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1963

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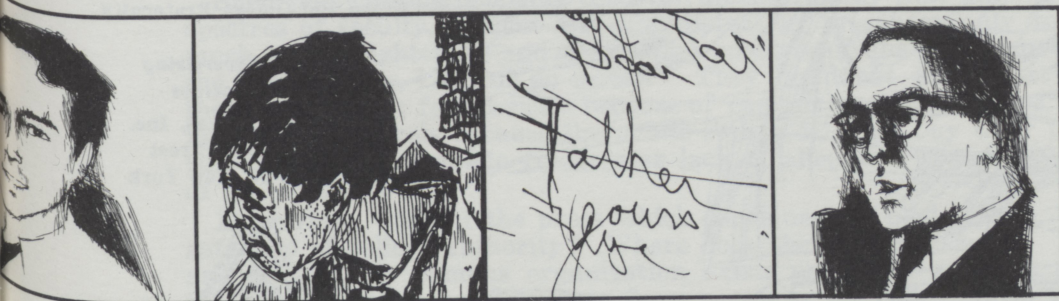
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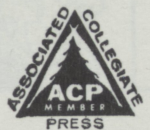
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E D I T O R I A L

One of the most nagging problems faced by the college press is: to whom does it owe its allegiance? On the professional level, this question is pointless; since the publisher pays the bills he expects, demands and receives the allegiance of that particular press.

But the college press does not have a publisher in the same sense of the word. There are several factions on almost every campus which claim financial responsibility for publications. These are: the administration of the college or university; the student government association; the student body at large. (It is surprising how frequently the two latter are totally unrelated entities.) On some campuses a fourth faction arises largely because of the squabble between the other three. This faction consists of an editorial board which finally gets completely disgusted with squabbles and attempts at pressuring, and in frustration removes the publication from the realms of any college authority. But removal from college authority means removal from college support, and this means the publications involved must be self-supporting or *ipso facto*, professional.

Such publications probably discover all too rapidly that they have escaped the spectres of faculty, student and administration pressures only to confront the much more frightening and demanding spectres of financial responsibility. Then the law becomes, "Sell or go under." They no doubt learn that where before they could harbor few radicals because of campus pressure groups, they now can harbor few radicals because the public simply will not buy their product. Thus they learn that complete freedom or lack of allegiance remains the *ignis fatuus* of all publications.

Meanwhile, what of the press which continues to plod within the financially safe fold of college authority? Where does their allegiance lie? Pragmatically and legally, any campus organization exists under the auspices and control of the college administration. Thus from necessity the college press owes its allegiance to the college and its administration. Perhaps ideally, it should owe allegiance to the students, or better yet, to good taste which should satisfy everybody. But the ideal is not always practical, and under present systems allegiance belongs to and can be demanded by the college. Certainly this system is wide open to many abuses, and student editors must depend on the good nature of the administration to maintain any semblance of freedom.

At East Carolina, the REBEL has been fortunate in that virtually no pressure has been applied by the administration. If other college press groups find they are having difficulty, they might first look in a mirror to see if the reflection of their own responsibility shines. If they do this and the image is untarnished, then allegiance or no allegiance, *ignis fatuus* or not, battle as vigorously as possible for the rights of the press.

Reynolds Price attended Duke University where he was an Angier Duke scholar. He graduated, Phi Beta Kappa, summa cum laude, with a Distinction in history. He spent three years at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar.

In 1962 Mr. Price's novel, A Long and Happy Life, was selected as a Book-of-the-Month and received the Sir Walter Raleigh Award as the best novel of the year written by a North Carolinian.

Mr. Price, who is an assistant professor of English at Duke, is working on a second novel and will have a collection of short stories, The Names and Faces of Heroes, published in June, 1963.



Interview with

REYNOLDS PRICE

Interviewer: To what do you attribute your insights into the fabric of eastern North Carolina's lower class people?

Mr. Price: Well, I lived in Warrenton, North Carolina and went to the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades there in the Warrenton school. It was a rural consolidated school. Students came in on buses from various farm areas of the county and those were the children I knew, the children with whom I grew up in that extremely impressionable period of late childhood and early adolescence. I was especially, I think, touched and affected by the girls of that age who were quite often physically more advanced than the boys and who have, quite often, for a short period of their lives at that time a kind of fineness and sensitivity which you feel is only going to last two or three years. And very shortly they'll finish school, if they finish

at all, and marry and immediately commence having a house full of children. And they'll eventually be worn down, drained, exhausted, and become the sort of tired, fat women that their mothers are. I spent a lot of my childhood in Warren County because my parents were from there. Quite often as a child I went there and stayed in the summers. So I think that this is the basis of anything I might know about the sort of people who occur in the novel.

Interviewer: Do you think that eastern North Carolina will continue as the region of your central interest?

Mr. Price: Well, at the moment, this book of short stories will be coming out in June. The stories take place in eastern North Carolina and

in a summer camp in the mountains in North Carolina. The novel that I am beginning to go back to now that I've finished the short stories is a traveling novel; it travels about in eastern North Carolina. I don't have any plans after that. I mean, I'm not one of these people who has the next six books planned; I only know one story at a time. So what the next one will be I don't know. I don't think about, when am I going to get out of eastern North Carolina. I just write whatever I want to write and it happens to be in eastern North Carolina.

Interviewer: Do you think you would have the same insights into character if you were to get out of eastern North Carolina?

Mr. Price: Well, I don't know. You never know that you have insight; you just guess. I mean you start out feeling your imagination captured by the idea of some character and proceed to write about that character. You don't say "Well, I've got insight into eastern North Carolina farmers, and that's what I'm going to write about." You just say "I'm interested in writing about this girl called Rosacoke Mustian." Then you start writing and it's up to other people to decide whether you've got any insight. But I think probably a good writer has a built-in warning system that tells him not to choose characters or a subject about which he doesn't know something. Now, very, very good writers have, I think, quite frequently veered out of their field and tried to write about things they don't really know about. Thomas Hardy wrote about the people who live down in Wessex, Egdon Heath and so on in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. He was fine; but the minute he tried to write about the society people in London, as he did once or twice, it was disastrous. He knew a lot of society ladies but they somehow didn't engage a very deep level of his imagination. Then, of course, there are some supreme writers who know everything—what it's like to be everything. I mean, Tolstoy knew what it was like to be everything from Napoleon down to the lowest form of serf. There's no question that any form of life was closed to him; it wasn't. But I don't think he ever sat up and said, "Well, you're very lucky, Leo Tolstoy. You know what it's like to be everybody."

Interviewer: What real purpose do you think that extensive advance publicity serves?

Mr. Price: Well, I don't know. I suppose you're talking about *A Long and Happy Life* which had

a great deal of advance publicity which was all through the desire and enthusiasm of my publisher. I was out of the country at the time and was really very much an outsider to the whole thing. I occasionally got sent bits and pieces of information.

I think probably in the case of a first novel, if it's tastefully managed and managed with dignity it's probably to the good of the book. So many novels are published every year. And by the very nature of that any novel, especially a first novel by a name that is absolutely unknown is just going to get lost in the rush and so if in any way a publisher feels that a book is worth notice I think he has to do an awful lot of handwaving and signaling to get the thing out. I think the danger is that it probably could backfire and I imagine that two or three people in America very much objected to what they probably felt was sort of high pressure in forcing the book upon them. The English resent that sort of advance publicity more than Americans do, because the English have this very highly developed sort of literary life which has gone on much longer than any kind of literary life in America. I think they very much resent having their minds made up for them in advance about anything. There was nothing like the advance interest in the book in England that there was in America. But even then, just with the same quotations printed on the jacket in England that were used in America, several English reviewers remarked that they had much rather the book had been published without advance comments from anyone. They felt that this was an unfair attempt to bias them.

Interviewer: But to go back to that same question, do you agree that there is a real distinction between American and British book reviewers and if you do, which method is more beneficial?

Mr. Price: Well, the English are very nasty. They attempt to be much more witty, to be sarcastic, ironic at the expense of a book. I think that there's a notable lack of meanness in American reviewing. I think that quite often American reviewers tend to be dull as dish water; they tend to be just like grade school book reports. The plot is so and so and the last sentence is "Children of all ages will enjoy this book," and "I recommend you go to your library and get it." Then you get wise guys, like the guy in Los Angeles who doesn't like to read southern novels so he writes a sort of little wise guy review about it. But on the

whole I think American reviewing attempts to be very serious.

Interviewer: How much do you think that critical reviews or critics actually affect the values of the readers?

Mr. Price: Well, publishers say there's only one review in America that can make or break a book and that's the daily *New York Times* review. I don't believe that exactly, because I do think the fact that my book got an enormous number of generous reviews must have helped it a great deal and I was totally surprised that the book took off in the way that it did. But apparently publishers do feel that the daily *New York Times* review is very important, that it really sells books if it gives a good one. I don't know what happens if it gets a bad one. I think publishers to a certain extent, even the best of them, operate by a system of irrational superstition. They have these very elaborate notions of when a certain book should be published and when it shouldn't be published. "It's very bad to publish such and such in June and it's very bad to publish such and such in November; we don't want your book to get lost in the Christmas rush" and this sort of thing. One wonders really if there isn't an awful lot of astrology in it all.

Interviewer: Do you think its possible that reviewers are more apt to affect the reception of a book in an academic community or on the academic level?

Mr. Price: Well, it's hard to say. I don't know because I can't think of any critic, any single reviewer in America who is greatly respected by a large body of informed readers. In England, say thirty years ago, if Arnold Bennet reviewed a book in the *Evening Standard*—he used to write, I think, a weekly book review—if Arnold Bennet liked a book he reviewed in the *Evening Standard* then it immediately sold thirty thousand copies just on the basis of that one review. If H. G. Wells recommended a book it immediately sold. I suppose in the 19th century in America if Emerson had recommended a book—I mean, Emerson's recommendation of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* took the thing right off the ground. I don't think there's a single critic in America with the possible exception of Edmund Wilson who could stand up now and say, "This is an extraordinary book," and find respect for his views. There are a lot of people that one's

always interested in. I mean, I'm always interested in what Mary MacCarthy says about books but nine-tenths of the time I don't agree with her. It's very hard to know because I think that reviewers in America are so irresponsible really; this may sound inconsistent. Where one would expect to find intelligent reviewers in America, one doesn't. I think one finds intelligent reviews in the *Sioux City Sentinel*. I don't think one finds intelligent reviewers where they ought to like the *Partisan Review* or the *Kenyon Review*, even sometimes the *Sewanee Review*. I mean, one certainly can't generalize too much. I think that the best reviews are provincial newspaper reviews.

Interviewer: Do you think it often defeats a writer to be forced to teach in that it compromises any complete commitment?

Mr. Price: Well, if you say forced to teach, yes, I think it would. Teaching is a calling and I don't think one ought to be forced into a calling. You ought never to force one into a priesthood. For better or worse, teaching, I think, is a form of priesthood. I teach because I very much enjoy teaching and because I especially enjoy having a certain part of my life rendered in the presence of people younger than myself, people who are full of enthusiasm and a certain amount of fervor. Goodness knows, enthusiasm and fervor vanish soon enough. But I think certainly one does see a number of people ground down, beaten to the earth, who might have been forced to teach because (a) they need the money, (b) this is the only way they know how to make their fifty-seven hundred dollars a year or whatever it may be.

I don't think we know what the effect of the movement of the American writer into the university is. People are trying to guess already about this extraordinary phenomenon of the universities becoming the literary patrons of America. It has never really happened in the history of literature before and it will be very difficult to know. But a very good friend of mine, a very wise man, Lord David Cecil, said to me that he thought any artist needed great stretches of his life in which he could be quite irresponsible—irresponsible to any form of authority—well, any sort of worldly authority. I mean, you're always responsible to the law of gravity, the laws of God, and so on; but I quite agree. I think that it certainly is a necessity in my own life, in the life of most writers I know, for a certain amount of irresponsibility. And the

university makes that very difficult. Because there is one very exhausting thing about teaching—there are many exhausting things about it, but I think the main exhausting thing about teaching is that not only are you expected to teach poetry or physics or whatever, but you are also expected to be an example of some sort to your students, a good example, with all that it implies. I'm not saying that one wants to be a bad example in one's hours off, that one wants to run out and do something really outrageous as soon as you get out of class. But I think that there is an element of strain which is probably in the end exhausting to a writer. There are a great many things one feels one can't do; but then I'm sure there are a great many things you can't do if you're an insurance salesman, if you're an editor for Random House, or selling refrigerators like my father used to do.

Interviewer: In teaching creative writing, do you stress the academic side of form and structure?

Mr. Price: I have a course in writing, but I don't call it creative writing because I think that's a very pompous phrase. I think it's been attached to an awful lot of very, very bad instruction in the past and in the present. I call my course narrative fiction, narrative writing. I think a great deal can be done for gifted students in a writing course if it's managed very carefully and very suspiciously. I think very little can be done for a student that doesn't have some real gift of his own. I mean, I think that's the thing about any art and it's a pretty obvious thing to say. If you don't start out with some donation which you didn't acquire, which came to you from God, or your genes, or something, you might as well give up. But I think you can take a gifted person and tell him the right things to read and point out and try to help him discover as you yourself try to discover the way certain things get themselves made and put together, certain stories, certain novels. I think you can at least begin to develop, help him develop his ear, his sense of what's good and what's not good, what can be done, what has been done, what needs to be done. I would say that the chief advantage in someone who wanted to write having a college education as opposed to not having one would be that college provides him above all, if he takes it seriously, with a reasonably disciplined reading background. I think that there is nothing more necessary and nothing more important for a writer to have. I've said it many

times but I think if I had to have advice to young writers carved on my tombstone it would be read about ten times as much as you write. I think so many young writers have the idea that you must keep the typewriter going; if you keep it going long enough something will happen. Well, nothing like that will ever happen unless you stop and think a bit and I think that the chief way writers can think is by reading other writers and reading very, very good writers.

Interviewer: Katherine Anne Porter said a few years ago she abhorred comparisons of writers and authors, especially by critics. How do you feel about this? Do you think that writers should stand completely on their own merit or be compared?

Mr. Price: Well, I think that the answer to that has to be double barreled. It's really ridiculous to say "the best novel of the year was *Spring Time in the Rockies*." Well, that's nonsense. In the first place how do you know at the end of a twelve month period? Do you have enough perspective to know that x's novel is better than y's? Just to take it further, I entered one of those illuminating discussions the other night of who was greater—Tolstoy or Dostoyevski, when we should have been on our knees thanking God that both men existed. David S. Lagenta says it's silly to try to compare writers because writers are not like race horses. You can enter horses in a race and tell them "When the bell rings, you horses go from point A to point B and the first guy who gets to point B wins the race." That's fair because all the horses are attempting to do the same thing, to get on their four legs from point A to point B at a given signal. No two writers are attempting to do the same thing. It is very unfair to compare people who are not attempting to do the same thing. Writers just are not race horses; they are not entered in the same race. But you must come along and say in the end, yes, comparisons are made, because it is perfectly clear that some things are more worth doing than other things. It seems to me that Jane Austin is a perfect novelist. Two or three of her books are absolutely perfect and I don't think that there is anything that needs changing about them; yet I think that anybody will admit that Tolstoy or Dickens were greater novelists as they did things that were much larger in scope and not only larger in scale but with more value because of greater intensity; a greater degree of comprehension, un-

derstanding, was being expanded upon a much, much broader range of human experience. So it is possible to say that Tolstoy is greater than Jane Austin. At the same time, why say it, why not just read them both and be glad that you have got them both? It is like saying "I love apples, so much more than I do steak," so what?

Interviewer: Your characters are more or less of the inarticulate group, and you said that you felt a certain compulsion or need to speak for the inarticulate. In the continuing concern to speak for the inarticulate, do you think that the articulate have been neglected?

Mr. Price: I have just read Walker Percy's *The Movie-Goer*. It seems to me, although I think the central character who tells the story is pretty inarticulate, that a number of the characters in that novel are articulate southerners insofar as they are based on the Percy family in New Orleans, which is a very distinguished southern intellectual family. I know there are no articulate people in Faulkner except that boring Gavin Stevens, who is always so articulate that you wish you could shut off the valve. Who else? Thomas Wolfe, well his characters are not supposed to be articulate; they go on for a lot of pages though.

I think southerners are uniquely articulate at almost all levels of society. Like southern people in almost all countries, as opposed to northern people in a given country, they will talk very freely about problems that you think lie closest to their hearts; they'll talk very freely about the alcoholic nephew in the family, or the wino father, or the illegitimate this or that. This is a very famous thing about southerners. I think in a way articulate and inarticulate are meaningless in the South. In any case, people will say that communication is impossible. No two people ever speak to one another. We're all locked up in those plate glass walls and we never touch. Nonsense, I mean I think, I imagine I communicate on a very intense level with four or five people; and it seems to me good enough. I don't worry that I can't walk up to the guy who sweeps out my office and talk to him kind of heart-to-heart. It doesn't bother me. I think an awful lot more people could communicate if they just tried.

I think that another question is how do you talk about characters who don't think very much, who don't think in any conceptional way? And that's a problem that I ran very much up against in writing *A Long and Happy Life*. One believes that intellectual people do a good deal of conception thinking, that I think that I've got situation A, I've got choices A and B and it would be better if I do A. The following things may result if I do A. The following things may result if I do B. *Ergo*, I do A. I'm sure that 99% of the people in the world don't live their lives in that way. I question if anybody does. Maybe Einstein or a few people like him did. But this is very much a problem that you have in fiction. How can I show the way a girl makes up her mind to marry the father of her child, or in the case of *Lie Down In Darkness*, how can William Styron show the mind of the girl rapidly heading for suicide, this little girl who obviously doesn't think very much? Well, all sorts of techniques have been invented in the 20th Century—stream of consciousness and so on and so on. I think they were just as artificial as the old Dickensian 18th Century method of saying "He thought to himself, 'I must go to the cliff and jump off.'"

So my characters just think that way. "I must go to the cliff and jump off." "I must marry the father of my child." They don't say, "looking out the window, seashells, breakers, foam riding across the waves, I must jump off the cliff." That's the Wolfe, Joyce thing. It seemed to be just as artificial as any method, so I returned to a much simpler method which is at least more readable.

Interviewer: Then there were not any concious techniques which you used?

Mr. Price: Rather simple ones. You just say, "Rosacoke looked at Wesley and thought 'Now I am free of Wesley.'" I think very seldom do you say to yourself in your head, "I am going to walk across the street and tell that man exactly what I think of him." How do you think? Do you think in words? Does one think in words? Do you think in pictures? I don't know, because by the time you've had a thought it's past history; it is impossible to reclaim the actual process. Sometimes I think very deliberately you do say words in your head. You do say sentences silently. Often in moments of great stress or moments of great determination, one does think words; but otherwise I suppose you think in a colossal jungle

of pictures and electric impulses and so forth. No one understands this, and so you just invent your own little particular convention, and my little particular convention in that novel was a rather natural technique of saying, he thought, she thought, she said to herself, and so on. The method would naturally alter with any given situation. You can't just invent a method at the age of twenty-five and expect to use it the rest of your life. That's what Hemingway did and look what it did to him. Right to the end he was trying to use tools that he had made, no doubt he made them, but he was still using the same old tools in 1961 that he was in those marvelous brilliant things in 1930; there's something a little grotesque about that, like looking at Marlene Deitrich and saying "Well I know Marlene Deitrich is fifty-six years old, but she looks just like she did 30 years ago;" you think, "Wow, she ought not to."

Interviewer: Since you deal with the illiterate groups in southern society, do you think these people are any closer to the mainstream of life?

Mr. Price: I don't know what the mainstream is, except that I'd say that all those people who go to bed hungry in Europe and Asia every night don't read books, certainly. My own father always said he'd never read but one and he wasn't especially proud of the fact, but it was just a fact of his life. He was a very good man indeed. A very wise man. I'm not all that convinced of the value of books. I think of all the things in the world which matter, art probably matters rather little. Nothing matters very much and few things matter at all, as Salisbury said. He may have been right. If it is true, I think art is one of the things that doesn't matter very much.

Interviewer: In that case why are you writing?

Mr. Price: Because it is what I can do.

Interviewer: Do you think that a writer has a real drive, that it's something he has to do?

Mr. Price: It is a very neurotic drive, other people steal underwear off clothes lines and things like that. Others write. It's just a rather constructive neurosis. I think it's probably better than people who steal underwear off clotheslines.

Interviewer: You made a comment about the technique you used in your first novel. You said something about making it readable. Is that your primary consideration?

Mr. Price: It's certainly one, yes.

Interviewer: Well, the book that jumps in my mind is *Finnegan's Wake*.

Mr. Price: There are people who have read it, but I'm not one of them. I'll probably go to my grave not having read it either. I think that's the great trouble with *Finnegan's Wake*. It is not readable. If a picture's invisible, it can't be seen; if a book's unreadable, it can't be read. I think readability is certainly one of the first things a writer must deal with. I think there are some things which are so complex that they cannot be said simply. It is useless to say that all prose must be so loose that it can be understood by a guy running a 50 meter dash. But I can't read Henry James, another confession; I keep making attempts to read *The Golden Bowl*, and *The Wings of the Dove*. They're just unreadable; but there are people whom I admire very much, people whom I even love, who think that *The Golden Bowl* is one of the supreme works of art. I just can't get past page 5, because I don't know what James is talking about. I realize if I'd been in the room with this man, I'd have just been asleep.

I do think it is possible to be too good, from moment to moment, in prose to be so good that the reader finds it impossible to get on with the page. He's continually stopping to admire a particular little description or a particular little comparison. "Yes, that just exactly right; that's exactly how a tree looks with ice on it," or "That's exactly what a 1939 Pontiac looks like." Consequently you have this very cluttered quality; you feel like you're being buttonholed; you feel like somebody's stopping you at the end of every line and holding you up. I think in that case, if you're a very clever person and have a very good eye for detail, you just have to throw a good deal of that overboard. I remember Eudora Welty saying that to me about one of my earlier stories that she read; that from moment to moment it was too fine, that there were too many good details in it, so that it slowed the reader down enormously. You know what it is like . . . you just go to the National Gallery in Washington, there are too many good pictures in that gallery. After a while you find yourself racing past beautiful pictures which, if they were hung in a single room alone, you would think each was one of the most beautiful things ever painted. But when you see forty-five of them in one room it just looks like wallpaper.

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A Touch of Madness

An old woman weeping
Under the gray blanket
Of a willow tree.
Grey rain over a long
Grey stretch of sea,
Under a grey sky—
Grey rain on a silver roof.
A thousand years ago.

Jules beside me
Reading in his chair
beside the fire,
Lost. Lost
in the intricate pattern
of a child's delight.
Back to yellow leaves on
Snow.

Back a thousand years ago
To the slow rhythm of a
Thousand hearts and
A thousand drops of grey rain.
The sacrilege of winter
Spreading yellow leaves on
Snow.

Ashes and yellow leaves,
Ashes and snow.
Ashes, leaves, snow—
A thousand years ago.

Jules beside me
Nodding in his chair.
Jules under the earth—
Under the ashes, leaves and
Snow.

A thousand years ago.

Dawn

Through a silver-frosted window
A sudden shaft of light!
A silver-shattering sunburst
Puts an end to night!

Along a stretch of warm sea-sand
A ribbon-twisted line of foam;
A night-weary shadow stops to muse,
Then turns again home.

White sails caught on a rising tide
Wait restlessly for me;
A lone gull wheels in open air,
And tops a white, foam-crested sea.

I must be gone.

Brenda Canipe

On Several Seas

Voices

O' Surely this is so—
Our feet have led us to the stars,
where, by the maze of lights,
we danced like frightened mice
on shattered coals . . .

Scars of failing stars
and silent stumps of flickering dark . . .
And we have run like ghosts
down fields where gryphons fled.

O' Surely I have crushed
a thousand flowers down . . .

The dark trees wait for light;
the young trees wait for rain . . .

O' Surely I have sought the shadow of myself
and lost your eyes
in every weep of night
to stumble on at morning . . .

where the blind mice dance

by the maze of music light . . .

O' Surely there is no beauty
like a thousand flowers crushed . . .

In the belly of this building
I will die . . .
I will haunt the floors above me
with a dying wail . . .
for I have made of Death
a woman wed to flowers . . .
And I will sadly gaze with silver eyes
upon the face of God . . .

For Surely I have heard
a thousand dying flowers speak . . .

Call up, call up
those magic men
with names like Gods . . .
who sowed their lives
like seed on the wind . . .
furrow to the right,
against the mast, Odysseus,
and the siren's voices
raised against him . . .
remember Achilles, Odysseus,
the manner of his dying . . .
Circe climbs a lonely crag
and looks to seaward . . .
and in Carthage a single figure
sets a funeral pyre
to light the world.

Troy

Time has eaten here . . .
the wooden horse waits,
timbers sag with weather,
head charred.
Once . . . this was a land alive . . .
this city has known the click
of history's heel; here Ajax died,
Achilles there . . . here aged Agammemnon stood
and disbelieved Cassandra . . .
but now—this ash is old,
Helen's bones are polished silver,
Odysseus dead—there is only the wind
and the wooden horse who waits.
Time has narrowed his eyes . . .

Milton G. Crocker

Mike's Place they say was built on the ruins of a once-thriving cotton farm, on land once lorded over by gentlemen. They say that Mike's Place is part of the New South—not the New South included in the governor's speeches nor even the New South of the travel folders: no, Mike's place is part of the New South of the back roads, of the sun-scorched dirt farms, of miles and miles of open countryside, green and alive with growing tobacco in the spring and seemingly barren and soggy and brown in fall and winter; or the weathered raw-boned people who trample over their fields, still tearing from the maws of the land their food and shelter just as generations before had done (this in spite of the governor's speeches).

T H E O U T S I D E R

You can sit in the cool back room of Mike's place while the hot summer wind whirls up the dust in the shimmery driveway outside. (During World War Two, it had been a roadhouse, frequented by marines who swarmed over the countryside, up and down the highway between there and the coast. After the war it was turned into a filling station; however, as time went by, the back room was reopened, a juke box installed; and, on the weather beaten front, along with the Pepsi and Nehi signs was added, in crudely painted letters: cold beer.)

"You oughtta get out of here," Mike, the proprietor, was telling the red-necked young man who sat at the counter in the front, hunched over a bottle of beer. "Outta this part of the country, I mean. It ain't your type of life."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I said. A fellow like you just don't belong here." He swatted a fly which had landed on the counter.

The younger man sat thoughtfully, picking at the label on the wet bottle. Outside the sun glared off a tractor parked by the gas pumps.

Now Mike was leaning over the counter, his paunchy face peering into that of the youth. "You know the way things are here. You grow yer tobacco an' you sell it. Maybe you trade in yer car. Saturdays you get drunk. Sometimes you fight. Sometimes you get thrown in jail. Sometimes somebody gets killed. That's the way it is here; that's the way it's always been around here and that's the way it always will be around here. God knows, I know."

"It's that way everywhere," the youth said quietly.

Mike straightened up. "This ain't the place for you, Joe," he said. "You got too many smarts for this kind of life," he said, tapping his forehead with his finger. He picked up a sappy dish towel from the counter.

"It's just for awhile," the youth said; "Just till Ann's old man gets better, you know. It's the only thing we could do. I mean staying here and helping out with the farm while he's laid up an' all. It's just for awhile."

"Hm! And just how long do you figure that'll

By LARRY BLIZARD

be, huh? Do you know?"

"I don't know," he replied vacantly, picking at the label on the bottle again. "But anyway, I can't leave Ann and it's her place to stay here with him."

A second fly landed on the counter. Mike went after it. Outside, the tractor's motor started up. A dusty second-hand car pulled up and two grimy, sunburned men with shirt fronts open and shirrtails hanging loose got out and came in.

"Another thing," Mike said as he carefully—almost delicately—brushed the fly off the counter, "what about Carl Powers?"

At the sound of that name, the youth stopped in mid-drink, set his bottle back on the counter; and, for the first time, gazed attentively at Mike.

"What about him?"

"You know he's outta prison now," Mike said, "an' you know how he felt about Ann. He ain't gonna take too kindly to you an' Ann bein' together."

"I can take care of myself, Mike."

"I remember him an' Ann used to come in here lots," Mike said, "—used to come in here Saturday nights an' drink an' dance an' raise hell. He's a big man, Joe, an' he's mean—real mean."

"I'm not worried about him."

"What I can't figure, Joe, is you an' Ann gettin' along together. I mean her and Carl, they were alike in a lotta ways. They both grew up around here; they're a part of this place. This is the only kind of life they know. They work the land, they drink, they fight. But you—" he jabbed his finger at Joe, "—you're not their kind. You're—too goddam easygoin'."

"Look Joe," Mike was leaning over the counter again, looking searchingly into the youth's face, "take my advice, huh: Get outta here. Take the girl with you—if you think she'll go—which I doubt. You stay here, you'll end up like the people who live around here, brown and wrinkled and squinty-eyed, and hard. It's the only way to survive here, Joe. But you'll be all dried up inside; the sun, the wind—they'll dry you up. You work the land, you drink, get in fights on Saturday nights, maybe shootin' somebody—or gettin' shot. These people—this is all they've ever known. They can take it. But you—you just ain't cut out for it. Why can't you just leave here, an' get away from Powers an' his kind."

The young man sat there saying nothing. Finally he looked at his bottle of beer. "I can't go, Mike. I love Ann. As long as she's here, I'll fit in here too."

And the afternoon passed. The sun, now a red globe against a purple sky, sank below the horizon; while the land, like a cat awakening from sleep in the sun, seemed to yawn and stretch in the fresh coolness of the evening breeze. And with the evening, Mike's Place came alive with lights and sounds—the juke box, the pin ball machine, the hiss of beer cans being opened amid the sliding of chairs and stools; the coarse laughter, the leathery faces and the smells of sweat and tobacco and soil—the smells of the land. The youth finished off his last bottle and walked out the door. The moon was a climbing pale disc in the sky as he drove off.

He had driven perhaps two miles when he noticed the car behind him. At first he paid no attention to it, but when he saw how the car hung close to his rear in the gloomy dusk, he studied it closely, took a deep breath, and very slowly, very deliberately pulled off, and crunched to a stop some yards ahead of him.

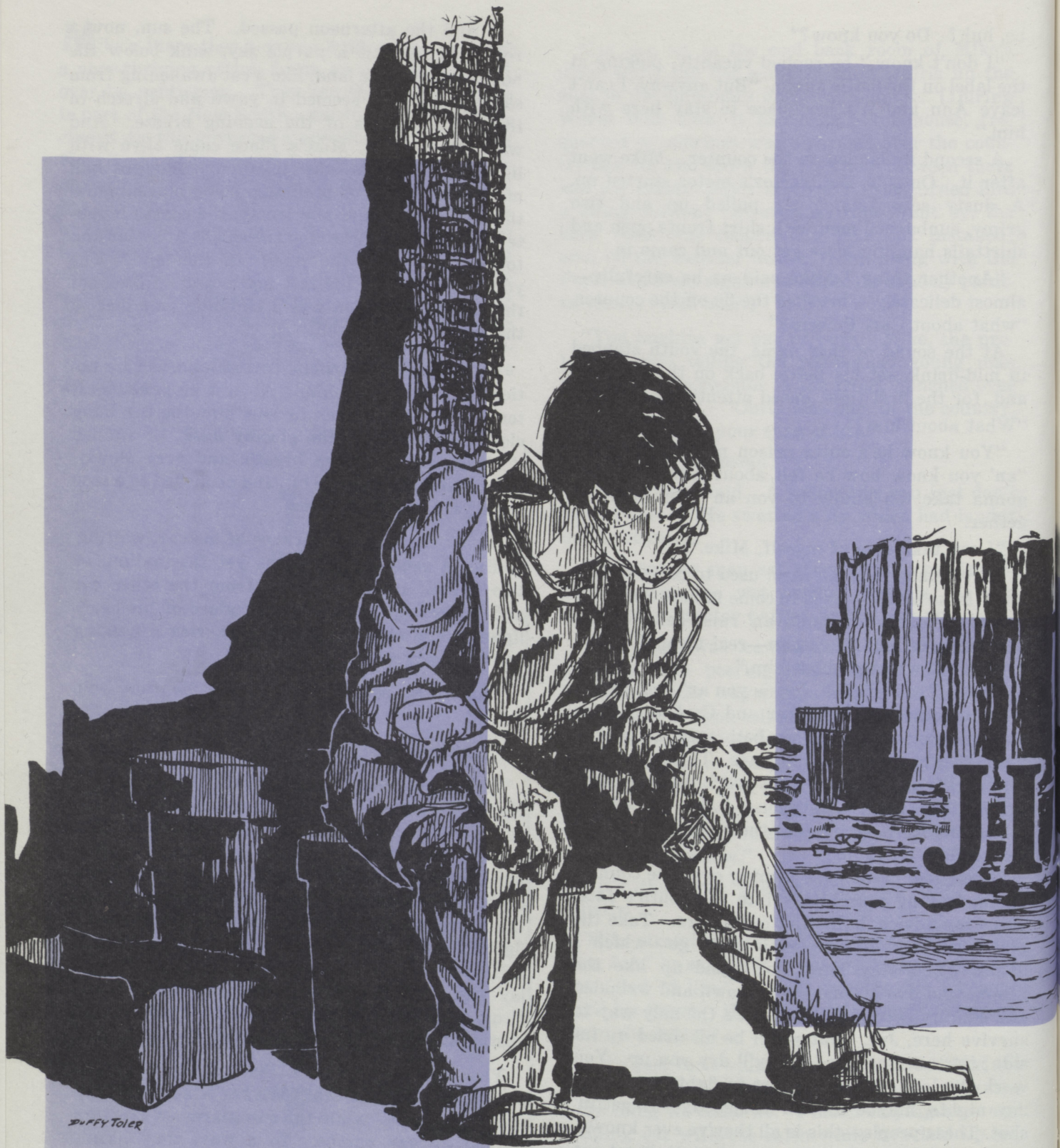
He sat there in the darknes of his car, waiting, feeling a sense of loneliness yet fascination, as two figures emerged slowly from the other car and walked toward him in the glare of his headlights. The one, the nearer one, was a hulking figure in a gray shirt.

"Joe?" the nearer man called, "Is that you, Joe?"

"I'm right here, Carl . . ."

"Come out, Joe, I got somethin' I wanna . . ." He said no more. The youth called Joe had the revolver aimed even as the other man called. The gun barked once—the hulking figure raised a hand, spun around, falling. The youth after firing once, fired again and again—four times more—at the figure writhing on the ground, at the shadowy figure behind him. Four more shots, a scream, and then silence. The echoes faded, the figures lay still. The darkness closed in around them. From somewhere, a fresh moisture-tipped breeze rustled the stalks in the field beside the road.

You can sit in Mike's Place in the burning summer afternoons, while the hot wind churns up the dust outside, while the sun glares off tractors parked by gas pumps. In a way, time hasn't changed the countryside around Mike's Place. In spite of the tractors and machines, the people still trample over their fields, work the land, fight, drink, love, and die. It is a part of the country with which the casual tourist rarely becomes involved. In many ways, it is still a harsh life.



By ZOE KINCAID BROCKMAN

That his name was Jim Jumper was the occasion for perennial flurries of mild mirth in the small town where the upright and the dissolute lived more or less harmoniously and uncritically together.

Jim Jumper was the town's most notorious bum, pan-handler, and fussy drunk. He seldom had enough money or begging luck for a real spree, but he was always foggy and unsteady from bay rum, vanilla extract, or canned heat. His last drink was paint thinner, but that comes later in the story.

His name amused old residents and newcomers alike, since Jim Jumper had never been known to accelerate his shambling gait, even when crossing Ashley Avenue, which is practically a death trap, or the railroad track which bisects the town.

Jim Jumper, age unknown, was tall, stooped, loose-jointed, and splay-footed. In appearance he was the reincarnation of Ichabod Crane, a character of whom Jim Jumper had never heard. Where what meager schooling he had been exposed to had ended, nobody knew. Just as nobody

he'd been pointed out as the town's No. 1 No-Good. But where he spent his little boy days or with whom, none could say. He seemed to have grown up in alleys, slept in piano boxes or coal cellars, and begged his food from restaurant leftovers.

I first encountered Jim Jumper in the newspaper office where I work. The newspaper was on Jim Jumper's beat, since reporters are known to be pretty soft-hearted people, and our office was always good for several touches. As for me, I studiously avoided the big, shambling, muttering man. It wasn't that I was afraid of him. Jim Jumper had never been known to harm so much as a kitten. It was rather that his unkempt, greasy hair, his spotted, smelly clothes, and the look of his skin, deeply pitted from acne or some ugly disease and ingrained with dirt, offended me. The newsroom staff, particularly the gay young sports writers, made quite a thing of a visit from Jim Jumper, if he remembered to make it after the paper was off the press. They handed out dimes, they poked sly fun, and they needled him in a way both kindly and merciless.

JUMPER

knew where he came from or who his family had been. He had difficulty spelling out newspaper headlines, and words of more than two syllables were beyond him.

When the grisly thing was over and the compulsion was upon me to record something of the history of Jim Jumper, there was little or nothing to draw from. Nobody knew whether or not he was a native of the town. All the old settlers could tell me was that he had been mooching around for forty years, and that from childhood

But Jim Jumper was aware only that he was in a friendly atmosphere, the boys offered cigarettes, and often gave him what remained in a mashed and crumpled pack.

Jim Jumper would grin, showing stained teeth with several of the front ones missing. He never lifted his head about his stooped shoulders, but peered upward through shaggy strands of fearfully dirty hair. He loved the newsroom, if there was a vacant chair he took it, tilting himself precariously against the wall. When the reporters

had time to talk they drew him out on what he was drinking that day, where he had slept the night before, and what he was going to do with the money they gave him. Then, if his mood was good, he'd pluck a battered harmonica from a torn pocket, clamp rubbery gray lips over it, and draw from it music that had an almost magical sound. His repertoire consisted of a few sad, nostalgic tunes, and seldom could he be persuaded to try any of the current favorites.

One day the boys sold him on the idea of getting married. What he really needed, they told him, was a nice fat blonde wife. They advised him to place an ad in the paper—they wrote the ad out for him with much ribald laughter.

Jim Jumper was elated. He discussed the ad with the man at the classified desk, had him read it over and over to him, and then stumbled out, sure that he'd find a nice fat blonde girl waiting for him when he visited the office next day. What he didn't know was that the crumpled up ad hit the wastepaper basket before he was out of the front door.

One day I didn't see him coming and he caught me at my desk in the woman's department. I typed busily, never once lifting my head. And Jim Jumper talked. "Gonna get married," he told me. "Big fat blonde girl. Got money. Got car. Can love like hell."

When I didn't reply he asked, "Cat got your tongue?" When I still gave no sign that I knew he was around, he waggled a long bony finger slick with dirt under my nose. "Lemme tell you something," he mumbled thickly and a little excitedly. "Prettier wimmen than you talk to me, an' younger ones, too."

At that, since I'm neither young nor pretty, my risibilities overcame me and spilled over into laughter. "Laughin' at me," he muttered fiercely. "Got no right to laugh at me. Gonna get married. Nice fat blonde girl." And he shambled off in the broken shoes that caused him to walk on the sides of his big splayed feet.

It isn't that people in my town are careless or hard-hearted, and we have a welfare department, same as the next one. Church people tried to do something for Jim Jumper, to sober him up, clean him up, and find some sort of a berth for him. But the big shambling wreck of a man wanted none of it. He'd been numb with cold or sodden with heat, depending on the season, all of his life. He was used to being hungry. His ancient clothes, stiff with dirt and grease, suited him. All he wanted was freedom to check his beat each day,

collect from the easy marks as well as the impatient ones who flung him a coin to get rid of him, and to shuffle into the newspaper's city room, which constituted his club, the only place he could go for a spot of conversation which had nothing to do with the good of his soul. Of preachers and the Salvation Army, he was leery. They'd give him food and a bed, or the Salvation Army would, but it was the feel of alcohol coursing warmly through his sluggish veins that he needed and had to have. Maybe the fearful stuff he drank eased up any blurred memories he might have had. And surely he must have had stirrings of memory. He'd been a baby once, he'd been born to somebody, and surely, for a time at least, he'd known warmth and comfort and some sort of security. But these thoughts came to us much later when we were through with merely accepting Jim Jumper and were trying to catalogue him as a human being.

The day that Jim Jumper, tight as a pickled owl on an unaccustomed windfall of real whiskey, was discovered showering the Confederate monument on the court house lawn with decaying tomatoes and cabbages garnered from a food store's garbage can, was the day the authorities took steps. Arrangements were made for Jim Jumper to go to the county home. He was washed, and that must have been accomplished by force. His hair was cut, and his bony, unsteady body was thrust into clean denim work clothes. Somehow his knobby feet were put into brand new shoes, the first new ones anybody had ever seen Jim Jumper wear.

The county home didn't suit him, as the uneasy authorities had known it wouldn't. Clean clothes, three plain, wholesome meals a day, and a clean bed meant nothing to a man who had never known them. Or, if he ever had, had long since forgotten that such comforts existed.

For the first day or two, Jim Jumper kept to himself and played the harmonica, which was his one treasure and which he'd been allowed to take with him to his new home. New? That's a laugh. It was the first home Jim Jumper had ever had. Unless the plaintive tunes issuing from the harmonica were tag-ends of something he had known before we became aware of him. Where, for instance, had a character like Jim Jumper picked up the melody of Brahms's "Cradle Song," or the wistful notes of "Mighty Lak' A Rose" and "Goin' Home," which seemed to be his very favorites? Nobody knew, and the origin of the wavering

tunes he played were shrugged off as "just one of those things."

After three weeks, Jim Jumper managed to elude the manager of the home and shuffle into town, a matter of some five miles. When he appeared in the newspaper office, sweaty, filthy, and exhausted, if there was any expression in his hooded, wary eyes, it was that of complete panic of a creature caught in a trap, of a captive in a trap, of a captive who had to get out of the trap at all costs.

This time the reporters couldn't help him. This time there was no easy banter, no give and take. They talked seriously to him, asked him why he couldn't behave himself and act like a human being, kept him talking while one of them put in a telephone call to the proper place. Presently a cross individual showed up, shoved Jim Jumper into a pick-up truck, and took him back to the home.

The great craving was upon him. There was vanilla extract at the home. Jim Jumper knew; he could taste it in the bread pudding they had for supper. There was bay rum; he could smell it on the scalp of the man who ran the farm and who despised him because he would not, or could not, work. But it was all locked away from him. And now there were no friends to laugh at him, to jeer at him, to tell him impatiently to "get going," but who, at the same time, gave him the bits of money which he exchanged for the only thing that made his existence bearable. What we realized much later was that Jim Jumper had to have something, just as all human creatures must, and his something was realized in the cheap mixtures which, if he had the money, he could always find.

The idea that desperation could or would assail Jim Jumper didn't occur to any of us. He was the town character, dirty, slovenly, witless, and drunken, and now we had at last got him into an atmosphere of cleanliness, decency, and sobriety.

Or had we?

Well, Jim Jumper had the answer to that one. Again he escaped the home, but he didn't show himself in the newspaper office. There his friends had failed him; they had delivered him to the enemy; he would not trust them again. He fell in with a ragged company of fellow derelicts, and holed up with them in an abandoned building for a real orgy. Whether or not he had known these men before, we had no way of finding out.

This was Saturday night. The group Jim Jumper joined had latched on to paint thinner in

large quantities, stolen from God knows where, and rolling about on the splintery floor of the lurching building, they drank the fearsome stuff.

How Jim Jumper got away, and why he chose, if, indeed, he did choose, to die in the Episcopal churchyard, is another of the mysteries surrounding this doomed man. His companions died horribly in the rotting warehouse. And how, since he must have been in agony when he stumbled or crawled there, did he recognize the figure lurking in the shadows awaiting the partner of an assignation as a woman, a nice fat blonde woman? What he said to her, no one will ever know, nor in what way the girl, who must have been frightened at the appearance of a stranger in her trysting place, repulsed him. His clouded mind must have still retained the foolish dream of a nice fat blonde girl for a wife. And, if he became angry when he thought I was laughing at him in the newspaper office, his last spurt of anger when rejected by the unknown blonde must have been headier and more violent.

Be that as it may, when the sailor who had arranged the furtive date with the girl arrived in the churchyard, he was, according to his later statement, galvanized from shock. His training for disaster brought him out of that, and he hailed a passing cop. The rest is history. There was the girl sprawled on the grass, her full breasts strutted against the fabric of a too-tight sweater, her plaid skirt twisted in spirals under her, and the long bony, dirty fingers of Jim Jumper already cold and rigid around her throat. The cops admitted that, before her face turned black and, yes, the tongue protruded, she might have been a nice looking girl. That she was blonde and fat was there for all to see.

The macabre business was swiftly concluded at the police station. The coroner was summoned as a mere formality. Since the doctor and the ambulance attendant had some difficulty in removing Jim Jumper's stiffened fingers from the throat of the corpse, the cause of death was self-evident.

The sailor took the next bus out of town, not bothering to pick up his luggage at the crummy hotel where he had registered, and not paying his bill. But the town was so stirred at the unexpected end of Jim Jumper, who was thought to be safe and protected at the county home, that the miserly hotel manager never gave the unpaid bill a second thought.

Clots of people on the streets discussed Jim Jumper, and some uneasily wondered if there had

ever been anything we could have done for him. It was so in the newsroom, where horror and tragedy strike hard, no matter how hard-boiled and nonchalant the reportorial staff tries to appear.

"Hell," the sports writer squirmed, "we were nice to him, weren't we? We kidded him, we gave him smokes and money. That's more than some people did. And how could we know he'd take seriously that stupid stuff about a nice fat blonde girl for a wife?"

Somehow, nobody from our place had the crust to visit the second-rate undertaking parlor where Jim Jumper lay, clean and clipped once more and dressed in the cheap but decent black which the county provides. We turned to our typewriters and clattered away in an effort to drown out our thoughts and our unwelcome memories.

All but the editor. A purposeful sound came from his office, riding the waves of good cigar smoke. He knocked out a fine lead editorial on the importance of the young being taught the dignity and responsibility of honest toil, throwing in a rail fence here and there. He bore down hard on the evils of alcohol, and he strongly advocated temperance education in the public schools, as a required, not an elective subject. Jim Jumper was casually pointed up as a sordid example of what indolence, non-productiveness, and the addiction to drink may lead to, and frequently does. The big fat blonde girl wasn't mentioned. Such as she had no business in our town in the first place. We didn't then, and we don't now care too much for murders. Big fat blonde girls of easy virtue should be all means proceed to the next station.

Poem

Strangers all, we of empty moods are,
Each one restless for another joy, another laugh.
Blank faces peering from tinselled lives beg to be
free,
To live in a shade, a brilliance their own.
I love the cool Spring breeze, the sleepy Summer
day; to walk, to dream.
Cloudless skies console a hazy faith
And I know joy, I laugh, I walk, I dream
Till fading shadows bring release.

DWIGHT W. PEARCE

A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

A Study In His Poetic Form

By

MILTON G. CROCKER

William Carlos Williams is dead.

The man who lived in the midst of an artistic furor all his life died quickly and quietly and without fuss on March 4; so far no critics have written grand and colorful obituaries; no one has painted his life in glorious living color, as they did Cummings. Stephen Gurvis did run a small item in "The Village Voice" having to do more with his life, contributions, etc., than with his poetry. But everything seems strangely quiet and subdued and it is easy enough to imagine the quacks and pseudo-artists, the members of the artsy-craftsy country-club set breathing easier since the man is dead who championed Ginsburg and Corso and shoved sexual ideas into the conservative quarterlies of our fair countryside.

It is difficult to weigh his work. There are those who consider him one of the most important writers in the twentieth century. And there are those who, with equal justice, turn their shoulders inward and stop breathing at the mention of his name. And there are those who stand scratching their weak little heads and can't make up their

minds (I'm one of those). He was a radical; but a talented radical; in these times of nonsensical verse and abstractions that try the patience of saintly monkeys, that should be enough.

Williams was born in 1883 in Rutherford, New Jersey. He went to the University of Pennsylvania; there he met Pound and got hooked on the opiate of poetry. But he was no dreamer, this man. He was a practical man, a man of action who had little nonsense about him. While Pound was racing over Europe, Williams was returning home with a degree in medicine.

Yet he and Pound became fast friends. It is evident from his writings and from the way the two men speak of one another that they shared a great deal of agreeable thought. Williams wrote to Norman, who was preparing the biography *Ezra Pound*, of their experiences on the campus of the University—how they "became engaged"—of the girls they knew—of H. D., whom Pound courted in those days.

Williams wrote home to his parents about ". . . the new student . . . who is making all the

arts his province . . ." and Pound later accompanied him to his home for extended visits on several occasions. Later, Williams sent the first poems he wrote to Pound for his personal criticism. An examination of his earlier work affords a view of just how much "personal criticism" was involved:

. . .
The birds piped ti-ti-tuh and as I went
I thought how Katharin von Borah knelt
At Grimma, idle she, waiting to melt
Her surpliced heart in folds less straitly meant.

As now, it was March then, lo! he'll fulfill
Today his mighty task, sing for content
Ye birds, pipe now! for now 'tis love's wing bent
Work sleeps, love wakes, sing! and the glad air
thrill.

However, by the time Williams had published his first book, under the pseudonym Elkin Matthews, he was, as one critic put it, ". . . oriented differently;" the critic, Vivienne Koch, in *Williams Carlos Williams* adds: "He was again responding to a tradition, but now to the more exotic one of the Provencal lyric which Ezra Pound had so vigorously employed in the songs and translations in *A Lume Spento*, . . ."

And yet the two are entirely different in their final approaches to the problem of literature, to the content of literature, if not to the form it should take. Pound, for instance, is classical to the core. Williams is not. Both pursued the demon of *vers libre*; but as Sir Herbert Read has concluded:

Pound defected . . . he became a Confucian
or a European . . . it remained to . . . Williams
to fill his shoes . . .

This is the core of the matter between them; Williams remained decidedly American in his poetry while such people as Eliot and Pound have taken on the aspect of Internationalism (the man who said that art has no boundaries was a nitwit; if you don't think so, try reading some good translations of Arabic poetry about four hours a day for the next three weeks or a month).

The crux: He, Williams, retains all that brutality, that exuberance, vitality and freshness, which is recognizable in the American culture. Eliot and Pound have a European gloss, a soft persuasiveness about them which he lacks. An hour with Eliot or Pound is likely to make one feel sad, a bit lost and somewhat disillusioned perhaps; an hour with Williams is liable to drive a sane man mad or have one plunging up out of his chair to ex-

plode recklessly into the street. We have:

THE TREES

. . .
wailing at the gate
heartbreak at the bridgehead
desire
dead in the heart

haw haw haw haw
—and memory broken

wheweeeee

and yet the same man can write:

AN ADDRESS

Walk softly on my grave
for I desired you,

a matter for sorrow
for decay;

flowers without odor
garlanded

about the sad legend
live in this

whom green youth denied.

And, still, Williams is much more *familiar* to us. There is nothing unfamiliar to us, nothing we cannot construe in such lines as:

XXI

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

This is a visual poem. There is nothing in it which we have not seen, nothing which we do not know; it is proletarian—as much so as

IMPROMPTU: THE SUCKERS

1927

Take it out in vile whiskey, take it out
in lifting your skirts to show your silken
crotches; it is this that is intended.
You are in it. Your pleas will always be
denied. You too will always go up with the
two guys, scapegoats to save the Republic
and especially the State of Massachusetts.
The Governor says so and you ain't supposed
to ask for details—

. . .

These are earthy and very honest verses. They

are as strong as anything the Russians have tried to produce artificially. This is Williams' method; whereas Pound and his cohorts develop intricate patterns and juxtapositions there is nothing complicated about Williams. He utilizes the same methods they do but he remains truer to life; there is something, as Pound once said, "... closer to the bone ..."

In his prose and his criticism he does the same thing. That is the secret; that is why it was possible for him, as early as 1955-56, to begin championing, defending, and sanctioning such characters as Ginsberg, Corso and sundry companions; the same forces led him to push "radical" ideas and "way out things" into the pages of genteel magazines across the countryside; he shocked his fellow academicians into accepting a new era in poetry in America as Pound had done in Europe several generations earlier.

Williams was, as things turned out, Whitman's only true follower. Other poets of a similar nature turned to various ends, none of which possessed the verve, the audacity of Whitman. But Williams had a wider range than Whitman, he was a twentieth century poet and was, of course, affected by his own time while Whitman, no matter how you cut it, belonged to the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. *Paterson*, for example, is the poem that Whitman would have written had he been born in the America of this century; compare these lines with some of Whitman's:

... The wild
voice of the shirt-sleeved
Evangelist rivalling, Hear
Me! I am the Resurrection
and the Life! echoing
among the bass and pickerel, slim
eels from Barbados, Sargossa
Sea . . .

The man who wrote these lines was action personified, could have no more been a college prof than the man who wrote "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed" could have been a traffic cop.

Paterson is a personification of man. As Williams himself commented in the note to Book I:

Part I introduces the elemental character of the place. The second part will comprise the modern replicas. Three will seek to make them vocal, and Four, the river below the falls, will be reminiscent of episodes—all that one man may achieve in a lifetime.

It belongs to the middle and later periods of his life; to that period when the kernel or stone in his earlier poetry has subsided somewhat and there is left a more pliable, plastic quality which will bend but not break. It is his outstanding poem. It is what he meant when he said:

A poem is a small (or large) machine made of words. When I say there's nothing sentimental about a poem I mean . . . there can be no part . . . that is redundant . . . a physical more than a literary character . . .

One is also reminded at this point of what he had written the conservative Miss Monroe a decade before the publication of Book I of *Paterson*:

. . . Verse to be alive must have infused into it something of the same tincture of disestablishment, something in the nature of revolution . . .

This came about as a result of Miss Monroe's suggestion to Williams that the poem "Peace on Earth" should have "a more explanatory title and that 'Proof of Immortality' lacks an iambic syllable in the fourth and sixth lines."

The influences are still there, of course; it is easily possible to see in the arrangement of *Paterson* the influence of Pound's *Cantos* and Eliot's later work. But in the interim Williams has hardened somewhat; the gap between their works and his has grown wide indeed; Williams' interests in colloquial culture has intensified and deepened.

But there is a catch to all this. It may be that Eliot and Pound have discovered something that Williams never did. That is: without the soft persuasiveness, without the gloss of classicism, it isn't necessarily good poetry. Poetry and art are gestures, the seed thrown against the wind; the facade of seen and non-seen, act against non-act; truth, on the other hand, is blowing back the seed, the fact of the matter. Between these two ends lie a world of extremities, a wilderness country through which no man may pass in safety. Yet it was in this no man's land that Williams built his fortress; and maintained it, passing not once but many times through the dangerous borders around it.

And though Hearst and cohorts may not grieve him there are those of us who must; for he was a great energy in the field of art. We will surely feel his absence.

QUIET CONTRADICTION

by

SUE ELLEN BRIDGERS

The front porch of a white, two-story house. The porch is wide and extends the width of the house. It is supported by four posts, one at each of the corners and one on either side of the steps. The front door has long narrow windows with shaded panes as do the windows. There is a wreath on the wall beside the door. It is a typical old southern town house.

A boy eight years old and dressed in short khaki pants and a tee shirt, is sitting on the porch with his feet on the top step and his hands cupped under his chin. A girl, nine years old, wearing an everyday summer dress, comes out on the front door carrying a plate of brownies. She sits down beside the boy, the plate of brownies in her lap, and starts munching one.

LOU: Don't you want one?

BEN: Huh-uh.

LOU: Sure are good. You know, the best food I ever had was when Grandpa died. There was this pineapple cake with great big chunks of pineapple. I ate it all right by myself.

BEN: (TAKING A BROWNIE AND STOPPING TO STUDY THE PLATE) Mama's got

Rebel readers may recognize this play as a reworked short story by Mrs. Bridgers which appeared in the Fall issue. The editors thought that the play, in addition to its own merit, might indicate how a short story is fashioned into drama.

some plates like this.

LOU: She does not. (STUDYING THE PLATE) You mama's plates got daisies on 'em. Wonder why it is men don't notice things like that? I know what kind of plates everybody on the block's got. Mrs. Jonas' got blue and white; Jody's mama's got roses; Mr. Barkley eats outa paper plates; Wally's mama . . .

BEN: Papa took me to Raleigh once. He took me and Mama and we went in this eating place. They had lights you couldn't even see and there was music in the walls.

LOU: I went to Raleigh one time.

BEN: I know it.

LOU: There were rows and rows of houses so close together that I couldn't see between unless I walked right up and peeped. And I did once. Mama don't know it. She told me not to dare to do it but I did anyhow.

BEN: Papa let me have three different kinds of ice cream. They had a million kinds.

LOU: Want another one?

BEN: Huh-uh.

LOU: I saw some statues in Richmond. There was one of a man on a horse. Mama says he lost the war. Where's Wally?

BEN: I don't know.

LOU: Did he do it this morning?

BEN: Nope. He was walking along and I started talking to him and he made a wrong turn.

LOU: Did you let him do it again?

BEN: He don't let me, does he? I ain't miss-

ed in two weeks, though.

LOU: It's not fair to talk to him.

BEN: All he's got to do is count, Lou. You go up three blocks, turn this way (MOTIONS TO THE LEFT) on the third one. Go over two, then up one and that way (MOTIONS TO THE LEFT AGAIN) two more. It's real easy once you get it in your mind.

LOU: You could have let him do it again one time.

BEN: Mama says she's gonna have the blocks moved. The grass can't grow 'neath 'em. Papa was gonna build somethin' with 'em, though.

LOU: Maybe we ought to stop doing it, anyway. It ain't much fun anymore.

BEN: What'cha mean—fun? It ain't suppose to be fun. It's just something you do and you got to do it right and every day too. Like a vow or swearing on somethin'. Anyway, you don't have to do it. Nobody asked you to go in the first place. (PICKS AT SCAB ON KNEE)

LOU: Quit that. Do you want to git it inflicted?

BEN: Huh-uh, but ain't it already? (STICKS KNEE UP IN HER FACE)

LOU: Couldn't hardly help it, you ignoramus, when ya got 'cha dirty fingers in it. (PRESSES THE SCAB) It is sorta runny.

BEN: Hey, what'cha trying to do? Squirt me in the eye? (MOVES AWAY FROM HER AND PUTS HAND OVER SORE)

LOU: You better git 'cha Mama to put some alkehol or somethin' on it.

BEN: I ain't.

LOU: You better, Ben Parsons. Can I see it one more time, huh?

BEN: What for?

LOU: 'Cause I wanta see a live knee sore 'fore it dies. 'Cause you gonna die, Ben Parsons, if you don't wash it out with alkehol.

BEN: Sez who?

LOU: Mama's a nurse, ain't she? I know all about knee sores from Mama. I'm nine, ain't I?

BEN: Nine ain't much.

LOU: Older'n you. A whole year older.

BEN: Well, you ain't no bigger.

LOU: Well, I'm smarter. Now let me see.

BEN: (MOVING BACK TOWARD HER AND TAKING HAND OFF SORE) Don't you go touching it.

LOU: I'm not, silly. (LOOKS CLOSELY). Hey, there's a bug on here! You already got bugs and you ain't even dead yet.

BEN: (LOOKS CLOSELY AT THE SORE)

That ain't nothin' but a gnat.

LOU: You gonna die, Ben.

BEN: Shut up, or you'll be dead first.

LOU: You ain't gonna murder me, Ben Parsons. White folks got laws against it. Just niggers kill each other.

BEN: You wanta play walking on the sidewalk?

LOU: You'll cheat.

BEN: I will not.

LOU: You did yesterday. You hit a crack and then you said you weren't playing.

BEN: Well, I wasn't. I didn't say let's play, did I?

LOU: You think we're too big to play, Ben?

BEN: I don't know. I wish you'd shut up about it. (WISTFULLY) I hope Papa comes home soon. I bet he'll come walking right down the street and look up at that sweet-gum tree and say "Damn fine looking tree" and pat the old bark and pull a leaf and say "Bring that home to Mama 'cause she dearly loves the smell," and then he'll sniff it a little and grin and push his hat back on his head.

LOU: Your Papa ain't coming home, Ben.

BEN: And he'll take his gun and his hat off and put 'em on the top shelf and say, "Gun's a dangerous thing, son." Then I'll say, "I'm gonna be a policeman, too, Papa."

LOU: That ain't how it's gonna be, Ben.

BEN: You remember the day Wally got his blood on the cement block?

LOU: Yeah. Your Papa bandaged him up right well. Of course, if Mama had been home . . .

BEN: Wally said Papa made it stop hurting. (SOMEONE INSIDE LETS OUT A MOURNFUL WAIL AND THEN SOBS)

LOU: Mrs. Jonas.

BEN: Telling about Patrick.

LOU: Did you know Patrick, Ben?

BEN: Huh-uh.

LOU: How old was Patrick?

BEN: Fifteen, I guess. Mrs. Jonas don't ever say. Just what a good boy Patrick was and how he use to kiss her before he went to school and how she always had fresh cookies when he came home.

LOU: Mama said Patrick wasn't such a good boy. She said he stole apples offa Mr. Barkley's tree.

BEN: Well, I've done that. It's not so bad.

LOU: But that ain't all. He got caught sneaking in the movie house, too. Mama says Patrick was the death of Mr. Jonas.

BEN: She's got his picture in her living room. He don't look bad.

LOU: Folks never do in pictures, silly.

BEN: Mama's got a picture of Papa. You remember that time when he got the medal? Mama's got a picture. It don't look much like Papa.

LOU: Mama's got a picture of me when I was just a little baby. I ain't got any clothes on, either. Mama just shows it to everybody.

BEN: Your mama's a nut.

LOU: She is not. I bet if your mama had a picture of you with no clothes on, she'd show it to everybody.

(A CLERGYMAN HAS COME DOWN THE STREET AND NOW GOES UP THE WALK TO PORCH)

MINISTER: Hello, Ben. Lou Anne.

BEN: Mama's in the house, Mr. Williams.

MINISTER: Thank you, son. (GOES TOWARD THE DOOR AND TURNS BACK A SECOND). God loves the little children nad will provide for them. (GOES IN)

BEN: What's he doing here?

LOU: They always come when somebody dies. Did you go to Sunday School last time?

BEN: Uh-huh.

LOU: I don't believe that about Moses, do you?

BEN: What about him?

LOU: Oh, turning the water into blood and that stuff about the snakes.

BEN: I like it. Except for when all the babies died.

LOU: It's not so bad for babies to die.

BEN: I wish Wally'd come.

LOU: Want another brownie?

BEN: I wish I had a Pepsi.

LOU: You already had one this morning.

BEN: What's that got to do with it?

LOU: Mama says one's enough.

BEN: Your mama's a nut.

LOU: She is not. She knows more than anybody.

BEN: She does not. God knows more than anybody.

LOU: Well, not counting God.

BEN: Do you really think He knows?

LOU: I guess so. It sure was good of Him to have Jesus. We've got a picture of Jesus when He was little. He's wearing a dress like a girl.

BEN: Boys use to do that.

(TWO WOMEN COME OUT OF THE HOUSE AND SPEAK BEFORE THEY SEE BEN AND LOU WHO ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH EAT-

ING BROWNIES)

ONE: Did you sign the register?

TWO: Yes. It'll be full by dark. So many people knew him.

ONE: Naturally, being a policeman and all. I surely hope it doesn't rain. Funerals are so depressing in the rain.

TWO: Well, you can never tell this time of year. Clouds are as likely to blow up as not. (NOTICING KIDS)

ONE: Poor little thing. No father. Makes it doubly hard on Mary Elizabeth.

TWO: A strong-willed woman—that Mary Elizabeth. Still hasn't cried. It does folks good to cry.

ONE: Ben, honey.

TWO: Eating brownies. Things like that keep it off a child's mind.

ONE: (RUBBING BEN'S HEAD) Such a fine young man.

TWO: So well-mannered, too.

BEN: Thank you, Ma'am.

(THE WOMEN GO OFF THE PORCH AND DOWN THE STREET)

ONE: I surely hope tomorrow is a nice day. Funerals can be so depressing in the rain.

BEN: What are they doing here?

LOU: Everybody comes when somebody dies.

BEN: I wish Wally'd come.

LOU: I bet his Mama won't let him.

BEN: Why not?

LOU: Just because. Sometimes you're so dumb. (SINGING) Ben is a dumb-bunny, Ben is a dumb-bunny.

BEN: I am not. I know lots of things you don't know.

LOU: What?

BEN: Oh, lots of things. Did you know Mr. Barkley's wife didn't die? She ran off and married somebody. I heard Mama and Mrs. Jonas talking about it. Mrs. Jonas said she was no good—no better than a nigger.

LOU: All niggers ain't bad. Some niggers are better'n white folks. They're just all the time running off.

BEN: Jessie ain't ever done it?

LOU: Jessie's different.

BEN: Jessie ain't ever done it.

LOU: But she's Jessie. I bet you didn't know Jessie's papa was a white man.

BEN: What's wrong with that?

LOU: Nothin's wrong with it. I just mean Jessie ain't really a nigger.

BEN: What is she then?

LOU: How do you think I know? She works for *your* Mama, don't she?

BEN: Jessie's a nigger. She just ain't ever run off.

LOU: That's cause she ain't got a husband. Who do you think she's gonna run off from?

BEN: She's got a baby. You remember when Jessie had a baby and it died. Mama and me went down there to nigger-town and it had already died.

LOU: Lots of folks have babies that die.

BEN: I know it.

LOU: Do you think God should of let Moses kill all those babies?

BEN: I reckon He can do most anything.

LOU: You still want a Pepsi?

BEN: Uh-huh.

LOU: You want me to get 'cha one?

BEN: If you want to.

(LOU TAKES PLATE OF BROWNIES AND GOES INSIDE. MRS. JONAS, A BIG BOSOMY WOMAN PASSES HER IN THE DOOR-WAY. BEN STANDS UP AND LEANS AGAINST THE POST WITH ONE ARM AROUND IT. ONE FOOT DANGLES OFF THE PORCH. MRS. JONAS COMES UP BEHIND HIM AND PUTS HER HAND ON HIS CHEEK. HER HANDKERCHIEF IS HANGING LIMPLY OUT OF HER DRESS. SHE HAS BEEN CRYING AND LOOKS AS THOUGH SHE MIGHT CRY AGAIN ANY MINUTE)

MRS. JONAS: (RUBS HAND ON CHEEK) Poor little Ben.

BEN: (PULLS AWAY FROM HER AND TIGHTENS GRIP AROUND THE POST) Leave me alone.

MRS. JONAS: (CLOSING IN AGAIN) Please, Ben honey. (SIGHING) People just gotta bear sorrow, honey.

BEN: Leave me alone.

MRS. JONAS: (HOLDING HIS SHOULDERS, TUGGING GENTLY TO PULL HIM AWAY FROM THE POST) It's all right, Ben. He really looks fine. Everybody's saying so. They all say he sure does look fine. Why don't you come see, Ben? Your papa would want you to.

BEN: (PULLS AWAY FROM HER AGAIN AND GOES TO OTHER POST) He's not dead. (HUGS THE POST) He's not dead. He's not dead, I tell you!

MRS. JONAS: (AT HIS BACK) Please, Ben. Be a man now, honey. Don't hurt your Mama like this.

(MURMURS INSIDE INCREASE. VOICES SO CLOSE THEY ARE ALMOST AUDIBLE)

BEN: (BODY RIGID AND STILL) Papa is a man. (SCREAMING) What are they doing here? Why don't they go away? Papa, make them go away!

(BEN RUNS INTO THE HOUSE, WHILE MRS. JONAS SCREAMS "BEN!". BEN IS BACK ON STAGE IN AN INSTANT, THE OPEN REGISTER TIGHT IN HIS HANDS. HE FALLS TO HIS KNEES, THE BOOK ACROSS HIS LEGS, SOBBING AND TREMBLING. RIPS THE PAGES OUT UNTIL THEY ARE CRUMPLED IN HIS FISTS. HE TIGHTENS HIS FISTS AROUND THE PAPER)

BEN: They aren't here. They were never here at all.

(PEOPLE GATHER IN THE DOORWAY, WATCHING. LOU ANNE HAS COME BACK ON THE PORCH AND HAS WATCHED, ALSO. SHE PUTS THE PEPSIS DOWN AND KNEELS BESIDE BEN. AFTER A FEW MINUTES, WHILE THE PEOPLE DISAPPEAR IN THE DOORWAY, MRS. JONAS, SNIFFLING AND SHAKING HER HEAD, GOES INSIDE. THE MURMURS RESUME)

(LOU ANNE OPENS HIS FIST GENTLY, AND TAKES THE PAPER. REPEATS ACTION SLOWLY WITH THE OTHER HAND. TAKES BOOK OFF HIS LAP AND PUTS IT ON THE FLOOR. SET DARKENS SLIGHTLY. LOU ANNE SILENTLY MOVES BEN TO THE STEPS AND SITS DOWN BESIDE HIM. HE IS STILL TREMBLING BUT NOT SO VIOLENTLY. HE LOOKS BACK AT THE WREATH. LOU ANNE LOOKS TOO.)

LOU: Why my grandpa died, he had so many flowers you couldn't see him.

BEN: Goddam, Goddam, Goddam.

LOU: I think lots of flowers are nice, don't you? My papa says your papa'll have more flowers than anybody since everybody liked him so well.

BEN: (PICKING AT SCAB ON HIS KNEE) I thought you said just niggers killed each other.

LOU: Well, I don't know everything. (SHE LOOKS DOWN AT SCAB AND THEN AT BEN. SHE PUTS HER ARM AROUND HIS SHOULDER AND PULLS HIM GENTLY UNTIL HIS HEAD IS CRADLED AGAINST HER NECK. SHE SWAYS GENTLY, HOLDING HIM AGAINST HER. AFTER AWHILE, SHE STOPS SWAYING) You ain't gonna die, Ben, even if you don't put alkehol on that sore. (BEN PULLS CLOSER TO HER) But tomorrow, I'll put some on it.

Richard McKenna, born in Mountain Home, Idaho, 49 years ago, entered the University of North Carolina after serving in the Navy and graduated in 1956 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English.

Mr. McKenna began his literary career writing science fiction stories and recently won the 1963 Harper Prize for Fiction for his novel Sand Pebbles. He is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and resides in Chapel Hill with his wife, Eva.

During the Winter Quarter, Mr. McKenna visited the campus of East Carolina College. The following article is a rewrite of an address which he delivered while here.



Richard McKenna

ON CREATIVE ENERGY

A few days ago I called a man in New York on long distance and he was not in. The operator in Durham gave my telephone number to the secretary in New York so that she could call back when the man returned. I have one of the few numbered exchanges, but in New York they still have named exchanges.

"Please repeat the exchange," said Miss New York.

"It's nine-six-eight," said Miss Durham. She pronounced it *nahn*-six-eight.

"Is that Nancy-Kate?" Miss New York asked doubtfully.

"No! *Nahn*-six-eight!" said Miss Durham.

Stupid! her voice implied. From their voices,

my writer's imagination knew at once that both were young and pretty girls. I listened with delight. The voices grew more impatient.

"Spell it. Won't you *please* spell it?" Miss New York pleaded.

"You *cain't* spell it! It's *numbers!*" Miss Durham said.

"I don't want the number. I already have the number," Miss New York said crisply. "Just please give me the exchange, will you, *please!*"

"Like I told you. *Nahn-six-eight!*"

"Nancy-Kate. Now is it *really* Nancy-Kate?"

"Listen! *Nahn!*" Miss Durham said desperately. "One - two - three - four - five-six-seven-eight-**NAHN!**"

"Nine? Are you saying *ni-yeen*?"

"Yes! *Nahn-six-eight!*"

"Nine-six-eight. Oh! It's a numbered exchange!"

Why didn't you tell me? her voice implied. For a moment I heard the distant rumble of the guns at Sumter. Then both girls giggled.

In setting out to make the particular statement about creative energy which I wish to impart in this talk. I know that I face a barrier to understanding more formidable than the Mason-Dixon line. It is the barrier between youth and age, for these remarks are addressed primarily to young men and women who are not yet twenty-one years old. What follows is an experiment in communication.

Everyone knows that creative energy is what produces art. Fewer know that it must power all significant work in science and in every scholarly pursuit. Not nearly enough people understand that it can also power every aspect of daily living and make the difference between dispirited boredom and a life that is vividly exciting regardless of external circumstances. My thesis is that we all begin life with a vast fund of creative energy and lose it along the way at rates which vary between individuals, so that among mature adults there is a far greater disparity than among children. My concern is to advise you, as college students, how best to retain as much as you can of your creative energy during the crucial period you have now entered and in which, in the normal course of things, so much of it is irrecoverably lost.

The problem and its solution are stated very well in Wordsworth's "Intimations" ode. I hope a good many of you have already read it with a certain puzzled interest, knowing its repute as great poetry, and yet in all honesty finding it incomprehensible and dull. I wish to translate Wordsworth's ode into contemporary terms and concepts and also to go somewhat beyond it, as our culture has gone far beyond what it was in Wordsworth's day. The ode embodies a subtle, elusive idea that cannot be bought over the counter or handed about like a package. It is more like catching a bird in flight and, if you are to stay with me, you must be prepared to fly a bit yourselves.

What Wordsworth chose to treat as different modes of being we can handle more easily nowadays with the concept of creative energy. There is still going on in all aspects of our culture a long-term shift from the statics of form to the dynam-

ics of progress and the notion of energy is more familiar to us than it was to Wordsworth. We have a number of schools of dynamic psychology busily disagreeing about how best to construct a unified field theory of the human spirit. Their jargon is at least as confusing as and much less pleasant to the ear than Wordsworth's poetic phrases. In this talk I will avoid the jargon.

I will instead begin by defining creative energy simply by pointing at it in such a way that you can all identify it with something of your own direct experience. While it is possible, and most fascinating, to infer the operation of creative energy in very young infants, I am going to point at a later manifestation of it, one recoverable through memory in recognizable terms.

When I was eight or nine years old I read a story about cavemen and one afternoon I went out to hunt a bear. I was going to bring him home to my cave as food for my parents and brothers and I meant to make his pelt into a robe for myself. It did not bother me that my cave was a conventional house and that my forest was a desert expanse of sagebrush and lava rock where no bear had ever lived. My spear was a long wooden lath on which I had whittled a point. I set forth filled with pleasant excitement.

It was a hot afternoon with the sky perfectly clear and the world flooded with light. The air was filled with a spicy sagebrush smell and the buzzing of locusts. Yet I went along in mounting excitement with the sense of a cool, shadowy forest all about me, and occasional sunny glades. I went somewhat further from home than I was accustomed to go in play, up a slight rise in the land and finally, with a thrill of fearful delight, I came upon my bear.

He looked something like a rock, crusted with gray-green lichens and partially screened by clumps of sagebrush. I had been that far a few times before and I knew that he was a rock, but I did not know it so certainly that he could not serve me as a bear. *Safely* serve me as a bear, if you will dare to know what I mean. Down I went on my hands and knees, heart thumping, spear gripped in my right hand, and I began to stalk him.

I was perhaps twenty feet away when his rump and haunch heaved slowly. The locusts stopped buzzing. I froze breathless, with a watery thrill of weakness down my legs. The bear did not know yet that I was there. I could still creep away. Instead I waited dry-mouthed until I recovered the marginal knowledge that he was also

a rock. Then, with both knowings held in precarious balance, I resumed my stalking.

The outline of his haunch became plainer. I could see his flank heave with slow breathing. A tension of fearful delight grew in me almost past bearing. The bear sensed my approach and reared shaggily up to loom and roar. In a kind of chaotic swirling away of everything I rushed screaming at the bear, thrusting and hacking and screaming and beating my lath to a splintered stump, until I had restored the set shape of things. I had slain the beariness of him and I had restored the rockness.

I had made him a rock for good and all. I stood there panting and trembling and I knew that I could never hunt him again. But I would always have a friendship with him; he had become a place for me, that I could revisit with pleasure. There were still plenty of other rocks for me to hunt.

That experience is my own fundamental definition of creative energy. A good place for each of you to look for his personal definition might be in the area of night fears and fancies, because after dark the set shape of things has less power either to protect or to command us. If as you search you find yourself becoming uneasy and inclined to scoff, that is only to be expected. I say it sadly. I hope you will not let it defeat you.

It is to be expected because you are still too close to your childhood and all the shaping forces of our culture impel you to put away childish things. The world of childhood can be acutely disturbing to an older mind. Our primary defense is first to forget it and then to insist that it never was because we cannot ourselves remember it. Wordsworth notes that often on his way to school he would have to grasp at a wall or a tree to make the physical world around him retain its set and proper shape. He found it terrifying.

Consider that for a moment in imagination. What would it be like to see the external physical reality all around you begin to shimmer and shift and sway like figures painted on a curtain? To see a cypress tree become a great roaring green flame? Who of us would not be terrified? Yet to a little child, who has not yet created for himself a stable and independent physical world, that is how it seems. It is no threat to him, because that is just how things are and they are pretty wonderful. The more surely he gains a stable physical world, the more he loses of the fearful wonder. As a boy he can still recapture echoes of it in daring imaginary bear hunts. In full maturity he may sometimes go at great expense to East

Africa to shoot real lions. That is a very paltry substitute.

Wordsworth was understandably terrified. We all carry at varying depths beneath our conscious memory that archaic, primordial terror. The inclination to scoff is a safeguard against its overwhelming reemergence. It is a necessary safeguard. But, Wordsworth goes on, "In later periods of life I have deplored, as we all have reason to do, a subjugation of the opposite sort." I hope in these remarks to help those who can stay with me to avoid too complete and crushing a subjugation of that opposite sort.

You are moving now through a transition zone. "Shades of the prison house begin to close upon the growing boy." That has already happened to you. "The youth . . . /By the vision splendid/Is on his away attended." That is where you are now. It is a great irony that you will not be able to appreciate the full splendor of it until you have lost it, until "At length the Man perceives it die away/And fade into the light of common day."

That is where you are going, into the light of common day. What you find it like when you get there will depend in part upon how much of your original stock of creative energy you will have succeeded in bringing through with you to be, in Wordsworth's phrase, the master light of all your seeing. And now, as I have called upon your memory to re-experience childhood, I would like to lead your imagination as far as it will reach toward an anticipation of your intellectual maturity.

To you now, physical reality is independent and mostly dead. It is no longer possible to turn a rock into a bear. It is not easy even to be friends with a rock in his essential rockness. But, just as the child you once were had to explore and to relate themselves to a wonderfully living, changing, unmanageable world of sticks and stones and bushes, so the youth you now are must explore and relate themselves to an equally fearful and wonderful world of ideas. No doubt you often find it confusing and difficult. Perhaps the idea you think you have grasped turns out not to be the idea your instructor thinks he has tossed at you. To you ideas are still more like birds in flight, with a life and a will of their own, than they are like baseballs. In your thought-world you feel the "Blank misgivings of a Creature/ Moving about in worlds not realized." Something of the same process which you have already gone through in your relation to the physical world must also take place in your relation to the world of ideas. It must take on for you a certain public

stability and reality which is roughly the same for everyone. You are going to be very powerfully tempted to make it a small and as far as possible an unchanging world.

If, however, you let the process go too far, it can practically destroy that life of the mind which you now have in almost unimpaired vigor. There will be no more play and exploring. It will not be possible to go bear-hunting among ideas. Then the thought-world is more of a prison house than a refuge, a narrow world of a few ideas safe because they are fixed and solid as rocks. I do not mean that a man in that state no longer thinks. He can send his attention skipping as nimbly as ever among his stock of ideas. Just so can all of you still run and shout among the rocks and bushes if you like, but you know you are not doing the same thing as little children. The man I am describing can think, all right, but he can no longer think *creatively*. Nor is his state any bar to material prosperity. I think there are many men of power and affluence who are as frightened of an idea threatening to change shape as they would be of a rock changing into a bear. They are extreme cases of that subjugation of the opposite sort. For them the salt has lost its savor and it is most merciful when the savor is lost so completely that not even an aching memory of it remains.

I will assume that no one who has come thus far with me wishes to end in that state, even if it means foregoing a certain measure of power and affluence. And I must warn you that our culture will move you by insensible degrees steadily in that direction, unless you resist it intelligently. Wordsworth's prognosis holds true for you all:

*Full soon thy soul shall have her early freight
And custom lie upon thee with a weight
Heavy as frost and deep almost as life.*

Here I am really extrapolating from the ode. The relative numbing of imagination had not gone so far in Wordsworth's day, when grown men and women could still find in traditional fairy tales the kind of delight that only quite young children can find in them in our time. Yet the experience is still the same and we can still learn from Wordsworth.

We can learn that intellectual manhood does not come as suddenly or as early as we may have supposed. I know of no infallible way to determine when it has come, but I can describe the particular signal by which I first discovered it in myself.

It was about midway through World War II and

I was on a ship in the South Pacific. I had charge of the watch in the engine room, in the sleepy hours after midnight, with nothing to do but walk around glancing at gauges and thermometers and listening to the steady hum of the turbines. It was my habit at such times to repeat poetry to myself, my favorite poems, of which I had many. I was just experiencing the music and pleasure of them without thought, the way another man might whistle a tune as he worked. I always had with me a pocket anthology of poetry and I would sometimes read a poem which I did not have by heart. That night I read Wordsworth's "Intimations" ode. I had read it often before, with a certain puzzled interest, but I had never been able to make it *be poetry* for me. That night, suddenly and powerfully, it became poetry for me. It became magnificent poetry. "To me alone there came a thought of grief . . . But there's a Tree, of many, one . . ." I repeated, and the words dripped wonder. "Fallings from us, vanishings," I marveled aloud. The ode had become a poem not only of feeling and sense-imagery but also of ideas. It was my first clear signal that I was verging into what Wordsworth calls "the years that bring the philosophic mind."

If you will read and study it now, perhaps the ode can also serve some of you as an indicator. It cannot be magnificent poetry for you because it is a memory of lost youth and you are still immersed in youth. One cannot remember the present until it has become the past. But if in your thirties you still find the ode incomprehensible and boring to read all the way through, the chances are that you will have lost not only your youth but also the ability to remember it. You will have paid for intellectual manhood a far greater tax on your creative energy than was really necessary.

I was just past thirty when the ode became true poetry for me. Wordsworth was thirty-three when he began it, and then he wrote only the first four stanzas. In them you can see him trying to resolve his "thought of grief" and you can see him fail. His last stanza ends with the same sad question:

*Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?*

Three years later Wordsworth answered himself in the final seven stanzas of the completed ode. It concerns us here mainly to note that he found a way to recover the glory and the dream and that he did it by taking hold of the stable and

rocklike idea of Christian Immortality and putting it through some transformations. He alarmed certain good and pious persons who feared that he was changing their familiar rock into a strange one. He sought to reassure them by saying that he was only playing with poetic possibilities, thereby implying that their rock might not be as rocklike as they had thought it to be, and no doubt alarming them still more. It is in that notion of playing with poetic possibilities that we can find one clue to what we are seeking.

We must accept it as a sad fact that after childhood rocks will refuse to become bears for us. We can no longer play with sticks and stones as once we did. But that same lumpish, inert petrification does not ever have to happen to our world of ideas unless we, unwittingly, permit it to happen. It will not happen if we succeed in carrying over with us into the world of ideas enough of the shaping power of our imaginations which we first learned to use on the physical world around us. If we do that, we recover the glory and the dream. We can, if we like, again play directly with sticks and stones, but now as architects and builders.

The question is how, precisely how, are young persons like yourselves to carry over into your world of ideas as much as possible of the creative energy of children. I have no certain answer. But I believe that by a lucky chance I came through that transition without a crippling loss and all that I have learned up to this point in my life suggests some tentative answers. To them I now turn.

Most important, never stop using your creative energy. The more lavishly you pour it forth, the more abundantly will it always remain at your command. Do not hold back and seek anxiously for some worthy field on which to expend your energy. That is being miserly. It is in the nature of creative energy that the misers lose it all and only the spendthrifts retain it. Make the whole world of ideas your field. Regard each new idea you meet with a friendly or hostile interest, but never with indifference. Whenever you turn your back on an idea you close a door in your mind and you may never again get it open.

Find your personal poet and make him part of yourself. Do not take him from anyone, no matter how august his authority; search and find your poet for yourself. He is likely not to be someone called great—for me at your age he was Kipling—but if you can meet him honestly and directly, without any screen of critical evaluation,

he can let you into the world of poetic thought. That world is the least petrified of all. Once you are fairly inside it, by however humble an entrance, you cannot be wholly lost. From inside it you will go on making more poets and their poetry part of yourself without conscious volition, like something which grows of itself. From inside it you can approach the real giants, Milton and Shakespeare and Chaucer, and make them part of yourself in a way not possible by an approach from the outside. It is the difference between *living* the poetry and just talking about it, however learnedly one may learn in time to talk.

I believe that what kept my mind alive and my fund of creative energy intact through all my years aboard ship was, more than anything else, my devotion to English poetry.

Make the same kind of entrance into the world of music and the plastic arts. Here I am in no position to speak with authority. In my day there was no art or music aboard warships and they were not something a man could bring aboard for himself, like a pocket anthology of poetry. But I passed my youth largely in China and Japan, where art is mingled intimately with all of daily living, and I made my entrance into that world through ways so diffuse and humble that I did not even know that I was in it. Only when I returned at last to the United States and missed it as a part of life did I learn to look for it in the special buildings set apart by our culture for such purposes. But just as with poetry, I think it is more conservative of creative energy if one learns to experience all art without self-conscious awareness, directly and wordlessly, before trying too hard to learn to talk about it.

Try to understand your years in college as a staking out of the world of ideas in which you will live the rest of your life. Make it a wide one. In the world of real estate some men must inevitably be poor and narrowly restricted. Every man may claim for himself as much as he wishes of the world of ideas. Make each course you take an outpost of the imagination to hold for you some region of wonder for exploration later in your life. Claim more such regions now than you can possibly exhaust in ten lifetimes. Build yourself outposts in as many as possible of the sciences and furnish them with the beauty and wonder of art. The more weirdly outflung and roundabout your boundaries may seem to more conventional minds, the more richly wonderful will be the world you are claiming for yourself. Claim it now and claim prodigally. Only so can you carry with you

into that world an abundance of the creative energy which you must otherwise lose.

Understand each course you take as an investment of your creative energy, which thus will still be yours to draw upon in later years. The way to make it an investment rather than a tax or a purchase price lies in the attitude in which you approach it. The course will embody a set of ideas. Address yourself directly to those ideas. Push to one side as much as you can all thought of pleasing your parents or professors with high grades. Do not for a moment think how you will someday use those ideas to make money. All of that poisons the living relationship you will be seeking. Simply become curious and explore those ideas in the very same way a little child will explore first the house and then the yard when his family moves to a new location. Do not expect to grasp them at once and as concretely as so many rocks, although the examination system will often seem to expect that of you. Hope rather that you never grasp them in full concreteness. You may often feel a certain baffled distress. That will be Wordsworth's "Blank misgivings of a Creature/Moving about in worlds not realized." In years to come, if you can retain it, it will be a source of great joy to you. If your grasp of an idea differs from that of your professor, do not assume instantly that you are wrong. Ideas are not rocks and you may both be right. Argue it in class and after class and you may teach your teacher something. If he is at all worthy of his vocation, he will love you for it. Even one such experience in a course is a more genuine token of education than an A on the final exam. It is your assurance that you have indeed invested there a portion of your creative energy, to go on working autonomously and drawing interest against the time that you will pass that way again.

In every term paper you write strive to tell the professor something about the course material which you suspect he has not learned for himself. Give him *your* thoughts, gained by your own exploration of the ideas, instead of just reflecting his thoughts.

You will meet certain invincibly dull and boring courses to which you simply cannot imagine relating yourself in the manner I have just described. I insist that you can. If you cannot kindle a curiosity about its set of ideas, then explore them vindictively. Go after them in order to revenge yourself by making fun of them, by transforming them ludicrously in your term papers, by seeking to deny their valid existence as ideas. If you pro-

voke them enough they will defend themselves and you will become creatively engaged with them, which is what you must achieve in every course if it is to be an investment of, rather than a tax upon, your creative energy. Do not demand of all ideas that they must please or divert you; claim those that shock and frighten you as well. The world of the mind would be a pretty dull place if it were only one great flowery meadow; build yourself also cliffs and chasms, tawny deserts and polar wastes.

I can almost guarantee that one attitude or the other will take you creatively through the most dull and difficult of courses. Simply persist in trying to relate yourself directly to the set of ideas and one or the other attitude will spring up within you. But you must persist, to the point of psychic discomfort. You must be like the man who dropped a nickel into a pond and threw a dollar after it in order to make it worth his while to recover both. Throw in your dollar and your wristwatch and your sweetheart and whatever else it may take to get you in there too. You must get in there, somehow creatively engaged with those ideas.

Another way of putting it is that you must begin now, while you still can, to play with ideas in precisely the way that children play with sticks and stones. Never stop playing with ideas as long as you live. Never grant to any idea the independent, unchanging, thing-in-itself existence which you have been forced to grant to rocks. Never grant to any professor the intellectual authority to make ideas into rocks for you. Those who do grant it, who indeed by their passive disengagement from ideas insistently demand it, in effect turn a university into a factory. They ride through it on an assembly line and when they tumble off the end they will run, all right, but someone who has kept his creative imagination is going to have to drive them. That man will be a product of the living university of students and teachers jointly and creatively engaged with living ideas, *playing* with ideas. Insist on being one of the latter. So in the realm of thought you may remain young indefinitely where another man, no less well than you endowed by nature, may be senile at thirty.

It will be said that you must live predictably and responsibly. That is true. But in the realm of thought never acknowledge any master. In the realm of thought wear custom like a decent garment, but never let it come to lie upon you heavy as frost and deep almost as life. Then,

when you are alone or in congenial company, you can cast it off and go adventuring. Men all around you will be living in stony thought-worlds sometimes sculptured grandly into Grecian architectural forms. Visit them there, for they are often good men. Do not disturb them with your freedom, for that would not be good manners. But if you feel your garment of custom beginning to cleave to your flesh, if you detect a certain stoniness creeping about your ankles, make your excuses politely and get out fast.

It will be said that you must specialize rather narrowly in order to have a successful career. That also is true. But so mark out your private thought-world that you can at will bring to your specialty the resources of whole continents. What you will bring will not be so much a jumble of bits of knowledge as it will be a large and free and flexible habit of thought, that priceless ability to *play like children with ideas*. With it you can find new approaches to old problems and roundabout ways to valuable insights not available to your more stony competitors. For the sake of that advantage, in this crucial period of your lives take H. G. Wells as a kind of model. Of him it was said disparagingly that while he was indeed a mile wide, he was only a foot deep. That is preferable to being a mile deep and only a foot wide, if one cannot have it both ways, because a mile will span a great many one-foot channels. I believe, however, that one can have it both ways if he chooses wisely and in time. Run widely now, in youth and early manhood, and you will retain sufficient volume to cut many deep channels later in life. But if you settle for a one-foot channel now you will be trapped in that slot forever.

Up to this point I have been talking to you in terms of your individual self-interest. There is another aspect of this subject on which I wish to touch briefly before concluding.

Our private thought-worlds must all take account of one another and combine into the common thought-world of our culture. The private thought-worlds range by minute gradations between extremes of stony immutability and surrealistic freedom. The proportions in which they combine determine for our common thought-world

something we may call an index of plasticity. I mean by that a relative ability to change and adapt in order to relieve stress rather than shatter into stony fragments when the stress becomes too great to resist any longer. I believe that the plasticity index of our culture is dangerously low. It can only be raised by mixing into the culture new minds more free and more abundantly supplied with creative energy to replace the stony old ones which are dying off.

It happens that some regions of our culture are more free and plastic than others. Those of you who manage to retain a large share of your creative energy will be tempted to move into those free areas and to confine yourselves there. By so doing you will be of little help in raising our overall index of plasticity. You may rather, by helping to increase the rate of change in those areas, work to increase the stress which gravely threatens the more stony parts of our culture.

One free region is art. An artist is still free to see the bear-quality in a black rock and to take his sculptor's tools and liberate the bear. But it is ominous that not many artists are doing anything like that these days; what they seem to see in all they look at is chaos and old night. Another free region is science. By playing with ideas the scientists have learned how to abstract from black rocks a certain metal which, assembled in the critical quantities already on hand, can destroy all life on our planet.

So, to conclude, there is a certain standpoint of thought from which I can tell you honestly that whether and in what proportions you can come through these college years with your creative energy undiminished may well determine whether or not our culture is to survive. You will not help much if you hide yourselves away in science and art. What you must do is to diffuse in your own persons the freedom of science and art, the incomparably precious ability to *play like children with ideas*, through the other and stonier parts of our common thought-world. If just enough of you can do that to slightly leaven the lump, I think we may all be saved.

Thank you.

love . . .

winter love

You were a ghost
Among brown leaves;
I followed you
through troughs driven by the wind;
you were a ghost . . .
and as you passed the flowers
died by the roadside,
the willows ceased,
and the cranes in the brake
cried once and rose . . .

MILTON G. CROCKER

forever

In one thoughtless moment you took my hand
And looked at me with soft, dark eyes,
While laughter spilled from your lips
Like wine from an enchanted cup,
And I have never been the same.
All that I have ever searched for,
All that I have ever hoped for,
Lived for an instant in that laughter and those
eyes.

Later, when my dreams are burnt to ashes—
Smoldering embers at my feet—
And all my days are but an endless, numb pro-
cession,
I shall remember you, stranger with dark eyes,
And all that could have been.
Lost, lost, forever lost.

BRENDA CANIPE

from a kid

If you won't love me, tell me true:
Can I just walk and be with you?
Perhaps while strolling here or there
You'll smile; I'd lift it from the air.
The breeze could pass in spurts and dips—
I'd love it for having touched your lips.
Let me be the one for you to use
When you have just some time to lose,
And use me for what fun you may,
Although childish seems what I say.
My love for you by such is fed . . .
Crumbs are also bread.

G. C. NORWOOD

THE REBEL REVIEW



Reverence After Midnight

Letters of James Agee to Father Flye

Letters of James Agee to Father Flye. New York: George Braziller. 1962. 235 pp. \$5.00.

James Agee is probably best known for his Pulitzer Prize winning novel *A Death in the Family* and for *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, a book about white tenant farmers in Alabama that somehow defies any sort of pigeonholing nomenclature. He also published a short novel, a book of poetry, wrote articles and columns on books and films for leading magazines, and wrote movie scripts (*The Quiet One*, *The African Queen*, *The Night of the Hunter*). Recently his articles and reviews of films have been collected and published

in book form under the title *Agee on Film*. This collection of letters is his fourth book to be published posthumously and there is considerable reason to hope that it will not be the last.

James Rufus Agee was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1909 and at the age of ten he entered St. Andrew's, a boarding school for boys operated under the Monastic Order of the Holy Cross (Episcopalian) near Sewanee, Tennessee, where he met and had classes under Father James Harold Flye. In the autumn of 1925, Agee entered Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire, at which point his letters to Father Flye began, continuing until five days before his own death in 1955.

These letters are all written to Father Flye who was in many ways Agee's adopted father. Perhaps his own father's dying when Agee was only six years old precipitated this adoption, but the close friendship between the two was also formed by the sharing of many interests and values. There are some ninety letters in this collection covering a period of thirty years, and in them Agee discusses books, friends, ideas, current events, his personal life, and his ambitions and feelings about writing. The letters are written in different emotional levels, running the entire spectrum from despair and suicidal moments to extreme elation and happiness. His prose is often cryptic and elliptical, but at other times expands into full blown sentences that come as close to approaching the richness of Elizabethan language as we are likely to find in a contemporary writer. We follow him from his early letters as a student through to his maturity and see the development of his mind and ideas.

Even if you are not interested in reading Mr. Agee's letters for academic reasons and even if you are not a writer yourself concerned with the young or maturing artist there are many things in the letters that could interest you. If nothing else, there is the personality of the man that emerges to meet you; warm, sincere, charming, strong, reverent. There are his hopes and doubts, his weaknesses and failures, which at times fill you with love, compassion, and wonder at the man. In the beginning you see the dynamic boy setting out to spend his life concerning himself with writing, and at the end you see the man who has driven himself in too many directions for too long, told to stop his beloved smoking and drinking in order to dispel the from six to twenty heart attacks he has each day. The one thing about the man that is revealed in these letters that may seem unfortunate or disconcerting is his almost adolescent self-pity when he talks about his ambitions. The reader may feel that Agee should not have thought so much about writing a good book. When he says he wants to write better than Shakespeare did, we are tempted to say, "All right, but what writer hasn't?"

I will not quote from him for it is only in reading these letters in their entirety that James Agee the man would come through to you, but there is one bit of information that you might use as a prospective reader. In the preface to the last edition of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, Walker Evans says that Agee was a "night writer." This is significant in that particular book,

but it is also important to remember with respect to this collection of letters. In reading this book it could conceivably mean more to you if you sat down by yourself at night someplace where you would not be disturbed and read it through without stopping. The suggestion is important first because Agee wrote at night and second because many of the things he talks about seem less dangerous unless felt in the solitude brought only by darkness.

—BEN BRIDGERS

Gripped By Forces

The Sand Pebbles. By Richard McKenna. New York: Harper and Row. 1962. 597 pp. \$5.95.

Richard McKenna, in a competition involving 545 submissions, has, in *The Sand Pebbles* carried off the 1963 Harper Prize Novel award. The title of the book designates the crew of the San Pablo, an ancient gunboat that cruises chiefly Tungting Lake, halfway an enlargement of the Yangtze River above Hankow. San Pablo and its slight armament are protecting, according to treaties established with China after the Boxer Rebellion, American interests and missionaries in the cities and region about the lake during the mid-twenties. The book begins with his story until he is shot to pieces by Chinese Bolshevnik forces in China Light, a missionary compound. The only departures from his story line are those which deal with Shirley Eckert, a teacher at China Light who goes up river with Jake and arouses in him feelings and admiration that smolder and glow through much of the novel. Still, the cast of characters is so numerous and the action so extensive that the pressures of the time and place could be conveyed without Jake Holman and Shirley Eckert. But they provide the central tenderness, the most poignant sacrifice, and the most acute individual human involvement.

Mr. McKenna depicts the human being ironically, and often tragically, gripped by forces at play beyond himself. If there is any carping to be directed at the novel, I would have to direct it at the inevitability of outcome. All is plausible and acceptable, though. How can the fate of Maily and Burgoyne be otherwise, those tortured lovers who seek to mate during the troubled and embittered rise of the Kuomintang government? They, missionary-reared Chinese girl and Ameri-

can sailor, are ground to pieces by hates that are national. Cho-jen, the brilliant young Kuomintang leader, and Ponan, the apt and inquiring coolie-engineer who serves ably under Jake, are destroyed in the clashes of American and Chinese groups. These losses are almost more damaging to the cause of America and the West than to China; the thing to be hoped for is that there are other Chinese as worthy and Westerners to appreciate them. I am almost disposed to think at the end of the novel that the world exists only because there are good persons who die in it or acts of good are done therein. Even Sand Pebble Harris, surely the earthiest of men, supremely elevates himself by receiving the blow meant for Lieutenant Collins, a commander whom he has grossly insulted.

I wish for the retrieval of Jake Holman more than that of any other. He is learning to acknowledge bonds to other human beings, bonds that he has spent much of his life denying. He has lived an admirer of man's machines, not man. It is too bad that, once possessed of vital wisdom, he is deprived of the opportunity to employ it.

—GEORGE A. COOK

"The Maiden Truffle"

An Anthology of Bad Verse: The Stuffed Owl. Ed. by D. B. Wyndham Lewis and Charles Lee. New York: Capricorn Books. 1962. 264 pp.

An Anthology of Bad Verse is a book that had been sorely needed for a long time. Not only does this book give the practicing poet an over-all view of bad poetry through the centuries and indicate severely what he should *not* do, and provide a much-needed boon to such rare characters as poets these days, but it also gives our anthologists a look at some material which will fit right in with the same marsh-mess they have been turning out for years. Judging from the taste in the most current anthologies this material will fit right in without a ruffle.

All kidding aside, this book is an illuminating study into the devious art of poetry. Chuckles aplenty abound on every page. But more important, it does provide a view of poetry which is entirely unorthodox and much needed. For example, for the poet who constantly has trouble making people understand what he is trying to say,

there is a sample section by Mr. Edward Edwin Foote. Although I have my doubts, Mr. Foote is generously credited by the editors as having possibly invented the footnote since he used it so frequently to make sure everyone understood:

Altho' we¹ mourne for one now gone,
And he—that grey haired Palmerston,²

to which he adds as an explanation in a footnote:

¹The nation

²The Right Honourable Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston, K.G., G.C.B., etc. (the then Premier of the British Government), died at "Brockett Hall," Herts., at a quarter to eleven o'clock in the forenoon of Wednesday, 18th October, 1865, aged eighty-one years (all but two days, having been born on the 20th October, 1784. The above lines were written on the occasion of his death.

Now you see. Isn't that clear?

There's something for everybody in this delightful collection. Its selections are not limited to the poetaster and the critic alone. For instance, for the scientific there are selections from Erasmus Darwin dealing with such delightful topics as "The Maiden Truffle" and "The Birth of KNO₃," and for the romantic there are "sweet" selections by Julia Ward Moore, the "Sweet Singer of Michigan;" (O' come on—you've heard of *her!*) and, of course, as should be in any volume of this nature, a large selection of William Wordsworth for the aging pedant.

The surprising thing about the book is that there are none of our modern soap-box jingles, housewife poetry, etc., but the editors get around that in the introduction. *The Stuffed Owl* is a collection of "good" bad poetry, a category in which jingles do not fall.

—MILTON G. CROCKER

"Silence of the Young"

Jeeney Ray. By Iris Dornfeld. New York: The Viking Press. 1962. 188 pp. \$3.50.

Iris Dornfeld's first book *Jeeney Ray* is the story of a mentally disabled child's search for identity amidst the ignorance of supposedly normal people. What *Jeeney Ray* is—a spastic, the victim of a wounded brain, a retarded child—

remains a puzzle for the reader throughout the book, even when Jeeney Ray herself is finally satisfied with her identity.

Jeeney Ray's search is pin-pointed in the question, What am I? which she asks everyone from Zelda, her fun-loving sister-in-law who has "no pity in her for me being what I am, . . . She don't bother how anyone is," to the warped people in the Pink Lantern Hotel where Jeeney Ray is employed as a maid. Until the death of her grandmother who dies leaving only "her teeth and her Book and her smell," Jeeney Ray has the security of the old woman's love and does not need an answer. Suddenly alone, confused by her inability to speak correctly and frustrated by the inability of others to accept her as a normal child, Jeeney Ray turns to the mysteries of the woods for consolation and understanding. Her silent observation of nature is poetic and touching.

"The summer is a bird's summer and there is no trouble in it . . . I watch life come naked and weak and grow wings for flying and let it go; I am a feeding mother till summer passes to dry and old for hatching, and silence of the young is everywhere, and the pause begins. All is dry ground and dry grass and a white sun baking day by day and fruit rot coming in the dampness of night, saying summer is almost dead."

Only Jim, the gentle ditch-walker who finds the child in the woods, realizes her need for understanding and help. As her teacher, he patiently helps her to form words with her tongue and lips and to read the Bible. "I go slow and hard so's to make no mistake; . . . Together we thunder joy clear to the heart of the sky and back to ourselves' heart; and final we are a whole new person from the cure of laughing, and lay back sweated inside out; . . ." As her friend, he gives her a spyglass. "It is the eye to secret life and brings me closer than touching."

Written in the first person and present tense, *Jeeney Ray* merits approval and admiration for the sustaining mood of sadness and longing which could have easily been lost in right words and good grammar. Its feeling, the warmth of Jeeney Ray, the vulgarity of the insensitive people around her, are all part of the beauty of this book. In reading *Jeeney Ray*, the reviewer has discovered the freshness of language, the delight of a child's recognition of life about her, and the terrifying ignorance and cruelty of people.

—SUE ELLEN BRIDGERS

Unsuitable Liason . . .

The Lonely Girl. By Edna O'Brien. New York: Random House. 1962. 244 pp. \$3.95.

Caithleen Brady, Irish, twenty-one, and adolescent, has come to the city to an insignificant job in a Dublin grocery store; she is Edna O'Brien's *Lonely Girl* obviously headed, owing to her unsettled if colorful home life, for an unsuitable liaison with a married man.

In an improbable love-at-first-sight meeting, Caithleen, the ingenue fresh from the bogs, sees Eugene Gaillard, modern Irish equivalent of the burnt-out case. This meeting launches a tediously adolescent love affair. Adolescence is the inevitable reverse of Caithleen's appealing youth; Eugene, his literary talent consumed in documentary movies on sanitation, provides the tedium.

The Lonely Girl traces the dissolution of this affair; badly mated from the start, Caithleen and Eugene bicker and finally part over their differences in background. Caithleen lacks her literary lover's sophisticated seize-the-day attitude, but she does not lack the inherent feminine desire for permanent arrangements. "I noticed with momentary regret that he never used dangerous words like 'forever and ever.'"

The first rumor of Caithleen's affair rouses her father from his alcoholic lethargy and provokes two outrageously funny scenes.

In a rage of indignant moralism ("Divorce is worse than murder"), he drags Caithleen back to the country to protect her from harmful influences. She escapes eventually and endures a jaw-jarring ride in an ancient hack driven by a sinister Caldwellian Captain Hook. "I worried that he might twist back his arm and put his iron hand on my knee." Two hours later her father breaks into Eugene's study leading a drunken posse of chivalrous bumpkins, including Captain Hook, to rescue "that poor innocent girl." A wildly comic battle follows culminating in an unexpected shot gun blast provided by a loyal servant. Eugene is the victim of his opponents' hob-nailed boots; the posse concedes to the falling plaster, and Caithleen crawls out from under the sofa festooned with "fluff and dust."

Predictably, the lovers grow tired of each other and separate in mutual disillusionment. Caithleen from London writes, "I haven't heard

from him now for a couple of months and I take it that he has gone back to his wife, or that he's busy in South America doing that picture on irrigation."

Isolated passages testify to Mrs. O'Brien's power of description. "We passed a group of fellows who stood at the crossroads, and they yelled to us in that maniacal way which country boys have of yelling at strange cars." Other similarly acute morsels highlight the narrative. For instance Caithleen and her roommate in a burst of romanticism dye all their underwear purple. Minor characters and minor incidents also ornament the plot of *The Lonely Girl*, but they do not redeem it.

—SUE MCDOWELL

For Juveniles

The Uncle. By Margaret Abrams. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1962. \$3.50. 146 pp.

I hardly know where to begin. It does have a nice cover. Margaret Abrams has done it. She really has. She fooled Mifflin into thinking this is a novel. And they published it. As I began reading, I decided to categorize as well as list all the weak points I could find. The margins filled with notes. Then I decided maybe I should try listing the strong points. This was harder. The cover is one. Strong cover.

At the very bottom of the winch in literature is the heavy block which keeps the cable taut: the *dramatic element*. Without this, your cable becomes a loose dangle of strands. It is this dramatic element which Mrs. Abrams fails to hook with her cable.

We become involved with a young stoic, seven years old, who has the perception of the ancients, the blind faith of Noah, the artistry of Freud. I know little boys are supposed to be made of hammers 'n nails 'n puppy dogs etc., but Gus is too much. That's his name. He is an unpredictable agglomeration of the perversions and repressions and traits of all the seven year old uncles you will ever know. (if you ever do.)

Anyway, after seven years, Gus finds out that he is an Uncle, and has been one all his life. Consequently, his nephew is also seven. Upon finding out that he is an uncle, Gus's pals make fun of him thusly: "Gus is an uncle!" They actually do this three times in the book, although Mrs. Abrams *tells* us that they do it a lot more. And upon this

exciting, vivid, meaningful foundation Mrs. Abrams attempts to build a novel worth reading. She quits after 146 pages.

First of all, the novel is not believable. Sweet, good-natured Gus is made fun of by his buddies, and in no more serious a mien than the chant just quoted. But Gus is nearly driven to distraction. He hides in old houses, he cries. He with draws, he sulks, he fights. But our impression at the outset is that Gus is a strong boy. We are *told* that. So, this is just not believable. It is absurd. The rest of the novel is essentially how the chanting affects him. No drama.

Another big fault is the fact that Mrs. Abrams makes the amateurish mistake of trying to *tell* us everything instead of *showing* us. Instead of showing us Gus's likes and dislikes, she *tells* us. How dull it is to be told something. But Mrs. Abrams wants to make sure we see only what she sees.

And there is another weakness. There is too much of Mrs. Abrams in Gus. We never see things very long from his point of view.

One would be right in assuming, then, that there are a number of shifts in point of view, narration, and even dialogue. Mrs. Abrams can't decide whose language to put the book in—her's or Gus's. She can't decide from whose eyes to view the setting—her's or Gus's. Note the contrast in these two segments of narration, both within forty pages of each other:

(Gus) liked the way his father looked in a white jacket . . . like a king or something. He liked the way his mother looked in something filmy and soft with her shoulders showing.

And now the shocker:

Until now (Gus) had existed in that state of primal sophistication in which the knowing of all things is still balanced in the psyche, not yet attacked and fragmented by the conscious mind . . . Gus had already begun to sense that a great many souls were too vaporous to be beleaguered.

Because Gus's anxieties do not seem important to him, they are not important to us. We thus care little what he does about them. And through all this, we always *hear* from Mrs. Abrams the story. We rarely get to see for ourselves. And because drama and believability are lacking, we feel we are reading a book intended for juveniles. Well, perhaps so.

—G. C. NORWOOD

The Bone Yard

We Have Always Lived in the Castle. By Shirley Jackson. New York: The Viking Press. 1962. \$3.95. 214 pp.

We Have Always Lived in the Castle, written by Shirley Jackson, provides an eerie tale of the two Blackwood sisters and their elderly uncle, three seemingly real characters who are woven into an unreal world. It becomes obvious from the beginning of the story that a dark cloud hovers over the three Blackwoods, which questions them regarding the mysterious death of the other members of their family.

Shunned by the villagers, they live secluded lives with the exception of infrequent visits by their few friends. Variety is unknown to the Blackwoods until the arrival of Cousin Charles. The existing close relationship of the girls dwindles but only momentarily. The tragic fire that sweeps the Blackwoods' "castle" claims the uncle's life and causes Cousin Charles' departure from the sisters' private life. The true family murderer is disclosed at the end of the tale, but this produces no reaction.

Miss Jackson's sole purpose is to weave an enjoyable story employing human emotions, real characters with weird personalities, and unreal surroundings. This purpose is accomplished through the modern literary technique known as surrealism. By relying upon the reader's subconscious mind, Miss Jackson weaves a tale that deeply penetrates fictitious writing. In evaluating *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, the Viking Press claims it is meaningless to describe in words the story, "for it is not just the subject about which (Miss Jackson) chooses to write, or even her ability as an immensely gifted storyteller, that distinguishes her work; it is her unique vision, illuminating the familiar."

Characterization is perhaps the key word in Shirley Jackson's writing. The Blackwood sisters are deftly portrayed as queer and different human beings placed in a fantasy world. Their personalities can be realized in the following verse which is used often throughout the book:

"Merricat, said Connie, would you like a cup of tea?
Oh, no, said Merricat, you'll poison me;
Merricat, said Connie, would you like to go to sleep?
Down in the boneyard, ten feet deep!"

Because it has no equal, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* is highly recommended to anyone

Contributors Notes

Zoe Kincaid Brockman, a well known poet, is the Society Editor of the *Gastonia Gazette*. Mrs. Brockman, whose work has appeared in leading periodicals, published her first volume of poetry, *Heart on my Sleeve*, in 1951.

Larry Blizard, long time Art Editor of THE REBEL, makes his first appearance as a fiction writer in this issue. Larry is a graduate student in the School of Art.

Sue Ellen Bridgers and Milton G. Crocker are members of the staff.

Brenda Canipe, a sophomore English major from Rockingham and winner of the 1963 writing contest, makes her third appearance in this issue of THE REBEL.

Dwight W. Pearce, a sophomore from Norlina, N. C., makes his first appearance in this issue of the magazine.

G. Carroll Norwood, a frequent contributor, is a senior English major from Black Mountain.

Sue McDowell, Ben Bridgers, and Dr. George A. Cook are members of the English faculty.

Joan Harmon is a freshman from Arlington, Virginia. She makes her first appearance in this issue of the magazine.

whose mind is in dire need of a thorough questioning, who wishes to escape from the everyday routine of life, or who desires purely entertaining reading.

—JOAN HARMON

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