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Union Station: Portland

THE boy liked the idea of stopping. His mother and father in the front seat exchanged a look, though. They were riding along St. John Street and had just crossed Congress. It was a beautiful, crisp, October day.

"Pull it over," the boy's grandfather said again. He was looking at the demolition going on. His finger shook a little as he pointed past his grandson's nose at the old train station being knocked down. "Pull it over," he said querulously.

"Yeah!" the ten-year-old boy said.

As they watched there was a crash that spanked a cloud of dust into the air.

"There goes the tower!" the boy said happily. He and the old man stared as they went by. The crane was turning away, carrying the heavy black ball at the end of a cable, gathering distance for another attack on the stone walls. "I wonder if any of those clocks won't break?" the boy said.

His father, driving, was looking too, in spite of himself. He didn't want to stop, though. He wanted to get out there and get it over with. He looked past his wife as the ball struck the building again. More stone fell but not so impressively as when the tower with the clocks had fallen. "Those clocks are smashed all to hell," he answered his son.

"Pull over," the old man said.

In the front they exchanged another look. The mother gave a tiny nod. The father sighed and put his blinker on. He parked in front of the three-story brick building that had been the business offices for the railroad. It was a block away from where the work was happening. It was an empty block because all the other buildings were already gone. The business offices were still in use, though.

The boy's father got out and unlocked the trunk. He moved the suitcase a little to get room to lift the wheelchair out. Then he unfolded the chair, pushed it up to the car door and locked its wheels. He and his wife strained to help the old man from the back seat. They looked at each other over his bent back. When he was out they moved him to one side so the door could be shut. He stood unsteadily beside the car, holding onto it, his white hair uncombed and cowlicked, like the boy's. He looked back at the train station coming down.

"Can I push?" said the boy, putting his hands on the handles.

"I don't think so," his father said.

"Oh, let him, John," the boy's mother said. "It's good that he wants to."

The old man ignored them, watching the demolition, his head nodding with the effort of standing.

"I can push him," the boy insisted.

"All right then." John touched the old man's arm. "Come on, Pop. Sit down and we'll go over and take a look."

He didn't take his eyes off the train station while they backed him up and sat him on the canvas seat of the chair. He ignored, too, the traffic although it passed fast and near, and made his son and daughter-in-law nervous. "Watch the cars, now," John told the boy.

"Ready, Gramp?"

"Take me over there," the thin, old voice said.

There was a break in the curb where there had been a driveway to one of the torn-down buildings. The boy pushed hard, got some momentum up, and rolled the wheelchair onto the brick sidewalk. The four of them went along the sidewalk and stopped a hundred yards from what was left of the old stone building. It was noisy with the loaders and dumptrucks working at the far end of the building. The loaders were scooping up the stone fragments, banging their blades on the sides of the dumptrucks, the loads crashing in and shaking the trucks. Middle-aged men in T-shirts set in the dumptrucks, their arms out the windows. At the near end the crane was pivoting to swing the ball into the wall. When the ball struck, it seemed to pause on contact and then to push slowing into the stone, the sound thick and muffled. The ball dangled in slow motion at the end of the cable as the fragments fell.

"Neat!" the boy said.

His grandfather sat silently watching, leaning forward in the wheelchair. The boy's father had walked a little away and was leaning against a light pole with his arms crossed, looking sadly at the old man. His wife came over.

"What timing," John said to her, shaking his head.

She laughed a little. "Of all the days."

"I didn't know they were knocking it down today," John said.

They were keeping their voices low even though the old man didn't hear well any more. Besides, there was the noise. But they spoke quietly, anyway.

"It's a shame, such a nice old building," the woman said. "It's too bad they couldn't find some other use for it."

"It was a nice old building," John said. "But what are you going to do when there aren't any more trains?" He sighed. "I guess they figure we need a department store."

The dumptrucks, fully loaded, were rumbling out of the lot onto St. John Street. The loaders were quiet. But the crane was still swinging the ball into the ruins of the station.

"Did you read the editorials last night?" the woman said.

"Nope."

"There was a pretty good one about what a shame it was to tear down Union Station for a department store when there are already so many department stores around and only one Union Station."

John looked at her and shrugged sympathetically.

"They said it had dignity," she said. "History, too. History and dignity. They said that's two things you don't find in a department store."

"I thought they sold everything there," John said.

She laughed perfunctorily but neither of them was much in the mood for joking. She put her hands in the pockets of her jeans, turning to look at the old man.

"He sure loved the place," she said.

"Yeah. Did you know that picture over the mantle was taken here?"

"The one with the football team?"

"Uh-huh."

"I didn't," she said. "You can't see much except for the people."

"They had just won some kind of a championship. High School. They came back by train and the whole town was here to meet them."

"It's hard to imagine him playing football, isn't it?"

"I guess he was pretty good."

They heard the old man coughing and John called to his son to bring the chair back. "It's too dusty for you up there, Pop."

"Daddy, Gramp used to work for the railroad, didn't he?" the boy said.

"For a long time," John said. He bent and said to the old man, "Show him your watch, Pop."

The old man ignored him, and John straightened, telling the boy about the inscription on the watch. "They gave it to him when he retired," he explained to the boy. He walked around the front of the wheelchair. "I wish you'd talk, Pop. The only thing you've said all day was, 'pull over'." He stood with his hands on his hips, waiting, but there was no reply. "We've given it a year, Pop. It's just not working."

Behind them the ball struck and a large, flat section of wall collapsed. Dust rose. They all looked over at the sound. John looked back at his father. He squatted with his hand on the arm of the wheelchair, and lowered his voice. "What if you fell, Pop?" he said. "You're too heavy for Mary. You're just too heavy for her to support, and you won't exercise so your legs just get worse and worse and it takes more and more help to get you from one room to another." He said it wearily, not expecting to get anywhere. They had been through all this before. It had been all downhill since John's mother had died.

John sighed and moved. He looked at his wife. She held her hands apart, palms up.

When John said it was time to go the old man didn't protest. His grandson pushed him back to the car. He wasn't limber enough to turn and look back at the demolition, so he kept his eyes straight ahead, his hands holding onto the arms of the chair, the metal beneath the bright green padding sparkling under his dry old spotted hands. The sun was high in the sky now. It was warmer, but there was still that crispness in the air. John always thought of it as football weather. That's what he was thinking as they walked back toward the car. Behind him he could hear the sound the chair's rubber wheels made in the bricks.

He struggled to get the chair to fit back in the trunk with the old man's suitcase. John slammed the trunk lid shut. He felt the breeze on his damp forehead walking back to get in to the car. Then they were underway again. They drove onto the bridge and crossed the river with everyone being quiet except the boy, who chattered and pointed out an old barge moving heavily.

Coming back it was late afternoon. The sun slanted into the trees on one side of the highway. The other side was in shadows. It was getting dark earlier these days.

John and his wife were quiet in the front, tired from the strain. The boy had been quiet, too. He was alone in the back. They left the highway and took the ramp to the bridge.

"Gramp wasn't happy," the boy said.

They were on the bridge, re-crossing the river. On the right were the tank farms where the tankers unloaded.

"He'll be happy once he gets used to it," John said. "He just has to get used to it."

"He'll make a lot of new friends, Tommy," the boy's mother said. She smiled tiredly at him over the seat back.

"You can come with us when we visit," John told the boy.

"We'll visit lots," Mary said.

"He wasn't very happy," Tommy said. "He didn't even want to unpack his suitcase. I thought you said he'd be happier there." His attention was drawn by the tanker sitting low in the water, waiting to unload. Then they were by it. Tommy looked out the back windshield for a moment before turning around.

"He will once he gets used to it," John said.

They left the bridge, went down the ramp and were on St. John Street. They went past the tire place and the brick office-building and stopped at the red light at Congress. Waiting for the light to change they looked at the darkened lot where the old train station had stood. The crane was gone and so were the loaders and dumptrucks. The building was gone except for a stone outline close to the ground.

"It's all gone!" Tommy said. "Except that little bit."

"They'll get the rest of it with jackhammers," John said.

"It sure came down easily," Mary said. "It is kind of a shame, isn't it John?"

"Yeah, it is," John said. "It was quite a building in its time."

The light turned green and John put the car in gear and stepped on the gas. They moved across the intersection. It was dark enough that headlights were coming on. John reached and put his coat on. He would have had to before they got home, anyway, and this way he'd be sure not to forget.

Jim Nichols
Rockland

Evening Theatre

My daughter plays evening actress:

*her clothes thrown sideways across the dining room,
she runs to my chair for a hug, snuggle and capture
inside my ol'daddy shirt.*

So natural on the stage! — her legs aligned

*with my legs, her knees on my large knees,
her feet like little triangles, her toes
unwrinkling and wrinkling. In mock surprise, I say,*

'You've lost your clothes!' Her shoulders lift,

*her hands lift, flat with their palms upturned.
'Clothes gone,' she says, her whole self involved in the shrug
In evening theatre I pull my shirt-front tight,*

*the evening actress caught inside it with me. She
was a dream for a long time, and I couldn't have her:
happiness to hold her where my heart beats
like a sudden angel fresh from the wings.*

Brian Fitzgerald
Presque Isle

Audra in Motion

Audra is on the move. Today she has heard that someone in the office claims she is paranoid — paranoid and a traitor. She thinks she knows who said it, but she honestly doesn't know why. Although, if you asked most people in the office, they probably could tell you — and probably would say that the statement, accusation, as Audra would term it, was a pretty fair one.

So Audra is right now literally moving through the office. It is one of those government offices where everything is out in the open. Desks and partitions plus one glassed-in corner for the office director so that he can be on display as a symbol of motivation and keep an eye on all employees at the same time. Most people do not care for the arrangement, but Audra likes it, mainly because she can hear everything that is going on. If anyone ever desires a confidential meeting, they have to either go into the conference room, which has to be reserved in advance with the director's secretary, or find someplace outside the office. Most people are too lazy to go to so much trouble and instead say whatever they please about most everyone and everything. The whole idea is German — comes from German engineers, Audra remembers. Of course, now that it is her name that is bouncing from partition to partition, she does not think the office set-up is quite as neat as she did before.

Audra is 55 and feeling much older than she ought to feel. It is all this tension that she causes — that she brings into the office with her. Most people can sense the tension and stand back when they can. They attribute most of it to the fact that Audra's husband is dying of an incurable disease. He has been dying for years, and it seems that he will be dying for many more years — that he will never finally die and be at peace, only always be at the excruciating point of near death. So it is this death-tension that accompanies Audra everywhere she goes that turns off people. People not familiar with her problems just think that she's a bitch and extremely aggressive. Audra wishes they all could experience what she's going through now. Could they handle it? What would they do?

Audra is still an attractive woman. She has kept her whitening hair its actual blonde color and done what is possible to ease the lines in her face. Her eyes are still a youthful blue, and she takes care with her clothing. Granted her dress size has swelled to three sizes larger than 10 years ago, but she feels she is not so bad — not really. She has not had sex in over five years and she believes this lack is turning her into an uncontrollable voyeur. In her car pool and in the office she listens to all the talk of who is dating whom, who is sleeping with whom and cannot stop from trying to force herself into such conversations since the vicarious sensations of listening to others describe sexual encounters helps — helps more than anyone can know. But most people are not receptive to her intrusions. And she can understand that — she would not have appreciated such an invasion into her own private life as it had been years ago. But now she would. She would like to talk and talk of the hollow feeling that she, Audra, the celibate, is experiencing. But no one wants to talk to her. They are tired of her problems. So instead she does find people who will talk of themselves and getting ahead in the office — how to betray others so that you may grab a promotion. Audra would love a promotion. It is the least God could do for her. Take her husband and give her a promotion — maybe throw in a new man to boot.

Audra speaks to people as she moves through the office. Some nod, some smile, some say hello and ask how she is. She feels that they are all liars and hate her. Hate her because they are afraid she is after their jobs and that they might have to offer sympathy about her dying husband. Yet, she seems to make friends easily. It is the keeping of these friends that has proven so impossible. She has never seemed to comprehend the simple fact that friendship involves loyalty and that you do not slander a friend and then turn around and expect that friend to be there smiling. But that's what she does. Audra feels, especially in an office, that doing that kind of thing is wheeling and dealing.

Audra is loud and speaks with a true Texas accent. She has heard that someone in the office has said that is her problem — that she is from Tex - ass, as she understands it was so crudely put. Well, she is proud of being a Texan. Yet, she never wants to go back there. Doesn't believe that she could get along with those backward kind of people anymore. Although, it does bother her that she could be criticized for being a Texan. She thinks she knows who said that too — not the same one who has made the most recent comments, no, someone different who obviously knows nothing about Texas.

Audra is now approaching a corner of the office filled with a partition and an empty desk. This is it. This will be her battleground. She is quite sure that this is where those words — paranoid, traitor — originated. Audra will have a confrontation. She is good at that. She can be like steel, verbiage bouncing from her, standing her ground and giving her foe the icy stare that has been said to wither the most seasoned bureaucrat. She will demand first, an explanation and, then, an apology. She believes that this has been going on for some time, this kind of talking behind her back by this person. Oh, Audra had been gleaning bits and pieces from here and there. All fragments, finally becoming whole. Jealousy the main cause, jealousy of her political acumen, her connections, her handling of complex office problems. Despair the lesser cause, despair because Audra had chosen not to work for this person who never had fully utilized Audra's capability of dealing with people — who refused to give Audra a promotion.

Audra waits at the empty desk for a few minutes and passes time looking through a dictionary for the word paranoid. She has always thought she knew what the word meant, but now she is not so sure. It was just like this person to use a word like that. Showing off. There — paranoid — characterized by suspiciousness, persecutory trends, or megalomania. Well, she didn't think that she was suspicious, she certainly didn't persecute people and megalomania, well that always meant someone like Hitler. None of that applies to her. And she dismisses it all quickly, deciding to emphasize the other word, traitor. For if she was a traitor by going to work for someone else; well, then, that was tough!

Audra puts the dictionary back on the desk, carefully placing it in the exact space from where she took it. Then she begins to make another full circuit of the office. She will stop at her desk for a few minutes to see if there are any messages. By that time her enemy will probably have returned. There is a message from her son. She is to call home. She does not want to do that. Her son is such a problem. He is 21, not in school and without a job. He does not like to work. So he keeps her husband company. He is also an informer for the county police concerning drugs. In a way she hates to think of her boy as a stool pigeon. But it does bring in money. She is sure someone will get him sometime — that or the house will get firebombed. She knows there is something wrong. She will wait to call. She must finish this business about who is or is not a traitor.

Audra is not quite as mad as she was when she first learned what had been said. She stands by her desk trying to hear what is being discussed inside the director's office which is across from where she sits. Her phone rings. She must answer it. It is her son. He wants to tell her that her husband fell out of his wheelchair and hit his head. But don't worry. He's okay. Just a minor scrape. Does she want him to take anything out of the frig to defrost for dinner. Audra is relieved. Her husband falls from wheelchair, at least once a week. Chicken is probably the best thing for dinner. He's really a good boy. Better than a maid. No, she does not want to talk to her husband. She hangs up and sits staring out the window at the Washington skyline. She can barely see the Mall, the dome of the Capitol building, but actually she sees nothing. Audra is thinking. She has forgotten paranoid and traitor. It does not seem so important anymore. She wishes her husband would hurry up and die and let her get on with her life again. She is feeling very, very sorry for herself. Suddenly she senses someone near her, actually standing in front of her desk. She looks up quickly, and there is the enemy. The very one.

"Someone said you were looking for me, Audra," the enemy asks in what Audra believes to be a much too nice voice.

But Audra is caught off guard. She has forgotten exactly what she was going to say. She hates to be unprepared. She would like a confrontation but on her own terms and not sitting down with her enemy towering over her. She must act quickly, must say the right thing.

But the phone rings. It is her son again. He is talking incoherently. The enemy fades away.

"He's dead," her son finally says. "Dad's dead."

Audra holds the phone receiver tightly in her hand, staring at it and realizing only one thing. That she is not ready for this. She never has been — never will be.

C. Walker Mattson
Troy

the older cashier lady at woolworth's

*we're both almost finished —
the store & me —
people don't go so much for notions now.
i'm just filling out my time
& taking a lot of vacations.
my husband's retired already
& doesn't like to drive.
he'd sit home all day & watch the soaps,
but i made him try those cross-country bus trips,
get out to see the world.
he wondered how he could fall asleep on a bus,
but he found he could doze
as comfortable as he could ever drop off
in his easy chair at home;
& i don't like to travel alone.*

Grete Goodwin
Cape Neddick

Snakehead, The Deuce

(From work in progress)

Little sister Persia's lighthearted, cuz the Deuce ain't shown his face on the sidewalks of West End for a thankful long time. She's back to singing something other than blues and hums skippy jazz notes while she's putting the last pats on her paper mache puppets. I hear her sing like that and my whole world goes yellow, green and white, with purple balloons rising, and all my seven children gather around and watch her with me, all of us crouched together, entwined sweaty good. Persia's hips and shoulders curve with the notes and her hands come down on the cheeks of her puppet, shaping them full as apples, pressing dimples in for innocence, twisting the little pale lips to make them knowing. Ain't nothing in the world like Persia when she's feeling free.

I'm feeling so sunnyday for her, I tell her all I'm thinking, about the Deuce, about her breezy singing, even my own part about the purple balloons. She goes silent, shutting the tune inside her wiry little body of a sudden, yet all the time her hands keep working like a der-ish over the face and scalp of the puppet head.

I can tell my little sister's about ready to have a deep blue sigh, and I'm weighing myself down with regret for ever having mentioned the Deuce's name. My purple balloons let wind and spew themselves out to a shrivel.

Just as I predict, she sighs, and oh it's a dark one.

"Yeah, but Minerva, this puppet here, now he's turning into the Deuce. See?"

She holds it up and damned if she ain't right. The cheeks that seemed so round a moment ago are flat and tired as wilted lettuce, and the lips look plain snide, no joy in them at all.

"What's that disgusting stuff all over his head, then?" The Deuce is balding, ain't got much left up in that region.

"Snakes. The puppet's name is Snakehead."

Persia runs her finger along one of the twisting white serpents real slow and moans a bluesy phrase that makes me shiver. My fault. But that's how quick little sister Persia's moods change, just like the damned traffic lights outside my bedroom window.

"What the devil can you do with a headful of snakes?"

Persia aims me one of her scare-glares. "You can stun people. You can turn them into stone."

"Well, how the hell is that going to fit into one of your shows?" By this time I'm shooin' the children out of the door. This is dangerous talk, don't want any of them to be harmed. They're all of impressionable age, and ain't we all?

Persia's seeming more small and dark than usual in her corner away from the skylight. "I'm going to use it somehow," she answers me, her voice too quiet, leaving me uneasy. "I've got a parody developin' on the Medusa theme. Only this time, Medusa is a man, and he's born ugly."

"Yeah, well, I remember that story," I say, uncertain.

"Then you'll see the connection," Persia says, lifting one of her eyebrows, little owl. Too damned well-read for her own peace of mind, I think. She can't be carefree for long. Now me, I'm a free spirit and work hard at it, for the good of my kids, something I learned real early on.

"I better see to the chickens," I say.

"See to your chickens, then," she answers, turning back to her headful of snakes. She ain't singing nothing, at least not till I go. I ticked her off, I guess, for not knowing what she's aiming at with that Snakehead of hers. Whatever it is, though, it sure fits the Deuce. Nobody else can tell a lie with such fooling charm.

"Persia," I say, one foot out the door, ready to split.

"Yo," she calls, not turning around.

"One thing..."

"Yo."

"Don't be turning me or my chickens into stone, or any neighborhood folks."

I scoot, then, quick enough to miss the blob of gummy paper I know she'll be hurling my way. I let the door to the studio slam behind me while I catch my laughing breath on the fire escape landing. Down below, my chickens are in the midst of a dusty squabble. Damn it, but I love them when they're all wiggling at once. Bunch of busy ants. They keep my world in motion.

The Bullhorn Messiah

Twice now he has warned them of Armageddon. But this third warning is "...the real thing!" His hand twists the air & flails the light, pounding the great taffy-sky, pink over the City. He again has the attention of us all.

He spews the white confected words, fancy, but hard as chunks from a real Utrillo wall, out over the crowd convincing them all not really needing the horn he waves, an open jaw of an ass, dead but for his mouth.

They are on their way to work, at lunch, or going home. The nuclear bundle in his hand calls them, treats them by name & he swears they are all known, natures for lordly use not for evil meaning. He bores a few, the few whose stop is furthest out.

But there is old Chaplin leaning on his cane & Mr. Solzhenitsyn beside him. One thinks that man is God's humor & the other thinks man is mush of personal hysteria tugging at us all with history & fear.

They listen to the bullhorn & watch it fling acrobatic words spilling upon them, raining on thirsting slugs, no more objects of rain than meanings of words, but each drop, word, tugging, washing over them both,

taking a little bit of both further along. The bullhorn points at the pimp Wash Flute as he squats on the brick like a drought-farmer waiting with the strength of a coiled chain. "Bullhorn," he says, "makes it sound too easy..."

"...going to the Mountain ain't like going to the john." & a few of us laugh though Flute's not smiling. It is said that with imagination a man chooses either to expand his circumference or center, two convergent circles that detect a iconic face.

There is mother-Escher with her hands on her hips, her elbows like knotholes stabbing the parish air, her hair swallowed in a snood of spiders' web swept from some house she's been cleaning. Linked to her chest is a chain of paper-clips

& under her bottom lip a plug of tobacco. Her ironing board leans against her, a canvassed shield she'll carry down the street where for a token price (six shirts ironed & folded) center the Blue Line thinking of her beloved John whose laugh was lost on Luzon.

Bullhorn drubs a code upon each ear & like sleet upon a window sill, familiar cold memories that always melt in the light, castigating hope where once love took daily flight. Twice now he has warned them of Armageddon.

(end of prelude to "The Broken Mouth")

Counting the Loons

Leaving the suburbs, heading north,
the land stops being so flat.
Bent cans and broken porcupines
tarnish the road for a while,
then disappear. The road itself
caresses the sides of hills,
winds through forests of tall spruce,
juts left, climbs out of the valley,
showing the mountain behind us —
sharp cliff slanted in sunlight —
a challenge for which we are not yet ready.
At the crest of the next hill
we drop to a small lake, at the foot
of a small mountain. It is the day
for counting the loons.

As gently as fog lifts, the canoe
slides from our dock into the water.
Midweek — and the paddles
with their dip, dip & J, dip, dip & J,
have nothing to fear
from buzzards or motor boats.
The loons, we suspect, are south,
out of the cove, nearer the inlet.
We have seen two, then none,
and are told that this week
the chicks will follow their parents
out of the underbrush
into the lake.

Under the bow
as we round the point, a white shape
looms and glides past: an ice box
jettisoned with the coming of bottled gas.
We wish we could haul it out,
make use of it, bring it to life.
You tell me that next to it is a couch
with a broken back. I can see nothing —
as the shoreline shrinks, images on the bottom fade.
Only now and then the arm of a great beast
reaches up — shadowy, intent on nothing,
waving its remnants of hands.

Off to our left, what looks
like a broken limb, bobs
too far away. As quietly as we can
with our city skills, we follow,
not wishing to scare it, not trying
to get too close. Only once
the thoomp of paddle on fiberglass,
loud as a nightmare, ruffles the lake.

The second loon we see only now
as it angles towards the outlet,
an unexpected twin from the mother's womb.
We stay with the first, lured by its speed,
the thrill of the chase, dark hungers.
And yet we are casual —
the two loons moving so smoothly
as tips of a widening V,
ourselves a red crescent moon
slipping through waves,
weaponless, intending no harm.
The second loon we watch till its black spot,
like a dream we have forgotten,
merges with underbrush on the far shore.
By now we know we were wrong. Our loon
will show us nothing, will take us nowhere.
Never too far in front, never too close,
it leads our parade in perfect balance,
black baton of a beak held high
as we near land.

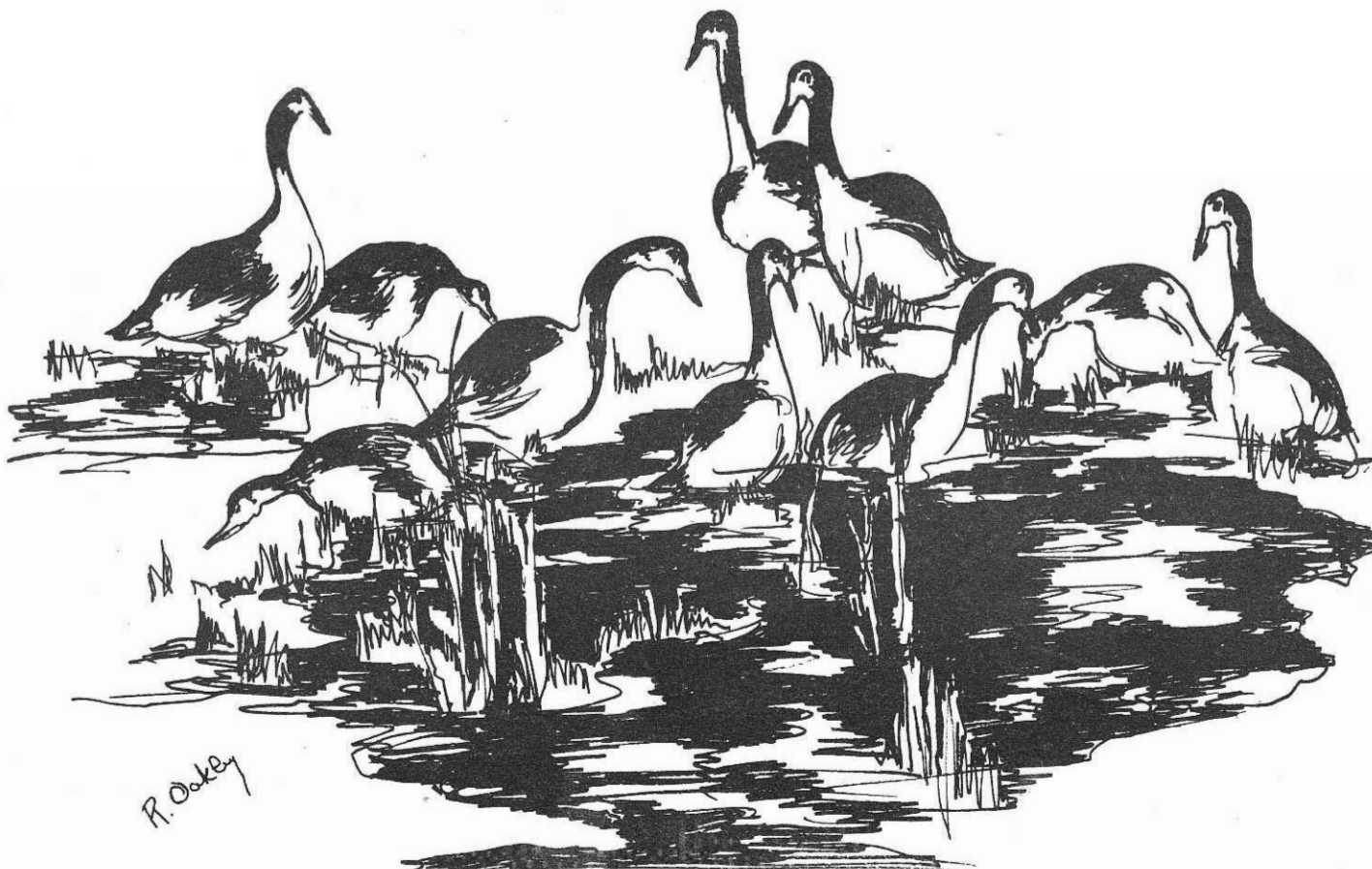
Ahead of us
the fallen tree, covered with birds,
surrounded by clam shells and trout,
lies like an island, ugly but fertile,
a birthmark bristling with hair.
Our loon, shifting its course just slightly,
steams past it like a frigate.
Seconds later we follow, and find nothing,
not even a loon's laugh to let us know
we are fooled. The shore teems with hideouts.
We drift, patiently, waiting for sound or motion,
but there is nothing. In all this corner

of the world, there is nothing —
only, roused by our wake,
in the six inches between sand and air,
the squirming red bellies of bloodsuckers

The land holds us. With a rush
the sun and mosquitoes discover our flesh.
Paddles reversed, we push through weeds.
Brambles challenge us from the shore.
Our friend is not to be found. The loons
will remain secret, uncounted by census.
There is nothing to do but go back.
Then, as we turn, we see
boards from an old dock,
dragged down by winter, blown here
by a storm. Not what we came for,
but something to use — for building,
repairs to the camp — something we need.
We leave the canoe, loop a line
from a low branch, lift long, rough,
moss-covered wood from the brush.
With bloodsuckers and rusty nails
attacking our feet, we stack five boards
on the gunnels, balance them delicately,
and head home — like a loon ourselves now,
dark wings spread over the sparkling water.

When we wake the next morning,
apple pancakes steam on the table,
mist rises from the lake, unveiling
one by one the tip of the canoe, the dock,
the gentle surge of the day's first waves
marking the progress of six black specks —
four small, two large — bobbing, ducking,
then as they approach, more stately,
closely ranked, proud in their morning coats,
come to return our call. It is a day
for learning again old proprieties,
for visiting neighbors, for building,
for climbing small mountains.

John Rosenwald
Beloit, Wisconsin



Stardust Rain

(from *Growing Pains*, a novel)

To let Joy meet his wife was suicide, Ted Wharton thought, but what to do? The old slipped disc routine would merely keep him off the dance floor, not out of the arena. Why hadn't he dumped Joy weeks ago, as he had planned? He had already feigned the flu to avoid her during the week, so that option was out. Sudden complications, maybe? Pneumonia? Meningitis? A convincing pneumonia required — aside from a hacking cough — some bloody sputum, which was hard to fake. What were the symptoms of meningitis? He looked them up, but before he had time to rehearse them, the prom had already arrived.

— With rain, that bane of tuxedos and gowns. Ted seemed to recall it had rained at his own prom, twenty-five years ago. (Did it rain at all proms?)

He and June arrived early, as required, manning their chaperone station, a table beside the door. They shared it with Ted's colleague, Hilda Peck, a typing teacher, and her husband, Max, a bald, robust, cigar-smoking fellow who instantly bored Ted stiff. The kids straggled buoyantly in, looking grown-up and stilted and dislocated in their formal clothes. When Joy arrived with that imbecile, Frank Pippa, the varsity quarterback, she looked so beautiful Ted's mouth went dry.

Her gown was satin — white, tight, elegant — totally different from what the other girls wore. Max Peck, with a suck of cigar, remarked that she sure was one hell of a dish for a high school kid, and Hilda slapped the back of his hairy hand.

Ted watched Joy dance with dense, compact Frank Pippa. (What was that line from Markham? *Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?*); he watched her body liquify the satin, eyed the silky shadows of her thighs. He listened to Max's fishing stories, set in vast Canadian wilderness where he wished Max would go this minute and never return; and danced two foxtrots with June to please her and the crowd, smiling and nodding to bright, dull, bad and good. The rain streamed down past half-closed casement windows in the blowy night.

The band took a break, the floor cleared, and the room filled with talk. Much milling around and punchbowl business, and Max dispatched the wilderness. Time to talk about gardening now. He'd planted ten rows of gold 'n silver corn this year, and by god —

By god, Joy was right at their table — without Frank Pippa — demure, subdued, and wearing a charming smile. "Hello, Mrs. Peck. Hello, Mr. Wharton." Ted's skin turned hot. Then the introduction of June, and he felt *creepy*. June smiling, extending her hand, and Joy — the perfect lady, the ideal Aubrey College-student-to-be — clasping it with aplomb and saying how pleased she was. The band had regrouped and it started up. Joy said, "May I have this dance, Mr. Wharton?"

Ted's heart skipped a beat. "Why certainly, Joy." He smiled, stood, took her naked illicit arm, and walked onto the floor.

Her hand in his hand, his hand in the small of her back, he looked at June and rolled his eyes in an oh-well-what-can-you-do sort of way — and Joy rubbed her satin against him.

"Joy! Not so close!"

She pressed her lips together and looked at his eyes. "I've missed you, Bear. It's been over a week."

June was watching them dance. He acted normal, smiled and said, "That flu . . ."

"It couldn't have been *that* bad, you didn't miss any school."

"Every day I went home and collapsed."

"Really." Sad, sad eyes.

"Yes, really."

They danced; she clung; he felt stifled, acutely aware of the crowd. "Not so close, we have to be careful!"

"Okay, okay."

She eased off, and they danced half an arm's length apart. She said, "June's pretty, Bear. She looks much older than your wedding picture, but she's pretty."

"Yes, she is."

"It's sad for her. It's going to be so hard."

"Joy, please, not here."

"Okay, I'll shut up, I'll be good. We'll just dance like this, like good little bourgeois puritans, and talk about nothing. Wouldn't Daddy be proud?"

Was this song going to last forever? "So he's running for school board now."

She grinned. "Oh, yes, and he's never lost an election. A born politician."

"Terrific."

She sniffed. "Oh Bear, forget about him. By election time we'll be married and living at Aubrey."

Strained, agonized, he danced. Without a hiatus the band slipped into another number: *Stardust*, the all-time favorite — and everything came back.

It had *poured* on that prom night so long ago, he remembered it clearly now: the last night he'd spent with Elaine. They had gone with each other for nearly six months, were madly in love, and then something had changed. He didn't know how or why it had changed, but it had, so fast, irrevocably, terribly, in the space of less than two weeks. It wasn't anything she'd said or done, she was somehow just different, not someone to love anymore. She knew how he felt, but she couldn't believe it; and they danced on that sad dim floor with the rain coming down in torrents, two adolescents drowning, drowning. *Stardust. Sometimes I wonder how I spend each lonely night. . . .* She cried and cried in the car on the way back home and he'd kissed her goodbye forever in the lush May rain before she ran inside the house and he never saw her again. And he'd never figured out where things went wrong.

Now Joy had the same mournful look as Elaine. That suffocating clinginess surrounded her, spun a web that was dragging him down.

"How's it going with Pippa?" he said, forcing a smile.

"How do *you* think it's going?" she said. "The creep already made a pass at me on the way *over* here. I told him I'm having my period."

The slippery rub of her hip against his. He would dump her his week, he swore he would, but before he did. . . . Maybe they could meet tomorrow night, she could wear this gown. . . . He said, "Are you having your period?"

She looked at him, said nothing, smiled, said: "No, Bear — I'm three days overdue."

Christopher Fahy
Tenants Harbor

A Nazi Looks at Death: 1946

*I must have slept, though I would have denied
that much, as I had denied everything.
Men kill in war. But what told me I had
slept was the first warming up of bird-song,*

*a flute in an auditorium that
filled in front of Mozart, Beethoven,
Wagner. I fitted the note into the
dream I was having of my wife, body*

*smelling of milk and children, soul swelling
with the crash of symphony. I must rise
now and put a strong face on. Forget my
wife. My children. And refuse the blindfold.*

H.R. Coursen
Brunswick

Thirteen Ways of Looking At A Puppet

- I
A white puppet sits on stage
crumpled
upon itself.
- II
I sit in darkness
like a blind
puppet.
- III
The puppet dances gracefully
to a music of pantomime.
- IV
There are three
sharp claps.
The puppet merges
with the audience.
- V
I'm not sure if
the audience was all puppets
or if the puppet was the audience.
Was the dance alive
or just still pictures?
- VI
Curtains start to close,
hesitate
and jerk open.
The puppet is hidden
but I see its shadow.
- VII
Oh fur coated ladies of Paris
why do you dream of china dolls?
Can't your see how the puppet
endears,
entangles himself at your feet?
- VIII
I know solemn nobles
and printed books with movement;
But I know too
that the puppet is entangled
in what I know.
- IX
When the puppet was hoisted offstage
it marked the edge
of one of many dreams.
- X
At the sight of puppets
dancing in stage light,
even the Parisienne madames
would cry real tears of laughter.
- XI
She strolled in the garden
under a parasol.
Once, a fear pierced her
in that she mistook
her shadow
for a puppet.
- XII
The Seine is flooding.
The puppet must be hoisted.
- XIII
It was a play all year long.
There was applause
and there would be more applause.
The white puppet sat
backstage
in the wings.

Elizabeth A. Bailey
Winthrop

The Sex Life of the Cardinal

Because he has no mate the cardinal
dives into his own reflection
mistaking himself in the double
glass door for the red competitor

who won't be moved, as if the route
to beat his solitary blues
were to wipe out every rubric dude
who struts in the wings sporting shoes

he fancies for himself. The tawny
female, perched on an oblique branch
wonders how long it will take
him to read the composite scent she carries —

blackberry, holly and grape — the soft
grass lining of her hospitable nest.

Alison H. Deming
Cape Elizabeth

Fires

there is supposed
to be a creature
called a salamander
which can live inside fires
I have often envied it
when I open the firebox door
glowing red caverns entice
entrance me with the possibility
of wandering, miniscule, inside
picking my way through intricate crystals
around me all a shimmering red
I make my way to the middle
while hot heat lancing
jubilant structures of burn
where one can explore forever
glory constructing
flesh unmade
everlasting.

Susan Atherton
Bradford

Morning Mail

The North Beal Post Office is dwarfed by anything larger than an old voting shack. Still, like a collapsed star, its gravity determines the path of everyone in town. I am early today, tired of scanning the posters and pamphlets on the wall. Looking out the window, I see them coming, falling towards me in staggered clusters, the unequal fragments of some larger entity. Ours is the pure will of habit, the need to know what is going on, or, after years of knowing better, the search for hope in empty boxes, the wait for the soft clack, the shadowy sliver of a letter falling into place.

But nothing has fallen into place yet. The mail is slow. The unseen clerk is still wrestling with the bags. Perhaps that is why the old folks stroll along, like green and grey clad animals against the changing hills where the trees have shrunk to one blaze of color. They shiver as they sense overtaking them the whine of tires from jacked-up pickups, the siren radials of Datsuns — the arrival of the young among the harmonics of engines idling.

Some just look and leave. A few, an even mixture of men and women, decide to wait a little, joined by the walkers who have caught up all at the same time. It is understood that the oldtimers will fill the three chairs or take the prime leaning space at the service table. The rest of us just find a place and stand. Some confidently open the doors of their boxes. It begins.

First class. The letters fall slowly, with the rhythm and noise of a bad typist. It is best to joke at times like this. People we cannot even see, people from everywhere — lovers, relatives, enemies, pests — have made choices about us in separate moments, and we wait for the results. I try not to stare at the glass door of my slot. Then begins a choreography of hands.

There are those who cannot believe in their empty boxes, who grow edgy and pace certain that the clerk is hiding their mail. But still the emptiness beckons like a tunnel to an abjss. By the time the newspapers are going up, by the time the fifteenth person has said, "Just what I need, more bills!" the young have left, and the five old citizens are not listening to anything but each other. Dorothy shouts at Edwin, who is nearly deaf, that they have a letter from Ruth Hutchinson. She is so used to shouting that it has become her normal voice, the register of a gull in pain. Gladys and Tom shout back. Edwin is shouting about the weather, uncertain if anyone hears. They will go on that way, not like children or squeaky wheels, just shouting all together then pausing for someone else to shout. Shouting bits of letters. Louder. Like souls in Sheol whose names have been spoken, the flame of their lives advanced. Gesturing. They shout so loud it is as if their voices have become disembodied, as if they are saying nothing.

I leave them there, burning with the warmth of small, loud furnaces, pilot lights in their spectacles, their hands waving, holding letters like crazed butterflies.

David Adams
So. Euclid, Ohio

REVIEWS

Sixteen Pastorals/Ruth Mendelsohn

(Bangor: Theodore Press, 1983) Winner of the 1982 Poetry Chapbook Competition sponsored by the Maine State Commission on the Arts and the Humanities.

What Ruth Mendelsohn tries to do literally in her quietly compassionate *Sixteen Pastorals* is take us back to the land, suggesting a way that we in America can start over, can restore ourselves by shepherding the place that is in our charge.

But these are not merely idyllic pieces celebrating a sentimental and rustic simplicity. Worked like a sonata in three movements with a final coda, the book is unified by both its honest and moving tone and compact style.

The "Five Long Songs" of the first section act as an exposition in which the poet describes her love as he lives close to the land, seeking his own territory. In the wedding poem, Mendelsohn has the wedding party "eat wild blueberries, not cake." Always she sets the objects of the poem down before us as if on solid ground, simply, directly, so that we are moved by the quiet assurance of each brief five-line poem.

The second section, "Five Exurban Pastorals," develops the theme of removing oneself from "the industrial offlands" to one's own named country of "the new green stunning." Here, the lines widen on the page, and the poet has also added three extra lines to each poem in this section. The effect is both cumulative and expansive — a nice touch.

The shocking finale, with the longest-lined and most substantial poems of the book, creates a pastoral holocaust. Now, Mendelsohn names our disaster, warns us of what will happen if we do not take our role of earth's overseers seriously: "Call it an end of blood / And breath. . ."

The coda closes the book in a tone of thoughtful resignation and acceptance of the end of life, while awaiting the possibility of a new beginning. Hopefully, we will all be wiser for having read *Sixteen Pastorals*.

**Kathleen Lignell
Stockton Springs**

The White Words/Baron Wormser

(Houghton-Mifflin, 1982, \$9.95)

Baron Wormser came to Maine twelve years ago. After a year on the coast he went inland. He and his wife built a house in the woods. The Washington Post quotes him — "I didn't go to writer's school or anything like that, but I read poetry on almost a daily basis." It is that familiarity, that assimilation of the old and the new which permeates *The White Words*. Wormser is less a Maine writer than a poet who has found in Maine a universal perspective. His poems reach beyond the parochial alliances and perceptions that limit so much Maine poetry.

It is not so much gossip that absorbs / Them as a fondness . . . for measuring lives: / . . . it is these towns that dignify the slimmest? / Of lives with a history, remembering even dogs? With an earnest pleasure, a rush of anecdote and regret.

Wormser's poetry is compassionate, investing the ordinary with an ironic yet gentle humor. In "Servants" he inquires —

"What happened to them? . . . They lost faith casually, without a fuss, / Being somewhat cynical to begin with . . . What did they do? / . . . Sensed desire before it was voiced. / Made jam and mocked doctors . . . How big were their lives? No more than a shoebox . . . And we? . . . We parade around our houses in our underwear, / . . . We grow shoddy, become imprecise in our speech, / Believe in the future."

Eschatological flickerings run through *The White Words*. We are lured into a quiet speculation on the ultimate, on last things.

To become part of that undistinguished / Duff hidden beneath the snow. / Let there be ends. This lingering is for now. / These leaves, like men, will cling to what they know.

One reviewer (Gerald Stern) suggest Wormser's poetry is what E.A. Robinson might have written if living today. I doubt that. It's just that occasionally a poem gives off a Robinson sound — the taut, controlled use of rhyme and rhythm. But Robinson is a Romantic, nostalgic, favoring the abstract. Wormser's eye is on the sparrow. His mastery of poetic forms, his fine use of rhythm, rhyme, dissonance and assonance, are keyed to the particular, to us, inhabitants of ". . . botched democracy's inadvertent showpiece?"

Though Baron Wormser may not yet have found a single voice or direction, *The White Words* is a dazzling display of what contemporary poetry can be.

. . . It is enchanting.

You can't deceive yourself, what you write is you.

g b clark

Entering the Walking-Stick Business/

Poems by Sylvester Pollet

(Blackberry Press, Brunswick, Maine, 1982, 47 pages, \$4.00)

-If we agree with Seneca that "as a man speaks, so is he," then Sylvester Pollet is a man who catalogues experience with startling precision and clarifies emotions with disarming simplicity. In this long-awaited collection, we hear a speaker who finds inspiration in the ordinary: *approaching a mountain, digging a drain trench, driving home fast the back way, or sitting, sitting, carving walking-sticks for sale*. Yet his subtle images are far from ordinary; rather, they are fresh, honest, precise.

Pollet's is a passionate yet controlled voice that speaks for us about the rhythm of life in rural Maine. For him the commonplace is extraordinary, worthy of a careful look through his fine lens. He affirms, for example, the majesty of deer moving through soft snow, the satisfaction of a green canoe, a good reel, wind and waves, and the distinction of September, the month of the ox-pull. He even learns "to plant the garden not for the philosophy but because the soil is ready and it's time."

However, just as easily as he isolates the familiar and makes it new, Pollet speaks to us about the uncommon: *love in a cold climate where young women tend to thicken early while men grow leathery, taciturn, morose*. With a keen sensitivity in his poignant "Letter to My Father," dead for a year, he sighs, "I've shown you my last poem." Candidly he reveals his own process of self-discovery in several poems, all titled simply "Self-Portrait"; when he eventually decides to "quit looking," he concedes to just "follow the grain."

And it is that voice of victorious surrender, that intentional letting-go, that readers will hear throughout this collection. We can be grateful he has entered this walking-stick business and shared with us his "extra gift of art."

Carol Kontos

Winter Dreams/H.R. Coursen

(Cider Mill Press, P.O. Box 211, Stratford, CT 06497, 1982, \$4.00)

In the first poem of this, his eighth volume since 1973, Coursen "rewinds the reel," plays a life back in reverse-motion images, ending with the bizarre notion of an infant sliding back into the womb and even sperm and egg uncoupling, "where beginnings are." Throughout this beautiful book his quest is both back "toward the dawn of things" and "ahead to memory, back to futures where sea and sky turn upside down." This double-journey is mostly taken alone, although Coursen gives us a share of delicate and sensitive love poems, made especially moving because of their gentleness and lack of self-indulgence. In many of these 56 poems the reader will sense a poet alone but not yet lonely, as he waits for another's voice "to close up the silent space beside me."

Coursen favors the short stanza and fairly short poems, both perfect for impressionistic sketches of nature around him. He is a great namer of things — birds, stars, seasonal subtleties — as if their movements will tell him something of his own. As he leads us through his recurring imagery of aviation, woodpiles, sports, mining, dusks, he holds to the "azimuths of faith." As he says, "We live in a found space beyond the turn of stars. Alleluia. Amen."

Terry Plunkett

The Hours of Morning/William Carpenter

(The University of Virginia Press, 1981)

I can't seem to let go of Bill Carpenter's poetry. I have read *The Hours of Morning* over and over — treasured it, quarrelled with it, learned from it, found my allegiance to certain poems shifting with time. Learning these poems is like entering a new land in which the poems are both the people and the features of their landscape. And they are drawn with a depth simply unavailable to most of Carpenter's better-known contemporaries. The strongest poems here repay continued reading, reveal a ravenous intelligence and a unique and joyfully pure sensibility.

It is disheartening how trendy contemporary poetry has become. I think the few weak poems in this volume are weighted with too much easy irony, too many convenient "... I think of's." But it measures Carpenter's strength as a poet that he casts off these affectations quickly and gives us *so much* rich, varied, complex poems. Some of them have the dark humor of a fun-house mirror stared into too long. Others dissect our own timeless rituals. Finally, the new land is ours, the new people are old us. Rather than quote wonderful lines (there are too many) may I commend the poems — "Autumn Encounter," "The Keeper," "Friends of de Chirico," "The Man Who Built a Car," "Cezanne at Mont Sainte-Victoire," "Five Translations from the Poems of Anasim Miscjek," and "The Grand Design" — deep and wonderful poems.

David Adams

Light Years/Poems by Roberta Chester

(Puckerbrush Press, Orono, Maine, 1983, 96 pages, \$5.95)

The subjects of Roberta Chester's poems range from her immediate family and the relationships that sustain her to her Jewish ancestry and the rituals of that European heritage. She explores the patterns of life, often in the context of the past and the future. As a consequence, other times and other places become a frequent referent in her poetry.

Amid that tension between what is, what was, and what might be, readers have constant evidence of her metaphorical mind. Her unique analogies unify the entire collection. For example, to prepare for winter the poet sews certain scraps of summer into the lining of her coat and stuffs "layers of clothing with memories against the wind" just as her great grandmother had sewed coins into the hem of her coat to cross the border. Similarly, in "Sonogee Nursing Home" she observes the old women whose "eyes are full of empty rooms" and whose "hands lying in their laps like gifts move over familiar things."

Such images are as satisfying as they are startling. Consider the sleeping poet with "stars jingling in his pocket . . . like so much loose change," or "the man at the edge of the field (who) speaks to April with seeds." It's impossible for a reader not to murmur, "Ah, yes."

But even when her voice is occasionally somber or pensive, Roberta Chester is not melancholy or remorseful. Rather, she seems to find comfort in taking long looks and making unexpected connections. In that process she rejoices in the possibilities of language and diligently continues "to find the words that will get it right." It is her consistent effort to do so that brings satisfying rewards for the readers of her poetry.

Carol Kontos

Point of View

When she raves about
The beauty of the gulls,
I wonder if she knows
The duty of the gulls,
And why she won't
Extol the grace
Of the blithe young miss
Who cleans her place.

Minnie Bowden
Orland

Octavia's Hill/Margaret Dickson

(Houghton-Mifflin, 1983, \$13.95)

Why so little memorable Maine fiction, short or long? A centuries assessment reveals the gamut — from Sara Orne Jewett to Ben Ames Williams, with Kenneth Roberts thrown in out of desperation, Thoreau from despair, Harriet Beecher Stowe for patriotism and Stephen King out of our adulation of the dollar. Can't include Erskine Caldwell. He gave up his down-east allegiance easily and early, having discovered there were more rednecks in Georgia than in Maine. Debatable. The flaw in most Maine writing (fiction and non-fiction) is that both genres are fictional in the most abused meaning of the term. Mythic adulteration to downright lies; packaged containers of newspaper columns awash in salt spray and loon calls, nostalgic forays over the hill and through the woods to grandma's cozy trailer; *Bert & I* reruns; humble poseurs. It's enough to send one back to Jacob Abbott, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* and *The Golden Boys!*

Whether or not *Octavia's Hill* endures as memorable fiction, Margaret Dickson's first novel reveals a real writing talent, a writer with the courage to look at Maine realistically and possessing an imagination capable of using Maine as a metaphor for universal concerns. In *Octavia's Hill* Margaret Dickson has not created a Yorknapatawpha County but its terrain suggests the comparison.

A threat of nuclear disaster contains the metaphysics of *Octavia's Hill*; its philosophical direction is contained within Tave, a woman haunted by the ghosts of her ancestors, constrained by marriage, and trapped in a physical nightmare. The concrete reality of a finely observed rural Maine provides a sharp and immediate sense of place.

The nuclear disaster is used thematically, balanced by Tave's memories and actions. She finally comes face to face with herself in a cellar which offers no real protection from the threat, whose roots are generations old. Over this she has little control as over the approaching radioactive cloud from the west.

However, Tave's life is not all darkness. We are given an almost idyllic account of her rural upbringing, her love affair and marriage. Here, for this reviewer, the nostalgic evocation of nature provides a rather tenuous link with the novel's climatic focus — the Green clan.

The Greens are those Maine inhabitants practically all Maine writers either avoid or lie about — the Maine rednecks. The Greens are members of that malignant subculture, a subculture certainly not confined to Maine and one that, observed realistically and used symbolically, has given significance to the work of such writers as Steinbeck, Erskine Caldwell and Faulkner. It is this use of the Greens that gives *Octavia's Hill* not only its graphic focus but a symbolic dimension rarely found in novels about Maine. Margaret Dickson has the intelligence and skill and courage to say some important things about men and women — and Maine.

g b clark

Amy Williams Murray Street

Crazy Quilt

Each fall I
quilt for St. Mary's auction
Crazy quilts,
like young couples.

We still make love.
I will shiver
like an old tree,
shuddering, shuddering
until dry leaves
fly off.

James McKenna
Augusta

Musings by the Painter On the Hidden Order of His Art

*Yes, Anton Ehrenzweig, my friend in faith,
true there is an order hidden in our art.
Whether loosed from cranial right or cranial left
or from a childhood's residue of unconstraints
it comes unbidden, surprising like an evening zephyr
lifting a curtain, brings the starlight to our eyes.*

*Not entirely hidden from us as we work,
but dimly seen within our long-partitioned minds
(a sort of Yang and Yin of these creative things),
like some treasures in deep water comes to life
only at the diver's touch; as last things are
best (withing our hallowed eschatology),
so here, he points, is where the brush turned suddenly
on undercoat, to drag a sweep of flowing color,
pulsed by some strong ventriculated surge
as if guided on an automatic course.*

*Then he knew the thing was done. One more touch
would kill the portrait's brooding mood.
He dared not move, beyond the laying of his brush,
and backed away to view what he (or it) had done.
Though the sitter could never say, with pointing pride,
"See how beautiful I am, my likeness mirrored
for eternity on this mount of painted
cloth," yet she, reflecting on her innate self,
knew what glamorous photographs of her concealed
the inner person that this painting now revealed.*

Evans B. Reid
Waterville

Title at the End

*Many's the morning
when growing restive
at my typewriter and
I feel the need upon
me I've ridden the
Rabbit 6/10 of a mile
up the bumpy dirt road
turned left onto South
Road for 1.3 miles
left onto Route 17
1.9 miles where the
General Store shares
the town with the P.O.
the Real Estate office
the garage and the empty
bakery that's moved its
breads to Manchester. I
rarely linger there isn't
anything else to see just
get back in the Rabbit
drive 1.9 and 1.3 and
the 6/10 miles down
the bumpy dirt road and I
am back at my desk where
I think about all the space
between things in Maine and
how the trip closes up
the gap between us
me and my typewriter and we
get back to business writing
this poem that I will call
as I light up and inhale
GOING FOR CIGARETTES
IN READFIELD, MAINE.*

Ted Bookey
Readfield

Rhetoric Espanol: Goya and Picasso

*Here on this expanse of red dust
beneath the yellow haze of sun,
on sand baked red
through years of blood;
here, where nothing remains but memory
and echoes of dying animals;
here the women no longer dance,
children's laughter does not echo
into the night air.
Here you see only bleached bones
and the crazed eyes of a mad animal
frazzled into a grotesque parody of itself.
Here there is only pain,
a land that grace has forsaken
where death has the only hands.*

Tobin Simon
Rockport



Photo by Kosti Ruohaama, Courtesy Black Star

the red paint people

*if the valleys sank
i'd pack you in the trunk, frances,
get you away from the sheepscot;
the hell with this sylvan glade.*

*you and your sons; the stone
might be a problem: heavy
on the shock absorbers.
I'm the last; no one would know.
the cousins in new jersey haven't
been around in years.*

*when the valleys sank
they moved their sacred objects,
before the abnaki, long before
the europeans found the new
gravesites, which they thought at first
suspicious for their stones of ochre: tint
of the infernal? but then its use
outweighed their fears, and
they in turn left us their objects,
household furniture stained red.
we moved them, house to house.*

*by
this we know them as the red paint people.*

*when the water rises
i'll be here. perhaps i'll see the others
packing up, your friends and neighbors
carried to the cars; and who'll be here
to move the man and woman and their
three-year-old, dead on the same day?
we'll nod, moving silently
from bank to roadside, an eye
cocked to the sheepscot, till
we have you safely loaded, ready
with your furnishings for higher ground,
and back weighted out onto
the roadway, for the ride
into the hills; relieved at last
to have you
in the nick of geologic time.*

Archie Hobson
New Gloucester

Aubade

*Asleep, he whispers, sighs, and dreams.
Angel, he laments, as if the midnight
world, now his own, somehow could conjure
darkness into flesh. Having slept
in unfamiliar beds, he is not through
desiring. Sweet thought. Not that he fears
the black-crowned heron of the night,
that bird, flying so preposterous
over the suburbs of the dawning city.
Heading north: what he remembers
in his own crowded rookery, a need
for tenderness. I feel its hunger
as the cry so huge inside me, waking me
at the first light, the loud flat qwak qwak
as the heron arrives, flying out
to feed on the tidal flats.*

Kathleen Lignell
Stockton Springs

The Death of A Woman

*A sunset
some twenty six thousand feet
up the south side of Everest,
she fell —
for a mile, they said,
without uttering a cry
into a glowing pink crevasse.
Her belt harness unhitched
from a lifeline, she stepped off
like a space walker
and sixteen men
saw her recede
to a dot
and asked only then
why they ever ascended.
Her laughing on the radio,
urging them on —
a woman
who had sought her place —
unnumbed their thoughts
like a suck of oxygen
the long way up the slopes.
But a woman should not die that way,
clean and absolute,
dropping silently
out of life
vanishing at such a height.
It seemed worse than men
who fell to their deaths.
She had an earthiness
in her laughter
at them for striving
up the slope of God
to reach a place
where sex was
no matter.*

Bruce P. Spang
Readfield

TLC

*This morning's glance
at those whiskers, anticipating
the embalmer's blade, sharpened
her vision of iron into a surreal
insight: The stubble, a shade
grayer than his concave cheeks,
had thickened overnight. The rank
outcropping of that hideously robust
tumor crowding a temporal lobe
into terminal apathy?*

*Either that visit or during
another of those countless trips
to look in on him, perhaps
feeling under the sheet to finger
the catheter, hoping for his sake
to be greeted by name, she relapsed
into vain nostalgia recalling
the uncountable times his old spiced
cheek had grazed hers, a breast,
her navel, then on down beyond
the mockery of that fruitless
linea alba to her eternally wistful
thighs, being addressed all the while
in the rasping gutterals of enticed lust.*

*An insistent salutation as welcome, surely,
as the diffident hello of that fetching
wraith, mask tipped to tempt
a daredevil kiss, the ritual probe
of a tomboy tongue, or more often
simply the companionable hug of soulmates
adrift in loneliness, fleshing out
the soft, clingy camouflage donned
in the latest of those periodic dreams
sampling a fondness for one another
they had been schooled to dread.*

*At the window, knees tensed
against the sill, haphazardly
watching a lone junco down
below frantically bobbing for
seeds in a clutter of leaves,
Lorna was reminded anew of life's
best kept secret in peace as well
as war. As if to mute the clamor
of Paul's lopsided breathing, she heard
herself wail, not uttering a sound: "Oh,
Christ, I'm left once more with nothing
but a vested interest
in a loved one's death."*

Farrell Davisson
Bar Harbor

What I Knew

(1)

I've a letter from my aunt who lives in the city, and it put me in mind of my first summer there.

"The trouble with men," she wrote, "is that they only see fear as something to be conquered. They find it hard to wait; they must always be lurking. They have not discovered that ignorance should be treasured like a silk-lined box, waiting — fearful and anxious to be filled."

Grolliers bookstore was the mecca of all serious young poets in the Cambridge of my time. I was serious enough, God knows, but untutored, rough, and fresh from the country, and a small Catholic school. Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley were heroes, reeling off reams was no special task, but I had not read a word of Robert Lowell.

I learned quickly, however, that in Cambridge one could get by knowing little, but knowing how certain things were done, and not done. A certain style and method were necessary. An informed eccentricity was useful as was a world-wise ingenuousness. I listened at every corner for clues, enjoying the game, anxious to be successful. Amid the whispers, boasts, the bon mots, I caught the reverent and ambitious tones of "Grolliers." A place, a shrine, a rite of passage. I would go then. I walked the streets peering and prodding into doorways to find its address, then savored the knowledge of its obscure geography for weeks. Planning, preparing.

The tableaux I found when I finally braved the portal stunned me. It was after all supposed to be a store. "Store," I knew the word and prefaced by "book" it meant certain things. Rows of shelves stocked with the items for sale; a counter, a cash register, ample vertical reference points: those shelves, the spines of books, the narrow aisles, the title printed up and down.

What met me here? Nothing but a dusty horizon. A ratty brown couch, long and low, heaped with coats and hats. At one end in dim light cast by an odd assortment of lamps, an old man with a misshapen head and a queer face. The lower half of this face was a thick bristle pile, just a shade grayer than the dusty prickles that upholstered the couch. From the floor there rose tottering piles of dusty volumes. The few shelves looked too personal to browse through. A frieze of black and white photographs ran round the walls, like the faded movie stars in the Greek restaurant back home. but these were famous poets, I was sure, though their names were names I didn't know. People who made words I had never heard. Still, you could tell by their faces that they were poets. There — that fat one with the long bushy hair. Somehow I knew just how he would sound, and smell, and act, and just the kind of rituals he might chant. I could almost taste the exotic food he used to feed his visions, though they were morsels I hadn't chewed yet. Everything was low and lean and stretched out, reclining, resting, leaning. Only the boys were upright.

Those golden boys who knew what it was they were supposed to do here. I wanted to learn. They had known the rules always, had listened to the words as their due, got the litany of names by heart from birth, had tasted all the foods forever. They tried their best now to look kindly and amused at me, who had to piece together scraps, reassemble past experience with new evidence. I, who was a learner. I could hear them tasting words, "winsome," "naïf" . . . In the instant of their scrutiny of me I recognized how foreign their purposes were from mine. I was on a journey just beginning; they felt they had arrived full-blown at the destination. We were at odds, but they held the superior position at the moment since they knew the litany of fame. They were at home in this odd place, welcomed in; I, by virtue of inferior knowledge, slow in coming, was a curiosity, something to be held to the light and examined coolly, kindly, they supposed.

"You've never been in here before," said the shopkeeper, the saint, the mystic, the shaman who launched indeed, some magic here, but it wasn't mine, and try as I could I could not think of one woman who had emerged from under his dusty wings. "No," I said.

Deprived of power, hope, and knowledge, I panicked; made rapid visions of revenge, cleaned up the store, built up shiny metal shelves stocked with books in vivid, glossy jackets, made a cash register ring, and ring out boldly. I silenced out the eager voices of the fair haired boys talking of their poetry, struggling to recall a line of mine I could hurl like light. "I heard stars crack, oh Christ! I'm Shakespeare's shrew." But that wasn't written yet.

The shopkeeper looked up at me long and calm as if we were waking from a long nap together. I realized that in all my time I had not moved but a few steps into the room. I moved closer. "I never read poetry myself; it takes too long," he said.

(2)

"Women," continued my aunt, "are intimates of fear, subsisting as they do largely on sorrow and cultivated, constrained bliss. They know that knowledge too quickly given is pain; they wrestle privately with time. Ignorance is not impotence, but a search — a slow rush toward wisdom."

My favorite place to linger that summer was at an organic supermarket on Walden Street. The "super" a joke of the young, just an old store overtaken and painted a bold red, but still keeping the low, bare wood, and splintery porch out front. This market was my museum, my encyclopedia, my atlas. Our fare at home had been simple and bland. I was eager to exchange my mother's pork chops and boiled potatoes for something richer, and the knowledge of how to cook it. People dressed in pale linen, denims, beads, beautiful and exotic streamed through this little store. I watched them scoop up bags of jewel-colored beans and seeds. Adzuki, mung, alfalfa, fenugreek, these were my poetry. It was a long process. I bought some cashew butter once, but found it bitter, and the cakes I made with the pale, brown-colored flours were flat and tasted of dust. Still, I persisted, and bought almond oil soap to perfume my skin, and rose-clay, and henna. I dressed as carefully as any ingenue for these trips to the store, the crisp cotton blouse embroidered in orange thread, the long, light calico skirt. I thought of all the many soft browns, the warm earthy smells, the soft film of golden dust in the shop and I wanted to be that soft and warm, like a hum, a chant, not a whistle or a shout.

One day a large bald-headed man watched me as I pondered and stared, sniffed and tasted. He stood silently, still, insouciant with his big arms folded casually across his chest, knowing we both felt the interest of his gaze.

"Come home with me," he said, and I did. He was a macrobiotic he said, and talked about Zen in small phrases, quietly with a powerful softness. I remember that he made me great steaming bowls of brown rice. Rich and good, pliant between my teeth. Savory, soaked in strong, salty brown soy sauce. He showed me how to cook it with just the right proportion of water to grain. I watched the gleaming kernels dance on the heat, and I watched the cold silvery water pour over them and turn cloudy and hot. I ate three bowls quick, and he laughed, "You've never had brown rice before?"

"No," I said.

The empty bowls grew cool while we smoked pipefuls of rich brown grass, and then went to bed. Simply, without a word; we knew this to be the intention of watching, and brown rice, and the fragrant pipe. He kissed me first in strange places, never on my lips but behind my ears, beneath my arms, in the damp crooks of my elbows and knees. I hung between his arms, pliantly, though presently his gestures became wild and rough. "Come," he murmured in my ear, "I'm going to give you a bath." There was that sharp, dark edge in his voice I did not like. I was afraid, yet afraid to seem backward, unyielding, less than daring, passionate. "No," I said meekly, almost whining. He hit the side of my face hard with one hand. I remember the red light behind my eyes and the pain, the surprise.

"I won't," I said, outraged — as if my outrage would give him pause. He hit me again on the other side, again the same red light and the pain. "Oh, you'll like it," he said, his voice bright with tension though my passion crept out my feet and left me cold, shivering, shivering with fear and the knowledge of his rape. I could not think about what he might do with me; I could only imagine the icy cold white sides of his bath, the glare of the cruel light on my eyes. Darkness I wanted. No one should see me. Afraid of the consequence of my words and afraid of anyone hearing my complaints. I struggled hard for some while. I held my tongue in fear, and he grew more ardent as my thrashing lessened; he passed on to other things. I tried to crouch and hide from these caresses carefully, cautiously as I might have done from his blows. He pulled my head roughly toward his crotch, pushing aside the long tangle of my hair to maneuver my face and lips. I clamped them shut, to scream, but quietly so no one should hear. They would know I came here with this stranger. My fault, my fault, mistake.

He grabbed my arm now, and his voice wheedled as the grip became tighter and tighter. "Do it," he said again and pushed my face into him. "Not like this," I said it between clenched teeth, growing bold for an instant before the pain of his grasp overtook me. He was in no mood for poetry or my simple fight. Remembering his bigness, the pain at my arm and my face, and in the roots of my hair; feeling his awful tension and power, his urgency, his rape, I complied with his requests, crying and choking, which cheered him, I suppose. I complied, and lay pinned beneath his bulk until morning when in the sickly dawn he let me rise and run home, unharmed.

Ellen A. Endter
North Yarmouth



Photo by Bruce Armstrong

Silence

(Among the letters to Dr. Pitzel)

Dear Sir,

It began by force, by forcing myself to remain silent, to restrain that ignorant impulse when it rose before it could escape and falsify everything. It worked. Gradually as I became more and more silent the deepest waters of my soul became less murky and my aural sense developed a sensitive balance. With equilibrium came isolation and the sea about me became calm, almost still, all about me. Finally I could not speak at all, nor did I want to. And I was meticulous about my writing; every word was good and I could not bear the disgrace of permitting bad, unnecessary or purely functional words to become real. Colors, sound, vegetables, animal carcasses, fur, etc... began to speak clearly; that is, I became receptive to their voices. It was beautiful. I was alone. Alone as a plant or a planet, though far less isolated and unto myself as humans are prone to be. I turned away from men, lost in the sound of substantial verse.

No one understood. Nothing mattered. My writing became abstract until the letter meant nothing to me beyond itself and was useless, an archaic fossil of a primitive and vulgar stratum. Of course it couldn't last, it was too heady a state. A rebellious desire coiled up in me from some changing spiral in the core of my person. I wanted to converse and exchange thoughts again. I was drawn backwards, down through the channels of music, I gave my mind back its agile motion and began to speak again, whole once more and completely false.

The problem is, sir, that it seems to have been a one shot deal. I can't seem to shut my voice off again, though I have long since wanted to — it blabbers day and night, deafening, drowning out the faintest murmurs. I can only remember, only dream of how it was when every stone had a different ineffable name, every variation of the evening sky had a name describing its color, tone, weight, its separate and partial meaning, its startling variations of self.

It is obvious now how useless it is to attempt to communicate. It doesn't interest me any more. I knew what metaphors were. I knew then what was beneath my abstract soul... I permit myself despair, my only happiness since happiness ceased to exist. I am alien; the poets themselves sense this, but cannot help me. They alone were my hope and they are no hope at all...

I prattle on like an idiot, stupid and happy enough. I talk about writing, television, my latest lust, now and then I linger over some particularly beautiful lines, and I remember in my heart that ungodly language of absolute silence. Only remember and can never express. And the attempt, the attempt drives me farther and farther away. Consequently, sir, I refuse to feel any moral remorse. God exists superfluously. This mockery of an explanation is my last duty to humanity, my final guilt and responsibility. I hunger for the silence.

Anne Wadleigh
Portland

Hearing a Fat Man Babble

No Quick Cure

*My doctor tells me I'm not sick:
I've just a slightly damaged quick,
Caused, one must suppose, in part
By low blows aimed too near the heart.*

*He says there's nothing to ensure
The malady will not recur,
No special pill, no swift injection
To guard against a new infection,*

*No vitalizing magic potion.
The druggist did suggest a lotion
Which, if faithfully applied,
Creates a pachydermous hide.*

*The only problem, it appears:
The process takes a hundred years.*

Jane A. Lindholm
Lewiston

Was it (I wonder)
A thing kind or cruel
That God with flesh
Wore down your mind
Blunt as my knuckle,
Making you into a fool,
While your poor
Starved soul cried out
To be articulate?

Ronald Zorn
Poland Spring

Exercise

Draw a line Label the line

Life

Draw a dot at each end of the line

Label one dot

Birth

Label the other dot

Death

Go back and place the word

My

In front of the three labeled words

Crumple this piece of paper

Light it on fire

Stomp out the flames with your feet

Rub your hands in the ashes

Rub your hands on your face

Look in the mirror

Smile

You have not done

What I asked.

Martha Henry
North Windham

**In the beginning
man, himself whole,
took a byte
from the apple
dangling
from the tree of knowledge,
the tree of life...**

INSERT DISC IN DRIVE 1

BOOT SYSTEM

[F]ind: Truth

[D]elete: Error

[S]ave: Love

[L]oad: Infinity

[R]etrieve: Eden

INSERT DISC IN DRIVE 2

**(Search
as you may
among your discs
and files,
the software
for that stellar system
shining beyond
the sectors of the window's silicon
is not yet user friendly.)**

]SYNTAX ERROR

|

Jim Davis
Unity



Photo by Bruce Armstrong

Chemotherapy

*Like cherry soda
and cough syrup,
my eyes close as the
needle punctures my vein
another time.*

*Throughout my body
the parade of sharp-toothed
Piranhas line up in formation,
mouths wide.
I want them to eat the bad cells,
But distinction to them is void.*

*I remember camp
Lying peacefully in my hammock,
and relax for a moment.
That's what the book says to do.*

*But it comes so quickly!
I was hoping the Compazine
would help this time.
I reach for the deformed, plastic basin,
the plastic needle still in place.*

*My ribcage splits
and stomach hardens.
Eyes do not focus,
Legs do not move.
Energy spent, I am
as a melted candle.*

Carla Lake
Auburn

Then

**He had gone to the greenhouse to draw.
The air being moist,
The floor was wet, slippery.
Spiking a cactus as he walked by,
He breathed the colour of its blossoms**

**Inside him. A dam was released:
He had seen that sunset, that cabin again.
And before it, the angle
Her back used to make against the porch chair,
The one nearest the trees, the green woods then.**

Caryn Purcell
Casco



Courtesy, Maine Photographic Workshop

Anxiety

*There is still a door
banging loosely in the wind,
though the house is old
and long empty.*

*I sit in the ruins
to watch the door swing.
Things enter,
and things leave.
The air seems full,
then slips out
as though it was nothing.
And nothing,
or something else,
comes in again.*

*It will not end.
With each slam, I start,
but go nowhere.
It begins to be frightening.
Somehow, I can't leave.*

*This structure is all I have.
I shut the door finally,
and wedge it with bits of board.
Is this safety?*

*The sky is there,
arching over the open rafters,
wide and absent.
The walls are broken,
and through the gaps, the field
is wandering in.*

Kirsten Backstrom
Bar Harbor

The Fate of Rameses Jones

What happens is, the third week of school, "Fungus" Wilson assigns me this term paper on *Fate*. There's fifteen of us in Senior (special) English and Fungus has fifteen topics on separate pieces of paper. His method is to stick them in a box and we draw. Frankly, Fungus himself looks like he was drawn from a box - a wet cardboard one. Paper due by Thanksgiving. So after class, though it makes me late for soccer practice, I stop by his office. What does he mean, write a paper on *Fate*?

Fungus is lumpish, sort of jammed-up looking. Trouble with him is, he knows too much. He peers up from behind his desk, adjusts tinted glasses and gives me this merde-eating smile. "Yes, Christy?" Any words with s's in them he tends to spit out so pieces of the words fly back at you. That's why the front rows in his classes are always empty. I back up and ask him about *Fate*.

"You do possess a dictionary, Christy?"

Actually most of our teachers at Adams aren't that bad, considering what you could get. Every place has a few losers. Fungus leans back, digs something from his ear and inspects it.

I nod and tell him *Fate* is a force or power that predetermines events and leads people to some sort of doom or destiny. What I meant to know is, what am I supposed to write about?

"What does your rather imprecise definition suggest, Christy?" Fungus tips back in his swivel chair and hoists up his feet. Black shiny shoes and sagging, greyish socks. "A philosophical dissertation on *Fate* in the deterministic literature of the *fin de siecle*?"

See what I mean? Anyway, I say, "Oh, you mean take some guy and show how he's doomed or really makes it big?"

Fungus arches what go for his eyebrows. "In the vernacular, yes, Christy."

Right off I knew who I'd write about. "Rameses," I say.

"Which one?"

"Which one?"

"There were twelve Egyptian pharaohs named Rameses. They ruled from -"

"I'm talking about Ram Jones, Mr. Lingus. Rameses Jones!"

"Rameses Jones?" Fungus lunges forward. "Fate, Christy, involves those with some measure of greatness. Now I realize Rameses Jones' continental background has engendered much fascination around school. But he only entered Adams this fall. And even being a senior does not, I'm afraid, automatically insure greatness."

From the soccer field came the sounds shoes make when they hit the ball solid. Then Coach Mastadon's voice. An impatient sound.

"Gotta go now, Mr. Lingus. Soccer practice."

"Remember, some famous person," Fungus calls as I head down the corridor. Whatever, I'd made up my mind to write about Ram. So what's the point writing about someone everybody knows blew it, like Hitler or Charles Manson or made it big like Pele or Odysseus. Sure, I wasn't sure what was going on between Ram and Eve Angelo, but whichever way, I knew Ram was going somewhere.

Believe it or not, Ram was born in Egypt. That's where his father and mother met. His father's some kind of businessman and Ram's lived in all sorts of weird places like Kathmandu, Upper Assam, Alabama. He learned to play soccer as a kid in Spain. His family moved up from the Caribbean to Adams first of June. Then Ram's father went off to Europe.

I met Ram at the beach where I rake seaweed and am the lifeguard, though with the ocean being about zero degrees centigrade year 'round, about all I do is pick up little kids who fall flat on their faces along the edge. Anyway, this day Eve Angelo comes walking up to my station with Ram.

Eve introduces Ram who has this wicked-good tan and right off I can see Eve's attracted to him. So at first I guess I'm kind of hostile. My dad has this thing about *old movies and we go to a lot*. Eve looks like Sophia Loren at her best. But Ram didn't come on strong and we got talking about soccer. Right away I could see why Eve was attracted to him. He was different from anyone we'd met before.

In a matter of days our whole bunch was gathering on the beach, everybody listening to Ram. Not that he talked all the time. And not because he could speak several languages or was good-looking enough to be on TV. A nice, friendly guy. Right off you felt you were with someone who understood the scene, could take charge, and thought really big. For instance, to jump ahead, there was that afternoon right after school started. By then we'd become good friends, though I'll admit the way Eve always seemed to be with him was bugging me.

That afternoon during Study Hall, Ram and I got talking about what we were going to do after high school. Right off Ram said why don't we go down to the Counseling Office.

Ms. Lysine Turgal and Coach Mastadon are the Guidance Counselors. This afternoon Lysine Turgal's there alone, her desk as usual littered with brochures. All her bookshelves are piled with catalogues and she has posters like *It's A Good Place TO Start* and *It Isn't A Job, It's Adventure* and ROTC and plane formations. She has a son who's a sergeant up on some godforsaken airbase in northern Maine. He comes down two or three times a year and talks to us and she's always trying to get us to join up. We figure they probably pay her ten dollars a head or something.

"Bon jour, Ms. Turgal," Ram says. She smiles, which is rare. She ignores me, which is usual. "We're thinking about college."

"Fine!" She automatically picks up a ROTC pamphlet. "Do you have any place special in mind? Now at State, Mr. Jones, they have -"

"Yale, Princeton, or Harvard, Ms. Turgal." Which was a complete surprise to me, but I nod anyway.

Lysine Turgal looks at me like she's seeing me for the first time, then sort of raises her nose. "You boys are shooting rather high, aren't you?" She sort of frowns at me and I realize she's forgotten my name, which really pisses me off, seeing I've been at Adams all four years.

"No, Ms. Turgal," Ram says gently but firmly. "Not high. Just on target." I mean, that's the way he can talk and she gives him this merde-eating smile, turns and rummages on her shelves and comes up with the catalogues. She makes a point of handing them to Ram then hands me a bunch of brochures - a couple of Vocational Techs and the State branch at Ft. Kent, which we should have given to Canada years ago. "Big things are happening up there, Mr. Christy."

"A big thing ought to happen to her," I blow, as Ram and I head back to Study Hall. "She barely remembered my name!"

"So, you learn to deal with people, Christy. Now which do you want, Yale, Princeton or Harvard?"

"Well -" And this is what I mean about Ram, how he could get you thinking and seeing things differently. "I'm not sure. Think I could make one of them? My grades aren't -"

"Both of us, man! So what? If you really want one of them, then you'll make it. Take my old man. Went to some cracker college in Florida. Probably majored in Underwater Basketweaving. But he wanted to make it big - and so he did. So can we!"

See what I mean? Ram has this confidence. Even when he gets in a jam he manages to turn things around. Take that first party at his place the beginning of the summer and what happened to Osric, his collie. Just a bunch of us guys, a few six-packs and a joint or two.

Ram's folks had rented this mammoth brown-shingled ark of a place right on the ocean. Ram's father was in Europe and his mother, whom none of us had seen but was rumored to be really beautiful, had gone to Boston. There was an old carriage house out back where Ram said any of us could sleep over if things got rough.

Actually the party started off real mellow. Ram had some terrific records *Quiet Riot*, *Grateful Dead* and Jimmy Hendrix. Then Ram broke open a case of Heineken. After a while some joints appeared. Things really began moving when Ram showed us how Osric liked beer. Frankly, I think Ram was imitating some TV commercial. Anyway, Ram would tell Osric to go upstairs and bring down a shoe. Then Ram would give him a saucer of beer. Pretty soon the place got sort of littered with shoes and Osric was having a bit of trouble with stairs. Then some of the guys started going up and coming down with shoes in their mouths. It began to look like a half-price shoe sale at L.L. Bean's. Finally Osric collapsed and rolled down the stairs. Ram put him in a little nest we made for him under a table.

It was after that the gathering got a little out of hand. Duke Peavy got in a fight with Andy Grimsby. A couple of South Harbor boys went down and fell off the rocks and three more of us slid in hauling them out. Some weird neighbor came by and said we were making too much noise and a few got sick and tore outside to flash the hash. Finally things began breaking up. Some left. I called home, woke up my dad and said I was spending the night. Andy and Duke decided to stay, too. Ram had curled up on the floor beside Osric and gone to sleep.

I was in fair shape when I came down in the morning and stepped out into the backyard. There's this really beautiful blonde in jeans and sweater gently hauling Osric by his front paws to a grassy spot by a woodpile. She doesn't even look at me. I thought, oh god, we've killed him. She knelt beside Osric and began stroking his head.

"Hi" I say, starting towards her. "I guess we -" Just then Osric's tail twitched and I knew he was alive. There wasn't any point saying anything more because she was looking at me, through me, like she was throwing a javelin. I did notice she was really stacked. Finally I said someone was coming for us soon. It was obvious we weren't going to get any breakfast there.

I went back inside the carriage house and kicked Andy and Duke awake, suggesting we'd better stay inside until our ride came. Finally my mother showed up. We came out and Ram's mother was still kneeling beside Osric, who looked a little sad. We said thank you as we crossed to where my mother was waiting in the station wagon but Mrs. Jones didn't look up. My mother gave me one of her indictment looks and got out and went over to Mrs. Jones. They talked a bit and then my mother came back and sort of jerked the wagon around, not saying a word, not even after she let Andy and Duke off on the highway to hitch it home. Only when we drove into our garage did she explode.

"I don't know what kind of a monster your new friend, Rameses Jones is, but you've certainly demonstrated you're no better! Getting that poor animal drunk! That poor sick creature!"

No point my mentioning Osric wasn't the only one who got sick.

"I suggest you go up and have a talk with your father!"

My father is a columnist. Spends most mornings typing away up in his workroom over the garage. And naturally, right off he asks me what kind of a merde-eating thing was that to do and I said I realized it and he said that after I finished at the beach every day I was to plan on helping him with his stone walls, weekends included. He's really insane about building stone walls and our restored farmhouse is beginning to look more and more like a medieval castle. Still, I knew Ram would be at the beach.

Sure enough, that afternoon Ram appears. With Eve Angelo. I immediately got depressed because Eve hardly spoke to me. Ram tells how, after a long talk with his mother, who's nuts about dogs, he went out and bought her a collie puppy and they'd made up. I said I wished I could have managed something like that with my dad.

"You learn to deal with people, Christy."

Eve gave him this lovely smile and already I'm worrying how he's going to deal with her.

Still, I couldn't help admiring the guy. That afternoon there were hardly any kids falling on their faces in the waves and Ram got going on the places he'd lived. In Egypt he'd climbed on the pyramids. Caught a shark off Haiti. And when they were living outside of Paris — well, Ram's father is what he calls an *entrepreneur* and there was this big development he'd started, swimming pools, tennis courts, security guards and so on. Anyway, during that time he'd seen in real life all the Beatles, the Prince of Monaco and Sophia Loren. I said something about Eve looking like Sophia Loren and for a change got a decent smile from her.

It got so for a couple of weeks our whole gang gathered every afternoon by my beach station. Of course Ram was the big attraction. But then one afternoon Ram announced he'd got this restaurant job in Boothbay and seeing he couldn't use his mother's car all the time had bought one of his own. We all went out to the parking lot to have a look.

"Good God, Ram!" Andy says. "If you'd told me I could've helped."

"Helped?" Ram, for a change, looked puzzled.

"That '75' Impala!" Duke snorted. "Rumor was old man Tompkins was going to use it for a mooring. How much you give?"

"Two hundred," Ram says. "So O.K., it's a bit beat up — but listen!"

He jerks open the door, slides behind the wheel. The engine catches instantly. There's this deep throbbing roar and a couple of gulls cruising overhead go screaming off. Ram slams it into gear, there's a cloud of dust and Ram's off around the lot, skids back to a stop and leaps out. Even as he does the beat-up sedan had changed, looking really powerful and cool like a Trans AM or a Corvette.

"Well, she doesn't sound bad," Duke concedes. "If you have any trouble with her I can probably help you some."

Ram nodded and it was like a king giving special dispensation to one of his subjects.

My dad, after warning me against any more merde-eating tricks like getting dogs drunk, finally let me off the rock piling. Ram seemed to like to stop by on his evenings off. Sometimes we'd just sit around. My dad liked to talk with Ram about the places he'd seen. Other evenings Ram and I, sometimes with Duke and Andy, would cruise around in Ram's car. For a while only little things went wrong with the Impala, which Duke would fix. But then the problems got bigger.

One evening in Brunswick we come out after "The Return of the Jedi" and both rear tires are flat. Ram immediately said old man Tompkins had swore they were practically new retreads. Anyway, Ram had never looked in the trunk. The spare is flat and no jack. And we were broke. But Ram went off, found a garage. They came, fixed our flats, got Ram to sign something and we were off. We couldn't figure how he managed it.

"You learn to deal with people," Ram said.

It got so you just sort of figured out that no matter the situation, Ram would somehow handle it. Of course there was the problem of Eve. But that was more my problem than his. I mean, she still came by to see me at the beach and things were more or less like they'd always been with us, kind of warm and friendly. But she'd also gone out with Ram a few times and when I tried to bring that up casually she'd sort of clam up. Anyway, there wasn't anything much I could do about it and the summer was mostly over.

By that time Ram's Impala was down to eight per gallon and a quart of oil. And then, just into early soccer practice, a week before school begins and regular season, disaster strikes.

To begin with, this Friday, we'd had morning practice. Coach Mastadon had really leaned on us. Then a practice scrimmage with Samoset from up the coast. We were really beat but Andy pointed out it would be the last chance to get loose until soccer season was over. So the plan was the four of us, Andy, Duke, Ram and myself would go up to Portland, take in a couple of waterfront bands, then drive out the to the State University branch where Andy had friends.

We take off in a cloud of exhaust and I'm betting we don't even make it to Portland. Ram said he'd put over six hundred into her and was putting her up for sale — eight hundred. Duke offers him a hundred and fifty.

We make Portland, cruise a few bars listening to the groups but naturally not drinking, even though Ram had a fake I.D. that always seemed to work for him. We didn't get around to eating and then it took forever to find Andy's friend's in this crummy dorm. A party was going on but nothing to eat but potato chips. They'd already run out of coke early. And we were in training, so no beer. But somewhere past midnight Duke said the hell with it and we chipped in and sent Ram out. He came back in a while with two six-packs of Miller's Lite.

Actually Ram had barely a bottle. But it was late when we left and the three of us were asleep by the time we hit the Interstate. All I know is that suddenly there's this merde-eating metallic screech and I'm pinned against the front seat with Andy sort of knotted on top of me. We had stopped. I hear Ram swearing and Duke moaning he'd broken both legs. Andy groaned and said he was probably already dead. I told him before he was would he get the hell off me. A door swings open and Andy and I spill out. There's this wet stuff running down my face. Then all of a sudden there are blue lights flashing and searchlights streaming across the face of this big ragged cliff which I recognize is where the Interstate cuts through a hill hardly a hundred yards from the turnoff down into Adams. Well, I think, we almost made it.

As it turned out none of us were really hurt. Ram showed the kind of a guy he was by taking all the blame, admitting he'd been drinking. Eventually he lost his driver's license for six months, even though he passed his breath test. All he'd done really was to fall asleep. His mother took away his fake I.D. card for a month and he had to junk his car, which was all it was anyway what with the cliff chewing on it for a while. But the worst thing happened the following Monday when Coach Mastadon in front of the whole squad, kicked the four of us off the soccer team for a week. So we missed our first three games, of which we lost two and tied one. Actually the only good thing to come out of it was that every day for a while Eve kept asking how the cut on my head was coming along. But by the time we rejoined the squad she was seeing a lot of Ram between classes. It was just about then that Fungus assigned our papers and I got to thinking maybe even people who are doomed start off having things their way.

Anyway, as far as soccer went, by the end of September, what with Ram's playing we had aced the opposition and even Mastadon admitted we'd make the Regionals. Naturally Ram was still making it big — the lead in *Our Town*, first prize in the Adams Prize Speaking. I was still thinking about how I'd write about Ram. He'd drawn Mediterranean Culture as his topic but said he hadn't even given it a thought. He was going to do ancient Egypt. "Hell, I was born there," he said. "No problem."

The problem was, for me, why hadn't he stayed there? Ram seemed to be talking with Eve more and more but when I mentioned it to her she said it was none of my business. Which I suppose was true. But once in a while when I was really depressed over the whole scene she'd come along in the corridor and slip her arm in mine. Like always I'd go funny all over. But another time she asked me was I even going to college? Ram had applied for early acceptance at Harvard. I said I knew about Ram. Who didn't? But I hadn't decided. Maybe I'd join the Peace Corps in Nepal. Eve just looks mad and walks off.

Anyway, by the end of October we're in to the last week of our regular games, no more games lost and the Regionals certain, the State playoffs possible. Naturally Ram had become sort of a major hero, though thankfully he still acted like a normal guy. Then disaster strikes again, this time for me, though it showed once more how Ram could handle things.

Friday in school Andy says his folks have gone to Boston and wouldn't be back until late. Andy's girl, Elise, is coming over, and Duke and his girl, Ann Varney. He wants Ram and I to join 'em. Why don't I ask Eve? It will be just a mild gathering.

I track down Eve in drawing class but right off she said she couldn't like she didn't want to. I hunt down Ram, but no, he hadn't asked her. But there was Betty. He'd ask her. I was sore enough at Eve so when I met Trixi O'Halloran in the corridor I asked her. Trixi is a cheerleader. Nice kid but she tends to yell a lot.

Now I suppose nothing much would have happened if Duke's folks weren't having this feud with Ann Varney's folks, who live next door to them. Something about a property line. But we'd been at Andy's only an hour or so listening to some records, Ram showing us some Haitian dance. Duke and Anne had stepped off into a side room. Suddenly there's this banging on the front door and in bursts Duke's mother. She's short, roundish and I mean, she was really bombed. Duke had told us how when she got going on coffee brandy that was the end.

"What's that Anne Varney doing with Duke!" she shrieks.

Or vice versa, I think. Out front a car horn starts blasting and a dog starts yelping. This stirs up Andy's terrier which he'd put in the cellar. Duke and Anne appear, looking slightly mused.

"Don't think I don't know what's been going on, mister!" She latches on to a floor lamp for support. "Your father's waiting for you out in the truck."

Duke just stares at her and tears start bubbling from Anne's eyes. The rest of us hold still. Ram shakes his head and mutters something about it being sad, very sad. Duke's mother glares at him, only it is like her face was put on crooked. She's head of this group, Chemical Parents, who are in a panic about grass and booze and how it's corrupting us. They have guidelines about watching their kids' diets, weight, their eyes, searching their clothes, and checking how many times they go to the john. They asked my folks to join but my Dad told them one Inquisition had been enough.

Duke finally says, quietly, "I'm not going anywhere with you."

"We'll see about that, mister!" She sort of revolves, knocking over the floor lamp and lunges for the doorway, screaming for Horace to come up. Duke's father must have been just outside because suddenly he's in the room, plus their beagle. He's a big guy with this mammoth gut. Actually not a bad guy, only he's obviously annoyed, what with his wife screaming at him and the beagle tearing around trying to pick up a scent, the rest of us just staring. Duke dodges his father and slips out the front door. His father and mother and the beagle take out after him. For some reason Andy lets his dog up from the cellar and we all crowd out on the front porch. Trixie starts yelling. I'm reminded of a riot scene from a Laurel and Hardy movie.

Duke's father is chasing Duke around and through their Chevy pick-up, Duke's mother grabbing at him as he passes. Cars were stopping. Neighbors lights going on. And up the road, blue lights flashing, siren wailing, comes Officer Bob in the town cruiser. Andy's terrier and Duke's beagle get in a fight. Then for some reason Duke's mother charges up toward the house, which has this steep lawn. Half way up she slips and rolls all the way down to the pick-up, where Duke's father lifts her up and shoves her in the cab, along with the beagle which he tears away from the terrier. Duke fades into the night as Officer Bob takes over.

"It's sad, really sad," Ram says. "Why don't you all go in and I'll go down and see what I can do."

Naturally we didn't go in. Ram went down to the pick-up and Officer Bob. Don't ask me what he said. But in a little while Duke's folks drove off, followed by Officer Bob in the cruiser, blue lights off. Ram came back up to the house, saying something about things being under control and that Officer Bob and Duke's father belonged to the same Lodge. We all went inside and Anne Varney washed her face and put on some fresh make-up. After a while Duke showed up.

I kept thinking what Ram had said it being *sad, really sad*. Later on I asked him, did he mean about Duke's father and mother or the way they'd treated Duke and Anne?

"You learn to deal with people, Christy," Ram says, "because life is sad quite a lot and who knows how any of us will turn out?"

Anyway, while the evening showed me again why I was right in doing my paper on Ram and Fate, it was also a disaster because naturally Eve heard about my dating Trixi. She wouldn't even look at me when we passed in the corridors. She always seemed to be talking with Ram, but when I made a crack or two, hoping to find out what it was all about, he would start talking about the soccer play-offs that began that weekend.

We won the Regional Playoffs in two weekends. Naturally Ram was top scorer, though we really got it together as a team. Duke and Andy were great on defense and Duke only got in one fight. In the only tight game, the final one, Ram scored the winning goal on a corner pass I got to him right in front of the net.

The weekend before Thanksgiving we went to the State Finals in our class. And we won — easily. The town of Adams went crazy. Coach Mastadon announced Ram was world-class Olympic material. Lysine Turgal told Ram that State was giving him full athletic scholarship. Ram said he was sorry but he'd just got his 'early acceptance' from Harvard. He'd told me about it the night before.

He'd come by the house to borrow some of Dad's reference books. Our term papers for Fungus were due and he'd found out he didn't know diddley squat about Egypt. He was going to have to whip something out in a hurry. Was mine done?

I told him just about. I didn't go into details, still not wanting Ram to find out it was about him. Also because I was having second thoughts. Frankly, by then I wasn't sure at all whether Ram was fated to make it big. He could just as well blow it. Before he left he told me he was asking Eve next day if she'd go to the Christmas dance with him. In spite of that, I finally decided Ram probably would make it big, providing he lucked out and someone didn't shoot him from sheer jealousy.

Ram was talking to Eve on the school steps when I arrived next morning. She hadn't as much as spoken to me since that merde-eating debacle at Andy's.

"Isn't it great, Christy," she says, "about Ram getting Harvard?"

"Sure is, Eve. You planning on going there too?"

Ram looks away and Eve just stares at me for seconds.

"You're real dumb, Christy, you know? I'm going to State. Why don't you?"

I stare at her. She was almost smiling. Ram mutters he has to see Fungus about a late paper and takes off.

"I thought you two were —"

"No Christy," Eve says. "Sure, I know he's going places but —" She gives my arm a tug and I feel myself go all over funny again. "You could go to State too, you know."

After a moment I said I'd give it some thought. We walked into the school together. I suggested she could come down to my house for dinner that evening. I'd ask Ram, too. Eve said that was fine with her.

The Widow's Lament

*What can you know of
my loneliness, waking
in the first grey light,
the odor of apricot
blossoms filling the
room but it's not the
bees bumping against
my window that wakes
me, it's his voice,
reaching into my sleep,
he's wet the bed again,
crying with shame
of it, calling me to
come help him, strip
off the soaked sheets,
wash his belly, his
thighs so I get up,
start down the hall*

*but there's no hall,
only this blank wooden
door I've never seen
before, pale blonde,
varnished slick under
my fingertips, a cold
glass knob, a squeak
as I twist and pull,
and beyond, the faded
brown sofa, his green
recliner, the old brass
lamp on the endtable,
but all adrift in
this strange, dim room
and his voice thins away
into the moan of the
refrigerator, the whine
of the electric clock.*

*No one is calling me.
Dead, my heart says,
dead, dead, dead, dead.
Eight years of it now.
But I just stand here,
for a while. What else
can I do? And in an hour,
at seven, the phone will
ring, to pull me on into
the day — Emma, calling
to find out if I have
lived through another
night, and she'll say,
"How did you sleep?"
And I'll say, "Well, not
so good." And then I'll
make myself some tea.*



Photo by Kosti Ruohaama, Courtesy Black Star

Marija

When Yugoslavia was being bartered
among three thrones
And the aproned women of Rijeka
plump in their babushkas
proffered fish and apples
in German, Italian
as the market required
This island of Krk nodded but once
and with a wave of hands
still looked after the small things

Marija lives in "My House"
She broke her leg when she was 78
A fall
She's better now
But still murmurs, "noga, noga"
when the woodstove smolders
at night
and cold Adriatic air crawls in
under the door and around the
worn window edges

She has seen so much
that she is beyond sharing it
and hugs three-year-old Stefan
when he comes to visit
And as she hugs
she cries

No one loves children
like the Slavs and the Jews

The days of easy smiles
and grapes in the garden trellice
were so short, soon gone
Long ago, hurtful to remember

She who wailed
when Jan, her man
made the monthly crossing
to Dubrovnik
Her people are of great passion
And flowers blossom in the arms
of he who leaves

So why didn't she die
when her heart was torn out
when those soldiers came
and took her son
for the Jugend, Jugend, Jugend
Everything about them was dark
The uniforms, the geometric movements
And that language
Impossible to whisper

A Volkswagen tears along the village road
An oxcart, loaded with sticks
The animal, plodding, prodded
by the swaying baba
Softly singing to the beast
Calling it, "my sweet"

Children bob home from school
chick-like
and a Gypsy mother
at a garden gate
pulls her straggling daughter away
And doesn't wonder
why, why
Like they do in America

A dark bundle of nuns rolls down
to the church
for vespers
Cackling like schoolgirls
In the last moments before silence
and ascending hands

Evening comes
Marija boils a pot of turnip and potato
on the woodstove
On the television a march is played
She takes the stoker and probes the ashes
for buried heat
Then looks out the window and over the bay
where the sky is changing color

In the morning Stefan will toddle in
Marija will hug his small warmth
for a longer moment
It was a terrible dream: roses in his arms

Robert T. Klose
Orono

thanks

in the worst of times, women
less than crazy, more than sane
have fine high times with women

less than lives, those times with women,
less than crazy, more than sane
sustain life. thus women

live who live with men. women
less than crazy, more than sane
with anger, turn to speech with women

entrusting them more than their mates. women,
less than crazy, more than sane,
pained with foreboding, confide in women

the child may not survive. as women
less than crazy, more than sane
they come and go, know from women

to grow withal, list to women
less than crazy, more than sane
in the worst of times. women
have fine high times with women.

Lee Sharkey
Skowhegan

Tunnels

vocal version
solo voice

Performance Notes: The first and closing non-English sections are constructed from letters, phonemes, and words derived from the letters of the word "tunnels." The middle section is a linguistic investigation of the first full stanza in English. The material sometimes ignites or releases an image or word, tangential flashes. Pronounce fragments of the word as if pronouncing "tunnels" with missing parts, i.e., say "els" as if saying "tunnels" without the "tunn."

Pronounce u as you
ut as suit
ust as boost
setun as seaton

Avoid unsubtle, over-theatrical interpretations. Except for Blue Moon, the sounds are spoken, not sung. Each dot equals a one-second silence.

T
S

...

T
N

Els.

Et
ust
un el.
En
ut len.

...

Els tun lute stu tel,
Eltun te L s nulet,

Let tul netus use nelt
luts luet,
En lunes sutle sunet.

..

Sluent un nel tenl,
lut lu sten tutul,
en el tul u sul.

Ten u tel us?
Nust ensu setun lenus?

..

O.K.

Tunnels.

and a passed age.
with store shun,
gave gills weight forth;
only to caps zinc oonjeep,
at eels tongue,
of cast shuck.

Enter orange.

I tick nun
then jaw kelp,
at cussing moons.

.....

Sing, *Blue Moon*.
because under the pelvic laces,
There are no fins!

Alone, the inverted Cone
with small openings
ran the instruments
gliding through the antediluvian
declining phase;
because
nest egg pulpits opposed to demand,
Said ready-made theory is USELESS.

...

that is why Snuffish thought
the world of land
Set apart for the avoidance of intimacy.

Bantam.

Paltry.

Potty

Are simply idiomatic words,
Under brimless coverings,
which set caps for picking at flaws.

.....

Ducking metallic salts
not found outside,
with radiating plates
at red flaps of flesh
hanging live in the water
covered with droll little animals,
he said,
"The fourteenth letter plus twenty-nine
and one half days equals its
mean density abbreviated M."

Newark!

The Union of South Africa,
Veer-oust - schnell - pod - brabble!!

When will a light touch
the two winged degenerates
infesting the escapement
as pigeons?

lide.
lapse.
equivocating.

Exist on the rough side of one's
tongue, extending into
the caterwaul.

Her glide-away organ
Succumbed to
binding shift-elapse;
which change-over Johnny
withheld with his *mutable* business.

of course all above board

..

yet.

with impassable trice,
and
spend welcome,
antiqued with whiffet balk
at nark quail stang;
which cock roose of
keep held.

Then

..

Making assent,
Ashen vast-dad?
Alas!
Only mum shallow
blessing suns.

...

Daystars?

..

Yes, passageways.

no deeper than a heavy dew.

...

E lu un nel tus.

Sulet en tu.

Ten u tel us?

..

Len uf

En

El un

ust

Et.

T

S

T

N

Els.

Ten u tel us?

No.

Stuart S. Smith
Baltimore, Md.

The Dream

(Painted by Henri Rousseau, 1910)

In the dream
three brown monkeys
and a robin
sit in an orange tree.
A young elephant watches
while a snake charmer plays.
Two female lions
lie baffled
at his feet
Far away in a robin's egg sky
a white winter moon burns.

In the left foreground
a nude woman reclines
on a ratan couch,
cushioned in brown velvet.
Her hair falls in amber plaits
over perfectly round white breasts
with golden nipples.
Giant pond lillies
on massive stalks
lean to her;
parakeet blue petals unfold
to expose rust centers
Other lillies bloom
in mellowed magenta.
One pink bud pushes
toward the grasp
of her extended hand.

Above her
in an umbrella tree
a blue bird of Paradise,
wings poised for flight,
looks back —
perhaps startled
by the presence of a pink garden hose
winding through the snake grass —
her dark eyes
focused on someone
not in the picture.

Maudann Warren
Portland



Doctor Heart

"Doctor Heart" is somewhat expanded from the original scenarios used by commedia actors. In places, I have suggested motivation, or emotional reaction, for example. Its form is most like an eye-witness account of a commedia produced in the 15th century at the wedding of the Bavarian Duke William. This expansion, which you can find in Oreglia's *The Commedia dell'Arte* (Hill and Wang), makes the production more accessible to modern theatre groups. The solid block of prose seems quite dense and rather tough to follow at first. I have found, however, that if it is broken up into paragraphs or scene units, some actors tend to use the scenario as a bible instead of a framework for improvisation. As it is written, endings and beginnings of scenes are flexible enough to suggest a continuous flow of action to the actors.

The role of the director in *Commedia dell'Arte* is analogous to that of a good editor. Like an editor, he can shape, excise, guide, criticize or praise, but the actors in ensemble are the primary source of energy and creation in commedia theatre. In today's theatre, for a director to relinquish creative control to the actors may be difficult, but it is necessary for the commedia.

J.P.



Seventeenth-century engraving of Pantalone by Jacques Callot.

CAST: Dr. Heart - a charlatan
Coviello - father of Lurette and Saccherina
Pantalone - a hypochondriac, father of Honestia
Lelio - in love with Honestia
Georgio - Lelio's friend
Lurette - Coviello's daughter, a sister to Saccherina
Puella - maid to Lurette and Saccherina
Saccherina - Coviello's daughter, sister to Lurette
Servette - maid to Honestia
Honestia - daughter of Pantalone
Zanni - Pantalone's servant

ACT I

Scene: A street with two houses.

Enter Lelio, reading. He sits. Enter Saccherina. She flirts with him. He ignores her. She tries harder. He starts reading aloud — it is a geometry text. She asks him what it is, he says love poetry, shuts the book and asks what she wants. She wants to know more about him, she says. He starts to teach her geometry. She pretends to be fascinated, gets bored, leaves. Enter Georgio. He asks Lelio to go fishing with him. Lelio ignores him. He asks Lelio if he wants to play some ball. Lelio ignores him. He asks what Lelio is doing. Lelio starts reading aloud from the geometry text. Georgio is dumbfounded. Lelio pretends excitement. He gets up and begins drawing geometric figures. A letter slips from the book. Georgio seizes it. They battle for it. Georgio reads the letter. It is a letter to Honestia offering marriage from Lelio. Lelio explains that it is the seventh letter he has written and that she will not answer them. Georgio points out that it is unaddressed and unsigned. Lelio says she ought to know who sent it anyway. Georgio offers to help him with a plan to get Honestia to answer. They exit. The letter drops out of the book.

Enter Zanni, complaining about Pantalone's stinginess. He has been sent to the Dr. to get free samples for Pantalone's illness. Enter Dr. Heart. Zanni continues to complain. Dr. Heart asks what the problem is, Zanni explains Pantalone has all kinds of aches and pains. Dr. Heart explains he is a doctor and that he can help. Pantalone calls for Zanni from inside house. Pantalone finally enters in a rage. He beats Zanni for not getting his medicine. Dr. Heart asks what the problem is. Pantalone explains that he is tired all the time and he gets hot and sweaty. Dr. Heart examines him and says he can cure him for a fee, but only if he will follow the

Dr.'s orders. He explains that the tiredness, heat and sweatiness comes from fast arm swinging and overuse of the vocal chords. He must always move slowly and speak softly. Pantalone eagerly agrees. He asks for pills. Dr. Heart gives him ten sourballs explaining that sourballs are for a sour disposition. There is one more thing, adds Dr. Heart. He must fall in love instantly. Pantalone thinks this is unusual but agrees. Dr. Heart says the cure won't work without it. Pantalone asks how to do that. Dr. Heart explains that he must find a suitable young woman and then let nature take its course. Any young woman will do. He must write her a letter. They argue over a fee. Pantalone ultimately offers his daughter — reasoning to himself that she will be one less mouth to feed. Dr. Heart says he will return in the morning for her. Dr. Heart exits. Zanni teases Pantalone, who can't raise his voice or swing his arms. Pantalone forces Zanni to stand so he can be beaten. Zanni discovers the letter. Pantalone snatches it and reads it. It is perfect. All he needs is a name. He tells Zanni to hold onto it while he thinks of someone. He exits. Enter Honestia and Servette. She sees Zanni with the letter. Zanni pretends to read it. She points out he can't read. She takes the letter — recognizes the handwriting and asks who it is to. Zanni says he hasn't decided yet. Enter Lurette and Saccherina. They read the letter. Each decides the letter is she after recognizing the handwriting. They both decide to accept and leave to prepare the wedding dress. Servette points out that Honestia knows the letter is to her. Honestia says she wants more than a letter — she wants to talk to him. All he does is write letters. She sighs in despair and exits. Zanni takes the letter to Pantalone.

ACT II

Pantalone enters with Zanni holding the letter. He is going to call on Coviello and see if his old neighbor can supply him with someone with whom he can fall in love. *Coviello enters.* Coviello is puzzled by Pantalone's behavior — soft speech, slow actions etc. Pantalone explains the Dr.'s advice. One of Coviello's daughters would be fine. He explains that he would do the same for Coviello if Coviello were ill. Besides that, he is willing to pay a small amount for the privilege of falling in love with one of them. Coviello agrees but asks which one. Pantalone isn't sure. Coviello commands both to step out. He explains the situation. They ask how rich he is. He responds - very. How old? Very. They both want to marry him. They fight. Pantalone urges them on. Lurette wins. Pantalone pays Coviello who exits counting the money. Saccherina goes inside sneering at Lurette. Lurette waits for Pantalone to say something. Pantalone explains the Dr.'s prescription. He asks her what to do first. She makes him do ridiculous things, explaining that he must do these things to show he has fallen in love. Pantalone falls exhausted. She exits, telling him to write her a love letter. He exits to put her name on the top of the letter he'd found.

Enter Georgio and Lelio. Georgio proposes various ideas to Lelio about how he can win his love. Georgio finds out that Lelio hasn't talked to her. He persuades Lelio to try that first. Georgio knocks. *Enter Honestia.* Georgio tries to get Lelio to talk to her. He fails. He tries to act as a go-between. Honestia is at first amused, then disgusted. She exits just as Lelio gets his courage up.

Enter Dr. Heart. He asks what the trouble is. Georgio explains. Dr. Heart says what he needs is practice in talking with young women. Any young woman will do. *Enter Lurette.* Dr. Heart asks her to help in a matter of life and death. She agrees. Dr. Heart instructs Lelio. Lelio parrots what the Dr. says but immediately falls into describing a geometry problem when Dr. Heart stops. As they encourage him, enter Pantalone. He overhears and becomes jealous. He demands that Lurette explain what is going on. Lurette explains that she was going to his house to explain what duties her new daughter must undertake. She explains that as Pantalone's wife, she must set strict rules for Honestia. Dr. Heart explains that Honestia won't be there long, as he is going to marry her and that soon she might be a grandmother. Lurette is outraged. She is too young to be a grandmother. She exits. *Enter Saccherina.* The Dr. asks her to help. She flirts with Lelio. Pantalone scratches out Lurette's name on the letter and writes in Saccherina. Lelio won't talk with her either. Pantalone offers her the same terms as Lurette. She ignores them and flirts with Georgio. Exit Georgio and Saccherina followed by Pantalone. The Dr. pronounces Lelio incurable and goes off to prepare for the wedding.

Enter Honestia and Servette. Lelio explains to Servette the Dr.'s wedding plan. Honestia faints into Lelio's arms. Lelio is confused. He drops her and exits. Curtain.

ACT III

Enter Zanni. He bemoans his fate as an underpaid servant of Pantalone — he is beaten daily to boot. *Enter Lelio.* He tries to find out from Zanni why Honestia fainted. Zanni proposes ridiculous reasons. Finally Zanni explains that Honestia is in love with him - Zanni pretends that idea is just as foolish as the others. Lelio doesn't believe it. *Enter Servette.* She berates Lelio for his cowardice and tells him that if he is brave he would tell Honestia that he loved her. Lelio says that he can't do it — he tried but it doesn't work. *Enter Dr. Heart.* He asks what the problem is and is told by Lelio. Dr. Heart asks him if he can explain his feelings in other terms. Lelio says he can use geometry. Dr. Heart prescribes geometry as the cure and asks for his fee. Lelio is broke. Dr. Heart says never mind, to consider it a gift because Dr. Heart is getting married. He describes Honestia. Servette is disgusted. Dr. Heart exits in high spirits. Lelio practices geometry to one side. Servette gets Zanni to agree to pretend to be Honestia. Zanni exits to get ready. *Servette calls Honestia, who enters.* Lelio addresses her in terms of geometry. They agree to run away and become congruent and exit. *Enter Coviello, Dr. Heart, Lurette, Saccherina, Puella and Pantalone.* Coviello will perform the marriage ceremony — it is to be a double wedding — Dr. Heart and Honestia, Lurette and Pantalone. Lurette announces she will not go through with it because she doesn't want to be a grandmother. Pantalone says he prefers Saccherina anyway. Pantalone exits briefly to get Honestia. *Enter Pantalone and Zanni in disguise.* Dr. Heart is revolted by Zanni. *Enter Georgio.* He announces Honestia's marriage to Lelio. Pantalone attacks him as a wife-stealer. He is restrained by Coviello. Lurette and Saccherina both make a play for Georgio. He says he prefers to remain single if that is his choice. Dr. Heart offers to take both. They discover he isn't rich and refuse. *Enter Honestia and Lelio, wedded.* Pantalone is furious because he will have to pay the Dr., Coviello is furious because he still has his two daughters.

CURTAIN

John Potter
Camden

Samuel Sewall Sails for Home

(Two sonnets from a sonnet sequence)

Editors' Note: Samuel Sewall (1652-1730) was a contemporary of the Mathers and, among other things, a merchant skipper. His 56-year Diary is rich in social observation of early New England.

"As weary Pilgram. . .
Blesses himself to think upon
his dangers past and travailles done. . ."
(Anne Bradstreet: Longing for Heaven)

XII

To Mrs Martha Oakes

"Words. . . written only ink'd paper bee."

Madam, I write to persuade you
to be sensible: for New England
is a cleaner country than
ever you were in before. To
d disdain it filthy is a sort
of Blasphemy which, as proceeds
from your mouth, must needs
defile you. I write this not
to upbraid, but to admonish you
and pray God commands you
freedom from provocations. But eyes
should show you, your heart know, true
joy in what you would despise.

XV

Becalmed on the Kennebeck

"And in God's Garden saw a Golden Tree."

Beclamed. I go ashore on
the Small Point side. A settlement,
rotted down, had signed its intent
with apple trees. All buildings gone.
Loon birds, silent, dive to meet
the flooding tide. All about me
faithful, abandoned, fruitful trees
abide. Twisted brier, berries, defeat
each other as they fight to rise.
Lost apples fruitfull still - *Laus Deo!*
Man and not the tree denies
Paradise. A butterfly slowly
unfolds. From rank leaves passion flies,
a greedy, gorging worm surprised.

Robert M. Chute
Freeport

House Painting

*In the heat of midday,
the green shadows, dark and swaying,
become paradise.
Someday one of the trees
will call me over for a conversation
when my mind is closer to roots
reaching the center of things.*

*All the clapboards have been in touch
with nobody knows how many winters
Today in the midsummer sun
the paint dries quickly
giving each wall a new viewpoint
but never hiding what was beneath.*

*Our neighbor from across the road
comes to talk about deer, his friend's dog
and housepainting. His memories are his
alone and he is driving in the motor pool
across occupied Germany, dreaming of jet black hair,
the Alps, and some love, remote,
rising every few months.
My memories, too, are already with me.
Down the road
new ones grasp, take hold
and are born.*

Stuart Kestenbaum
Portland

Modern Romance

*At one a.m. a pang of loving comes;
The hour you wake and find yourself alone.
You grit your teeth, with elegance you dine:
French onion soup and California wine.
Post-coital snack for two a meal for one'
The recipe from Cosmo newly-tried.
On memories and Ruby Cabernet
Your belly swells until you're satisfied.*

*Too rushed to cook, you find forgotten steak:
Your mother guaranteed it would impress.
But knowing how he wolfed it down and left,
It only brings intestinal distress.
You're sick all night, for days you feel the burn:
Perhaps the steak was finally too old.
You'd eat it still, on principle alone:
In your house, nothing's simply left to mold.*

*Your shelves stripped bare, it's time to venture forth;
At Heartland the selection overwhelms.
You ply your cart until there's no more room:
Convenience foods to heat up and consume.
Enough good home cooking for awhile:
A can of everything to get you by.
Fresh tastes to tempt a budding appetite.
Try one by one and find the one that's right.*

Jennifer Lyons
Portland

The Skywriter's Wife's

Lament

*We can't see for the clouds
and he can't for being in the smoke
but he goes up anyway —
says he feels it, in his gut like,
when he levels out of a good round o
or noses up a t.*

*If only he'd wait for it to clear
so we could see
and make it something we know,
Shop Klein's, or Pepsi Cola,
we'd wait for him to dot the i.*

*But as it is it scares me —
I keep thinking someday he won't come back
(he wouldn't either, if his tanks were bigger).*

*Days and days he lands, his tanks all blown;
I don't know what he does:
gibberish, his name,
he calls it praise!*

Sylvester Pollet
East Holden

50 Is

*as lonely as
the Mooselookmeguntic River*

Jo McDougall
Fayetteville, Arkansas

KENNEBEC: A Portfolio of Maine Writing

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publication. Because of the amount and
quality of writing, this issue is expanded
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