

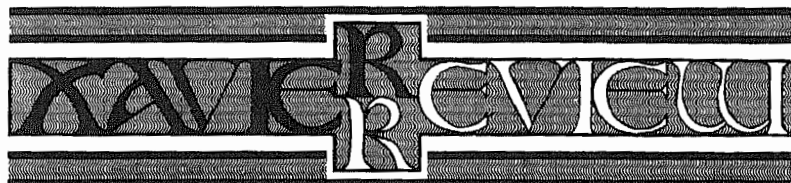
# XAVIER REVIEW



*Manor King in Envy from Roads to Hell. Photo by Thomas Bouchard.*

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

ELEANOR KING is a modern dancer and teacher born in Middletown, Pennsylvania in 1906. She has studied dance at the following: *Clare Tree Major's School of the Theatre* (1925 - 26); the *Theatre Guild School* (1926); seven years with *Doris Humphrey* and *Charles Weidman*; and mime with *Etienne Decroux*. She was a member of the original Humphrey-Weidman group (1927-35) appearing in the United States and Canada. She danced in Leonide Masine's *Le Sacre du Printemps* at the Philadelphia and Metropolitan Opera Houses (April 1930). Her first large work with POETRY (Lauro de Bosis) and MUSIC (David Diamond and Franziska Boas) was ICARO which premiered at the *Brooklyn Museum Dance Center* in 1937. She has choreographed works based on the writings of James Joyce, Walt Whitman, and Petrarch. After studying dance in Japan in 1960 and 1961, Eleanor King received a *Fulbright* grant as a research scholar in Japan in 1967. She has also performed in Sri Lanka, Holland, England, France, Taiwan, and Korea. She spent part of last year teaching dance in New Orleans.

ALICE MOSER CLAUDEL, whose poem appeared in the first issue of *Xavier Review*, died this spring. As poet in residence at Xavier in the mid-seventies, she was instrumental in assisting students toward writing and publishing.

THOMAS BONNER, JR. is the new editor for *Xavier Review*; he replaces CHARLES FORT, who has left to direct the creative writing program at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

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## CHARLES FORT

### *Interview with Eleanor King* May 24, 1981, New Orleans

Fort: How important was the Spiritual movement at the beginning of modern dance?

King: Every dance of any period reflects the time in which it is created. Since I was a modern dancer at the beginning of the modern dance movement, my work naturally reflects what I grew up with. Dance itself is always on three levels. We have a physical expression using the physical body, but to exploit the physicality of movement is not my idea of dance. That is exploitative in a way of the quantitative aspects of movement. The real purpose of dance is to express the spirit of the idea or the emotion of the concept, and that is the ultimate reason why we dance, to try to embody the spirit of time and place. Every movement has a spiritual connotation.

Fort: Was that more evident in that time period than today?

King: The spirit of today is vastly different, and the dance we see today has its own spirit, but what we had in the beginning was a very wonderful and exciting and stimulating awareness of creating something for the first time, something quite new that hadn't ever been before.

Fort: In that sense spirit has vanished. The dance has vanished.

King: Yes, dance vanishes as you perform it. Movement dies as it's born. It's elusive.

Fort: You can never really preserve it even on film.

King: You could preserve a record on film but it's only two-dimensional, and it's certainly lacking in the actuality of movement which can have a tremendous resonance with it. When you see it reduced to a shadow of two dimensions you're getting a very thin shadow of something—not the actual dance.

Fort: Part of your dance was, I'm sure, the originality, the spontaneity of creating something new. You were a part of the movement . . .

King: I was part of a revolutionary movement, and that was very exciting, and we felt that, as I have said in that film that was made if it, *Divine Madness*, the documentary, most of which takes place at Perry Mansfield. We confidently thought that ballet would die within three years. It couldn't exist any longer. It was dying on its feet, a faded 19th century, unrelated to the present world. It was hopeless in our opinion. Of course what has happened is that modern dance revived the ballet, and it is the one form of dance that everybody knows and has heard about.

Fort: In a sense what you're saying is that ballet is a spin-off of modern dance.

King: No, not a spin-off, but it has been revived; it has been resuscitated.

Fort: That's an important point. Indirectly you're the cause of the great resurgence . . .

King: Indirectly, modern dance has stimulated the revival of ballet, and it's interesting that ballet companies in the many parts of the world are now featuring modern dance classics like Jose Limon's *Moor's Pavane* which is performed by many companies around the world.

Fort: That's a very fascinating perspective . . .

King: But the modern dance of today is no longer what we called modern then. They call it post-post modern dance, so with the times everything changes and new generations come up, and always in modern dance you have a rebellion against the parent forms with which you grew up. That's part of our American emphasis on individuality. It's the blessing and the curse, too, of the anarchic condition in the arts that we feel, every modern dancer feels, that he or she has to repudiate what he was taught to prove his own originality.

Fort: You have to destroy the creator, the choreographer.

King: Yes, and there is lots of wasted motion in that act, but that happens to be in our genes in this Western part of the world.

Fort: In Eastern dance how does the student mature?

King: In the East it's completely opposite. You are in a classical form, tradition, and only the Master is supposed to be able to make changes in what is traditional and in what has been handed down, and over

there you are not even considered to be an artist until you are 50 years old and you can be a Master by the time you are 60, and if you are exceptional then you become a national treasure at 70. The acknowledgement and recognition in classical traditional Eastern dance comes very late in life. You have to prove yourself first by a long apprenticeship.

Fort: Were students in the East where you studied in Japan and Korea influenced by the Western forms of dance?

King: Yes, but in Japan there is a very jealous tradition, and the classical masters, of whom there are about 70 different schools surviving today, are naturally influenced, but they are trying very hard to maintain their 250 year old tradition. It isn't a very old tradition actually, but it is old compared to our Western way.

Fort: And that discipline? Can you define what that discipline exactly is vs. the Western dance form?

King: In my Japanese experience with Fujima Sensei, who is the choreographer of the dynastic family, who choreographed for Kibiki-za in Tokyo Fugimas, the traditional way was for the apprentice to obligate herself, to become a devotee and spend hours and hours every day with the Sensei doing whatever was required, as a maid or as an apprentice. The tradition was that not until 10 years had passed and only on successful application and proven worth would the name be given and the Fugima name would be handed on. Recently though, there has been an acceleration so that the name is given earlier; Fugima now doesn't require 10 years anymore but perhaps 5, so that's already an acceleration in the training process. In my own Western experience I was an apprentice, so to speak, with Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, and I was with them for 7 years at which time I felt compelled to go out on my own and do my research out of my own way of dancing.

Fort: What were your feelings when you left Humphrey and Weidman? Were you confident?

King: I just felt that I had to leave. I had absorbed and been part of a marvelous period, and it was an extraordinary, fortunate event in my life that I was with them from the beginning of their established company. It was marvelous timing, but there is a kind of time-span where all these movements start with a vision, and it's like a great crest

of a wave that eventually the energy of that is going to recede before there's a new crest, so the energy of the first wave had disappeared, and there was going to be a new crest for another direction, but I was in the trough.

Fort: A sudden doldrum. . .

King: We were terribly busy. We were working very hard and travelling and touring and performing, but the spirit, the original spirit, seemed to have exhausted itself. That's part of life.

Fort: You experienced a certain separation from the master, in Eastern terms. You left the group to do your own dance. I'm sure you brought with you, though, that vigorous strength.

King: I was searching for a form of theatre dance. I started to study for the theatre originally. I was always interested in combining poetry and dance and this is, of course, very difficult to do, and I have done quite a few works using the spoken voice.

Fort: You used poetry with Lauro de Bosis.

King: He has a marvelous classical treatment of the story of Icarus, Dedalus the inventor and Icarus his son in the great myth. Dedalus invents the first wings, but it's in an attempt to fly to freedom because he is kept as a captive by King Minos on the island of Crete, so the father invents the wings that are going to carry him and his son to freedom, The son is too bold and daring and flies too close to the heat of the sun, and the wax melts the wings and he plunges into the sea and it's a lost cause. Lauro de Bosis was an Italian-American poet; his mother is an American, and he wrote it in the period when Mussolini had started Fascism in Italy. A poet, he was very torn and kept writing propaganda and leaflets to be distributed to the people, and he hired a little airplane, just a monoplane, and learned enough so he could get it up in the air and bring it down, and his aim was to scatter these leaflets to the people of Rome to waken them up to the dangers of Fascism in the name of liberty. He was discovered, and twice he had to change his name and go into hiding. He moved from Switzerland to France to escape Mussolini's spies who were after him as an enemy and, finally, he had enough gasoline to fly over Rome and flew over the city. He did not have enough gasoline to return to the base, and as soon as he returned the whole Italian air corps went after the plane. It disappeared, and no one knows what happened ultimately.

Fort: You do have one piece where you showed repression, Fascism. You were entangled in rope.

King: That also was Italian. *Icaro* was a very large group work. I think I had thirty people involved in that, and it took a year of work to present it as a fifty minute verse drama. We had speakers in Italian, too, readers in Italian, and the chorus of dancers used syllables that they spoke or lamented with, and it was a very experimental work and a very exciting work and a marvelous thing to do as a tribute to Lauro's life.

Fort: What was its crucial theme?

King: It was liberty; it was for freedom in a period of terrible political repression and suffering. Fascism was creeping all over the world.

Fort: That image of a poet in a plane is striking.

King: Yes, his whole life was a symbol of what he put into the verse drama, which has been translated into the English by Ruth Draper. I didn't want the English prose; I wanted the poetic quality of Italian verse, so that's what we used.

Fort: The poet dropping leaflets rather than bombs is exemplary.

King: A marvelous poetic symbol and a tragic one that he obviously knew and was determined to do—his heroic gesture.

Fort: Maybe he landed in another spiritual world—a hero.

King: The other interesting Italian connection I had was in the early forties, when the war was on between the Western World and the Axis. The Italian-American Labor party in New York organized a huge Madison Square Garden occasion in which the Italians of America wanted to show their devotion to the Western cause, the Allied cause, so they were presenting their *La Guardia*, with a huge check for the Red Cross, and an Italian poet had written a poem about the tradition of Italy, and I was asked to symbolize in a mime-role the spirit of Italy in chains, and then at the climax of the poem, throw off the black robe and untie or break the bond, the rope around my wrists, and reveal the classical white dress of Italy with the green and the red bands across

the bosom, and when this liberation occurred, the house, 22,000 strong, roared it's very deep excitement.

Fort: Did you have a name for this particular piece?

King: The name of the poem by Arturo Giovanatti is "Italia".

Fort: So your beginnings of poetry and dance were with that role. What date do you have for that?

King: Icaro was first produced in 1937 at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Dance Center, and the following year I was given a fellowship at the Bennington School of Dance in Vermont, to do creative work for the Festival, and again I did something with words. This was a psalm. It was called "Ode to Freedom", and it was based on a beautiful hymn sung by the colonies, and it was called "Bunker Hill: A Sapphic Ode". I used only four verses of it. In-between we had musical interludes to bridge the verses. That was for 10 dancers and the soloist and was very exciting to do.

Fort: So in a sense, you were prophets of even the beat generation of America in terms of your use of dance, imaginative verse . . .

King: Working for theatre, combining poetry and movement. For me dance in itself is poetic movement. It's based on natural things that you normally do, but if it's a good dance, it's raised to a poetic level; it's not just normal prosaic movement.

Fort: Initially, how was the audience made to react to this theatre dance? Were you more concerned with the choreography?

King: No. It's the idea that possesses me, and I am possessed by the idea, and I just give it out and it's no longer my concern how they react to it. I just have to feel it out and I'm not ultimately thinking, "Will this please the audience?" The idea and how to form it and give it a shape so it can communicate the essence of the thought is important. I guess I'm an intellectual snob, if you like, that I'm not thinking first of all that. I don't think how can I please an audience. That's the last thing I'm concerned with. My concern is to try to shape the truth of an experience. It's something I've experienced. If I've felt very deeply, it wants to take a shape, and it wants to have a form, and there's the

form, and you can ignore it or dislike it, but if you happen to like it, I'm delighted.

Fort: "Pleased" is a difficult word in today's world.

King: That's incidental. Now I have had students who always disappoint me when all they're thinking about when they're dancing is "How do I look to the audience?" Well that is *not* their concern.

Fort: The dance before the choreography?

King: The form, the shape should be self-evident and should stand on its own truth.

Fort: Dance before the dancer?

King: Yes. Yes Charles. If you think so!

Fort: Okay. Fine, but there are other choreographers who don't work that way.

King: There are many choreographers who are not interested in working that way.

Fort: Your piece, though, "Italia", what was your objective there, if any? Were you going to confront somebody with the truth?

King: This was something I was assigned to do. I did not choose the poem; I did not choose the event that they invited me to be the performer at, so it was a role given to me which I assumed and was happy to do, under the circumstances.

Fort: How many years did you stay in America?

King: My first exposure to Europe came in 1952, and that was illuminating and enriching, and I kept going back, but it was when I got to the University of Arkansas, where I had the opportunity to do whatever I wished to do, a pioneer situation, that I started doing one day some verse, or dance plays, plays for dancers, and the first one I chose was translated by Arthur Whaley, from Japanese Noh, and I didn't know a thing about Japanese Noh. I had seen Kabuki dance and Classical Japanese dance in Seattle, so I knew something about the

Japanese theatre, the popular theatre, but I had never seen a Noh play. Arthur Whaley had never seen a Noh play. He had written very beautiful poetic translations of Pound and Fenalosa, and the Letters of Pound and Fenalosa, and Japanese Noh excited me very much. But I tried to do the *Three Dance Plays*, and the first one was Noh, and Yeats had never seen a Noh play, and then we commissioned a poet to write us one that used an Appalachian, American theme and the Civil war.

Fort: That's interesting you used Yeats, because he is considered a visionary poet.

King: I was so disappointed with the results; I just knew it wasn't Noh-like, and I thought suddenly, well, why don't you go to Japan and see how they do Noh plays, for they've been doing them for 600 years. Why go on making mistakes?

Fort: You were obviously influenced by Japanese rather than European influences.

King: In the Anglo-Saxon world of literature, we don't have verse plays as a tradition. We have only the Yeats plays, which are Irish, and there are just a handful of one-acts, and there are very few plays; if anyone knows of any more that are written for dance, let me know. I went to Japan on my own, and I was completely bowled over because it was the first time I lived in a dance culture where you can see dances that are 2000 years old along with the most modern dances, and you can see the evolution of the forms from the earliest rituals on up, a very rich culture for dance. And when I saw the Noh plays, I was astounded, and my hair stood on end because of the intensity and the suppression and the minimal gesture—less means more. The barest movement must convey the deepest impression, and that's a very severe restriction, and exactly opposite to our Western dance that explodes all over the place, physically. So this repressed abstract movement was the most beautiful theatre I had ever seen.

Fort: I could see how you could emerge into that form because of your own dance theatre.

King: I was simply an observer, but I studied the classical dance which is based on the most ancient tradition, but primarily Kabuki version, which is a late version of Noh. A popular version of it, vulgarized Noh, is Kabuki, and it's fascinating. I've loved studying it, but to learn to be

a Noh dancer was never my hope, because first of all you have to have a year of learning how to sing and I didn't have a year and I didn't want to sing. I wanted to know the form, and so I observed it and I kept going back to Japan for more. It was my good fortune. I had a Fulbright to further study dance, so actually I've had four study trips to Japan, and that was very illuminating.

Fort: You also incorporated music into your dance. Were Diamond and Boas American composers?

King: Yes. David Diamond is a very well-known American composer now. He was a very young man when he wrote music for my *Icaro*, and that was the mold for what a modern dancer in the 30's and 40's was supposed to create. The movement first, and then invite an American modern composer to write accompaniment for it. When Doris Humphrey, in 1938, did the Bach *Passacaglia*, she was accused of all kinds of retreats, the artist retreating into a world of another form than what was contemporary. You see, everything had to reflect the world you were in, speak to the world you were living in, the times you were living in. Of course, we lived in very pressured times, much more so than today. As difficult as times are today, they do not compare with the period of the Depression and World War II.

Fort: I'd like to talk about those times. Scott Fitzgerald emerged in the 20's and 30's with his American Dream. It was also a very tragic dream. Was your dance influenced by the depression, the tragedy? How did you incorporate that into your dance, if at all?

King: Every living moment you were conscious of a world disintegrating. In Europe, all over the world, all over the Western Pacific, Eastern Pacific, war, they called it, too, the theatre of the Eastern front or the Western front. America stood, isolated by our geographical position. We were not touched the way Europe was absolutely destroyed, millions and millions and millions of people slaughtered and dead and the destruction of the lives of the people. Everything gone. For a whole decade there was nothing but chaos. We don't have that situation, but in those days it was a very definite thing and you could not escape it. It affected what you did, what you thought.

Fort: Your dance was influenced more by a world view rather than limited to an American play, American theatre.

King: Yes, and when I left Humphrey and became a soloist, I was in despair about themes. *Icaro* inspired me right away. Here was a protest against conditions and something positive to say, and then later I heard Hindimith's *Mathis der Maler*. It's a symphonic suite written as an opera. The music that was recorded was just the orchestral section without the operatic singing. I love the angel concert, and I love the other parts that were selected, and I felt, well, here's something one could dance about because, again, this was positive, the idea of Gabriel as the symbol of the messenger, coming from on high bringing good tidings, bringing good, so that inspired me to do the two characters in the Annunciation, Gabriel and Mary, and then I did a whole concert based on that concept of good and evil.

Fort: Which is a very Eastern philosophy, good and evil.

King: Yes, it's universal. And then I did my *Roads to Hell Suite* which was a satire on the inner bad qualities that we all have and how they can destroy us, such as pride, sloth, envy, and wrath. I didn't like to do the whole seven deadly sins because some of them are unaesthetic, and to do gluttony on the stage would be not interesting, really, to others.

Fort: How did you devise movement around those sins that you were using?

King: That took lots of reading and lots of work. I worked a year on those four satires. Dante's *Inferno* was very important of course. Langland's *Pier's Plowman*, and then the Catholic theory about the sins was helpful too. I composed the movement first. The music was written by Genevieve Pitot who was, (she died recently, alas), a marvelous New Orleans woman with French training who lived in New York and was a composer for many dancers and was an arranger of music for many Broadway shows. She was director of music for the WPA Dance Theatre. She wrote a marvelous piano score for me, and a few years ago she wrote me she was orchestrating it for symphony.

Fort: Could you define the archetypes in *Roads to Hell* for the modern world? It was a satire which brings out the folly, stupidity of mankind.

King: I had a lovely time doing *Pride*, and the imagery in a way was Mussolini, the way he would stand up like a pompous rooster and be just like a big strong . . .

Fort: Minotaur, a man with a body and head of a bull, a monster.

King: Yes, exactly, a Minatour, very good. Thank you. So that was one image, and I found lots of movement patterns I recognized in myself and in other people as being typical of pride. In the Bible they talk about the stiff-necked attitudes of people, and so it's very easy to find the physiological image of pride as someone leaning over backward and getting trapped in his own robes. "Pride goes before a fall." There were many aphorisms that helped me. Sloth was very interesting to do because this was not typical of most dances. The symbol of sloth is someone who's lazy, unable to come to terms with anything and full of inertia, so that's a negative idea for movement and how can you make a negative idea interesting?

Fort: That's a great obstacle for any artist. How did you manage to do it?

King: The fun thing there was that the music was to create the dramatic situation that was going on, and sloth yawns and gets awake very slowly and staggers around and then is aware that something is happening on the outside and almost gets to the point of doing something or calling for help, but inevitably everything ends in a collapse. In the end she turns her back and yawns and goes to sleep.

Fort: A very tragic state of mind, like limbo or purgatory.

King: It's horrible. It's disturbing. It's psychotic to see this withdrawal from the real world.

Fort: The artist is trapped in the physical world and spiritual world, the inability to act upon his own actions.

King: Right, and ultimately very tragic, but Envy was very exciting to do because I can see that as a kind of chase on a merry-go-round reaching for the brass ring and being scornful of people who have more than you have. Then being very vituperative, spitting and hissing. I even used hissing as a part of the . . .

Fort: As part of a very capitalistic emotion and idea, in terms of the Depression, in terms of envy, and certain business methods, such as getting what you want any way you want.

King: Anyone with something more than you have, but not just the

sense of physical possession. Any one who's above you, you laugh at them; you scorn them; you throw mud; you are just unable to accept the fact that you are . . .

Fort: That you are very human.

King: Yes, so the end of envy is that she keeps leaping and reaching and is grabbing but doesn't get anything. Wrath was the easiest to do because that's an inner hatred that consumes as in the Chinese character for wrath. It's the sick part, so I started with movements indicating a tortured heart that was not happy, and it erupts like a volcano.

Fort: How were eye movements developed with wrath?

King: That was part of it as all dance has to be expressed through the eyes first of all. And then wrath ends completely defeated and utterly destroyed from within, because hatred and wrath do destroy.

Fort: Did you have a great movement of the arms or a great falling over?

King: It was a very wonderful suite to do, and the joke was that when I got to Seattle, in the 40's, middle 40's, and was engaged to perform for a woman's club called the Sunset Club, the manager who booked the concert phoned me one day and asked, "Can you think of another title because I'm having a problem with the secretary of the club who doesn't wish to put the word "Hell" on the program? Can you call it something else?" I said, "No, that's the title and I can't think of another word that's better."

Fort: You could hardly change the title.

King: No, but this was very disturbing to the secretary of the club; she said, "Well, I know the members of the club won't like it. We really can't accept such a word on the program and can't you substitute another dance?" I said, "Why should I substitute another dance? It's the best thing I do. I want to give you my best."

Fort: What about "Roads to Sunset?" You didn't change it at all?

King: No. I did not. What they did then was to take the title off, and

there were subtitles, Pride, Sloth, Envy, Wrath. That was very embarrassing I think for them, because they were a Sunset Club.

Fort: When you turned solo, you departed from Denishawn?

King: Don't use the word Denishawn. I am strictly a Humphrey-Weidman dancer who happened to be at the Denishawn School when Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman were the ones in charge, and I never met Miss Ruth and Mr. Shawn until years and years later. Actually Doris and Charles were deciding to develop modern dance that very year, and I never felt that I was in contact with the real Denishawn group. See, there again I'm being a modern dancer and repudiating that whole background of my grandparents, my artistic grandparents.

Fort: Were you in a sense repudiating your roots?

King: I consider my roots to be Humphrey-Weidman, and they were rebelling against Denishawn. They were starting what had never been done before, a whole new concept of how Americans dance.

Fort: You started incorporating the literature of Joyce and Whitman.

King: That happened to be my particular bent. I'd been very much interested in and influenced by writing.

Fort: You used the sonnet form within the dance; the form itself is very contained, with one dominant impression. What types of sonnets? Did you have love sonnets?

King: Actually, I've done very few Romantic themes, and that was another very interesting thing about early modern dance. In the ballet we have nothing but the theme of sex. We have male-female, boy-girl, young love, bliss; that's been ballet's thematic material and that's universal; that's perennial. We all love it, but the modern dances said here's a whole world and there's more to life than just young love and romance. That's a very short episode. There's much more to life than sex. Doris and Charles together did the first duet where a man and woman were on equal terms of personalities. It wasn't the woman being idealized to an impossible degree on her pointes, and the man pushing her around or lifting her up, a mere elevator or support, but it was two people, two people standing on their feet equally as

individuals and having a friendly and warm attachment, but *equals*. Between equals there can be no idealization.

Fort: Modern dance created themes of disintegration rather than ideal love.

King: Doris's greatest work is her *New Dance*, and she has a vision of society, a democratic society with everybody contributing to the whole and each person's uniqueness coming out. Men as well as women were part of the Humphrey-Weidman company, which was great, and it was idealized because we don't actually achieve the ideal. It's something we dream about, we work for. That's hope.

Fort: You talked a few days ago about a dance on Harlem. Can you tell me something about it?

King: *American Folk Suite*. In the 30's, we used to love to go up to the Cotton Club. It was a big big ballroom, and we'd go up there and just be astounded at the movement. We would like to imitate it though we never could do it as well as the people who originated it. They had a marvelous rhythmic feeling and beautiful flow and wonderful bodies, so we could just admire it really and look pretty silly trying to do it. It was very infectious, so I did a folk suite. I incorporated a dance called a hoe-down but it was a city hoe-down, urban, and it was the Big Apple kind of movement and that was really fun to do. The music was written by Reginald Forsythe, a composer from Harlem who had studied in England. He wrote a piece called, *The Duke Insists*, and it was in marvelous syncopation which Norman Lloyd used to use in his music for dance class as a wonderful and very inspiring piece of syncopation.

Fort: During the early modern dance movement was the Harlem Renaissance. There was a great African influence on Harlem at the time. Did you carry it through in the *Folk Suites*?

King: That particular piece I've done 7 different sections for. That *American Folk Suite* and the *Horn Pipe*, based on the way the mountaineers of Colorado dance using old traditional music, and then I did *Ballroom* to Martin Gould's piece, which was a composite of social dances done as a solo, and I did a Hurdy-Gurdy piece which was a city child's reaction to Hurdy-Gurdy music and having no space in the city in which to really dance. Then I did a *Lonesome Train Blues*, Sonny Terry's harmonica piece, which I love. That was great.

Fort: You were enthralled by the diverse American cultures. Was this before you went to Japan?

King: Yes, that was in the 40's I started it in the 30's but I kept adding.

Fort: Did you perform that *Folk Suite* in Japan?

King: No. I went to study rather than as a performer, but I was asked to perform, and I performed some abstract dances without music—*Transformations* was one solo. *Four Visions: Air, Water, Fire, Earth* was done without music. I think on every program it's good to have one work that is without text and without accompaniment so that you really focus on the movement. I wouldn't want to see a whole program like that. One dance I think has its virtues.

Fort: What did you do during the 50's and 60's in terms of what was happening in America—the Beat Generation?

King: I was at the University of Arkansas, and that was when I started doing *Theatre of the Imagination*, and I tried to use poetry and mask and mime and dance. We gave performances indoors and outdoors, travelled in the area to Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma.

Fort: Isn't a lot of Japanese dance performed outdoors, traditionally?

King: The ancient dancing is originally outdoors under the sky and that's a very wonderful effect.

Fort: You have so many different levels between the cosmos and earth.

King: The Noh plays, originally and every summer they do Noh plays at night called Takigi Noh with the 4 bonfires at the 4 sides of the stage, a little square outdoors, and it's marvelous to see *Demon Plays* through the smoke and sparks flying. The whole thing is mysterious, elemental. If you see it in the daytime it's magnificent to see the effect of the sunlight coming through the clouds and shining on the mask, the wind blowing the sleeve of the costume. Nothing can compare with those outdoor plays in Japan.

Fort: No stage could emulate those impressions.

King: I used to be very fascinated by the night rehearsal for theatre,

and I'd think, "Oh this is the most exciting moment of all when you illuminate the movement with a downspot or special lighting, and then suddenly there it is perfectly pure space and everything else is eliminated by the movement. The lighting was very exciting, but after I got to Japan I ceased to be interested in the artificial illumination. I thought there's nothing to compare.

Fort: There is a choreographer like Nikolais, of course, who tries to recreate the visual image.

King: He does wonderful things with all our electronic marvels, but to me that's all artificial.

Fort: It's a video-game on stage.

King: It is a game, but it's exciting what he can do. That's an external thing.

Fort: I can imagine the audience at a Nicolais performance with buttons on each seat trying to create their own motion. Some day maybe it will come to that.

King: Right! I'm sure.

Fort: Let me get back to dance vanishing . . .

King: As you do it you mean?

Fort: No, I'm talking about the more frightening consequence, dance dying.

King: Dance dying? Dance will never die as long as we have human beings who always have some movement expression.

Fort: Regardless of support, financial support from the governments?

King: Support is irrelevant. People are born to move. If they don't move they are already dead. Movement is the first instinctive expression we all have. So dance will never die. The forms always change.

Fort: Finally, tell me about the *Theatre of the Imagination* and what attempts are being made to create that type of theatre?

King: A lot of young artists today are combining all of the elements of our world including the electronic and the visual imagery, like using still photographs or moving picture elements on the wall against moving dancers in front, that kind of combination of elements. I think that is very healthy, and what I would of course hope to see is more poets becoming interested in writing for dance theatre or what I call *Theatre of the Imagination*, and that more dancers put up their horizons and think of using poetry as a form of melody, as it is, and that our theatre dance become enriched. I see very heartening evidence that a lot of young people are working this way, but I think primarily we need to activate the poets towards the concept of theatre which incorporates all the arts, so you write us the next play for dance.

## CHRISTINE ZAWADIWSKY

### *The Mouth Of The Monkey*

Always open in dark and loveless places,  
sitting at tables near the wall  
and conversing with masked animals,  
illuminating dark masses of people  
with the self-image that makes him a prisoner,  
the small dark monkey,  
beast or angel,  
traces the o of his mouth in surprise,  
then closes his eyes,  
closes his eyes.

Nothing has changed.

Blood has warmed and hummed in various hearts  
and some sweet and secret doors have opened  
and in have entered great slivers of ice  
and gangsters have slashed open many pockets,  
but nothing has changed.

A marble rolls in the mouth of the monkey.  
A small light illumines the words of the night,  
the world of the family,  
a wild noise,  
the curtainless windows,  
small crippled birds.

Love taught him how to speak:  
still nothing has changed him.

Frozen-faced, rubbing his underbelly,  
blue with the auras of liars and strangers,  
the monkey mouthes his uncertain o's.

And some sweet and sacred words  
have kissed and repaired us, long words,  
long snakes, long conga lines of dancers  
with everyone's hands in colorless pockets,

and some pale and sweaty dreams have traded us,  
traded us for a life on the wing  
(though the monkey can only live in a cage  
in a room under the God-forsaken stars),  
traded us and closed our eyes.  
On a dark and moonless evening  
in a blue and smoky room  
the monkey pries his mouth open  
while on the ceiling colored marbles roll and fall.  
Nothing has changed,  
o nothing has changed.

**RICHARD ROBBINS**

*Dream With Your Grandmother*

It is like evening, and this may be a full  
moon in shivers on the water.

She holds

to Mother's arm, walking  
toward the ocean. There are no waves,  
but dark scuds the pier as if it  
were a ship.

Mother steps  
over wet planks. And Grandmother is walking  
on the water. From somewhere in the brush  
you watch them both.

Mother turns when Grandma sinks, unrocked  
until the last, beneath the storm.  
You do nothing. Lie still among  
lilies. There is no air moving  
in these leaves.

You go then dive after her,  
no light this deep  
but in the dying glints off sand.

Feeling

for an arm, leg, the undertow  
takes you farther down, and you swim up  
for black air, the slack rope Mother throws you  
floating on the top.

Diving again, a loop around your ankle,  
no need for air and then the rope  
tightens, feel the foot turn blue, the  
calm  
knot snapping, the drawing  
further out and down.

*American*

In this land each female  
is a huntress;  
men call, *Pursue me*,  
fondling guns  
in their breasts,  
importing saints,  
making plastic saviors.

Coupled or alone,  
men and women sunbathe  
on the lip of a gun barrel,  
then shower, and attend a class  
on how to substitute for  
the wilderness one finds  
in simple grass.

## M. CORTNEY DANIELS

### Look Away

I

The smoke removes itself entirely,  
hangs worn trademarks over doorways  
at either end of a hall.

The cigarette grows considerable less.  
The ash detaches and cools on the table;  
war comes down to this.

The bolt across the window's open.  
Lamplight ejects itself into the night.

II

What's more lively  
than the night growing longer?

The double barrels of a shotgun.  
The powder kegs you're saving.  
In barrels, things; and things look whole.

Your two eyes, inverted cartridges,  
would like to explode when they're fired.

Would you burn a hole inside you?  
You don't like yourself.  
The eyes say so.

III

You're growing a house inside you,  
but you don't like the smells in the air.

When asphyxia by toxins is real,  
when your hear pumps the wrong way,  
when you're afraid to breathe  
but you can't get away . . .

#### IV

. . . if there were a fire  
and your house became the ground,  
how would you be sitting on top of it?

Look away from this room.  
Your child's kicking.

*Pine Baron*

(from a sequence "Andrew Wyeth at The Royal Academy")

The spiky swift gestures  
of an avenue of pines  
and under them, this still-life:

the helmet Karl Keurner wore on the Marne,  
a sniper decorated by the Crown Prince.  
Here his wife Anna uses it as a scuttle

loaded with dry cones to start her fires.  
It is part of their farm now,  
like a bucket or a cooking pot.

But what brings my jeep  
jamming to a halt  
right by that helmet on its brown blanket of needles

are the pitchy ridges of the cones,  
with the sheen of oiled feathers, the curve of ears.  
—They burn like a dream—she says.

*Songs for an Unstrung Banjo*

Now is not too late to read  
the totems of this blind frontier,  
this wooded self:  
kodiak, blacktail deer,

fierce-beaked eagle, sandhill crane.  
Only ancestral rites remain  
where second-growth timber bends above  
the whistle-wing of a mourning dove.

Here's mystery; and here's its worship:  
a Yukon sights where ripples whip  
and splash, sights his .22

toward the place a muskrat hides,  
deep-watered, feeding. He will too.  
She'll surface nearly where she dives.

*My Father Remembers*

Myrtle Hicks,  
black-haired, black-eyed,  
so pretty you'd think she was tubercular,  
the kind of look they have.

her house with the twined  
holly and maple, perfect,  
like one tree.

the tunnel behind it  
which led to a spring  
in event of Indian siege.

at the picnic, my mother  
holding her hand  
over her mouth, laughing  
when a dog came running  
out of the graveyard  
with a bone.

*Leo of Roses*

In the morning coming down  
half-lit pine stairs  
parting the curtains  
in the dim hallway I see Leo sitting  
on his red front porch staring  
into the street against last year's roses  
this year's new Italian tomatoes  
listening for the mailman's bag  
to slap against the gray metal fence

Seeing your frameshadow Leo  
within stems that are heirlooms after a storm  
hard as pronged tadpoles in a straight pool  
I know it is safe to sleep  
with a cup of hot milk and black beans  
I go back to bed  
where your skin shines through  
the walls of my smoky room

You made everything astonishing  
around our bright houses  
when phantoms came with their hoops  
and medieval dances jamming the corners  
of gutters  
you turned lawnpeople trashpeople  
old collectors into bartering angels  
you lit up six blocks  
with your ghostwind vision

As I went out to jangle morning glories  
snap my own roses fight milkweek pods  
that hung like hoarfrost fingernails  
on our fences  
after days of writing and darkness  
you would greet me over the wild hedge  
like a great barn rattling singing birds  
holding gifts of cucumbers grapes violets

*Horse*

Months ago the sore on the horse's back  
was so deep you could feel clear through  
to bone. All its ribs trembled  
as its lips must have, quiet now,  
drooping, only the air between them.

Surely there is some being watching over  
this horse. Its eyes pretend to see  
nothing, but still it sees.  
Even if a fire blazed it to the stars  
like an enormous Brazilian god  
it would still be there, all year,  
in snow, no snow, brother to saints, beasts,  
hangmen, the earth on which it stands.

*Enough*

*Enough! or Too Much.*

—William Blake

Uncle Gurton's beard had a long and rather complex history, but I will try not to bore us with much of that. Enough to say that it was a fabled beard and that when my father and I heard that Uncle Gurton was coming to visit we were thrilled at the prospect of viewing the legendary fleece.

"How long is that beard of his now?" my father asked my grandmother.

She smiled a secret smile. "Oh, I wouldn't have no idea," she said. "But he's been growing it for forty years or more and ain't once yet trimmed it. That's what I hear tell."

"And he's coming here to our house to visit?" I asked.

"That's what Aunt Sary says in her letter." She held up the scrawled bit of paper, but not close enough for us to read the writing.

"And when is he going to get here?"

"She wouldn't know about that. You'll just have to wait."

"Hot damn," my father said. "If this ain't the biggest thing since Christmas. We're going to make the old man plenty welcome."

"Now, Robert, don't you be deviling Uncle Gurton," she said "Leave him in peace."

"Oh, I wouldn't harm a hair of his face," he said. "When you say he's coming?"

She smiled again. "You'll just have to wait till he shows up."

*Show up* is exactly what Uncle Gurton did. We heard no car or truck arrive, and he didn't walk into the house or knock at the door. One Tuesday noon he was just there, standing under the walnut tree in the side yard and staring at our chopblock and pile of kindling as if he'd never seen such objects upon the face of the earth. An apparition, he simply became present.

The three of us raised our heads from our dinner plates at the same time and saw him, and a spooky feeling came over us.

"What in the world is *that*?" my father asked.



In a while she lit on the correct form. "Has Hiram Williams got him a good tobacco crop set out?" He smiled and gave a vigorous affirmative shake of his head. After this, she asked questions that could be answered yes or no, and Uncle Gurton would nod a cheerful Yes or wag a downcast No.

And all during this exchange he was feeding voraciously. Great heaping forkfuls went into his hirsute mouth with mechanical accuracy and rapidity. A sight awesome to behold. My father kept filling his plate and Uncle Gurton kept emptying it. My father described it later: "The way he was forking at it, and with all that hair around his mouth, I kept thinking it was a man throwing a wagonload of alfalfa into a hayloft."

He finished by downing a whole glass of buttermilk. We came to find out that buttermilk was his sole beverage, breakfast, dinner, supper. He never touched anything else, not even water.

He edged his chair back from the table.

"Uncle Gurton, won't you have a little something else?" my grandmother asked.

"No thank you," he said. "I've had an elegant sufficiency; and more would be a superfluity."

That was his one saying, the only one we ever heard him utter, and he was as proud of it as another man might be of a prize beagle. He said this sentence at the end of every meal, and we came to realize that he got mighty upset, his whole day was lusterless, if you didn't ask him to have a little more something, and give him occasion to say his sentence.

My father's mouth flew open like a phoebe's after a fly. His eyes lit up with surprise. "Would you mind saying that again, Uncle Gurton?" he asked. "What you just said?"

Uncle Gurton gave him a sweet warm smile and disappeared.

I don't mean that he dissolved into nothingness before our watching eyes like a trick ghost in a horror movie. But he evaded my father's request with one of those silent smiles, and when we had got up and scraped our dishes into the slop bucket and stacked them on the drainboard of the sink and turned around, Uncle Gurton was gone. His chair was angled back from the table, his red and white checked napkin folded neatly and laid in the seat, and he was nowhere to be seen. If it weren't for the soiled plate with the knife and fork primly crossed and the empty streaked glass, we might not have believed that he had been there. No footsteps of departure, no sound of the side door, nothing.

Our Uncle Gurton has got some interesting ways about him," my father said.

"Poor old soul," my grandmother murmured.

This habit of absenting and distancing himself we learned to know as an integral part of Uncle Gurton's character, as one with the man as his silence. You would sight him on the ridge of the pasture above the farther barn, his stark figure scarecrowlike against the sky and leaning into the wind, and then if you glanced off into the pear tree to see a bluejay, he was no longer on the ridge when you looked again. Snuffed out of the present world like a matchflame. Translated into another and invisible dimension of space. What? Where? When was he? He was an enigma of many variations, and his one answer, silence, satisfied them all as far as he was concerned.

"There's one thing, though, you can be certain of," my father said. "He won't miss a mealtime."

And this was true. As soon as the first steaming dish of corn or squash or squirrel burgoo was set out, Uncle Gurton *arrived* from whatever mystery world otherwise absorbed him.

My father kept testing him. "Uncle Gurton," he said, "this afternoon Jess and me have got a little fence mending to do along the back side of the far oatfield. Restrung some barbwire, reset a few posts. How'd you like to go along and keep us company?"

There was the smile, sweet and friendly and utterly inscrutable.

My father rephrased the question. "I mean," he said, "would you be willing to go along with us, maybe lend us a hand?"

Uncle Gurton nodded.

My father leaned back in his chair. "That's fine," he said. "We'll catch us a smoke out on the porch here after lunch and then we'll go on over to the oatfield."

What distracted us? When we finished eating and had tidied up a bit, Uncle Gurton was gone again. The folded napkin, the crossed knife and fork; and no Uncle Gurton.

"I'm going to get me a moving picture camera," my father said. "Because I want to find out how he does that. I believe that it's a truly rare gift he has."

He pondered the matter all the way out to the fenceline, the roll of barbwire hoisted on his shoulder and bouncing on the burlap-sack pad with every stride. I walked at his side, toting the awkward posthole diggers and the wire stretchèr. "I put the question to him wrong," he said at last. "I didn't ask him was he actually going to go with us, but was he *willing* to go."

"What's the difference?" I said.

"He was willing to go, all right, but he was even more willing not to."

At the top of the high second hill of the pasture we turned to look back. There in the dusty road between the house and the first barn, as steady as a mailbox post, stood Uncle Gurton.

I dropped the posthole diggers with a loud clatter. When we looked again, the road was empty.

"No, a movie camera wouldn't capture it," my father said. "It would take some kind of invention that is beyond the capacity of present-day science."

We were resting from the fence work. We sat in the shade of a big red oak and watched the wind write long cursive sentences in the field of whitening oats.

"One question we don't need to ask," my father said. "Whether he sleeps with his beard inside or outside the covers. Stands to reason that a man who would tuck his beard down in his overalls will sleep with it under the covers."

"How long do you reckon it is?" It was the thousandth time I had asked that question.

"Before he got here, I would've guessed it was a foot and a half," he said. "And then when I saw him first, I'd've said two feet. But now the more I don't see it the longer it gets. I've been imagining it four or five feet easy."

"You really think it's all that long?"

"I've got to where I'll think anything when it comes to that beard."

"If it's that long he has to let it run down his britches leg," I said.

"Which one you think, left or right?" Kind of a ticklish decision," he said. "Maybe he divides it up, half down one leg, half down the other."

"You reckon it's the same color all over?"

He gave me a level look. "Jess, for anything I know, it's green and purple polka-dotted under them overalls and he's got it braided into hangnooses. But I'll tell you what. I'm bound and determined to see that beard, every inch of it. I'll never sleep easy again till I do."

"How you going to do that?"

"I'll let you know."

It was three days later, the hour before suppertime, when he revealed his grand and cunning design. He took a thumb-sized blue bottle out of his pocket. "You see this? This is our beard-catcher, this is going to turn the trick."

"What is it?"

"It's a sleeping draught I got from Doc McGee."

Doc McGee was our veterinarian, an old old man who lived with his wife in a dark little house three miles from us, at the very end of the road where the mountainside pines took possession and human habitation left off.

"What you going to do?"

"Slip it in his buttermilk. When he goes to bed he'll sleep as sound as a bear wintering in. Then we'll have us a look at that beard."

"You think it'll work?"

"Doc says it'll lay a horse down, he's put many a horse to sleep with it. I'll give Uncle Gurton just a little bit. We won't be hurting him any."

"You sure?"

He was impatient. "Sure I'm sure."

And so at supper my father kept close watch on Uncle Gurton's buttermilk. When he had drunk off the first glass, my father picked it up. "Here," he said, "let me get you some more, Uncle Gurton." He tipped me an evil wink and I knew he was going to drop the powders..

Uncle Gurton nodded and flashed the friendliest smile in his smile-box, and when the buttermilk came he drained it in two noisy swallows. My father looked so gleeful I was afraid he'd bust out laughing and spoil it all.

Then I was afraid he'd got hold of the wrong powders because nothing seemed to be happening. Uncle Gurton was as brighteyed silent as ever and was forking into the stewed tomatoes with devastating effect. But in a few minutes I saw that his eyes were growing faraway cloudy and the lids were drooping.

"Have another piece of cornbread," my father suggested.

"No thank you," he said. "I've had an elegant sufficiency—"

But he didn't say on to *the superfluity* and we knew we had him. He rose from the table and stumbled through the kitchen and out the door, headed down the hall for the stairway. He didn't cross his knife and fork on the plate, and the checked napkin lay on the floor where he'd dropped it. My father retrieved it and laid it by his plate.

My grandmother followed his progress with curious eyes. "Uncle Gurton's right strange-acting. I wonder is he feeling poorly."

"Aw, he's okay," my father said. "He's just plumb tuckered from appearing and disappearing out of thin air all day."

We cleaned and stacked our dishes and then retired to the side porch where my father smoked his ciagrette after meals.

"We going to see the beard now?" I asked.

"Better give him a little while, make sure he's sound asleep. Let's

go out to the shed a minute.”

In the woodshed he took a dusty kerosene lantern off a hook and shook it to hear if there was oil in the reservoir. He reached an old moth-eaten blue wood sweater off a nail and wiped the cobweb off the lamp. “We’ll need this if we’re going to be good and sneaky,” he said. He brought the lamp and the sweater and we returned to the porch and he smoked two slow cigarettes and we watched the first stars pierce the western sky. The far hills went hazy blue and then purple-black.

“Let’s go,” he said, and we opened the forbidden door and tiptoed through the dark sun parlor. The souvenir teacups rattled on the glassed-in shelves. It was stale in here and dusty. I was afraid I’d sneeze and trumpet our crime to the world at large.

We entered into the dark stairway hall and stood for a moment to listen. My father struck a kitchen match with his thumbnail and lit the wick and let the shell down. The pale orange light made our shadows giant on the walls, and everything was strange there in the hallway, all silent, and in the stairwell above in the hovering darkness. I felt a way I’d never felt before, like a thief or a detective. My breath was quick, the pulse tight in my temples.

We climbed the stairs one careful step at a time. Our shadows fell behind us and washed up on the far wall and the shadows on the banister posts spun like ghostly wheelspokes. My father held the lantern by his side in his left hand and I hid in his righthand shadow, moving when he did.

We paused at the top of the stairs and he raised the lantern. The door to Uncle Gurton’s room was at the end of the hall and we edged toward it. Every snap and squeak of the floor made me fearful; I was certain we’d be discovered. What could we say to Uncle Gurton or my grandmother when they found us? I realized, maybe for the first time, that my father wasn’t always the safest protection in the world.

At that fateful door we stopped and held our breaths to listen. My father began to ease the door open, turning the knob slowly, slowly, until it ceased and the door swung open upon blackness. We heard the sound of heavy breathing and I felt relieved to know we hadn’t poisoned the old man to death. My father had wrapped the wool sweater around the lantern and now he rolled it up from the bottom, showing a little light at a time.

We needn’t have been so precisely stealthy. Uncle Gurton’s mouth was open and, lying flat on his back, he uttered a gurgling half-snore. We could have dropped a wagonload of tin kettles on the floor and he wouldn’t have stirred an ounce.

I was impressed with how Uncle Gurton lived. There were a few

shirts on hangers in the open closets and one shirt hung on the back of a chair by the foot of the bed. In front of this chair his battered brogans sat, a sock dangling out of the top of each. And that was all I saw there. He led a simple existence.

My father handed me the lantern and we advanced to the edge of the bed. After giving me one significant and thrilling glance, he began to turn the sheet down from under the old man's chin. We were dismayed to discover that Uncle Gurton slept in his overalls. He wore no shirt; his naked freckled arms lay flat beside him, but the blue denim bib still hid what we had schemed so anxiously to disclose. My father rolled the sheet down to Gurton's waist, then leaned back from the bedside.

He gave me another look, this one of bewilderment and frustration. Little beads of sweat stood on his forehead. I shrugged. I was ready to leave, figuring Uncle Gurton was just one too many for us. He was a coon we couldn't tree.

But we'd come too far for my father to let it go. He reached and unhooked the gallus on the far side; then loosed the one nearer. Then he inched the bib down.

We were not disappointed; it was everything we had come to see. A creeklet of shining white lay over Uncle Gurton's skinny chest and gleamed in the lantern light like a drawer full of silver spoons. It was light and dry and immaculately clean—a wonder because we'd never known Uncle Gurton to bathe. We'd never seen him do much but eat.

I thought the beard was marvelous, and I couldn't regret all our trouble and terror. It was like visiting a famous monument—Natural Bridge, Virginia, say; and I felt a different person now I'd seen it.

But the great question went begging. How long was it? We couldn't tell, and there didn't seem any way to find out unless we stripped him naked or tugged the beard to light by handfuls.

We stood gazing dejected until the beard began to move. It was a movement hard to distinguish. At first I thought it was flowing away to the foot of the bed like a brook, and then I thought it was rising like early mist over a pond. My father clutched my shoulder and I knew he saw this motion too.

Then suddenly it was out upon us, billow on billow of gleaming dry wavy silver beard, spilling out over the sheet and spreading over the bed like an overturned bucket of milk. It flowed over the foot of the bed and then down the sides, noiseless, hypnotic. There was no end to it.

I felt it stream over my shoetops and round my ankles and it was all I could do to stifle a shriek. I dropped the lantern and my father

bent and picked it up before it could set fire to the beard, to the house. We retreated, stepping backward quickly, but always facing the bed. We were afraid to turn our backs on that freed beard.

Now over Uncle Gurton's torso it began to rise into the air, mounding up dry and white and airy. It was like seeing a frosty stack of hay rising of its own volition out of the ground. Little streamers of beard detached from the mass and began to wave in the air like the antennae of butterflies. They searched around the tall flat headboard of the bed and went corkscrewing up the curtain drawstrings. In just a moment the beard had curled in and out, around and over, the chair in the middle of the floor like wisteria overtaking a trellis.

At last my father said something, speaking out loud. *My God*, was what he said.

"Let's please leave," I said. The flow of beard was up to my calves now and I was afraid it would start wrapping around my legs the way it had gone over the chair. Then what would happen?

"Go on," my father said. "I'm right behind you." Then he pointed and said *My God* again.

Over the bed the beard had climbed until it was like a fogbank, only more solid, and threatened to topple forward. But it was still sliding underneath in sheets off the bed like a small waterfall, and now out of that misty mass and down over the edge of the bed came a birchbark canoe with two painted Cherokee Indians paddling with smooth alacrity. Above them, out of the mist-bank of beard, flew a hawk pursued by a scattering of blackbirds. We heard a silvery distant singing and saw a provocative flashing and then a mermaid climbed out of the beard and positioned herself in the streaming-over straight chair. She did not seem to see my father and me, but gazed into some private distance and sang her bell-like song; the hair that fell over her shoulders, hiding her breasts, was the same color as Uncle Gurton's beard.

Behind the mermaid's singing all sorts of other sounds emerged, squeaks and squawks, chatterings, chitterings, muffled roars, howls, and thunderings: the background noises in a Tarzan movie. In the corner of the room was a sudden and terrific upheaval and a great mass of beard lifted to the height of the ceiling, then subsided to ominous silence. We glimpsed the movement of a huge indistinct bulk beneath the surface, moving stately-swift toward the far wall.

"What's that?" I whispered.

My father said *My God* once more and then murmured, "I believe to my soul it's a damn big white whale."

"I really think it's time to get out of here."

"I do believe you're absolutely right, Jess," he said. He pointed at three dark sharp triangles cutting through the surface. "Sharks in here too. Well, that settles that. We'd better go, I reckon."

He slipped the lantern bail up over his shoulder and dropped the old wool sweater. It floated for a moment on the surface of the silver hair and then suddenly submerged. Something had snatched it under, I didn't want to know what.

We made our way to the door, lifting our feet high, and after a minute of straining together, managed to push the slowly closing door back against the wall. The river of beard was already out into the upper hall, spreading both ways along the corridor. We stopped at the top of the stairs and my father unslung the lantern from his shoulder and held it up. The beard was flowing steadily down the steps, and the footing on the stairway looked plenty treacherous.

"What do you think?" I asked.

"I don't know. I don't trust it."

"I know what," I said. "Let's slide down the banister."

"Yeah, that's the ticket," he said. "I'll go first and hold the lantern for you. You can see your way down better."

"I'll go first."

"Stay right here and watch if I get down okay." He clenched the tin wire bail in his teeth. Then he straddled and lifted his feet and slid to the bottom pretty nifty. But he hit the newel post there hard and I knew if he hadn't had a mouthful of lantern bail I'd've heard some hairsingeing curses. He got off and stepped back, holding the lantern with one hand and rubbing his ass with the other. "Come on," he said, "you can make it just fine."

But as I was getting set to mount the banister, my left foot tangled in a wavelet of beard and I pitched forward. I was sure I was drowned or strangled, but my right hand on the banister held me up and I twisted over and got hold with my left hand and pulled myself up. Then I got on and slid down.

"I was worried about you for a second there," he said. "Come on, let's go."

"I was a little worried myself."

The beard was only shoetop deep down here and we went padding through it into the little sitting room, then through the kitchen hallway and out the back door.

In the yard stood a startling black apparition but when my father held the lantern toward it, it was only my grandmother standing straight and narrow and angry in a wine-colored bathrobe. "What have you boys been doing?" she asked.

We said nothing and turned to look at the house. The upstairs windows were packed solid white with beard, and there were trailers coming out of the downstairs kitchen windows, and from the chimney a long flamelike banner of it reached toward the stars and swayed in the cold breeze.

"We just wanted to see Uncle Gurton's beard," I told her.

She clucked her tongue. "Well, do you think you've seen enough of it?"

My father looked at her and gave a deep and mournful sigh. "Yes ma'am," he said, "I've seen an elegant sufficiency. Any more—" He choked on a giggle like a knuckle of bone in his throat. "Any more would be a superfluity."

**ROBERT STOCK**  
**NEW ORLEANS POET**

**d. 1981**

*Skipping Stones*

The world in brightest colors  
 rings changes in me. Cracks  
 in clouds widen, include me  
 nearer water and clean  
 slick mud. *There was a boy . . .*  
 and he's born again, before  
 vision-completing tools  
 lie pressing in my hand.  
 Three times the shallow slate  
 skips in crossing the stream,  
 planes up to have its hues  
 called out by the flung sun,  
 then vanishes in cattails.  
 Downstream the course is longer:  
 two - four - six - eight,  
 a plain course on the bells,  
 a torch from town to town,  
 and just before the tenth  
 a pause. It's not the stream  
 ends it, but gravity  
 glossing my want of force,  
 and judged as in collusion  
 when in doubt or defeat  
 I hang my harp up cloyed  
 on willows by these waters  
 Babylonish. I rummage  
 for such another stone,  
 think of Blake and Keats  
 in need of the sestina  
 that sullied in Henley's use,  
 of how Uccello's brush  
 catches at perspective  
 and misses, how the Incan  
 runners for lack of the wheel  
 (reserved for children's toys)  
 scourged his legs with nettles  
 to keep them on the run.

When I discovered and hefted  
the slate, it sang in my ears:  
"I am the Holy of Holies!"  
And when I skipped it over  
the silver-minted ripples  
it psalmed: "I splash the world  
in my weight, and what is more,  
all color's in my black!"

**ROBERT STOCK**

*Palengue*

Temples dance their question: "Where  
have the good years gone?" And jungles:  
"What bittered our greens, whittled us spare?"  
I cannot grasp the stream's complaint.

I know; but only raise my fist  
sunward; fail while the land grows dark  
and every cloud's a vented cyst  
and lizards bloat with song and blood.

My fingers clutched on increase lost  
and mouldering friezes gained, I know:  
so raise a famished heart: a frost  
spreads and dumbly jungles die.

Maybe the stream's the only thing  
I understand. My fist is wet  
with sweat and sweet remembering  
of what a wiser fool forgets.

*Forever, Limited*

Death is tangled in the works of the clock.  
It stopped at midnight though it chimes through noon.  
Such days we tell time by weathercock.

Time limps, its one leg shorter a laughing-stock,  
its seven-league boot a tocsin, and soon  
Death is tangled in the works of the clock.

Time, the same in Palenque and Antioch, ,  
seldom pays visits till they're inopportune:  
such days we tell time by weathercock.

Now the seconds do not bother to knock;  
they crawl on bread, tarnish our silver spoon.  
Death is tangled in the works of the clock

and marks two times in one intractable tock.  
Time snickers at the regalia of the dragon.  
Such days we tell time by weathercock.

Commotion that's better behaved in a hollyhock  
is jangling and whirring in the casing's cocoon.  
Death is tangled in the works of the clock.  
Such days we tell time by weathercock.

*Nightfall Along the Middle Pearl River*

Through shallows  
along the Middle Pearl  
a crowdaddy  
races my shadow  
(heading home  
as sundown thickens  
round cypress knees),  
then skewers for refuge  
under a ledge:  
while my shadow  
arrives, I roam.

*Crazy Bear Bayou*

No other man has held you in his eyes.  
The morning hour misty as a wish  
Has circled secrecy around my prize.

Somewhere coiled and poisonous the monster time  
Awaits my arrival with scaly-eyed calm,  
To strike as I watch egret angels climb.

But I will taste this first full kiss of light  
That leaves ecstatic colors on the memory—  
Bright petals fold forever back the painful night.

## EVERETTE MADDOX

### *The Desperate Sonnet*

My blinding blonde darling, don't let's be missed  
trains out of the only station. Hold  
me a river instead. So what if I  
got a graveyard in my mouth? Are you depressed  
at my part-time job? Oh I could list  
my publications, but the polka dots on my tie  
are coming off one by one, and I'm too shy  
anyway, but then I think of your little wrist  
like the stem of a daisy turning over your desk  
I want to come myself. Don't ever still  
forever be leaving! Lovely! Don't be gone  
like a goddamn twilight ruin! Be still! Risk  
your matchless ass on a sure thing and say you'll,  
yes, be my all-purpose beloved, especially that one.

## ANDREW SALKEY

### *In America*

(A Novel in Progress)

#### Boston

Boston's brown, too, in a way. Its history clings like good tea leaf treachery.

And those rude, large limbed, freckled, Latinate priests, Irish by attraction, were my first contact with the sound of the place.

Most of them, mission high, fired into the brown, when they descended on us. Scattershot it was then, with their missals cocked accurately between chest and bent wrist.

Spied a few on a recent visit to courageous Boston, where blacks are perennial targets, and they looked just as married to Christ as I remember them at home, enjoying veranda cool, family intimacy and soulful power over packed masses.

And Brahmin Boston, a cunning riverchill, lying there, cuddling himself in lucubration and brown study, commerce the only sounds of plain life, with its snub-nose trucks and hustling service class.

Secondhand London is the pawprint feel one gets, if one gets anything, at all.

And the patriarchal reveries in those bars and offices! And the eternal racism, greener every season!

#### Mango Security

Suffice it to say that time moves with the miracle of ripening mangoes in a dark cupboard; sometimes we remember they're there, sometimes we bang the thin doors without seeing a thing. There was no one more trusting than Friend To All.

Her cupboard was closed with a light on in it that stayed on when anybody opened it at any hour of day or night. Soon, there were no mangoes. Friend To All smiled and picked more for the cupboard. They were taken, too. And so it went, day and night, until Friend To All turned to struggle.

#### Dangerous Fizz

Time to reappoint and promote, again, and strictly out of that thin

air that causes anxious footwork and painful pretences and two-sided trumps.

Out trot sudden creative writing and pent-up caustic soda. It's all as unreal as happiness. Nobody knows a thing about anybody's classroom. Students are kings and queens. And everything's on a wing and an experimenting premise. It's a farm of the blind. And it's unsightly to move bodies in the dark. But the movers are at work, and we are who they are.

### M'chaya

A former advisee sent me the word, all the way from New York. It arrived in a clipping that said it is "a goodness".

I like the story. It stresses its own unique definition: "This summer it was really hot in my apartment and my mother-in-law sat herself by the fan so a breeze blew right on her, and she said, 'Oh, what a *m'chaya!*' That's what it means. There's no other word that says it."

### Which makes me think of Thanksgiving

November's—end, useless mellow pastures, treachery on hand, as always, brown stains, and first snow.

All that spawns multiple leaps of the fancy, in my study: there mightn't be very much of a sense of class, here, but there *is* definitely a bid for happiness, every day, where coming in first, second or third matters and ends up by being the deepest pain for some of my most settled and secure American friends. I watch their faces turn to Robert Desnos who tells them that *Par nos cinq sens ligote /Notre univers rapetisse*, and I watch the suitable regret flicker and fade; because, after much thought about the universe, the thing of immediate importance is the narrow American self, the one of continuing pain for happiness on a daily basis.

And it's Thanksgiving Day.

We've made the crossing, and thank you.

A kind of forced family feeding, everywhere. Pressured familiarity. Received ritual bulging indoors. Better than Christmas.

Shadows could easily take over the nation, on a day like today. Resistance to reality is at its lowest, State to State. Yet, there's surrealism's chomping at the bit, from Coast to Coast, a terrible impatience to get ahead of the dream. The American *m'chaya*, perhaps?

## Don't Swerve

If you fail the urge to keep running after the dollars from heaven, and you're left walking, don't allow your thoughts to turn to rape. That's the usual brutal property swerve. Thus, the rapist lies about the take he's grabbed without consent; thus, the raped is lied to by police and court; thus, the continuing rape.

## After—Thanksgiving Thought

Where there used to be a logic of the world, there is now only the logic of America. That's the way it is, bombs away, or bite on the bullet and give thanks to the situation that allows unheeded voters to make their mark on paper.

I'll long remember Salvador and the New Myrmidons. And strange how the demon democrats articulate themselves so broadly overseas; and, on the spot, they seem almost impossible to touch; to wrinkle out the claws of the offenders, wedding rings and all, is looking at Washington and Virginia grow creepers that hide in the open like cement in concrete lives.

"Spotting the rot in lived-in rooms ain't that simple," the Amherst builder said, shaking his head, his hands full of hasps and nails. "Rooms like those know how to hide what's wrong. You might as well close your eyes when you go into them, and feel your way by sound."

## Christmas in Cuba

In clearing the salamander of *caudillo* rot, the new Cubans also cleared away the fake white beard and cotton wool snow; those of earlier Christmas—dreams dream no more of gifts wrapped in sky and Happy New Year wishes.

My Guide, Maria-Luisa, tells me our *companero* bus driver didn't know today, December 25th, was Christmas Day, so rearranged everything's been, since '59. And I saw children busy at school, on the 25th, their uniforms, New Year plans, soon to bloom.

## Two Elderly Men on the back veranda of the Hotel Nacional in Havana

The first guess was that they'd been deliberately left behind. The

second, they stayed. Isolated, they fit together, shoulder to shoulder. They huddle in symmetrical intimacy, ignoring the new tourists.

They'd been Nacional-goers for years and years and years, their privacy and fun and games always assured of low-swinging blossoms, of old arcing Cuban fruits.

George Raft no longer cruising by. The skin trade gone. Now, countryfolks lean against the reception desk for keys and information.

The two elderly men discuss the mad changes, as if they'd happened only yesterday. One tugs at the soft collar of his Czech shirt. His old-time *guayaberas* are long-frayed, maybe; torn, perhaps; or lost in the wash. The other contemplates a fly on his left trouser leg.

Then, all of a sudden, they thrill to their recall of Hemingway's *macho* stance at the bar. They chuckle over ancient champagne stories.

Just as suddenly, they frown, feeling let down by America's foolish mistake. They call it treachery. It's occurred twice: at the start of the damn thing, and at the Bay of Pigs. The same, in Vietnam. Not going the whole way!

Naturally, day after day, with little else to do, they return to the back varanda of the Nacional, their pensions still coming in to keep them going, they themselves stalled in a land of irreversible change.

They nod at each other. They stare at the *Malecon*. They toss nostalgia between their veined hands. They make little emphatic hooks of their fingers. Sand rushes through them.

They keep coming back, again and again. The Nacional stays changed. They've come to a dead stop. Only their sweet memories dart about. And who would believe them?

The two elderly men nod and nod and nod at each other. The Nacional stays changed. America seems much, much more than ninety miles away.

### The Twentieth Anniversary

"What's a mistake for you is a win for me," said the woman outside her apartment door, in the rent-free commune, where her Batista *bohio* once squatted. "Sure, it's true, '59 spread the sugar for the likes of me and the likes of Chico, and we're level now with how we see ourselves."

"Twenty years aren't much concrete blocks to build with," the old Habanero said. "But we're building with more than years and with more than concrete blocks."

## Cuba es un Planeta

In its garden-paths and mountain-folds and water it is vast and lush; in its history it is long-winding and cumulative; in its people it is rock-rooted and green; in its challenge and actions it is planetary.

Just you try to turn back a dream, and feel the dead weight of the effort! *That*, the mass of the planet makes clear to the northern planner.

*Cuba es un planeta!* And, in fact, it moves itself in the world we live in and call ours, leaving the near, fixed star suitably planet-sticken.

## Morning Glory, Hibiscus and Old Cruelties

In my Andrew Wyeth highway house, in the January snow, I lull myself toward a reverie of Havana, of Old Colonial Havana, from a bus with no spare parts stop dropped on it by the mighty blockader, and even though I hear the insistence of the Slav immigrant steelworker's U.S. prayer,

*A good job,  
saves money,  
work all time,  
go home,  
sleep,  
no spend . . .*

I am happy for the smiles of the workers who comrade us around the daring of the bus, in Havana.

Outside, now, their smiles touch us like hands eager to show us the way '59 cracked open morning glory and hibiscus, open only in Miramar, before, and open only for special eyes to see tinsel and the telling lights of enterprise, high off the hog, with few to benefit.

Andrew Wyeth should see the balconies in lived-in Plaza de la Catedral, how they touch the textual memory we may have of Cruel Spanish orders and crueller Machado-nods and Batista-winks at scattershot murder in the narrow streets.

Back in the Plaza de la Catedral, in a city built to cluck for profit, since 1519, but no longer scratching backs, nobody bothers about travel book family names like Bayona, Lombillo, Arcos or Aguas Claras.

Maria-Luisa lives there now. So does Juanito. And the big buses

park respectfully some distance away from the Plaza, and wait for the return of respectful tourists in allowed groups.

Somebody reaches out to 1838 and the recall of General Don Miguel Tacon, the spike heel in Cuba's side for four years of personal plunder and plumes, and to the jingle that survives the slasher:

*Mix together  
Cataline and Tarquin  
with the Sultans of Algiers,  
add Tiberius and Nero  
and the Holy Inquisition  
and the savage fury of Attila;  
then knead that mess  
with iron and human blood  
and you'll come up with a miniature  
of the great Tacon of Havana!*

The bus ride takes us to the airport and to Tampa, and Andrew Wyeth claims me, again. Make—sell—buy—or—die breaks over us like boils. Plague years can't describe it. Snow doesn't hide it. Doesn't wash it. Nothing cleans deep stains. Branding is a forever passion.

Learn to live it or slip away from it, at night, when the watchman droops on duty.

February wears its old mask, making out January's gone. Nothing changes for the hell of it. Flowers break open with a *whoosh* we never hear.

*Night Raid*

There was one witness  
but the newspapers did not say  
neither did the police  
perhaps he was too small to mention  
so small so small  
hardly there at all  
peering out behind the bathroom door.

He simply was not that important  
not worth shooting that night  
he had not pushed dope  
or been accused of cop killing  
his biggest worry until now  
was having his hair combed  
before nursery school.

He was easily forgotten  
tossed inside  
the neighbor's living room  
as a final act of kindness  
an end to a sacrificial feast  
What could he say in court  
that would be believed?

No one would listen  
to the recurring nightmare  
of a four year old  
who could have fantasized  
his mother's cries for mercy  
her pleading for her life  
before her bath became her blood  
it really doesn't matter but  
there was one witness.

*In the Condor's Shadow*

In the Condor's shadow,  
It is still April  
The skies have not yet wept  
Upon the brown faces of these mountains  
Bedecked in immortelle blossoms;  
The receded rivers wind,  
Slowly,  
To where the sea-gates open;  
The islands pant  
In the sun's ferocious stare.  
But, at this spring,  
In the sparkling waters rushing  
From the erect nipple of the earth  
As spurts of virginal milk,  
The children of Zion wash themselves  
Of four hundred years  
Of slaveships;  
Four hundred years  
Of the whip;  
Four hundred years  
Of the chain-gang;  
Four hundred years  
Under the yoke.  
The tendrils of their hair  
Snake toward the true origins;  
In their singular hearts,  
The glowing embers of revolt.  
"Consider the lilies of the fields,"  
They tell me.  
"They do not spin or weave. Yet,  
They bloom strong and bountiful.  
Almighty Jah provides for them.  
Consider us lilies. Let Jah be praised."  
And I stand before them,  
Frozen,  
In their apocalyptic gaze  
As the transparent day-moon

Breaks loose, from its moorings,  
To flee  
From the unsheathed blade of  
The maddened sun.  
Within me,  
The delirious spasms of remorse throb.  
I am a stranger  
Lost  
In my own ignorance.  
Wind! Wind!  
I summon you.  
I summon you  
That I may regain my eyes;  
That I may regain  
My conjureman powers.  
For I am yet to know  
The secrets of Pyramids.  
I do not know if these clouds  
Are the sails of invisible ships.  
I have never been to San Francisco  
Except on one Caribbean Night,  
Through the eyes of a woman  
Who wept me there.  
And you ask me, "Where have you been?"  
My brother, I will answer you.  
I have just returned  
From a semi-tranquility  
Where I hid  
For fear of looking  
Into your painfilled eyes.  
(Mine were lost among neon-lights)  
For fear of hearing  
The breaking of my sister's  
Trapped sobs  
Escaping the cage of her throat.  
(Mine were crushed in subway tunnels)\_\_\_  
I confess!  
I confess!  
From you, I had repudiated myself.  
I, the somnambulist,  
Newly awakened from his shameful sleep.  
O wind-blown tree.

O scattered seed.  
Forgive me! Forgive me!  
I must capture a Tornado  
To take you  
Where the hypnotic chants of  
The sorceress straddle the world,  
Carried on the shoulders of  
The haunting voodoo-drums;  
Where tongues of flame reach up  
To scorch  
The trembling flesh of the sky,  
To bounce  
From the shining ocean's blade,  
To plunge  
Into the breast of the sacrificed earth.  
Forgive me  
Black, unborn babies  
Do not,  
With the silent mutterings of  
Fresh lips, say my name with scorn.  
Forgive me, river.  
Forgive me, stone.  
Forgive me, tree.  
Forgive me, leaf.  
Blood-drenched skies  
Forgive me.  
Forgive me  
I come to wipe your face  
With trembling hands.

## RANDOLPH BATES

### *Remembering Galindez*

#### *Observations from New Orleans*

Victor Galindez looked like two men. His lower body belonged on a welterweight, but a heavyweight's shoulders bulged from his black Luna Park singlet. When he smiled his face kept the appearance of a primitive mask: protruding brows, big cheekbones, a massive jaw. Before Mike Rossman stopped him in New Orleans in the fall of 1978, Galindez had held his World Boxing Association light heavyweight title for four years, successfully defending it ten times. The rematch, scheduled for Las Vegas in February, had been canceled even as Rossman waited primed in the ring. The reason given was a dispute about judges, but many boxing people said the actual problem was Galindez' inability to reach fighting condition. Now six weeks later, on April 3, 1979, Galindez had returned to the Superdome fit and boxed six rounds with the sparring partners who flew with him from Buenos Aires, a heavyweight named Marcos Kid Tosto and Ruben Pardo, the middleweight champion of Argentina. During the sparring Galindez wore the usual foul protector over his tight red training trunks. But painted on his equipment was an extra flourish, an arching white scorpion on the black leather cup.

Having finished his first local session, Galindez let his skip rope sail over his head and raised his hands to the applause in the assembly room. Kid Tosto put on a sombrero and began to play the guitar. Galindez moved among his large entourage touching people, several of them women with small children, before going to stand before a television camera. He rubbed a towel into his curly hair, amusement showing in the scar tissue around his eyes as the reporter discovered he would have to do the interview through an interpreter.

Earlier that afternoon the crowd in the carpeted training area was small. The two sweat-stained rings, commandeered from local gyms, seemed out of place in the refrigerated air and humming fluorescent light. Several modish politicians and television personalities stood by the portable steel A-frame that served as a mount for the bags. They were horsing around and paying little attention to a bland interview of Willie Pastrano that was being taped in one of the rings. Pastrano's expression brightened when the interviewer stopped quizzing him about the upcoming fight and asked a more personal question. "Well, y' see, Harold Johnson was a counter-puncher. But the night I won the

title, I had him comin' to me . . . ." Seeming to forget himself, Pastrano winked at the camera.

The moment Rossman and his camp sauntered in, a group of fighters from the police gym on Magazine street began needling Freddie Johnson, a ranked New Orleans middleweight who was to be one of Rossman's sparring partners. "Here the Jewish Bomber! Go'n bomb Freddie!"

Johnson didn't raise his eyes from the sports page in his hands. "F'git that. He's only a man."

With his ivy-league haircut, Rossman looked more like a husky college student than a fighter. He was twenty-two; his features weren't yet noticeably swollen. His trainer mounted the ring steps and spoke to the spectators in an even voice. "Ladies and gentlemen, the light heavyweight champion, the best in the world."

Freddie Johnson's two rounds with Rossman seemed uneventful—much infighting and few clear scoring punches. But when he rejoined the fighters from Magazine street, he gave a definite answer to their questioning looks. "The man hits hard."

The fight was billed as "The Super Brawl." Its publicists had no trouble proving unusual hostility between the principals. Their dislike for each other was evident in sequences taped from the first fight and in photographs of Rossman, taken just after the referee stopped it, as he stood in his younger brother's arms and shouted into Galindez' bloody face. The last-minute postponement in Las Vegas, an embittering blow to Rossman, renewed speculations that Galindez no longer could make the weight and that he wouldn't fight without a majority of Latin judges. For the rematch in New Orleans none of the judges contracted was an American, and Rossman was subdued at the press conference. He seemed disgusted when Galindez produced a camera, snapped his picture, and said, "Roas-mann, I love you." For his part Galindez appeared to enjoy the publicity. He visited Children's Hospital and, on a cool morning after roadwork, dived into Lake Pontchartrain while writers watched.

Galindez ended his sparring the Wednesday before Easter. That afternoon every chair in the assembly room was taken. As is customary, the champion trained first. A minor official performed the introduction in a reedy voice. "Well, c'mon, folks," he called, prolonging his duties. "Give 'em some noise! Fighters like noise!"

Rossman spoke out like a shot. "You ever been a fighter?"

The man acted as if the champ had made a joke, but an awkward quiet remained until after Rossman had sparred. Rossman's brother switched on a Bruce Springsteen cassette, and people began to loosen

up as Rossman finished to music on the speed bag and rope.

The tension built again after Rossman left and the South Americans arrived in a somber mood and got ready to box. For three rounds Galindez pressed Ruben Pardo without letup. His last sparring partner was Jerry Celestine, a formidable light heavyweight contender from the Criminal Sheriff's Gym in Parish Prison. Celestine had to put most of his effort into slipping punches and countering. When Galindez knocked him along the ropes with a hook to the elbow, a Latin handler cut the session short. "*Perfecto! Bastante!*"

A small blond boy was seated near the front with his father. The child suddenly stiffened. A second had been scissoring the wraps from Galindez' hands, and Galindez had tossed the first one up for older boys to fight over. He laid the other wrap on the blond child's knee.

His own work done, Kid Tosto strolled through the exit playing his guitar and returned with baskets of roses. A table was rolled in. Galindez sat behind it, autographing picture postcards of himself. He posed for photographs with people waiting in line and kissed young and old women on their mouths and gave each of them a rose.

His whole entourage was meandering out with him when Galindez stopped abruptly in the doorway. They all stopped around him. The father of the blond boy was trying to guide his son around them toward the escalators. Squeezing by, he wished the fighter well. Galindez ignored him and bent over the boy; he offered his hand and spoke in clear English. "How are you, my friend?"

The boy seemed startled. He hesitated before gripping Galindez' hand and then looking into his eyes, as he had evidently been taught. "Hello."

"Are you my friend?"

"Fine."

Later, standing with his father on the descending escalator, the boy looked at what he held in his hands. The gauze was still damp, but the tape had begun browning. "What am I supposed to do with this?"

The day before the fight, a Friday, the training area seemed deserted. All the fighters on the card were gone. Except for Galindez. He was in the ring alone, for an hour of brutal calisthenics, sweating off the last pounds. When he jumped down and headed for the exit, someone off to the side, it may have been Willie Pastrano, began to clap, softly at first, then louder as other ex-fighters joined in. Galindez raised his hands in the doorway and stood there.

Fight time. The blue ring in the center of the vast arena seemed to grow smaller and brighter as the crowd swelled through the afternoon prelims. Celebrities were now milling around behind the press tables at

ringside. Policemen stood talking to the woman who carried the round numbers into the ring during rest periods. Crossing her sequined thighs and shifting her exaggerated bosom, she gazed past them toward the camera light a television crew was testing. The light flickered, then beamed, highlighting a column of heads as it drew down into a silverish cone around a commentator in a gold coat. The underswell of noise rose when the houselights went dim. There was mass shifting in the direction of twin spotlights that streaked the walls around the chute to the dressing rooms. In shadows between the lights, something appeared to roll down the chute and buckle like a street float. Near the concession stands the spotlights focused on it and held. The noise turned to cheering. Galindez and half a dozen others were jogging within a cordon of security guards. Someone ran alongside them waving an Argentine battle flag. As Galindez assumed possession of the ring, the spotlights picked up a second procession, which was already lurching up the aisle under the flags of the United States and Israel.

During introductions by the emcee, Champ Summers, both corners were crowded with partisans and heraldry. Willie Pastrano crossed the ring, then Joe Brown from Texas. Last, Galindez' countryman, the retired middleweight champion, Carlos Monzon. When Summers intoned his name, Galindez threw off his robe and stepped out all in white, except for pale blue socks that matched Kid Tosto's tuxedo and the flag propped in his corner. Summers dropped his hand toward Rossman. The champion stood calmly in his WBA belt. His long velvet trunks were the same blue as the Star of David tattooed on his calf.

Electrical buzzing and the rumble of generators were audible in the hushed seconds before the bell. Smoky borders of light drizzled around the ring, and the bell clanged into the kind of stillness that follows saxophones. Rossman was nodding at something his manager-father was telling him. Galindez took his arms from around Monzon. They turned.

Rossman struck first, a neck-popping jab that he threw flat-footed. Galindez shook his head, tried to bump Rossman off balance, and followed with a hook. Rossman slipped the punch, jabbed him again, then doubled, hooking off the jab. For an instant Galindez' hair stood away from his skull. He boxed cautiously for the rest of the round.

Rossman's jab dominated the second and the third, but in the fourth Galindez began to come on. It was his style, after fighting in close, to drift outside, gloves pawing at this waistband, and then to leap back in to maul his opponent. At one point he charged Rossman so fiercely they almost went through the ropes. They were trading heavy punches when the bell sounded at the end of the fourth. Rossman pulled in his fists. Galindez kept clubbing him. Before the referee could break them,

Rossman's brother was in the ring trying to get at Galindez. Galindez ran around Rossman and swung twice at the youth. Handlers from both corners swarmed through the ropes to wedge them apart.

As if spurred by the screaming and confusion, Galindez rushed Rossman at the start of the fifth. Rossman fought back, but he stopped using his right. Toward the end of the sixth, he became trapped in Galindez' corner. For thirty-six seconds, with his people shouting in Spanish around them, Galindez battered Rossman with a fury of scoring blows. Turtled behind his arms, Rossman chopped with his left. At the bell he had to spend precious seconds of rest walking all the way back across the ring. Galindez had his way with Rossman in the seventh, eighth, and ninth. He walked through Rossman's jab and banged hooks, which carried body weight, to Rossman's neck and ears. His left split Rossman's guard; when Rossman began to flinch from it, Galindez started smashing him full-face with right-hand leads.

Many in the crowd stood through the ninth rest period, stamping and cheering. At the bell for the tenth, the cheers turned to boos. Rossman remained slumped on his stool, and his father signaled it was over. Galindez leaped into the air, fell down, then bolted toward Rossman with his fists raised. His seconds cut him off and lifted him to their shoulders. Bulbs flashed, the bell clanged, and someone whipped the pale blue flag above the bucking knot of people.

When the ring finally was cleared, Galindez prolonged the moment by walking out on the press tables waving his belt. Not until fighters and handlers for the next bout stood and backed up at ringside did he let himself be carried away toward the chute.

Few people knew then that Rossman had broken his right hand in the fifth. And no one could know that Galindez would be beaten into retirement eight months later when he returned to New Orleans to defend against a new challenger. Nor that within the next year—having fought, lost, and retired again—he would be killed horribly on a speedway. But there are temperate men who were preoccupied for hours after witnessing him win back his title, men unable to explain why to puzzled family or friends. And how could they? It was as ludicrous and beguiling as a silicone breast. How to tell a loved one, or tell anyone, that for the moment all they wanted was to be Victor Galindez?



Read from left to right and top to bottom, the manuscript shows the sentencing of the young Jewess, her attempted execution, her rescue by the virgin, and her baptism.

*Miracle of the Jewess thrown from a High Cliff:*  
Number 107 of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*

Medievalists in most areas of study know less about Spain than any other area. This is a pity, for some of the Middle Age's greatest literary, artistic and other cultural treasures still are overlooked. Perhaps the most striking example of a great but neglected work is the vast anthology of Marian miracles and hymns known as the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* created under the sponsorship of King Alfonso el Sabio, "the Wise," or "the Learned, who ruled 1252-84. There are four codices of the *Cantigas*, but one is of exceptional interest in that it contains the full-page illuminations of 194 of the 400-odd miracles distributed throughout the corpus of these stories and prayers in verse. The *Cantigas* are even omitted from most histories of Spanish literature because they are not written in Castilian, but in the Galician-Portuguese dialect, considered even by Spaniards until into the fifteenth century as the most apt medium for lyric verse. Within the pages of the combined volumes of the *Cantigas* one encounters the most extensive assemblage of brief narratives, for miracles are short stories, the most copious outpouring of lyric verse, and probably what is most important of all, the largest and most colorful collection of illuminations.

King Alfonso was famous for the development of the sciences, the history, the laws and the recreations of his people, and all bibliographies of medieval Spanish work list these. A glance at the entries under Alfonso X in Jose Simon Diaz, *Bibliografia de la Literatura Hispanica*, III (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1953) or subsequent editions, will reveal his vast contributions to the sciences, to law, history, prose fiction; but the best source of information about the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* is to be found in Joseph Snow, *The Poetry of Alfonso X, el Sabio* (London: Grant and Cutler, 1978). In order to complete and dispense with the bibliographical items which should be mentioned, I add that the only reliable critical edition is Walter Mettmann, *Alfonso X, o Sabio Cantigas de Santa Maria*, 4 vols. (Coimbra: Acta Universitatis Conimbrigensis, 1959-72). Lastly must be mentioned the only complete facsimile of the *manuscrito rico*, Number T.I.J. archived today in the Escorial which contains the full page illuminations of 194 miracles alluded to above. This facsimile now makes it possible for scholars to study a manuscript virtually inaccessible until now. The bibliographical reference is: *Alfonso X el Sabio, Cantigas de Santa Maria. Edicion*

*facsimil del Codice T.L.I. de la Biblioteca de San Lorenzo del el Escorial, Siglo XIII* (Madrid: Edilan, 1979). A volume of notes, transcriptions, musical notation and study accompanies the facsimile.

The three-fold impact of codex T.I.J. must have been great indeed upon those permitted to peruse its pages. The stories are intriguing, the great variety of verse forms delightful, and the melodies vary from pleasant and slow to stirring and rapid.

The miracles in the *Cantigas* stem from many sources. The first one hundred seem to be found in most of the great Latin anthologies of the Blessed Virgin's miracles distributed throughout most of Europe; the second one hundred contain a larger percentage of miracles of Spanish vintage, not even recorded outside of Spain; and the third and fourth one hundred continue to increase the number of purely Spanish miracles, and by this I mean characters, and locales, and facets of daily life belonging to Spain, and to some extent, to Portugal.

The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* was an "open-ended" work in that it allowed for the inclusion of miracles as it was assembled and set down in writing across some thirty years of King Alfonso's reign. We believe that the learned King intended the miracles to be presented to the entire populace in all its masses and classes, and indeed, most of the miracles are performed for people of lowly status, with a smaller proportion dealing with royalty, the nobility and the upper hierarchy of the Church.

With these matters in mind, I believe that I can in the brief pages of a single article best make comprehensible what the *Cantigas* are by presenting one miracle and by explicating its content as to the literary elements of short story and as to the visualization of the story in the miniatures. Miracle 107 is typically Spanish. Its setting is Segovia, and its principal character is a Spanish Jewess, in this case one who has committed a crime not specified by the text of the poem. Benita Benaim Lasry of Columbia University, who is studying 107 from another viewpoint, believes, and I agree with her, that the crime was adultery, for the punishment meted out to the woman was to be cast down from a high cliff, which along with stoning to death was the penalty for that sin.

First note the format of an illuminated page from the *Cantigas* and bear in mind that this is the format of all but one of the 194 in the codex under consideration, that is, T.I.J. The illumination measures 50 by 30 centimeters and is divided into six sections or panels, each of which visualizes an incident, and sometimes several incidents of action. Each panel is capped by a caption in either scarlet or azure calligraphy which states what is taking place in the panel. All the panels are divided from one another by the same design as found in the frame of the entire illumination. At each corner of the panels appears either the lion

rampant of Leon or the three towered castle of Castile, the emblems of royalty of the two kingdoms ruled by Alfonso.

The full title of this miracle as it is set down in the text is very nearly a complete summary of its plot, for it reads, and I translate: *How Holy Mary saved from death in Segovia the Jewess who was thrown over a cliff. Because she commended herself to Holy Mary, she did not suffer harm.*

It would be rewarding if the reader of this article would now read the translation into English of the entire miracle made by Dr. Kathleen Kulp-Hill of Eastern Kentucky University who has graciously permitted me to print it here.

*The Holy Virgin will aid those in distress if they believe in Her. Concerning this, the Mother of Mercy performed a miracle, in all truth in that city of Segovia, as this song will relate.*

*It was for a Jewess who was caught in a crime and arrested and taken to be hurled from a high and rugged cliff in that place.*

*She said: "Oh, woe is me, how can anyone who falls from here remain alive unless it is by God's will? But you, Queen Mary, in whom Christians believe, if it is true, as I have heard*

*that you succor the unfortunate women who are commended to you among all the other guilty women, come to my aid, for I have great need.*

*If I remain alive and well, I shall, without fail, become a Christian before another day dawns."*

*The Jews who led her, dressed only in her chemise, let go of her and pushed her over the cliff, shouting, "There she goes!"*

*But when she fell from there, the Virgin came to her aid. Therefore she did not perish, but fell clear of the rocks*

*right at the foot of the fig tree. She sprang nimbly up and went on her way, saying:*

*"May the Glorious One, precious Mother of God, who was so merciful to me, be ever praised. Who will not serve her?"*

*She arrived at the church of Her who should always be blessed, where she saw a great crowd of people, and she said:*

*"Come at once and baptize me, then you shall hear of a miracle which will astound all who hear it!"*

*Those people baptized her without delay and she was henceforth always a devoted believer in Her who prays to Her glorious Son for us, that He have mercy on us on the fearful day when He comes to judge us.*

It will also benefit the reader if he will follow the action as the artists visualized it in the black and white reproduction of the full page of illumination.

Panel one's caption reads, "How they arrested the Jewess of Segovia who was caught in a crime," and the artists visualize this clearly. Citizens surround her, and an officer of the law mounted on a horse makes it clear that she is under arrest. She wears a typical Jewish garment and headgear determined by Alfonsine law in the famous *Siete Partidas* or *Seven Divisions of Law*. I have already mentioned that her crime was probably adultery. The scene or background here is uncluttered and graphic. Above the heads of the people extends a series of tile rooftops, and towers indicating the irregular arrangement of houses and buildings.

Panel 2, "How they led her to be cast down from a high cliff which was there," reveals Jews conducting her toward the site of execution which is not yet visible. Behind the group of Jews pushing the woman along roughly appears the great aqueduct of Segovia included as a piece of local color and to make it evident that this is indeed Segovia. I am puzzled as to why the arches of the vast Roman structure are not Roman arches at all, but are of the key-hole variety. Note the caricature of Jewish physiognomy, one of the frequent occurrences of anti-semitism in the *Cantigas*.

Panel 3, "How they cast her down and no harm was done because she called out 'Holy Mary,'" depicts her falling headlong from the cliff top, having been pushed off by a group of her coreligionists. As she hurtles earthward she steeples her hands in prayer against the dark stone of the cliff bespangled here and there with colorful blossoms. The six Jewish executioners, their faces studies in caricature, gleefully watch her fall. One points, and according to the text of the poem, cries, "There she goes!"

Panel 4, "How she got up unhurt, praising Holy Mary for it," shows her standing near the fig tree which was seen also in panel 3, placed in the minatures to give an impression of the great height which she fell. She devoutly lifts her hands in prayer toward the Virgin who can be seen giving her benediction from the clouds. The picture is one of the most brilliant in the group, with the Jews colorfully depicted on the cliff as they point or throw up their hands in wonder. The dark cliff, the green tree, the blue sky, the many-colored flowers, and the white chemise of the Jewess combine to create a scene of great interest.

Panel 5, "How she entered the church of Holy Mary and told the people about the miracle," reveals the Jewess beneath a cusped arch. With one hand she points at the image of the Virgin on its altar. Her other hand, index finger upward, helps her to explain what has occurred. The

Christians in the church have fallen to their knees under a smaller arch. At the far right one sees the image of the Virgin on a brightly colored tiled altar. The Jewess' face is keen, those of the people attentive.

Panel 6, "How the Jewess turned Christian," reveals under a golden scalloped arch at the left the Jewess sitting in a font whose rim covers her lower extremities. She has her hands folded in prayer while a priest pours baptismal water over her from a pitcher. She had cried out in church, "Come at once and baptize me, then you shall hear a miracle which will astound you and all who hear it." As we have seen, her relation of the miracle seems to be taking place in the previous panel. Three Christian ladies are her sponsors in baptism.

I hope that this article, as brief as it is, has touched upon sufficient of the narrative techniques employed by the king's artists as they visualized the many miracles. When scholars in medieval Spanish art fully realize how great a respository of many areas of research lie buried in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and realize that they can now study it all in the fabulous facsimile, their work will be rendered more easy and more interesting. And non-Hispanists, too, should find much in this great Alfonsine work to contribute to their investigations.

JIM BARNES

*Apocalypse*

(Translated from *In den Ellipsen des Mondes*, 1959)

Who will bury the dead  
on the battlefield of Europe,  
who will count them  
and weigh them and say  
that was humanity? Who  
will then, before  
the snow of oblivion  
lies white on  
the bodies of the slain,  
lament  
the towering debris of the dead  
among Balkan and Pole?  
After the wail  
of the last dying hound  
will there still be a voice, or alas,  
only the coffin of a child,  
or a faltering beat of a wing  
on the shattered branch?

Silence and destruction will reign.  
And, over the open eyes  
of thousands upon thousands of the fallen,  
thunderstorms will come and  
moons fade out.  
From the abandoned atomic reactor  
decay will spread out  
over the earth,  
and the crippled roses  
will deny the creation.  
Invincible silence will reign  
on the battlefield of Europe.

Dagmar Nick

## *Alex Haley's Commencement Address*

Xavier University, May, 1981

I am very moved to be here. I sat there thinking several things, one of them I just wish I could have heard about a half a sentence worth of it some years ago, well before *Roots* had happened, and then I was sitting thinking how my grandmother would have interpreted all of that. She simply would have said, "The child done well" and that would have been it for her. And I also was thinking about how, in fact, all of this really started and the reason I personally can never feel like "Wow, look what I did," or "Isn't it marvelous." The fact is I really was one who interpreted what others had passed down to me. I can tell you I would just like to share it. In Henning, Tennessee, a little town, about 500 people, half white, half black, about 48 miles north of Memphis, my grandmother, after my grandfather had died, in her loneliness and her grief, began to invite her sisters to come visit for the summer. (They had come, these sisters of grandma who were my great aunts, from places which to a little boy were exotic, like Kansas City, Chicago, Eastern Michigan, Carbondale, Illinois, places like that which were very exciting to me even to hear about.) They, every evening (it was almost like a pageant, as if there was a script for it) they would have supper, as we called the evening meal, and then they would come out onto the front porch. Dusk was deepening into early night. Honeysuckle was just outside the porch. They would each sit in a rocking chair. There were lot of rocking chairs on the front porch. And they would first, as I recall, start kind of getting their rhythm. Some people had a quick rock, and others had a longer rock, and it seemed they had to work that out. And then all these old ladies, (they certainly seemed old to me) would start running their hands down their apron pockets and coming up with cans of Sweet Garrett Snuff and loading up the lower lip and taking little practice shots. The champion, I remember, was Aunt Liz who came from Oklahoma, who could drop a lightning bug at six yards when she got ready. They would just talk about the family. They talked about their father, Tom Murray, a blacksmith who had been a slave along with their mother in North Carolina. They talked about their father's father with much wagging of the head and saying things like "Oh he was just scandalous." And this was somebody called

"Chicken George." They talked about his mother named Kizzy and less often, in an almost mysterious way, they would talk about this African who always said his name was Kinte and who would make certain sounds to his daughter Kizzy when he got a chance, and I just grew up with it as a matter of course. I heard the stories so much that they were rather much like the stories I heard in Sunday School.

By the time I was 10 my head was a jungle of the stories of Chicken George and David and Goliath and Tom the Blacksmith and Moses. I grew up with that imprinting of those family stories which some 35 years later, having happened in that interim to have become a writer, I got curious about it, and that was what ultimately led into the book *Roots*. I had no dream what it would do, not even the remotest dream. Sometimes people ask, "Did you have any idea?" and I sometimes jocularly say, "If I had, I would have typed faster," but the fact is there was no way to know. I think now when I look back upon it, that what *Roots* really did tap into, was one central change that is probably the greatest common denominator among us human beings on earth and that is family. That no matter who we are, where we are, we belong to some special family, and every family on earth has some ancestry and goes back into some native land and that, fundamentally, is what *Roots* dealt with.

I think that in terms of having this honor, this privilege, to speak here this evening, I would take out of *Roots* and share with you one of the incidents that meant so much to me. When the book was written, I had no idea it was going to be filmed. When the film rights were bought, I began to attend meetings in Hollywood with the producers, and the network people, and I was just wide-eyed and wide-eared listening to what goes on as a book gets translated and transformed into a film. I learned that there were only certain scenes in the book that could be used. You couldn't film a book literally. The film would last a week if you filmed everything in *Roots*. So you just had to pick certain scenes, and after they had done a good deal of discussion about this, I remember one afternoon I just sat, having not had a whole lot to say up to that time, and I said, "You know, as the author I'd just like to say one thing, that no matter what other scenes we use, there's one scene I feel is more integral than anything else and that was the scene I had in the book where Kunta Kinte *fought to keep his name* because that seemed to me to be the transition story, and I would like to see that simply whenever we use that scene. It will be as powerful as any other scene in the film, and that's all that I ask, that nothing be more powerful than that particular scene." It was set up. The writers wrote

the script that was supposed to attend the scene. There was something that happens in the film business; I've been told by people who know a great deal about it, that every now and then some magic will happen, something that you could not have put into a script to save your life. It happened with that particular scene. We were filming in Savannah, Georgia. As you know, young Levar Burton is just an incomparable discovery we made. Levar, as a matter of fact, had been studying to be a priest and had just gone over to dramatic school, where they had put him into a musical because they didn't want him to feel left out. They had given him a bit part in the student production of Oklahoma, when a casting director's assistant happened to go the student production, saw him, knew we were casting for Kunta, and threw Levar's hat into the ring. There were 132 young men that tried for that role, and when we eliminated 131, the one that stood there last was Levar Burton, who was the only one of the crew who had never in his life been before a camera, and he was the one who played the role incomparably and in any case, it was scripted that he would be insisting that his name was Kinte when the master said that his name was Tobe. The overseer would say he had to be beaten until he would say his name was Tobe. As you recall, he was strung up by his wrists and being beaten, and down there waiting to receive him was his older mentor, Fiddler, played incomparably by Lou Gossick. The script called for Kinte to be beaten until he could stand it no longer, when he would just kind of whisper, "My name is Tobe," and then he would be released and would fall into Lou Gossick's arms and then he would slowly blue out and let the 2 hour segment end on that scene. But what happened was something I will never forget, that we could not have scripted. He was being beaten; Vic was playing the overseer. Vic is such a lovely person, as a person, but he played the overseer so realistically that I came to hate him. I remember one afternoon I told him, "I wish I hadn't created you." In any event, the beating went on until finally everybody could see that Kunta could not stand it any longer, and he finally said, "My name Tobe," and then Vic turned and said, "Say it again. Let me hear it again boy," sort of glowing, and more weakly he said, "Tobe, Massa." Then Vic turned and said, "Cut him down," and the scene was supposed to end. The cameras fixed, focused, whirring full of film, and the scene was supposed to end on blur out with Levar falling into Lou Gossick's lap, but then he came down into Lou Gossick's lap, (I have since talked to Lou several times about it) Lou told me that he said, "Man, I don't know what happened to me. I forgot all about being Louis C. Gossick Jr.; I went back 200 years. I was sitting there on that plantation with that boy being beaten, when he hit my lap the things I

began to say I don't know where they came from; they just came out," and what came out was, Levar, sank into his lap; Lou, the veteran actor began weeping. It wasn't intended that he weep. If we had intended that (we have tears) we would have supplied him, but he began to weep, and he said something I never will forget. He said, "What difference it make what they calls you? You knows who you is. You's knows you's Kunta" and then Lou began to cry a little harder, and the cameras were going full speed, critical focus, right on the two of them and he said what I particularly treasure: "There's going' to be a better day," a beat, and then he repeated, "There's goin' be a better day." And then a little beat more and there was a blink as the last film ran through the camera, and we used every frame of it, and I'd like to feel that it was the most powerful scene in the whole of *Roots*. It was not intended; it was just spontaneous; he just spoke something, and I've always liked to think it symbolized what was the case with all those people who were then in slavery and who then came through the Civil War into the Reconstruction, and the theme was a kind of felt thing: there is going to be a better day.

One of the earlier manifestations of it was the urgent drive to build schools of one sort or another. Schools were built in groves. The seats were logs split half open. Teachers were brought from wherever anybody could teach anything at all. They became a teacher, and students ranged in age from little ones to grandmothers and grandfathers, who desperately wanted to try even to learn to write their names; anything at all associated with learning was precious to people who had written their name with an X. And that moved up into a period we were talking about this evening over at President Francis's home; I believe Mrs. Francis mentioned it. It was a period, a long period, when there were small colleges in the South, the black colleges, and several things would characterize them. One of these was almost always when they had a commencement. Now, those graduates sitting down, to a man and to a woman, represented the first person in their family ever to have graduated from college, and when that happened it did something for the whole family. Everyone in the family walked a little bit taller, the minute that event happened within that family, and there was almost a pageantry that, to this day, happens at those colleges. I go every chance I get to speak at one of their commencements and these are the colleges, not as large, not as sophisticated as Xavier, but they're in there doing the best they can and it will happen just like here. There will be the graduates and behind them will sit the parents and then the other people. The President will get up and the degrees all

there on the table piled up, and the President will get up and say, "Now we're going to do the presentation of degrees and in the interest of efficiency, we would appreciate it if everyone would withhold their applause until it's all finished, and then they will start calling names, and they may get to number 5; they may get to number 7, but before they get to someone, Willie May or John Haley, or somebody, some grandmother in the back can't stand it no longer and stands up and hollers, "Thank you Jesus!" and from that point forth, the commencement is a camp meeting. It's an institution among a people whose background was "There's going to be a better day." We have the institutions such as Xavier where the better day is beginning to manifest, not as rapidly as it should, to be true, but much more than it has in the past, also to be true.

I believe one of the things we need to deal with now is getting rid of what are more sophisticated forms of slavery, a tendency among a people to think it is too much to expect a people to do what perhaps they can do to a certain degree for themselves, particularly on an individual basis, to expect that other people should provide things that we could do within our own families. One thing I would like to suggest, not sophisticated at all, is that everybody here, it doesn't matter whose parent, whomever, if you are so blessed, if any of us are so blessed as to have elderly mothers, and fathers, or in the case of those of us who are younger, grandmothers and grandfathers, at the first opportunity we get go to them; walk up to them and simply physically hug them and thank them for what they've done to make it possible that you are as you are today. I was raised by my grandma, and I have a particular partiality for anybody's grandmother. I always feel like mama and daddy find they brought you in the world and they can do, they do marvelous things for you, but nobody in the world can quite do for grandchildren what grandparents can do. They kind of sprinkle stardust over the lives of children. It's true, and those are people we do not want to draw away from because they symbolize all that which went before. Many times today, grandparents literally couldn't pronounce, let alone spell, but they know it's marvelous, and they would just bask and glow, but we need to remind them that it's because of them that we are doing whatever we are doing. We need never to forget it. We also need to become I think, more competitive than we are. We say we have equal abilities. I think more than not we sometimes do. We should go out and let nothing be stopped to prove that we're equal, mentally and physically, to do anything anybody else can do. I

sometimes travel a great deal, and in this city, any city in this United States, around about dusk you can get in a car, I get in rented cars and do this, and you drive around among what might be called the minority neighborhood, and like a pageant, like a surrealistic ballet, you go around and anything that looks like a playground, at the later part, after sundown, going in the dusk, you can see the little brothers in there and the big brothers too, getting in the last shot in that hook up on the pole, and that's why they dominate everything that looks like basketball, the kind of practice, the kind of obsession that goes into it. What we also need is some people to be in these laboratories around Xavier and the Xaviers of the country, getting in the last test-tube experiment of the day, obsessed with that and the various other things that will make us much more a competitive people.

I think broadly, in terms of society, what we are dealing with, (and this is just not in terms of minority peoples but people at large) somehow it seems to me that mankind has been all but cursed with an affliction to separate from each other. We have done such a job of dramatizing the things that make us different from other groups of people, that we have almost obscured the things that make us all human beings, so very much alike with such common needs. I think that events of recent days, the attempted assassination of President Reagan; what's happening in Atlanta (only Friday, in Jackson, Tennessee, a Priest was shot and killed) only show we are looking at the worst of us. It's got to be turned around. Somehow, we've got to learn the drama of seeking each other, finding each other, trying to embrace each other in ways we can. We are looking at the drama of trying to promote life instead of hatred, that which has been offered and which is one of the hardest things on earth to sell—love. But if we can sell it, it offers to us rewards greater than we could possibly manifest, than we could possibly articulate.

I couldn't better symbolize this than to take one other section from *Roots*. It's surrealistic. I was so glad that we were able to use it in the first show and then to use it as the logo of the second show, and it was something that I had found in a little obscure village in the back country of Gambia, West Africa. I was asking through interpreters, an old, old man to tell me about the culture of the people in that country, physically the 2nd largest continent on the face of the earth, whose image up to this time had been largely Tarzan. Its history, its society had been damaged by that. He told me one little thing. When the little boy Kunta Kinte was 8 nights of age, his father Homero went to the mother who had borne him and the women had been handling him, but among those people, those allegedly savage people, the rule was

absolute that although the mother bore him, and all the women played with him, fondled him, they had taken great care that no woman ever had spoken directly to that child. It was reserved for the father to be the first to speak directly into the child's ear. On the eighth night of the naming ceremony, the father, with the people of the village gathered about, took his child from the mother and with everyone looking, the father, having now decided what to name him, held the infant up and he turned his ear, so that the little ear was very close to his lips, and he whispered, "Kunta Kinte." The theory of these alleged savage people is that from his father, the child should be the first ever to know who he is. The father that night took the infant out alone into a clearing space, and there was a bright moon-lit night, the firmament overhead, and with no one present now but himself and the child, that father spoke to his child, and I have always like to feel it was not Omero Kinte speaking to his son Kunta. It was not just an African father speaking to his son, but it was in the way that there can be such a message from the great second largest continent on the face of earth to the rest of the whole world about what are our potentials, as human children, as human people, human family. If we will seek and pursue the various facets of a society that treasures loving each other rather than hating each other, the potentials would be what that father said to that son as he held him up, looking at the heavens, and spoke to him: "Behold the only thing greater than thyself." I probably talked over. Thank you. I can't help it.

*Milton (1901-1927)*

Wildhead Milton, your own youngest.  
He felt I, much younger, had  
Eroded your affection for him.  
He would say  
"Mom, ain't I your baby?" then  
Pick you up as if you were his baby.  
And you would fuss and laugh and kick your feet.  
I guess he was about near right; I  
Came a nephew, stayed a son.

When I was a year old, Milton  
Slipped off to the postoffice (our Federal Building)  
Lied about his age to  
Join the army, fight the war, to  
Save the whole world for democracy  
And Woodrow Wilson.  
Woodrow who so loved the world he  
Gave his only misbegotten League of Nations;  
Hated blacks, it seems, with equal ardor  
Maybe Mom was right; sixteen is young  
To fight a nation of strangers. Maybe  
Milton was. The army might have been  
His great escape from Portsmouth, Ohio,  
Jailhouse to a dream.  
Milton never saw P<sup>aree</sup>.

Instead he zigzagged in and out  
Of menial jobs at menial wage,  
He hoboed once or twice down to the South  
Then hustled hurried to return to  
Home. It never looked so good as when you  
Heard the footsteps of those Down South  
Railroad police running right behind you.  
His great achievement was to visit Harlem.  
Got the chance to drive the colored

School principal and his family  
To New York and even Canada.  
Now were we proud! We hung the  
Two model canoes bought from the Indians  
On the mantle in the middle-room  
Behind the new coal stove.

Milton lived his real life  
On 'leven<sup>th</sup> Street. We never  
Knew just what he did—played pool played  
Cards drank up a little bootleg whiskey.  
Once he stepped into eleven-o-eight  
(That's where we lived on Thirteenth Street)  
Stepped in with a wife and him with  
Neither pot window nor grass.  
That holy conjunction lasted hardly enough  
To wet the pot. The bride returned  
To whence she came; Milton returned to  
'leven<sup>th</sup> Street.

Once in every six or seven years or so  
Police converged around some house or shed  
Or other last ditch place and  
Shot some black man full of holes.  
"He went berserk" they'd say  
And that was all there ever was to that  
Except for family grief, a funeral, and  
Rumors hot at first soon trickling  
Off to nowhere.  
It was one winter night.  
I stood at the side window and  
Watched my long tall oldest brother  
Running down the street toward our house,  
Coat-tails flapping in the wind.  
When he reached the door he took up  
A'nt Matt in his arms and said  
"A'nt Matt he's dead, Milton's dead."

The policeman reported in a proper style:  
"The man advanced on me in a  
threatening manner and said he  
would kill me. I fired one shot."

Mom said, "Poor Milton;  
Last thing he said to me was,  
'Mom, I'll be home early, take a bath' ".  
But Milton lay quiet by Uncle Bob's garage  
Fast chilling blood flowed down the  
New broad channel; a man cut through his  
Face and brain with a large-size bullet.  
No World War, no Paris, France  
No farm, pigs and potatoes  
No more the flunky in downtown stores,  
Six male cousins carried him  
To an open hole in the "Colored Section"  
Out at Greenlawn Cemetery.

*Sax Man*

at JC's club on Friday nights  
you were the man we all hopped to  
like the end of your horn  
was the underworld  
and your blowing  
kept us up in the air  
kept us from falling in.

when you sat out  
to let the others take their solos  
you nodded, toe-tapped,  
rolled, shook, anxious  
to step back in  
and when you did  
all heads snapped forward  
to watch you blow  
lifting your legs like a mad dog  
twisting your body into a tornado  
blowing your moans, sighs, laughs,  
sometimes pausing to hoot  
the sweat popping into music.

your drunk body  
blasting through the windshield  
didn't have anything to do  
with music, magic,  
didn't have anything to do  
with that one sizzling night  
you blew the buttons off your shirt.

*Dream Orpheum Balcony*

and then  
our lives full of streetcar clamor  
streetcar clamor  
drowning out freight cho-cho  
(cho-cho midnights run amok  
through day & night...  
cho-cho making us sweat  
until our heart beats  
louder than train wheels)  
and then  
off to eighty-eight steps  
toward fantasy heaven  
where warm hamburgers from the counter  
below  
spill chopped onions  
over the balcony  
into the Esther Williams aquatic  
extravaganza...  
our peanut shells giggle  
uncontrollably  
at the sound  
of the last solemn  
kiss  
and then  
street car clamor drowning out  
freight cho-cho  
except at midnight  
when cho-cho chugs  
the weight of our  
questions  
and then

LEE MEITZEN GRUE

*What Was Upstairs at the Picture Show When  
I Was Eight Years Old*

my mother bought tickets from a calcimine lady  
housed in a glass booth noise shook from feet  
herding up stairs  
one pair  
had socks turned down around  
baby doll shoes  
skinny legs like mine

but brown

we passed our tickets to the man  
who tore them up  
sent us through velvet ropes  
to blind dark  
where luminaries spoke  
where we accustomed to  
turned our faces up  
but looking back a light shone down square  
like smoke contained  
what spooked was dark what laughed  
hands that gripped a rail  
slung white popcorn boomerangs that sailed

black heaven was faceless as a bathroom door

what was contained had skinny legs like mine  
brown brown brown

*Pandarus and Criseyde:*  
The Motif Of Incest.  
In Chaucer's *Troilus*

Probably the central thematic fact in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is that Pandarus has sexual relations with his niece. This incestuous union, consummated at most only several hours after Criseyde has sworn eternal devotion to Troilus on their first night of rapturous love, serves to highlight Chaucer's main intent in writing the *Troilus*: that is, by travestyng Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*, to ridicule and condemn the myth of courtly love. While previous studies—including ones by Haldeen Braddy, Evan Carton, Ian Robinson, Thomas Ross, Beryl Rowland and David Sims—have served to establish that Chaucer consciously and deliverately introduced an incestuous element into the relationship between Pandarus and Criseyde, in this paper I shall confine myself to demonstrating the elaborate, multifaceted way in which Chaucer weaves the motif of incest throughout the first three books of his masterpiece, so to prepare us for the devastating incestuous climax at the end of Book III.

In Book I, while establishing in our minds a general expectation of sexual misconduct by alluding to Paris's ravishing of Helen, Apollo's of the daughter of Admetus, and Titius's attempted ravishment of Diana (Book I, lines 652-65, 785-8), Chaucer introduces the motif of incest at two distinct yet related points. First, in promising Troilus that he would help him to win his beloved whoever it might be, Pandarus avers:

Ne, by my trouthe, I kepe nat restreyne  
The fro thi love, theigh that it were Eleyne  
That is thi brother wif, if ich it wiste:  
Be what she be, and love hire as the listel!

(I, 676-9)

Thus, Pandarus avers, even if Troilus's beloved were his brother's wife, Helen, Pandarus would not discourage Troilus from pursuing her. This putative love of brother-in-law and sister-in-law is the first of at least four different versions of incest—including also mother-son, brother-sister, and uncle-niece—which Chaucer will present or suggest in the course of his poem. The second indication of the motif of incest in Book I occurs shortly thereafter in a somewhat oblique yet significant way when, still exhorting Troilus to reveal to him the identity of his beloved, Pandarus exclaims:

To Cerberus yn helle ay be I bounde,  
Were it for my suster, al they sorwe,  
By my wil she sholde al be thyn to-morwe.

(I, 859-61)

While, strictly speaking, of course, incest is not directly evoked in these lines, since Pandarus offers his sister to Troilus rather than suggesting that he would take her for himself, first, there would seem to be little difference in the ethical import of ravishing or prostituting one's sister, and secondly, what might be called the codeword of the incest motif is here present, the word "suster." Indeed, in almost every passage of the *Troilus* that concerns incest the word "sister" or some aspect of the concept of sisterhood is evoked. This is true, of course, of the passage we have already discussed regarding Troilus's hypothetical lust for his sister-in-law, Helen. Add to these considerations the fact that Troilus later makes a counteroffer to give Pandarus any one of his own "sisters," including Helen, as a reward for Pandarus's faithful service (III, 407-13), and the fact that Helen is later described by the codeword "sister" in a passage whose full effect depends upon knowledge of her own incestuous relationship with Deiphebus and which is probably based on a Biblical episode involving brother-sister incest (see discussion below), and we may have some fairly adequate idea at this point of what Chaucer is doing in these early passages of Book I in the way of carefully preparing the groundwork for the incest motif.

At the opening of Book II, we discover Pandarus, on the morning of May 3, Chaucer's favorite day of disaster, suffering in bed from lovesickness, and so, the narrator continues:

The swalowe Priogne, with a sorowful lay,  
Whan morwen come, gan make hire waymentynge,  
Whi she forshapen was; and ever lay  
Pandare abedde, half in a slomberynge,  
Til she so neigh hym made hire chetyrnyge  
How Tereus gan forth hire suster take,  
That with the noyse of hire he gan awake,  
And gan to calle, and dresse hym up to ryse,  
Remembryng hym his erand was to doone  
From Troilus, and ek his grete emprise;  
And caste and knew in good plit was the moone  
To doon viage, and took his weye ful soone  
Unto his neces palays ther biside.  
Now Janus, god of entree, thow hym gyde!

(II, 64-77)

Thus, as Pandarus is about to undertake a mission of love to his niece,

Criseyde, supposedly on behalf of his friend, Troilus, we are reminded of the incestuous lust of Tereus for his sister-in-law, Philomela, for which, according to Ovid, he was transformed into an ugly bird, the hoopoe. Tereus's fate, as a form of punishment, would suggest the motif of damnation, related to the motif of incest in most relevant passages throughout the first three books of the *Troilus*, as it was, for instance, in the allusion to "Cerberus yn helle" in line 859 of Book I. Thus, we might reasonably infer, Chaucer suggests that Pandarus is going blithely about the business of damnation in his equivocal pursuit of Criseyde. We should also perhaps note the presence once again in this passage of the codeword of the incest motif, "suster," in line 69.

The motifs of incest and damnation are conjoined in the next passage relevant to the present study, a passage which alludes to the traditional tale of incest perhaps most fruitful in Chaucer's thematic design, Oedipus's union with his mother, Jocasta, resulting in the birth of Antigone, whose name Chaucer will later give to Criseyde's niece. Chaucer's first allusion to the Oedipus episode in the classical story of Thebes occurs in a passage which, significantly, like almost every passage in the *Troilus* that concerns the incest motif, has no counterpart in Chaucer's source, Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*. When Pandarus arrives at Criseyde's residence supposedly to further Troilus's interests, he finds Criseyde and two lady friends of hers listening to a maiden recount the siege of Thebes, whereupon the narrator presents the following colloquy between Pandarus and Criseyde:

With that thei gonne laughe, and tho she  
seyde,  
"This romaunce is of Thebes that we rede;  
And we han herd how that kyng Layus deyde  
Thurgh Edippus his sone, and al that dede;  
And here we stynten at thise lettres rede,  
How the bisshop, as the book kan telle,  
Amphiorax, fil thurgh the ground to helle."

Quod Pandarus, "Al this knowe I myselve,  
And al th'assege of Thebes and the care;  
For herof ben ther maked bookes twelve.  
But lat be this, and telle me how ye fare.  
Do wey youre barbe, and shewe youre face  
bare;  
Do wey youre book, rys up, and lat us daunce,  
And lat us don to May som observaunce."

(II, 99-112)

In these two stanzas, Chaucer raises the specter of incest once again with Criseyde's allusion to Oedipus, and also associates it with the motif of damnation through the immediately following reference to Amphiarus, who, we are told, "fil thorgh the ground to helle." When Pandarus responds to Criseyde by scoffing at the cares of Thebes and inviting his niece to bare her face and join him in a dance and in doing "to May som observaunce," he is himself taking a further step on the road that will lead him to an incestuous union with Criseyde, and, thus, to damnation.

Chaucer's introduction into the *Troilus* of a young woman named Antigone as Criseyde's niece is an extremely instructive matter relevant to the present study. First of all, by this maneuver Chaucer further complicates a generational pattern he originally complicated by turning Boccaccio's Pandaro, who was Criseida's cousin, into her uncle. This, while in *Il Filostrato*, Troilo, Criseida and Pandaro are very neatly all of the same generation, in Chaucer's *Troilus* the generational pattern is significantly more complex, in that Pandarus is possible as much as two generations removed from Troilus, since he is the uncle of Criseyde, who is the aunt of Antigone, who is old enough to sing of love, and, thus, presumably, of the same generation as Troilus. I would maintain that Chaucer has introduced this generational complexity into his work for two very important and related reasons. First, in this way he further suggests and emphasized the motif of incest, by having Pandarus be Criseyde's uncle and not merely her cousin, and by having Criseyde be aunt to a young woman named Antigone, indicating the product of an incestuous union. Second, Chaucer thus also suggests that Troilus is involved with an older woman, and Criseyde, in turn, with a yet older man, so adding to the horror of incest one of his favorite weapons of sexual farce and ridicule, the venerable motif of *senex amans*. Thus Chaucer, a man of forty-five at the time of his writing the *Troilus*, has wrought in it an intricate tapestry of sexual involvement and incest among generations that was far beyond the reach of young Boccaccio in *Il Filostrato*.

With Antigone's various appearances in the first three books of the *Troilus*, Chaucer uses the underlying symbolism of her name with significant impact. She is introduced as one of three nieces of Criseyde who accompany her into her garden, and, specifically, as the one who sings Criseyde a song in praise of love (II, 827-75). This song, so elaborate, so effusive, so conventional in its glorification of sexual love in the established terms of the courtly myth—promulgating sexual love as the virtue of all virtues, preserving one from all taint of vice—is turned on its head, as it were, not only by the suggestion in lines 880-2

that it might have been written by Helen, the cause of all Troy's woe, but also through the fact that it is sung by a young woman with a name suggesting the fruit of an incestuous union associated with patricide. Given the well-known woes of Oedipus and his family, the woes of Thebes and the woes of Troy, can there be much question that Chaucer intends us to see Antigone's song in the hues of grisly irony, and that Criseyde's reply—"Lord, is ther swych blisse among/Thise loveres, as they konne faire endite?"—is the most grisly irony of all? The other two appearances of Antigone both occur in contexts clearly associated with incest. The first (II, 1563) is at the house of Deiphebus, in a sequence whose incestuous implications we shall soon explore. The other is in the narrator's conspicuous reference to her in III, 597 as accompanying Criseyde to Pandarus's house. Chaucer has his narrator single her out here as the only one specifically named among Criseyde's entire retinue because Criseyde, after all, is herself about to engage at Pandarus's house in the kind of behavior—incest, that is—to which the name of her "faire nece" bears obvious testimony. Thus, in his characteristically subtle, economical way, Chaucer introduces into his poem a new minor character who yet serves an important purpose in further adumbrating the centrally significant motif of incest.

In the first three books of the *Troilus*, both of Chaucer's most important and extensive departures from Boccaccio's plot—the Deiphebus episode at the end of Book II, and the sequence at Pandarus's house, which comprises the larger part of Book III—are fully explicable only with reference to the motif of incest. Just as we have seen that Chaucer dramatically complicated the generational relationships of his major characters for a thematic purpose, so it is clear that, for a similar end, he transformed Boccaccio's relatively straightforward and conventional exposition of the assignation between Troilus and Criseyde at her house into a series of convoluted escapades at the houses of Deiphebus and Pandarus carefully and thoroughly orchestrated by Pandarus himself. In changing the setting of this critical sequence Chaucer subtly yet unmistakably shifts our attention away from its expected, total absorption with the love of Troilus and Criseyde, as is the case in *Il Filostrato*, to a kind of ironic fascination with the clever high jinks and masterful legerdemain of Pandarus, as he smooths the way to Criseyde, not only for Troilus, but, much more significantly, for himself as well. But, before looking at the climactic passage describing Pandarus's sexual involvement with his niece, let us first consider the intervening episode at Deiphebus's.

Why did Chaucer introduce this episode at the house of Deiphebus, which, on the face of it, would seem a curiously irrelevant

and totally unnecessary digression? The answer is simple yet critical in its implications for the present argument. From classical times onward, the received tradition concerning the story of Troy included the view that, after the death of Paris, Helen married his brother, Deiphebus (in this regard, see McKay Sundwall, "Deiphobus and Helen: A Tantalizing Hint," MP, 73(1975), 151-6). Thus, when at the end of Book II of the *Troilus*, Deiphebus himself suggests to Pandarus that Helen should be part of the group coming to his (Deiphebus's) house supposedly to succor Criseyde, and when we are told by the narrator that Helen obediently came to Deiphebus "as his suster . . . / . . . in hire pleyne entente" (II, 1559-60), and when Deiphebus and Helen later spend a thoroughly suspicious hour along together in an "herber greene" purportedly reading and poring over a letter given them by Troilus ((II, 1705-8), the message that Chaucer delivers to his audience would seem clear enough: need we believe that the incestuous relationship between Helen and Deiphebus began only after Paris's death? And is it, then, so incredible to think that Criseyde, this other Helen, should similarly violate her troth to Troilus, even if in the very day of the consummation of their relationship?

But there is still another dimension to the incestuous context of the Deiphebus episode. A number of years ago now Charles Muscatine noted the striking parallel between the sequence concerning Troilus's feigned illness at Deiphebus's house and the Biblical account of Amnon's ravishing of his sister Tamar, as it is detailed in II Samuel 13:1-20 (See "The Feigned Illness in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," MLN, 63(1948). 373-7). As Muscatine pointed out, in both the Biblical and Chaucerian versions, the lover, a king's son (Troilus: Amnon) is persuaded by a trusted friend (Pandarus: Jonadab) to feign illness in order to lure into his chamber a beautiful woman (Criseyde:Tamar) for sexual attention, managing also to deceive an unknowing visitor or visitors in the process (Deiphebus, Helen:David). It is, of course, quite instructive and pertinent to the present study that Chaucer might very well have used a Biblical episode involving brother-sister incest as the basis for his development of what, as we have indicated, could seem an inexplicable digression. Given, however, as illuminating background the hoary tradition of an incestuous relationship between Helen and Deiphebus, along with the detailed resemblances between the events of the Deiphebus episode and those of the Amnon-Tamar sequence in II Samuel, and given the undue prominence of Pandarus in his flamboyant orchestration of the whole business, what the Deiphebus episode does thematically is carry us one significant step further toward the ever more obviously inevitable incestuous juncture of an

enterprising uncle and a serviceable niece.

At last, then, we come to the culminating episode of this delicately woven tale. Soon after Troilus has departed from his newly-won beloved, Pandarus appears before her, as the narrator tells us:

Pandare, o-morwe which that comen was  
Unto his nece and gan hire faire grete,  
Seyde, "Al this nyght so reyned it, allas,  
That al my drede is that ye, nece swete,  
Han litel laiser had to slepe and mete.  
Al nyght," quod he, "hath reyne so do me wake,  
That some of us, I trowe, hire hedes ake."

And ner he come, and seyde, "How stant it now  
This mury morwe? Nece, how kan ye fare?"  
Criseyde answerde, "Nevere the bet for yow,  
Fox that ye ben! God yeve youre herte kare!  
God help me so, ye caused al this fare,  
Trowe I," quod she, "for al youre wordes  
white.  
O, whoso seeth yow, knoweth you ful lite."

With that she gan hire face for to wrye  
With the shete, and wax for shame al reed;  
And Pandarus gan under for to prie,  
And seyde, "Nece, if that I shal be ded,  
Have here a swerd and smyteth of myn hed!"  
With that his arm al sodeynly he thriste  
Under hire nekke, and at the laste hire kyste.

I passe al that which chargeth nought to seye.  
What! God foryaf his deth, and she al so  
Foryaf, and with here uncle gan to pleye,  
For other cause was there noon than so.  
But of this thing right to the effect to go,  
Whan tyme was, hom to here hous she wente,  
And Pandarus hath fully his entente.

(III, 1555-82)

Thus are we brought, even given the narrator's obvious reluctance to provide us with every graphic detail, to the logical fulfillment for which

we have been so carefully prepared. Pandarus, we are told, pried under the sheet, embraced and kissed his niece, who generously forgave him for his previous (and present) misdeeds, and "with here uncle gan to pleye." The sexual adumbrations of this crucial passage have been competently elucidated by Haldeen Braddy, Beryl Rowland, David Sims and others: the unmistakable phallic symbolism of the sword, with its numerous analogues elsewhere in Chaucer; the clear sexual suggestiveness of "Pleye" and "deth," connotative terms observable not only in this passage but, once again, elsewhere in Chaucer and in other classic English writers as well. These and other similar explications of this passage are well-known enough not to need further development at this point. Rather, I would simply recall to your attention Haldeen Braddy's ringing question: If the whole of Pandarus's intent was simply to bring Troilus to Criseyde's bed, why should Chaucer have had his narrator wait for several hundred lines after describing the blissful consummation of the younger lovers, and in a passage strangely devoted to the "pleye" of the uncle with his niece, to assert that only then "Pandarus hath fully his entente"? Given the evidence adduced by the Chaucerians cited in this paper, and the new evidence contributed by the present study, there is, it seems to me, only one reasonable answer to Haldeen Braddy's question: only in coition with Criseyde does Pandarus achieve indeed the prize he so vigorously and tirelessly sought, and we are the witnesses of this brazen act of incest, through which Chaucer brings us full circle, and displays in unquestionable infamy the myth of courtly love.

*Salt and Pepper*

Don't talk to me about white.  
I have had it: too many times  
people say, "it's white," and  
it turns out to be far from  
the truth. Vanilla ice cream,  
for example, vs. a white cat,  
vs. my skin, vs. a blank page.  
And then they say, there aren't  
various shades of white,  
there's just white.

Only in the context of black  
does whiteness ring true.  
It's hard to prevaricate  
about black. It is or isn't,  
except, of course, with skin—  
but then skin-talk breeds lies.  
Black ink, black paint,  
black is the hole in your eye.  
It is the frame. Against it,  
all other colors fly, set up  
to their best advantage.

Sleazy white, you only mark your spot  
when black is there to show you're not.

*Joy*  
*for Alma*

Coyote watches young Joy  
push her brother's buggy  
along the cattle trail.  
She stumbles in a gopher hole,  
letting go of baby's pram and  
down it rolls to the bottom  
of the hollow and tips over.  
Brother is bawling,  
his wraps are full of stickers.  
She calms him down and wheels him  
home, not telling her mother  
who later puzzles over  
the stickers in her shawl.  
That night Coyote kills a calf  
in that same draw.  
When Joy kicks up a cattle bone  
where the buggy had tipped over  
she's scared because she thinks the bone  
fell out of baby brother.

*Tornado Watch*  
for Thomas Sauret

Thunder shakes the whole house.  
I hold onto our rented  
bed, my only life raft,  
while the man who lives  
outside the window at night,  
the one you never see,  
watches me struggle with sleep.

Certain the watch will  
turn into a warning,  
I locate candles and matches  
thinking when all else fails  
this light will keep me safe.  
I pull the spring blanket  
up to my chin  
prepared to block  
the lightening's illumination.

But my timing's off.  
The window lights up  
his obscene baby face  
pink against the wet  
black umbrella.  
He gestures for me  
to let him in then laughs.  
His continuous laughter  
falls like the rain  
from the gutterless roof.  
The old terror of sleeping alone—  
I click off the lamp,  
listen for the funnel cloud's approach,  
the swift silent unlocking,  
his seductive watery breath  
next to mine.

*On My 29th Birthday I Remember*

My train has stopped  
in the grey station  
of my birthplace:  
I see a man  
tired from working 30 years  
for the Southern Railroad.  
He trudges across the gravel.  
I would like to meet him  
but what will I say?  
That I know  
we are born of simple flesh?  
That the tiny precise atoms  
of our bodies  
are the same atoms  
swirling in fiery galaxies  
a million light years away?

I look past the station  
to the red clay hills  
choked with kudzu:  
I know there is nothing  
more real than this place.  
I feel my heart rise  
without reason of name or place  
and touch the land.  
Here at this lonely depot  
the only person  
on the platform is a woman.  
If I could speak to her,  
I think, if only  
I had the courage to say:  
*Love continues  
like light falling upon earth.  
This is heartland  
anywhere we step,  
when the light suddenly shatters  
in a thousand filaments of belief.*

## HARRY STEPHENSON

### *Waiting*

You have fastened emerald green shades  
to your windows, painted the walls  
ivory, the woodwork glossy white.

You have stationed the bed on the North  
South axis of the world, your soft chair  
under a brass lamp near the radiator.

You have placed a small round table  
near the winter sun, large enough  
for a breakfast service, the morning paper,

a porcelain figure: two swans  
aware only of turning together.

*Until Dawn Covers Me*

Alone, here, on the slate floor  
with fireplace heat scorching my breaths  
I hold to my heart  
stems of holly  
pull leaves off  
one at a time  
playing *he loves me not*  
pitching questions into flames  
watching words burn  
watching passion burn  
late into the night  
watching until the fire dies  
until coals turn to pillows  
of soot  
until dawn covers me like a stiff sheet  
and the last berries vanish  
from my cold hand

*Wyoming Yuletide*

I work the skeleton key home,  
balancing packages as the door swings wide.  
I find the light switch with my elbow.  
The light descends the glide of our backstairs,  
the shoulder-wide entry from the garden.  
I look down on snow, on weeds I meant to scythe.  
I watch the lights of winter wheel  
over filigree and snow.

What Christmasses in homecoming  
the three of us come to!  
What laboring against windchill home!  
Winter will soon enough fill out  
the wiry mesh of aspens, the enduring  
cold a cue to relish, an invitation  
to dance heartily. The room inflates  
with its importance, the scheme of furniture  
set about a sunburst square of carpet.

Our daughter in the next room,  
addressing figures, ignores these winds  
taking hold of damaged stucco, snaking  
up our boards. We set out the cableknits,  
the wool plaids. We see our fire  
for the night, the staggering cold  
our pasts root to driven a little  
from our windows.

Marked as we are by the trappings  
of sea-level, by the stations  
we moved out of in the bodies of our fathers,  
we know geography as contest, sounds  
in an old house that might have alarmed us once  
a score for our enthusiasm and strangeness  
in high country.

The mean deaths I meant to ride  
to obsolescence are set behind me now,  
the nag of something trustworthy  
clear for the first time. We listen  
to music past twelve, the arias  
healing the abstractions of wide space,  
the year before us like passage  
into an idea, our daughter sleeping  
the wind out, the resonant indigenous  
Jesus among our studs and wiring,  
the softwood fire become a stirring  
by which we turn down  
what we lacked.

*Doors*

each man collects his things  
forgetting where he hid the key  
and where he found the door

in time a man forgets which door  
concealed which thing  
which thing he thought  
a monster which a pearl

before he dies  
the man forgets the pearl for good

each other door survives a man  
each other door leads everywhere

you raise your hand you bring a door to life  
what batters down the door  
you bring to life

*Laughter of Minutes*

laughter of minutes was in the air  
and an emptiness crept through us  
like leaves on a field,  
late-night.  
voices of the yet unborn  
stirred and lingered in the weeds.

those voices, the disinherited,  
we followed.  
we manufactured worlds  
in landscapes of logic  
where no one could live.

and it was into our own emptiness  
that we wandered.  
we searched for sunrise through a microscope  
and found our tiny ancestors hungry.  
we dwelt between the light  
of inhuman stars  
and our own bewildered eyes.

each night we shed our bodies in our sleep  
to wake with new ones nearly the same.  
each day we waited.

the laughter of minutes was in the air  
while on the threshold of a whisper, we stood,  
we waited.

and as an angry future clustered before us  
we followed the voices.

## CHARLES FORT

### *The Caravan # 1*

It is a three year journey at night  
pulling covered carts  
full of diamonds, emeralds,  
poultry and tired children  
for ten thousand miles.  
The large boxes on their backs  
are filled with rock.  
Nobody speaks out  
and nothing can stop it.  
Riding in the front  
is the full-veiled woman.  
Some talk low of how her hands  
one night caught fire.  
This princess crawled on her knees  
and began digging those knotted bones  
into the cool sand.  
Others tell how the hands smouldered  
and the wind carried the stench  
through the mountains.  
The next day boar pigs arrived  
rooting wild for some ungodly carcass  
and an inaccessible woman.  
It is morning as the sun becomes lit in white hair.  
It will remain caught in this mirage of wind  
until her deep set eyes are mine.

*A Japanese Garden In November*

In honor of the secrets that are around us openly,  
friends, we stand together here on a frozen path  
like the releasing circle of numbers in a combination.

Cold sunlight washes the eyes clear.  
Yellowing leaves search in circles  
over the ground everywhere.

Bless the bright edges that fill the sky,  
bless the rake of the wind.

Bless the strength of those who love in fear.

Bless the playful mind.  
Curse the humility of those who turn away,  
curse the callous kind.

Bless the arc of the red bridge  
always the same.  
Bless the actual life.  
Bless the blooms  
that sit upon the undulating green,  
leaves upon a cool darkness  
trailing roots down into a shining immense.  
Our faces do what we see; our eyes are sweet.  
How fine our speaking in this gold and winding place.

*Summer Women Part II*

The summer I was twelve Cousin Bessie came to stay with us for two weeks. Until she appeared that July I had never met her. She was actually my grandmother's first cousin—and somehow, I'm sure, mine too. She was 4' 10" and I towered over her having reached all but two inches of my eventual 5' 6" height. Bessie was in her 60's then; well preserved. She had no children. No muscles sagged and no child-wrought lines of care showed on her face. A quiet woman who loved to talk, her eyes would gleam and a faint blush of color would appear on her cheeks when she was well enough to visit a while after supper, a supper prepared especially for her which she would eat but never could hold down.

Bessie was in Memphis for x-ray treatments following surgery for stomach cancer. Every morning at 6:30 a taxi would come for her and bring her back five hours later limp and wasted, smaller than when she left. The days passed quickly though and the ambulance came to take her home. "Next summer", my mother promised, "if Bessie's still alive, she wants you to come and visit." A reward for my good behavior (for giving up my bed).

When school was out the next summer Bessie was still alive and even, they said "a little bit better." Over the winter she had made two more trips to Memphis, but she was alive and I was invited for three weeks. I was to go by bus—by myself! "Don't talk to anyone, you don't know who they could be." "Be sure you stay on that bus 'til they call Aaa-DAMS-VILLE!, if you get off they'll leave you." My mother's admonishments followed us out of the driveway. At the station Daddy found a seat for me, settled my bag in the rack over my head and kissed me goodbye. "Have a good time now."

Bessie and Everett met me at the station in Adamsville and we drove out to the farm. My mother had been right about one thing, they were rich! Their house was brick and big. In the kitchen everything had been built low so that Bessie would reach the counter and shelves without having to climb up on a stool. We ate all our meals in that kitchen and I drank goblets of fresh milk—as many as I wanted—frothy and chill from the cellar. Because of her "condition" Bessie couldn't keep up the huge garden. She tended just a small corner with tomatoes, string beans, and a few squash, not enough to

tax her strength, but she never neglected her chickens. Every morning we fed them then collected the eggs, did the cooking for the day, and then went visiting. A few times when her pain was really bad, Bessie would spend the afternoon in a tub of warm water, the only concession I saw her make to the cancer that was gradually but surely killing her.

In the evenings we sat on the porch inundated by the earthy, acrid smell of geraniums. They ringed the porch with lush heavy foilage and masses of deep red blossoms. Everyone remarked on how well they did and even though she gave away cuttings they simply didn't flourish for anyone else. The evenings were cool and we'd talk until bedtime when the wind, moaning through the double row of pines along the road, would lull us to sleep.

One morning just a few days before my visit was to end we were hurrying through our morning's work so that we could go into town. It was a quiet still day, hotter than usual and we complained a little as we gathered the eggs. I saw Bessie stop and look all around . . . she didn't say anything but after a few minutes she stopped again and this time I knew why. Smoke, I smelled smoke—not from the house. Then we saw gray wisps drifting across the road and down the hill from the direction of the church. Everett had built the small frame church to replace an older one that had stood on his land for years and every first Sunday fifty or so neighbors gathered for services.

Everett was in the field now too far away to know what was happening, to smell the smoke. There's was the only house nearby. She and I would have to put out the fire. "There's not much wind" Bessie said. "We can put it out." I followed her, running into the cellar where she picked up a heavy canvas cloth and an old blanket. We started up the hill at a trot. We reached the church quickly and saw the side yard covered with a quivering glaze of heat suspended a few inches above the ground with random licks of red flame occasionally breaking loose. Only the dry grass was burning, a small fire, easy to put out.

"You start on that side and I'll meet you from over here" Bessie said. I did as she told me. Once, twice, I whacked at the flames with the blanket—eleven, twelve times, I worked on the heat penetrating the soles of my shoes, singeing the hairs on my legs, my arms and face. You have to get close, very close, to beat out a fire. Twentyfive? Thirty? I lost count. I can't keep this up, I'm not doing any good. I slowed and looked over at Bessie still flailing away with the canvas, the flames circling around behind her. I realized that the wind was picking up,

fanning the flames. The smoke was thicker now choking me; it burned my eyes tears blurring my vision. The heat was greater. We can't, that sick old woman and I can't put this fire out. "Don't stop now! Beat! It'll get to the church if we don't. No one can help us, we've got to do it!"

We did it. How long it took, how we did it I can't remember. I do remember when the fire was out standing in that churchyard with Bessie, exhausted, our shoes singed our sweaty smoke-grimed faces split with grins—pleased with ourselves and with each other. The smoke still drifted up saturating our clothes and hair. "The grass is ruined but it'll be fine again by next spring." The church was smoke stained but "the men can scrub that off."

We stayed on a while to make sure that no more fire smouldered unnoticed. Then leaning on each other we made our way back down the hill. It was almost lunchtime and Everett would be coming in from the field before long.

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