oiled guillotine. You feel there's nothing more to be said, nothing worth saying. It's just the opposite with philosophical texts. They generally remind me of a crack Kafka made about Martin Buber: no matter how much he says, something's always missing.

I don't know if art is villainy but I'm certain that "Villainy" is art.

As for its author, I cannot wish him to be as happy as he wants, because I don't believe happiness is what he wishes for. Rather, I wish he could be as happy as he deserves.

Notes

[1]See "Sidney Fein and Paul Mandelbaum," *Denver Quarterly*, 35, 1 (Spring 2000), 93-105.

[2]See "Three Short Pedagogical Pieces," *RE:AL*, 27, 1-2 (Spring/Fall 2002), 209-31.

At the End of Our Rope

We reached it at sunset
after a long climb down through heavy winds and blowing snow.
It wasn't a good place,
just a plateau

with scant protection.
We pitched our tent and lit our fire and warmed
our hands for awhile.
Outside, it stormed

on and on and on. We didn't speak
more than a few words and each word was essential:
Yes, no, come, go,
words like that. A little

time later we slept
and what you dreamed and what I dreamed we didn't share.
At sunrise we looked out
at nothing there

but mist and ice,
and the end of our rope, frayed, gently swaying
now that the wind had lessened,
still anchored to something

so high above us, so long ago,
we could scarcely remember what we'd tied it to:
a stump or some rock outcropping
that held it through

all our betrayals. When the mist rose,
we saw we'd plunged into such cold and shame and bitterness,
no one would rescue us
and we could not rescue ourselves.

Tracks

Nothing quite so ugly as a grizzly bear's tracks in the mud,
said our guide. The fear rises up your throat,
your hair stands on end, but besides that
there's these big blotches of mud, the pads' indentations,
the feeling of waddling. We looked down,
our eyes following the asymmetrical splats and splatterings
along the river bank. The bloated tracks
looked like a line of old wet baseball gloves discarded in disgust,
lying on their backs, small pools of brown seepage
already foaming their pockets. You don't want to go there,
muttered our guide. It was almost evening
in summer Alaska, our huge backpacks so heavy
that if we stood up straight without bracing ourselves,
we'd topple over. Mosquitoes landed: the delicate feeling
of the very tip of a finger brushing your skin
just before the tiny needle inserts its swelling hole
over and over everywhere. The river delta,
its yellow and green grasses stretching out for miles,
lay beneath a pale sky. *What are we doing here*,
I wondered, feeling sullen, diminished, *paying for adventure,*
telling ourselves if we escape enough we'll finally learn
how to want not to want, how to rid ourselves
of all but beef jerky, red and black checkered shirts,
twig huts, cracked white coffee cups of water extended to the rain.
The tracks
lumbered outward into the setting sun. Ugly is as ugly does,
our guide told us. Look how big this beast is, how uncaring
of what we think of him or him of us. The guide scratched languidly.
He'd moved to Alaska from the lower forty-eight, he said,
because of the loneliness, the bittersweet loneliness,
the incredible loneliness, the magnificent loneliness,
the soul-affirming loneliness
of missing almost everything that keeps you folks alive,
and for the sock-eyed salmon and the gravel river beds.

The Accompanist

I've always worried about you—the man or woman
at the piano bench,
night after night receiving only such applause
as the singer allows: *a warm hand please,*
for my accompanist. At concerts,
as I watch your fingers on the keys,
and how swiftly, how excellently
you turn sheet music pages,
track the singer's notes, cover the singer's flaws,
I worry about whole lifetimes,
most lifetimes
lived in the shadows of reflected fame;
but then the singer's voice dies
and there are just your last piano notes,
not resentful at all,
carrying us to the end, into those heartfelt cheers
that spring up in little patches from a thrilled audience
like sudden wildflowers bobbing in a rain
of steady clapping. And I'm on my feet, also,
clapping and cheering for the singer, yes,
but, I think, partially likewise for you
half-turned toward us, balanced on your black bench,
modest, utterly well-rehearsed,
still playing the part you've made yours.

URBAN WAITE

The Grapefruit Tree

When I was twenty-one, my friend Oscar made *menudo* for me. We were in the kitchen of the brick-red house he rented on Maple Street. On the stove a large stockpot sat, filling the kitchen with gentle steam. And every few minutes Oscar walked the short distance from where we were sitting, across the linoleum floor, to stir the soup. I watched him slip the tripe into the boiling hominy—corn tortillas, lime, and radish all sitting on a carving board nearby. I remember the sticky sensation of that kitchen, the feeling of a kitchen being used, the way the windows fogged up in the winter with the heat and the moisture coming off the stove, the way the plastic countertops always had scabs of debris stuck to them, little pieces of hair, old soup, ketchup, and flour turned to glue. I remember how after taking my hands from the countertop, I could roll my palms together until the dirt rolled itself into neat little cylinders and fell from my hands onto the floor. Oscar stirred the soup again, letting it simmer under the cover until the top began to bubble a bit with the steam, clattering as the hot air escaped. From where I was sitting I could pick out the rich textures of garlic, chilies, and corn in the air. The windows behind me were clouded over and the kitchen had the heavy feel of stewed meat and airborne oils let loose on us. It was a late Saturday morning, and Oscar was in such a state of disbelief over the fact that I had never had *menudo*, nor did I know what it was, that he kept asking over and over again, "You're Mexican, what do you do for a hangover?"

"I take aspirin," I said.

My parents split their holidays between two families. If we were not at home in Seattle, we spent Christmas with my father's family in Connecticut and Thanksgiving with my mother's in California. Christmas was always easier with my father's family because there were never any secrets between them and us, or more specifically me. I never had to guess at my father's heritage as I did with my mother. I never felt as if my grandmother

on my father's side was hiding her history, as my mother's parents hid Spanish from us, only using this language if there was a secret to be passed between them.

This is why I accept my father. I accept the lineage passed down to me, knowing that he can speak Italian fluently, that his sisters can as well, that one sister still lives in Naples with her own family, although they all grew up fluctuating between New England and Italian childhoods. I don't need to question this history, as I must my mother's, as if something had been stolen from me. As if something had been in my pocket, something of my own. Only a distant memory now, faded, and I am checking my pockets blindly, touching the cloth again and again, finding nothing but the space of something missing.

For this reason my mother avoided Christmas. She avoided the memories of her youth, the Sundays in church and the memories her mother created, telling her children they were Spanish, although there was nothing in their household to suggest anything but our own Mexican roots.

I can remember the days surrounding Christmas when we were in California, spent in Hoff's Hut, smelling fresh baked pies under glass, or breakfasts of eggs, ham, sausage, and potatoes. My father took me there while my mother went to church with her parents, desiring that I not be part of the life she had tried so hard to move away from. I can't remember what we talked about on those mornings. I remember only the pies, the lemon tarts, the strudel, and the chocolate puddings which glistened out from beneath the glass near the cash register.

I think about Hoff's Hut now as the place my grandfather took me when his health began to go. How he filled boxes of sweets for me, making me promise not to tell Grandma, pulling me closer into him and his voice lowering as if the walls could hear, "Don't tell Grandma or she won't let us come next time." I was young then, ten perhaps, and still captivated by the promise of sweets, although my grandfather would take little bites of each, a satisfied look of contentment across his face after each taste. But what I remember most about those days, visiting my grandparents in Long Beach, was the way my mom would laugh, the secret of my grandfather's trips to Hoff's Hut a new layer built upon so many more like the joy my mother took in having a secret over her own mother who held so much back from all of us.

My grandfather liked to put sugar on his grapefruit. He went out the back way, over the patio that he built, past the small rose garden he planted in the back yard and picked one off his grapefruit tree. He did this every morning when the fruit was ripe and got big bags of them from the market when it was out of season or not ready. I remember going down to California with my mother and staying in their house, the wooden Jesus

carvings over the beds, the plastic runners over the carpet, from which I could hear sounds whenever my grandparents moved around the house. I heard them late at night as they turned the corner in the hallway and the close of the bathroom door. I could tell the difference between my grandfather's heavier shuffle steps and my much smaller grandma's, who always seemed to be shrinking in every part of her life. In the morning I listened for them to get up, waiting in the twin bed across from my mother's, the beds they'd used as children, and listening to the sound of their feet on the plastic. Then waiting thirty more minutes, knowing that in the refrigerator was half a grapefruit, covered in plastic wrap, waiting for me.

It didn't surprise me when my mother taught me how to eat a papaya with lime and brown sugar. I knew this was something she had done as a child when she asked me where to find the brown sugar in my own cabinets. She was visiting for the week, down from Seattle and staying in the apartment I rented at the foot of the Hawaiian mountain range. The fruits there were nothing like the fruits of my own childhood, cold-weather Washington fruit like apples, plums, and pears. I could see the link between my mother and her childhood in this Hawaiian fruit. I knew because of how excited she was when we pulled over on the highway just outside Waimanalo, the rusted springs of my pickup truck coming to a stop near an old fruit vendor as old as my grandfather, had he still been alive.

She bought three, the green skin curving up over its own edges as it gradually turned yellow then red. How we waited, my mother like a little kid again—watching these papaya ripen on the windowsill that looked out toward the mountains and Manoa valley below. We waited until they were red and yellow in places, black in some where the sun had been too harsh. I remember the way she took the seeds out, like little frog eggs covered in mucus, using only a spoon and how some of the skin came with it, like pink sorbet. Then, sitting out in the living room with a lime in sections and the box of brown sugar in front of us, her squeezing the lime on and then the sugar over the top. But how lonely and far away it felt to me—two spoons to take the meat out and one half of a papaya for each of us. We were so far away then, my mother back home in the California of her youth and I unconnected on my own island thinking about the grapefruits I used to wait for in my grandparents' refrigerator.

Food carries something within itself, the story just beyond the smell, a brief olfactory glimpse of knowledge on the street, an open window hinting at the story. The smell of *mole*, rich with cinnamon, cumin, and cocoa, always reminds me of the first time I went to Mexico. I don't have to think about it, the scent does the work for me, transporting me to a little table

where I tried the sauce for the first time when I was eleven with my parents and two of my cousins, all of us trying—for their own first time—something new.

I remember *mole* over chicken, the brown oval plate and the doors of the restaurant open to the sidewalk where people passed and a small breeze meandered. The breeze was not enough to drive the flies away, but it was slow and steady enough to bring in the sounds of traffic, the soles of shoes, the occasional rustle of a newspaper out on the street. The sauce seemed to glow orange then, the white meat shining through the darker sauce, the liquid over the chicken a sweet alternative to what I was so used to in the States. I remember my mother trying to explain to me how the sauce was made, about the chicken stock, the chocolate, the little things like oregano, garlic, and oil that went into it, the flour used for thickening, or the way the chocolate was folded in.

These things were all new to me then, and still in some ways exist only there in that restaurant, open to the street, with the cars and people passing by and me tasting something spicy and sweet for the first time.

I imagine the things that occur to my mother as she cooks, all the little associations that pass through her mind. When she makes pie dough I wonder if she shares the same connections I do to afternoons and summer days where a leftover piecrust becomes a snack sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar for my father and me.

I wonder if she thinks of avocados as I do, the way they bring me back to my grandmother's kitchen days after she has passed away, knowing for the first time that I am in my grandmother's kitchen without her. I am alone in that galley kitchen with four aunts and an uncle showing me how to make guacamole. There is a thought passing high up above the smells of onion, lime, the smooth mottled feel of avocado skin, the cool hardness of a wooden pit, and chilies—how my grandmother is not there, the value of a life taken away with nothing but emptiness as a replacement.

How do I describe this to my mother, my nineteen-year-old voice not ready yet? Just a smell of soft green flesh, or a touch, the brief thought or association—a reminder of that absence. But my mother carves up avocados over eggs in the morning or spreads them over bread for lunch, and somewhere in here I know that we are layering more memories on top of the old and that someday I might not remember anymore why avocados once made me sad.

Oscar made it sound as if his mother made *menudo* every weekend during his childhood, and his sister and brothers survived on it for the week, spooning watery yellow portions into bowls for breakfast and dinner. It's a

rare glimpse into his family life that Oscar doesn't often allow, something he has not shared, like so many other things in his past. I can't really say I know him because to know someone I think you need to know where they come from. I can't say I know him because every moment I'm looking to him for signs of how to act, of what to say. I imagine in him there is some history I'm missing out on, some childhood knowledge of Mexican families and the circumstances that allowed my grandmother to deny her Mexican identity. I am trying to remember the first time I met Oscar, the moment we were introduced, the Halloween party at a mutual friend's, his costume a pair of dickies, a hairnet, and a black sweatshirt—playing the stereotypical Mexican. I am trying to remember the look he gave me—while we stood there—the only two Mexicans at the party, my costume only what I wore every day, a T-shirt and jeans. We exchange a glance, a look that I cannot share, the one that shows the ancient bloodlines existing between us in one glance, the one he has that is not my own.

I want to think there is identity in family, that through history we define ourselves. I believe other people see this too, like the way I can see Oscar's brothers and sister in him, his parents, or like the Hispanic man who touches the underside of my elbow when he talks to me on the street, asking for directions, leaning in to ask me, as if we shared a secret, "Where are you from?" The only answer that makes any sense to me being where I was born and grew up, "Seattle," I say. His eyebrows shift, as if thinking this over, then soften, looking at me again, feeling out the conversation as if I've missed some vital link amidst our exchange.

I've seen him before, I've seen him in the mirror, the dark brows, the feather of the eyelashes, the skin—porous and oily—the line of stubble, clean-shaven and dark beneath the skin. I've seen him in the old pictures, the sepia tone of my great grandfather in New Mexico, the stance of his dark features unmoving within his family, my grandmother only a dark-haired child then. I imagine the Rio Grande so close then, the fluid beat of water and ripples in the background. The river that will in a few years swallow up this town and so many memories, making it possible for them to begin again. Making it possible to shirk off the boundaries of their Mexican identity, their Spanish language, instead becoming Spanish in order to escape the prejudice of the time.

The old man on the street is still looking at me, his brows tightened as if he is trying to understand a secret. But there are no secrets between us, only the missing history of my birthright and the brief glimpses I piece together through brittle pictures with no memories and the scents of food. After a moment of staring, baffled by my response, he moves off in confusion down the street—still trying to understand my words. I know what he is searching for in me, but I don't have the knowledge to help him.

The things I remember from my childhood are small little things that no one but me took particular interest in. I remember the light through the kitchen windows, the way the sun came through in the west and landed in between shadows on the floor. I remember how the dust would never settle but merely floated there in the light, sometimes rising, or falling, and somersaulting over and over again as I wiped a hand through or filled my lungs with air and blew out into the beams of light. There were many days spent like this on the kitchen floors with my toy cars and trucks, badly beaten until the silver metal shone through the paint, like a collection of demolition derby cars. I can think of times when I rode my little red and white Volkswagen bug through the house with the pads of my feet like Fred Flintstone, hitting the squeaky red horn on the steering wheel until my mother yelled at me to stop. When I lay out on the floor I played with the ball bearings my dad let me keep from his bike shop, or I counted the savings of pennies and nickels I kept in the seat of my car.

On days like these, days when I lay on the floor and stared up at the sun, first closing one eye then the other and trying to put the leaves of a nearby tree in between, my dad would come home and give me rides on the tops of his feet, until I fell off and he spun me on the slick wooden floor, feeling each board under my back. These were usually the times right before dinner when my mom called me in from the street and my dad was just getting home from work.

Between the two of them they made quick dishes with little prep work. My dad always made a pasta: Spam casserole, *orzo*, tortellini soup with broccoli and Parmesan, or sometimes polenta with red sauce and mozzarella. My mom made things like breaded pork with capers, lamb balls, tacos in corn tortillas, burritos in flour tortillas, or sometimes when she didn't feel like cooking, reheated tamales from the freezer. There was a lot of overlap between the two of them, but these were the dishes I knew them for.

I observed.

During summers I got the stool from the corner near the phone and climbed up onto the counter—sitting with my legs dangling—where I could see the food being chopped up, or watch as my mother tenderized a piece of chicken with the heavy metal mallet, the chicken pressed between two sheets of plastic wrap. Or during the winter, watching either one of my parents at the stove as I waited over the heat vent in the kitchen, too cold to move and feeling the heat coming up from the furnace in the basement.

By the time I was nine, I cooked one meal a week and assisted on many of the other meals. I cut tomatoes for my mother or chopped lettuce, sometimes helping my dad make cookie dough that never made it into the oven, but always into our stomachs, or sometimes into the fridge for storage.

There are memories passed down through food. I always think of eggs, flour, and olive oil when I think of Christmas at home, I think of the large yellow ceramic bowl my father mixed the dough in, measuring out sections for lasagna. I got used to seeing the stainless steel pasta maker appear on the counter in the days leading up to Christmas, the familiar clamp made out of dull steel attached to the countertop and the way the light hit on the corners of the pasta maker, making it seem as if my father had been polishing it for the past twelve months. And on the morning of the 24th I remember always bringing up the wooden clothes rack from downstairs with its eighteen wooden dowels from which we hung the pasta. I remember pressing the dough again and again through the machine until it came out smooth and long, the edges pressed all the way to either side until they too were straight. I remember the pots all lined up along the stove, the large one for boiling the pasta, the one for tomatoes and meat, which simmered most of the day, and the skillet filled with heavy cream.

I grew up doing this. Only during winters when we visited my mother's family or my father's did we not carry on this tradition. But I got used to expecting it—to setting time aside for repeating this tradition throughout the years. And I could see this too in my father, when he went home to his mother and became the son, making pasta with his sisters and mother in the old kitchen he grew up in, while my cousins and I looked on.

I realized something standing in Oscar's kitchen that morning, watching the soup boil and smelling the rich taste of *menudo* in the air, that Oscar and I were not as different as I thought. I realized that his mother was like my mother, that they cooked for families that they had grown up with but did not exist beneath the same roofs anymore. I realized that Oscar's mother had been cooking all those years for a family of four men and one daughter, and that when Oscar made *menudo* for his friends he was making it for his family, two large cans of hominy, tripe enough for six, chilies, tortillas, a radish if he had it. I thought about my own mother, how after I moved out of her house I lost ten pounds, and for years as I fluctuated between returns and living on my own, so did my weight, shifting with the foods I wanted to eat and the foods I was eating for the family members not there.

My grandmother figured this out before me, that the meals she cooked after my grandfather was gone were too much. I remember seeing her a few months after the funeral, how she had shrunk so much, how she didn't eat and always had leftovers that my mother or one of her sisters was throwing out. I still lay in bed, listening to her travel the familiar paths from her bedroom through the living room to the kitchen; only these trips were fewer now. I remember how difficult this was for my mother, how she

knew without saying anything that my grandmother was dying and that there seemed to be little my family could offer.

I wasn't there when it happened. I flew down later with my father and stayed in the same bed I always had, listening to the house now quiet. For dinners my mother and her sisters made the usual things, potatoes with ham one night, tacos on another night; my uncle took me to the supermarket for avocados and showed me how he made his guacamole. I wandered around a lot that week, looking through my grandfather's desk drawers, the way I had when I was a kid, but as a youth became too scared to do. I found old pictures we had sent them in which I looked like myself but not like myself all at the same time.

Everything that week became a translation of something larger. The pictures in the desk opened up families I had never seen, restoring bridges that spanned borders and gave me a brief glimpse of a past I had never understood. There were pictures of my great grandparents, their children and the places they had come from and forgotten. The food we ate that week was like that too, it was a taste of something larger. It was a taste of the family that lived before us and disappeared, passing down recipes like memories. Did my grandmother have a memory of avocados, an uncle who showed her how to cut the pit out, getting at the core and separating skin from flesh, pit from meat? Had my grandfather always known the taste of grapefruit, the acidic citrus, pink and yellow, the full water feel on tongue of skin and pulp?

And in the back yard I wandered around the patio, touching the leaves of my grandfather's roses, feeling the coarse dry sensation of something that had not been cared for and had seen better days. Across the lawn, back by the fence sat the grapefruit tree—full and waiting—on the grass a couple of grapefruits already disappearing into the ground below.

TRUDY SEAGRAVES

Metropolitan Life

It's her habit, after a museum day in New York, to catch the 9:47 home. As she stands in line, rocking, waiting for Metro-North to screech to a full stop in Norwalk, she smiles, fingers heating an embossed business card tucked in her coat pocket.

It's not the first time she's met an attractive man at the Metropolitan. He's not an artist, like herself, but he's there once or twice a month. He's with Chase Bank and lives in Gramercy Park. Divorced, or so he says, and she believes him. His kids are out of college, which puts him at about fifty. It's a plus that he's stocky, for she hates a skinny man in bed—if it should come to that.

She carefully negotiates the filigreed steel steps of the railroad car thinking how fortuitous that earlier that afternoon she stopped in the Petrie court for an espresso, and how lucky the place was overcrowded and that such an attractive man headed for her table.

"May I share?" he'd asked, bowing slightly.

"Of course," she said, quickly at ease with his square, intelligent face. Their double espressos lasted an hour, and by then they both knew they'd spend the afternoon together and stay on for dinner. She did not want to give him her phone number, just yet, but she has his, and she will call.

She steps away from the train, pulls her raincoat around her waist, and snugs the belt, but it isn't cold. She looks up at a starless night and feels an almost imperceptible mist falling on her cheeks. Nothing about the glow of street lamps in the mild November air signals danger. No looming shadow or faint sound alerts her to the figure behind the wall, just beyond her car, rag in one hand, knife in the other, rope tucked into his belt.

No sound startles her in time to look, to scream, to run. When she reaches for the door handle of her car, he slaps the oily rag over her mouth and presses the knife blade to her throat. Her feet scoot out from under her, purse and packages fall to the pavement, and he drags her over a low curb, then pushes her down, down, down. Something massive crushes her chest, and the smell of oil clogs her nostrils. Frantically seeking air, she tries to

turn her head. A hand covers the rag on her face, another tears her slacks at the zipper.

He's everywhere.

She comes to in a blaze of lights and, alarmed, flies back into the black tunnel of forgetfulness, then feels them lift her as if a child. The blankets are coarse. She's lying in a back seat, lights flying by, a siren wailing. They lay her tenderly on her back on the gurney, and she curls into fetal position. Someone tucks a thin blanket around her. The blanket is hot but she can't stop shivering.

She opens her eyes, slowly, carefully. "Water," she pleads. Her mouth is foul with the taste of kerosene—or was it gasoline? Someone brings a paper cup to her lips. She sips and her ears open. A child is wailing. People are talking in hushed tones, then one voice rises above the rest, yelling. Bells ring. And phones. A young officer stands guard at her side, not a foot away, and she never takes her eyes off him. Feet apart, he looks fierce and proud. Now he's bending his head. He's talking into his cell phone, and when he clips it onto his belt, turns and leans down to whisper, "Your daughter is on the way." It's only then she cries.

She wipes her cheeks with one hand. The other one stays wedged between her legs. He's still talking, louder now. She frowns, studying his lips, struggling to make sense of language. Syllables and consonants fall slowly into place, more seen than heard: "—because, ma'am, we been cruisin' the station, lights out, for weeks—"

He straightens and glances around the brightly lit anteroom at the sick and wounded, then leans down again to speak more quietly. "You saw the murders in the paper."

She licks her lips and cannot speak. She doesn't read the local papers.

"So you wasn't on the lookout. Ma'am, you're lucky, see—"

She glares at him.

"No, I'm saying you're lucky you're alive; the others—"

"Don't tell me!"

She does not yet know that months later, when called to testify, she'll have no choice but to listen to how he dragged the other two women into the brush behind an abandoned building, where he torched them—where he was headed with her. One of the victims was a prostitute cruising the station, the other, a twenty-nine-year-old mother working late. And he? A brutal nineteen, a decade younger than Helen's children.

In the first few days and weeks, her son and daughter take turns staying with her, for they live in her town. They urge her to move in with one of them, at least for a while, and she won't. If she gives in to fear, she'll never master it. Besides, it's strange being so needy, strange that parent-child roles have seesawed.

The events of that night, before the police hauled him off, stay a jumble in her mind, like rotting trash you cannot sort. She never finds the worst piece, but the trauma nurse said it happened.

As if he were a disembodied demon, she experiences only parts of him: huge hands slick with oil—or was it gasoline?—the imprint of his knee in her back, the cold, sharp blade against her throat, worse even than his incantation: "Mother-bitch!"

She'll heal quickly, she's sure of it.

But no. Sleep is elusive, even with pills. During the day, she cannot venture beyond her yard. Going to her studio off the back of the kitchen proves useless. Time and again, she puts on her smock and walks into the room she loves best in all the world, only to stare helplessly at the portrait she was rendering before it happened, for now there's a disconnect between eye, heart, and hand.

Her portrait business will dry up if she can't finish the commissions she's taken. Her attorney advises her to call her clients and tell them the bare essence of truth. *Something happened and I can't paint, for now, for a few months, maybe. Can you be patient?* And she makes the calls, praying it will only be a few months. Her savings are dwindling.

By the time she learns her demon hasn't infected her with a life-threatening disease, she's so depressed she hardly cares. But as the months tick by and each repeat HIV test comes back negative, she begins to feel grateful for a clean bill of health. Still, she's lost her hold on the future. Her therapist insists she call the Rape Crisis Center, and she does, finally, finding slim consolation in the sessions; most of the women in her group are young incest survivors.

When one of them tells her she never slept until she adopted a dog, Helen adopts Roger, a five-year-old German shepherd. Sweet-natured, yes, but eighty pounds of determination—or so the breeder promises. What surprises her is how quickly she comes to adore him, how easily he makes her laugh, lifting a paw to shake hands, his habit of quizzically turning his head to the side when she speaks to him in long sentences, which she does, all the time. Seeing how gentle he is—how calm and even-tempered—she seriously doubts he'll do anything but lick the hand of an intruder, and has her house wired for an alarm system.

Still, when it's time for bed, she dreads closing her eyes. She knows the film will start, the same one, over and over, as if in the VCR set on automatic rewind. At first, she's only hunted. She runs, crying for help, her screams imploding in her brain like a hand grenade, and then she slides away from herself to become a second person, an identical twin who floats into the air and watches from above, while he flips her earth-bound self like a pancake, dropping the knife only long enough to fumble with his pants—and there it is—the part before the part she never quite remembers.

Enraged, he pulls on himself, hard. Now her screams fill the bedroom, and Roger is on his feet, whimpering, face digging through the covers to lick her hands. Gasping for air, she reaches for him and tries to sit. Staggering to the bathroom, she faces the mirror under a glaring bank of lights.

Why didn't you knee the son-of-a-bitch? Why didn't you spit the rag out and really scream? That scares them, doesn't it? Doesn't it? And why, for God's sake, didn't you have the Mace in your stupid hand, instead of at the bottom of your purse?

Why did you allow it to happen?

The counselor at the rape center takes Helen aside one night. "You can't give in to it, you have to get angry. Here's what I want. Take a pack of hot dogs into the garage or somewhere like that. Get yourself a sharp knife and a hammer. You have an ice pick? Okay." The woman laughs, but Helen cannot.

"Go at it with a vengeance. Cut, stab! Bite that sucker! Spit it out! Get on your feet and grind him into the floor like a big spider. You have a fireplace? Make a nice, hot fire and burn him. Burn him till nothing remains but ashes."

Helen stares in disbelief, but the woman holds her ground. "He wanted to burn you. Do it any way you want just so long as you do it, and before next week."

Helen goes into the garage with a hammer and ice pick, and can't help laughing at the absurdity of murdering a pack of hot dogs from Stop & Shop. But it isn't long before the moist, flesh-colored shafts become his flesh. Like an actor lost in character, she slides into a frenzy of macerating, slicing, biting, and spitting. Finally, stupefied, she sits back on her heels, appalled by the depth of her rage. It's a long time before she remembers she's supposed to burn him.

She piles shredded skin and pulp onto newspaper, dribbles a few drops of kerosene on it, carries her bundle into the house, and drops it into the living-room fireplace. Watching the fire flare and pop and spit, she doesn't know whether to celebrate or weep, until she detects a whiff of kerosene, and instantly the rag is over her mouth, the knife at her throat, and she can't breathe. Leaping to her feet, she yells, "Roger, come!" and before she turns, he's at her side. She hugs him hard, grabs her coat and his leash by the front door, and flies out into the late-winter sunlight.

And then it's spring. Six months have passed and the nights are no easier. Worse, there's a certainty, now, that while she sleeps, a crazy man intent on violating her and her alone is creeping up the stairs, always creeping up the stairs. *It has yet to happen*. There are men out there who hate her enough to break in and kill. She's certain of it.

She knows where they took him, knows it's for life—but it's a joke, isn't it? Some bleeding heart will take him under her wing and lobby for

redemption and release. It happens all the time. She can see it. He'll stand tall and clear-eyed, clean-scrubbed and clean-shaven, Bible in hand, and look them in the eye, and because he hasn't murdered anyone in prison, they'll vote release. And she will stand there shaking, and her lawyer will stand there telling the panel the boy promised to come back and kill her, and he's capable of doing that—and more.

And no one will listen.

He'll finish her. She knows it.

When she takes Roger on a walk around the neighborhood, at some point or another, the image of that boy-man floats before her and she has to stop, pulse racing, breath coming in ragged gulps. She's learned to shut her eyes, willing the old vision to vanish. And it does, and in its place, the new one—he's in jail on a gurney, sedated, being wheeled into an operating room. The surgery is a success. In the New World, castration is the rule. That scene firmly in place, she moves on.

By the end of summer, her nightmares slacken to the point where she opens her eyes only two or three times a night to check the alarm system, or the new brass deadbolt gleaming in reflected light from the bathroom, or to listen for Roger's fluttery dog-snore. Nights when she awakens choking and sweaty and her pulse fails to tamp down, she makes sure the pepper spray is by the phone, although she no longer lifts the receiver to hearken for a dial tone, half afraid he's cut the wires. Nor does she get up anymore to check that the window isn't locked in case all bastions fail and she has to jump from the second story.

Once again she walks with head aloft, meeting strangers' eyes, no longer humped by shame. At the mall, when a swarthy young man jostles her in the elevator or follows her into the stairwell, she may start sweating, but she reaches in her pocket for the cylinder and doesn't panic. She can sit alone through an entire film in a darkened cinema. She can hike her neighborhood woods—with Roger, of course—and one fine October day, finds herself picking up a brush—hand, eye, and heart reconnected.

When the call comes, Helen is in her studio completing a large canvas from photographic studies of a cherubic three-year-old wearing a silk dress embroidered with rosebuds, chubby arms wrapped around her knees.

"It's me, Martin. How you doin'?"

"Martin!" Her attorney for the trial. "How am I doing? I'm *painting*, even as we speak." She laughs and wipes a strand of hair from her eyes with the back of her hand.

"Sleeping?"

She hesitates. "Some."

"Well, hang on, it's about to get better. Our friend got his throat slit for hisself. Ear to ear. Just got the news from the State. Thought you'd want to know." He chuckles.

She tries to wedge her paintbrush in the rack over the turpentine, but her hand is trembling and the brush misses the slot. She throws it down and gets up, wonky and off-balance. Her knees are trembling, but she has to be on her feet.

"*Why?* What I mean is—why would somebody kill *him*?"

"Why? Tell me there isn't a god."

"I don't get it." She wraps an arm around her belly.

"Happens more often than you think. This guy ends up on the same cellblock as our guy, and not only is he from Norwalk, he's the *brother* of that prostitute your guy killed. The first one, remember? And if you think there isn't honor among—" He waits. "Helen?"

She swallows, unable to speak.

"Helen?"

She whispers, "Thank you," and replaces the receiver carefully, staring at the phone as though new to this century.

A roll of the dice. A divine crapshoot. Thank you, God.

Suddenly exhausted, and like a sleepwalker, she mounts the stairs to her bedroom and leaves the door wide open, the alarm system unmanned. She takes the phone off the hook, strips, slides under the covers, and dreams seamlessly into late evening, when Roger, tail thumping her mattress, gently paws the sheets and whimpers for his dinner.

The next morning, she calls her favorite dog-sitter before heading into New York to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a lover seeking reconciliation with her muse. It will be the first visit since it happened, almost a year to the day.

And she'll drive in. No more trains.

She parks on the West Side, locks her car, and ambles east, probing the pocket of her sweater for the red cylinder, sliding her thumb into position—not that she'll need pepper spray in broad daylight, not with middling people streaming into Central Park as they do on balmy Saturdays. The late-morning sun capes her shoulders and warms the top of her fading red hair, washing her with tenderness toward herself. Just beyond sight, through treetops turning copper in the autumn sunlight, lies the splendor of the museum and a whole day with paintings.

She suppresses a desire to skip. Will she look foolish? Quickening her pace, Helen approaches a stout, professorial-looking man walking as though his feet hurt. He glances at her once, twice, then smiles shyly, tentatively. Finding him familiar, in a collegiate sense, she smiles back. Each moves on. *There*, she thinks, *a stranger I'm not afraid of—except, the*

only men who look at me nowadays are tweedy sorts, a far cry from the tigers of my youth. But I'll find someone, I know I will, and if I don't, well, I had a pretty fine husband as husbands go, and more lovers than I want the children to know about.

She grins, remembering the night with an Italian artists' rep on a water bed in a room of the Holiday Inn in Darien; the Labor Day weekend that began with Dan and ended with Marvin; the Australian hang glider she met in Mousehole, where she'd gone to paint the summer after Norman died.

Warmed through and through, she takes a deep breath. The sun is hot and bright, the sky an Aegean blue, with clouds like pulled cotton, and the park is filled with ball players and picnickers. Saturday-people. Feeling at one with them, she glances around, then notices a thin man in a mismatched suit walking stiffly toward her, right hand churning in his pants pocket. She wheels and runs across the grass, fear rising with bile in her throat. At the edge of the pond she stands, knees locked, sucking long droughts of city air—as if that alone could cleanse her.

It isn't about me, she tells herself sternly. *Let it go. He's just another wanker. Sad, when you think that's his acme of pleasure*. She heads slowly back to the asphalt. Still, it's some minutes before her heart stops beating in her throat, before she can relax her grip on the pepper spray, before she can will herself not to turn and make certain he isn't following.

I'll skip, she decides. *I really will. No one will find it strange, a fifty-year-old Dorothy flogging the yellow brick road. This isn't stuffy Connecticut, and up ahead on the crossroad, isn't everyone running or roller-blading?*

When the path splits, she follows the known way, allowing herself the childlike joy of running full tilt downhill under a footbridge and out the other side, and there it is, looming ahead—majestic matron. Her museum.

Over the years, Helen's viewing has become purposeful. She climbs the marble steps off the Great Hall and swings left for the Dalí exhibit. She rents a Walkman and tunes into Philippe de Montebello, whose urbane tone suggests more a British actor between plays than the museum's director.

Hours later, happier than she can remember, she removes the earphones and shakes out her hair before stepping into the final retrospective, a darkened alcove featuring Dalí and Buñuel's old film, *Un chien andalou*. Scenes flick by—rotting donkeys, ants swarming on human hands—most of them familiar from art school. She tucks her purse into her lap, uncertain how long avant-garde will win out over revulsion, amused that what she once found astonishing and even brilliant, she now finds pathetic and adolescent. She watches in mounting outrage as a man stalks a woman and traps her in the corner of a room, grabbing at her breasts.

Helen shuts her eyes. *Good God! Does Philippe know about this?* She leaves her seat, but stops short in the doorway. *You can't keep running. Every horror isn't about you.* She turns back in time to see a hand lift a razor blade to an eyeball—and bolts.

Head down, she makes it to the shelter of a ladies' room. It's a long time before she can leave the stall. Stepping to a sink, she splashes cold water on her eyes, runs fingers through her hair, cleans the mascara from her cheeks, and fluffs on too much rouge.

I'm not running.

Heading for the cafeteria, she puts her shoulders back and concentrates on a plan. First lunch, then Corot, Monet, and Cassatt. That bunch. A cup of tea around four-thirty, then Hans the Younger and study those eyes; no one in the world, then or now, paints eyes of such human perfection. She smiles, thinking how she tends to get too close, and usually earns a scolding from one of the guards, cautioning her to keep back three feet.

After Hans, she'll take a quick run to the mezzanine to scan the ever-changing glassed racks of American portraits, hit the gift shop and buy a silk scarf, have a sherry in the balcony while the chamber music group tunes up, and at closing, hail a cab back to the car.

A perfect day.

Hungry now, she strides along, smiling at Roman heads and frescoes from Boscotrecase, sniffing again that iodine-Mercurochrome smell peculiar to rooms of statuary. She smiles at the living, people she'd probably like if she got to know them. She joins the lunch line, grabs a tray, and lifts a chef's salad out of the case, aware, also, that a man to her left is moving closer, is watching her. She stiffens. *The wanker from the park? How can that be? I've been here—hours!*

"Say, are those salads fresh?" A pleasantly modulated voice. A normal voice.

She peers left, then shifts her body to the side so she can eye him more fully. Instantly, her pulse flattens and she suppresses a smile. It's only a stocky, sweet-faced older man with clear khaki-colored eyes—unusual! His pale skin is rusty with freckles across the cheeks. She's willing to bet he's as Irish as she.

"Fresh? Well, I like them." Reaching across him, she grabs another tray. "You'll need this." Another quick glance. His graying russet hair is thick and frizzy. He seems an easygoing man by the look of his worn camel-colored sweater; blue shirt open at the neck, one button forgotten; baggy brown corduroys; and real Maine loafers, not those wimpy deals with tassels.

"I haven't been in here before."

She keeps the surprise out of her voice. "The Metropolitan?"

He laughs. "The cafeteria. I haunted the museum when I was in art school."

"Which one?"

"Pratt, but it's been years since we moved to California. I just moved back. Yup." Looking pleased, he helps himself to a salad. "For good, I think."

She follows his arm to his hand. No wedding ring. *But he said we. We moved. Perhaps he moved back because he got divorced. Or widowed. Or did he say I moved back?*

"How's the pie? It looks kind of . . . sweaty."

"I wouldn't. But just ahead is a basket of the best bran muffins." She points. "And there's the coffee."

He grabs a mug and fills it. "Looks like you come here all the time."

She draws back and turns to face him. Who is this man? His countenance seems open enough, skin creased in the way of someone living a life of good will, for she knows that anyone over fifty wears old habits for all to see.

"I went to art school, too." She looks him in the eye when she says that, and for a long moment they're silenced by the delicacy of finding they're both fine artists. She drops her head when she feels a flush rising up the back of her neck into her hair.

They inch past steam trays of hot meals, his arm brushing hers as they stop and start. He's behind her now, and says into her ear, "Anyone who goes to art school can't be all bad."

And she can't help laughing.

Suddenly remembering her own coffee, she grabs her tray and heads back for a mug. Will he move on without her? Part of her hopes he will. He is attractive, and he is an artist, and he may be single, but not now. Not yet! Please, God, not today.

When she turns, he's signaling for her to join him near the cash registers. "I saved your place!" he mouths.

Moving quickly, she slides her tray behind his, and asks, "Do you work as a fine artist?"

"I do now. I was an art director—made a good living. But the kids are out of college, now, so I can let the commercial work go. I do landscapes. That's my thing." A slight flush comes to his ruddy cheeks. "As it happens, I'm teaching some courses at a college just outside the city. Just started. I must say, I love it. Yup. What do you do?"

"Portraits."

"The face of God," he says quietly.

"What?"

"That's what portraits are. You're painting the face of God. And the ghost of your own face creeps in, in the eyes or the mouth. Haven't you noticed?"

She gazes out across the cafeteria and up into the domed and gilded ceiling, seeing the children she's painted over the years. "I never thought of it that way."

"Painting comes through the soul." He taps his chest. "And caring about the people you paint. Or nature, if that's your thing, otherwise, why bother? You see, an artist—sorry! I get carried away. It's a good thing I'm teaching; I can be a bore."

He points to his tray. "Took your advice on the muffin."

She studies his profile. He would have been handsome. In fact, he is. Suddenly panicked, she busies herself securing loose ends of damp plastic wrap around her salad plate.

Jostled from behind, she jumps, then turns around. It's only a boy, thirteen, maybe. She ducks her head and smiles to let him know it's all right, then faces forward again and studies the back of this new friend's head.

If he comes here all the time, maybe I'll run into him next month. Maybe we can be museum pals, the way people are pen pals. But if he asks me to eat with him, what can I say? I don't want to be rude.

"May I buy your lunch?" Eyebrows up, he has his billfold open, an index finger in it.

"Oh, no!" Helen fumbles for a twenty, while he puts his wallet away and waits, tray in hand.

She pockets her change, takes a deep breath, and risks all. "Share a table?"

"Love to!"

Her cheeks are burning and she's short of breath.

"Lead on," he says, stepping aside with a trace of courtly bow. "You're the native."

She winds through a tangle of chairs, reminded of years past when she looked forward to meeting new men on painting trips or at galleries, recalling the steady rhythm of the old familiar minuet, the turn-and-shift of getting to know someone. Those were highly structured moves. Surely, she's lost the knack.

Together they find a vacant table and clear the remains of someone's lunch. She sits, certain he'll settle across from her, but no, he pulls out the chair to her right. Nearly paralyzed by his proximity—but also warmed by the faint, sweet, cedary smell of his sweater—she finds her hand guarding her throat, and makes herself lower it to pick up her napkin.

A slight nod, and he reaches across their trays for her right hand. She lifts hers, and shakes. His is warm, fleshy, soft.

"Walter Palmieri."

She blurts out, "*Palmieri*? Your eyes, those curly lashes, you look so . . . Irish!"

He chuckles. "My mother was a lassie, but my father was Italian. Dark, black hair, and what a nose. You'd have had fun painting him."

"I—forgive me, I forgot—I'm—I'm Helen Murray."

"Helen," he says, letting go her hand to pick up his own napkin. "And you're all Irish."

He drops his elbows on the arms of his chair, face earnestly tipped to one side. "Say, Helen, I can't tell you what this means to me, meeting you by chance this way, that you didn't brush me off. People say New Yorkers aren't friendly, but it's not true. And aren't you glad? Look how much we have in common."

Her mouth goes dry. She licks her lips and picks up her coffee. "Umm."

"Where do you live?" he asks. "In the city?"

She shakes her head. "Connecticut." *No need to be more specific.*

"I'm just around the corner, on the West Side. Do you drive in?"

She hesitates. "Yes."

"Isn't it expensive? I mean the parking?"

Before she can check herself, she says, "I leave the car in the eighties and walk through the park. Takes ten minutes."

He frowns. "You don't walk back after dark. I mean, it gets dark early now."

"I catch a cab."

"Well, I'll walk you! I go that way. Why pay for a cab?"

She puts her coffee cup down and scans the room, not stopping until her eyes meet those of a solidly built, gray-haired woman, a no-nonsense type who looks as if she might be a Latin teacher or the principal of an inner-city grammar school.

"No need," she says, checking the impulse to lift her tray and move to the other woman's table.

"I understand." He looks solemn, now, even downcast, and clears his throat. "Say, I didn't mean to overstep. In California, people just talk—"

When she doesn't answer, he tries to laugh. "I'm married, *very* married. I'm not—" He shakes his head. "What can I say?" He flushes bright red to the roots of his hair. "You're a very attractive woman, it's not that, it's just, my wife and I—" He shrugs.

"Don't worry about it. You were just being friendly."

In the long silence that follows, Helen holds herself to task for bungling a simple exchange, a friendly overture. Why can't I be easy about anything, she asks herself. Why does everything have to be about *him*?

"So, did I tell you? I guess I didn't. Jane's an artist, lots of awards. She started in representational, but the last ten years, nothing but abstracts. Big stuff. *Huge!*" His arm flies out as if flinging paint on the far wall. "People love them."

She looks up from buttering her muffin and catches a wistful twist to his mouth, the look of a man who blundered and regrets it.

Help him out, she tells herself. He meant no harm.

"I used to do abstracts, but I quit because nobody wanted them." She manages a laugh. "I needed money when my daughter started college, so I taught myself to do portraits. From books. Can you believe it?"

"Sure. You already had the basics. Once you have the basics, you can always recoup."

"Yes," she says, turning thoughtful. "I have the basics." It's a few moments before she hears what he's saying.

"—why my wife's are selling, not just lines and blobs, it's the rigorous training that shines through. They make sense."

She picks up a paper cup of oil and vinegar and squeezes the dressing onto her salad.

"Like Klee, or Mondrian."

He nods, picks up his muffin, and starts to butter it. "You'd like her, because everyone does— Say, would you meet us here, one day? Let us know when you're coming in? Because she—"

He talks on, face serene with the pleasure of describing the woman he seems to love, until Helen reaches out to touch his sleeve. "I'd like that, Walter. I'd like that very much."

What's in Our Name?

Though I've never been to North Dakota I live in the most geographically isolated town in America, so I feel I have some grounds for kinship. A friend of mine used to frequently hitchhike from Wisconsin to Missoula. A North Dakota farmer picked him up once. After a lengthy exposition of his state, he paused, then concluded: "Yup. The fact that North Dakota is populated at all is living testament to the fragility of the wagon wheel."

—Mike Freeman,
Yuktat, Alaska

The first of these favorite areas associated with Lewis and Clark is the region around Bismarck, North Dakota. There is a fetching candor about this compact state capital (population: 53,500) on the Missouri. The capitol building is a modest Depression-era skyscraper, as if the government had insisted that some symbol of its power stand taller than the grain elevators. To a family hailing from Boston, a city like Bismarck boasts a touch of the exotic. The city also occupies a stretch of the Missouri that we came to appreciate as typical of the river: a powerful ribbon, fringed green with cottonwoods, and winding through a floodplain sharply defined by ocher bluffs and hills. (Karl Bodmer's painting *View of the Bear Paw Mountains* from Fort McKenzie superbly captures the Missouri's character.) From Fort Abraham Lincoln, on a grassy, windswept knob across the river, George Armstrong Custer set out in 1876 for his final destiny at the Little Bighorn.

—Cullen Murphy, "Lewis and Clark and Us,"
The Atlantic Monthly March 1998

At the beginning of the Paleocene, about sixty-five million years ago, warm, shallow oceans covered much of central and eastern North Dakota, and huge forested swamplands similar in many ways to today's Florida Everglades existed in the western part of the state.

The hot, humid, swampy lowlands of western North Dakota provided habitat for many exotic plants and animals Lush forests filled with ferns, cycads, figs, bald cypresses, magnolias, ginkgos, sycamores, dawn redwoods, palms, and other subtropical plants flourished. Water lilies and Equisetum (horsetail) grew in ponds and swamps. Mats of vegetation dozens of feet thick built up in the swamps; after millions of years of pressure and heat, the plant material transformed into layers—some as thick as thirty feet (10 m.)—of lignite coal. Dense forests extended as far north as the Arctic Ocean.

—John Hoganson, "North Dakota Everglades,"
North Dakota History, Vol. 73, Nos. 1 & 2, 2006

Reviews

John Updike, *Terrorist*. New York: Knopf, 2006. Pp. 310, $24.95 hb.

Appropriating the authority that has legitimately accrued to him after half a century of assiduously chronicling the fine details of the banal domestic suburban middle-class scene, Updike has turned his sure hand to exploring the new darker corners of the American reality. For although *Terrorist* may ostensibly be about the mindset of a "homegrown" terrorist—half-Egyptian, half-Irish, but as American in his touching idealism as they come, when all is said and done—the narrative is really about the dead-end American capitalism has run into.

In *Terrorist*, Updike turns the issue of sacrifice and martyrdom on its head: who really are the lambs being led to their daily destruction, by what propaganda machine, and with what insidious intent? In doing so, he has entered territory all but outlawed recently to authors, who have for the most part (like the disturbing justification of democracies living in perpetual fear offered by Ian McEwan in his paranoid *Saturday*) stuck to the starkest characterization of us versus them, the self versus the other, civilization versus barbarism. Perhaps it was only someone like Updike, always oriented toward taking the basic impulse of religion seriously, a man of essentially conservative outlook, who could have dared to muddy the consensual waters to such a threatening extent.

Terrorist is rather schematic in the unfolding of its narrative drive, but this achieves a precise economy of emotion, convenient in keeping the focus on Updike's self-limited universe of meaning. For a change (unlike his work since the last of the Bech books, which has wandered in search of a purpose), Updike achieves a delicate balance between description for its own sake (which undoubtedly holds its own intense reading pleasure) and description linked to the working out of emotional conflict. Perhaps Updike needed to remove himself (as in some of his work of the nineteen-eighties) again to a more transcendent plane than his usual deeply ploughed territory, to be able to achieve the kind of restraint that lets us admire his descriptive skills without reservation, making us desire more rather than less.

The classical simplicity of the plot unfolds in five movements. The opening act contains in embryo the irrevocable dynamics of *Terrorist*. The stage is set as we meet eighteen-year-old Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy at Central High School in New Prospect (in northern New Jersey), at odds with the mindless self-destructiveness of his fellow students, mostly

minorities, as they pursue the shallowest of the shifting glamour dreams offered by popular American culture. Ahmad's rectitude and integrity, charming in its own way, get the goat of Jack Levy, his Jewish guidance counselor. Levy tries unsuccessfully to have Ahmad think seriously about college, instead of pursuing truck driving as his Yemeni Imam, Shaikh Rashid, Ahmad's guide at an inconspicuous local mosque for seven years during his self-imposed discipleship, has persuaded him to do. Ahmad feels simultaneously attracted and repelled by a black choir-singing fellow student, Joryleen Grant, whose boyfriend, Tylenol, will soon put her up to turning tricks to support his pimping lifestyle. But Ahmad, even when later in the story his Lebanese boss, Charlie Chehab of Excellency Home Furnishings (who turns out to be Ahmad's pathway to the planned martyrdom operation), pays Joryleen to "devirginate" him, hesitates to go all the way.

Here then is the agonistic matrix of race and class in which envious competition and relative deprivation demand preset conclusions, leading to the highest form of individual and collective intellectual suicide, terrorism, that so confounds the secular person. Updike's introduction of Jack Levy as the voice of exhausted secular reason, at sea in a world of rising faith, is particularly apt, and handled with consummate skill to suggest an array of illuminating meanings. Updike skillfully blends in the theme of repressed sexuality that is at the core of nearly all explanations of fundamentalist terrorism (and accurately so), but does it in a subtle manner. The abiding link with Joryleen throughout the novel is also significant—Ahmad's last wish to Shaikh Rashid, on the night before the plot to blow up the Lincoln Tunnel, is to have his financial reward for martyrdom granted not to his self-sufficient mother, but to Joryleen.

In succeeding chapters the tense coexistence between those of secular conviction and those of religious faith intensifies. Levy ends up sleeping with Ahmad's agnostic Irish-American mother Teresa (a part-time abstract artist, and full-time nurse's aide), who'd married Ahmad's Egyptian father on the strength of his exotic good looks, only to be abandoned by him early on. Jack, married to an obese Lutheran librarian, Beth, ends up being unceremoniously dumped by Teresa, who still retains hope of making a good marriage. We wonder constantly about the extent to which different degrees of faith and skepticism inform the motivations of Ahmad's mentors: Shaikh Rashid, who seems more carried away by the seductive language of the Qur'an than always by its explicit content; and Charlie, who says the right things against American foreign policy, even as he is utterly hypnotized by the irrefutable marketing strategies of consumer capitalism. That there should be some doubt even at the end about the exact motivations of Ahmad's substitute father-figures is as it should be, if the focus is to remain on Ahmad's own free will.

The final chapter, particularly the moment-by-moment description of Ahmad maneuvering the explosive-laden truck toward and into the Lincoln Tunnel, is Updike at his best. Plot and character have merged seamlessly, symbolism and metaphor are deployed with perfect calibration (such as the scene, on the morning of his scheduled adventure, when Ahmad helps an overturned beetle back on its legs), and the potent combination of inevitability and indeterminacy represents the height of suspense: much as the actual unfolding of the West's simultaneous complete control over, and complete vulnerability to, acts of terrorism in the real world signifies a kind of tension whose meaning explodes into a million different splinters of insignificance upon each close inspection through purely intellectual or rational means.

Updike has succeeded in this book in entering that most forbidden of recent zones, the "mind of the terrorist"—forbidden, that is, to writers of a liberal persuasion, who've not yet vacated their middle-class suburban point of view where dysfunction and decadence are still forms of coping not leading to darker questions, but existent in and of themselves, as if cut off from the argumentative world of advertising and manipulation, and simply the final natural resting point for Western man to have arrived at.

Updike has picked up the key threads in any explanation of why someone essentially goodhearted and idealistic (and Ahmad is one of Updike's most sympathetic characters ever) might turn to terrorism as the only way out of the American consumerist morass. Updike has highlighted a critique, picking up from the Egyptian theorist Sayyid Qutb's dismissal of American society as jahiliya (ignorance), that ought to compel us to a reconsideration of our own complicity in whatever acts of terror follow from the brutal logic of domination. This domination extends, above all, into the realm of intuition and empathy, traits that Ahmad's fellow high-schoolers have been taught to dismiss, regardless of the emotional costs. Consider this brilliant passage of observation, as Ahmad drives his Excellency's truck:

> From the bleached boardwalks that do for sidewalks, clusters of people stare at his high square orange truck as if its appearance is an event; they look, in their medley of bathing suits and beach towels and tattered shorts and T-shirts imprinted with hedonistic slogans and jibes, like refugees who were given no time to gather their effects before fleeing. Children among them wear towering hats of plastic foam, and those who might be their grandparents, having forsaken all thought of dignity, make themselves ridiculous in clinging outfits of many colors and patterns. Sunburned and overfed, some sport in complacent self-mockery the same foam carnival hats as their grandchildren wear, tall and striped ones as in the books by Dr. Seuss or headgear shaped like open-mouthed sharks or lobsters extending a

> giant red mitt of a claw. *Devils*. The guts of the men sag hugely and the monstrous buttocks of the women seesaw painfully as they tread the boardwalk in swollen running shoes. A few steps from death, these American elders defy decorum and dress as toddlers.

Reading *Terrorist*, one realizes the extent to which the task of understanding the new darknesses (which have emerged, as it were, fully born and adult-minded, from shells that used to be embryonic in appearance not very long ago) is truly the province of the fiction-makers, who ought to step into the breach, with acts of high imaginative empathy, to displace the simple-minded politicians and bureaucrats currently lording it over us. Updike has taken a lot of trouble to read the Qur'an as terrorists, or the merely disillusioned, read it; he has done it without making our own role as participating actors any easier. The threat is presented in its true dimensions: smaller than the exaggeration of "their" abilities would have us believe, but greater in terms of our own self-destructive capacity for overreaction. The fact that he maintains a light hand throughout suggests his faith in the eventual victory of reason over blind faith. (His ending certainly moves in this direction, especially as he offers catharsis to the reader.) But the victory is not at all assured, and it might well turn out to be the hollow victory of the worst characteristics of American consumerist life Ahmad (and Qutb and Updike) reject.

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Landscapes with Figures: The Nonfiction of Place. Edited and with an introduction by Robert Root. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. Pp. x + 294, $21.95 pb.

The Big Empty: Contemporary Nebraska Nonfiction Writers. Edited by Ladette Randolph and Nina Shevchuk-Murray. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. Pp. xiv + 302, $21.95 pb.

I'll be the first to admit that I have an ambivalent relationship with creative nonfiction. I both teach and read it, and essays in this genre often seem to fall into one of two categories: insightful meditation or sentimental, narcissistic schlock. So with a mix of interest and wariness I approached two new nonfiction anthologies, both recently published by the University of Nebraska Press. Both collections take as their focus the sense of place in nonfiction. Yet, as Robert Root's title suggests, these are landscapes with figures, requiring a human perspective to find significance and meaning. When writing about place, the speaker usually takes the role of either inhabitant or interloper and uses place as a trope to examine such issues as memory, identity, and history—and the essayists of these collections fulfill this expectation. But apart from the focus on place, these two books are quite different: *Landscape with Figures* includes not only essays on all sorts of places (Cape Cod, a salt marsh, Kyrgyzstan) but also introductions to each essay written by that essay's author. *The Big Empty*, on the other hand, is a collection of narratives about Nebraska by Nebraskans. I will comment on some of the individual works in these books, but because both of these anthologies consist of essays and excerpts previously published elsewhere by reputable presses and journals, I think it's more compelling to examine the choices made by the editors in how they organized each book, and try to discuss what overall message each therefore seems to convey. Why these essays in these formats? What does each collection contribute to the discussion of place in writing?

Of the two anthologies, I found *Landscapes with Figures* to be the more successful. Editor Robert Root establishes the various issues of writing about place in his introduction to the book, and he includes a good selection of both essay topics and essayists such as Kim Barnes, Alison Hawthorne Deming, Barbara Hurd, and Natalia Rachel Singer. Many of the essays describe some version of that perennial favorite place subject—wilderness versus development—but there are an equal number of surprising and thoughtful pieces, such as Kim Barnes on her irrational attachment to the Clearwater River in Idaho in "Almost Paradise": "Having left the river, I found myself lost, as though the story I had told

myself of who I was had somehow disappeared, fell from my hands like a wind-torn map" (28). Or David Gessner's witty rant against nature-writer mystics (even as he aspires to be one) in "Sick of Nature":

> For my part I'll take writing that spills sloppily over genre walls, always expanding its borders. We all pay lip service to Whitman and his famous "contradictions," but it's not all that common to see writers contradicting themselves on the page. "My moods hate each other," wrote Emerson. Amen. I love to see Thoreau overcome by an urge to strangle a woodchuck. . . . (101)

I was a bit disappointed to see not one but two essays by Scott Russell Sanders—not my favorite writer for his propensity towards such ham-fisted phrasing and imposed significant parallels, such as this example from "After the Flood":

> Returning to one's native ground, always tricky, becomes downright treacherous when the ground is at the bottom of a lake. Unwilling to dive through so much water, I can return to that drowned landscape, as I can return to childhood, only by diving through memory. (206)

But what do I know? Sanders regularly appears in *Best American Essays*, so someone must like him. My favorite part of *Landscape with Figures*, however, is that Root has had each author write an introduction to his or her essay. A few of these are a letdown: writers complain when readers ask stupid questions like "Where do you get your ideas?" Yet some of the intros give in to readers' demands and do little more than explain the idea for the piece and how it was written. My feeling is that if the author has done his or her job, such an explanation is unnecessary. Happily, many of the authors' intros take this opportunity to examine a particular question of how place operates as an element in writing. Lisa Knopp's process-oriented intro describes how, since her writing tends to "focus entirely on the flora, fauna, weather, water, and landforms," she had to "invent ways to include people" (128-29). From John Hanson Mitchell, we have the overarching idea behind this anthology eloquently summarized: whether his subject, Scratch Flat, exists as mythical farmland, cursed spot, or modern site of wilderness-versus-development, "Nothing was free from the bonds of setting" (146). Human stories need place in order to take place.

Overall, I think the authors included in this anthology do a great job of conveying this need in both the essays and their introductions.

I wish I could be as pleased with *The Big Empty*. As someone who has spent the last few years living in North Dakota, I can understand the defensive response or feeling of inadequacy when I read in the introduction

that "Nebraska is rarely a destination. . . . Nebraska is a state outsiders readily admit to driving through or flying over" (ix). So my sympathy and curiosity are piqued by the prospect of such a varied list of Nebraskan authors—including Michael Anania, Ted Kooser, William Kloefkorn, and Mary Pipher—writing about the state in terms of its topography, weather, history, people, and general ethos. Unfortunately, this collection comes across as very uneven, with some odd or questionable editorial decisions. In particular, Ted Kooser's piece is peppered with so many Bohemian proverbs that it's almost too folksy to bear. The overwhelming majority of these essays seem to be invested in perpetuating many of the perceptions, even as they deplore the stereotypes held "back East." I can only conclude that the editors intend this contradiction. There are a few notable exceptions. Michael Anania's essay "Myths of the American West" describes the pervasive myth of Nebraska as more frontier, more hardscrabble, more pioneering, and therefore "more American" (9) in order to discuss the wealth of sources that refute this popular myth. And once again, Lisa Knopp is a standout with her piece "Far Brought," which uses botany to portray the indigenous prairie vegetation as the Other to be colonized by homesteaders, who plow and plant it into some semblance of "home"—so much so that in fact, Arbor Day originated in Nebraska. In an excerpt from *Stranger to the Game*, pitcher Bob Gibson describes growing up poor and black in mid-century Lincoln, jumping between the voices of family members, to present us with a portrait of how sports, especially baseball, became an effective racial desegregator and unifier as well as a path to higher education. There's also a fascinating group of essays that detail the American Indian experience in Nebraska, from Mark Monroe's experience as the first "Indian Candidate for Public Office" in 1969, to the different reactions of white people to Delphine Red Shirt depending on whether she was in or out of dancing costume in "Weighed Down by Buckskin," or Joe Starita's account "From Pine Ridge to Paris" of Buffalo Bill Cody's use of Pine Ridge Reservation Sioux in his Wild West Show and America's subsequent iconoclasm of the Plains Indian. But while I found these pieces to be a strong point of the collection, their editorial placement is weirdly problematic. It seems like this anthology spends its first half establishing the "norm" of Nebraska, its myths and history as told from the perspective of an insider of homesteader heritage. All of the minority or "alternative" experiences are found in the second half of the book. Because the essays are not arranged alphabetically by author, the editors must have specifically chosen the order in which these essays appear, which begs the question, why? Are Randolph and Shevchuk-Murray trying to soothe us with a more familiar Nebraska before they introduce a new element? Even weirder is the inclusion, before Mark

Monroe's essay, of a piece by his friend, Kenneth Lincoln, at the end of which Lincoln describes the *hunka*, a Lakota ceremony in which he became brothers with Monroe. Monroe himself, in his essay about running for public office, mentions that Lincoln wrote articles and editorials in the *Alliance Times-Herald* on his behalf. The ordering of these essays makes me wonder if, just like Lincoln, the editors of *The Big Empty* believed that these Indian voices needed introduction and support. I don't think the editors meant any harm. At worst, their approach is a bit suspicious and patronizing. But at best, *The Big Empty* is uneven and often contradictory. While I did come away with an expanded view of Nebraska, I'm not sure that view is any clearer than before.

So what have we learned about the role of place in writing? *The Big Empty* too often fails to resist sentimentality—but when the writers are all Nebraskans who feel a deep connection to their often misunderstood state, the temptation is going to be great. Home always ends up more of a symbol than a place. I find it interesting that Barnes' piece in *Landscape with Figures* didn't bother me in the same way. Perhaps it's the cumulative effect of *The Big Empty*—because *Landscape with Figures* concerns many different places and authors' relationships to them and includes introductions to each essay, the result is a more varied collection that provokes more thoughtful questions about place. But in the larger ongoing discussion about the importance of place in writing, I appreciate the University of Nebraska Press' generous contribution in the form of these two new books.

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John D. Bessler, *Writing for Life: The Craft of Writing for Everyday Living*. Minneapolis: Bottlecap Books (514 N. Third Street, Suite 105, 55401), 2007. Pp. xviii + 336, $24.95 hb.

It makes sense that a new Minneapolis, Minnesota-based literary press, Bottlecap Books, would select a book about writing as its first title and also that the book's author is Minnesotan, John D. Bessler. *Writing for Life: The Craft of Writing for Everyday Living* is Bessler's fourth book, and in it he takes us through a complete process of writing, with his twelve chapter titles guiding us through that process. These titles at first glance might seem quite basic, for example, Chapter 1—"Start Where You Are"—but it's the substance within his chapters that makes one realize that this isn't just another book about writing. One thing that distinguishes this book about writing from others is that Bessler doesn't give us just a process for writing and his own experiences; his work is also highly referenced with a variety of sources. In addition, he moves to broader issues, such as the current state of writing in American education and the workplace with statistics from the 2004 report of the National Commission on Writing.

Bessler cites authors, artists, musicians, scientists—creative people—many who have written books about their writing and its process or at least had something to say about writing or creative expression. Bessler also includes an extensive bibliography, listing authors and titles about writing dating from 1972 to the present (but mostly late 1990s and more currently dated). This bibliography by itself is an excellent resource for writers, whatever their skills or experiences. Bessler uses explanatory notes as he cites his sources, and they are arranged by chapter at the end of his main text.

Another interesting feature is the extensive use of short quotations from literally hundreds of writers or otherwise well-known people. These many quotations are formatted in miniscule print, blocked into two sections per page on the page preceding each section or chapter. These direct-quotation pages are complete with their own titles that relate to the following book section or chapter, and these titles are included with their own line and page number on the contents page. I believe this inclusion indicates that these quotations are important and meant to be read seriously. And, in my opinion, they are very enjoyable and interesting. When one turns that page, with its two blocks of quotations, on its opposite side appear four further quotations, in larger font but italicized—and all of these quotations also relevant in some way to the book section or chapter that follows. For example, chapter one, "Start Where You Are," is preceded by the page with two blocks of quotations in tiny font size, and this page has its own title—"Beginnings." On the following page one of the four

italicized quotations is Joseph Heller's (author of *Catch-22*) statement, "Every writer I know has trouble writing." A reassurance so simple would immediately cause readers to breathe a sigh of relief and let them know that as they read they'll undoubtedly be amongst good company. The first actual sentence of the text goes right along with Heller's claim: Bessler writes, "Writing is hard work" (1). And thus we begin our journey into the reality that hundreds before us have already discovered—writing *is* hard work. But we know early on that Bessler is going to guide us through a doable process as he stresses the importance of being able to write well in both education and in the workplace.

Bessler begins his book by explaining his experience with writing—that he's a lawyer and that influences the kinds of writing situations he encounters, but he also stresses the importance for everyone to choose one's words carefully for effective communication, and also that being better writers will help people to be better thinkers.

What I find particularly interesting about *Writing for Life* is the information that Bessler includes beyond his writing process and his own writing examples. For example, Bessler includes definitions of terms for the novice writer and perhaps reminders for the more experienced writer. Words such as *plagiarism*, *tone*, *voice*, *metaphor*, *analogy*, etc. are explained and examples are given. Bessler often includes examples from well-known writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Margaret Atwood, and one that seems to be one of his favorites, Anne Lamott, to name just a few. Further, Bessler gives readers history lessons that are extremely interesting such as that " . . . written language is only about 5,000 years old" (127), and how the invention of the printing press in 1455 revolutionized the book trade (128). He also explains the creation and development of the United States Library of Congress in numbers that are rather daunting: "29 million books and other printed materials, 12 million photographs, 4.8 million maps, 2.7 million recordings, and 57 million manuscripts. Much of the material is actually available online" (170).

Bessler's "book's premise is that *anyone* can learn to write well and that *everyone*, regardless of current proficiency, can improve his or her writing ability and should take concrete steps to do so" (16). As a writing instructor and co-director of a university composition program, I must agree with him. I see his book as one that could be very useful for the beginning writer, but with his extensive research, I also see it as a text that could be used by very skilled writers and perhaps even in the writing classroom. Overall, I see Bessler's work as probably the most extensive writing project that I've ever seen in that genre of "writing books."

Of particular delight for me was a reference toward the end of his text. In one of Bessler's last examples he refers to Herman Melville's short story

"Bartleby, the Scrivener." He gives a brief summary of the story: a "law-copyist in the days before photocopiers, Bartleby works for an aging Wall Street lawyer. . . . The story ends with the lawyer's mention of a rumor . . . that Bartleby used to work as a subordinate clerk in the Dead Letter Office in Washington, D.C." I must admit that in my earlier experiences with this story, both as a student and then as a fiction instructor, I had met the Bartleby character and story with mild irritation. But the way that Bessler uses it as an example gives me a new perspective.

> Words are not intended to end up as dead letters or to be mechanically processed without thinking; they should be used to reach people, to give them understanding, to make them think in new and different ways. Don't think of writing as Bartleby apparently did, as a dull pursuit to be done, if at all, for the purpose of earning a meager living; instead, think of writing as a great adventure, the stuff of Mount Everest expeditions or deep-sea dives in the Black Sea for sunken treasure, and as something that will add a new dimension to your life.

I had to laugh as I read what he thinks writing should be for us. I could definitely sense his enthusiasm, and when he mentions "deep-sea dives in the Black Sea," my heart skipped a beat because I've waded in those very chilly waters and the thought of diving in is heart-stopping. It gives me goose bumps to this day to think back and remember, and yes, that's also how the writing experience should be. Bessler wants us to jump in, merge ourselves in the world around us and then write that world about what we see.

Kim Stafford, *The Muses among Us: Eloquent Listening and Other Pleasures of the Writer's Craft*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003. Pp. xi + 138, $17.95 pb.

Although I am a bit delinquent in discussing a writing book first published in 2003, Kim Stafford's *The Muses among Us: Eloquent Listening and Other Pleasures of the Writer's Craft* is still widely available and is a delightful invitation to listen to the unlikely. And although it can be read as a "how-to" for the writing instructor or writing student, it is more in that it inspires through Stafford's personal anecdotes and thoughtful and philosophical reflections. He gives us a glimpse into how the writing process works for him and how it can be approached by others.

Stafford's text is quite straightforward as far as laying out a writing process. There are elements of his process which are often seen as typical: composing, expansion, revision. However, what he suggests for each step in the process is not always typical. Early in his book he states, "My

writing is plagiarized, but not from books" (9). He then goes on to explain that he has an awareness of what is being said around him; he remembers phrases that have been said to him in the past and things he's seen or heard or read more recently as an unintentional audience. How to use these tools as writing sources is explored in chapters entitled "Library of the Mind" and "The Writer as Professional Eavesdropper." In the latter chapter's subsections, Stafford explains how he keeps notebooks that become collections of "Conversations Overheard," "Informal Speeches," "Written Texts from the Street," and "Graffiti and Short Phrases," and many of the discovered fragments and phrases eventually work their ways into his writing. These fragments and phrases become examples of his sources, and in a way they place a value on humanity—humans who have so often *not* been valued—society's castoffs, the unheard; to these he gives voice.

Stafford's chapter "Quilting Your Solitudes" goes into much more detail—a list from one to twelve—a process for writing: 1. FREEDOM, 2. THE NOTEBOOK, 3. THE POSTCARD, 4. THE LETTER, 5. THE GATHERING, 6. THE TITLE, 7. THE DRAFT, 8. THE MUSICAL KEY, 9. EXPANSION AND THE SECOND GENIUS, 10. RESPONSE FROM A WRITING GROUP, 11. THE END OF REVISION, and 12. QUILT BLOCKS. As Stafford lists each step in the process, he describes what it is and then he creates the list again with his own example for each part—showing us exactly how this process can work.

His many useful suggestions for getting started writing include several anecdotes. He tells us, for example, of his sneaking out of a conference to walk down some rail tracks to seek out a hobo camp (and finding one); he shares with us visits to second-hand stores and the storied treasures that he finds. These stories all suggest occasions for writing and make the reader realize and notice that one probably could also have a lot to say about many things if one only stopped and took notice. It's the vividness of Stafford's details that makes reading his examples and his discussions about teaching writing so enticing:

> You tell me about Alaska winter, in dear detail, with your lit thread of discovery that binds all things—icicle, nose prickle, the sound soft snow makes underfoot, a night dog's bark—and I begin to notice my own thousand and one nights in small-town motels, traveling in the ministry of the word. Or I tell you about traveling in the ministry of the word—and you begin to remember your own travel through mornings and evenings in your family's story. (82)

He further questions, "What is our story? What is mine, and what is yours? . . . Reading this world, we need each other" (83).

One of my favorite chapters in Stafford's book is "The Random Autobiography." He describes this strategy as being based on an example

from one of his father's (poet William Stafford's) students. He states, "This writer simply lists recollections in a kind of musical sequence as they come to mind," and reading her text has "since transformed my teaching" (86). Stafford can "see how the random autobiography invites each writer to freely shift from particular observation to long assessment, and then back to the particular. . . . Each line in the random list could be a chapter title for a book of essays, a collection of poems, a song list" (87-88). He then offers his own examples, as each of the more than one hundred times he's had writing groups do this exercise, he, too, has done it as well. And he claims that "With the random autobiography, we have much important work to do, for everyone has a multitude of places to begin" (90).

Stafford addresses several ideas that are useful to writers, for example, the issue of time, and he suggests to start with small increments in minutes, rather than extended hours. He offers several titles of texts and authors to serve as models for different types of writing: Barry Lopez's *Field Notes*, Dorothy Allison's *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, and David James Duncan's *River Teeth*, to name a few. And he explains how and why they will be useful and how each is "constructed of small pieces that appear to have been independently created, but that add up to a whole work," to show a writer how a "grand project" could be written (48).

Further, toward the end of his text, Stafford gives writers two exercises to help them "unlearn" the "rules" that may be stilting their writing. He instructs that we practice writing a page from top left to bottom right—one sentence—"take pleasure in writing the greatest run-on sentence you can" (91). Conversely, he then asks that we, again, "write from the upper left to the lower right corner . . . but this time letting no sentence be longer than four words (but every sentence must have a subject and a verb) (92). These are segments of his examples:

> Could my writing be the river that winds through the obstacles of my life, flowing in its own way, without conflict, so sure of its own relation to gravity that it unfurls its long story past clock and meal, past child and loving wife, inquiring gently through dream and waking. . . . (92)

> Writing takes time. Life takes time. There's your problem. Can they happen together? They can. Rivers have the key. Rivers pass rocks. There is a way. A rock sits heavy. The river goes around. The mountain rises. The river cuts down. Life gets complex. Writing gets simple. . . . (93)

I can see that these would be very good exercises in the writing classroom to get students really thinking about sentence length and structure.

The task of writing about "writing books" is at least a bit daunting. I find myself critiquing some experts' processes and feel a sense of both

dread and humility, wondering at the shakiness of my own process as I peruse theirs. But I am also encouraged and find myself applying what these writers (here Bessler and Stafford) say as I am reading about their ideas. I am reminded to notice those serendipitous moments where I discover what I wasn't looking for. Being handed my dad's "lost" tape nine years after his passing; well, to hear his voice was chilling but finally bearable. And as I transcribed it for the rest of the family I realized, once again, that we are surrounded by language—familiar and foreign—a resource to be tapped, organized, explained—the awe of someone else's ideas. What made me think of this idea was Stafford remembering his grandmother's 1911 diary: "The text comes to me as a gift, and my work is to tell how it arrived and what it says, and what this saying may imply, or call into question" (25). He later refers to the collected phrases in his notebooks and writes, ". . . life is a universe of fragments yearning for coherence" (33).

I don't think Kim Stafford would mind my admitting that as I've been reading and thinking about his book this summer, I've often found myself staring out the window—daydreaming about his ideas, which lead me to notice from my kitchen window a pair of blue jays at my bird feeder. And to my delight one day recently they lined up their five babies on the neighbor's fence—big babies mostly hungry and not yet good at flying. They remained there until their parents arrived when they became quite animated, waiting to be fed. It seems now not so coincidental that as I read Kim Stafford's *The Muses among Us*, where he often points out to notice (see and hear) what is going on or being said, that I should notice this family and hear their distinctive cries at feeding time.

Stafford suggests that we take notice of our surroundings and place ourselves at times in the unfamiliar. And I realize how quickly eggs hatch and infant jays come to maturation and realize, too, how quickly children grow up. A summer is quick to reach avian adulthood, but so too quickly go twenty years, and daughters become women. His discussion of language—oral, written—and image, is rich with stories of his life and what he notices. He delves into his past which frames how he sees the world and influences how he thinks. Language, words, which ones are chosen, how they are put together can be everlasting. Perhaps language is the one true possible constant in lives where time passes, lovers leave, children grow, and baby birds fly away.

Stafford closes his book on a serious note with an "Afterword" called "Learning from Strangers." This section includes a discussion of the 2000 presidential election and the aftermath of September 11, 2001. He then, once again, reiterates the importance of listening to fragments and quotes four famous lines, which he calls "our political discourse":

Four score and seven years ago.
The hand that rocks the cradle can rock the boat.
The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.
Ask not what your country can do for you. (132)

He states that "The real meaning of democratic citizenship is the search for some form of song that enables the individual life to enter the world," and further that "The short songs we need now are about to be written by voices we don't yet know. We will need to be eloquent listeners to invite these songs forth, and share them all around" (133). I could not more agree with his thoughtful proposals.

Mary E. Bauer Morley
University of North Dakota

Richard W. Etulain, *Beyond the Missouri: The Story of the American West*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006. Pp. xii + 466, $39.95 hb, $24.95 pb.

When I assigned Elliot West's *Contested Plains*, I struggled to explain to students still becoming familiar with the field of Western history why it was exceptional. "New" Western history did not seem like an appropriate label for West's superb work. In the words of reviewers *Contested Plains* is "complicated and nuanced" with its "layering," and "To understand where western history is now, and is likely to go in the future, one must read this book."[1] How do we categorize such works, most often described as "complex," and are they a new generation in the field of Western American history? Richard Etulain, a prominent and long-time scholar of the region, casts his lot with complexity. Etulain praises West's *Contested Plains* and points to it as a model for his *Beyond the Missouri*, which seeks to go beyond the "New" Western history.

The two major interpretations of Western history have been Turnerian and the "New" Western history. Seeking to correct the overly triumphant histories that followed the lead of Frederick Jackson Turner, the latter inserted social history, the environment, and conflict into Western history. The iconic work of this new history was Patricia Nelson Limerick's *Legacy of Conquest*, published in 1987.

Etulain is concerned with interpretation. He characterizes the New Western history as declensionist and creates a bit of a straw man by casting all New Western history in the mold of *Legacy of Conquest*. Calling himself a "radical middler" (xiii, 5), Etulain wishes to distinguish himself from "new" history and asserts that a new interpretive body of Western history has been born.

I am not convinced we have gone beyond, but I agree that something is afoot. The scholarship of the last twenty years covers a broad range and the infusion of categories of analysis like race, class, gender, and environment has had positive ramifications for our understanding of the West, and the good and "complex" works of historians like Elliot West build on this scholarship. In other words, works like *Contested Plains* might be the best of New Western history. More broadly, other fields like women's and environmental history are seeing a similar trend toward "complexity."[2] These might be mature histories—the collective products of years of social and environmental histories, no longer needing to prove the legitimacy of their topics or having to fight a corrective war. If there is a new historiographical wave, we must see more to know its character.

That said, *Beyond the Missouri* is a masterful work that covers much ground, figuratively and literally. His synthesis simmering for years,

Etulain is drawn to "untidy" figures and "sociocultural messiness" (5) and privileges neither triumph nor blame in his interpretation. Change and complexity, a simple thesis, are how he characterizes the West (448). The West, including the Great Plains, is "unique" (xii) because of its diversity and pace of change in watershed periods like mineral rushes and wartime. In the twentieth century chapters, demographic data is well-utilized and important to the socioeconomic changes he highlights. Naturally, one finds things missing. How did he forget to mention Oregon governor Tom McCall when he discusses the distinct brand of Western politics? From geography and first settlement to the 2000 census, Etulain successfully crams the West into one book.

The least satisfying chapter covers 1960 to 1980. Here Etulain combines civil rights with growth in the Sunbelt and Ronald Reagan, but the pieces seem choppy, perhaps because we are still close to these decades and have no familiar narrative. The last two chapters lay out where the West is going, and the final one is entitled "In Search of Region." After decades of the West being considered a region, Etulain—perhaps with some disappointment—sees a period of postregionalism, a fractious landscape and people without a common identity, and what he refers to as a "New Gray West."

This gray West is ambiguous, and it seems to combine the optimism of Turnerians and the tragedy of the New Western historians. Etulain does not blame New Western historians for "ambivalent anxieties" of grayness (393), as historians seem to reflect this change rather than initiate it, but he seems a little contemptuous as he describes the "dark" West depicted by historians as having come to fruition. He connects this dimming trend and scholarly work by using similar descriptive terms for them.

Known for his works on Western culture, Etulain intersperses literature and art throughout; the final chapter is a thoughtful piece on the West's spokespersons—historians and artists. The book is rich with photos, maps, and graphs and could easily be used in an undergraduate course as a textbook, would please a Western enthusiast, and is encyclopedic—good for supplemental lecture material. I particularly like his choice of quotes (though there are no footnotes), and each chapter includes a tight list of suggested readings representing core works he has drawn on.

Notes

[1]Reviews of Elliot West, *Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998) include: Jeffrey Ostler, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 30:3 (1999), 537-38; William H. Goetzmann, *Journal of American History* 86: 1 (1999), 259; and Glenda Riley, *The American Historical Review*, 104: 2 (1999), 567-68.

[2]Examples include Nancy Hewitt's *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), a work on women's activism, and Karl Jacoby's *Crimes against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), which examines the American conservation movement.

Amahia Mallea
Drake University

Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed: A Memoir*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006. Pp. xvii + 314, $24.95 hb.

Wangari Maathai of Kenya, founder of the Green Belt Movement, was the first African woman to be awarded a Nobel Prize (2004). Many readers of her autobiography will be reminded of two previous Nobel Peace Prize laureates: Albert Schweitzer, whose concern for the health of Africa's poor touched the lives of many thousands; and Mohandas K. Gandhi, whose campaign of non-violent political resistance changed the face of India.

Born in a mud hut to peasant parents in the Central Highlands of Kenya in 1940, Maathai had the good fortune to be allowed by her father to attend school. She proved to be such an outstanding student that when she finished her secondary education she was awarded a scholarship to attend college in the United States. Later she studied and conducted research in Germany and then completed a Ph.D. in anatomy at the University of Nairobi where, despite opposition because of her gender, she also secured a faculty position. It is something of a miracle that coming from such humble origins Maathai grew up to be the first woman in East Africa to earn a doctorate and the first to become a professor.

For her academic success Maathai owes a debt of gratitude to the missionary activity which accompanied the 19th-century British colonization of Kenya, since it made possible the Catholic education which she received both at home and abroad. But, as she emphasizes, the coming of the British was a very mixed blessing. The assimilation of European cultural attitudes and economic practices caused long-lasting problems for Kenya, some of which would eventually inspire Maathai to create the Green Belt Movement.

Prominent in Maathai's thought is an awareness that colonization led many people to begin to view nature in a new way. Only a small portion of Kenya, principally the Central Highlands, the home of Maathai's Kikuyu tribe, is forested and richly supportive of life. The Kikuyus attributed their prosperity to the proximity of Mt. Kenya, which they believed was the dwelling place of God, and they treated the highlands' natural wealth with reverential respect. The missionaries, however, taught the people that God dwelled not on the mountain but in heaven. Maathai stresses the result. "Many people accepted the missionaries' worldview, and within two generations they lost respect for their own beliefs and traditions. The missionaries were followed by traders and administrators who introduced new methods of exploiting our rich natural resources: logging, clear-cutting native forests, establishing plantations of imported trees, hunting wildlife, and undertaking expansive commercial agriculture. Hallowed landscapes lost their sacredness and were exploited as the local people became insensitive to the destruction, accepting it as a sign of progress."

The clear-cutting of the highlands in particular caused many hardships: polluted drinking water, dietary deficiencies, and a lack of firewood and shelter. The consequences were—predictably—a troubling increase in malnutrition and disease. Moreover, because rivers which began in the Central Highlands served as a water resource for much of Kenya's arable land, their degradation had serious implications for the country's wider economic health. Such practical problems of everyday life first attracted the attention of Maathai when she was a young woman and caused her to wonder what could be done.

The answer came to her about three years after she completed her Ph.D.: reforest Kenya. It is typical of Maathai that the sheer enormity of the task did not deter her. She began to teach rural women to plant trees in belts of 1000 or more to improve their own local living conditions. Over the next three decades, thousands of women and many men as well participated in this effort. By the time Maathai was awarded the Nobel Prize, the volunteers had planted over thirty million trees, and the Green Belt Movement had spread to countries around the world.

The road to success, however, was paved with difficulties. Maathai launched the Green Belt Movement only a decade after Kenya won its independence from Great Britain, and she soon found herself on a collision course with an increasingly authoritarian and dangerous Kenyan regime. Realizing that "responsible governance of the environment was impossible without democratic space," she began to "plant ideas" about democratic rights and responsibilities by organizing seminars around the country. The regime immediately took notice. Her activities began to be obstructed. She responded by staging non-violent protests against governmental wrongdoing. Her refusal to back down brought her jailings, beatings, and death threats. She learned to travel at night, in disguise, on the floors of cars, always in fear for her life. So important was her involvement in Kenya's struggle to return to a system of multi-party rule that by the time the country's strong man was defeated, the tree had become the national symbol of democracy. In 2002 Maathai herself was elected to parliament.

Wangari Maathai's well-written autobiography is a multifaceted work. It is the memoir of a woman in her 60s recalling with fondness childhood moments among the trees and streams of her native highlands. It is the treatise of an intellectual who has both experienced and reflected upon the consequences of Africa's encounter with European civilization. And it is the manifesto of a humanitarian who has not hesitated to place her own well-being at risk to improve the lives of others. Above all, *Unbowed* is the story of a healer—a healer who rose from inauspicious beginnings to a position of prominence by working tirelessly to bring health to Kenya's forests, to its rural poor, and to its system of government. The Nobel

Committee summed up her achievements in the following words: Wangari Maathai is "an example and a source of inspiration for everyone in Africa fighting for sustainable development, democracy and peace." *Unbowed* brings us the inner world of this remarkable person.

Ralph Koprince
University of North Dakota

D. E. Steward, *Torque*. St. Augustine, FL: King's Estate Press, 2006. Pp. vi + 126. Illustrations by Wayne Hogan. (870 Kings Estate Road, St. Augustine, FL 32086-5033)

We have published a number of D. E. Steward's generically elusive "months," but he is also a widely published poet. *Torque* is his latest collection, and like his "months" (bearing titles of actual months in various languages from the world-wide settings of them) these poems are geographically allusive and free in form (most of the poems being uncorrupted by punctuation), but they are firmly rooted in international life and knowledge of its rich diversity.

"Larch" is a good example of how Steward blends geology, botany, ornithology (and his love of them) in a poem of (but much more than "of") alpine skiing.

Larch

Snow patches south-facing slope melt
Fall grass banks strong slanted sun
Austrian and Italian frontier ridges
Clear sky everywhere shirts off
Scuol to Ftan up four hundred meters
Two hours across the Silvretta's lower reach
Above the Clüs, deep pit of the Engadine

Meet a farmer in his Sunday clothes
Carrying down a fence-transformer pack
Three nutcrackers pass on corvid course
Grasshoppers berries rosehips butterflies
Larches on the shoulders of each ravine
Dropping golden needles on the snow
So that even it is colored sun

Edging easily this long belvedere
Fragment of the Earth's orogeny
Laid out wide before the winter
As though newly opened freshly set
Lurch wildly in wondrous vertigo
Sending peaks and planets spinning
Coming down again the rush the early dusk

Robert W. Lewis
Editor

Editor's Notes

Pushcart Prize

We were pleased to submit six nominations from our issues of last year for *Pushcart Prize XXXII: Best of the Small Presses* (2006). And we were delighted to learn that Erica Keiko Iseri's essay "Overwintering in Fairbanks" was chosen for publication in the latest volume, edited by Bill Henderson.

Jay Meek, our long-time colleague at the University of North Dakota and poetry editor of *North Dakota Quarterly*, has died three years after his retirement. We grieve at his passing and offer our sympathy to his family.

Call for Poems

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society is asking for poems, prose poems, or prose tributes of one to three pages in homage to Roberts, the Roberts Society, and/or Kentucky.

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society has for ten years been dedicated to diligent research, criticism, and scholarship on Roberts and her works. In conjunction with this coming year's tenth Anniversary of the Society, Steven Florczyk and Matthew Nickel will edit a book of poems.

This festschrift will be titled "Illumination and Praise: Poems for Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Kentucky" and the editors hope the volume will speak of their love of Roberts, their renewed understanding of her works and their place in Kentucky and American literature, and the family that has traveled annually to Kentucky to present papers, celebrate Kentucky writers, and to sing old and new songs and hymns late into the bluegrass nights.

Please send submissions in a WORD document to sapling805@yahoo.com. Direct any questions to sapling805@yahoo.com or telephone at (337) 482-5480. The deadline for submissions is February 1, 2008.

Fiction

We have finally published the many long ago accepted short stories to the point at which we again invite sumbissions of new stories.

Thanks to those readers-writers who had noted our short-story holiday and held off submitting until now.

Sea Changes: Books That Mattered

Just as they provide pleasure and prompt criticism, books have a role in the developmental history of their readers. For the impact of a book depends not only on *how* it is read but *when*. Many books fortify or deepen the beliefs of readers; others prompt adaptive responses—that is, the newly read text is fitted to its reader's fund of knowledge and experience. Encounters with some texts, however, amount to a sea change in the lives of their readers. They produce fundamental reorientations of belief, understanding, and purpose. *North Dakota Quarterly* publishes occasional accounts of "books that mattered," books that produced a sea change in their readers. These personal essays have been about well-known books like Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and lesser known ones such as George Morgan's *The Human Predicament*. As one contributor has proposed, books that matter "liberate the reader from a parochial view of experience . . . and usher their readers into a fuller understanding of self, society, and culture." *NDQ* continues to invite contributions of personal essays on a book or books that mattered.

Explore . . . Endure . . . Evolve . . .

Contributors

Dick Allen's newest collection of poems is "Present Vanishing" to be published by Sarabande Books in October 2008. It follows *The Day Before: New Poems*, also from Sarabande. Other of Allen's poems have recently appeared in or are soon forthcoming in *America's Best Spiritual Writing: 2007* (Houghton Mifflin), *American Poetry Review*, *Triquarterly*, *New England Review*, and *Ontario Review*. When not working on poems, Allen drives slowly around America in an old Honda Accord listening to bluegrass and Bach.

Fred Arroyo's novel *The Region of Lost Names* will appear in the spring of 2008 from the University of Arizona Press. Arroyo's stories, poems, interviews, and reviews have appeared in various literary journals, and two of his essays are forthcoming in *NDQ*. He's an assistant professor of English at Drake University where he teaches fiction and nonfiction writing classes. Arroyo is at work on a new novel.

Fu-jen Chen is Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan, where he teaches ethnic American literature and Lacanian psychoanalysis. He is the author of *The Traumatic Thing* (2005). He has published numerous articles on ethnic American writers. He has also contributed to the Greenwood Press sourcebooks.

Tracy DeBrincat is a freelance creative advertising consultant in the entertainment industry. Her first novel manuscript, "Every Porpoise Under Heaven," received the 1996 Washington Award for Fiction. Her short stories and poetry have appeared in *The Baltimore Review*, *The Berkeley Fiction Review*, *Crucible*, *Eureka Literary Magazine*, *The Southern Anthology*, *Willow Review*, and *Zyzzyva*, among others.

Viet Dinh received his MFA from the University of Houston and currently teaches at the University of Delaware. His stories have appeared in *Zoetrope: All-Story*, *Threepenny Review*, *Five Points*, *Fence*, and the *Michigan Quarterly Review*, among others. As far as he knows, no one is out to get him.

Natalie Harris teaches English and Creative Writing at Colby College in Maine. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Southern Review*, *Laurel Review*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Eclipse*, *Red Rock Review*, and *Writer's Post Journal*. She was recently a finalist in *Glimmer Train Story*'s "Family Matters" contest.

Jolee Josephs teaches yoga and is a gradaute student in the creative writing program at the University of West Florida. Her publications include the textbook, *I Hate Writing*, and poems in *The Troubadour* and *Poems and Plays*. She is currently at work on a novel.

The poetry of **John Manesis**, a retired physician, has appeared in many publications including *Wisconsin Review*, *Zone 3*, *The Charioteer*, *Footwork: Paterson Literary Review*, and *Measure*. His first poetry book, *With All My Breath*, was published in 2003 by Cosmos Publishing Company. The second, "Other Candle Lights," will be published by Seaburn Publishers Group.

Brad McDuffie currently teaches English at Nyack College in New York. He recently traveled to Italy for the International Ezra Pound Conference in Venice and had the pleasure of reading for Pound's daughter Mary de Rachewiltz, at the Imagist Reunion Conference in Brunnenburg. His poems have appeared in various journals and books.

Wendy Mnookin is a writer living in Newton, Massachusetts. Her book of poetry, "The Moon Makes Its Own Plea," will be published by BOA Editions in 2008. Two previous books of poetry are also published by BOA Editions. Her prose has been published in *Salon*.

James Morrison is the author of a memoir, *Broken Fever* (St. Martin's Press 2001), and a novel, *The Lost Girl* (Parlor Press 2007), as well as several books on film. He teaches film and literature at Claremont McKenna College. This is his second appearance in *North Dakota Quarterly*.

John N. Mugass is an emeritus professor of physiology. He has won awards in the West Virginia Writers Annual Writing Competition and the People's Choice: Prose contest at the West Virginia Writers Conference. He has been writing literary fiction and nonfiction since 1999.

Claudia Ricci teaches literature, journalism, and creative writing at SUNY-Albany. Before turning to fiction, she worked for several years as a newspaper journalist. Her first novel, *Dreaming Maples*, was published in 2002, and her short fiction and poetry have appeared in numerous literary magazines nationwide. She resides in Spencertown, New York. A student of flamenco guitar for many years, Ricci is currently revising her second novel, "Eyes on Orion," which like "Needled," was inspired by the music.

Trudy Seagraves was a medical editor-writer-copywriter for 23 years. She works as a Book Doctor and is a PEN woman, letters category. Eight of her stories (one of which received first prize) have or will soon be published. Her novel, "Bad Ladies," is with an agent.

Anis Shivani is at work on a book charting the decline in American fiction, under altered conditions of production and consumption in recent decades, in such genres as suburban, women's, and immigrant fiction. Essays and reviews appeared recently in *The Antigonish Review*, *The Contemporary Review (Oxford)*, *Cambridge Quarterly*, *Pleiades*, *Boulevard*, *Chelsea*, *Colorado Review*, *New South*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, and elsewhere.

E. M. Snow lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

H. R. Stoneback is a Distinguished Professor of English at SUNY-New Paltz. He is a Hemingway scholar of international reputation, author/editor of 14 books and more than 120 essays on Durrell, Faulkner, Hemingway, et al. He is also a widely published poet, author of five volumes of poetry including *Café Millennium* (2001) and *Homage: A Letter to Robert Penn Warren* (2005). His latest book, *Reading Hemingway's* The Sun Also Rises, is the inaugural volume of the Reading Hemingway Series from Kent State University Press (May 2007).

Urban Waite has been nominated for a Pushcart, the *Best New American Voices* series, and in the last year his work has appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *Fugue*, *LIT*, *The Florida Review*, *Redivider*, *Third Coast*, *Colorado Review*, and *AGNI*. He is a graduate of Emerson's MFA program and the recipient of the Saint Botolph Club Foundation's Artist Grant in Literature.

Robert Wexelblatt is professor of humanities at Boston University's College of General Studies. He has published essays, stories, and poems in a wide variety of journals and three books: *Life in the Temperate Zone*, *Professors at Play: Essays*, and *The Decline of Our Neighborhood*.

Professor Emeritus at the University of Missouri-Rolla, **Douglas Wixson** is the author of *Worker-Writer in America: Jack Conroy and the Tradition of Midwestern Literary Radicalism, 1898-1990* (University of Illinois Press 1994) and *On the Dirty Plate Trail: Remembering the Dust Bowl Refugee Camps* (University of Texas Press 2007), drawing from the field notes of Sanora Babb. A recent essay, "In Search of the Lowdown Americano: H. H. Lewis, William Carlos Williams, and the Politics of Literary Reception, 1930-1950," appeared in the spring 2006 issue of the *William Carlos Williams Review*. He lives in Austin, Texas.

Fredrick Zydek is the author of eight collections of poetry. "T'Kopechuck: The Buckley Poems" is forthcoming from Winthrop Press later this year. Formerly a professor of creative writing and theology at the University of Nebraska and later at the College of Saint Mary, he is now a gentleman farmer when he isn't writing. He is the editor for Lone Willow Press.