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Harold J. DeBey

Harold J. DeBey, associate editor of San José Studies and for three decades a professor of chemistry at San Jose State University, died of pancreatic cancer May 29, 1988, at the age of 64. Although he was an authority on amino acids, his breadth of learning made him a valuable editor for articles in other fields, both scientific and non-scientific.

As provost of New College for eight of its 11 years' existence as an alternate B.A. program at San Jose State University, he taught classes in nutrition and jazz, as well as in chemistry. His long interest in education had earlier led him to serve as assistant dean of graduate studies and to chair the Academic Senate, and later marked his service as a member of the Board of General Studies before his retirement in 1986. He deplored the separation of the humanities, arts, social sciences, and sciences from one another and worked all his academic career for a coherent integration of knowledge at the undergraduate level. His last publication, "The Folly of the Body," which appeared in the Spring, 1987, issue well illustrated the kind of teaching that he did in clearly presenting difficult material in an engaging manner.

Harold DeBey was born in Kansas but went to Colorado State College at Greeley for his baccalaureate, which he received in 1947. Following receipt of a Master's in chemistry from the University of Wisconsin in 1951, he was granted a doctorate from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1957, the year that he came to this university. He is survived by his mother, Gertie DeBey; his brother, Cecil DeBey; and his sister, Alta Gilberson.

Hal DeBey's ideals were to foster excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service to the university. He carried them out with exemplary fidelity. He had a combination of granite-like integrity, willingness to give selfless service, compassion for troubled people, and breadth of interests and knowledge that made him both a fine model and a fine companion. We do and will continue to miss him very much. We extend our deepest sympathy to his family.
Pictures in Poetry: Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn”

Eva T. H. Brann

Painting is poetry keeping silent; poetry is a talking picture.

This very ancient saying, attributed by Plutarch to the Greek poet Simonides, bears within it the seeds of a long critical tradition. That a painting should say something and that poetry should depict something is arguably the crux of the Western representational, mimetic mode.

Word and picture are here in an apparently mutual relation, “sister arts,” in Dryden’s words. Yet, since it is a poet who is making the observation, he puts it in terms of silence and speech, giving sound, the poet’s element, a certain preeminence over sight, the painter’s sense. Some half-millennium later Horace in *Art of Poetry* coined the phrase *Ut pictura poesis*, “poetry is like a picture.” It is this simile, the literary half of the Simonidean metaphor, which enters the critical vocabulary as the watchword for the long-prevailing doctrine of pictorial poetry.

Behind this doctrine stands an oddly contradictory coupling of assumptions, namely that while poetry is the most serious of the arts, sight is the greatest of the senses. These assumptions are not grandly challenged until the 18th century, when Lessing in *Laocoon* directly criticizes Simonides’ saying on the grounds that the visual arts and poetry differ not only in the manner but in the object of their imitation. The visual arts depict the pregnant moment while poetry tells of developing action; they have different temporalities. One might argue that by enforcing such specialization, Lessing is in fact preparing that rejection of the representational tradition itself which dominates the critical theory of our century. For how can either art form imitate the world if the one is debarred from telling a story and the other from depicting a shape?
The *Ut pictura poesis* tradition includes a very old, special, and fascinating strain. If poetry is to be like a picture then, by a natural transition, it might very appropriately be about a picture. That is to say, the descriptive power of words, their magical capacity for evoking visual images, might well be applied to visions which are themselves artful, namely to paintings and sculptures. Indeed, there is no purer way of insuring that poetry will be strictly picture-like than to make it speak about a picture.

Such descriptions of visual works in poetry are nowadays called "iconic." The source of this term is a writer of the second century, Philostratus the Elder, who (along with several others) wrote "images," *eikones* or "icons" in Greek, prose pieces describing with the utmost pictorial vividness real or imaginary works of graphic art, images of images as it were. These descriptions were meant to return the compliment of the painters who had, of course, painted literary themes all along: Homer's *Odyssey*, for example, had begun to be illustrated on pottery in the eighth century B.C. and was still the subject of wall paintings in Roman times. Ben Jonson translates a dictum of Philostratus showing the spirit of this enterprise: "Whosoever loves not pictures is injurious to Truth and all the wisdom of Poetry."

This direct way of realizing the *Ut pictura poesis* principle may be a minor strain in the tradition, but it has at least four great instances. One, coeval with poetry itself, occurs in one of Homer's descriptive passages, the one in Book XVIII of the *Iliad* depicting the shield made for Achilles by the divine metal-smith Hephaestus. What Achilles carries before him as he leaps onto his final field of battle is quite simply the world—heaven, sea, land, war, peace. For all that is depicted upon the shield by means of precious inlays. There is no subsequent iconic passage of equal grandeur.

A second famous ancient case is the only antique full-length pastoral novel, *Daphnis and Chloe* (of uncertain date). Longus wrote it after having seen in the grove of the Nymphs "a most beautiful sight, a painted image," which he so admired that he was seized by a desire to write in response to the painting" (*antigrapsai tei grammei*—significantly the Greek words for writing and a painting are the same—both are "graphic"). So he searched out an interpreter of the visual work and set about writing his four books of woodland romance, in prose to be sure, but poetic in spirit.

A third, medieval, case of iconic poetry is the description of the three bas-reliefs showing scenes of humility in Canto X of Dante's *Purgatory*. He refers to these reliefs as "visible speech," thereby giving force to the whole of Simonides' metaphor: Because the pictures speak silently through sight, the poem can render them visible through speech. It has been pointed out that the presence of iconic poetry exclusively in
Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
    Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
    A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
    Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
    What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
    What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
    Are sweeter: therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
    Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
    Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
    Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
    For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
    Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unweary'd,
    For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
    For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
    All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
    A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.
Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou are desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty;"—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

John Keats
Ode on a Grecian Urn
Purgatory—it occurs in no other region—has remarkable significance; for it marks Purgatory as a place without true nature or present reality, where all is either past or future, either memory or imagination: the place of images *par excellence* (De Sanctis in Hagstrum, 1958).

III

Finally, a modern, indeed a Romantic poem, Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn” of 1819, is both as canonical and as original a case of the “iconic” genre as one might hope to find. Keats’ urn combines elements from real marble vases, such as that of Sosibos in the Louvre which Keats had seen in drawings by Piranese, with the front-and-back picture panel arrangement common in classical Attic pottery (Bowra, 1950). Thus Keats produces an “image,” indeed an image of an image, in the Philostratan tradition. It is likely that he was aware, if not of this sub-genre specifically, then at least of the lively *Ut pictura poesis* debate of his time.

He goes even further. He adds an epigram, as it were. The urn, “a friend of man,” addresses us with oracular speech: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty.” An epigram is a metric inscription affixed to a picture or statue or grave monument by way of breaking through the muteness of the images to make them “speaking pictures”; often the utterance is in the first person—the work itself speaks. The epigrammatic tradition goes back to the Archaic period in Greece. In reviving this ancient practice, evidently quite deliberately (Spitzer, 1962), Keats adds a wonderful complication: In the outer stanzas the urn as a whole, as an incarnate *memento mori*, is personally addressed, and it in turn responds in *propria persona*. In the three inside stanzas it becomes a quiet bearer of obstinately mute “speaking pictures” which at first seem to rebuff the poet’s wildly passionate questioning with their silent frozen messages.

The silence of those middle scenes is a betwixt-and-between silence. Later on, painting will be valued for its principled speechlessness. Ortega y Gasset makes explicit the post-Romantic view:

All the marvelousness of painting rests on its dual condition: its will to express and its resolve to stay silent... Like a spring it depresses itself in its muteness in order to be able to bounce back with the suggestion of ineffable things.

On the other hand, the antique urn itself, that “Sylvan historian,” depicts its scenes with that silently articulate classical clarity, a sharp vividness, whose rhetorical counterpart (called *enargeia*) was greatly valued in the very tradition which thought of speech as highly visual; for example Plutarch praises Thucydides, who is like the urn a historian, for the vivid clarity, the *enargeia* of his descriptions.
Keats sees in the mute stasis of the urn’s pictures neither only the serene clarity of antiquity, nor only the tense ineffability of modernity, but a quality of silence which, for a moment, bridges these two. It is the epitome of Romanticism, namely the silence of a rapture fixed in endless prolongation, which is depicted in the pale marble painting of the ever-unconsummated love chase on the front panel of the vase. Can one imagine a better device for expressing the Romantic coalescence of “forever” and “not yet,” of clear shape and misty longing, than that of “iconic” poetry, the translation into moving speech of a frozen visual moment?

There is yet another, even deeper facet of Romanticism which Keats’ “icon” serves to convey. It is the broaching of the boundaries between art and life. That breakthrough comes when the view shifts to the back, where a sacrifice is depicted. The poet wanders off the vase to view and to muse about the empty little city with its vacant acropolis, the city which the celebrants had left one morning long ago for the altar in the woods, only to be caught in a static enchantment forever. Any romantic wanderer about an antique site, one where the place is very much present but the people very much gone, will be familiar with Keats’ romantic sense: They must be somewhere!

IV

One might say that the Ut pictura poesis tradition has a complex culmination in the ode: Here is a poem addressing an urn and describing the pictures upon it, pictures which in turn induce visions of a world behind them; moreover, in the end the urn itself gives voice and responds to the poet’s questioning—responds delphically, though not, as some claim, vapidly.

What the urn says, presumably as the moral to what it shows, is, to be sure, not original. The association of beauty and truth comes through Shaftsbury into Akenside’s famous poem-essay of 1744, The Pleasures of the Imagination; and their identity, which is implied in Keats’ two converses, is to be found in Schelling’s aesthetic philosophy. Nonetheless, the urn’s oracle is very much Keats’ own answer to certain doubts about what we would call the “reality” of the imagination.

Two years before the writing of the ode, on November 22, 1817, Keats had written to his friend Benjamin Bailey in order to “end all your troubles as to that of your momentary start about the authenticity of the imagination.” (Forman, 1952) “What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth,” Keats advises him, “whether it existed before or not,” for all the imaginative passions are “creative of essential Beauty.” “The imagination may be compared to Adam’s dream. [The reference is to Paradise Lost.]—He awoke and found it truth.” So the first member of the
epigram, "Beauty is Truth," encapsulates this poet's long-standing answer to the question: What existence is behind the images of the imagination? It is that passionate imagining itself bestows existence.

The converse member, "truth is beauty," is the poet's answer to the question: Is meaning ultimately in visions or in thoughts? In the same letter, in the context of his "favorite speculation," Keats raises a problem which was indeed his lifelong preoccupation: Whether the way to truth can possibly be by "consecutive reasoning," that is, by thought and philosophy, or whether, as the poet is inclined to think, it is through the sensory imagination. The urn's dictum that truth is beauty is a concise resolution, fitting its visible source. It is in the Philostratan tradition which allies pictures and truth. Truth is essentially in imaginative vision, not in words. The crown of this Romantic artfulness is that this reflection comes from the urn, after all, not in the form of a properly engraved epigram but emanates, an unspoken truth, from the vision of the vase itself.

So the convertibility of beauty and truth, far from being an accident of vapid phrase-making, serves as a resting point for Keats' passionate poetic speculation: The objects "seized" by the imagination are actual, and what is ultimately actual has a visual character, "—that is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know," adds the poet, seconding the vase. Here the modest old critical doctrine of *Ut pictura poesis*, that poetry is essentially visualizable, has been elevated to a grand piece of metaphysics. Truthful words, that is to say, poetic words, are essentially about significant visions, "silent forms," such as can "tease us out of thought/As doth eternity." For in eternity, in the "empyreal hereafter," Keats intimates, there are to be found the pre-existent prototypes of the visionary imagination—"another favorite speculation of mine."

The "Ode on a Grecian Urn" marks the grand climax of the iconic technique; for its enabling doctrine, that "poetry is like a picture," comes to an end when imitation, mimesis, no longer drives either the visual or the poetic arts. And that happens from the Romantic period onward, when non-mimetic theories of the imagination begin to gain currency. The sisters part; music, if any, is the new preferred sibling to literature. Indeed the typical iconic *tour de force* of our century is the verbal rendition of real or invented musical compositions, such as is found in the novels of Proust or Mann. What painters peculiarly value in painting is now no longer its visual communicativeness, its silent poetry, but its silence simply:

I confess my predilection for the silent arts ... Words are indiscreet; they break in on your tranquility, solicit your attention, arouse discussion. (Delacroix.)
And what poets value in painting is the same; when they write about painting it is not to describe it but to express its silence:

Where the poet was lucky his poem will speak the silence of painting; it too will say nothing more than: It is so, it is as it is.
(Nemerov.)

Thus, after nearly two and a half millennia, language and visual imagining draw apart; for their mutuality depended on the understanding that visual arts depict something, the very thing the poetic arts describe. And that is just what neither artists or critics any longer take for granted.

Works Cited

FIFTEEN years old is a very uncertain and confused age. I see it in my son. He is always troubled, always absent-minded, as if he lived with his head in the clouds. Some days he sits in front of the television without turning it on and stays there for hours. I haven't the faintest idea of what he is thinking, or what he imagines he is seeing on that black, imageless screen. I am worried about him, and I think I have every reason to be. I never know what tack to take with him, because every time I try to talk to him, his answers show he really isn't paying attention. If he doesn't care for the topic of conversation, he gets nervous and shuts himself up in his room, and I don't see him again until morning when he leaves for school.

I have spoken to his friends' parents and it seems to me that they find themselves in the same situation, more or less, with their children. There is the same incomprehension, the same detachment and indifference that exist between me and my son. I don't understand what these kids have in their heads. I have even tried to eavesdrop on them when they are together and I have discovered that they use a lot of obscenities, but I haven't heard a real, coherent conversation from them. In a word, they can't even talk among themselves.

I am worried, above all, about the void in which they live. I am worried that my son looks at the blank television, that he has no dialogue with anyone; I am worried about his lack of interests and enthusiasm, his silences. He doesn't read newspapers, doesn't go to the movies, doesn't go dancing. I was very different, but of course today everything has changed. Someone has suggested that I try slapping him, but I am opposed to corporal punishment, I am a modern parent, and I don't feel I should hit my son because he looks at the blank television or because there is no dialogue between us. This is not to mention that he is already over a foot taller than I am, and I wouldn't want to give him the idea of putting his hands on me, one never knows.

It was just a little while ago that I told him, Find yourself a hobby, some-
thing to amuse you, or a game, like tennis or soccer or pole-vaulting—in short, a diverting sport that will be good for your health. I would even rather see him shooting pool than doing nothing, but he started laughing when I mentioned it, as if I had said something strange and ridiculous. If you don’t like shooting pool, why not try bowling, skateboard, frisbee? In this way I showed him that I am more up-to-date than he thinks and that it really isn’t a laughing matter. I know that when a boy takes a liking to a game, even if he neglects school, at least his mind is occupied with something and he isn’t running worse risks. I am thinking of drugs, naturally. Today drugs are the nightmare of all parents, just as venereal disease once was. Syphilis can now be cured, but it seems that nothing can be done about that plague, drugs.

A month has passed since my son asked me to buy him a motorcycle, a Lambretta. At first I was surprised, but I said to myself better the Lambretta than drugs. I asked him a few questions about it, cautiously, to avoid irritating him. I recalled that some years ago a cousin of mine had bought a motorcycle for his son, who later took off and was never seen again. Every so often he sends a postcard—from Baden-Baden, Hamburg, Marseilles, Amsterdam—and everything ends there. All those years of affection down the drain. A month ago a card arrived from Helsinki. What can he be doing in Helsinki? I wouldn’t want anything like this to happen to my son, I said to myself, and so I bought him a used Lambretta, with a rather run-down engine that hadn’t been properly overhauled. He can’t get very far with this, I thought.

But he didn’t have the slightest intention of running away from home. In fact, ever since I bought him the motorcycle, you could say that he has overcome his disgust for talking to me, and once in a while he addresses a few words in my direction. He has even explained why he needed the Lambretta: he told me that he uses it in a game he plays with his friend. Thank goodness, I said to myself: if he has finally taken a liking to a game, he will calm down. Maybe he will change this negative attitude, maybe he will be more serene, maybe he will eventually let me in on his secrets, as fathers and sons used to do with one another.

One night he came home all sweaty with a tear in his jacket. He sat down in front of me and said that he had so much fun he thought he would go out of his mind. Thus I have come to know what his game consists of. He explained to me that it requires two players: one drives the Lambretta; the other directs the game. They drive down the narrow streets near the Campo dei Fiori where there are never any police, and they snatch the handbags of women who walk through that neighborhood. In the beginning, they got some practice by stealing bags from old ladies who couldn’t run, and hence the risk was reduced to a minimum. After a month of practice, they pounced on the tourists, preferably foreign tourists.
I asked him what they did with the handbags and he explained that they return them by mail when they find an address among the papers; otherwise they throw them in the Tiber. He says that they have mailed one to Minneapolis in the United States, and others to Canada, Brazil, and even to Australia and Japan. And the money, what did they do with the money? We keep that, he answered; if we didn’t, the game would lose all its meaning and we wouldn’t be amused anymore. Besides, the money pays for expenses—gas for the Lambretta, repairs, the postage needed to send the handbags to their rightful owners, and so on. Keep in mind, he added, that we often find foreign currency and we lose a lot with black-market exchanges.

The women whose bags are stolen often start screaming and chasing after us and this is very exciting, my son told me. When we finally reach a safe place far away from the victim, we burst out laughing and then we go to the pizzeria or the movies. My friend and I always divide the money in half; we divide the expenses in half too. We take turns driving and the one who sits behind the driver must choose the victim and snatch her handbag: this is the rule of the game. In a word, it seems that they are having a fine time, lucky them.

Ever since my son started playing the purse-snatching game, he has improved a great deal. In the morning he goes to school, returns home at 1:30, does his homework, and then goes out with the Lambretta. Sometimes he brings his friend home with him and they do their homework together before going out. At other times it is my son who goes to his friend’s house especially when they have homework in mathematics because the boy’s father is an engineer and he helps them do the equivalences and equations and solve the word problems. I myself don’t understand mathematics, but I gladly listen to the poetry they must learn by heart—Pascoli’s “Valentino” (“Oh! Valentino, new-clothed like the hawthorn buds!”), D’Annunzio’s “Shepherds of Abruzzo” (“September is here. Let us go; it is time to migrate”), Leopardi’s “The Infinite” (“This solitary hill was always dear to me”)—all very beautiful poems. I have always liked poetry and I remember much from my own schooldays, so I can help them recite without even looking at the book.

My son often comes home very late at night, when I am already in bed, but if he returns early, we sit in front of the television and watch a program together, and when it’s over, we exchange our opinions of it. The times when he stayed for hours before the blank screen are long gone. If there is nothing interesting on television, he tells me about the purse-snatching game, always with great enthusiasm. One night he told me that he and his friend had managed to snatch five bags. Every so often I give him some recommendations because I am always afraid that during their getaways down those congested little streets, they might fall or collide with someone. I made him promise me that they will pay the insurance
with the next snatch. They told me they won't do anything else with it. They are splendid boys. Give them a little time, and they'll even be as happy and carefree as they should be at their age.

The other night they came home happier than usual and announced that they bought a Kawasaki. I had to go down into the courtyard to see it. They told me to calm down, they had already arranged everything, including the insurance and the registration. I myself will never get on a Kawasaki, but I must admit that it is undoubtedly a beautiful object.
Ours incinerator for solid waste cost more than $20,000 a decade ago, when the hospital was built. One week after the opening, it exploded. All that remained was a million fragments, as if someone had tossed a stick of dynamite into the trash. Was it sabotage? That was my first thought. The police immediately began an investigation, but it was closed after a month of making absolutely no progress. Since then a requisition for a new incinerator has moved at a snail’s pace from one office to another in the Department of Health. The appropriation to purchase this necessary appliance has already been approved three times, but the disputes among the firms who bid for the contract have blocked the purchase on each occasion. Four months ago a firm that was excluded from the bidding objected to the result of the last round, maintaining that the approved model was technically obsolete and uneconomical. It took more than two months to study the report prepared by an engineer of this firm, a captious and prolix document of more than 400 typewritten pages. In the end, the engineers from the Department of Health had conflicting opinions on the worth of the approved model, and since the period when the funds were available had expired in the meantime, it was necessary to file a new requisition.

A new incinerator would be the most rational solution, the one that is normally adopted by every hospital in the world. Unfortunately, the incinerators installed in the state hospitals of our country all have the same defect: they explode. In recent years, more than 50 have exploded, although the newspapers have been somewhat reticent on this subject.

A hospital cannot go on without an incinerator, so many have been closed. Besides, the state hospitals are all experiencing financial crises at this time, and the people who have the means prefer to send their sick to the hospitals of the huge chain, European Mafia Hospitality Inc. These hospitals have the latest medical equipment, and they have secured the best doctors, the great medical and surgical specialists. The nuns who work as nurses in the hospitals of European Mafia Hospitality Inc. are
highly skilled, efficient, and very gentle with the patients, while our male and female nurses behave with incredible rudeness. Sometimes our male nurses strike the patients; such an incident happened a few days ago in my hospital, in the ward reserved for patients with respiratory ailments. Someone has suggested that the offending nurses are subversives sent to infiltrate the staff because of the competition for the incinerator contract.

As director of the hospital I also have responsibility for its hygiene, naturally. I had managed to come to an agreement with a private firm who would remove the trash twice a day. The service was rather poor, and the cost was exorbitant: it cut deeply into the budget of a hospital that was already on the brink of bankruptcy. I don’t want to talk at length about the trash produced by a hospital, but everyone knows that it starts with the kitchen and ends with the operating rooms. It is easy to imagine the kinds of trash that comes out of the latter: a quantity of intestinal appendices, first of all, then legs, arms, and other parts of the human body. It was learned that the firm who removed the trash used it; that is to say, this firm dried the trash, then ground it up, and sold the end product as feed for poultry. As a result, people in this area were eating chickens and turkeys raised on the appendices, legs, and arms of my patients. The poultry was even eaten here in the hospital.

This discovery gave rise to a small scandal which, however, had to be suppressed because the mayor had been implicated. Trash removal is one of the dirtiest businesses there is—figuratively as well as literally. All this happened a month ago, and I still haven’t found another firm who is equipped to remove our trash. All the same, necessity has suggested a solution that seems to me rather convenient and, above all, less costly. This is what I want to talk about, because it may be helpful to other hospitals, for example, who find themselves in the same situation as the one which I direct.

My hospital—I say “my hospital” as I say “my lawyer,” not in a possessive sense—is located on the top of a hill a few miles from the city. This is an almost artificial city which rose around a tiny ancient nucleus in the boom years. It seems made of cardboard. The houses were built too fast and hence chaotically, and shoddy materials were used. The new section of the city has already deteriorated more than the ancient center, which, in contrast, holds up very well, its stone walls in full view. Its pavements are a little disjointed, but they endure wear and tear better than the thin layer of asphalt on the new streets. Even my hospital seems made of cardboard.

Exactly opposite the hill on which my hospital stands is another, slightly higher hill with an old castle that has been turned into a museum for tourists. In the sky over this castle vultures fly about at a great height. Every so often they dive, then rise, and resume flying in broad circles.
This happens every day, in every season, or more precisely, ever since the castle has stood there. It was built around the beginning of the 11th century. The people in the area relate that many centuries ago the prince who lived in the castle used to leave his victims' corpses in the courtyard to feed the vultures. Since that time these birds have bequeathed the custom of flying over the castle to one generation after another, expecting that the prince would leave more corpses at their disposal. These predatory birds are stupid creatures of habit.

Everyone knows that vultures are attracted by blood, by raw meat. One day the flock descended to the courtyard of the hospital when meat for the kitchen was being unloaded from the butcher's truck. In a few minutes, while the delivery men had stopped in the kitchen to drink a glass of wine, those repulsive beasts had picked clean an entire calf and several plucked turkeys. It was this episode, which I witnessed with my own eyes, that suggested the way to rid myself of the trash from the hospital.

One must keep in mind that these birds obviously suffered from a centuries-old hunger that was also bequeathed from generation to generation, and I intended to take advantage of it. I ordered a large plastic container full of trash to be carried to the center of the courtyard on the following morning, at six o'clock. There were different kinds of trash in the containers: some of it came from the kitchen, the remainder from the operating rooms. I stood at a window and glanced at the clock. Within three minutes the vultures noticed the prey and dove headlong to the courtyard. The flock was composed of 12 vultures; I counted them. In another four minutes the birds had gulped down with an indescribable voracity all the trash that I had the housekeeping department put into the container, including bandages, plaster casts, and a great mass of bones, those very tiny ones. As soon as the vultures were finished, they resumed their flight and continued whirling in the sky with cries that I imagined were due to their satisfaction. They were so full of food that it seemed difficult for them to rise from the ground.

I repeated the experiment every morning during the following week. My fear was that the vultures would be satiated from the trash they had gorged the previous days and would eat less frequently or in fact disdain to descend to the prey that I diligently offered them day after day. But their voracity seemed almost to grow daily. Moreover, the flock increased very quickly: it rose from 12 to 20 birds, then to 24, and remained stable at this number. In a single week I managed to get rid of the trash that had accumulated in the basement of the hospital and was beginning to give off a horrible odor. I immediately fired the workers I had engaged to dig a deep ditch in the garden, and from that day on, I had housekeeping carry the trash to the center of the courtyard every morning at six. So far the vultures have never missed their appointment.
In the beginning there were, I confess, some drawbacks. Although the patients were prohibited from leaving the hospital before seven in the morning, a young accountant who had been admitted to the infectious disease ward happened to go down to the courtyard before the vultures' arrival. He had one of his arms in a sling, and it was dressed with a bandage that displayed a large stain of coagulated blood. The vultures hurled themselves on the poor man and literally tore the flesh from his arm. To calm him down I had to explain that we were going to amputate it anyway because of gangrene. But this incident, as well as the risk that similar incidents might occur again, has suggested a solution that I now consider definitive—especially since the requisition for the new incinerator continues its journey from office to office in the Department of Health and no one knows whether it will ever arrive at its destination.

I have had a special crane devised, and for the past few days, the trash has been unloaded on an upper level of the hospital rather than in the courtyard. In this way, I have also put an end to the complaints of the patients who are wakened at dawn by the vultures' squawking. I must say that housekeeping has been so punctual and efficient, so functional, that I am writing a brief account intended for other hospitals who are having problems with trash removal. With the help of the rapacious ones, we might even be able to compete with European Mafia Hospitality Inc.

I have noticed that after so many centuries, the vultures have finally stopped whirling over the castle. If I look up, I constantly see a pack of these birds flying at a dizzying height in broad circles whose center is my hospital. The patients never talk about the vultures, nor do they ask where their appendices or the limbs that are amputated in the operating rooms wind up. Besides, they have good reason to be so unconcerned: whether these things are reduced to ashes or serve as feed for poultry or prey for vultures makes no difference to them.
THE lowlands of Mexico's western coast fall within the shaded crosshatching of the *tierra caliente* region. In this climate zone, temperatures range from genial to sultry, rainfall is frequent and copious in the summer, and the vegetation is adapted to long periods of aridity. Which of the following is *not* a likely description of the area?

a. Archipelagos of dense thicket and coconut palm swell above the bronze-green savannahs of the plain.
b. Inland, beyond the coastal towns cooled by fountains of purple bougainvillea, are dry forests of cacti, leguminous acacia, and tangled thorn.
c. Sea breezes mitigate the oppressive temperatures of the low latitudes, inducing languor and sensual susceptivity in inhabitants and casual visitors alike.
d. The hills beyond the narrow plain are overlaid with dense, coniferous forests much like those certain visitors recall in Seattle in 1976.

2. Acapulco is

a. the most economical destination in the faculty club's vacation package.
b. a Spanish word for "second chance."
c. a temporary refuge for those who want change without alteration.

3. At her usual rate of travel, Frances takes an average of two minutes to walk one block down the Avenida Costera Miguel Aleman. Gilbert, always more impatient than Frances, covers a block in a minute and a half. At the moment, seven blocks lie between Frances and Gilbert. How much longer will it be before Frances and Gilbert meet? (And, more importantly, what will happen when they do?)

a. At the end of six minutes, feeling fully the inadequacy of her response, Frances will exclaim, "It is you?"
b. Gilbert will reduce the time to 5½ minutes by recognizing her across the last hundred yards and sprinting to her, his smile easy with goodwill and charmed by the coincidence of their meeting, his expression uncomplicated by any twist of remorse.
c. Frances will spot him before he sees her and, panicked, duck into a leather goods shop, thus postponing the longed-for meeting for another three years (when it will then take place at an MLA convention in Los Angeles).

4. What is wrong with the sentence: “Yes, it’s me.”
   a. A subject complement must always be in the subjective case.
   b. It leaves the conversation suspended.
   c. When two people have not met in eight years, it is incorrect to assume that me has the same meaning for both.

5. At the age of 20, Frances married her English literature professor, who was the age that she is now. She has spent twice as many years divorced from Gilbert as she once spent married to him. Gilbert and his next wife Becky, whom he is now divorcing, have a son whose age is just two years less than the length of Frances’s separation from Gilbert and who is one-sixth the age of Gilbert when he divorced Frances. Also, the son’s age added to Frances’s age at the time of her marriage is equal to Becky’s age now. How long were Frances and Gilbert married?
   a. Four years almost exactly, from the wedding in November, 1973, (which Frances’s mother tearfully refused to attend) to the final decree in December, 1977 (financed by a loan from Frances’s grimly vindicated father).
   b. Three years, if the true final date is accepted as August, 1979, when Frances discovered Gilbert’s adultery with his student Becky.
   c. Twelve years, if marriage is the state in which one person remains connected to another, regardless of legal redefinitions, absence, and time.

6. With whom is “Cry Me a River” identified?

7. The concept that man and woman were originally a single creature which, divided, ceaselessly seeks its other half in order to become whole was proposed by
   a. Plato in the third century B.C.
   b. Woman’s Home Companion in 1946.

8. Read the following selection and choose the best title for it.
In 1971 Frances Horton burst radiantly into the World with the enthusiasm of a young peach tree in bud. She had an indefinite but exultant sense of destiny to which Northwestern University was to be the means. With a gravity innocent of self-mockery, she copied the great thoughts of the Occident and Orient in her spiky, avid handwriting and was torn between becoming a saint or an artist. Her fragile blond dauntlessness stirred up a tender nostalgia in Associate Professor Michaud who became her patron and convinced her that to realize herself, she
must distinguish herself as an undergraduate in literature, master the German language and French wines, improve her tennis sufficiently to play doubles with him, learn how to talk with slightly jaded poise to faculty members much older than herself, and become sexually adept. In time, she accomplished all these goals and was presented with her destiny by Professor Michaud, though she sometimes wondered if this was what she had once felt coming to flower.

a. "You're Only Young Once."

b. "Mrs. Gilbert Michaud."

c. "Man's Best Friend."

9. Kittens are to cats as idealistic co-eds are to

a. husbands.

b. clay on a wheel.

c. 32-year-old women who have twice been denied tenure.

10. The first time Gilbert made love to Frances, they were drunk on the French wine with which he was educating her palate. He confided that, as a scholarship boy in a rock-and-moss Eastern university, he’d been merely tolerated. It had been made clear to him that his manners, his clothes, and his pretensions to culture were all unsuccessful imitations of the right and authentic ones. "Oh," cried Frances, for whom his style and decrees had become the tests of her own, "if they could only see what you’ve become now!"

From this episode, it may be deduced that the relationship between Frances and Gilbert most closely paralleled the relationship between

a. Daisy Buchanan and Jay Gatsby.

b. Trilby and Svengali.

c. Princess Elaine and Sir Launcelot.

d. Any combination of the above.

11. I can never think of what to say when I meet someone who once meant everything to me.

____ True ______ False

12. Which of the following is not a characteristic symptom of anxiety?

a. An increase in muscle tension, originating about the mouth and eyes and gradually pervading the entire body.

b. Redirection of the blood flow to the muscles used in self-defense and away from the rapidly chilling hands and feet.

c. A warm tingling in the chest, typical of euphoria, and a pleasurable anticipation of the immediate future.

13. Choose the phrase that best completes this sentence: After inviting her to his hotel, Gilbert volunteers that he has come to this place to be alone and to pull himself together after his distressing separation from his second wife, a revelation that fails to call up any obvious reaction in Frances because

a. through the intelligence of mutual friends with whom she has
deliberately kept up, she already knew of the separation (though not the retreat).
b. she would be far more interested to know why he separated from Becky and whether Becky failed any of his tests in the ways that Frances did.
c. she feels little sympathy for a crisis that is readily put to rest in a tropical resort as opposed to the kind that is ground down by crying jags in an unbearably silent faculty apartment shrouded in damp redwoods.

14. Frances accepts Gilbert’s invitation to have a drink at his hotel. In literature, this is comparable to the scene in
a. Jane Eyre in which Jane re-encounters Mr. Rochester at Ferndale and discovers there are no longer obstacles to their happiness.
b. Wings of the Dove in which Kate Croy goes to Merton Densher’s room, knowing that what is about to happen will irrevocably bind them.
c. Anna Karenina in which Anna at last steps off the railway station platform.

15. Sipping wine beside the pool of the Acapulco Princess, Gilbert—double suns blazing in the dark lenses of his Vuarnet glasses—confides: “Becky lost her idealism.” In this sentence, the word idealism means
a. innocent expectancy.
b. belief in herself and her opinions.
c. unquestioning admiration of him.
d. perhaps all of the above.

16. “I must have been crazy,” Gilbert muses, “leaving you for her.” In this sentence, the word crazy is used
a. clinically, to signify a condition of stress-induced schizophrenia.
b. rhetorically, to emphasize a point.
c. apologetically, to disarm the auditor.

17. Identify the source of these lines:
“For every man the world is as fresh as it was at the first day, and as full of untold novelties for him who has the eyes to see them.”
a. Thomas Henry Huxley in 1868.
b. Frances Horton’s notebooks in 1971, unattributed.
c. Gilbert Michaud in 1971, wooing Frances Horton by appealing to her intellectual idealism, unaffected delight in self-discovery, and awakening hormones until she yielded shortly after to become his lover and later his wife.

18. By 1973, Frances had decided to apply to graduate school so that she also might become professor of literature. Like her husband, she spoke approvingly and knowledgeably of German operas, certain Bordeauxs, Pueblo pottery, and obscure Japanese poets. She’d given up wearing pastels in favor of the forest green and earth tones Gilbert preferred and gave up the first person singular in favor of the plural. This condition is sometimes called
19. "We really had a good marriage," Gilbert tells Frances. "I didn’t realize it until it was too late. Good doesn’t begin to describe it, it was one hell of a marriage we had." In rhetoric, such a construction is a good example of a. epanorthosis. b. antiphrasis. c. selective recall. 

20. Patient X is a 32-year-old divorced woman, who dreams sometimes of being in a room with a man whose face is hidden. All she recalls of the room are windows draped in heavy green material and presenting no view but that of the dense, netlike branches of a redwood tree just outside. She is being held tightly against the man and though she cannot move, she feels happy and secure. If this were your patient, how would you interpret her dream? 

a. It expresses a subconscious desire to return to her childhood. 
b. It manifests unacknowledged hostility toward my authority. 
c. It is a typical expression of the neurotic irresolution of most women her age. 

21. Read the selection below and choose the best title for it. 
Before her marriage, Frances never smoked cigarettes and Gilbert smoked occasionally. However, she found that lighting up one of his cigarettes made her feel poised and sophisticated, especially at faculty parties. By their second year of marriage, Frances was smoking a pack a day. Rightly, Gilbert—who could take or leave cigarettes—pointed out that this was an addiction, not a minor indulgence, and Frances tried to quit. He continued to smoke in her presence, as he felt this was a necessary test of her will power. Frances quit smoking at last six months after they had separated. 

a. "How to Quit Smoking." 
b. "You've Come a Long Way, Baby." 
c. "F, Not Passing." 

22. Match the singer to the song. 

- "That Old Feeling" a. Bessie Smith 
- "I've Got You Under My Skin" b. Virginia Verrill 
- "Empty Bed Blues" c. Virginia Bruce 
- d. Frances Horton Michaud

23. G. Michaud asserts: "Teaching in the university encourages one to stay young." Discuss. (Hint: Consider point of view, i.e. do you think speaker intends statement to reflect back favorably upon middle-aging self or to flatter auditor? Define young—supple, idealistic, immature,
24. Choose the most logical order for the following sentences by numbering them from 1 to 6.

__ Pouring the last of the “barely drinkable” wine into their glasses, Gilbert tells Frances “You are still luminous.”
__ The wine, his unexpected compliment on her forest-green shift, her still unsettled agitation at the meeting, all combine in Frances to produce a kind of hectic euphoria in which she finds herself speaking easily and warmly of the pompano she has just finished, of a recently seen production of Parsifal, of an exhibit of Acoma pottery at her college, and of a recent triumph in a doubles match, discreetly letting him infer that the older and quite renowned colleague who partnered her has been doubling inexhaustibly with her elsewhere as well.
__ The wine bottle empty, Gilbert insists they continue this delightful conversation at the Normandie, where the chef has a way of preparing the pompano that compares favorably with thon à la provençale.
__ After they have walked around the Zocalo for the third time, Gilbert tells her that it is much too early to talk of going back to her hotel and, since his own hotel is just nearby, asks why they shouldn’t enjoy a night-cap on the balcony of his room.
__ The streets are hazy violet laid over with a grid of yellow shoplight, their fellow strollers have the surfeited air of holiday-makers, and Frances herself is feeling too enchanted to reflect: she has never much cared for fish, she put on the forest-green shift (which outlasted her taste for it) hoping for its ruin by sweat and suntan oil, she now enjoys Puccini much more than Wagner, she plays tennis for exercise and without much joy, and she for the same reasons maintains her relations with the elderly pedant whose youthful and, she has come to think, adolescent concern with the rightness of his taste and opinions has begun to depress her.

25. I most enjoy spending my evening
a. in a smoky, wine-fumed dorm room with a group of students my own age debating whether art can be separated from morality.

b. before an open fireplace, sitting companionably naked with husband, drinking red wine and listening with virgin wonder to “Liebestod.”

c. in a newly discovered Thai restaurant with my pro tem lover and other literary colleagues, wittily disparaging recent films, media events, international politics, and the behavior of colleagues who are not present.

d. on an open balcony on a warm evening, watching the lamplight drip from the hills into the dark, smoky bay and tremulously aware that I have been restored to an intimacy I thought unrecoverable.
26. Which phrases best describe your ex-husband? Check as many as you wish.

- dependent on the approval of others.
- ambitious.
- candid and charming in unthreatened moments.
- contemptuous of failure in others.
- transcendent and inspired as a teacher by a genuine love of his subject.
- moodily preoccupied with the idea that he has failed in his life.

27. Which phrase might your current lover use to describe you? Check only those expressions that are applicable at present.

- dependent on the approval of others.
- preoccupied unproductively with the past.
- difficult and often negative.
- joyfully expectant of the world's abundance.
- prickly and sarcastic.
- luminous.

28. At times Gilbert told Frances that what he admired most about her was her naive delight in everything new to her. At other times he told her she must learn to distinguish between the emotions stirred by cheap sentimental art and those engendered by true masterworks. In application, this means that when Gilbert took "Pathétique" off the turntable and told Frances it was trite,

a. she should have told him it wasn't trite to her.
b. she should have asked him to amplify so that she would not make a similar mistake in the future.
c. she should not have gone into the bathroom and cried.

29. Frances still has unresolved feelings about Gilbert. The preceding statement can be logically deduced from which of the following?

a. Frances has set down her wineglass and is holding her hands tightly in her lap so that their agitation is not apparent to Gilbert.
b. Though the first sad gravity of middle age has worked on Gilbert's face and though he has been slowed by a new heanness of flesh and of spirit, still the changes in him seem as unshocking to her as if she had seen him transformed morning by morning.
c. She remembers that he once wrote her a sonnet, comparing her to an apricot and a city on fire.
d. She remembers that he remembers her radiance and she his hope.

30. If A is older, then B is older. If A or B is older, then there is hope of change. Given these premises, which of the following is (are) true?

a. A has hope, so A is older.
b. Both A and B are wiser.
c. B is too much older than A, so there can be no hope.
31. "What I really envied in you then was that you seemed so unafraid," says Gilbert with an underlaid note of compunction. In this sentence, compunction means.
   a. contriteness.
   b. complicity.
   c. compromise.
   d. concupiscence.
32. I believe that other people usually tell the truth.
   True  False
33. Love: sex
   a. hunger: food
   b. hope: experience
   c. tennis: pompano
34. I dream of flames of bougainvillea, tall palms dazzling like rockets, and a blinding darkness where a whisper of soft, sweet ash falls all around me.
   Never  Sometimes  Often
35. Complete this sentence: If I had a second chance at my marriage, I would
36. Error recognition: The morning sun turns the bay to silver mesh and Frances, observing it from Gilbert's balcony, feels exultantly, expectantly, luminously unafraid of the future.
   a. The italicized phrase contains an error of diction.
   b. The italicized phrase contains an error of verbosity.
   c. There is no error.
   d. The error is Frances's.
37. Gilbert says that in the few hours they've spent together the world has once again seemed fresh and full of promise. He tells Frances they ought to consider reconciling. He says that living together first would be a good test of whether they ought to remarry.
   If the above statements are true, it follows that:
   a. If Frances does move in with Gilbert, their marriage will be renewed as will their lives each day.
   b. If Frances does not move in with Gilbert, he will offer to remarry her before he discovers that what he thought was a retained enthusiasm for life was just almost hysterical excitement brought on by a stressful meeting in a place where she has no habits or points of reference.
   c. If Frances does move in with Gilbert, his discovery that she deceived him with her sham ardor will make him feel less guilty about becoming involved with a genuinely exuberant student.
   d. If Frances does not move in with Gilbert, she will never know whether they can successfully reconstruct their relationship now, using the supports they have strengthened and seasoned between them.
38. My favorite color is
a. forest green.
b. pale blue.
c. can't answer.
39. Frances: I'm a lot older, Gilbert.
    Gilbert: you're still a very good-looking woman.

From the conversation above, it can be inferred that:
a. Gilbert thinks Frances is worried about not being as youthfully attrac-
tive as his previous wife or as his female students.
b. Frances is surprised to realize that she's changed, when she has been
   thinking of herself and her feelings as being the same as always.
c. Gilbert is not listening.
40. Choose the pair of phrases that best completes this sentence: Within
    the next five minutes, Frances will make up her mind to__________
    and as a result, a year from now, will find herself ____________.
   a. return home with Gilbert...sipping wine in a firelit room and listening
      avidly to Sieglinde's dark and passionate laments.
b. return homewith Gilbert...following him across town, at a discreet
      distance, in a borrowed car.
c. return home alone...grading papers while she waits for a phone call
      from a man whose wife may or may not be out of town.
d. take a sabbatical...doggedly gathering notes for a critical work on
      Ellen Glasgow.
e. let go of everything...living in insecure circumstances in an
      unfamiliar place and nursing a small flame which will warm her if not
      illuminate.
42. Can you ever recover what has been lost?
Fantasy

Mary Delphine Troy

CHARLIE lay on the bed in their one room cottage on Kailua Beach, eating the miniature Baby Ruths Ellen had bought for the trick-or-treaters who hadn't shown up.

"You don't have to wear the wolf outfit if you don't want to," she said.

"I'm not going," he said between bites.

"Come on," she said, skipping across the room in her short cotton smock with the snap-on hood, feeling ridiculous, but willing to try anything. "What's Little Red Riding Hood without her wolf?"

"They can't have as much fun with me there, anyway," he said. "They can't talk about me."

Tim, her brother, had invited the family and some friends in order to show off his new apartment, his first apartment, and all week she had felt his eagerness as he called her at work for advice on the food, his costume, the guest list. She had felt it like a weight in her stomach, because she had known that as much as she wanted to give her big sister seal of approval to his Makiki apartment—"small but cute," her mother said—Charlie would not go.

"Do it for me, Honey," she said, sitting next to him on the bed, thinking she had spent last night with his friends, other real estate brokers, and had been bored by talk of lease-holds and planned developments. She could tell him staying home had not even seemed an option but knew she wouldn't mention it. "Please," she said and wondered if tears would help.

He sat up, grabbed her around the waist, bit her earlobe, and nuzzled her neck. "We'll have more fun by ourselves," he said, and she knew he was right. "Tell me what you're thinking."

"Tim. He'll miss us."

"Try to think of me for a change," he said, rolling over, face down. He talked into the pillow. "How would you like to go where you were hated?"

"I'm sorry," she said, rubbing his back, and she was. Her parents didn't
approve of her living with Charlie, even though she told them that at almost 30, she had had enough experience, could take care of herself. “He’ll hurt you,” her father had said. “He’s selfish.” And it didn’t help that Charlie was sullen and uncommunicative around them. “You have to be big about this,” she’d tell him, and he’d say, “Why?” or “About what?”

She leaned against the headboard, and the jack o’lantern they had carved the night before grinned foolishly at her, the candle flickering behind crossed eyes and a toothless mouth. They lay there for a while in silence, Charlie with his head facing the wall, sulking, she thought as she looked at his dark, wiry curls, wanting to touch them. She knew Tim and her parents would wait, would act as if they believed Charlie and she would show up, as if they didn’t know there were problems.

At 8:30, she noticed the regularity of Charlie’s breathing, heard the small moans he usually made in his sleep, and, leaning over to check, saw the darker spot of blue his drool made on the pillowcase. If Charlie would just sleep for a while, she thought, as she blew out the pumpkin’s candle, tied red ribbons to the ends of her blond braids, and picked up her basket of goodies, she could make everyone happy.

While driving over the mountains into Honolulu, she decided to say he had the flu. It had come over him suddenly this afternoon, and up until the last minute, he had thought he would be able to come. He hated to miss the party.

Her knees were shaking as she rode the elevator, and she was forced to wait outside Tim’s door to catch her breath. But while trying to fix her smile, she knew they would only pretend to believe the flu story, and her mother would smile knowingly, or worse, sympathetically, sure that Charlie didn’t love Ellen enough to come with her. She leaned against the wall. It was unfair of Tim to invite her anyway. He must have known it would put her in the center, as if she were a rope in a game of tug-o-war.

She went back and sat in her car, started the engine, and drove down Keaumoku, turning right onto Kapiolani because it was easier than turning left. Sitting at the red light of Piikoi and Kapiolani, she watched the night people cross in their bizarre costumes. One woman was dressed as an egg, and a man wearing a diaper, plastic wrap, and high heels walked behind her, bumping into her shell. Then Ellen noticed the neon lights up ahead spelling out “Fantasy,” blinking on and off.

Fantasy was a Korean bar, the kind of place women did not go to alone, the kind of place men seldom took dates to. Korean bars were for lonely men who wanted the company of pretty hostesses, men who were willing to pay a fortune for cheap champagne, pleasant chit-chat, and more. Turning into the parking lot, Ellen imagined Fantasy’s clientele would be mainly Filipinos, their black hair slicked back, their high cheekbones shining with sweat, their loud-colored shirts half-opened to reveal hairless chests. She sat in her car for a moment, but when she finally entered
the dimly lit lounge, she almost said "wow" out loud. It was even tackier than she had expected.

Fantasy was a long, narrow room with booths made of curved royal blue plastic seats along one side, and a low, padded bar, also of royal blue, along the other. A white baby grand dominated the far end of the room. The ceiling and the wall behind the bar were composed of mirrored tiles marbled with gold. Crystal chandeliers with flame-shaped bulbs turned down low reflected off the tiles. The wall behind the booths was made of heavy red curtains, and the shag carpet was the same red, almost scarlet. The tables in each booth were hard, shiny, and black with chrome strips around the edges.

She was tempted to sit at the bar, on one of the stools with red velvet-like cushions, but her nerve failed her, and she ducked quickly into the nearest empty booth. Glancing around, she saw that there were some Filipinos there, but also some other Asians and a few haoles with the anonymous look of bankers or doctors in town for a convention.

The women were fancy, and, she thought, beautifully decadent looking. They were oriental—she didn't know if they were real Koreans or not—with false eyelashes, red lips, black permed and waved and western-looking hair, tight sheaths with mandarin collars, or sparkly halter tops and mini skirts. They wore boots or gold sling-backs with patterned hose.

A hostess wearing a dress the color of Dendrobia orchids but smelling strongly of gardenias stopped at the booth. "Can I help you?" she said, not smiling, businesslike.

"I'll have a chi chi," Ellen said, wanting a drink as showy as Fantasy.

"Are you waiting for someone?"

"For anyone," Ellen said and laughed until she realized her mistake. She should not seem a threat to the hostesses.

"Have a drink with me," she said, trying to placate the woman in purple, to let her know she'd play by the rules and not take up a booth alone.

Soon the hostess was back with two chi chis. She slid into the booth and introduced herself as Naomi.

"I'm Little Red Riding Hood," Ellen said. "I was on my way to grandma's, but I got lost."

Naomi nodded gravely, and Ellen told herself that that one hadn't been very funny either. She tried straight conversation. "Have you noticed that all the weirdos in Honolulu come out on Halloween?"

"This is my first Halloween here," Naomi said. "I wouldn't know about that."

"Do they celebrate Halloween in Korea?"

"I wouldn't know about that, either," Naomi said. "I'm from Denver."

The two women sipped whipped coconut and gin through straws in silence, and Ellen began to think the detour to Fantasy had been silly; this
hostess was not a good drinking partner. Ellen finished her chi chi quickly, though, noting that Naomi’s seemed almost untouched, and leaned back against the hard, cool plastic. Then Naomi clicked her scarlet fingernails on the table top, and the bartender arrived with a bottle of champagne chilling in a silver bucket, and two glasses.

“I like this better. You will, too,” Naomi said, popping the cork into her palm. “I like my job,” she smiled prettily and, Ellen thought, carefully. “I enjoy meeting the public.”

“How many bottles do you have to sell in an evening?”

Naomi laughed, a long rumble that surprised Ellen by its timbre. “As many as I can. How many can you handle?”

“Who knows?” Ellen said, downing the first glass. Then she excused herself to make a phone call. As she stood at the pay phone by the door and watched a couple dressed as a pair of dice enter the liquor store across the street, she told Tim that both Charlie and she had the flu. Yes, she agreed, it was unfortunate.

Upon returning to the booth and a full glass of champagne, she asked more about Naomi’s job, and found out that Naomi stayed sober by sipping slowly so that the customer drank most of the bottle, by mixing water with her drink when the customer wasn’t looking, and, every now and then, by making herself throw up. When the customer danced with her, the bartender would place a fresh bottle on the table, and she’d convince her partner that they had finished the previous one, sometimes acting drunk so he’d believe it. She admitted most of the men knew they were being fooled, but said she could make two hundred an evening in commissions anyway.

An Asian in a beige tux with a cream colored ruffled shirt sat at the piano and played “Feelings.” Some of the men led their hostesses to the aisle where they stood embracing in a sort of dance, swaying together to the music.

“What about later?” Ellen said. “Don’t you have a back room or an upstairs or something?”

“We have no such thing. It’s rumor.”

“Glad to hear it. It’s just that they say a man can get more than companionship in these places.”

“No,” Naomi said and then winked. “Of course, I could be lying. About everything.”

Ellen laughed. “No one knows I’m here. I’m trying not to feel guilty.”

“Good girl,” Naomi said. “Drink up.”

“I try to keep them all happy,” she said. “Especially Charlie. But he’ll still end up mad at me.”

“The whole world should be happy,” Naomi said, and Ellen, trying not to laugh, felt champagne bubbles burn the inside of her nostrils. Ludicrous, she thought. Preposterous.
One of the bankers or doctors stopped at their booth and asked Ellen to dance. His stomach strained the buttons of his yellow sports shirt and hung over his belt.

"Naomi first," she said. "Then me. Then you can buy us champagne."

The man—he said his name was Dan—didn’t seem to mind the directives, and as Ellen sat alone and watched him clutch Naomi as if she were what kept him upright, she felt powerful. When it was her turn, she swayed in Dan’s beefy arms to “If,” and he sang in her ear. When the dance was nearly over, he said, “Is Little Red Riding Hood afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?”

She smiled at him, showing off the dimples Charlie called innocent, pleased he had recognized her. “The Big Bad Wolf’s home in bed, Honey,” she said and giggled. She was cheap and loose and exciting. They returned to the booth where Naomi waited with a fresh bottle. The label said 1965, but Dan said it tasted like yesterday’s. A rip-off, he called it. They had probably just switched labels.

“Shut up,” Ellen said.

He turned to her, his moist brown eyes indicating his drunkenness, and said, “Maybe ’65 just wasn’t a good year.”

She recognized it as what she would have said—capitulation for harmony—and felt sorry for Dan, but only momentarily. He’d forget all of this when he sobered up.

“I like my job,” Naomi said, smiling prettily this time for Dan. “I enjoy meeting the public.”

Dan smiled back.

“Sixty-five was the year I was born,” Naomi said, and Ellen subtracted quickly. At nine years her junior, just a baby really, Naomi was tough. Ellen saw her own almost 30 turn into 40, then into 50. She’d always be pulled and stretched, letting herself be formed and reformed to please those she loved. “Love, hah!” she said, and they both smiled at her. Her lips were turning numb and her head began to ache, and she wondered if Naomi had a lover and if he knew where she was. “Change clothes with me,” she said, standing in the aisle. “That color’s better on blondes anyway.”

Naomi shrugged as if to say it was all in a day’s work, slid across the seat after Ellen, and told Dan to stay put.

In the ladies’ room, Naomi said Dan was pilau, but at least dancing with him was better than with the skinny ones. “With them, you can feel everything,” They undressed and Naomi put on Ellen’s costume quickly, saying she had to hurry out before Dan lost interest. “He slobbered in my ear while we were dancing,” she said. “And I’ll probably get a cold. Just for that, I’m sticking him with the whole bill.”

The purple sheath fit Ellen so tightly, she wondered if she would be able to sit without straining the seams. After Naomi left, Ellen stood
before the mirror, unbraiding her hair and trying to get it to fluff out, to be full and sensual. Then she followed her reflection as she slithered back and forth, trying first for glamor, then for toughness. She leaned against the metal door of a stall, hip out, mean-like, and talked to herself. “Shape up,” she said. “Get with it.”

She and Naomi danced with Dan a few times, and then, deciding she absolutely had to dance with every man there, she asked all of them, sometimes having to pull them into the aisle. She had her glass refilled often, and at one point, took the microphone for an acappella performance. “Princess Pupulli has plenty papayas,” she sang, shaking her body, trying to shake her breasts the way she imagined it was done in places like this. She pantomimed holding large, ripe papayas, bouncing them up and down. “And she loves to give them away.” She shimmied to the end of the bar, as far as the cord would stretch. “Oh me uh, oh my uh,” she turned, caught the toe of her right foot in the cord, and, thankful she was not wearing heels, hopped twice and was free. “Won’t you try some papayas today?” She kept her composure and finished all four verses, winking at the men in the aisle seats as she strutted across the room. When she finished, everyone applauded.

By the end of the evening, she was practicing Naomi’s pretty smile and telling anyone who would listen that Naomi was her long lost sister, laughing loudly along with them at the joke. And she became convinced that this was her true self. Once, when Naomi went back to the ladies’ room to throw up, Ellen followed her, trying to explain her discovery. “It’s me,” she said as Naomi rinsed her mouth with cold water.

“It’s all you,” Naomi said, wiping her mouth on a paper towel, then breathing into Ellen’s face. “Do I stink?”

At closing time, Ellen kissed all the men good-bye, slapping their hands playfully as they grabbed her, telling them that that kind of behavior was reserved for the back room. She changed back to Little Red Riding Hood, and, realizing she would never make it over the mountains, agreed to share a cab with Naomi for the two blocks to the Ala Moana Americana Hotel. “Money’s no problem,” she said. Dan or someone had paid for everything so far.

Naomi said the hostesses waited in the back room while the bartender totalled their commissions.

“Aha,” she said. “I knew you had a back room.”

“Come on,” Naomi said. “I’ll show you.”

Behind the bar was a door, hidden in the mirrors, and they walked through it into a brightly lit room containing a small refrigerator, a sink, a 30-cup coffee maker, a formica-topped kitchen table, a few straight-backed chairs, and a television. A black garter belt lay on the table, and the room smelled slightly of acne medicine. The hostesses massaged one another’s feet and seemed absorbed in a rerun of the *Brady Bunch.* It was
an episode about the oldest daughter’s first boyfriend and about how her parents worried about her. Just as the heart-to-heart talks were beginning, though, the bartender flicked off the set and paid the hostesses. It was time to go.

Her room at the Americana was too quiet, and it made her head ache even more. She tried the television, but the *Brady Bunch* was over, so she turned the set off and called Charlie. She wanted to tell him everything she had done, but when he answered, when she heard his voice thickened with sleep, thought of his body still warm and soft from its curled position, she changed her mind.

“Hey, Charlie,” she said, “Shape up.”

She hung up and turned out the light. Anyway, it was none of his business. When she closed her eyes, the room began to spin—and she with it—in wider and wider and faster and faster circles. Hey, Charlie. I’m very entertaining. She moved her left hand across his side of the bed, instinctively reaching for his butt, touching only the cool sheet. You had to be tough with someone like Charlie, she told herself. You had to make him pay attention. She smiled. That would be the fun part.
AFTERWARD Mama said she wasn’t oversurprised at the change in Uncle Louis. “I was just caught off guard because it was gradual,” she said. If Mama and Uncle Louis had been on real speaking terms, I think she might have applauded his transformation. But she couldn’t. Mama hadn’t dealt the new hand yet. She was still playing the old. So she watched, and I listened. I had never really liked the old Uncle Louis. So, at the beginning, I didn’t care how the new one came out.

The old Uncle Louis was boring and scary. Everybody called him “Looey.” “A crab salad without the salad,” my father said about nine times a year. He would follow it with, “That’s a San Francisco joke, like your brother-in-law.” He liked watching my mother not react.

Louis hated his job, showing movies to garden clubs for an oil company. He had got into it right out of college because it was safe and because, my mother said, “Louis could never make up his mind about show business because of Myrtle and Everett.” I had loved Myrt and Ev, Louis’ parents. Everybody loved them. They had been Bolo and Yolanda, Fast Dance and Patter. They were funny and magic, knew all the words to every song, and tap danced at my birthday when I was six. Mama said that Aunt Cat had fallen in love with them first and had never just looked at Louis alone. Ev and Myrt were the first people I ever knew who died. And they died together, in a car crash, which made it worse. I can remember crying for a whole morning, then spending the afternoon trying to make a penny fly into my shoe like Ev always did, until my father magically made it turn into a nickel in his shoe and sent me round the corner for candy.

Mama said that showing movies made Louis feel close to his folks without having to take the risk of real show business. But the movies were boring. They were mostly travelogues. After a while I stopped hoping they would turn into Flash Gordon and almost got to like them. The wildflowers would bloom in seconds and the mountains seemed cool. I got so I could just drift away, lying across the black and white swirls of the imitation oriental rug, looking at the relatives’ feet while the clickety noise of
the projector competed with the tinny sound from the film. I remember the first Thanksgiving we all settled in to watch the movie. I ran behind the screen to see where the pictures were coming from. I was disappointed that there was only Aunt Clara, sitting in the dining room, with her second piece of cake. Uncle Louis was waiting for me when I came back around. "Boo!" he said. I jumped and cried and ran to Mama while the aunts (except Clara) and cousins and uncles all laughed. Mama said, "Louis, you fool," and squeezed me tight.

But Louis was mother's sister's husband and, because Catherine could do no wrong, Mama made allowances back then. But except for popping out, or making me think the wooden door stop shaped like a black frog was going to eat me up, he was boring. After he said his things—"Hey, Allazoozoo" or "How ya doin', good lookin'"—that was it. He'd just sit quietly and smoke his Chesterfields. Mama used to say, early on, that he was deep. Papa always answered, "I'm waiting."

It was after Aunt Cat died that things began to happen. Papa said he expected better things from Louis ("a blonde floozie at least") since it had been two years since Cat had shrivelled into herself and died. Mama just looked and became very tight-lipped. Whatever happened between her and Cat and Louis was locked in the deck, waiting for the next deal. She still invited him to dinner but just barely.

That summer Louis would come straight from work and walk into the kitchen and sit, not asking for anything but not refusing anything either. The open window brought green shadows right into the kitchen. He always said, "Thank you," and drank my mother's lemonade with careful sips. But he had stopped scaring me. And his hands stayed in his lap instead of fooling with his Chesterfields. He didn't sigh exactly, but he'd breathe into the middle distance. I forget whether my mother finally got tired of inviting him, or he just started refusing. Whichever it was, by Labor Day Uncle Louis stopped appearing at the dinner table.

I had finally saved enough money for a real date. Dinner away across the Bay from Alameda in The City and a real musical comedy at the Geary. Ellen Katzenbogen's father trusted me on the strength of my yard work (I was prompt and never talked back; what an easy scam that was), so he had okayed the excursion. If he had known I was planning to put my hand on Ellen's breast during the second act, I know he would have had me shot at dawn. But I figured he wasn't a mind reader, so I stopped my nerves and smiled at him as openly as I could. Ellen kept looking back at me each time I moved the mower across the lawn. I thought our date had excellent potential.

After almost three days of discussion with my father, I had chosen Au Tour Eiffel for our meal. My father had brought home a dinner menu for my nervous inspection. We looked at the prix fixe, and he figured the tip and laid it all out for me. He even called for reservations and made sure I
knew which streetcar to take to get there from the Key System terminal.

I wore my black suit ("still slims you down," said my mother, tugging the jacket), and Ellen wore a white dress. Even though I had plans, I felt relaxed with Ellen. We always made each other laugh. We were laughing a lot by the time we got to the restaurant. The walls were painted with pictures of windows opening up onto different scenes of Paris. Ellen was impressed.

It wasn't until we had started on the onion soup that I spotted Uncle Louis. He was sitting by himself at a corner table. His hair was combed somehow differently, and there was a colored scarf knotted around his neck. I watched, my soup with its foreign strings of cheese forgotten, as he took out a pipe and a tobacco pouch. His fingers didn't quite know what to do, but he finally got it lit.

By this time Ellen had stopped talking and looked over her shoulder to see what I was watching. "Who's that?" she asked.

I was embarrassed but couldn't think of a plausible lie, so I just said, "That's my Uncle Louis," hoping that would end it. It did. Ellen was not interested in my relatives. But midway through the Duck à l'Orange, Uncle Louis came over to the table.

"Allazoozoo, kiddo," he said, by way of introduction.

"Hi, Uncle Louis," I said, shaking his hand and standing up and putting down my fork. It all seemed very complicated.

"This is Ellen Katzenbogen," I said. Uncle Louis looked at her and wiggled his eyebrows. Ellen smiled, which seemed to cover the situation.

I decided to plunge in. "You look different," I said.

"I am," he said.

I thought there might be more coming, but that seemed to be it. I sat down slowly, so he wouldn't think I was being rude.

"How are things?" I asked.

He waved his pipe back and forth. He didn't seem to have any more to say, but he didn't want to leave either. That at least was like the old Uncle Louis.

"Your pipe smells very nice," Ellen volunteered.

"Thank you," he said. "It helps me," he continued enigmatically.

I filed that away for my mother. He continued to stand over us, popping his lips against the pipe stem, letting out short puffs of smoke.

"We're going to the Geary to see Plain and Fancy," I said. I was concentrating on keeping the duck and the sauce on the plate, and so missed his expression. But I heard him say, "Ah," in a way that seemed deep. He took Ellen's hand and said, "The theater." Then he left abruptly.

Ellen watched him go. "That was weird, the way he left," she said.

"He always leaves like that," I said to Ellen. "That's not weird. The pipe is what's weird."
Even though Ellen hunched forward during the entire second act, spoiling my plans, I did not count the evening a total loss. We had a lot of laughs. And there was Uncle Louis.

The next morning, in between my combination plot synopsis and review, I reported the tale of Uncle Louis and the pipe and the scarf. My mother’s eyes lit up, but she didn’t say anything. My father said, “I always say . . .” and then decided not to.

The following week on a Tuesday evening Aunt Clara appeared. She drove up in her old blue Kaiser as if it were Thanksgiving or Christmas. My father saw her framed in the doorway, coughed, and headed for the basement. My mother was surprised at the sink with the water running, so my algebra and I were ignored.

Clara pulled out a chair and sat down abruptly. She was breathing hard and her clenched jaw made her chins jiggle.

“Well!” she said.

“Hello, Clara,” said my mother, wiping down the sink.

“He’s flipped,” said Clara. She was always up on the latest slang. “He’s rented that wonderful house to some couple from Niles, and he’s moved to an apartment in The City.” She paused for breath, and longer, for effect. Mama gave in.

“By himself?” she asked.

“Of course by himself,” shrieked Clara, glaring in my direction. But she couldn’t bring herself to go on.

“Clara, just spit it out,” said my mother. “He’s your brother, after all.”

“The apartment is in North Beach,” said Clara. I was impressed. Jackie Martin’s older brother had been over to North Beach on a double date. They had gone to the hungry i and seen Mort Sahl. And afterwards they had gone up to the City Lights Bookshop. Jackie said there was a place downstairs where you could sit and read the dirty books.

“North Beach is cool,” I said.

“Finish your algebra upstairs,” Mama said. I bent over the table and looked busy until she focused back on Aunt Clara. “There must be more than that to bring you all the way over to the West End this time of night,” she continued wringing out the dishcloth and smoothing it over the faucet.

Clara looked at my mother and took out a handkerchief. She touched it to the hairs on her upper lip, and paused.

“He’s going to quit his job,” she said. There was even more, but Aunt Clara just couldn’t bring it all out at once. Mama snapped the dishcloth off the faucet and gave it another wring-out with quick turns of her wrist.

“And . . .” prompted Mama.

“And . . . he says he’s going to be a playwright!” Aunt Clara spit it out in one breath with her eyes closed.

“Imagine that. Whatever for?” Mama asked the sink.
Clara just rolled her eyes and began to quiver. Mama pulled out another kitchen chair and sat across from her. I hunched over my algebra and hoped I was invisible.

"You know I’m still not over that business about Cat,“ Mama said. "But I’m not putting that in on this." Here was Mama, getting ready to deal out a new hand of cards. For her, love was built by red deeds on black, things matched, the ante got raised. Life was a series of sequences and melds. Or a relationship might be over until there was a new deal.

"This is different. Now," Mama lowered her voice and moved closer to Aunt Clara without moving, I knew she was right at the heart of things. "What I want to know is, what has he actually written, on paper, that makes him hopeful he can do such a thing?"


"Nothing nothing," said Aunt Clara.

"How do you know?" I asked, curiosity overcoming fear of banishment.

Aunt Clara spoke at me through my mother’s dark look. "He told me," she said. "I asked him ‘What have you written?’ That was the first question. And he said, ‘I haven’t gotten to that part yet.’ He said he could only change one thing at a time, so he was going to ‘arrange the arrangements’ first, and then write the plays.”

"What arrangements?" my mother asked.

I knew, but couldn’t say: the pipe and scarf were the first signs, a tiny red tip of butterfly wing at the far end of a gray cocoon.

"I don’t know," Aunt Clara cried. She paused and looked in my direction, then decided I didn’t matter. "I think he’s taking drugs. Or maybe he’s drinking."

"I don’t think it’s drinking," I volunteered, now that I was part of the discussion. "He wasn’t drinking the other night in the restaurant. He was just smoking his pipe."

"A pipe!" said Aunt Clara. She pointed at my mother. "Smoke," she said ominously. "They smoke all kinds of things these days."

"Prince Albert isn’t dope," said my mother.

"Well, it isn’t Chesterfields either," Aunt Clara popped back.

They went round it some more, but couldn’t find anything else. My mother appeared content just to contemplate the facts for a while. And later that week I had a long talk about North Beach with Jackie Martin in his back yard. I told him everything I knew—and some I didn’t—about Existentialism. He seemed skeptical, but I thought I sounded pretty good.

The day of Clara’s visit my father had remained in the basement, firmly out of Clara’s reach, until my mother called him to dinner. When he heard the news he surprised me by staying in neutral, declaring he would
"reserve strongly" on the subject.

However, he shifted into high a couple of weeks later as one Friday night Uncle Louis became "That Damn Fool." Uncle Louis had done the unthinkable. He had gone to see my father at his office during business hours, and it wasn't an emergency.

My father was an assistant vice president with a big bank in The City. As I pieced it together later, one of the people in my father's section had lost a check for $850,000 and traced it to an elevator shaft. Money was always "lost" at the bank, so there was nothing special in that. It was only a slight worry. But while my father was engaged in the finding, Louis and "some young girl with black hair down to here and so much black gook on her eyes you wondered how she could see straight" had barged through my father's office and found him down on his knees at the open elevator shaft, peering into the dark, trying to locate the elusive draft while a secretary held a flashlight.

Uncle Louis had always had the mistaken notion that because my father worked in a bank, he had money. I believe my father had once explained to Louis (as he had to us many times since his promotion) that there were more assistant vice presidents in banks than lettuce leaves in Salinas. Louis, however, was dazzled by the title and the closeness to the money. "No more sense than a turnip," said my father.

So right then and there, while two full vice presidents hovered nearby waiting for my father to find the check, and his secretary jiggled the light, Louis and his friend made their pitch for money by acting a scene from Louis' play "about death or some damn thing," said my father, his ears turning red again.

For myself, I wanted to know whether Uncle Louis was a good actor, but I couldn't think of a way to ease the question into the conversation. About six weeks later I almost got to see for myself.

Uncle Louis was now driving a Yellow Cab. When he pulled up at the curb one night, my father, idly watering the hydrangeas by the front porch, dropped the hose as if it had turned into a snake and bolted past me up the front steps and into the house. I could hear the basement door slam shut.

"Allazoozoo, kiddo," said Uncle Louis.

"Hi, Uncle Louis," I said, picking up the hose. "That's a neat taxi. Does it have a two-way radio?"

"Sure, he said, "A little talk this way," he pointed, "and a little talk that way," he pointed again, "and I'm off." His hand made a shooting motion up to the sky.

"How's the play coming?" I asked, jiggling the water.

His eyes lit up and he wiggled his eyebrows. "Teriff, kiddo," he said. He looked right at me and said, seriously, "Very cool."

I nodded.

“Oh, yeah,” I said. “Me, too.”

My mother came out on the porch with a dustcloth she kept flicking.

“You could take that hose around the back now,” she said to me. I shifted the hose to my other hand and she looked over at the cab.

“Hello, Louis,” she said from the top of the steps. “You look different again.” He touched his hair. That was it, of course. All the gray was gone.

“Hello, Grace,” he said, shifting from one square to another on the sidewalk. “I wanted to invite you all to come to my play.”

“In a theatre?” my mother asked too quickly.

“Yes and no,” said Uncle Louis, moving as he spoke.

“Which is it?” My mother snapped the cloth.

Louie danced over to another square. “Well,” he said, “it’s public and people are invited.” My mother stopped flicking the cloth and waited almost patiently.

“So I guess that makes it theatrical…”

“Louis,” my mother intoned.

“It’s in the basement at the City Lights Bookshop over in North Beach. This Sunday at five. A staged reading, they call it.”

He was so proud, this uncle, a tone I had never heard from a grown-up before. Could change really fill you up and make you not care about barging into an office or moving sideways across a sidewalk, the way he was doing now? His excitement seemed to hold him from above, on strings, buoying up his chest, making his legs light. He had forgotten about my Aunt Cat and all that meant to my mother. All he wanted was someone from before to share in the change. I watched my mother soften a little.

“What’s it about?” I asked, shifting the hose back.

“A woman who senses the futility of life and descends into a living hell,” he said. “It has music, too.”


“We’ll see,” said my mother.

I went, finally, not because my mother thought I should, but because she needed someone to sit between Clara and her, and my father refused.

“I’ve already seen it,” he said. “The elevator preview. Unless he’s doing it up in Napa”—our closest insane asylum—“I’m not interested.”

None of the other relatives could be persuaded to find the time, so that Sunday I was forced into the black suit and maroon tie and sat in Aunt Clara’s Kaiser, watching my mother’s back get tighter at Clara’s approach to traffic. I was in a sour mood since my suggestions about us all wearing
"cool clothes" had been vehemently overruled.

"I'm not sure about that hat," said my mother, looking dubiously at Clara's feathers.

"I always wear a hat," said Aunt Clara, in the same tone she used to announce that she always had a second piece of cake.

We parked two blocks away and walked up the hill. The bookshop glowed from the corner. Jackie Martin's brother was right. The store was wonderful. The bearded Chinese at the cash register let us by the door with a look; I didn't care. The racks and shelves were crowded with paperbacks. I recognized the names Kerouac and Ginsberg and Camus, but the titles and the rest of the authors went by too fast. My mother was actually pushing us along. The old wooden floor smelled sweet, and the aroma of ink and paper hung in the air like incense. There were a few people among the books—men with beards and women with long hair and long skirts. The place felt safe.

"Don't you look at anything," my mother said, giving my head a rap with her middle finger, the way she had done since I was five. I was half blind with embarrassment at being dressed wrong with funny adults in this grown-up heaven—and excited beyond the telling at actually being there. I couldn't wait to talk to Jackie so we could figure out how to get here on our own. I wondered where they kept the dirty books.

A space had been cleared downstairs. A couple of stools stood behind black music stands, just like the ones in the school band room. Over to one side a man stood behind two bongo drums and a xylophone. Across the room an old overstuffed chair sat in the middle of a dozen wooden folding chairs, like an old frog with a lot of undeveloped tadpoles. I sat down in the big chair and sank until my knees were even with my chin.

My mother appeared. "Get up out of there this minute. What do you think you're doing?" She was using her loudest whisper. "Look at this," she pointed. "And this." Her finger jabbed again. I looked at the back and arms of the chair. The fabric had been completely worn away. There were only shiny black patches, worn smooth by countless heads and arms.

"You don't know who's been there or what. Get up." I struggled to my feet, my ears red like my father's. I followed my mother and Aunt Clara to three folding chairs that had been set up off in a corner.

At five o'clock more people came in and sat, but things seemed no closer to starting than they had when we got there. A woman with bells around her neck glided over to us, jangling softly as she moved. Her eyes were fixed on Aunt Clara, actually on the hat.

"You know, I could charge money for this," Aunt Clara said sarcastically. But the woman only smiled and kept looking, moving her head up and down, jangling. Aunt Clara finally gave up and pulled off the hat and put it in her lap. She was quivering, but silent.

At five-thirty someone changed the lights to dim, and the bongo drums
began to get more rhythmic. Five minutes later Uncle Louis walked in. He was wearing a black turtleneck and black jeans and black boots. His pipe was confidently clenched at a jaunty angle. He looked over at us and nodded gravely. I mouthed the words, “Allazoozoo,” over to him. I thought I saw his eyebrows wiggle, but I wasn’t sure.

“He’s growing a beard,” Clara whispered. My mother nodded. I thought maybe he had just forgotten to shave.

Louis sat in the overstuffed chair. The Chinese man looked over the bannister from above, then went up and turned off some of the lights. The man stopped playing the bongos and started plonking on the xylophone, harsh rhythmic chords. A door at the back opened and a man and a woman stepped up to the stools. They were both wearing black turtlenecks and solemn expressions. They stood in front of the music stands and the woman said, “This is the first public reading of Blind Darkness, the first play of one of San Francisco’s newest authors, Louis Luznik.”

Mama and Aunt Clara stiffened simultaneously. I was a little stunned myself. Not only had she pronounced his name “Lewis” instead of “Looey,” but Uncle Louis’s last name wasn’t Luznik. Not even close. I tried to explain.

“I think he needed something more like Ginsberg or Kerouac, since he’s writing that kind of thing,” I offered.

My mother just stared quietly. But Aunt Clara was beyond staring or explanations. She was out of her chair and standing over him before the actors even had time to climb on the stools. Clara’s hat was in her hand and she shook the feathers down at Louis sunk in the chair.

“Louis. Frankfort. You. Traitor.” She punctuated each word with a feather poked at his face.

He took the hat from her firmly and gave it to the bongo player, who put it on. Clara looked stunned.

“Sis,” he said quietly. “It was time for no more wienie jokes. Now split.”

My mother turned to me and said, “Split?” at the same time Clara said, “Wienies?” The actor, perched on his stool, turned a page of the script on the music stand. “Act One,” he intoned. “At the edge of the Dead Sea.” The drummer began a complicated rhythm on the bongo drums. He shook his head; the feather twitched. The actress began,

“At the edge of the endless sea, night and dark from the black...”

I think I would have liked it. I thought I knew what it felt like, to be dark and lonely. But my mother turned to me and said, “I don’t think a family discussion between Clara and Louis is just the thing for right now. Let’s... split.”

Aunt Clara was so amazed that she followed without a murmur. My mother propelled us up the stairs and out the door the same way she had
moved us in. It was almost like a movie run backwards. I waved to Uncle Louis over Aunt Clara’s shoulder as we went up the steps. I thought I heard him say, “Later, man;” but it could have been the bongo player.

And that was really all. Change happens and then it stops, and for a while—sometimes a long while—things are a new same. This new Uncle Louis drove a Yellow Cab, lived in North Beach, wrote things, and—on the few times I saw him—smiled. He stopped saying “Allazoozoo,” though. And I was never really sure how I felt about that.
As usual, I’m reading the obituary page. He, John B. Kelly, wasn’t the only man who died that day. There were others as expected, and among the others was Robert Woodruff. He strung the Coca-Cola banner around the world and the article mentioned that he kept Coke at five cents for the GI’s during the war. Then there was Victor W. Farris. He had invented the milk carton, plus other things. And Al Todd passed away.

Al Todd?

He was behind the plate for the Philadelphia Phillies on 24 May 1935 during the first night game in the Majors. During the game he circled the bases when the center fielder lost a routine fly in the lights. Now I have drunk Coke and can roughly recall the arrival of the milk carton but I never heard of Al Todd, and I’m a fan. I was born during the war years and I don’t know much about who was playing at the time, yet now I’m reading that Al Todd’s career stretched into those years and beyond. Of course I remember Joe DiMaggio and Ted Williams. Who doesn’t? In fact, when I was a Little League player I tried to imitate Williams’ level swing and majestic follow-through.

The textbook swing of Ted Williams I first saw in 1953, which was one of those years when I collected every baseball card issued. I was no mere collector. I also memorized the data on the back of each card. I got so good at it that a cousin took me to Angelo’s luncheonette on the corner of Baltimore and Springfield in Kent Mills and sat me on a high swivel stool and bought me a black-and-white milk shake and wagered that I could answer any then current baseball question. I usually won, for I had spent many hours flipping over the back of each card. I even concocted fantastic baseball games and amassed sheets of disposable statistics on my own games. I lived in a baseball fantasyland; my adolescent life wheeled around it.

Kelly wasn’t the only man who died that day, but he was the only famous Philadelphian to make the obituary page.

John B. Kelly was an ex-Olympic rower. I had once spotted him sculling
on the Schuylkill and had fixed my glasses on him. I never rowed but I’m a runner, and once while circling an asphalt track in the direction opposite from his, I saw Kelly face-to-face. He was going off and I was coming on, so we only went by each other one time.

Kelly had shoulders like granite and he wore them well. Actually, he had that invincible look about him, and I was shocked at his death, for his death signaled, certified—that I would ultimately die.

Kelly I had recently seen at the Spectrum. (This was one of the reasons why his death had provoked me.) A friend of mine had coaxed me into going to the Spectrum tournament, and although I played tennis, I found it tedious to watch. I only went to accommodate my lawyer-friend, and to see, live, the antics of John McEnroe. But my attention at the match was drawn away from the boyish-looking McEnroe and on to the wife of John B. Kelly, as her right profile was perfect and her luscious sandy hair tied up in a flawless light bun glued me. I thought of the hours it must’ve taken to get that bun so perfect looking. And when Mrs. Kelly got up during a break, accompanied by her husband, the crowd gawked in their direction. I said to myself: “What a handsome couple! What passes in America for royalty. They have the world at their feet. The sky’s the limit!”

A few days after that tennis tournament John B. Kelly died. He had just gotten off the river and was jogging to the Athletic Club on Broad and Vine for a shower and a rubdown when he fell against the sootsmear of a padlocked donut shop, with his body yielding itself to the cracked sidewalk. An elderly witness summoned the police, and they removed the body to the morgue on Callowhill Street. Because Kelly carried no ID’s nobody could identify him at first, and, besides, no one at the morgue could believe it was him, for he had been a fortress of a man with his stunning wife (20 years his junior) and he had recently survived a freak shooting in Coral Gables. When he didn’t arrive home the family started to call around town and the police had a member of his family come to the morgue to make a formal identification.

The TV-radio fusilladed news of his death. The media noted that his 93-year-old mother had not even been told of the death of Princess Grace some years earlier. I fell in love with Grace Kelly when I saw her in The Swan with Louis Jourdan. I was 14 at the time and her flawless face, like that of an Egyptian goddess, mesmerized me. I realized that my fascination with the Kellys had steeped deep into my adolescence, that they were part of Philadelphia lore.

I detach the obituary page from the newspaper and stuff it into the bulging, chewed-up folder. I only keep the obituaries that have a compulsive something about them.
I watch my two-year-old go round and round. He does it roughly 25 times. He bangs into the corner of the sofa or bridge chair or white rectangular flower stand with a flourish, briefly screaming before he resumes his relentless charge around the wooden blocks. He frequently changes directions and by the time he plops on the floor there is no block formation left. The multi-shaped blocks spread all over as if they had been shot out of a sweeper. I gather them up and put them in a plastic basket. Then he starts up again with the blocks. One by one he takes them out of the basket.

I scan the baseball boxscores though I’ve already gone the route with them. I don’t have much else to do. I could leaf through my overstuffed folder of obituary pages but I don’t. I should’ve known about Al Todd and I’m amazed that Victor W. Farris also invented the circular saw. Some inventor, yet I never heard of him until I read his obituary. Who’d die first? DiMaggio or Williams? What are the odds of both of them dying on the same day? The same year? Their deaths would bring America to a standstill; a fleeting standstill but nevertheless a standstill. With their deaths an era will pass. My father said Williams gave his best years to his country and, in fact, my father told me many things that still stick in my mind. Like he said we would have to shit or get off the pot in Nam. Said that in 1967 and when I got there in 1968 we were still on the pot; never really got off until we got chased out. While in the army I always read the casualty lists in the Stars and Stripes, occasionally recognizing a name on the list. Three times I saw names from Kent Mills, two of them from the same block. They had lived seven houses apart, the two GI’s.

I started reading the obituary page when a young boy and what initiated me was my father tearing out the notice of his father’s death from the Inquirer and then pinning it on to a bulletin board that my mother kept in the kitchen for coupons and church notices. The obituary stayed up there a long time. I’d stand frozen before it, and I know that at the time I hardly understood what death meant. The obituary stated that my grandfather was a veteran of World War I and had served with the Second Division on the Marne. It further mentioned that he was a Presbyterian, and that word, Presbyterian, gripped me. It sounded forbidding. I had assumed, up until that time, that everybody in my family was Catholic, but apparently not everybody was.

So, when young, I started cutting out the obituary pages and pasting them into a scrapbook. I got tired of the pasting and eventually stuffed them into shoe boxes; later, I just jammed them into folders. If my parents thought my collection of death notices peculiar, I don’t recall them saying it. Still, they undoubtedly thought it. But they were tolerant, and anyway, I always collected something. A good deal of what I collected, including shoe boxes crammed with death notices, got lost. (I still retain one of the original scrapbooks, though it has been shattered by time.) My collection
of baseball cards got washed out during a flood in my parents' basement, the deluge triggered by the overflowing of Salisbury Creek. I, unfortunately, happened to be in the army at the time.

I'm daydreaming all of this, with bits and pieces of my past cascading by like I'm a waterfall. Actually, I'm tired and I didn't catch Jimmy tearing into my folder of death. Some of the obituary notices are ripped, others are crunched. I salvage what I can; put them back in order. Why in order I don't know. I've a sudden fear that I will not have the impact upon my son that my father had upon me. I'm thinking Jimmy will ultimately judge me as too eccentric. My father's name was also Jimmy and I believe he determined I was eccentric from the time he first met me when he returned from the war in 1946. If only I could impress upon Jimmy the living legend of Ted Williams. But I know I won't be able to do it. I don't know why but that's the way I feel.

My wife comes in from work and Jimmy runs to her. Nancy discovers a stray obituary page in the blocks' basket and asks whether Jimmy has started reading the death notices. I laugh, she laughs, and then Jimmy screams a laugh. He has no idea why he's laughing but he senses that it has something to do with the mess he's made. I clean it up, then I drift off on the couch.

***

I'm spinning radically on the rim of a red hula hoop. I'm unable to get off. Baby blocks bombard me and when I can no longer ward them off I wake up.

The blocks' bombardment severed it.

It's twilight. I get up and grab that disjointed hula hoop and carry it to the dumpster. It had been sitting outside by the water spigot for days and before that it had hung on an attic rafter. Hung there for years.

I never mastered the hula hoop when young, but the girls in the neighborhood excelled at it. I watched them, compelled by their vibrating bodies, hypnotized by their relentless spinning.

I'm back in the house and I tell Nancy that if I die suddenly like my father I want it included in my obituary that I served with the Ninth Division in Vietnam and that I attended Catholic schools.
A Dish of Strawberries

What a lovely inclination of tastes!—
Tart, sweet, light.
His eyes beam in, thoughtfully, on his tongue.
The tartness keens down to a blade.
The sweetness chokes like the pat lies of a lover.
The lightness spreads out the firing-squad of dawn.
Mix it all up with some nice thick cream
and he'll savor the sly eyes of poison
bulging their fat disguise.
That's right!
Bust it all over his head.
Crunch the crockery down
like a crown,
grind the mulch
into his hungry features.
Restrained Reply

Thank you for the note. It's good to know you liked that poem of mine you stumbled into. I like it, too, although I worry that perhaps it's made out of my heart's dried blood ground into powder and reconstituted into a screaming flow of things I only pretend.

I wish I could say it was nice to meet you and hear your poems, but the truth is I found both terrifyingly repulsive in their cool defiance of all ineptitude.

It’s true you may have noticed some things like this about me—if you really notice anything besides the thoughtful angles by which images and faces lock into each other to provide departures for your studied attitudes.

But if you did, perhaps you caught the edges of my wish not to burn or freeze away my daily desperations in the bottom of this drifting boat but to craft their crazy angles into paddles to shoot the rocky channels where brittle pain breaks into simple joy.
A Dark Day Answers Rilke’s Plea for Change

Easier to become a stone.
More graceful to be faceless moss.
As the tube draws water,
to be inorganic feelingness.
To think the chains are broken.
But to find only sourcelessness
staring from grass, from skies, from faces.
Easiest to die, easiest to let the wind
take the leaf, tip the see-saw.
The wheel still responds
to the unthinking hands,
the brain-link unbroken.
To travel on,
to forget death,
to throw away the cache
of capsules never accumulated.
Easiest to dream that one is changing
when all movement stuns like a stone.
To find no angel, or only one angel.
To imagine that one is, simply, not dead.
The Earth Just Moved a Notch

A feeling so slight
no one notices
not the gulls
flying over waters
white with breakers
or the men
cascading down Montgomery street
on lunch hour
whose shadows
are slightly changed
along with their position
relative to other suns
Could it be love
changes us this way
late at night
when we are sleeping
yet draw nearer
The Joke

When you are on that platform
The one God pushes you off
He says good luck, bon voyage, don’t mention my name in vain, etc.
But he never sends you into the world empty-handed
He gives you something you can use later
A napkin, a blowtorch, a pen
Something
Then He drops you between two people making love
Just as they climax He makes their whole bodies scream
So they can’t hear you when you land
If you’re lucky God blesses you
That’s when He lets you in on the joke
The joke is . . .
I don’t know
Something to do with love
How it’s shaped like laughter
So we can’t hold it in
And keep it to ourselves
Some people are uneasy
around a childless woman.
They are afraid
that I will ruin their nest somehow,
as if I belong to that species of birds
that deposits large eggs
in a clutch of smaller ones.
At hatching time,
all seems to be going well.
But the young cowbird
eats like a monster.
It pushes its rivals
over the rim of safety
to their deaths
and still keeps
crying for food
with the urgency of a street beggar.
Before it can fly,
it will be
the size of its foster parents
combined.
Maybe its true,
what they suspect about me.
I have chosen
a strange kind of freedom.
One day,
I might put something in their hands
that will open its eyes
and make them squirm.
The Toy Soldier Factory

I bought a toy soldier one day,  
the knight dressed in silver enamel  
who had aimed a crossbow right at me.  
As soon as I took him away  
from a showroom that looked like Armageddon,  
I knew he would never be killed  
by the Minuteman with a musket  
threatening just across the aisle.

Back at the factory, they began  
manufacturing the replacement knight,  
casting liquid metal into the hot womb  
of a mold labeled "knight/crossbow #242."  
When he had cooled, someone with brushes  
and the colors of all the wars in history  
daubed him into a trifle for collectors.

During the last battle on earth,  
my knight will be safe, his heart  
shielded from radiation by a body of lead.  
At the factory, the replacement knights  
will stand in rows, ready,  
but no one with brushes or colors  
will come. The final soldiers  
will be painted with white light  
and, after that, the hot wombs  
of this world will stay empty.
For a Father at Sea

"Mankind owns four things
that are no good at sea:
rudder, anchor, oars,
and the fear of going down."

Antonio Machado
Robert Bly, translator

The experts have told you
that a bad thing
is about to happen.
For a long time,
you follow their instructions
about diet and exercise
and, even, sex.
But you don't improve.
When you try to go back
to the old habits,
you can't remember
what living was like
before this ache began.
What you discover then
surprises you.
One night before bed,
you decide to list
your last decent alternatives.
You could cook your bad heart
and eat it.
You might turn it loose
and be rid
of its dull, caged thumping.
The final option looks hardest,
a genuine passion.
If you shut the light off
and wait in the dark,
the pain will choose for you.
For Bad Dreams and Other Common Misfortunes

A friend has told you
that they are voluntary indulgences,
that even the worst nightmares
can be made into occasions
of instruction, even pleasure.
He has made it sound as if you could wake up,
soaked with terror,
and decide to change your fear
like a damp gown.

Something more comfortable
may be as close as your dresser.
When you slip into it,
you smell the sunny wind
that blew it dry
while it hung on the clothesline.

They may really be after you.
But if it seems you can’t move,
let yourself be reminded
of how much clean flannel
you have, folded away.
You can put it on
as often as you need to,
without ignoring the messages
that come to you
out of your true danger.
Making Love

There is a secret under your skin.
If you were a banana, smooth
and pale and green at the ears,
I would lay you in a dish over the heat
that the refrigerator motor makes.
Gradually, your face would appear,
its crooked mouth, sad eyes, and freckles.
A human being ripens the same way,
in the slow, warm bowl of the hand.
Wrath and Rapture in the Cult of Athletics

Robert D. Clark

The Spring issue featured an article about the crisis in race relations at San Jose State University in the Fall of 1967. Its appearance prompted renewed interest in the congeries of events of that time, and this interest in turn sparked the appearance of these reflections of Robert D. Clark, now president emeritus of The University of Oregon. At the time of writing this article, he was president of San Jose State (then "College"). The editors thank Dr. Clark for making these thoughts available to us two decades after the events, at a time when the memories of recent Olympic Games are fresh in our minds and the position of blacks in sports is again a salient issue.

I AM tempted to believe that the primary value for the American male is not God, mother, or country, but athletics. Or perhaps I should say that for the American male athletics is joined to God, mother, and country in a quarternity of values, that athletics like the others is a kind of Jungian archetype, a primordial urge to aggression transmuted into ritualized conflict, harmless but immensely satisfying. It is a deeply spiritual experience, not to be tampered with by heretics, or obstructionists, or even by blunderers who are imperfect in the performance of the ritual.

Not that athletics stands alone or in opposition to the others, or that the values are discrete. Not at all. Each value is enhanced by the others. The most casual observer of the Olympic games must perceive that athletics is inextricably bound to patriotism, and not for Americans only. And it may occur to some that TV commercials advertising a breakfast cereal make athletics comfortably at home with God and mother.

Events of the past year have given me new reason to reflect on the exalted place athletics occupies among our household gods. For some, I
committed the unpardonable sin: I canceled a football game. My iniquity was, to the offended, like a decree eliminating Mass or like a ban against preaching. It struck at the ritual of combat and exaltation on the football field. I might have been overwhelmed by the mad mail had it not been for the exultation of the heretics (somewhat greater in number) who rejoiced at the mortification of the faithful.

I had no animus against football, no intent to cancel a game. My college was caught up in an angry demonstration of black students who protested discrimination in the college and in the surrounding community—in non-college housing, in the fraternities and sororities, in the treatment of athletes, in the selection of faculty and non-academic personnel, in the development of the curriculum. I have no doubt that we were less guilty than many, perhaps most, colleges. Certainly to the country at large we were a model of non-discrimination. But we were nonetheless guilty as daily hearings clearly demonstrated. Day by day the excitement mounted. We were at the end of the long hot summer of riots. The external community burning with anger threatened to burn with fire. No one, not caught up in the hysteria of a mob, can understand its urge to uncontrollable and indiscriminate violence. Responsible citizens of the community and the college, concerned for the safety of involved spectators, recommended cancellation of the game. I cancelled it.

The editorial comment of the leading newspapers was largely and vigorously supportive. And so were many of the people who wrote to me. Most of the critics were angry, some were furious, irritated, disappointed, many were vulgar, or profane, a few threatening. But I did not at the moment attach any unusual importance to athletics as a basis for the outburst. For one thing, I had not only cancelled a football game, I had placed fraternities and sororities on probation. And to some of my critics one act seemed as reprehensible as the other. But more to the point, the primary complaint was not probation or the cancellation of the game, but my yielding to threats. That brought recriminations against me and denunciation of the blacks. The usual clichés: “gutless wonder,” “I question your strength of character,” “weakness limp, spineless,” “you are a yellow-bellied cowardly, left wing Communist,” and somewhat more eloquently, “People like you will pay no attention to anything but their own faint heart-beats and the quivering of their white livers or the pulsing of their yellow bellies.”

The remarks about the blacks were hardly more flattering and scarcely more original: crude, abusive common-place epithets, and hard-line advice. “I know what I would have done—I would have thrown every damn one of them out on their ear. What are you going to do if they demand to date your daughter?” “What we need to do, sooner or later, is to outlaw the NAACP, CORE, BLACK PANTHER, and other Racist groups just as we did the Communist party. I think they are more of a
threat to the country than the communists." "If nigger well-being is going to lead to the destruction of civilization through the form of integration, then I prefer the nigger perish rather than civilization."

I began to formulate a new definition of courage, demanded of me by my critics: to stand with the strong against the weak, to cry out against the oppressed who dare rebuke their oppressors.

It was the threats and demands of the blacks and my "cowardly" yielding that bugged people. And it was the angry commentary on this issue that, in retrospect, gave me a cue to the high valuation they unconsciously placed on athletics. They were not incensed by demands for non-discrimination in housing or for better personnel policies, or for elimination of discriminatory practices generally—some of them tried to placate me by declaring their support of these demands. But cancellation of the football game? "Why in the hell didn't you contact the police?" "You should have solicited aid from our Governor . . . I am an ex-marine and have bought a revolver and shells, I am not afraid!" When a deeply held value is threatened, and particularly when it is threatened by those already defined and hated as enemy, the primordial drive takes over and men do not ask for facts, they do not even ask if there are facts. And so they were unmindful of the fact that the blacks did not ask for cancellation of the game, they were indisposed to learn that the police were fully mobilized, that the Governor's special riot squad had been alerted, and that the police themselves, knowledgeable in the behavior of hysterical mobs, were among the first to advise cancellation.

Even among these first writers I noted, again in retrospect, the tendency to intermingle the values of patriotism and athletics: "To Americans who uphold the integrity of our nation and its constitution—are we becoming so cravenly 'liberal' that we fear to defend our homes and selves against criminals and baboons?"

But it was the next series of events, the threats of black athletes to boycott the Olympics, that made clear how inextricably bound together are athletics and patriotism. Tommie Smith, holder of several world's records in the dashes and a student at San Jose State College, apparently precipitated the crisis. Badgered by a reporter in Tokyo in the late summer of 1967, he admitted that he might boycott the Olympics. Whether Smith had thought about a boycott or whether the reporter suggested the idea to him, I do not know. But Smith had reason to be angry. A handsome, personable, and competent young man, who ought to be esteemed as a person, he is valued chiefly for his incredible speed. That is a common fate for athletes, as Housman said so poignantly: "early though the laurel grows, it withers quicker than the rose." But for the black sprinter the withering scarcely waits the breaking of the tape. And for Tommie, among other indignities, that meant the denial to him and his bride of an apartment near the college—because they are black.
But, as I remarked earlier, reason does not stay the primordial urge. Tommie and his bride were still freshly bruised from apartment hunting when I received the first angry letter, *Olympics Booster* decal attached: “Your College or any other College in this land of ours does *not* need Tommie Smiths. In fact, our Country must now take a stand and tell these blackmailers, these hippies, and these traitors that we will not tolerate this.... Our young people must learn patriotism in our schools.”

Harry Edwards, then a popular instructor at the College and leader in the black student demonstration, took up the Olympics boycott issue, made forays into college athletics programs and engineered a trial-run boycott of the New York Athletic Club. Edwards did not have to search for grievances—they leaped out to him from nearly every dressing room and playing field in organized athletics, amateur or professional, as evidenced later by a well documented series in *Sports Illustrated*. The threatened boycott was a painful experience, not simply from the searing of the conscience, but from the sickening fear that without the black athletes, America would make a poor showing in the Olympics.

That Edwards is a responsible leader and an able negotiator for the betterment of blacks are hidden by the fact that he is also a fiery militant. His unrestrained denunciation of whites, his angry threats or warnings, his towering presence—he is 6 feet 8 inches tall—frighten whites and evoke passionate, aggressive responses all of which complicate the problem of appraisal. Not one of my correspondents noted that *The New York Times* credited him with keeping the athletic club boycott non-violent; few conceded that there was a problem of discrimination against black athletes; many pointed with injured pride to the fact that athletics was the one segment in our society where a black man could succeed through his ability. Their attacks and their demands that I fire Edwards were focused on his militancy, on conduct unbecoming a college teacher. But through much of it came the unmistakably anguished scream against one who would tamper with athletics, particularly with that nearly sacred festival of Olympus. Old Zeus must find some satisfaction in his staying power.

The climax came in Mexico City when Tommie Smith and John Carlos in record-breaking time won first and third in the 200-meter dash. With gold and bronze medals suspended from their necks, they stood on the victory box. As the flag ran up the mast and the band played the Star Spangled Banner, they dropped their chins and raised gloved fists in what was afterwards identified as the Black Panther salute. The American public, triumphant, but a little apprehensive, watched the ceremony from their TV screens. Whether they were at once shocked and angered by the incident or whether the shock and anger followed the news reports, I cannot say. But the anger seemed to mount, not antiphonally but by response of one agent to another, TV to public to press and back.
The night of his victory, I heard Tommie Smith, calm and unangered, explain on television the meaning of his action: it was symbolic, his gloved fist, power in black America; the gloved fist of John Carlos, black unity; the scarf, the beauty of blackness; and the socks, black poverty. His friends in Black America, he said, would understand what he meant. The reporter baited him. Black America? Wasn't he an American? Smith stood his ground, a slight edge in his voice: he was a “Black American.”

I regretted the incident, but I regretted far more the fact of the “other” America, the one to which Smith and Carlos and most of the other blacks belong, because whites have closed the gates, have failed to make America one country open to all of its people. I wondered what went into that defiant gesture: poverty, hunger, despair, not abstractions but concrete experiences. Doors slammed on blackness, loved ones crushed by the meanness of mean people whose only claim to assumed superiority was their whiteness. Success, and adulation, yes, and the right to dream of a gold medal, but along with idolatry on the track, contempt on the streets. I thought of the few blacks in the generations past who have broken the barrier, chiefly in entertainment and sports, of the narrow corridors of their acceptance, of the thin trickle of followers, and of the many who aspired but didn’t make it. And I saw in Smith and Carlos the new breed, young blacks who are not satisfied with personal achievement in the prescribed channels of a white man’s world but who are going to take their black brothers with them, who are determined to rip open the conventional barriers that the white man erects to abridge his own creed and law.

But even in this unhappy reminder of our flaws, I found reason to be proud of our country and to hope for its future—proud that the flag these young men defied protected them in their defiance. “Only in America,” one cartoonist captioned his drawing. The thought did not occur to me at once, however. The patriotic theme was injected later. When the incident occurred, one of the other black athletes was quick to insist that it was “in no way intended to be an insult to the American flag.” In his interview immediately after the race Smith did not mention the flag. What he and Carlos thought or intended I do not know. I suspect that they did not anticipate the depth or strength of the emotional springs they had plumbed. The American public howled in rage. In the celebration of two of their preeminent values, country and athletics conjoined, the sacred ritual had been interrupted, the symbol defiled.

But I get ahead of my story. I regretted the incident as a breach of accepted conduct and understood when the United Sates Olympics Committee apologized to the Mexican government and people, although the language and the reasoning troubled me. Thirty hours later, the American committee, responding to pressure from the International
Olympics Committee (which Avery Brundage headed), suspended the athletes. "Politics," said Brundage. Said the American committee, "unusual exhibitionism... that violates the basic standards of sportsmanship and good manners..." But no reference was made to the presumed offense to the flag or disrespect for the national anthem. And at that moment not a word of the ugly rumor of suspected bribery. Because the athletes were students at my college, I released a statement to the press, protesting the moralistic ambiguities of the committee's statement, praising the men for their achievement and for their dedication to justice for black people. I expressed regret that our treatment of black athletes had prompted the demonstration.

Once more the storm broke, dozens of letters, some strongly supportive, some abusive, most of them angry protests against my support of men who had violated the ceremony and dishonored the flag. I confess that it is difficult for me to understand why so few looked behind the gesture of disrespect, why so many found easy explanation in bad manners, ingratitude, un-Americanism, boorishness, and contempt for law and order.

One could say that theirs was a reflex judgment, or lack of judgment, based on the assumption that those honored will accept their honors in humility and gratitude—a convention not lightly to be dismissed among those who must live together.

Or one might say, as I said at the outset, that athletics has taken on a unique sanctity, that it is a transfigured value, a form of worship, its ritual prescribed. Who violates its ceremonies invites the wrath of the faithful. True, but superficial. How did athletics achieve its transcendent character? By what process was it made so evocative of wrath or rapture? By its identification with patriotism? Good, but not enough, as the bums or heroes of any Saturday afternoon's ball game can testify.

I have thought much about this matter in recent months. That passion is involved we cannot deny. Athletics provides both an outlet for the raw passion and the means to tame or sublimate the instinctual rawness. People are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, Freud argued. Rather, they are endowed with a powerful instinct for aggressiveness and destruction; they are tempted to direct aggression against their neighbor, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to torture or kill him. Civilization brings human passions more or less under control by directing them into acceptable forms or towards an approved object, say an enemy. Civilization achieves control by elaborate codes of conduct, rules and regulations which, if internalized, become the conscience. Thus is added to the rules of conduct a self-regulating agent, a sense of guilt or shame.

Athletics is society's most effective means of civilizing aggression. Under what other circumstances could a man wave a stick or hurl a
round, hard missile at another without evoking anger and retaliation? Where else would he dare strike an opponent a crushing blow with his shoulder or grab a running man around the legs and haul him to the ground? Or where else could he chase a man, overtake and pass him at top speed, break a slender thread with his out thrust chest and claim a glorious victory? And the spectators, full-throated, join in the battle, identify with this man or that, the blue-jerseyed team or the red, and emerge, victor or vanquished, their passions purged, their bodies limp but unbruised. It is a great feeling, a cleansing and a healing, even in the remorse of defeat. I have experienced it and liked it, as competitor and spectator, and I shall go back for more.

All of this required an elaborate code and unending hours of reward and punishment necessary to instill the code in the conscious and unconscious behavior of the players. Coaches take over for parents in the development of the superego—instructions, pep talks, off-the-cuff lectures, man-to-man talks, father and son banquets with guest speakers on morals and manners and the will to win—not rules of the game only, but conduct off and on the field, etiquette, behavior reflecting proper attitude, "good sportsmanship," control the temper, smile when discouraged or beaten, give credit to opponents who win, be modest in victory, be courteous and respectful to officials. And the do nots: do not crow, do not grandstand, don't blame the officials, don't alibi, don't play dirty, don't use insulting or profane language, don't break the training rules. And for the spectators: may the best team win, or, root for the underdogs—as long as they have a chance! Primordial passion, sublimated and held in delicate balance by potential punishment and guilt.

There are exceptions, known only to the devotees of sport. "Nice guys never win," is OK if you're professional and winning; eye-ball to eye-ball is an acceptable pantomime for a professional out on a close call; and an exchange of punches at the line adds color and excitement to the football game—if the officials don't see it. In general the rule is, the more important the contest and the younger and more nearly amateur the contestants, the greater the crowd's insistence on good sportsmanship and the more certain its disapproval of any breach in the code.

The emotion of athlete and spectator alike is heightened by the intermingling of values: athletics, religion, and patriotism. The opening ceremony at games (or presentation of awards at the Olympics) is patriotic in the playing of the national anthem and the raising of the flag. It is religious in the ritual. And if, as in religion, the ritual is drained of its content by repetition, the form is there to be flooded with meaning and emotion when a crisis is at hand—a play-off or a championship game. Then the solemn ceremony becomes a petition, not always unarticulated, or at the Olympics, an exaltation. The crowd's loyalty to school or town is patriotism when the team represents country, and victory is not
merely a show of strength and skill and luck but of pride in school or love of country. The crowd is amused when the athlete fortifies his will to win by superstitious behavior, the carrying of a rabbit's foot, the wearing of a lucky shirt, or the touching of every fifth picket on the fence. But so closely is good sportsmanship, honest winning, associated with religion that the crowd responds with a resonant amen when it is told that a certain athlete draws on a Higher Power "not to win" but "to do his best."

And thus we have exalted athletics. And thus we have written meaning into the code—identified gesture with the values we cherish—and overlaid it with sentiment and explosive emotion. How then could we understand Tommie Smith and John Carlos? How could we separate out the magnificent victory from the breach of ceremony? How honor achievement when subsequent behavior violated the ritual? We could keep the medals, of course, and count them in the country's total, and we did. But how could we search out the meaning, how discover the anguish behind the gesture, how find the firm hard line that marks the limits of a black athlete's entry into the white world, how could we see the line when the whole of our vision was focused on the fantasy of a gloved fist tearing asunder the stripes of the flag?

That should be explanation enough for the violent reaction to the cancelling of a football game, for the anger evoked by a threat to boycott the Olympics, explanation enough for the outcry against the demonstration on the victory stand. I wish it were. But it is not.

Some of the letters addressed to me were vulgar, profane outbursts of those whose rancor and hatred of another race are without shame. Others were from those who, prompted by their love for and pride in the college, feared that my support of Smith and Carlos would invite criticism and undermine public support. Innocent though they may be of any thoughtful reflection on what a college is or ought to be, they were loyal and sincere people, whose criticism might have been directed against a white as well as against a black. It is a third group, much larger, that worries, even frightens me. Quite as sincere as the others in their desire to protect the college, they are more complex, more disguised in their responses. They protest too much. They are, in their own words, unprejudiced. They would not stoop to the profane and obscene language of the uninhibited racist. But one marvels that the urbane could be so infuriated by disrespectful behavior at an athletic contest. One begins to probe for the brooding, explosive tension that must be discharged through socially approved channels. And one is moved to ask: is the furious assault on poor sportsmanship and unpatriotic behavior the displacement for deep-seated aggression against the blacks? It is a disturbing possibility.

We cannot psychoanalyze a whole nation. But can we, by calling attention to the meaning of their behavior, awaken a dominant society to a more meaningful response? Can we direct their attention to the agony
behind the defiance of the black? Can we engage their enormous motive power in constructive action? I do not know. But we must try.

Note

THE training center in the oil refinery where I taught consisted of a group of prefabricated units, each constructed in squares around an open space with a stand tap in the middle. The spaces were the size of a suburban garden and were usually left bare although one was given over to the cultivation of sunflowers, watermelons, and sweetcorn. This garden was tended by the Libyans whose job it was to keep the training center clean. In the block where I worked my staff room looked out on the central square.

Every afternoon at about three, the cleaner would take off his overalls and wash himself at the stand tap before praying dressed in cotton trousers, shirt, and tagiyah (an embroidered cap which devout Muslims wear at all times). It cannot be claimed that he kept the block particularly clean. Indeed when the smell of the staff room dustbin and the number of cigarette butts on the floor became so great that we complained, loud arguments would be heard between his supervisor and him. It could have been that he objected to sweeping up after infidels or that, as for long stretches of the day we appeared to be doing nothing, he felt that we should clean up the mess ourselves. But the truth of the matter was that he was old and illiterate and occupied his job because of revolutionary policy rather than national or personal need.

During my two years in Libya, from 1980 to 1982, I was to find much that was reflective of this desire to get Libyans working and controlling the industries essential to their economy. It resulted in inefficiency certainly and for foreign western workers an infuriating inconsistency in attitudes toward completing work within a given time.

I was hired by the Azzawiya Oil Refinery Company to teach English in its training center. The refinery is located 50 kilometers west of Tripoli near the town of Zawia which means "angle" in Arabic. The bleakness of
the name is reflected in the jerry-built apartment blocks and the sharp contrast of light and shadow in this entirely new town stuck on the side of the North African highway. Sometimes a surface-to-air missile was located outside the refinery and sometimes a mobile radar dish, too. At such times walking along the coast was a tricky business.

In Libya there seem to be three alternatives for male school leavers. If they are extremely bright and graduate from high school with good grades, they can go to university and study medicine, agriculture, engineering, or other subjects directly relevant to the economy. English is taught at university as an aid to study abroad rather than as a discipline in itself. Secondly, school leavers can train in the oil industry. Foreign oil companies such as Exxon, Mobil, Oasis, and Occidental used to be required by the Ministry of Heavy Industry to undertake training programs with the objective of replacing foreign management and technicians with Libyan personnel. With the collapse of oil production to a quarter of its 1970s level and Libya’s international troubles, training has languished. My last report from the refinery was that half-a-dozen English teachers remained from the 20 or so who worked with me between 1980 and 1982. In the training center the intake for a two-year course numbered 240 and there were plans to double this by having a new entry every year. I cannot vouch for the foreign oil companies, but at Azzawiya there was a selection procedure involving written examinations and interviews. The Libyans developed this process themselves, following an unsatisfactory first entry of students whose sole object in attending the center seemed to be to avoid the third alternative for the Libyan school graduate; that is, military service.

I have been told that military service is of five years’ duration. While I was there, Libya’s involvement in Chad’s civil war intensified and Libya also carried out border raids on the Sudan. Some of my students would disappear for long weekends and I would be told, privately, that a brother or cousin had been killed. Libyan losses, then, may have been a matter for conjecture; but the frequency of bereaved relatives among my students and the anxiety they showed to remain at the center, with its perk of military exemption cards, showed that military life was something to be feared. One of my students vanished from the course and went to train as an airline pilot. This, I learned, was due to family influence or “wasta,” the vital element for promotion, good jobs and what-have-you in all Arab countries.

Many of my students were related to each other, a reflection of the extended nature of the Arab family. Certain students were pre-eminent because of family connections with important officials, although there were occasions when a student attempted to use “wasta” and was firmly put in his place by the uncle or cousin he was importuning.

At times it seemed to me that my first year was a matter of survival.
among a collection of draft-dodgers. There was a lack of motivation, and a teacher survived by sheer force of personality or a willingness to accommodate himself to large-scale absenteeism. Disciplinary procedures were a joke as the Libyan administration, either through tender-heartedness or collusion, was unwilling to dismiss a student. At the Ras Lanuf site between Tripoli and Benghazi, for which we supplied students who would become refinery trainees, a harsher regime prevailed. Trainees who tried to avoid work were threatened with instant dismissal and the army was alerted to their impending availability. A recruiting officer would wait at the gates when the disgraced trainee was due to emerge. Unsurprisingly, trainees with connections in Azzawiya tried to return to work there.

Military Training for All

Every Libyan, including women, is given some sort of military training at school. People working on the refinery had to spend evenings drilling outside the center and learning how to fire, dismantle, and assemble a Kalashnikov automatic rifle. Every male Libyan employee had to do a stint of guard duty on the refinery gates. Despite training, they were not very efficient. After an elderly shepherd had been shot by accident, it was rumored that the guards were not to be issued ammunition from then on. If American forces had raided the refinery then, they would have been faced with empty guns and, not knowing the difference, would perhaps have massacred the entire militia. Probably the bullets are back in the guns now. However, one wonders just how effective even a fully armed Libyan militia would be against a professional western force, given the cursory nature of the training. One also wonders how aware American servicemen are of the nature of their potential opposition.

Recently an ex-colleague of mine, who is working in Mallorca, spent an evening with a sailor from the aircraft carrier “Admiral Nimitz.” The man was wearing a T-shirt with the legend “I crossed the line of death” and reacted without humour and some bewilderment when my colleague teased him after saying “I lived behind the line of death for two years.” Civil Libyan reactions to various incidents which have damaged Libya’s diplomatic standing in the west are generally of the nature, “You are my guest in my country and my friend, but your government has done a bad thing.” Ex-patriate reactions in Libya, particularly British, vary between scorn at their government’s position and outright fury when they consider that their lucrative jobs in Libya might be in danger as opposed to propaganda that their lives might be in danger. American workers probably feel the same way.

At Christmas in 1981 I boarded a flight to London from Tripoli consisting of British and American workers homeward bound for a Christ-
mas holiday. The Britishers were smiling, but the Americans looked very
glum, as President Ronald Reagan had just declared it illegal for Ameri­
cans to use their passports for entry into Libya. Their gloom was no doubt
intensified by increasingly raucous renditions of “Land of Hope and
Glory” and “Britannia Rules the Waves.” However three weeks later
when I returned, the same American faces were to be seen on the aircraft,
this time not so glum. When I talked to them they explained that “a way
had been found round President Reagan’s edict.”

The attempt, however cursory, to train every Libyan in some form of
military skill is the result of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi’s desire to make
all Libyans responsible for their society, on the one hand, and, on the
other, to make the maximum use of a small population in defending Libya
against larger potential enemies such as Egypt and the U.S.A. In 1981, the
U.S.A. was rumored to be seeking military facilities in Tunisia and
recently, following the raid on Libya, was exercising the Sixth fleet with
Egyptian forces in the Gulf of Sirte which is claimed by Gaddafi as a
Libyan zone of exclusive influence and through which he has drawn his
“line of death.”

The collaboration of the Egyptians is both inevitable and ironic. It is
inevitable because relations between Egypt and Libya have never been
good, particularly after the Camp David agreement. On the day after
Egypt’s President Anwar Sadat was assassinated, I went home on
holiday; while I waited at Tripoli airport, the public television showed the
shooting over and over again. It is ironic because Gaddafi models him­
self on the Egyptian Arab nationalist leader, Gamal Abdul Nasser. One
might be fanciful and draw a parallel between Nasser and Gaddafi and
Karl Marx and Karl Kautsky, the German economist of the generation
following Marx. As with Kautsky, nothing that Gaddafi has said or done
deviates from the original revolutionary plans of his mentor. Nasser
played off Soviet aid against western aid. Gaddafi employs American and
European technicians to run the oil industry and, at present, Eastern
European personnel to train his professional military.

In 1956, Nasser’s style and rhetoric were such as to lead the British
Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, to describe him as another Hitler. Eden
believed his own rhetoric with disastrous consequences in the Suez
crisis. President Reagan also appeared to believe his own rhetoric but had
the advantage of being powerful enough to take effective action. Eden’s
tragedy was that he failed to understand the potency of Arab nationalism
at the time. Reagan’s error might be to misunderstand an Arab leader
who sees himself as Nasser’s heir and to take action which might
temporarily lead to a change of regime but which would do nothing to
stop the problem of Arab terrorists—or “commandos,” depending which
side of the fence one sits on. Palestinian forces actively engaged in such
activities would simply go elsewhere, to Iran possibly or eventually back
to Egypt, should the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism prove lasting. Arab nationalism is a Hydra and Reagan no Hercules.

Salience of Land Redistribution

Within Libya, Nasserite policies have been followed with regard to education, health, housing, food subsidies, and the redistribution of land. This last is of particular importance within the context of Arab nationalism. It is, firstly, a reaction against absentee landlords who lived off rents. Secondly, it served to remove a large, Italian farming population who cultivated the coastal strip west of Tripoli; and, thirdly, it was a response to events in Palestine before the inauguration of Israel.

Jews gained ownership of land in Palestine in the 25 years preceding 1947 by purchasing it from wealthy Arab families who lived off the rents of tenant farmers. It is their descendants who form the core of Palestinian resistance to the state of Israel. Both Nasser and Gaddafi, as self-proclaimed Arab revolutionaries, could not help being consistent and undertaking some form of land redistribution, not to prevent a Zionist takeover but to prevent similar control by groups whose economic interests would be inimical to Arab self-determination. And, of course, land reform preserved Nasser's and Gaddafi's constituency among the peasant core of Arab nationalism.

It is interesting to observe how Israel's diplomacy manages to exploit this still existing division in Middle East society. Arms are sold to the seemingly fanatic republic of Iran. However Iran's administration is held together by the competence of a merchant class not averse to enriching itself. Businessmen from the Gulf states regularly visit Israel and admire the way of life there. The current President of Egypt, Mohammed Husni Mubarak, has even closed down the offices of the P.L.O. in Cairo in order to strengthen his relationship with Israel. Gaddafi himself, without being guilty of the corruption present in other Middle East countries, reflects the contradictions which result from the difference between rhetoric and reality. At one time he overtly supported both Iran and Iraq in their war.

It cannot be claimed that Nasser's and Gaddafi's land reforms have been remotely successful in economic terms. Indeed in Egypt, the loss of fertility of the Nile delta consequent upon the regulation of the Nile's waters by the Aswan dam and the inertia consequent upon a system of small holdings have led to the collapse of a large part of Egypt's cash crop economy. In Libya, the political consequences of land reform are more important than the economic. With a small population of two and half millions and a high per capita income due to oil production, Libya can import all the food she needs. Also Gaddafi has insured against the possible failure of Libya's small holders to make Libya agriculturally self-
sufficient by undertaking large-scale projects in barren areas particularly in the south of Libya around Sebha. These are managed by state-appointed administrators, worked by foreign peasant labour from Iran and Turkey, and the expertise is provided by westerners.

Many landless nomads have been settled, while larger landowners have lost land. Redistribution has been a rather rigidly applied policy. One family I visited had 200 hectares (500 acres) before the revolution and protected themselves against loss by parcelling it out among sons and brothers or by selling portions of it. The widow of the original owner is now reduced to tending a herd of sheep on her eldest son’s land. However the original holding was not particularly massive. A second family had no land before the revolution. I was shown around their citrus orchards and olive groves, planted by the Italians who had held it before them. The head of the household let his sons tend the trees and stared bemusedly from his porch all day long. They had another piece of land where the desert proper began. There they tried to grow potatoes and watermelon.

The policy has strengthened grassroots support for Gaddafi in the Tripoli region, which has no oil deposits. The siting of the refinery at Zawia was to balance production between Tripoli and Benghazi in whose hinterland are the oil-fields. The deposed King Idris came from the Benghazi region, and consequently there is more opposition to Gaddafi, whose policies have reduced the wealth of many Benghazi families. Criticism of him can be quite open. Once in a class a student said that all Gaddafi’s projects had been started under the regime of King Idris and that Gaddafi had merely taken the credit. The rest of the class argued violently with him. As my Arabic was limited, I did not understand the substance of the arguments. They could have been telling him to shut up or they could have been answering him point for point. However, given that Libya is not a democracy as the West would understand it, the student was perhaps being extremely foolhardy. He disappeared from the course to train as a dentist in Yugoslavia, another case of the operation of “wasta.”

Alleged Atrocities

I heard many stories of atrocities against dissidents ranging from the paranoid fantasies of an English ex-patriate, who claimed to have been led into an aircraft hanger following a driving test and shown a row of hanged men, to the cooler reporting of an English literary figure, Anthony Thwaite, who has contacts with both Libyan exiles and Libyan foreign service officials. My surmise is that tyranny is probably a haphazard affair in Libya and that the number of real horrors is at least sometimes exaggerated. Libya is not an “evil empire,” but a small country whose inhabitants are bound together in extended families in turn
forming tribes. Action taken or considered against a Libyan is subject to the pressure of the tribe; drastic action such as execution would invite the possibility of a blood feud. In his “Green Books,” Gaddafi shows himself to be well aware of tribal constraints and, indeed, has used the tribe as a component in his political thinking. There were executions and these would be announced on television. They would be for crimes such as embezzlement and drug trading. In 1981 one such announcement gave a figure of more than 100 sentences for dealing, possession, and smoking of hashish. Of these 100 no more than a few were executed, some received prison sentences ranging from 20 to 7 years, but most were released after “promising not to repeat the crime.”

Gaddafi himself is a devout Muslin and personally led raids into night clubs during the early years of his regime. Under the application of Sharia law in Saudi Arabia, crimes perceived as corrupting to society, such as drug dealing, are punishable by death. Similarly, embezzlement, which is the theft of money held in trust, is a social crime. The justifying text in the Holy Qu’ran refers to “The punishment for those who fight against God and his Messenger and cause disaster in the land is (1) to be slain (2) to be crucified (3) to have their hands and feet cut off crossways (4) to be banished from the land.” Fourteen hundred years ago this reasoning applied to the highway robbery prevalent in the Arabian peninsula. Embezzlement and drug trading were unknown.

No assessment of Gaddafi can be a balanced one without taking into account his religious faith. In this light the treatment of erring ex-patriates could be described as moderate. During my time, two Englishmen were fired for persistent drunkenness, but only after they had turned up to work intoxicated. As they were employed as supervisors on the refinery, everyone was fortunate that their condition caused no accident. Another English refinery worker drove his car into a ditch after a wild party in which he had consumed the illegally distilled “siddiki” and smoked the weed heavily. The police gave him three days in a cell.

Ex-patriates were usually imprisoned for currency scams, bad debts, or homosexuality. Personal vengeance is often a cause of conviction and punishment for the last. A gay colleague gave a party in which a Libyan student injured him with a bottle in his face after argument over a mutual boy friend. The student was sent to the army, and my colleague was cosseted in the hospital despite the Libyans’ being aware of the facts.

It would be unfair to call into question Terry Waite’s efforts in obtaining the release of the four British hostages from Libya in 1984. But one of them, Alan Russell, was an Englishman whose contract as an English teacher at the refinery overlapped slightly with mine. It was reported to me that at the time of his arrest, he had been without papers for a month—not a good idea—and had been interviewing people on the streets in Tripoli with a cassette recorder about their opinions on life in Libya. This
would be unremarkable in England, but in Libya such behavior would be
devoid of common sense, particularly as Britain had just broken off
diplomatic relationships with Libya following the London embassy
killing.

Apart from taking the sensible precaution of avoiding attempts at
amateur journalism or opinion polls, we felt remarkably free from con­
straint. Travel, for example, was relatively easy except in the eastern
desert regions where the oil fields are located and on the borders with
Egypt. People working there had to have a special pass. In favourable
contrast to Saudi Arabia where people must have a permit to travel
outside their city of residence, I could hitchhike almost anywhere. Once a
Libyan went a hundred miles out of his way to drop me off at the
city of Homs beside the ruins of Lepcis Magna. In addition, “group” taxis would
travel long distances for one dinar (about $3.50).

Travel Easy

This ease of travel was a boon, as private cars were almost impossible to
buy, a state of affairs reflective of certain constraints resulting from the
mismanagement of the Libyan economy. This is not to say that Libya is
unique in the restrictions it places on foreign ownership of transport. In
Saudi Arabia, the private ownership of large four-wheel drive vehicles
such as the G.M.C. Suburban is now limited to Saudi nationals; and in
Qatar, permission must be sought from the Chief of Police for a foreigner
to own anything larger than a coupe. The nationalistic impulse and a
desire to reduce the horrific accident rates in both these countries are
accentuated in Libya by economic conditions.

Redistribution of land is only part of the attempt to distribute all the
gains from economic activity evenly among the population. Salaries in
1982 ranged from $5,000 a year for students at the refinery to $25,000 for
the highest paid manager. While I was there, the salaries of refinery
employees were actually reduced to bring them in line with the salaries of
government officials. Foreign western workers are much better paid,
with Americans, West Germans, Swiss, and French at the top of the heap.
In my second year, I received about $40,000 before taxes, plus free
housing, services, and three plane tickets a year, an average remunera­
tion for a foreigner.

Libyan salaries are not a true reflection of their standard of living. Food
is subsidized, a common feature of Arab countries, and land redistribu­
tion has meant that each adult male is entitled to 50 acres. Our cleaner
would work his land when he was not dozing at the training center; and
he would use his family as labour and sell his surplus produce. His
farming activities were subsidized with free machinery, seed, and fer­
tiliser. Each adult male is entitled to a house large enough for his whole
family although no Libyan can own more than one house.

Just what ownership in Libya exactly means is open to conjecture. In 1985, there was a public bonfire of title deeds in Tripoli to signal the end of private ownership. This event, however, could have more significance in the gesture than in the fact. The burnt title deeds could have dated from before the revolution, in which case they would have contained a majority of foreign owners. There is little doubt that Libyan smallholders expect to hand on their farms to an heir. Public housing has been built in the large cities, but the nomad population for which it was intended has failed to occupy it. So there are large blocks which are simply empty and rapidly becoming derelict.

Finally, in addition to land, free housing, and subsidized food, Libyans also receive free medicine and education up to and including the university level. Taxation for all this is on a sliding scale and, with a Social Security contribution of three and a half per cent plus a Jihad (Holy War) tax of three per cent for the PLO, total taxes worked out at between 15 and 20 per cent. All workers, Libyan and foreign, paid these taxes; so that, in 1981, 5,000 British citizens were contributing about $1,000 a year to the PLO and the smaller American contingent of 1,000 possibly 50 percent more per head. With the involvement of Occidental Oil in Libya in the form of OxyLibya, it can be said that Armand Hammer has given a substantial contribution to the PLO. Of course, western workers employed by Occidental would be paid outside Libya and therefore could not be said to have paid Jihad, which was not the case with Libyans or other Arab nationalities working for OxyLibya.

In addition, we were supposed to spend in Libya ten per cent of what remained of our salary. As food was subsidized, it was, in fact, difficult to spend this much money there. However, up to 1983, the Libyans were inclined to overlook how much one had retained in the country. After this date, when the economy receded further, the Libyan banks became more insistent on the regulations being observed. Several teachers who remained on at the refinery had to leave small sums behind in Libya, ranging from between $500 and $1000.

40 Per Cent Demanded

Other Muslim nationalities including Palestinians, Jordanians, and Sudanese could only export 60 per cent of their residual salaries. In addition they had to pay rent, electricity, and water rates. Many Palestinians had settled in Libya, not as part of an army but as teachers, technicians, and professionals such as doctors. They have nowhere else to go, particularly if they originate from the Gaza strip. One of my colleagues was out of Israel during the 1967 war and was deprived of his citizenship. He held a kind of Egyptian passport and had not seen his parents for 14 years; he
was unable to enter Israel, they could not leave and return afterwards. Filippino nurses are employed in the hospitals. In 1982, they had two-year contracts without leave and earned approximately half the lowest Libyan wage. I lived in a free flat with three bedrooms, a sitting room, bathroom, and kitchen. The nurses had free flats but without a sitting room and usually sleeping three to a bedroom. Sometimes they would be without water inside their flats.

I lived in a purpose-built village beside the refinery. On the other side were stone quarries worked by Tunisians and Baluchis. They could earn reasonable money if they broke their backs and cut 3,000 blocks of stone a week, which required a 12-hour day for five days a week in conditions where the temperatures could reach 110°F in the afternoon. Payment was about four piastres a block (about 13 cents). The stone workers lived in the quarries in small shacks without light or water. The rock shelf next to the sea below the quarries was covered in human excrement.

The hierarchy that these examples reveal is common in the Middle East. It could be said that the economic stringencies already effective in Libya in 1982 prefigured similar conditions now present in all Middle East countries. Baluchis, South Asians, and Yemenis are the “wetbacks” of the Middle East.

Some of the trainees drove trucks to transport stone to building sites. They tripled their wages in this way. “Black work” increased in Libya as the Peoples’ Committee (Libya's form of democracy) closed down small businesses and shops. The purpose of this closure was to increase the labor available to Libya’s core economic activities which, as well as oil, include a steel industry and the large scale agricultural projects in the Fezzan in the south in desert previously uncultivated or else uncultivated since ancient times. This policy was so successful that the only visible entrepreneurs were the taxi drivers of Tripoli whose fares for sole use of their vehicles were outlandish. Students also used to work on the side as taxi drivers.

Shops were put out of business by supermarkets which sell goods at wholesale prices. The small shopkeeper cannot compete. The idea is to eliminate profits. Fruit, vegetables, and meat are sold directly from the farms by farmers driving in their Peugeot pick-ups and setting up shop in the traditional market place. Official policy is to collect all local produce and sell it at government prices from a central point. The farmers contrive to evade this. In the supermarkets there is a combination of inefficiency and haphazard distribution which is not helped by pilfering. There are tales of trucks arriving with a quarter of their original load. In Tripoli the effects of this were plainly marked. The old souk, which used to be a pleasant source of goods from all over North Africa, is now empty and deserted.
The economic condition of Libya can be blamed on the policies of Gaddafi. When he spoke in May, 1987, about economic conditions in Libya, he did not accept responsibility. Instead, somewhat inconsistently, he blamed, first, the idleness of the Libyans and, then, the reduction in the demand for oil. Many of his policies repeat mistakes made by other Arab countries—for example, the parlous state of the Algerian economy induced by too-rapid industrialization without reference to either the needs of the Algerian economy or the state of the market. Libya has set up a steel industry which uses scrap metal as raw material. There is an ambitious scheme to create an artificial river using Libya’s reserves of artesian water. A French hydrologist informed me in 1978 that Libya’s water reserves were enormous.

The oil industry has diversified into refining and the production of conventional petroleum products such as ethylene, of which there is a world surplus. Saudi Arabia, for example, now seeks to include clauses in its commercial agreements with other countries where its useless ethylene is disposed of. Gaddafi’s influence on the Libyan economy perhaps exacerbated a recession. There is a nuclear power station at Dongwa and a $500 million investment in nuclear research in Pakistan. This, when Pakistan’s desire for military parity with India is considered together with Gaddafi’s international reputation, has led to rumors of Libya’s imminent acquisition of a nuclear capability.

Again, much of Libya’s overseas investment has parallels in other parts of the Middle East. The share in Fiat which Libya has been forced to relinquish, following the American raid and Libya’s shelling of the tiny island of Lampedusa, was like Kuwait’s share in the Germany company Opel. In terms of the whole economy, Gaddafi’s support for controversial groups is miniscule. Cash for the PLO is provided by the Jihad tax, and the hard evidence for support for the I.R.A. is limited to the seizure of arms in a boat off the Irish coast in 1973. Recently Gaddafi has reaffirmed support for groups such as the I.R.A. but whether this support is more than vocal is open to doubt. Gaddafi, however, does spend enormous sums on weaponry; for example, there is the agreement with the Soviet Union to purchase $12 billion worth of hardware. He has also pursued a policy aimed at the eventual creation of a Pan-Islamic state in North Africa with the long-drawn-out adventure in Chad and support for the Polisario movement in the Western Sahara against Morocco. Gaddafi funded Sadat’s war against Israel in 1973 and has concluded various unification agreements with Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria, none of which ever amounted to much.

With regard to Gaddafi’s support of extreme PLO groups, its extent and effectiveness are open to doubt. Yasser Arafat has kept Gaddafi at
arms’ length. Libya, like other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, supply the PLO with funds, but Gaddafi is too far away to lend much practical military support in the event of war. Given Gaddafi’s Pan-Islamic aspirations, his self-image as a “savior,” after Nasser had bestowed the soubriquet, and his feelings of duty to brother Arabs (perhaps the most misunderstood element in his make-up), he is bound to offer shelter, money, and even training ground.

Beyond that, anything said about Gaddafi’s PLO support is mostly conjecture. Hard evidence is limited. In 1981, there was action taken against opponents by Libyan embassies, by then turned into “People’s Bureaux.” A Libyan student reported to Anthony Thwaite that he had been held in prison for two days after failing to go on an official demonstration, and an English businessman described in The Guardian his torture in a Libyan prison. Amnesty International lists fewer than 100 victims of Gaddafi’s regime. The bombing in Berlin that provided casus belli for the Libyan raid seems to have been instigated by Syrians and Jordanians, one of whom was responsible for making his heavily pregnant Irish wife walk on to an El Al flight with a bomb.

The most serious incident laid directly to Gaddafi was the Libyan People’s Bureau shooting in London when a policewoman was killed by a Libyan bullet. Again, it is difficult to prove direct responsibility on Gaddafi’s part, especially if it is true, as he claims, that he has put his experimental democratic theory into practice.

The “Green Book”

Gaddafi’s “Green Book” advocates a democracy based on Peoples’ Committees which should include the whole population of a village. Decisions should be unanimous and arrived at publicly. In this theory, the ballot box encourages an opposing point of view so that the “General Will” of the people will only be representative of a majority rather than of the whole population. Those who see in this theory a formula for totalitarianism need also to consider that Gaddafi is writing for a people whose recent economic history is one of extreme scarcity. In 1959, Libya was listed among the ten poorest nations. Consequently, dissidence in these conditions leads to a quarrel over the means of existence and is therefore extremely dangerous. In the old tribal system, the “raìs” or leader of the community, wandering or settled, would make a decision after consultation with all responsible people. Gaddafi has tried to democratize this old custom.

Local communities have a certain amount of autonomy, although it must be observed that the decisions they make are on subjects initiated by the ruling group and also that Peoples’ Committees have no power over the armed forces or the oil industry.
A sceptic would observe that this exclusion of Peoples' Committees from decision-making in the country's economic and military base speaks for itself. But the Peoples' Committee style extends into Libya's foreign representation, so that it is not too hard to imagine that perhaps the London shootings were the result of a decision taken on the spot and not under instruction from Tripoli. Gaddafi himself is not all-powerful.

All Arabic countries, with the possible exception of Egypt under Mubarak, are ruled by families, be they monarchies or republics, which is one explanation for their relative stability. The isolated leader tends not to last long. Gaddafi derives support through relatives by marriage and his decisions are informed by these people. If Gaddafi is to be accused of being a mad dog, then Abdusalaam Jalloul, his deputy and former Prime Minister, must also be accused. In fact, Gaddafi's interviews with the foreign press are often lucid and not without charm or humour. When I was in a Tripoli bookstore, I noticed on sale a French translation of a political thriller, *The Fifth Horseman*, in which Gaddafi appears as the instigator of a plot to explode a nuclear device in New York unless certain political demands are met. I was told, perhaps apocryphally, that Gaddafi was reading it to improve his French. It may be that the avid fan of "Mission Impossible" in the White House would read it as a policy document.

Gaddafi's survival has always seemed to be in doubt, but not because support for him is tenuous. His reforms have provided Libya with a material security which, given the small population, persists despite recession. His more ambitious projects, such as the attempt to establish a heavy industry base, the agricultural and irrigation projects, and the large scale purchase of arms ($7,500 billion between 1970 and 1983 as compared with $6,800 billion by Egypt and $3,600 by Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco together) may not damage the economy irretrievably, because now the price of oil is beginning to recover. Libya has advantages in the type of light crude she produces and the ease of access by European countries.

Because of the nature of Islam, Gaddafi is committed—albeit at one remove—to permanent support for Palestinian aspirations. Muslim eschatology is bound up with the role of Israel in the Last Days. The Prophet Mohammed, Peace be on him, said that Israel should triumph in the face of Muslim disunity. The Last War is to be fought when Israel reaches Damascus. Given the contrasts of beliefs on the afterlife in Jewish and Muslim communities, one might almost say that Israel is fighting for the Promised Land, while the Palestinians are fighting for entry into Paradise. According to that view, the conflict is irreconcilable and Gaddafi in his heart of hearts is part of that irreconcilability.
There is a story current in the Middle East, which tells of Gaddafi just after he had gained power. An old woman saw him guarding his family’s sheep.

“Why are you doing this?” she asked.

“The prophets looked after sheep: Noah, Ibrahim, Musa, Issa, Mohammed, Peace be on them, they all looked after sheep. So what is wrong with it?”

The old woman cackled, “Do you think you are a prophet?”

“What do you think?” said Gaddafi.
The Moral Implications of Annie Phelan's Jell-O

Paul F. Griffin

Developmental psychologists tell us that a healthy personality comprises two elements: a sense of autonomy, a capacity to "stand on one's own two feet," and a sense of relationality, an ability to create and sustain relationships with other people. Carol Gilligan in her work on the connection between gender and personality has argued that an appreciation for the function of both these components, which operate quite differently and often come into conflict with one another, is essential to any full understanding of ourselves. She writes:

These disparate visions in their tension reflect the paradoxical truths of human experience—that we know ourselves as separate only insofar as we live in connection with others, and that we experience relationship only insofar as we differentiate other from self. (63)

Although Gilligan assigns equal roles to autonomy and relationality within the functioning of the human psyche, she asserts that in doing so she runs counter to the beliefs and traditions of our culture. She contends that we have come to see autonomy as a male trait and the capacity to foster relationships as a female characteristic. Given the patriarchal nature of our society, we have, she claims, therefore tended to undervalue this latter skill:

Woman's place in man's life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies. But while women have thus taken care of men, men have in their theories of psychological development, as in their economic arrangements, tended to assume or devalue that care. (17)
On many fronts, we are currently witnessing in our society a re-evaluation of this state of affairs. Using a view of human experience which takes into account both our capacity to distinguish ourselves as unique individuals and our success at establishing relationships with the world around us, thinkers in a wide spectrum of disciplines have created a new optic for examining almost every field of human endeavor. Evelyn Fox Keller, for example, has shown that to interact with the physical world for the purpose of understanding and co-existence rather than domination and manipulation calls for a new idea of science and the scientific method. Gilligan herself has argued that most of our scales for measuring moral development need revising because they reward the capacity for autonomous action and neglect the role of relationships in making ethical choices.

I want to consider here a recent novel which I think illustrates this re-examination of the cultural values of which Gilligan writes. I choose this work precisely because it is not a work of explicit "consciousness-raising," what the French would call a "thesis novel." It would be difficult to argue that the work is either overtly or tacitly "feminist"; indeed, the case could be made that the work is marked by a deep strain of misogyny. I turn to William Kennedy's 1983 novel Ironweed, then, to show the extent to which this work, almost despite itself, depicts a character who learns the limitations of basing his life entirely on his capacity to stand alone and so comes to revalue the relationships which bind him to the people around him.

The novel tells the story of Franny Phelan, a drifter who has abandoned his family and spent 22 years living "on the bum." Franny leads a hand-to-mouth existence on the road before returning to his hometown of Albany, New York, in 1938 and reconciling himself with his family. In telling the story of a hobo at the time of the Great Depression, Kennedy chooses a background which highlights the failure of past values to meet the economic and spiritual needs of his protagonist.

To understand the significance of Kennedy's treatment of this failure of value, we must first look more closely at the character of Franny Phelan. Franny is motivated by a strong desire to be on his own in the world and by an impulsive nature which causes him to flee from his family and loved ones. After his marriage, for example, he runs away from his old neighborhood to escape his mother who disapproves of his new wife. As a young man, he flees from Albany when he kills a scab during a trolley strike. Throughout the early part of his life, he leaves his family each summer to play pro baseball. Finally, in 1916, he takes to the road for good, after he accidentally drops his infant son and kills him. In his recollections, Franny lumps all these acts of flight together in his memories of his overpowering desire to leave home each year to play baseball:
He loved living with Annie and the kids, loved his sister Mary and half-loved his brothers Peter and Chick and his moron brother, Tommy, who all came to visit him at his house when he was no longer welcome at theirs. He loved and half-loved lots of things about Albany. But then one day it's February again, And it won't be long until the snow gets gone again, And the grass comes green again, And then the dance music rises in Francis' brain, And he longs to flee again, And he flees. (147)

On the road, Franny's capacity for autonomy manifests itself primarily in acts of irrationality and violence. In the course of the novel he remembers numerous incidents in which he has fought and struggled with other drifters and been cut and maimed by them. At one point he looks down at his hands and feels they have an evil power of their own which has led him to hurt and even to kill other people:

Francis' hands, as he looked at them now, seemed to be messengers from some outlaw corner of his psyche, artificers of some involuntary doom element in his life. He seemed now to have always been the family killer; for no one else he knew of in the family had ever lived as violently as he. And yet he had never sought that kind of life. (145)

In fleeing from the consequences of his actions and of his own violent nature, Franny tries to lose himself in the rootless existence of a bum. He wants to be an outsider, apart from the world. He prefers to be what the narrator calls a “social maggot” because his separation from the world in his mind confirms his guilt for killing the scab and his son and for being impulsive. He wants there to exist an order in the universe which will allow him to bring upon himself public punishment for what he has done and what he has been. Because he cannot control the events in his life, Franny seeks to remove himself altogether from his family and from society; he exerts his autonomy by acting in a way that assures that the world will condemn him.

Eventually Franny tires of his life on the road, however, because he remains dissatisfied and restless. He does not understand this insight on any abstract level, but instead feels it as a failure to establish any lasting bonds with the people whom he meets. He has tried to convince himself that there exists a camaraderie of the road, a moral code among those whom society has made outsiders. But finally he realizes that he has no real connection with these other drifters whom he meets along the way.
He sees that the status of outcast which he has imposed on himself will not provide him with a standard of conduct by which he can live:

By their talk to each other they understood that they shared a belief in the brotherhood of the desolate; yet in the scars in their eyes they confirmed that no such fraternity had ever existed. (23-4)

For Francis, life on the road fails to fulfill an unarticulated need for solid, sustained relationships with others. Even his common-law marriage to Helen, a fellow vagrant with whom he lives for nine years, leaves him unfulfilled, because their interaction is motivated not by a sense of mutual dependence but by their shared need to maintain their isolation from others. Helen articulates more clearly than Franny himself the unhappiness caused by this type of relationship. As she sits by herself in a run-down hotel, aware that she is dying, she muses on the nature of their characters and their life together:

She admits she is leaving Francis, but no one could call that a betrayal. One might, perhaps, call it an abdication, the way the King of England abdicated for the woman he loved. Helen is abdicating for the man she used to love so he can be as free as Helen wants him to be, as free as she always was in her own way, as free as the two of them were even when they were most perfectly locked together. (138)

Helen realizes that even when they were together, Francis was motivated by a need to be "free," the same impulse which made him flee his family and seek to go it on his own.

In deciding to leave Francis by dying—an action which she believes she can bring about by willing it—Helen is acting on another insight into Franny's psychological make-up. She has purposely failed to meet him on the day that she checks into the hotel, so that she can die in solitude and because she senses that Francis, left to his own devices, now will seek out the family he has been avoiding. The previous night, she had sensed his uneasiness and told him either to leave Albany altogether or to go back and at least visit his family to "get it out of your system." (65) The morning of her death, Helen is angry at what she perceives as Franny's abandonment of her, but she understands the necessity and importance of his return home and prays that Franny might receive "divine guidance with his problem" and observes, "The poor man was so guilty." (121)

Helen's reading of Franny proves correct. Before he even learns of her death, her urgings and his own restlessness, fueled by a visit to his old neighborhood, prompt him to return home to see his family after 22
years. When he takes this step, which he acknowledges is infinitely more difficult than any of the tribulations or indignities that he faced on the road, he finds that he must reassess the impulsive side of his personality which he distrusts so much:

Francis was now certain only that he could never arrive at any conclusions about himself that had their origin in reason. But neither did he believe himself incapable of thought. He believed he was a creature of unknown and unknowable qualities, a man in whom there would never be an equanimity of both impulsive and premeditated actions. (216)

As readers, we see what Francis does not: that he has little to fear from what he dismisses as the “unknowable” side of his personality. Although some of Franny’s unpremeditated, impulsive actions have had violent and lethal consequences, almost all have been gestures of solidarity with other people. Throughout the novel, however, Franny undervalues these gestures, behaving in an “aw shucks” way and dismissing the sense of connection which he instinctively feels toward others as being unimportant in any absolute sense.

For example, when Franny returns to Albany, he imagines that he sees the ghost of Aldo Campione, a man whom Frannie had tried to help when he himself was fleeing the city after murdering the scab. Campione had escaped from the police who were transporting him to trial and rushed up to the moving freight train where Frann y was hiding. Before Franny could pull him into the moving train, however, the police shot Campione in the back and killed him. When Franny recalls this incident, the moral he at first draws from it is “that a proffered hand in a moment of need is a beautiful thing.” But then he immediately qualifies this statement with a more rational assessment:

All this Francis knew well enough, and so the truest lesson of Aldo Campione resided not in intelleced fact but in spectacle; for Francis can still remember Aldo’s face as it came toward him. It looked like his own, which is perhaps why Francis put himself in jeopardy: to save his own face with his own hand. (28)

The narrator here has Francis rethink his own first and more generous analysis of his action and express his mistrust of his impulsive generosity by stepping back and interpreting it as a selfish act of no moral significance. Franny rationalizes his uneasiness at remembering a genuine act of relationality.

When he finally comes home, Franny is hard pressed to pinpoint why
he is returning to his family. A week before he appears at his wife Annie’s door, his son Billy had bailed him out of jail, given him money, invited him to come to dinner, and, most importantly, revealed to Franny that for 22 years Annie had never told anyone that it had been Franny who dropped and killed their baby. As he tries to explain his return to his wife, he rehearses all these acts of kindness:

"I say it was Billy gettin' me out of jail, goin' my bail, then invitin' me home, when I thought I'd never get invited after what I did, and then findin' what you did, or didn't do is more like it, and not ever see' Peg growin' up, and wantin' some of that. I says to Billy I want to come home when I can do something for the folks, but he says just come home and see them and never mind the turkey, you can do that for them. And here I am. And the turkey too." (160-61)

The man who abandoned his family for 22 years comes home with a turkey, an expression of his desire to be with his family again and at the same time to assert that he is still autonomous, a provider who can “do something for the folks,” even though he knows that in the material sense he cannot.

When Annie, during their first conversation in over two decades, tells him she has remained faithful during his absence, Franny is dumbstruck. He is quite uncomfortable being the recipient of generosity in a situation where he wanted to see himself as a provider. His wife’s simple candor heightens his sense of guilt and makes it even more difficult for him to receive her gesture of kindness. His discomfort increases when she will not let him dismiss her action lightly by attributing it to her Catholic religious beliefs:

"That’s what the religion does," he said when he could talk.
"It wasn’t the religion.” (161)

At first, Franny tries to understand Annie’s behavior in terms of some external system of values; her religion told her to be faithful, so she has done so. But her denial and her straightforward, unpremeditated generosity force Franny to recognize that her actions have come from another, for him less well articulated source. Her simple and dignified response to Franny’s stumbling efforts to apologize reveals that her conduct is motivated by the empathy she feels for him and by a realization that his life on the road has caused him humiliation and suffering:

"Annie, I got five million things to ask you, and ten million things to tell. I'd like to eat all the dirt in this yard for you, eat
the weeds, eat the dog bones too, if you asked me."
"I think you probably ate all that already." (177)

For Franny, who has spent most of his adult life trying to "go it alone," this empathy is unsettling. After his homecoming dinner with his family, he again leaves them to sort out the emotional issues which the reunion has raised for him. He joins up with his hobo friends in a flop house, but he quickly discovers that he sees them now in a new perspective. He reveals this change in an incident in which he cannot stand to let one of them indulge in the same self-deprecating behavior in which he himself has engaged for most of his life:

"I like to be condemned," Rudy said.
"No, don't be condemned."
"I like to be condemned."
"Never be condemned."
"I like to be condemned because I know I done wrong in my life."
"You never done wrong," Francis said. (201)

After seeing the way that Annie and his children view him, Franny is beginning to absolve himself, to understand himself not as a moral agent who has failed, but in terms of some new, less stringent principle which he cannot quite articulate. He realizes that neither he nor the bum whom he addresses in the flop house can explain the misery he has known as retribution for some heinous act he has committed. He cannot respond to the lack of order and meaning in the world simply by asserting himself or by lashing out or by running away. He begins to see that the world, not unlike himself, is irrational and impulsive and that on his own he cannot do anything to make this situation more palatable.

The narrator tells us that Franny now can see in one of his hobo acquaintances "his own early venom and self-destructive arrogance reembodied," and this recognition causes him "to quit the flop and seek out something he could value. . . ." (209) After his dinner at home, Franny realizes that he has to abandon his efforts to make sense of the events of his life by withdrawing from his family. At this point he understands more clearly an insight he had when he first returned to Annie's house. He realizes that in abandoning his life as a bum, he is fleeing again, but this time in a new direction:

He stared and knew that he was in the throes of flight, not outward this time but upward. (163)

In one of the final scenes of the novel, in which he goes to a shanty-
town, a changed Franny offers to share his food with a vagrant. In this incident, Franny is motivated by the same instinctive sense of solidarity which had influenced his earlier actions. Previously, however, Franny had dismissed his own generosity as the inadequate, *ad hoc* action of a guilty man who in a larger, absolute sense of morality is a failure. At the end of the novel, he embraces the impulsive side which motivates his acts of kindness as something good in its own right and a tool for survival:

By now he was sure only that he lived in a world where events decided themselves, and that all man could do was stay one jump into their mystery. (224)

Franny’s gift of a sandwich to a hungry man represents the positive side of the impulsive nature which made him take to the road; the sense of connection to others which he has always had represents the value which he is seeking in his life. In learning this lesson, Franny no longer has to view himself as someone who has failed to live up to some external, *a priori* notion of human morality; he no longer must consider himself a “social maggot,” an outsider. Because he can finally admit the value of his instinctive sense of solidarity with others, Franny is able to quit the road. Early in the novel, the narrator tells us that for Franny, running

... was as pleasurable to his being as it was natural: the running of bases after the crack of the bat, the running from accusation, the running from the calumny of men and women, the running from family, from bondage, from destitution of spirit through ritualistic straightenings, the running, finally, in quest for pure flight as a fulfilling mannerism of the spirit. (75)

What Franny realizes at the novel’s end is that as a baseball player, a vagrant, a husband, and a father, his running, without his knowing it, has always had the same destination: home.

The narrator of *Ironweed* describes Franny’s homecoming and change in a strange fashion. On the last page is a paragraph different in tone from those that surround it. With a 19th century omniscience, the narrator offers some medieval cosmology:

The empyrean, which is not spatial at all, does not move and has no poles. It girds, with light and love, the primum mobile, the utmost and swiftest of the material heavens. Angels are manifested in the primum mobile. (227)

The narrator maintains that the power of love and connection which Franny Phelan has begun to discover when he returns home was actually
present in his world throughout his life. On the surface, and especially in light of the religious imagery chosen, the narrator seems to suggest here that love exists as an absolute. This interpretation is quickly undermined, however, by the context of the paragraph. This description of the empyrean is inserted in a description of Franny’s life in his wife Annie’s attic, where he is hiding to avoid questioning in the death of a man he killed during a fight at the shanty-town. The paragraph that precedes the description of the empyrean focuses on much more mundane and modern concerns:

“Do you like Jell-O, Fran?” Annie asked him.

“I can’t remember ever making Jell-O for you. I don’t remember if they had Jell-O back then.” (227)

The light and love of the empyrean exist in the specific and simple context of the concerns of Annie, the wife who has never revealed to anyone that Francis accidentally killed their child, the woman who accepts him back after 22 years. In the freely given and wholly unanticipated kindness of Annie, Franny finds a new way of making sense of the world. The love and connection which will finally allow him to survive are not absolute; they do not exist in a timeless celestial sphere, but in the context of real human relationships.

Kennedy’s strange narrative style thus puts us as readers in the same position as Franny. We can only make sense of his description of the empyrean by understanding it in the relative and specific context of Annie’s simple gesture. The empyrean and Jell-O are of equal moral worth; they both describe the same phenomenon, one in the outmoded discourse of medieval cosmology, the other in the real, every-day language of 20th century America. Annie’s love is not the manifestation of an absolute, the public faithfulness required by her religion. Despite or perhaps because of the way Franny has treated her, Annie knows the value of family and connections in maintaining a sense of dignity and is willing to extend this connection to Franny. The measure of her love and the standard of the morality that she teaches Franny by her example are not rationally determined, a priori standards of faithfulness, but concrete, impulsive gestures of support and connection between autonomous human beings.

For Franny, Annie’s offering of Jell-O, like all her quiet actions, poses a new form of ethical dilemma. At the novel’s end, he must decide not whether he is moral or immoral according to some pre-existing standard, but whether to accept the proffered web of connection to another human being and the responsibilities it entails. He must rethink his code of ethics and learn to “stand on his own two feet,” not by feeling guilty and imposing on himself a life of isolation but by remaining at home and
maintaining connections with his family despite the difficulties they cause.

It is important to see that this response to the alienation which Franny has felt for most of his life does not require him to adopt some new and different way of seeing the world. Instead, he must go back to embrace an element of his life which has always been present, but which he has chosen to devalue or ignore. In returning to Annie, in admitting the validity of his own compulsive side, Franny acknowledges a force which has always resided within him and in the world around him. In Gilligan’s terms, Franny, in coming home, allows himself and the world around him to speak in a new and a more comprehensive voice, one which supplements rationality with impulse and tempers his desire to stand alone with a recognition of the importance of connection to others.

In philosophical terms, what Kennedy does in Ironweed is to redefine the ethical possibilities of relativism. Franny learns that ad hoc, impulsive actions, which he had previously dismissed as unimportant and selfish, have their moral worth. This kind of relativism differs greatly from the more familiar Hobbesian and Nietzschean versions, in which human beings, lacking absolutes, are vicious, violent, and willful creatures bent on asserting their will and assuring their survival and dominance at any cost. Kennedy suggests that a world without absolutes can be a humane place after all, if we grant that people are not inherently competitive and vicious and see them instead as social, connected beings capable of mutual support. The impulsive need not always be destructive. In beginning to learn this lesson from Annie’s gentle and unpremeditated example, Franny is able to free himself from the burden of guilt which has isolated him from his family for so long. By seeing himself in the new light which his wife and his family teach him, Franny learns how to act in an age whose guideposts for behavior are at best unclear.

It cannot be argued that Kennedy in Ironweed offers a gynocentric vision of the world. Franny provides the central focus of the novel; he mistreats and hurts the women whom he loves. Kennedy sentimentalizes the family and repeats a stereotype of the long-suffering and forgiving wife that has a history stretching from Homer’s Penelope to Alice Kramden of The Honeymooners and beyond. But Kennedy departs from the stereotype by showing us, in his rather round-about way, that Annie does teach Francis how to survive in the world and offers him his only chance at a decent life. By seeing himself in the new light which his wife and his family teach him, Franny learns how to act in an age whose guideposts for behavior are at best unclear.

To recognize this moral order requires a fundamental change in our society’s values. The challenge for us to make this recognition comes from Gilligan and her colleagues in almost every field of endeavor who have shown us that there exists another way of seeing, another manner of
interpreting ourselves and the world, which brings to the fore aspects of human experience that our culture has neglected or repressed. The reading of *Ironweed* developed here contends that in rethinking his life, in looking for and finding "something he could value," Franny Phelan hears this different voice, and that his story gives evidence of a transvaluation of values with far-reaching social implications.

**Works Cited**

King of Wild Things

David Rees

When Where the Wild Things Are was published in 1963, Maurice Sendak had already built for himself a considerable reputation as an illustrator of children's books, and he had also written and illustrated four books of his own. Although many of the themes, verbal and pictorial, that are found in Where the Wild Things Are (and the two great picture books that followed it, In the Night Kitchen and Outside Over There) are present in the earlier stories, there is little in them to prepare the reader for the immense leap forward it shows in imaginative skill and execution. Where the Wild Things Are brought Sendak fame and fortune: he is now generally considered the most important illustrator of children's books of his generation and the inventor of a new genre—the picture book that stands in its own right as a work of art.

Kenny, the hero of Sendak's first book, Kenny's Window, is a characteristic Sendak child: lonely, frustrated, and bored; a small boy who deals with his feelings by inventing games and who brings some kind of order and sense into his life through dreams and imaginative play. It is a well-written tale that immediately shows that Sendak has gifts as a writer; in fact the story is more interesting than the pictures, which, though technically adequate, are pallid and somewhat self-effacing, no more than illustrations of the words. The writing skill is shown throughout; "It smells like winter is melting," Kenny says, and—

It was snowing and Kenny watched the large flakes melt against his window. They ran down the glass in long sad drips. "My window is crying," thought Kenny. He turned his head sideways and looked up at the sky. "I wonder why snow looks dirty up there and clean down here."
"Why does it?" he asked aloud, but no one answered.

The balance, however, is wrong: there is too much text and not enough art-work, and there are flaws in the narrative structure. The ending is
inconclusive, and some basic information is lacking, such as why are Kenny’s parents hardly ever mentioned; does he have any brothers or sisters? The concepts involved in the rooster’s questions are a little difficult for the young reader—what is an only goat, for example, and do you always want what you think you want? However, the book moves effortlessly—and satisfyingly—from reality to fantasy and vice versa; and some of the pictorial devices that Sendak uses so frequently in his later work are here—the cross-hatching, the lovely old-fashioned bed, the importance given to windows, to the moon.

The pictures in Very Far Away, Sendak’s second book, are less tentative than those in Kenny’s Window; but the story, although it tackles some major themes—sibling rivalry and a young child’s anger with his mother—is diffuse and disappointing. Sendak deals much more profoundly with the first of these issues in Outside Over There and the second in Where the Wild Things Are. Martin, unlike Max in Where the Wild Things Are, is not allowed to confront his feelings, which results in the narrative lacking drama and fizzling out. He is the first of a number of central characters in Sendak’s books whose Christian name begins with the same letter as the author’s own: Sendak is perhaps pointing out that the boy is himself, an idea that is reinforced by the pictures of nearly all the heroes from The Nutshell Library onwards—they are self-portraits.

The Sign on Rosie’s Door is an advance on its predecessor; a well-written if somewhat episodic story in which the pictures begin to do something other than just illustrate the words. The aggressive, unfriendly relationship between Pudgy and Sal is not mentioned in the text, but its course is well portrayed in the pictures, as is the crowded, rather stifling urban setting. The drawings of children in motion—falling, dancing, bending over, running, fighting—are done with an assured skill and fluency that hints at the masterpieces to follow; and for the first time considerable emphasis is put on the use of costume in children’s games: dressing up in unusual clothes makes it easier to leave the boredom, loneliness, and frustration of reality, and either be someone else (as Rosie does), or confront feelings that are normally repressed (Max in Where the Wild Things Are), or find new skills (Ida in Outside Over There). Mickey’s nudity in In the Night Kitchen has a similar function—being naked in front of others is a sort of costume too.

The story-line of The Sign on Rosie’s Door is low-key and depressed in mood, an interesting contrast with the pictures, which are warm, lively and affectionate. It’s a sad tale—Rosie is a creative artist and needs an audience, but she can only hold the other children’s attention fleetingly. The one occasion she sings On the Sunny Side of the Street, uninterrupted and all the way through, is when she’s alone. Even at the end, after the games are finished and she’s in her bedroom, she is still wanting to be someone else, in this case the cat: she goes to sleep on the rug, and the cat
sleeps in the bed. The story is almost all dialogue; it is like a play—or the kind of show Rosie wants to perform in. The brevity and realism of this dialogue, and its ability to suggest more than it says, is excellent—

"Is that you, Rosie?" Dolly asked.
"There was no answer.
"Please tell us who you are," said Kathy.
"I'm Alinda the lost girl."
"Who lost you?" asked Pudgy.
"I lost myself," answered Alinda.
"Aren't you really Rosie though?" asked Pudgy.
"I used to be Rosie," Alinda said, "but not any more."
They all sat down on the cellar door.
"Who is going to find you?" asked Sal.
"Magic Man," said Alinda.
"Who's he?"
"My best friend," answered Alinda.
"And what happens when he finds you?" Kathy asked.
"He will tell me what to do," explained Alinda.

The Nutshell Library is in four volumes: an alphabet book, Alligators All Round; a counting book, One Was Johnny; a book of months, Chicken Soup with Rice; and a cautionary tale, Pierre. The last three are written in verse, which Sendak handles with the same ease he had shown in the dialogue of The Sign on Rosie's Door. This quartet was originally published as miniatures—each book measured two and a half by four inches—boxed in a simulated wooden crate designed by Sendak himself. The whole thing shows his remarkable ingenuity and successful realization of original ideas. Alligators All Round, perhaps because of its subject matter—the letters of the alphabet—is a smaller achievement than the other three, but the pictures are entertaining and thoroughly individual. Chicken Soup with Rice, which aims to demonstrate the usefulness of soup in every month of the year, has a delightful sense of humour in both its pictures and its words. Particularly good are the drawings of a whale spouting soup and a Christmas tree decorated with soup bowls, and the crazy and felicitous rhymes for June—

In June
I saw a charming group
of roses all begin
to droop.
I pepped them up
with chicken soup!
—and July—

In July
I’ll take a peep
into the cool
and fishy deep
where chicken soup
is selling cheap.

The latter is accompanied by a picture of a snobby-looking turtle on the sea-bed, wearing a chef’s hat and stirring a tureen.

Pierre is the story of a boy who doesn’t care but is made to care when a lion eats him. (The lion ill in bed after his meal is one of the best pictures in the book.) The idea obviously owes something to the Cautionary Tales of Hilaire Belloc—the penalty for Jim’s disobedience was to be eaten by a lion. But Sendak’s story, unlike Belloc’s, has a happy ending; the lion disgorges the boy, frightened but unharmed, which is reminiscent of Red Riding Hood’s grandmother being rescued from the wolf’s stomach.

Being eaten alive is a recurring theme in Sendak's work. In Kenny's Window Bucky, the teddy bear, is threatened with this fate; and in Where the Wild Things Are, Higglety Pigglety Pop! and In the Night Kitchen, the idea is richly ambiguous: a destructive act and an act of love. (“We’ll eat you up—we love you so,” the wild things say to Max.) The anti-social, self-centred hero is another recurring theme, as is the threatening lion; and, in the pictures, Pierre’s bed is almost the same as Kenny’s, and Pierre is Max/Mickey/Hector/Maurice Sendak—and Johnny in One Was Johnny, the most interesting and personal book of the quartet. Sendak, in Selma G. Lanes’ biography, The Art of Maurice Sendak, is portrayed as a solitary, reclusive man, living alone with his dogs; and One Was Johnny is the story of a boy who lives by himself and likes it like that—it shows the increasing annoyance he experiences when he is plagued by a series of uninvited guests, a rat, a cat, a dog, a turtle, a monkey, a blackbird, a tiger, and a robber. In verse that recalls both Sing a Song of Sixpence and This is the Farmer Sowing his Corn, he threatens to eat them if they don’t go away; wisely, they depart, one by one. The cheeky, selfish blackbird is repeated in later books, and so is the dog, Sendak’s own, a sealyham called Jennie, who first appeared as Baby in Kenny’s Window.

It is not easy to avoid superlatives in a discussion of Where the Wild Things Are. It is the most popular and the most controversial picture book ever published, and its sales have been huge. It is also, quite simply, the best picture book ever published. Sendak would not again write so good a text; it is spare, poetic prose of great beauty, and every word of it sounds exactly right. (In the Night Kitchen and Outside Over There have occasional uncertainties in assonance or rhythm, and a few moments that sound
ordinary or flat when something heightened is needed.) Its pictures are a perpetual delight and astonishment. In the scene that shows Max chasing the dog, Sendak draws his finest picture of Jennie, and Max leaping after her is a masterly portrait of a body in motion—energy, savagery and speed personified.

The wild things, too, are something like perfection: the ferocity of their claws and teeth always rendered impotent by the bizarre shortness of their legs and arms, by the goofy stupidity displayed on their faces, and the heavy, galumphing nature of their movements. The juxtaposition of words and pictures is utterly original and could not be bettered: as Max retreats into fantasy, the pictures grow in size like an orchestral crescendo and push the text nearer and nearer to the edge or the bottom of the pages, and at the climax—the wild rumpus—words disappear altogether. They are not needed; the pictures say it all: a noisy, frenzied disco, then a pause for breath as everyone quietly swings from the trees, and finally a companionable, family-like atmosphere as the wild things dance a grotesque hokey-cokey. After this, with Max returning to reality, the wildness diminuendos; the words now force the pictures to shrink; and on the very last page with its reassuring statement about Max’s supper (“and it was still hot”), there is, for the only time in the book, no picture at all. The whole device produces a very satisfying, rounded shape and structure.

The subject matter of Where the Wild Things Are is aggression, the savage lurking beneath the civilized veneer in people. It is the way in which Max unleashes his aggression, and the anger he displays when his mother sends him to bed without any supper, that has disturbed critics just as much as—if not more than—the likelihood of the pictures frightening children. Max’s wolf suit (which has the same sharp claws as most of the wild things) has an identical function to Rosie’s hat, high-heeled shoes, and grown-up dress: it gives him the license to behave in a way that is usually not possible, to experience impulses and emotions that are otherwise repressed.

As Rose becomes Alinda, star of the stage, so Max becomes a “wild thing,” strangling his toy dog with string suspended from a washing-line that looks like barbed wire and hammering nails in the wall till the plaster cracks. No wonder Max, when he threatens to eat his mother, is sent to bed without having eaten anything. And it is no wonder, too, that Max is angry: his aggressive feelings have been punished; they have not been allowed a proper outlet. His mother depriving him of food is saying, “I don’t love you at the moment.” The wild things are Max’s aggression and anger brought to life: he invents them, then tames them, and finally does not need them. It’s his mother’s love he wants. (And the supper that symbolises that.) Quiet now, the aggression properly worked out, he returns to Mother, love, and security—and his supper.
The ending is triumphant: it exorcises all the preceding alarms and fears. When Max pushes the hood of his wolf suit to the back of his head, we see for the first time that he is a vulnerable small boy, not a primitive savage: this is a moment of immense relief and pleasure.

There are many familiar Sendak ideas in both the words and the pictures. The cross-hatching, the dream-like night-time scenario, the brilliant moon, the old-fashioned bed, are examples; there is even a lion, or a parody of one, in the wild thing bowing to Max when he is made king of all wild things. There are also new themes that recur in later books—the sailing boat reappears in *Outside Over There*; the happy, smiling boy in a boat in *As I Went Over the Water*. An object that turns into something else is another new idea—Max’s room becomes the trees of a forest; his tent becomes a cave which is then his bed. In *In the Night Kitchen* the dough turns into an aeroplane; the trees Ida can see from her window in *Outside Over There* are replaced by a storm-tossed ship on an ocean, and the hooded, faceless friars (the goblins) are in fact babies.

Eating in *Where the Wild Things Are* is almost obsessional, as it is in *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* Max wants to eat his mother; the wild things want to eat him; Max sends the wild things to bed without any supper; Max wants to eat his own supper, is deprived of it, then given it. Love and rejection of love are implied in this, as well as the more obvious ideas of destruction and fear of destruction. Eating the sacred host at religious services is an act of love (Roman Catholics believe they are devouring the real body of Christ); swallowing is a way we can make love, sexually. Sendak said the wild things were in part based on his Jewish aunts and uncles who annoyed and embarrassed him as a child with comments like “You’re so cute I could eat you up.” We tend to think of them, initially, as savage animals, but they are drawn with many human features. Some have human heads and hair-styles, one has human feet, and the skin of another is a striped tee-shirt. The third scene of the wild rumpus, the hokey-cokey, is a gathering of elderly relatives enjoying themselves at a party.

One further point of interest is that Max, when he begins to imagine his bedroom is a forest, is on the left-hand side of the page looking to the right, and he remains in this position in almost all the pictures until he returns to reality. Conversely, the wild things invariably enter from the right and mostly look to the left. The one picture in which this situation is completely reversed shows Max as lonely. (He’s sitting in his tent, like a sulky Achilles, on the extreme right-hand side.) At this point he gives up being king of the wild things, which, although he has physically been where the wild things are for some time, suggests he has only just arrived there emotionally. To be the wildest thing of all is to be alone, deprived of love. This small detail helps to demonstrate the extraordinary care Sendak took with this book. The 338 words of the text have the same feeling as the pictures of being worked out meticulously, attention paid to
every possible nuance.

_Hector Protector_ and _As I Went Over the Water_, slight pieces compared with _Where the Wild Things Are_, nevertheless show Sendak’s art developing in new directions. They are picture stories that illustrate a nursery rhyme which is in both cases no more than four lines long; and they were published together as one book. In no other work of Sendak’s is there such emphasis on the pictures as opposed to the text; the pictures vastly extend what the words say, so much so that they do all kinds of things not even hinted at verbally. It is as if the rhymes were merely the bare bones, the art-work the living detail: the first two lines of _Hector Protector_, for instance—

_Hector Protector_ was dressed all in green,
_Hector Protector_ was sent to the Queen.

—are illustrated by no less than eleven pictures that show Hector fighting with his mother because he hates the idea of being dressed in green; Hector angry that he has to take a present to the Queen (a cake his mother has baked); Hector shouting “I hate the Queen!”; a fierce lion and a nasty snake that he tames and takes with him to the palace; and his dramatic arrival, interrupting Queen Victoria while she is reading a Mother Goose book of nursery rhymes. There is also another of Sendak’s cheeky blackbirds who eventually gets to eat the cake and who looks wonderfully sick afterwards.

These two works make a delightful book, but Sendak is in danger of repeating himself; they are both too much influenced by _Where the Wild Things Are_. The pictures have the same dark, dream-like colouring and cross-hatching; Jennie makes yet another appearance; and Hector not only looks like Max, but shows no fear when he is in costume, tames wild animals as Max tames the wild things, and his mother sends him to bed without any supper because she’s angry with him. _As I Went Over the Water_ has a monster somewhat like a wild thing, albeit less frightening in appearance; a boy (costumed) in a ship; two blackbirds; and the boy becomes friends with the monster. It is all a little _déjà vu_.

In _Higglety Pigglety Pop!_ Sendak makes up for almost banishing words by writing his longest story and producing a book that is the opposite of _Hector Protector_—the one work of his in which pictures are totally subordinate to the text, even more so than in _Kenny’s Window_. It is Jennie’s final appearance (she died a month after the book was published), but this time she is the central character rather than a bit-part player. _Higglety Pigglety Pop!_ tells the story of a dog who leaves home because she is dissatisfied with having every material comfort; she wants experience, so she gets a job as a nursemaid to a baby who won’t eat. Her task is to make the baby eat; if she fails she will be eaten herself—by a lion who lives in
the cellar. She does fail, but she escapes from the lion; she then talks about life with an unhappy ash tree and eventually becomes the leading lady in the World Mother Goose Theatre, performing a dramatised version of the nursery rhyme, *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* Most of the people she has met en route, include the lion (now docile), star in the play, which it seems will have a run that will last for ever. She is content; she *really* has “everything.” *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* is too enigmatic and private to be particularly satisfying, although certain characteristic Sendak themes appear; for instance, a child (here a baby) being made to acknowledge and overcome its anger and destructive impulses. Jennie was dying while Sendak was writing the book, and earlier in the same year he himself nearly died from a heart attack; death and immortality are ideas hidden away beneath the text—the World Mother Goose Theatre is perhaps a symbol of children’s literature itself, and Sendak may well be meditating on the place he and his dog will share in it after they both are dead. Some of the pictures—they are all, unusually for Sendak, black and white drawings—are beautiful, romantic night scenes, but one misses the energy, the humour, and the dramatic confrontations of *Hector Protector, Where the Wild Things Are,* and *The Nutshell Library.*

This low-key, rather static tale was followed by Sendak’s most vigorous and joyful work, *In the Night Kitchen.* The pictures are a startling contrast with anything he had done before: here he ceases to ally himself with European influences on painting and illustrating and explores the comic-strip traditions of his American childhood. The colours are garish primary colours, the objects stark and flat; bold black outlining replaces cross-hatching, and the words, except on the final page, are all drawn inside the pictures. The story is less easy to interpret than *Where the Wild Things Are,* it is allusive and elusive, with many ambiguities. Do the bakers, for instance, know that Mickey is in the dough when they are kneading it, or are they so unintelligent that they really think he is the milk? And why isn’t there any milk in the bakery? Three nursery rhymes—*I see the moon; Blow, wind, blow; *and *Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker’s man*—are influences on the story, as well as the fairy tale of Hansel and Gretel; there are also some familiar ideas in the pictures: Mickey looks like Sendak; moons abound; and there is another old-fashioned bed (Max’s, but dwarfed—Mickey is younger than Max). The toy airplane above the bed becomes a larger airplane, made of dough, that flies; and at one point Mickey is costumed in a sleeping-suit of dough.

Mickey, however, spends more time out of his clothes than in them, which caused as much of a furore when the book was published as had the supposedly terrifying monsters in *Where the Wild Things Are.* Sendak on a previous occasion drew a naked child, a girl, in the frontispiece he did for George Macdonald’s *The Light Princess,* and it was not received adversely. Maybe this situation is a comment on a sexist world that
relishes pictures of the female nude but complains when it sees an unclothed male; but is more likely that the nature of Mickey's nudity offended people rather than the mere fact of it. Mickey revels in being naked, flaunts it in front of others. The picture in which he falls into the bowl of dough and meets the bakers for the first time is joyful, without shame.

Other pictures are equally provocative: when Mickey is fashioning the dough into an airplane, one of the wings looks like a giant penis, and he is playing with it; the milk bottle throughout is phallic; and the picture of Mickey in the top of the bottle pouring milk into the dough beneath is—well—ejaculatory. (It may also suggest urinating.) Most striking of all is Mickey standing proudly on the bottle, the measuring-cup on his head like an upside down chamber-pot, shouting "Cock-a-doodle Doo!"—a gleeful display of uninhibited sexuality. So, one begins to think about the words—"I'm in the milk and the milk's in me" and "So the bakers they mixed it and beat it" take on a sexual implication; and "baker" which connects in sound with "masturbator." I think Sendak is doing something in In the Night Kitchen that is profoundly healthy and wise: saying to the anxious child that nakedness and sexuality are normal, pleasurable, and good. (And possibly that urinating—bed-wetting?—is nothing to be ashamed of.) One can only feel pity for those troubled librarians and teachers who, in their copies of the book, painted nappies over Mickey's genitals.

Sendak has said that one of the story's ideas came from a childhood memory of a bakery, the slogan of which was "Sunshine Bakers—We Bake While You Sleep!" Why he chose, however, to draw the bakers as three identical Oliver Hardy look-alikes is unclear; perhaps he wanted to link the tribute the book is to the pop art of the 1930s to the popular cinema of that period.

It is also a tribute to his own urban childhood: it is dedicated to his parents, and the sky-line of New York City is present in most of the pictures, a marvelous jumble of densely crowded buildings, all of which are in fact the gadgets, bottles, tins, jars, and cartons of the kitchen itself. Even a train, on closer inspection, turns out to be loaves of bread. The sky is done extremely well: a midnight blue that isn't quite natural, the darkness of the night made just a little pale (as it always is in a city) by the electric light shining up into it. The pictures of Mickey flying and falling have a superb freedom and fluidity; the child never plunges—he floats, and, as he sinks gently into the milk bottle, the look on his face is ecstatic. It is the way we fly in our dreams. Another touch linking Mickey with Sendak is when Mickey pops out of the cake (was the author remembering Spats' birthday cake in the film Some Like It Hot?) wearing a little hat of dough which looks like a Jewish skull-cap. Finally, the pictures of Mickey, now clothed and still very happy as he slides back into bed, show
that bed as gloriously warm and comfortable. It was all a dream: and it serves to demonstrate how important our dream lives are in our attempts to explore and understand our feelings.

In 1976, Sendak produced Seven Little Monsters and Some Swell Pup, both of which were disliked by the critics. They are in fact lightweight, although Some Swell Pup, a dog-training manual for children, has some splendid pictures. Seven Little Monsters is so thin—a brief text and a few drawings of monsters who are no more than anaemic cousins of the wild things—that the result is merely for the coffee-table; one wonders why he bothered to do it at all. The year 1981, however, saw the publication of his third great picture book, Outside Over There. In The Art of Maurice Sendak, he is quoted as saying—

They are all variations on the same theme: how children master various feelings—anger, boredom, fear, frustration, jealousy—and manage to come to grips with the realities of their lives.

Boredom, fear, and jealousy are uppermost in Outside Over There: Ida is supposed to look after her baby sister, but she is much more interested in practising on her wonder horn; she neglects the baby, who is stolen by goblins. She eventually rescues the child by playing frenzied music which makes the goblins (now naked babies) dance so much that they melt and become a stream. Sendak says he was influenced considerably by the plot and the music of The Magic Flute; the pictures with their enchanting, idealised landscapes suggest something of the atmosphere of that opera, and one of them shows Mozart in a summerhouse, composing at the piano. The kidnapped baby is paralleled in the opera by the Queen of the Night's lost daughter; the horn has similar functions to Tamino's flute and Papageno's bells; the three ladies with their shining swords become in Sendak's pictures faceless monks (goblins) with huge spears; and Ida's faith, patience, and courage are tested as Sarastro tests Tamino. Sendak, however, does not reproduce the opera's curious plot convolutions—the Queen of the Night, the sympathetic, sorrowing mother improbably transformed into a villain; and the evil Sarastro being shown in reality as good and wise.

The text, though it begins well enough—"When Papa was away at sea, and Mama in the arbour, Ida played her wonder horn to rock the baby still—but never watched"—, is not as perfect as Where the Wild Things Are. "Now Ida in a hurry snatched her Mama's yellow rain cloak, tucked her horn safe in a pocket, and made a serious mistake" attempts too much in one sentence, and ends by sounding banal; "The ice thing dripped and stared, and Ida mad knew goblins had been there" forces words against their will into an iambic rhythm and an odd half-rhyme.
The pictures, however, are magnificent. Gone are the vivid colours, the night scenes, the cross-hatching of earlier books; these paintings are soft and luminous, with gentle pinks and blues, and benign yellows and greens predominating. They have a sort of midsummer magic about them—and, indeed, Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* hinges on a child stolen by the Queen of the Fairies. Several of them are deliberately reminiscent of famous European art: the rain cloak recalls Titian and Tintoretto; Ida and the baby are a madonna and child in the manner of Rafael or Leonardo. Ida, flying, owes something to Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel ceiling; the baby in the egg-shell is a reminder of Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*; the goblins as babies are like the fat cherubim of many religious works of art; and the opening scene hints at Turner or Claude Lorraine, one of their sea-ports at sunset minus the crowds. The landscape throughout suggests a late 18th century view of nature—ordered, park-like, with grottoes, lakes, rustic bridges, ruins. Presenting the goblins at first as hooded, faceless monks or friars is, both in idea and execution, superb; they look very sinister, like evil religious fanatics from the Inquisition. But perhaps the most sinister pictures are of the substitute baby, “the ice thing,” particularly when it is melting. Even though it represents Ida’s feelings about her sister—the child is a nuisance; it would be better if she didn’t exist—the unexpected granting of the wish is horrifying.

Sendak had drawn a picture of goblins stealing a baby in a previous work, the frontispiece to Lore Segal and Randall Jarrell’s *The Juniper Tree and Other Tales from Grimm*; and some of the pictures in *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* are of the bad-tempered baby Jennie has to nurse. With the five goblins as babies, Sendak said he was thinking of the Dionne quintuplets, who figured in newspaper stories during his childhood, and the kidnapping was influenced by memories of the stealing of the Lindbergh child. (The villain, like the goblins, used a ladder.) Other echoes and repeated ideas are the inclusion of Sendak’s own dog (an alsatian this time); costume—Ida in the rain cloak can act in a way that is different from her normal behavior, as did Max in the wolf suit and Mickey when naked; the baby’s strange hat, which resembles a lampshade, recalls Mickey adorned with the measuring-cup; the goblins’ dance is a faint echo of the rumpus in *Where the Wild Things Are* and has a similar climactic function. The ice child melts and Ida makes the goblins melt; Max, deprived of his supper, deprived the wild things of theirs. The sunflowers grow as rapidly as Max’s forest, and the view out of the window shifts with great rapidity, from trees to a boat to a storm at sea.

The total effect of all this is a book that is enormously rich and satisfying. It was published on both a children’s and an adult list: a recognition of Sendak’s unique achievement as a writer and illustrator, an acknowledgement that his picture books are not just useful toys for very
young children, but works of art that can be enjoyed and appreciated by all. His place in the "World Mother Goose Theatre" of children's literature is that he, more than anyone else, has changed our ideas of the picture book out of all recognition.

His own comments, in the speech in 1964 accepting the Caldecott Medal, admirably sum up what he has attempted to do in his work:

We want to protect our children from new and painful experiences that are beyond their emotional comprehension and that intensify anxiety; and to a point we can prevent exposure to such experiences. That is obvious. But what is just as obvious—and what is too often overlooked—is the fact that from their earliest years children live on familiar terms with disrupting emotions, that fear and anxiety are an intrinsic part of their everyday lives, that they continually cope with frustration as best they can. And it is through fantasy that children achieve catharsis.

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Contributors

Eva T. H. Brann, tutor at St. John's College, Annapolis, is author of *Paradoxes of Education in a Republic* (University of Chicago Press, 1979). Her essay in this issue is adapted from a work-in-progress, *The World of the Imagination*, an extensive review of theories and uses of the visual imagination in philosophy, logic, literature, the arts, and theology. A former N.E.H. fellow, she received a Ph.D. from Yale University in 1956.

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To Prospective Contributors

San José Studies, a journal sponsored by San Jose State University since 1975, is published three times each year—winter, spring and fall. The contents include critical and creative prose, as well as poetry, interviews, and photographs, directed to the educated reader but providing resources for the scholar as well.

Our scope is interdisciplinary. Past issues have included articles on topics as diverse as the social implications of genetic engineering, Melville's deliberate "errors" in Billy Budd, the need to enlarge the canon of American literature, and the letters of William James. Entire issues have been devoted to John Steinbeck, to the American Bicentennial, to cultural diversity in California, to Roberta Holloway, to Charles Darwin, and to Ezra Pound, Emily Dickinson, and H. D.

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